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Bill Duncan was recognized for his 16 years of service to the Groton Area School District. Darlyne Johnson was also recognized, but not present, for her 21 years of service.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

GREEN 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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If you're just tuning in, we're in the middle of a breakdown of the Minnesota Vikings' roster. We've already covered the offensive positions and are in the second week of the defense. Last week we covered the defensive line, this week we move on to the linebackers.

The rest of the Vikings' roster is undergoing a fair amount of change, but the linebacker group is still retaining the top three and four of the top five members from last season. Linebackers are often overlooked in today's NFL, but Mike Zimmer will be counting on this group to stabilize the defense in 2020.

Eric Kendricks has been a good middle linebacker for years, and the rest of the nation is just starting to take notice. He has always been a sure tackler, but this year his pass defense took a leap forward – he was credited with 12 pass breakups, many of which came in high-pressure situations. The 28-year-old was graded as the best linebacker in the league last season by Pro Football Focus and is under contract for the next four seasons.

Anthony Barr had verbally agreed to a contract with the New York Jets last offseason before changing his mind and coming back to Minnesota on a 5-year, \$67.5 million deal. Kendricks played the most snaps last year amongst linebackers (947), but Barr was right behind him with 929. It's questionable whether he'll be able to live up to the monster deal he signed, but there's no doubt the 28-year-old made some splash plays throughout the season.

Eric Wilson is the third linebacker, which means he's technically a starter, but the Vikings were usually in the nickel formation, so he only played 379 snaps last season. Wilson re-signed with the team on a one-year deal, so the 25-year-old linebacker will be back in 2020.

Ben Gedeon will be the primary backup linebacker this season, a role he's been in since being drafted in the fourth round of the 2017 NFL draft. The 25-year-old LB only saw the field 102 times last season, but in the past has shown the ability to step in and start games when needed.

If you look at the past two seasons, the Vikings have only kept five linebackers on the opening day roster, but if you look back over the past six seasons, the team averages six. I think this is a year when the team opts to keep six, meaning the following two players will likely make the final 53:

Cameron Smith was a fifth-round pick in 2019 and he saw action in five games last season. He played well when he was on the field and has a good chance of making the roster.

Troy Dye was a fourth-round pick back in April. He won't play much this season, as it will take him a while to get adjusted to the NFL because of the lack of an offseason – but when he finally sees the field, I think he will make a big impression.

If the Vikings keep a linebacker on the practice squad, it will be a battle between Jordan Fehr, DeMarquis Gates, and Blake Lynch.

Do you think Barr was worth the contract he signed in 2019? Reach out to me on Twitter (@JordanWrightNFL) and let me know. Skoll!



By Jordan Wright

Early Lead For Redfield Pheasants Seals Fate For Groton Locke Electric

Groton Locke Electric watched the game slip away early and couldn't recover in an 11-0 loss to Redfield Pheasants on Sunday. Redfield Pheasants scored on a double by Levi Logan in the first inning, a walk by Drew Dickhaut in the second inning, a walk by Sutton Masat in the second inning, a walk by Levi Logan in the second inning, a walk by Kaleb Rogers in the second inning, and a walk by Christian Boomsma in the second inning.

The Groton Locke Electric struggled to put runs on the board and had a tough time defensively containing Redfield Pheasants, giving up 11 runs.

Redfield Pheasants got on the board in the first inning. Levi Logan doubled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring three runs.

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

Elliot Millar was the winning pitcher for Redfield Pheasants. He went six innings, allowing zero runs on four hits, striking out five and walking one. Kevin Krumm threw one inning in relief out of the bullpen.

Evan Erickson took the loss for Groton Locke Electric. He lasted two innings, allowing four hits and eight runs while striking out three.

Spencer Locke, Carlos Camacho, Heupel, and Edwin Rodriguez all had one hit to lead Groton Locke Electric. Groton Locke Electric didn't commit a single error in the field. Dalton Locke had the most chances in the field with seven.

Redfield Pheasants collected 11 hits. Kevin Krumm, Christian Boomsma, and Drew Dickhaut each racked up multiple hits for Redfield Pheasants. Kevin Krumm led Redfield Pheasants with three hits in four at bats.

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11 Redfield Pheasants

Sunday, July 12
4:00PM

Groton Locke Electric

0

Redfield Pheasants [more stats](#)

Lineup	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
Jared Kuehn	3	3	1	2	1	0
Kevin Krumm	4	2	3	1	1	1
Drew Dickhaut	4	2	2	1	1	1
Sutton Masat	4	1	1	1	1	0
Alan Masat	4	0	0	0	1	4
Levi Logan	3	0	1	4	1	1
Kaleb Rogers	2	0	0	1	2	1
Christian Boomsma	3	1	2	1	1	0
Nate Binger	4	2	1	0	0	1
Elliot Millar	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easton Millar	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	31	11	11	11	9	9

Batting

2B: Levi Logan
TB: Kevin Krumm 3, Jared Kuehn, Nate Binger, Sutton Masat, Drew Dickhaut 2, Levi Logan 2, Christian Boomsma 2
RBI: Kevin Krumm, Kaleb Rogers, Jared Kuehn 2, Sutton Masat, Drew Dickhaut, Levi Logan 4, Christian Boomsma
FC: Nate Binger 2
HBP: Jared Kuehn

Totals

Team QAB: 17 (41.46%)
 Kevin Krumm 2, Alan Masat 2, Kaleb Rogers 2, Jared Kuehn 2, Nate Binger, Sutton Masat, Drew Dickhaut 3, Levi Logan 2, Christian Boomsma 2

Team LOB: 9

Fielding

E: Drew Dickhaut
DP: Jared Kuehn, Sutton Masat, Drew Dickhaut

Pitching	IP	#P	S%	H	R	ER	SO	BB	HR
Elliot Millar	6.0	73	.644	4	0	0	5	1	0
Kevin Krumm	1.0	14	.786	0	0	0	2	0	0
Totals	7.0	87	.667	4	0	0	7	1	0

Pitching

W: Elliot Millar
Pitches-Strikes: Kevin Krumm 14-11, Elliot Millar 73-47
Groundouts-Flyouts: Kevin Krumm 0-1, Elliot Millar 4-7
First pitch strikes-Batters faced: Kevin Krumm 3-3, Elliot Millar 14-22

Groton Locke Electric [more stats](#)

Lineup	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
Anthony Sippel	3	0	0	0	0	2
Dylan Frey	3	0	0	0	0	1
Heath Giedt	3	0	0	0	0	0
Spencer Locke	3	0	1	0	0	0
Carlos Camacho	3	0	1	0	0	1
Josh Heupel	3	0	1	0	0	1
Edwin Rodriguez	2	0	1	0	0	1
Aaron Severson	1	0	0	0	0	0
Dalton Locke	1	0	0	0	1	1
Evan Erickson	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cody Hanson	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	24	0	4	0	1	7

Batting

TB: Josh Heupel, Spencer Locke, Carlos Camacho, Edwin Rodriguez
ROE: Josh Heupel
GIDP: Cody Hanson

Totals

Team QAB: 11 (44.00%)
 Cody Hanson, Josh Heupel 2, Anthony Sippel, Spencer Locke, Aaron Severson, Dylan Frey, Carlos Camacho 2, Dalton Locke, Edwin Rodriguez

Team LOB: 4

Fielding

DP: Evan Erickson, Heath Giedt

Pitching	IP	#P	S%	H	R	ER	SO	BB	HR
Evan Erickson	2.0	60	.450	4	8	8	3	7	0
Carlos Camacho	5.0	81	.605	7	3	3	6	2	0
Totals	7.0	141	.539	11	11	11	9	9	0

Pitching

L: Evan Erickson
HBP: Evan Erickson
Pitches-Strikes: Evan Erickson 60-27, Carlos Camacho 81-49
Groundouts-Flyouts: Evan Erickson 1-1, Carlos Camacho 1-6
First pitch strikes-Batters faced: Evan Erickson 10-18, Carlos Camacho 15-23

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GHS Graduation Service Held, finally!

July 12th seemed like a long ways away when the decision was made in March to postpone the graduation ceremony due to the outbreak of COVID-19. But July 12th did finally arrive and the ceremony was held in the GHS Arena with appropriate spacing for the graduates.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

July 13, 2020 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of June 8, 2020 and June 29, 2020 school board meetings as drafted or amended.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Approval of June 2020 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
3. Approval of June 2020 School Lunch Report.
4. Approval of June 2020 School Transportation Report.
5. Discussion and necessary action on installation of HVAC ionization system – Kevin Nehls.
6. Continued discussion and necessary action on District response to COVID-19.
7. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

ADJOURN

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ANNUAL REORGANIZATION BUSINESS:

1. Call to Order with members present.
2. Installation of incumbent board members, Grant Rix and Steven Smith, followed by election of president and vice president as well as appointments to the various "ad hoc" committees.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approve July 2020 District bills for payment.
2. Designate legal counsel/school attorney...Rodney Freeman of Churchill, Manolis, and Freeman of Huron.
3. Designate Groton Independent as official legal newspaper for FY20.
4. Designate Business Manager as custodian of all district accounts.
5. Approve engagement letter for Eide Bailly to conduct FY2020 school district audit.
6. Authorize Business Manager to continue existing funds and establish new accounts and to invest and reinvest funds in local institutions which serve the greatest advantage to the District and set business manager bond.
7. Authorize Business Manager to publish staff salaries.
8. Designate official bank depository...First State Bank/Dacotah Bank.
9. Adopt Groton Area School District Policy Manual with such revisions as previously approved.
10. Adopt Special Education Comprehensive Plan.

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11. Authorize office personnel to administer Agency Funds & NSLP (school lunch) funds, with oversight by business office management.
12. Authorize superintendent to administer or direct federal programs, with Consolidated Application (Title programs) and related ESSA compliance issues assigned to building principals.
13. Appoint superintendent to act as Asbestos Compliance Officer.
14. Authorize superintendent or designee to close school in emergency situations or inclement weather.
15. Authorize superintendent or designee to institute NSLP & School Breakfast Agreement.
16. Adopt Food Safety Plan, HACCP-Based Standard Operating Procedures.
17. Authorize superintendent or designee to institute ASBSD school bus mutual assistance pact.
18. Authorize business manager to transfer petty cash and incident payment funds (SDCL 13-18-16/17).
19. Approve peripheral sports and other volunteer school workers such as chain gang, line judges, Booster Club/PAC workers, assistant coaches, volunteer coaches, volunteer drivers, school board members etc. to be included in the school's worker's compensation insurance coverage.
20. Approve Open Enrollment #21-05 and Open Enrollment #21-06.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **8:00 PM – DISTRICT BUDGET HEARING – Revenue & Expenditures – Line Items**
2. Set date and time for regular school board meetings.
3. Appoint board member to serve as voting member of the North Central Special Education Cooperative Governing Board for 2020-2021 school year.
4. Review list of surplus items and declare surplus.
5. Set salaries for board members...**presently at \$50/meeting; \$75/meeting for chairman; mileage as applicable.**
6. Set rate for substitute teachers for 2020-2021 school year...recommend \$100/day [Currently \$100/day].
7. Set rate for substitute bus drivers for 2020-2021 school year...recommend \$65/day [Currently \$65/day].
8. Establish activity admission & school lunch prices for 2020-2021.

		<u>Recommendations</u>
Admission:	Adult - \$5; Doubleheader - \$6	No Change
	Adult 10-punch ticket - \$45	No Change
	Adult All-Activities Pass - \$75	No Change
	1 st -12 th grade - \$4	No Change
	1 st -5 th grade activity ticket - \$25	No Change
	6 th -12 th grade activity ticket - \$30	No Change
Breakfast	JrK-5 - \$2.50; 6-12 - \$3.00; Adult - \$3.25	No Change
Lunch	JrK-5 - \$3.25; 6-12 - \$3.75; Adult \$4.50	No Change
9. Set rate for OST services for 2020-2021 school year [Recommend No Change].

ADJOURN

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#140 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

It's Sunday, so it is also time for our two-week trend report. We do this to smooth out the day-to-day reporting fluctuations.

You know this isn't going to be good; we've been running hot all week, and it hasn't really slowed down. We are now at 3,315,300 cases in the US, 56,900 more than yesterday. We are up to 13 days of the worst-ever, and today was our fifth-worst.

The increases continue to accelerate. On June 28, I reported total cases had increased by 270,000 in a week or 11.6%; on July 5, those numbers were 340,000 and 13.3%; this week, they're 412,000 and 14.2%. One June 28, the two-week increase was 476,000 or 22.3%, on July 5, it was 612,000 and 26.7%; today it is 753,400 and 29.4%. I have concerns about what we'll see in the coming week as the Independence Day effect starts to materialize.

I track 55 states and US territories, including the District of Columbia; and 28 of these showed rates of increase higher than the nationwide two-week increase, almost the same 28 were higher over just the past week. We've gone from 20 to 25 to, this week, 27 states with more than 30% growth in cases over two weeks. Here are the states with the greatest rate of growth in cases over 14 days with their percentage increase in that time: US Virgin Islands (123.46% - hard to make much of this with such small case numbers, but a worry), Montana (103.71%), Idaho (98.11%), Florida (91.26%- big improvement), Texas (74.23%), South Carolina (70.01% - also better), Alaska (67.17%), Arizona (65.60%, which is a big improvement), Nevada (61.43% - looking better), Oklahoma (56.33%), Tennessee (52.98%), Alabama (51.20%), California (51.05%), West Virginia (49.86%), Georgia (48.89%), Oregon (45.78%), Arkansas (43.14%, which is better), Mississippi (40.11%), Utah (39.79%), Louisiana (38.83% - improved), Missouri (38.35%), North Carolina (38.09%), Kansas (37.11%), Hawaii (36.01%), Puerto Rico (34.29%), Wyoming (31.40%), and Ohio (30.38%).

Fourteen-day trends in new case reporting have 40 states and territories increasing, as follows: Hawaii, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Colorado, New Mexico, North Dakota, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi, Alabama, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, US Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. Twelve states and territories are not showing much change, as follows: Guam, Wyoming, South Dakota, Nebraska, Arkansas, Mississippi, Vermont, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. Only two states are showing declines in new case numbers, as follows: Maine and New Hampshire.

Today Florida set a record, not just for Florida, but for the US with a single-day new case report over 15,000; the previous record, set in New York, was just over 12,000, so this is a huge increase. Alaska also hit a record for one-day new cases. Seven day averages set records in California, Montana, Oklahoma, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, North Carolina, Florida, and Puerto Rico. The US seven-day average has increased by 165% over the past month.

The new spikes appear to be showing up in the Midwest with almost every state in the region showing an upward trend in cases. Minnesota had its highest new case numbers this weekend since May; Ohio set a record Friday. Indiana, which is most of the way through its phased reopening plan, has seen sharp spikes in cases. Kansas has daily counts at the highest levels they've seen since this started. Most of these states have had problems with testing access. Test positivity rates continue to rise in the South and West and are now also rising in the Midwest. US military cases have doubled in the past month.

We have now reported 134,943 deaths in the US, an increase from yesterday of only 384. The number of deaths is remaining relatively low, although the seven-day average is increasing after months of decline, up by almost 49% over the past week, which is a concern. Eight states set single-day death records this week, Arizona, South Dakota, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Florida. The following states are showing the greatest increase in new deaths reported: Washington, Oregon, California,

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Idaho, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, New Jersey, South Carolina, Florida, and Puerto Rico. In good news, yesterday New York had its first day since March 13 with zero new deaths; what a milestone that is.

Let's talk schools. I really wish I could say to you, "Here's what you do," but I can't. And neither, really, can anyone else. There's so much we don't know. The issues at hand are that we know for sure that being out of school is bad for kids, not just academically, but also socially, emotionally, psychologically, and for some, physically. But we also know being in school in an environment that is not safe is also bad for kids in all of those same ways because being unsafe creates all of these harms too. We know that keeping schools closed creates societal harms: further disadvantage to the disadvantaged, including the poor and minority students, as well as to women's careers as mothers disproportionately absorb the bulk of the burden caused by a lack of child care. And if schools are a source of continuing community spread, then being in school would also create societal harms as viral transmission continues to grow, especially in those same disadvantaged groups, the health care system is weighed down, and people die. As the Washington Post summarizes statements from Carol Burris, an award-winning principal, and Rose Levine, a fifth-grade teacher, "There are no great answers about what districts should do this fall. The best option is the one that causes the least damage."

So what should schools do? A great deal was made of the American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) statement a week or so ago, making the case for reopening schools, saying the decision "should start with a goal of having students physically present in school;" but as that statement became politicized and drew criticism for ignoring the safety of school personnel (about one in four teachers classify as high-risk for serious illness with Covid-19), the AAP has issued a new one, "making clear that while in-person school provides crucial benefits to children, 'Public health agencies must make recommendations based on evidence, not politics.' The statement also said that 'science and community circumstances must guide decision-making.'" AAP's president has now explained that local infection rates must be considered in order to safely reopen.

The things we don't know that are causing the most uncertainty have to do with how readily children spread this virus. We know small children are far less likely to become infected upon exposure and that they are far more likely to remain asymptomatic; but we don't know how efficiently an infected child will transmit the virus. There is some evidence they're not all that efficient at it, whereas teenagers are more likely to infect others. There have been very few outbreaks in which the index case is a young child. Arnaud Fontanet, head of the Epidemiology of Emerging Diseases unit at the Institut Pasteur in Paris, said, "High schoolers are still contagious and primary school students are less contagious but not zero-risk." That would mean opening elementary schools may carry less risk, but the evidence is not all that strong at this point. And a study from Germany shows children have viral loads comparable to those in adults, so there would be no reason to think children would be less infectious. It could be the evidence seeming to show children are less commonly sources of infection is simply because we test children so much less than adults.

We know social distancing and mask-wearing reduce the likelihood of spread, but we're talking hours per day together and an airborne pathogen, as well as children who are not going to be highly disciplined about following those rules. The other big variable is how widespread the virus is in the individual community. This means the right decision in one location may be the wrong decision in another; and of course, there are weeks between now and opening of school. A great deal can change in those weeks. Once a school reopens, the picture will continue to evolve so that a decision which was right in August may need to be revisited in September or October.

Districts are probably going to have to consider some modifications to "normal." Ideas that have been floating around include hybrids between remote learning and in-person class meetings and staggered scheduling. Additionally, they absolutely should be requiring masks and distancing; but I see this being a huge bone of contention in many communities where a high proportion of the constituency does not believe such measures are necessary and/or helpful.

One concept that is gaining some currency in other countries is the "bubble," a group of students and

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staff which restricts its interactions to other members of the bubble. The idea here is to limit potential contamination and the need to shut everything down when an infection turns up. Keeping students in a classroom bubble or a “year bubble” for high school students is an approach which could be useful. Some schools are using bubbles of up to six students within a classroom; bubbles must keep a three-foot distance from one another and six feet from the teacher. Otto Helve, pediatric infectious-disease specialist at the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, addressed this: “How do you minimize the impact on the school? The more cases you have in a society, the more likely it is that you will have an outbreak at a school, or that you will have a teacher or a parent or a child who brings the virus to the school,” suggesting bubbles might be particularly beneficial where there is a high infection rate as we have at present.

All districts should be writing policy dealing with the inevitable turn-up of a case, either in a student or staff member or in a family. When do you shut down or quarantine all/some of your students or staff? How do you protect medically vulnerable students? Staff? What do you do with a staff member who cannot safely work inside the building—cut them loose, find a way to pay them, figure out how to have that person work from home? If they’re at home, who’s going to provide on-site supervision for that classroom? Where’s the budget going to come from for that? If your classrooms have students clustered at tables, how do you distance? How do you pay for different furniture to permit distancing? If you’re doing remote teaching, do you have the IT staff to make that happen? If not, how are you going to pay for that?

Into this whole morass of concerns, we would do well to consider that many states whose budgets have been hard-hit by the recession are cutting funding for schools, so money for these initiatives is not likely to be available at the state level. And that communities may be deeply divided over whether any of this is necessary at all or just more fear-mongering.

It’s difficult to know where to turn for solid information. It has been suggested we look at European countries who are, in many cases, successfully reopening schools without accompanying spikes in infection rates, but it is important to note that these countries did not reopen in the middle of the runaway growth in cases we’re likely to still be dealing with in a month or two. Most of the evidence we have, for example, that young children are not likely to transmit the virus was collected in countries in lockdown or at least implementing other measures. What seems to have been occurring is that high schools spread the infection, it moves from there into families, and then from there into the elementary schools. But because few places have tested children extensively, we don’t have a great deal of information to work with.

We think wider measures like social distancing have a greater effect on community transmission than closing schools, but we can’t be too sure about that. Lauren Ancel Meyers, professor of biology and statistics at the University of Texas, Austin, says, “The risk of reopening will depend on how well schools contain transmission, with masks, for instance, or limiting occupancy. The background community transmission rate in August will also be a factor.”

Most experts agree testing will be essential, but because it won’t be possible to test everyone all of the time, it will not catch everyone who is infected. Recommendations are for random testing, but there is also a recognition that funding for such a testing program is unlikely to be available. There is also the issue of the limitations we are experiencing on testing capacity. Other countries have brought back only a portion of students to begin with—only younger children or only older ones—or alternating days. Many have limited class size with maximums of 10 or 15 students in a classroom, placing desks far apart or grouping them into pods with social interaction restricted to those groups. Where mask-wearing has been limited, there have been more outbreaks.

It will also be important to circulate fresh air by filtration, bringing in outside air, or opening windows. Of course, some of these strategies will be limited by the onset of winter if we’re still dealing with high transmission levels at that point. Also by available funding, which we’ve already established as a critical issue. We’ve been underfunding our schools for decades, those in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods worse than those in better-off communities, so whatever we do will undoubtedly exacerbate those inequities going forward. Whatever schools do this fall, it is my hope that the current crisis will prompt a serious reconsideration of our funding mechanisms and willingness to spend money on schools; there will be another pandemic, probably sooner than any of us expects or wants. It would be nice to get a little

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proactive and start planning for that today instead of waiting until the crisis is upon us.

This next is not new news; but I am finding it relevant today. It is a story from Benton Harbor, Michigan, where, 15 years ago, a local police officer falsified charges of dealing drugs against a resident, Jameel McGee. This isn't one of those cases where the crook claims innocence when he really did the crime; the officer, who did time himself for several incidents like this one, admits what he did. But at the time, the charges stuck, and McGee spent four years in prison. McGee says, "I lost everything. My only goal was to seek him when I got home and to hurt him."

He was released when Collins' crimes surfaced, and he ended up at an agency that addresses the need for jobs and helps people to become employable, working at a small café. And there, some time later, he bumped up against another former prisoner, Andrew Collins, who started working there too. I can't imagine how either of them felt at that first encounter. As the story goes, Collins said to him, "Honestly, I have no explanation, all I can do is say I'm sorry."

And McGee somehow reached the decision to forgive, not to hurt. Improbably, they became friends, dear friends, friends who give speeches together about forgiveness and redemption. Asked, "Did you forgive for his sake or for yours?", he responded, "No. For our sake. Not just us," pointing to himself and Collins and shaking his head, then gesturing widely to encompass the world, "for our sake." He explained he has hopes for a kinder humankind. He wants to be an example. And so the friendship. And the speeches.

So there's a message. If this guy can set aside the grievous harm done to him in service of making a better world for all of us, we should each be able to set aside our own impatience and inconvenience and frustration in the present moment, in service of making a better world for all of us. After all, we're only semi-stuck at home, not locked up in prison. Can we—together while apart—find a way to build the world we want to live in—the way Jameel McGee did? Pick one thing. Do that. No one's going to do it for us.

Stay well. We'll talk tomorrow.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	July 1	July 2	July 3	July 4	July 5	July 6	July 7
Minnesota	36,303	36,716	37,210	37,624	No Update+	38,136	38,569
Nebraska	19,177	19,310	19,452	19,660	19,827	19,929	20,046
Montana	967	1016	1083	1,128	1167	1,212	1249
Colorado	32,715	33,029	33,352	33,612	33,866	34,065	34,257
Wyoming	1184	1203	1233	1267	1289	1312	1349
North Dakota	3576	3615	3657	3722	3779	3816	3849
South Dakota	6764	6826	6893	6978	7028	7063	7105
United States	2,629,372	2,686,587	2,739,879	2,795,163	2,839,917	2,888,729	2,938,624
US Deaths	127,322	128,062	128,740	129,437	129,676	129,947	130,306
Minnesota	+442	+413	+494	+414		+512	+433
Nebraska	+135	+133	+142	+208	+167	+102	+117
Montana	+48	+49	+67	+45	+39	+45	+37
Colorado	+204	+314	+323	+260	+254	+199	+192
Wyoming	+33	+19	+30	+34	+22	+23	+37
North Dakota	+37	+39	+42	+65	+57	+37	+33
South Dakota	+48	+62	+67	+85	+50	+35	+42
United States	+46,475	+57,215	+53,292	+55,284	+44,754	+48,812	+49,895
US Deaths	+1149	+740	+678	+697	+239	+271	+359
	July 8	July 9	July 10	July 11	July 12	July 13	
Minnesota	39,133	39,589	40,163	40,767	41,571	42,281	
Nebraska	20,201	20,425	20,623	20,777	20,998	21,172	
Montana	1,327	1,371	1466	1,593	1,677	1,758	
Colorado	34,664	35,116	35,525	36,191	36,591	36,913	
Wyoming	1,378	1,404	1428	1,445	1,488	1,506	
North Dakota	3898	3971	4070	4154	4243	4334	
South Dakota	7,163	7242	7336	7401	7454	7499	
United States	2,994,776	3,055,144	3,118,168	3,187,270	3,247,782	3,304,942	
US Deaths	131,626	132,309	133,291	134,117	134,815	135,205	
Minnesota	+564	+456	+574	+604	+804	+710	
Nebraska	+155	+224	+198	+154	+221	+174	
Montana	+78	+44	+95	+127	+84	+81	
Colorado	+407	+452	+409	+666	+400	+322	
Wyoming	+29	+26	+24	+17	+43	+18	
North Dakota	+49	+73	+99	+84	+99	+91	
South Dakota	+58	+79	+94	+65	+55	+45	
United States	+56,152	+60,368	+63,024	69,102	+60,512	+57,160	
US Deaths	+1,320	+683	+982	+826	+698	+390	

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

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July 12th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent
from State Health Lab Reports

We only have five counties that are fully recovered as we lost Kingsbury, McPherson and Spink counties. North Dakota has a .02 positivity rate while South Dakota is at .04. That represents the rate of infections to the number of tests. Both are well under the 5 percent rate recommended by the CDC.

South Dakota has more recovered cases than positive ones and the active cases has decreased by 7. In Brown County, the number of active cases went up by one.

Brown County:

Active Cases: +1 (18)

Recovered: +1 (338)

Total Positive: +2 (358)

Ever Hospitalized: 0 (18)

Deaths: 2

Negative Tests: +17 (3348)

Percent Recovered: 94.4% (-.3)

South Dakota:

Positive: +45 (7499 total)

Negative: +957 (83,109 total)

Hospitalized: +0 (738 total). 53 currently hospitalized (Down 12 from yesterday)

Deaths: +0 (109 total)

Recovered: +52 (6522 total)

Active Cases: -7 (868)

Percent Recovered: 87.0 +0.2

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Harding 42, Potter +2 (199), unassigned +436 (3102).

We're doing something a little different just for today. We are still listing the changes in positive and recovered cases; however, we are listing the number of active cases instead of the raw numbers and we are listing all of the counties today.

Aurora: 1 active case	Codington: +4 recovered (21 active cases)
Beadle: +2 positive, +2 recovered (50 active cases)	Corson: 3 active cases
Bennett: 1 active case	Custer: 1 active case
Bon Homme: +1 positive (2 active cases)	Davison: +1 positive, +1 recovered (16 active cases)
Brookings: +1 positive, +1 recovered (19 active cases)	Day: 3 active cases
Brown: +2 positive, +1 recovered (20 active cases)	Deuel: 1 active case
Brule: +1 positive, +1 recovered (9 active cases)	Dewey: +2 positive (34 active cases)
Buffalo: +1 positive (18 active cases)	Douglas: 6 active cases
Butte: 3 active cases	Edmunds: 1 active case
Campbell: Fully Recovered	Fall River: +1 recovered (3 active cases)
Charles Mix: +1 recovered (56 active cases)	Faulk: 4 active cases
Clark: 1 active case	Grant: +1 positive (3 active cases)
Clay: +3 recovered (10 active cases)	Gregory: 1 active case

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Haakon: Fully Recovered
 Hamlin: 2 active cases)
 Hand: 1 active case
 Hanson: 2 recovered (2 active cases)
 Harding: No infections reported
 Hughes: +1 positive, +1 recovered (12 active cases)
 Hutchinson +2 positive (4 active cases)
 Hyde: Fully Recovered
 Jackson: +1 positive (2 active cases)
 Jerauld: 2 active cases
 Jones: 1 active case
 Kingsbury: +2 positive cases (2 active cases)
 Lake: 9 active cases
 Lawrence: 1 active case
 Lincoln: +6 positive, +2 recovered (45 active cases)
 Lyman: 22 active cases
 Marshall: 1 active case
 McCook: +1 positive, +1 recovered (6 active cases)
 McPherson: +1 positive (1 active case)
 Meade: 8 active cases
 Mellette: 5 active cases
 Miner: +2 recovered (2 active cases)
 Minnehaha: +5 positive, +11 recovered (286 active cases)
 Moody: 3 active cases
 Oglala Lakota: +3 positive, +4 recovered (31 active cases)
 Pennington: +5 positive, +11 recovered (161 active cases)
 Perkins: 1 active case
 Potter: No infections reported
 Roberts: +1 positive (10 active cases)

Sanborn: Fully Recovered
 Spink: +2 positive (2 active cases)
 Stanley: 1 active case
 Sully: Fully Recovered
 Todd: +1 positive (14 active cases)
 Tripp: 2 active cases
 Turner: 5 active cases
 Union: +1 positive, +2 recovered (24 active cases)
 Walworth: 5 active cases
 Yankton: +1 positive, +1 recovered (12 active cases)
 Ziebach: 2 active cases

Fully recovered from positive cases (Lost Kingsbury, Spink and McPherson counties): Campbell 1-1, Haakon 1-1, Hyde 3-3, Sanborn 12-12, Sully 1-1.

The NDDoH & private labs report 4,489 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 92 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 4,334. NDDoH reports no new deaths.

State & private labs have reported 228,535 total completed tests.

3,570 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	985	13%
Hispanic	1126	15%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	1206	16%
Other	751	10%
White, Non-Hispanic	2716	36%

County of Residence	# of Deaths
Beadle	8
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	2

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons
Aurora	34	33	299
Beadle	553	503	1555
Bennett	4	3	442
Bon Homme	14	12	627
Brookings	95	76	1980
Brown	358	338	3348
Brule	34	25	582
Buffalo	86	68	547
Butte	3	0	570
Campbell	1	1	66
Charles Mix	96	40	925
Clark	15	14	342
Clay	93	83	1058
Codington	92	71	2139
Corson	20	17	157
Custer	10	9	624
Davison	55	39	1802
Day	19	16	452
Deuel	5	4	317
Dewey	35	1	1147
Douglas	10	4	347
Edmunds	8	7	322
Fall River	13	10	783
Faulk	24	20	137
Grant	17	14	572
Gregory	5	4	263
Haakon	1	1	246
Hamlin	13	11	511
Hand	7	6	217
Hanson	13	11	149
Harding	0	0	42
Hughes	70	58	1338
Hutchinson	17	13	754

Hyde	3	3	103
Jackson	7	2	370
Jerauld	39	37	245
Jones	1	0	40
Kingsbury	8	6	437
Lake	29	20	713
Lawrence	20	19	1581
Lincoln	396	351	4981
Lyman	82	60	760
Marshall	5	4	324
McCook	17	11	518
McPherson	6	5	178
Meade	53	45	1494
Mellette	9	4	269
Miner	10	8	212
Minnehaha	3756	3470	21603
Moody	23	20	502
Oglala Lakota	112	81	2618
Pennington	635	474	8146
Perkins	1	0	100
Potter	0	0	199
Roberts	57	47	1221
Sanborn	12	12	178
Spink	14	12	935
Stanley	14	13	170
Sully	1	1	55
Todd	66	52	1455
Tripp	19	17	489
Turner	29	24	746
Union	151	127	1539
Walworth	16	11	440
Yankton	85	73	2557
Ziebach	3	1	169
Unassigned****	0	0	3102

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

4

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	3629	58
Male	3870	51

Age Range

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	821	0
20-29 years	1560	1
30-39 years	1565	5
40-49 years	1181	7
50-59 years	1168	12
60-69 years	692	21
70-79 years	275	15
80+ years	237	48

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Baseball Schedule

Date	Team	Opponent	Location	Time
July 13	Little League Scrimmage in Groton U10/U12 to follow U8 Scrimmage			U8 7:00
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	Redfield	Redfield	8:00 (1)
July 16	SBU10/12	Scrimmage	Groton	7:30 (2)
July 20	Jr. Legion	Clark	Clark	6:00 (2)
July 20	Legion	Northville	Groton	6:00 (2)
July 21	Legion	Webster	Groton	6:00 (2)

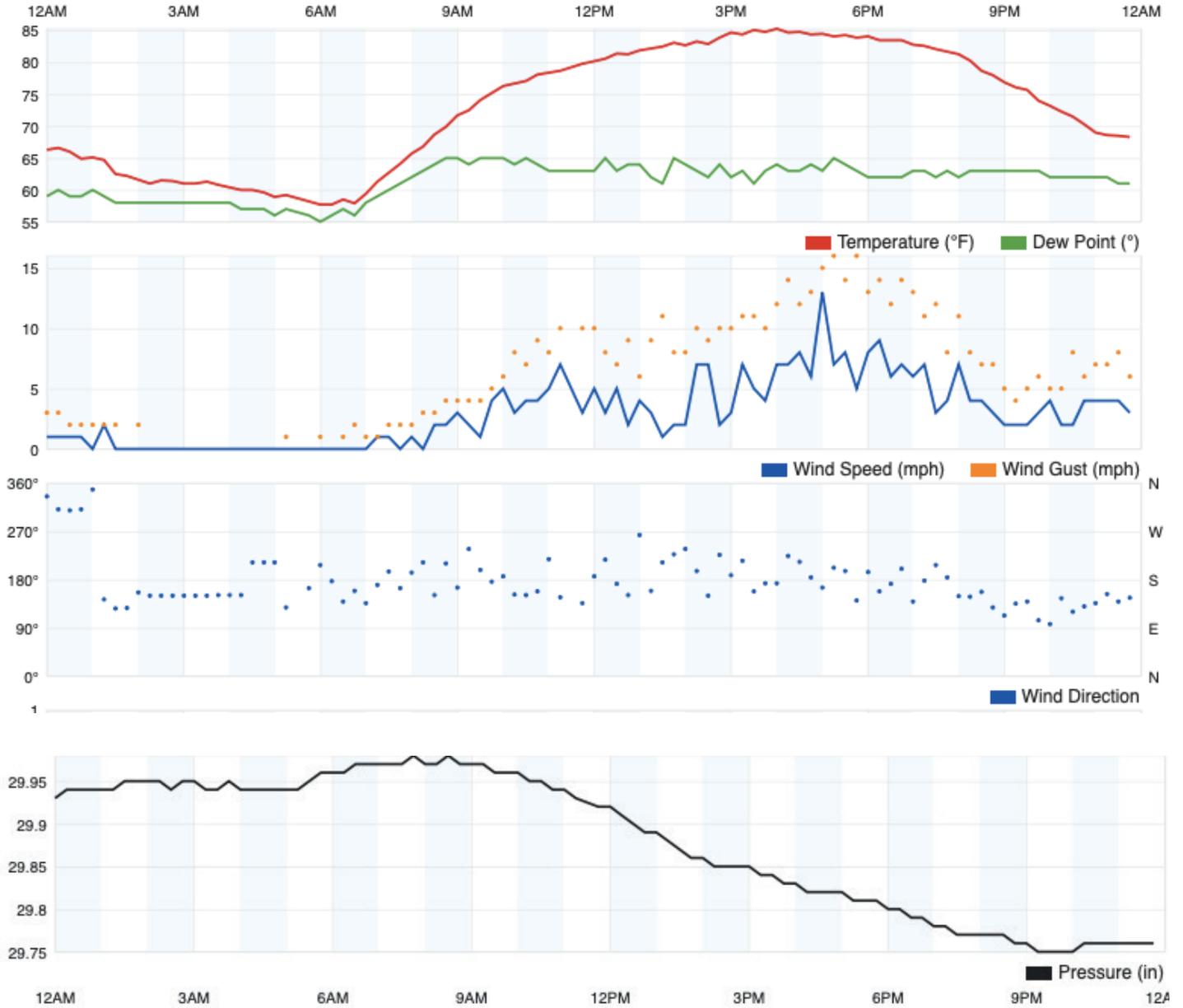
First Round State VFW Jr. Teener Schedule in Webster

DATE	AWAY TEAM	HOME TEAM	Result/Time
Fri, Jul 17	SDVFW 14U Castlewood	SDVFW 14U Groton	11:00PM 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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Hot

High: 90 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy
then Chance
T-storms

Low: 60 °F

Tuesday



Gradual
Clearing

High: 81 °F

Tuesday
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 56 °F

Wednesday



Sunny

High: 85 °F

SLIGHT RISK of Severe T-Storms

ISSUED: 1:23 AM - Monday, July 13, 2020

WHEN

The highest risk period will be from 5pm – 9pm this evening.

WHAT

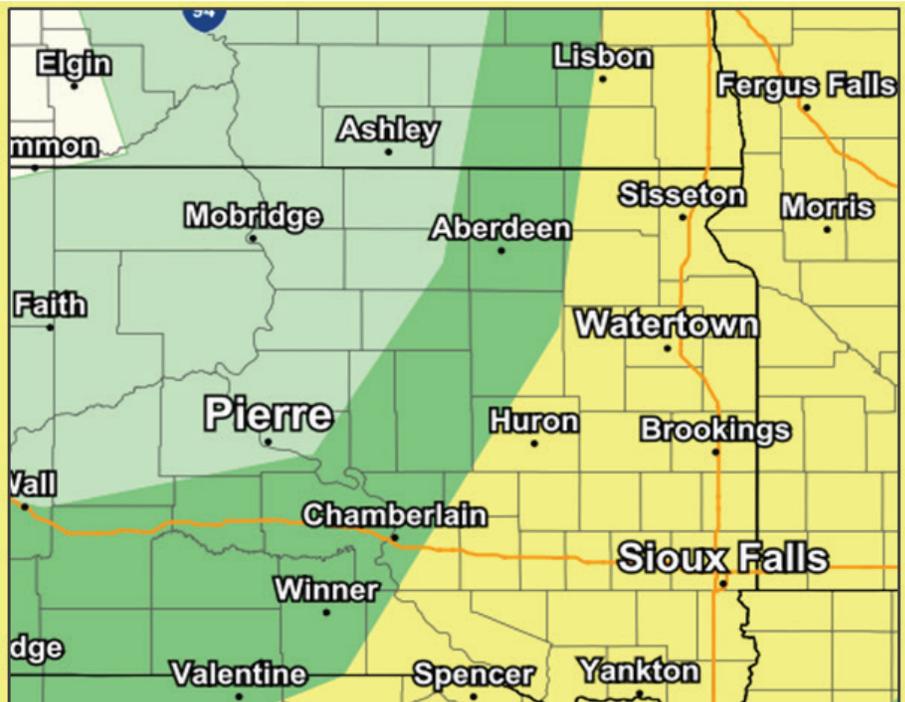
Scattered severe thunderstorms possible. These storms could produce **wind gusts up to 70 mph, large hail up to golf ball size, and perhaps a tornado.**

WHERE

Northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota, including Watertown and Wheaton.

ACTION

Monitor the weather and have a plan of action if severe weather approaches your area.



MARGINAL

Isolated Severe Storms Possible

SLIGHT

Scattered Severe Storms Possible

ENHANCED

Numerous Severe Storms Possible

MODERATE

Widespread Severe Storms Likely

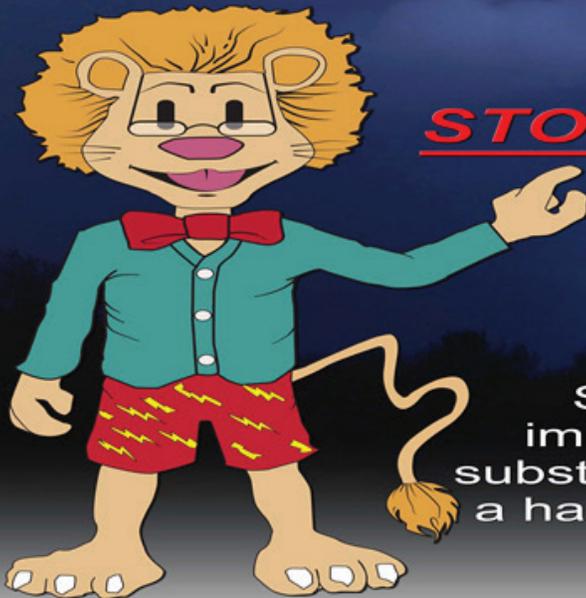
 **NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE**
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

A cold front will move across the state today. By late afternoon or early evening a few severe storms could form near this front, especially over northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota. Large hail and strong winds are the main threats this evening. #sdwx #mnwx

When Thunder Roars Go Indoors!



STOP Activities



Seek shelter
immediately in a
substantial building or
a hard-topped metal
vehicle!



www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov



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Today in Weather History

July 13, 1964: Early morning low temperatures dropped into the lower to mid-30s across the northern half of the state. Some low temperatures include 32 degrees at Castlewood, 33 in Andover and 4 miles NW of Onida.

1895 - A tornado struck Cherry Hill in New Jersey causing fifty thousand dollars damage. It also descended into the Harlem and Woodhaven areas of New York City killing one person, and finally ended as a waterspout in Jamaica Bay. (David Ludlum)

1951: Rivers across eastern Kansas crest well above flood stage, causing the most significant destruction from flooding in the Midwestern United States at that time. Five-hundred-thousand people were left homeless, and 24 people died in the disaster.

1975 - Dover, DE, was deluged with 8.50 inches of rain to establish a 24 hour record for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1977 - Lightning struck a key electrical transmission line in Westchester County of southeastern New York State plunging New York City into darkness. (David Ludlum)

1980 - Afternoon highs of 108 degrees at Memphis, TN, 108 degrees at Macon, GA, and 105 degrees at Atlanta, GA, established all-time records for those three cities. The high of 110 degrees at Newington, GA, was just two degrees shy of the state record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Unseasonably cool weather prevailed across the Midwest. Ten cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Casper, WY, with a reading of 39 degrees. By way of contrast, record heat was reported in the eastern U.S., with highs of 93 degrees at Burlington, VT, and 101 degrees around Miami, FL. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - There were just three reports of severe weather across the country, and just one record high temperature reported. Thunderstorms brought much needed rains to the Tennessee Valley area, producing nine inches at Senatobia, MS. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A thunderstorm at Albany, GA, produced 1.40 inches of rain in forty minutes, along with wind gusts to 82 mph. Afternoon highs of 98 degrees at Corpus Christi, TX, 110 degrees at Tucson, AZ, and 114 degrees at Phoenix, AZ, equalled records for the date. Greenwood, MS, reported 55.65 inches of precipitation for the year, twice the amount normally received by mid July. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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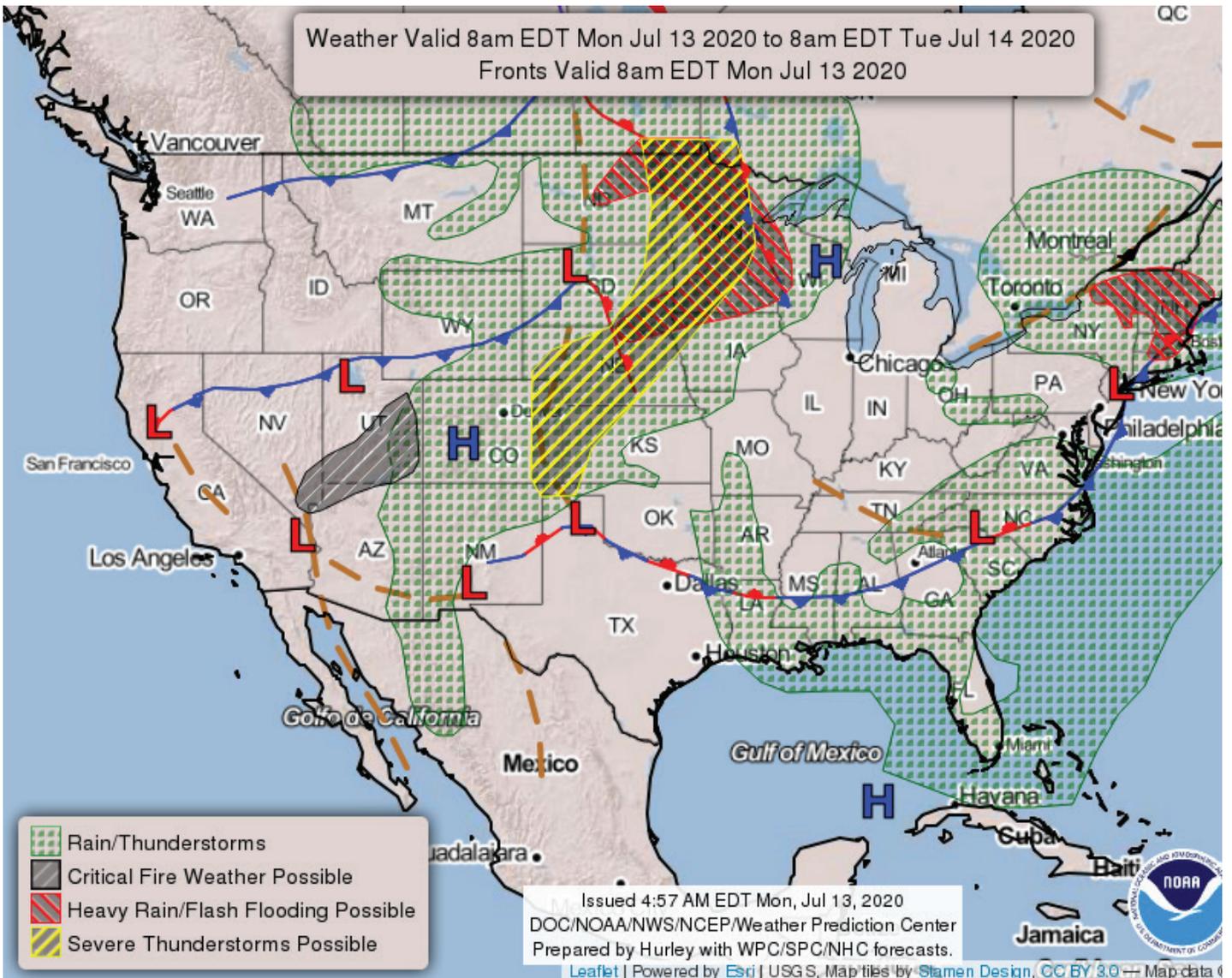
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 86 °F at 4:04 PM
Low Temp: 57 °F at 6:05 AM
Wind: 16 mph at 5:09 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 106° in 1936
Record Low: 44° in 1987
Average High: 84°F
Average Low: 59°F
Average Precip in July.: 1.28
Precip to date in July.: 0.32
Average Precip to date: 12.12
Precip Year to Date: 8.64
Sunset Tonight: 9:20 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:59 a.m.



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AS BIG AS WE MAKE IT!

Herb had been dating Liz for about a year. He was deeply in love with her and finally decided that he would ask her to marry him. So, he went to a jewelry store and used all of his hard-earned savings to purchase an engagement ring for her. Unfortunately, the rings were more expensive than he imagined, and he had little money to spend and had to settle for one with a small diamond.

One evening he took her to dinner, and after they ordered their meal, with a shy, trembling voice, he asked, "Liz, will you marry me?"

"Oh yes, of course, I will," said Liz.

With tears in his eyes, he presented the ring to her and said, "Liz, I'm sorry, so sorry that the diamond is not as big as I wanted it to be or as large as my love."

"Oh my," said Liz, "that doesn't matter. The diamond is as big as we make it!"

How very true! Value is always in the eye of the beholder, isn't it?

We often substitute "things" for thoughtfulness or gifts with goodness. We even confuse large with lovely or big with beauty. Often we substitute spending time with someone by offering them a present instead of ourselves.

When we give something to someone, especially to God, the cost of the item is not, in the final analysis, what matters most. What matters most is our attitude and reason for giving.

Prayer: May we realize, Lord, that giving reflects the sincerity of our heart, not the size of the gift. May we also show our love by what we do as well as what we give. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today : Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly. Colossians 3:14-25

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

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

News from the Associated Press

Levitt, other South Dakota venues join push for federal aid

By PATRICK ANDERSON Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Nancy Halverson thinks about the future of Sioux Falls' art scene — not just the musicians and artists who have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic, but of the people who rely on the local entertainment industry for a livelihood.

All of it hangs in the balance as the coronavirus pandemic and efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 continue to force difficult decisions for Sioux Falls' independent venues.

The nonprofit outdoor music venue Halverson helps oversee joined a national effort to get federal aid for independent music venues that have been unable to recoup losses caused by the pandemic and resulting shutdowns.

"A lot of donors right now are moving their funding or they're shifting around to those first-line responders, which is certainly understandable," Halverson told the Argus Leader. "We're not saying that's not the right decision but it does impact how we go, moving forward."

Halverson is the executive director of Levitt at the Falls, which recently canceled its August and September calendar and faces direct financial repercussions, with a ripple effect that will reach the larger Sioux Falls community.

While Levitt is less dependent on revenue from ticket sales and bar sales than most music venues, it also benefits from donations made on-site by show goers, and from its share of beverage sales by contractor vendor JJ's Wine, Spirits & Cigars.

Advocacy work by the recently formed National Independent Venue Association is looking to remedy some of the problems faced by independent venue operators by asking leadership in Washington D.C. approve federal aid.

Levitt is one of seven South Dakota-based venues and promoters that have joined the Association and are helping with its #SaveOurStages campaign, joining almost 2,000 venues from across all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The entertainment industry took a "direct hit" at every level from the coronavirus pandemic, Pepper Entertainment Talent Buyer Matt Bump said in an emailed statement.

Pepper, a Sioux Falls-based entertainment marketing agency, has also joined NIVA and the push for federal assistance. The company works with local venues such as The District, The Denny Sanford Premier Center, the Washington Paviloin, Wileys and Sandbar.

"Pepper Entertainment has always strived on building relationships, and mirrors NIVA's mission to preserve and nurture the ecosystem of independent live music venues and promoters throughout the United States," Bump said in his statement.

Most independent venues are likely facing financial ruin and permanent closure due to the effect of the coronavirus on their business, especially with shutdowns across the U.S. possibly running into 2021, according to NIVA. A number of big names in the music industry, including Dave Grohl, Billie Eilish, Lady Gaga, Jeff Foxworthy and Jerry Seinfeld have joined NIVA's cause in a letter to Congress.

"Indie venues are the safe places that allow artists to grow, explore, and intertwine the musical culture of their city and their artistic community with their own inner voice," NIVA President Dayna Frank said in a statement. "We are steadfast launching pads, sounding boards, and cheerleaders for the greatest talent in the world."

Sturgis officers receive Carnegie Medal for fire rescue

By SIANDHARA BONNET Rapid City Journal

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — Sturgis Police Sgts. Dylan Goetsch and Christopher Schmoker said it was just another day at work for them when they pulled 47-year-old Jason McKee out of a burning house in 2018.

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In December 2019, the officers were named Carnegie Medal award recipients. On Thursday, July 9, they received their awards, the Rapid City Journal reported.

"When we went there that morning, we didn't really expect to have what happened happen. Honestly, I thought we were going to get in trouble (when) I told the chief what happened," Schmoker said at the award ceremony.

The Carnegie Medal is awarded to those in the United States and Canada who risk their lives while saving or attempting to save the lives of others. Goetsch and Schmoker join 16 others in receiving the award this year and are now among 10,135 to receive the award in its history.

Rep. Dusty Johnson presented the awards along with Sturgis Police Chief Gody VanDewater at Sturgis City Hall.

"This is our nation's highest honor in recognition of civilian heroism," Johnson said. "It's pretty remarkable when you think about it that in South Dakota we churn out people like this."

Around 5 a.m. May 12, 2018, Goetsch and Schmoker arrived at a burning house and began searching through dense smoke in the home.

VanDewater, who recounted the story during the award presentation, said after entering and exiting the lower level of the house, Goetsch climbed a ladder below McKee's bedroom window. When he opened it, he heard the man breathing.

He climbed back down and re-entered the house through the front door with Schmoker with wet T-shirts over their mouths and noses. They then ran to McKee's room, dragged him down the stairs and out of the house.

McKee was hospitalized for smoke inhalation and inhalation burns to his lungs. Goetsch and Schmoker sustained minor smoke inhalation.

Sturgis patrol officer Benny Page said he arrived on scene shortly after Goetsch and Schmoker left the building.

"I was able to see them covered in the smoke, smut and ash," he said. "It's kind of neat to be secondarily involved."

Schmoker and Goetsch said when they started telling other people what happened, it became more clear what they accomplished.

"When you start to tell people the story and hear other peoples' reactions, you're like, 'oh...' or you realize it was a bigger deal than you thought it was," Schmoker said.

Schmoker and Goetsch previously received Lifesaving Awards from the City of Sturgis.

South Dakota reports 45 new COVID-19 cases, no new deaths

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials report the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the state is nearing 7,500.

The South Dakota Department of Health on Sunday reported 45 new confirmed cases of the coronavirus, raising the total number of cases in the state to 7,499. But that does not include people who show symptoms or are asymptomatic but are not tested.

The Health Department reported no new deaths from COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, so the state's death toll remains at 109.

South Dakota has 868 active cases. A total of 53 patients are currently hospitalized, down 12 since Saturday.

The number of confirmed cases in Minnehaha County increased by five to 3,756, the Argus Leader reported. Lincoln County added six new cases while Pennington County added five.

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

21 injured in fire aboard ship at Naval Base San Diego

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Firefighters on land, in the air and on the water on Monday were still battling a blaze on a Navy ship that injured at least 21 people and sent smoke billowing over San Diego.

The fire began Sunday morning in a vehicle storage area aboard the USS Bonhomme Richard, according to Rear Adm. Philip Sobeck, who said 17 sailors and four others, including firefighters, were treated at hospitals for smoke inhalation or other minor injuries.

It was proving to be a stubborn blaze to put out, requiring helicopters dumping water from above, fire-fighting vessels shooting seawater and fire trucks pounding water through hoses from the dock. Sobeck told the San Diego Union-Tribune that there was no ordnance on board, and while the ship holds a million gallons of fuel, that is "well below" any heat source.

About 160 sailors and officers were on board when an explosion and flames sent up a huge plume of dark smoke from the 840-foot (255-meter) amphibious assault vessel, which has been docked at Naval Base San Diego and was undergoing routine maintenance. That's far fewer than the thousand typically on the ship when it's on active duty, said Mike Raney, a spokesman for Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Sobeck, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 3, told the Union-Tribune that the Navy thinks the fire began somewhere in a lower cargo hold where marine equipment and vehicles are stored.

The fire was not fueled by fuel oil, hazardous materials or electrical causes, Sobeck told the newspaper. It was fueled by paper, cloth, rags or other materials in a standard fire. He said he is not concerned about the air quality or toxicity around the fire.

The explosion was probably caused by a change in air pressure, he told the Union-Tribune.

All crew members were accounted for, said Admiral Mike Gilday, Chief of Naval Operations.

"We are grateful for the quick and immediate response of local, base, and shipboard firefighters aboard USS Bonhomme Richard," Gilday said in a statement.

The 23-year-old ship has the capacity to deploy and land helicopters, smaller boats and amphibious vehicles. Because of its age, a fire could be particularly destructive, especially if it reached the engine room and other tight spaces with machinery, said Lawrence B. Brennan, a professor of admiralty and international maritime law at Fordham University in New York.

"The heat of a fire of this nature can warp the steel, and that can be a major problem for any ship," said Brennan. "On an older ship, it's even more of a problem."

Two other docked ships, USS Fitzgerald and USS Russell, were moved to berths away from the fire, officials said.

China sanctions Cruz, Rubio, Smith, Brownback for criticism

BEIJING (AP) — China said Monday it will impose sanctions on three U.S. lawmakers and one ambassador in response to similar actions taken by the U.S. last week against Chinese officials over alleged human rights abuses against Muslims in the Xinjiang region.

U.S. Senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, Rep. Chris Smith and Ambassador for Religious Freedom Sam Brownback were targeted, as was the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. The four have been critical of the ruling Communist Party's policies toward minority groups and people of faith.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said the U.S. move had "seriously damaged China-U.S. relations" and that China was determined to uphold its national sovereignty against what it sees as interference in its internal affairs.

"China will respond further according to the development of the situation," Hua said.

She did not spell out the sanctions beyond saying they would correspond to the American ones. The U.S. prohibited any property transactions by Americans with four senior Chinese officials and barred three of them from entering the U.S.

There was no indication that any of the sanctioned Americans had plans to travel to China.

The sanctioned Chinese officials include Chen Quanguo, who heads the northwestern region of Xinjiang, where more than 1 million members of Muslim minority groups have been incarcerated in what China

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terms de-radicalization and retraining centers.

Critics have likened the camps to prisons to which inmates are sentenced with little due process and where they are compelled to denounce their religion, language and culture and pledge allegiance to the Communist Party and its leader, Xi Jinping. An Associated Press investigation has also discovered allegations that women in Xinjiang's predominantly native Uighur ethnic group were forced to use birth control or undergo involuntary sterilizations.

Ties between China and the U.S. have deteriorated steadily over the coronavirus pandemic, human rights, Beijing policy toward Hong Kong and trade. The Trump administration has also slapped visa bans on Chinese officials deemed responsible for barring foreigners' access to Tibet, along with those seen as enforcing a clampdown on civil rights in Hong Kong.

Despite such moves, former national security adviser John Bolton has alleged in a new book that Trump told Xi he was right to build detention camps in Xinjiang.

Additional visa restrictions are being placed on other Communist Party officials believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, the detention or abuse of Uighurs, Kazakhs and members of other minority groups.

In addition to Chen, Xinjiang's party secretary and a member of the national-level Politburo, the other sanctioned officials were Zhu Hailun, party secretary of the Xinjiang political and legal committee; Wang Mingshan, party secretary of the Xinjiang public security bureau; and Huo Liujun, a former top official in the region's police force.

They and their immediate family members are banned from entering the United States.

China has sought to crush any hint of separatist tendencies among Uighurs, which critics say amounts to a campaign of cultural genocide. Uighurs are mostly Muslim and their Turkic language, Muslim religion and central Asian culture make them distinct from China's Han majority.

While China says it is bringing prosperity and development to the vast, resource-rich region, many among Xinjiang's native ethnic groups say they are being denied economic options in favor of migrants from elsewhere in China.

Last December, Xinjiang authorities announced that the camps had closed and all the detainees had "graduated," a claim difficult to corroborate independently given tight surveillance and restrictions on reporting in the region. Some Uighurs and Kazakhs have told the AP that their relatives have been released, but many others say their loved ones remain in detention, were sentenced to prison or transferred to forced labor in factories.

In October 2019, the United States imposed visa restrictions on Chinese officials "believed to be responsible for, or complicit in" the detention of Muslims in Xinjiang. It also blacklisted more than two dozen Chinese companies and agencies linked to abuses in the region — including surveillance technology manufacturers and Xinjiang's public security bureau — effectively blocking them from buying U.S. products.

China's officially atheist Communist government at first denied the existence of the internment camps in Xinjiang, but now says they are vocational training facilities aimed at countering Muslim radicalism and separatist tendencies.

Feds to execute 1st inmate in 17 years for Arkansas murders

By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

TERRE HAUTE, Ind. (AP) — The federal government is planning to carry out the first federal execution in nearly two decades on Monday, over the objection of the family of the victims and after a volley of legal proceedings over the coronavirus pandemic.

Daniel Lewis Lee, of Yukon, Oklahoma, is scheduled to die by lethal injection at 4 p.m. on Monday at a federal prison in Indiana. He was convicted in Arkansas of the 1996 killings of gun dealer William Mueller, his wife, Nancy, and her 8-year-old daughter, Sarah Powell.

The execution, the first of a federal death row inmate since 2003, comes after a federal appeals court lifted an injunction on Sunday that had been put in place last week after the victims' family argued they would be put at high risk for the coronavirus if they had to travel to attend the execution. The family had

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vowed to appeal to the Supreme Court.

The decision to move forward with the execution -- and two others scheduled later in the week -- during a global health pandemic that has killed more than 135,000 people in the United States and is ravaging prisons nationwide, drew scrutiny from civil rights groups and the family of Lee's victims.

The decision 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. It is also likely to add a new front to the national conversation about criminal justice reform in the lead-up to the 2020 elections.

In an interview with The Associated Press last week, Attorney General William Barr said the Justice Department has a duty to carry out the sentences imposed by the courts, including the death penalty, and to bring a sense of closure to the victims and those in the communities where the killings happened.

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 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. The federal prison system has struggled in recent months to contain the exploding number of coronavirus cases behind bars. There are currently four confirmed coronavirus cases among inmates at the Terre Haute prison, according to federal statistics, and one inmate there has died.

"The federal government has put this family in the untenable position of choosing between their right to witness Danny Lee's execution and their own health and safety," the family's attorney, Baker Kurrus, said Sunday.

Barr said he believes the Bureau of Prisons could "carry out these executions without being at risk." The agency has put a number of additional measures in place, including temperature checks and requiring witnesses to wear masks.

On Sunday, the Justice Department disclosed that a staff member involved in preparing for the execution had tested positive for the coronavirus, but said he had not been in the execution chamber and had not come into contact with anyone on the specialized team sent to the prison to handle the execution.

The victim's family hopes there won't be an execution, ever. They have asked the Justice Department and President Donald Trump not to move forward with the execution and have long asked that he be given a life sentence instead.

The three men scheduled to be executed this week had been scheduled to be put to death when Barr announced the federal government would resume executions last year, ending an informal moratorium on federal capital punishment as the issue receded from the public domain. A fourth man is scheduled to be put to death in August.

The Justice Department had scheduled five executions set to begin in December, but some of the inmates challenged the new procedures in court, arguing that the government was circumventing proper methods in order to wrongly execute inmates quickly.

Executions on the federal level have been rare and the government has put to death only three defendants since restoring the federal death penalty in 1988 — most recently in 2003, when Louis Jones was executed for the 1995 kidnapping, rape and murder of a young female soldier. Though there hasn't been a federal execution since 2003, the Justice Department has continued to approve death penalty prosecutions and federal courts have sentenced defendants to death.

In 2014, following a botched state execution in Oklahoma, President Barack Obama directed the Justice Department to conduct a broad review of capital punishment and issues surrounding lethal injection drugs.

The attorney general said last July that the Obama-era review had been completed, clearing the way for executions to resume. He approved a new procedure for lethal injections that replaces the three-drug combination previously used in federal executions with one drug, pentobarbital. This is similar to the pro-

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cedure used in several states, including Georgia, Missouri and Texas, but not all.

Associated Press writers Colleen Long in Washington and Andrew DeMillo in Little Rock, Ark. contributed to this report.

Ready or not: Election costs soar in prep for virus voting

By ANDREW TAYLOR and CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The demand for mail-in ballots is surging. Election workers need training. And polling booths might have to be outfitted with protective shields during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As officials prepare for the Nov. 3 election, one certainty is clear: It's coming with a big price tag.

"Election officials don't have nearly the resources to make the preparations and changes they need to make to run an election in a pandemic," said Wendy Weiser, head of the Brennan Center for Justice's democracy program. "We are seeing this all over the place."

The pandemic has sent state and local officials scrambling to prepare for an election like few others, an extraordinary endeavor during a presidential contest, as virus cases rise across much of the U.S.

COVID-related worries are bringing demands for steps to make sure elections just four months away are safe. But long-promised federal aid to help cash-starved states cope is stalled on Capitol Hill.

The money would help pay for transforming the age-old voting process into a pandemic-ready system. Central to that is the costs for printing mail-in ballots and postage. There are also costs to ensure in-person voting is safe with personal protective equipment, or PPE, for poll workers, who tend to be older and more at risk of getting sick from the virus, and training for new workers. Pricy machines are needed to quickly count the vote.

Complicating matters is President Donald Trump's aversion to mail-in balloting. With worrisome regularity, he derides the process as rigged, even though there's no evidence of fraud and his own reelection team is adapting to the new reality of widespread mail-in voting.

"As cases of coronavirus in this country rise, it's vital that all voters be able to cast their ballots from home, to cast their ballots by mail," said Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn.

A COVID response bill passed by the House in May contains \$3.6 billion to help states with their elections, but the Senate won't turn to the measure until late July. Republicans fought a \$400 million installment of election aid this March before agreeing to it.

But key Senate Republicans seem likely to support more election funding, despite Trump's opposition, and are even offering to lower a requirement that states put up matching funds to qualify for the federal cash.

"I'm prepared not only to look at more money for the states to use as they see fit for elections this year but also to even consider whatever kind of matching requirement we have," said Roy Blunt, R-Mo., chairman of the Senate panel with responsibility for the issue. "We can continue to work toward an election that produces a result that people have confidence in and done in a way that everybody that wants to vote, gets to vote."

The pandemic erupted this spring in the middle of state primaries, forcing many officials to delay elections by days, weeks and even months. They dealt with poll worker cancellations, polling place changes and an explosion of absentee ballots.

Voting rights groups are particularly concerned with the consolidations of polling places that contributed to long lines in Milwaukee, Atlanta and Las Vegas. They fear a repeat in November.

As negotiations on the next COVID-19 relief bill begin on Capitol Hill, the final figure for elections is sure to end up much less than the \$3.6 billion envisioned by the House. That figure followed Brennan Center recommendations to prepare for an influx of absentee ballots while providing more early voting options and protecting neighborhood polling places.

Even before the pandemic, election offices typically work under tight budgets. Iowa Secretary of State Paul D. Pate, who's president of the National Association of Secretaries of State, said the group has been calling on the federal government to provide a steady source of funds, particularly to help address ongoing

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costs of protecting the nation's election systems from cyberthreats.

For Georgia's primary last month, election officials spent \$8.1 million of the roughly \$10.9 million the state has received in federal funds. The money was used to send absentee ballot applications to 6.9 million active registered voters and print absentee ballots for county election offices. Some of it also was used to purchase PPE and secure drop-off boxes for counties.

Meanwhile, the state elections division has seen a \$90,000 reduction for the current budget year as Georgia — like the rest of the nation — deals with a decline in revenues due to the pandemic.

The state's remaining federal funds will be used to help cover the costs of developing an online system for voters to request absentee ballots, less expensive than sending ballot applications to every voter, and exploring whether installing plexiglass dividers around voting machines could allow more voters in a polling place at one time.

In Colorado, a universal vote-by-mail state, the Denver election office has had to reduce its budget by 7.5%, nearly \$980,000. Jocelyn Bucaro, Denver's elections director, said the federal funds sent this year helped with purchasing PPE and other pandemic-related supplies.

Iowa similarly spent its federal dollars on mail-in ballots and pandemic supplies, Pate said.

Vote-by-mail veterans and vendors of the equipment, software, ballots and envelopes that will be needed in November say the window to buy them is quickly closing.

"Right now, what I'm seeing in most places is just this kind of indecision. What are we supposed to be planning? Vote by mail or in-person or combination?" said Jeff Ellington, president of Runbeck Election Services, which prints ballots and the special envelopes used to mail them and supplies high-volume envelope sorters.

"Decisions just need to be made so people can start to put a plan into place," he said.

BlueCrest, a Pitney Bowes spinoff, sells high-volume sorting machines that handle up to 50,000 ballot envelopes per hour. That's the kind of crunch big counties can expect to face Nov. 3 in states including Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, where Rick Becerra, a vice president at the company, said he's been talking to officials. The machines average \$475,000 each.

"I tell them the time is now," he said.

Cassidy reported from Atlanta. Associated Press writer Frank Bajak in Boston contributed to this report.

Activists seek to decriminalize 'magic' mushrooms in DC

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The posters started blanketing light posts just a few weeks after the city entered what would be a monthslong stay-at-home order. Vividly colored and bearing a three-headed mushroom, they asked Washingtonians to "reform laws for plant and fungi medicines" by making natural psychedelics "the lowest level police enforcement priority."

It was the start of an underdog campaign that just managed a truly improbable political feat: a successful grassroots petition drive conducted entirely under pandemic lockdown conditions.

Last week, activists presented more than 36,000 signatures to the Board of Elections. If the signatures hold up through the verification process, voters in the nation's capital will face a November ballot initiative that would decriminalize psilocybin "magic" mushrooms and other natural psychedelics like mescaline.

If passed, it would be the first of its kind for an Eastern city; Denver became the first U.S. city to pass such an initiative in May 2019, with the California cities of Oakland and Santa Cruz following suit. It would also likely face efforts in Congress to overturn or block its implementation.

Activists are deemphasizing the recreational aspects of the drugs, focusing on the therapeutic and medical benefits as treatment for depression, trauma and addiction.

"D.C. could really lead the way on this," said campaign manager Melissa Lavasani. "You shouldn't bear the repercussions of the drug war while you are healing yourself."

Just getting on the ballot required an innovative change in normal grassroots signature-gathering tactics

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and an assist from the D.C. Council. Activists had planned to launch their campaign in March with traditional door-to-door canvassing and street-corner volunteers. But they decided to hold off as the coronavirus made inroads and the local infection numbers climbed. By April, it became clear the lockdown would last months and they decided to proceed anyway.

They briefly tried some door-to-door in the Capitol Hill neighborhood but found families under virus lockdown weren't receptive to a stranger at the door with a clipboard. So they shifted tactics and appealed to the D.C. Council for help. The council, as part of a larger coronavirus relief package, approved a landmark set of changes allowing residents to download a copy of the petition, sign it and submit a picture of the signed paper.

Volunteers set up signature booths outside grocery stores, at polling stations on the day of Washington's primary election and even at the site of the city's ongoing protests over systemic racism and police brutality.

Organizers also mailed copies of the petition and detailed packages centering around Lavasani's family and her story to about 220,000 households. A D.C. government employee and a mother of two, she says she successfully treated post-partum depression that included suicidal thoughts with controlled doses of psilocybin mushrooms and another natural psychedelic called ayahuasca.

"I started micro-dosing with psilocybin and within a matter of days I felt like myself again," she said. "It was really scary to know that if anybody found out I was doing this, I would lose everything."

It's a message that Lavasani believes will resonate in a nation reeling under the psychological burdens of an ongoing pandemic, nationwide protests over racial injustice and what promises to be the most divisive presidential election in living memory.

"We're going to be in rough shape when we get through this, and we're going to need all the help we can get," she said.

It's also a message that had gained a foothold within mainstream scientific circles. A growing body of work is looking at the effects of natural psychedelics to treat depression, trauma and addiction. Last year, Johns Hopkins University opened the Center for Psychedelic and Consciousness Research with plans to study the effects of psychedelics on ailments including anorexia and Alzheimer's disease.

In an article, center director Roland Griffiths called natural psychedelics "a fascinating class of compounds" that can "produce a unique and profound change of consciousness over the course of just several hours."

The proposed D.C. ballot initiative would apply to psilocybin mushrooms, iboga, mescaline and ayahuasca but not to peyote or to human-made psychedelics like LSD. It would instruct the Metropolitan Police Department to treat such substances as a low priority. If successful, Lavasani said she envisions patients being able to consume such substances in controlled circumstances and in consultation with doctors or therapists.

But even if it passes, Lavasani acknowledges it will probably be blocked by Congress, which retains the right to alter or even overturn D.C. laws. When a 2014 ballot initiative approved legalizing marijuana use, Congress stepped in and prohibited the district government from spending any funds or resources on developing a regulatory or taxation system for marijuana sales. The result has been a thriving "gift-economy" gray market where customers and dealers maintain the thin pretense they're buying something else like a T-shirt and receiving the marijuana as a gift.

Maryland Republican Rep. Andy Harris, who sponsored the budget rider that blocked the 2014 marijuana initiative, has indicated he plans to do the same if this new initiative passes. A spokesman for Harris declined to comment further on the issue. Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton, Washington's nonvoting delegate in the House of Representatives, has vowed to oppose any such effort.

"We will continue to fight any and all attempts to overturn D.C. laws, regardless of the policy, as D.C. has a right to self-government," Norton, a Democrat, said in a statement.

Lavasani said she would rather not see such psychedelics simply added to that gray-market mix. She's hoping for an upcoming "blue wave" in November elections that would shift the Senate to Democratic hands and smooth the path of Washington's quest for statehood. The Democratic-controlled House approved a landmark D.C. statehood bill in June, but it faces insurmountable opposition in the Republican-held Senate.

For now, Lavasani said she plans a citywide educational initiative before the November vote. She's counting on the idea that ordinary voters, far from the psychedelic heyday of the 1960s, no longer regard

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natural psychedelics with the kind of stigma attached to marijuana and other drugs.

"There's more of a blank slate compared to cannabis," she said. "A lot of people have a real issue with weed."

Undaunted, US global media chief plows ahead with changes

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Despite a barrage of criticism from both Democrats and Republicans, the new chief of U.S. global media is plowing ahead with changes to the Voice of America and other international broadcasters that are heightening concerns about their future as independent news organizations.

Although Agency for Global Media chief executive Michael Pack has assured Congress that VOA and its sister networks will remain independent and pledged he would consult lawmakers on significant developments, last week he initiated personnel changes and began a review of visas for foreign employees.

Some fear the moves will damage the institution's credibility and its ability to fulfill its congressionally mandated mission to broadcast impartial news around the world by turning the operation into a propaganda machine for President Donald Trump. Others, though, see them as important and long-needed reforms.

Pack on Wednesday fired the executive editor of Radio Free Asia, Bay Fang, whom he had demoted from president shortly after assuming office last month. A day earlier, Pack installed a South Carolina politician with little, if any, relevant experience to run the Open Technology Fund, which works to provide secure internet access to people around the world.

In addition, Pack launched a case-by-case review of visas for foreign agency employees, many of whom bring critical language skills needed to communicate with the foreign populations that are the primary audiences for AGM broadcasts. Although the review is not complete and no visa actions have yet been taken, some believe the review itself sends a chilling message to journalists.

As those moves were happening, the agency on Thursday publicly boasted of removing the Iranian and North Korean flags from a display at its Washington headquarters, prompting questions about the priorities of its new leadership at a tumultuous time in world events amid rising tensions between the U.S. and China and disputes over how to handle the coronavirus pandemic.

"As of today, the flags of regimes hostile to America no longer fly in the halls @USAGMgov, the taxpayer-funded home of U.S. international broadcasting," the agency's public relations bureau tweeted. The post included before and after photos of the flag display and the hashtags: "#America" "#freedom" and "#SpotTheDifference."

Pack, a conservative filmmaker and associate of former Trump political adviser Steve Bannon, has defended the moves as necessary to reforming the agency, which critics have long said is beset by bureaucratic and journalistic issues. That criticism exploded earlier this year when the White House attacked VOA for its coverage of COVID-19.

Democrats, who suspect Pack wants to promote Trump over broader American values and interests, and some Republicans have demanded explanations for his abrupt dismissal of the heads of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Middle East Broadcasting Networks and the Open Technology Fund. (The director and deputy director of VOA resigned within days of Pack taking control of AGM.)

On July 1, seven U.S. senators, including four Republicans who voted for his controversial nomination, sent a letter to Pack expressing concern about the dismissals and possible politicization of AGM. "These actions, which came without any consultation with Congress, let alone notification, raise serious questions about the future of USAGM under your leadership," they wrote.

Pack did not respond to the letter from Republican Sens. Marco Rubio of Florida, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, Susan Collins of Maine and Jerry Moran of Kansas until a week later, when he sent a polite but firm reply that said he was only doing what he had been hired to do.

"The president, the American people, and the Senate asked me to make bold and meaningful changes," he wrote in his July 8 response, a copy of which was obtained by The Associated Press. "Indeed, throughout

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the confirmation process, and in the weeks since taking the helm, I made clear my commitment to fixing the widely-known management issues that have long beleaguered USAGM and, in turn, its institutions.”

“During the confirmation process, I pledged to respect and protect the independence of the USAGM journalists, and I stand by that pledge,” he said. “I also wish to reiterate my firm commitment to honoring the VOA Charter and to supporting the missions of the other USAGM networks and our heroic journalists around the world. As an agency, through accurate and reliable reporting, we have to get the truth to those starved for it.”

Yet, the review of visas, known as J-1 visas, for foreign staffers and the appointment of 78-year-old former South Carolina Secretary of State James Mills to run the Open Technology Fund have raised questions about that commitment.

The visa review, in particular, “will be perceived as a threat to many reporters,” said Matt Armstrong, a former Republican appointee to the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which was the AGM’s predecessor. “Mr Pack is finding his ways to influence VOA’s output without direct intervention. Failing to renew (visas) may result in harsh penalties for some of these reporters and their families, from jail to even death.”

In response to reports that visas had already been or were about to be cancelled, the agency responded that the review was not yet complete and that “it appreciates the value of critical-language skills offered by U.S. citizens and foreign nationals.”

“To improve agency management and protect U.S. national security, it is imperative to determine that hiring authorities and personnel practices are not misused,” it said. “As such, USAGM is undertaking a comprehensive, case-by-case assessment of personal services contractors who are J-1 visa holders.”

It did not give a projected date for the completion of the review.

2020 Watch: How many more Americans will die from COVID-19?

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

Presidential politics move fast. What we’re watching heading into a new week on the 2020 campaign:

Days to general election: 113

THE NARRATIVE

These are among the darkest days of President Donald Trump’s presidency. Coronavirus infections are exploding, the economic recovery is in jeopardy and Trump may have undermined his own “law and order” message by commuting the prison sentence of his friend and political adviser.

Emboldened Democrats are trying to guard against overconfidence, even as they see real opportunities to expand Joe Biden’s path to the White House in states like Georgia, Iowa and Ohio. And Biden’s slow-and-steady approach is winning praise from Democrats everywhere as Trump’s string of unforced errors and divisive rhetoric continues.

There’s less time for Republicans to turn things around than they’d like. Early voting across several swing states is set to begin in little more than two months.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

How many more Americans will die?

The number of Americans dying from COVID-19 is surging again. The daily death toll began falling in mid-April, and it continued to fall — until about a week ago. Daily reported deaths in the U.S. have increased from 578 two weeks ago to 664 on July 10, according to an Associated Press analysis of data from Johns Hopkins University’s seven-day rolling average. That’s still well below the heights hit in April, but researchers are expecting deaths to rise for at least some weeks still as infections soar.

Overall, more than 135,000 people in America have died as a result of COVID-19, according to Johns Hopkins. As a reminder, Trump in April predicted a death toll of “substantially below 100,000.” In May, he predicted deaths could reach 100,000. And now, the CDC’s latest model forecasts as many as 160,000 deaths by the end of August.

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The Trump administration has yet to offer any kind of comprehensive, coordinated federal response. There was one noteworthy change over the weekend, however: The president wore a face mask in public for the first time.

Is "law and order" tainted?

Trump went where Richard Nixon would not when he commuted the sentence of longtime friend and political adviser Roger Stone, who had been convicted of multiple felony charges for lying to Congress, witness tampering and obstructing the House investigation involving Trump himself. Legal experts were aghast, and Republican Sen. Mitt Romney called it an act of "unprecedented historic corruption."

The decision came as the president touts "law and order" as a central message in his reelection campaign. Another Republican, Sen. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, called the Stone commutation "a mistake."

Will the criticism from his own party grow? It will be especially difficult for Senate Republicans in tough reelection campaigns to stand by the president on this one. They won't want to address it, but Democrats will make it difficult for incumbents like Sens. Martha McSally, Cory Gardner, Susan Collins and Tom Tillis to stay silent.

Is it time to cancel the conventions?

Democrats have already embraced a dramatically scaled-down national convention in Milwaukee next month. Even a series of smaller Democratic watch parties across the country is in jeopardy as coronavirus infections surge.

Yet Trump's desire to project stability has fueled intense pressure on Republicans to host a large-scale convention of some sort in Florida, which has suddenly emerged as the unofficial epicenter of the pandemic in the United States. Florida officials on Sunday reported the largest single-day increase in positive coronavirus cases in any state since the beginning of the pandemic.

According to state Department of Health statistics, 15,299 Floridians tested positive. That's significantly higher than the previous records in California and New York, which didn't crack 12,000. How much time does Florida's Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis have to get things under control? The Republican National Convention is officially scheduled to begin in Florida in 42 days.

Besides public health concerns, we're also hearing that convention officials are struggling to raise funding for the high-profile event. While Trump could certainly benefit from a post-convention bump, the potential costs may be beginning to outweigh the benefits.

Will Biden's progressive populism resonate?

Biden offered new details for his long-awaited jobs plan last week that he hopes will shift the balance of the high-stakes economic debate. Trump's numbers have been weak on most issues, yet voters have not been willing to give the presumptive Democratic nominee a clear advantage on the economy.

Biden released a New Deal-like economic agenda that he touted as the most aggressive government investment in the U.S. economy since World War II. He plans to invest hundreds of billions of dollars to reinvigorate the U.S. manufacturing and technology sectors while tightening current "Buy American" laws intended to benefit U.S. firms. He also emphasized previous pledges to establish a \$15-per-hour minimum wage, strengthen workers' collective bargaining rights and repeal Republican-backed tax breaks for U.S. corporations that move jobs overseas.

Trump's inability to contain the pandemic will make it harder and harder to maintain any kind of advantage on the economy. The question is whether Biden can convince voters his brand of progressive populism is better.

THE FINAL THOUGHT

It's later than you think. Nov. 3 may feel like a lifetime away, but early voting in a series of battleground states is little more than two months away. Mid-September will feature the first votes cast in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Minnesota and Virginia. Two weeks later come Iowa, Maine, Ohio and New Mexico.

There's a lot of money left to be spent, we don't know who Biden's running mate will be and we haven't seen any debates, but the window to change the direction of the presidential contest is shrinking quickly.

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2020 Watch runs every Monday and provides a look at the week ahead in the 2020 election.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

5 things to know today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. **MARS IS ABOUT TO BE INVADED BY EARTH** The U.S., China and the United Arab Emirates are sending spacecraft to Mars beginning this week. It's the most sweeping effort yet to seek signs of ancient microscopic life at Mars.
2. **PANDEMIC PAIN BY THE GENERATIONS** Sometimes at odds, America's two largest generations have something to agree on: the coronavirus pandemic has smacked many at a pivotal time in their lives.
3. **#METOO CAMPAIGN SPARKED IN EGYPT** More than 100 allegations of sexual harassment, assault and rape against a former student at a top university have roiled a country where sexual assault is rampant.
4. **FEDERAL GOV'T TO EXECUTE FIRST INMATE IN NEARLY 2 DECADES** Daniel Lewis Lee is scheduled to die by lethal injection Monday for 1996 killings of a gun dealer, his wife and her 8-year-old daughter.
5. **KELLY PRESTON, ACTOR AND WIFE OF JOHN TRAVOLTA, HAS DIED** Travolta confirmed that his wife of 28 years died after a two-year battle with breast cancer.

Kelly Preston, actor and wife of John Travolta, dies at 57

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Kelly Preston, who played dramatic and comic foil to actors ranging from Tom Cruise in "Jerry Maguire" to Arnold Schwarzenegger in "Twins," died Sunday, husband John Travolta said. She was 57.

Travolta said in an Instagram post that his wife of 28 years died after a two-year battle with breast cancer. "It is with a very heavy heart that I inform you that my beautiful wife Kelly has lost her two-year battle with breast cancer," Travolta said. "She fought a courageous fight with the love and support of so many." The couple had three children together.

"Shocked by this sad news," Maria Shriver said on Twitter. "Kelly was such a bright loving soul, a talented actress, and a loving mom and wife. My heart breaks for her family who have already known such sadness and grief."

Preston had a lengthy acting career in movies and television, starring opposite Kevin Costner in the 1999 film "For the Love of the Game." In 2003, she starred in "What a Girl Wants" and as the mom in the live-action adaptation of "The Cat in the Hat." The following year she appeared in the music video for Maroon 5's "She Will Be Loved."

Russell Crowe tweeted that he met Preston "first in late '92 I think," adding, "In 1995 we auditioned together for Breaking Up, Salma Hayek got that gig." Crowe said he hadn't seen Preston much, "but when I did, she was always the same sparkly eyed gem."

She occasionally appeared in films with her husband, as they did in the box-office bomb "Battlefield Earth" in 2000.

Preston and Travolta were married at a midnight ceremony in Paris in 1991 while the couple were expecting their first son, Jett.

In January 2009, Jett Travolta, 16, died after a seizure at the family's vacation home in the Bahamas. The death touched off a court case after an ambulance driver and his attorney were accused of trying to extort \$25 million from the actors in exchange for not releasing sensitive information about their son's death.

Travolta testified during a criminal trial that ended in a mistrial and was prepared to testify a second time, but decided to stop pursuing the case and it was dismissed. He cited the severe strain the proceedings and his son's death had caused the family.

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Both Preston and Travolta returned to acting, with Preston's first role back in the Nicholas Sparks adaptation, "The Last Song," which starred Miley Cyrus and her future husband, Liam Hemsworth.

They had two other children, daughter Ella Bleu in 2000 and son Benjamin in 2010. Ella wrote on Instagram Sunday: "I have never met anyone as courageous, strong, beautiful and loving as you. Anyone who is lucky enough to have known you or to have ever been in your presence will agree that you have a glow and a light that never ceases to shine and that makes anyone around you feel instantly happy."

Travolta and Preston met while filming 1988's "The Experts."

They last starred together in the 2018 film "Gotti," with Travolta playing John Gotti and Preston playing the crime boss's wife, Victoria.

"Kelly's love and life will always be remembered," Travolta said on Instagram. "I will be taking some time to be there for my children who have lost their mother, so forgive me in advance if you don't hear from us for a while. But please know that I will feel your outpouring of love in the weeks and months ahead as we heal."

Preston's death was first reported by People magazine.

Families of Italy's virus dead seek answers, solace, justice

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — It started out as way for grief-struck families to mourn their coronavirus dead online: a Facebook group where relatives who were denied a funeral because of Italy's stringent lockdowns could share photos, memories and sorrow that their loved ones had died all alone.

But this spontaneous virtual forum for eulogies, anguish and condolences has now turned into an activist group that is providing a steady stream of testimony and evidence to prosecutors investigating whether any crimes contributed to Italy's COVID-19 toll.

Lawyers for the Noi Denunceremo (We Will Denounce) Facebook group and an affiliated non-profit committee are filing 100 new cases Monday with Bergamo prosecutors investigating the outbreak, on top of 50 complaints lodged last month.

The case files and Facebook posts paint a visceral portrait of the people swept up in Italy's devastating coronavirus outbreak, the first in the West: of mothers and fathers taken away by ambulance and never seen alive again by their children; of frantic efforts to locate vacant intensive care beds and impossible-to-find oxygen tanks; of hospitals so overwhelmed trying to save the living that relatives of the dead were often just an afterthought.

"It's a system that didn't hold up, a system that had to choose who to save and who not," said Diego Federici, 35, who lost his otherwise healthy mother and father to COVID-19 in just four days in March.

Federici believes that neither of his parents was treated adequately. He says his mother was essentially sedated until she died and then her body was transported to Bologna, 250 kilometers (155 miles) away, to be cremated because Bergamo's crematoriums and cemeteries were full.

"There are too many doubts, too many things that were done badly," he said in a telephone interview.

Compiled by sons and daughters, widows and widowers, the vast majority of cases that We Will Denounce is filing with prosecutors concern deaths in northern Lombardy's provinces of Bergamo and Brescia, where the outbreak erupted in late February. The two provinces fast became ground zero of the European epidemic and together account for around a quarter of Italy's 35,000 official COVID-19 deaths.

Experts believe the true number of coronavirus deaths is much higher, in Italy and elsewhere, due to testing limitations.

"We are certain that with 35,000 dead, they can't go and cover up everything as has unfortunately occurred with other Italian tragedies," said Stefano Fusco, who co-founded We Will Denounce with his father after the March 11 death of the family patriarch, Antonio.

Many members of the group assert that the failure of regional and national political leaders to seal off virus-afflicted areas in Bergamo and Brescia early on allowed the contagion to spread throughout Lombardy and overwhelm its health care system, eventually leading to the West's first nationwide lockdown.

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Bergamo prosecutors have already questioned Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte, the health and interior ministers, as well as members of Lombardy's regional government and industrial leaders. They also interviewed the founders and early members of the We Will Denounce group whose posts helped spark the investigation. No charges have been filed and it's not clear if any will be.

But simultaneously with Monday's filing, lawyers for We Will Denounce are sending a letter asking the European Commission and the European Court of Human Rights to supervise the Italian investigation, alleging that crimes against humanity are involved and that Italian citizens' right to life and dignity were violated.

Attorney Consuelo Locati, whose father died during the outbreak, cited two regional decrees that she says contributed to the deaths: A March 8 decree allowing recovering COVID-19 patients to be housed in nursing homes, and a March 23 decree essentially instructing Lombardy's general practitioners to treat suspected virus patients by phone, not in person.

The directive to treat by telephone, Locati said, violated the patients' constitutional right to health care. Many relatives of virus victims say during the peak of the outbreak, their family doctors were themselves sick or declined to conduct in-person visits. Locati says they were essentially prevented from doing so by the regional government, which was struggling to keep doctors safe and provide adequate protective equipment for health care workers.

"This prohibition of doing house visits is found in so many complaints, and so much testimony: of the doctor who won't go out or who can't go out, the doctor who prescribes antibiotics via telephone," she said. The effect of the directive, local authorities say, was that patients died at home or waited too long to go to the hospital and were then too sick to be saved.

The Lombardy regional government has strongly defended its handling of the pandemic, pointing to the heroic efforts of doctors and nurses there and the region's successes in adding intensive care beds to keep up with demand from ailing COVID-19 patients. At the same time, though, regional officials have acknowledged shortcomings.

Lombardy's governor, Attilio Fontana, has appointed a committee of five experts to review "what worked less well and what worked well" as the region looks to identify what part of the health care system "should be looked at again, modified and corrected."

"We are all ready to recognize if errors were committed — if they were committed — but underlying that is the fact that we found ourselves in the middle of a cataclysm that no one ever expected," Fontana told a June 29 press conference when asked about the We Will Denounce complaints.

Stefano Fusco said he never expected his Facebook group would grow as quickly as it did and turn into a juggernaut of activism pressing for justice for Italy's virus dead.

"We created it thinking maybe it would get no more than 1,000 people, but in the first 24 hours there were 5,000 members," Fusco said. Within a week, membership had reached 14,000 and today stands at 60,000.

The main rule of the group is to keep politics out of posts and not accuse anyone directly of wrongdoing.

"It's simply to remember someone, and give a face to the numbers, because during the pandemic the dead were just numbers. But to us, behind 100 dead there are 100 families who are suffering," Fusco said.

What is remarkable is that the posts are so similar, and are responded to with an outpouring of condolences and broken heart emojis from strangers, many of whom have clearly endured the same fate.

"Like you, I have asked myself for months if there's someone guilty, if this tragedy could have been avoided," Ludovica Bertucci wrote the Facebook group, eulogizing her dead father, grandparents and uncle. "I don't know the answer, and I'm afraid of the answer ... afraid of discovering that if someone had taken a different decision, maybe my stupendous father would be here with me, together with all the others."

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

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Look out, Mars: Here we come with a fleet of spacecraft

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Mars is about to be invaded by planet Earth — big time.

Three countries — the United States, China and the United Arab Emirates — are sending unmanned spacecraft to the red planet in quick succession beginning this week, in the most sweeping effort yet to seek signs of ancient microscopic life while scouting out the place for future astronauts.

The U.S., for its part, is dispatching a six-wheeled rover the size of a car, named Perseverance, to collect rock samples that will be brought back to Earth for analysis in about a decade.

“Right now, more than ever, that name is so important,” NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine said as preparations went on amid the coronavirus outbreak, which will keep the launch guest list to a minimum.

Each spacecraft will travel more than 300 million miles (483 million kilometers) before reaching Mars next February. It takes six to seven months, at the minimum, for a spacecraft to loop out beyond Earth’s orbit and sync up with Mars’ more distant orbit around the sun.

Scientists want to know what Mars was like billions of years ago when it had rivers, lakes and oceans that may have allowed simple, tiny organisms to flourish before the planet morphed into the barren, wintry desert world it is today.

“Trying to confirm that life existed on another planet, it’s a tall order. It has a very high burden of proof,” said Perseverance’s project scientist, Ken Farley of Caltech in Pasadena, California.

The three nearly simultaneous launches are no coincidence: The timing is dictated by the opening of a one-month window in which Mars and Earth are in ideal alignment on the same side of the sun, which minimizes travel time and fuel use. Such a window opens only once every 26 months.

Mars has long exerted a powerful hold on the imagination but has proved to be the graveyard for numerous missions. Spacecraft have blown up, burned up or crash-landed, with the casualty rate over the decades exceeding 50%. China’s last attempt, in collaboration with Russia in 2011, ended in failure.

Only the U.S. has successfully put a spacecraft on Mars, doing it eight times, beginning with the twin Vikings in 1976. Two NASA landers are now operating there, InSight and Curiosity. Six other spacecraft are exploring the planet from orbit: three U.S., two European and one from India.

The United Arab Emirates and China are looking to join the elite club.

The UAE spacecraft, named Amal, which is Arabic for Hope, is an orbiter scheduled to rocket away from Japan on Wednesday, local time, on what will be the Arab world’s first interplanetary mission. The spacecraft, built in partnership with the University of Colorado Boulder, will arrive at Mars in the year the UAE marks the 50th anniversary of its founding.

“The UAE wanted to send a very strong message to the Arab youth,” project manager Omran Sharaf said. “The message here is that if the UAE can reach Mars in less than 50 years, then you can do much more. ... The nice thing about space, it sets the standards really high.”

Controlled from Dubai, the celestial weather station will strive for an exceptionally high Martian orbit of 13,670 miles by 27,340 miles (22,000 kilometers by 44,000 kilometers) to study the upper atmosphere and monitor climate change.

China will be up next, with the flight of a rover and an orbiter sometime around July 23; Chinese officials aren’t divulging much. The mission is named Tianwen, or Questions for Heaven.

NASA, meanwhile, is shooting for a launch on July 30 from Cape Canaveral.

Perseverance is set to touch down in an ancient river delta and lake known as Jezero Crater, not quite as big as Florida’s Lake Okeechobee. China’s much smaller rover will aim for an easier, flatter target.

To reach the surface, both spacecraft will have to plunge through Mars’ hazy red skies in what has been dubbed “seven minutes of terror” — the most difficult and riskiest part of putting spacecraft on the planet.

Jezero Crater is full of boulders, cliffs, sand dunes and depressions, any one of which could end Perseverance’s mission. Brand-new guidance and parachute-triggering technology will help steer the craft away from hazards. Ground controllers will be helpless, given the 10 minutes it takes radio transmissions to travel one-way between Earth and Mars.

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Jezero Crater is worth the risks, according to scientists who chose it over 60 other potential sites.

Where there was water — and Jezero was apparently flush with it 3.5 billion years ago — there may have been life, though it was probably only simple microbial life, existing perhaps in a slimy film at the bottom of the crater. But those microbes may have left telltale marks in the sediment layers.

Perseverance will hunt for rocks containing such biological signatures, if they exist.

It will drill into the most promising rocks and store a half-kilogram (about 1 pound) of samples in dozens of titanium tubes that will eventually be fetched by another rover. To prevent Earth microbes from contaminating the samples, the tubes are super-sterilized, guaranteed germ-free by Adam Stelzner, chief engineer for the mission at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena.

"Yep, I'm staking my reputation on it," he said.

While prowling the surface, Perseverance as well as China's rover will peek below, using radar to locate any underground pools of water that might exist. Perseverance will also release a spindly, 4-pound (1.8-kilogram) helicopter that will be the first rotorcraft ever to fly on another planet.

Perseverance's cameras will shoot color video of the rover's descent, providing humanity's first look at a parachute billowing open at Mars, while microphones capture the sounds.

The rover will also attempt to produce oxygen from the carbon dioxide in the thin Martian atmosphere. Extracted oxygen could someday be used by astronauts on Mars for breathing as well as for making rocket propellant.

NASA wants to return astronauts to the moon by 2024 and send them from there to Mars in the 2030s. To that end, the space agency is sending samples of spacesuit material with Perseverance to see how they stand up against the harsh Martian environment.

The tab for Perseverance's mission, including the flight and a minimum two years of Mars operations, is close to \$3 billion. The UAE's project costs \$200 million, including the launch but not mission operations. China has not disclosed its costs. Europe and Russia dropped plans to send a life-seeking rover to Mars this summer after falling behind in testing and then getting slammed by COVID-19.

Perseverance's mission is seen by NASA as a comparatively low-risk way of testing out some of the technology that will be needed to send humans to the red planet and bring them home safely.

"Sort of crazy for me to call it low risk because there's a lot of hard work in it and there are billions of dollars in it," Farley said. "But compared to humans, if something goes wrong, you will be very glad you tested it out on a half-kilogram of rock instead of on the astronauts."

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Accusations of serial assault spark new #MeToo wave in Egypt

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Their accounts are similar. The girls and women describe meeting the young man — a former student at Egypt's most elite university — in person and online, followed by deceit, then escalating sexual harassment, assault, blackmail or rape.

Some were minors when the alleged crimes took place. In all, more than 100 accusers have emerged online in the past two weeks.

It's resulted in a new #MeToo firestorm on social media, and the arrest of the suspect last week from his home in a gated community outside Cairo.

Activists say the case shows that misogyny cuts across the country's stark class lines; many in Egypt have previously portrayed harassment as a problem of poor urban youth.

Women's rights champions hope the authorities' swift response signals change in how Egyptian society handles accusations of sexual assault.

"What's before this case is totally different from what's after," said Nihad Abuel-Komsan, head of the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights and a lawyer representing some of the alleged victims.

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Sexual assault and harassment are deep-seated problems in Egypt, where victims must also fight the undercurrent of a conservative culture that typically ties female chastity to a family's reputation. In courts, the burden of proof lies heavily on the victim of such crimes.

In a statement, the public prosecutor's officer said the accused man acknowledged he blackmailed at least six girls, saying he would send sensitive photos of them to their families if they cut ties. Several attempts by The Associated Press to contact him or his lawyer were unsuccessful.

Amr Adib, Egypt's most prominent TV host, said in a recent episode that he'd spoken with the young man's father, who occupies a high-ranking position at a telecommunication company. He said his son dismissed the allegations.

At least 10 women have officially reported their claims, according to Abuel-Komsan, of the women's rights center. Activists also set up the Instagram account @assaultpolice to collect allegations, said Sabah Khodir, a U.S.-based writer who helps run the account. She said there are more than 100 accounts.

"We are demanding to be listened to ... We are just using what we have, lending our voices to hopefully create some kind of change," she said.

A court has ordered the accused to remain in custody pending an investigation into an array of accusations that include attempted rape, blackmail and indecent assault, according to a five-page statement by the public prosecutor. In the same statement, the prosecutor urged more alleged victims to come forward.

Last week, the government of President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi moved to amend the country's criminal law to increase protections for the identities of sexual assault victims, which activists have welcomed. The amendment still needs parliamentary approval and el-Sissi's signature to be made law.

The allegations against the student cover a period of at least three years.

Many of the anonymous accounts appear to be from fellow students at the American International School, one of the country's most expensive private high schools, and the American University in Cairo, which school officials said the accused left in 2018. It would appear that he then enrolled at the European Union Business School in Spain, in an online program last year.

In February, he spent three weeks at its Barcelona campus, but the school expelled him after an accusation of online harassment that was subsequently proved false, said Claire Basterfield, a spokesperson for the EUBS. The school has filed a 54-page criminal complaint with the Spanish police, seeking further investigation into his actions.

The head of the American University in Cairo, Francis Ricciardone, said the university has a zero tolerance policy concerning sexual harassment, but that he would not comment on an ongoing case.

According to accusations posted on social media in the past two weeks, the former student would mine the pool of mutual friends on Facebook, online groups or school clubs. He would start with flattery, then pressure the women and girls to share intimate photos that he later used to blackmail them to have sex with him. If they did not, he would threaten to send the pictures to their family.

In some cases, he "attracted their sympathy by claiming he was going through a crisis," then lured them to his home in an upscale compound where he sexually assaulted them, the prosecutor's statement alleged.

In Egypt, sexual assault complaints have typically involved street harassment. During and after the 2011 uprising that toppled President Hosni Mubarak, women were frequently harassed, groped — and in some cases, beaten and sexually assaulted — during mass protests.

This time, there are signs of wider ripples throughout the society. The current series of complaints has prompted Egypt's Al-Azhar, the Sunni Muslim world's foremost religious institution, to speak out on sexual harassment and assault, even challenging the widely held belief that a woman is at fault if her clothing is less than modest. It's a departure from the norm for the conservative Muslim majority country where most women wear headscarves.

There are also other corners where accusations of sexual harassment are emerging, such as in civil society groups and businesses.

Two rights groups said they fired one employee and suspended another, and opened investigations after allegations of sexual misconduct against them were made public. Authorities also detained a prominent publisher over the weekend after a poet filed a complaint with the Cairo police, accusing him of sexually

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harassing her, the state-run al-Ahram reported. The publisher denied the allegations in a Facebook posting. He was released late Sunday on 5,000 Egyptian pounds (\$313) in bail, pending an investigation.

The recent cases — reaching into the Egyptian elite — have “refuted all previous arguments and justifications for harassment, from poverty to illiteracy and things like that,” Abuel-Komsan said.

21 injured in fire aboard ship at Naval Base San Diego

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Twenty-one people suffered minor injuries in an explosion and fire Sunday on board a ship at Naval Base San Diego, military officials said.

The blaze was reported shortly before 9 a.m. on USS Bonhomme Richard, said Mike Raney, a spokesman for Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Seventeen sailors and four civilians were hospitalized with “non-life threatening injuries,” Raney said in a brief statement. He didn’t provide additional details.

Previously, officials said at least one person was treated for smoke inhalation.

The cause of the fire was under investigation. It wasn’t immediately known where on the 840-foot (255-meter) amphibious assault vessel the blast and the fire occurred. The flames sent up a huge plume of dark smoke visible around San Diego.

Rear Adm. Philip Sobeck, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 3, told the San Diego Union-Tribune that the Navy thinks the fire began somewhere in a lower cargo hold where marine equipment and vehicles are stored.

The fire was not fueled by fuel oil, hazardous materials or electrical causes, Sobeck told the newspaper. It was fueled by paper, cloth, rags or other materials in a standard fire. He said he is not concerned about the air quality or toxicity around the fire.

There was no ordnance on board, Sobeck said. There are a million gallons of fuel on board, he said, but that is “well below” any heat source.

The explosion was probably caused by a change in air pressure, he told the Union-Tribune.

San Diego is the Bonhomme Richard’s home port, and the ship was undergoing routine maintenance at the time of the fire.

About 160 sailors and officers were on board, Raney said — far fewer than the thousand typically on the ship when it’s on active duty.

All crew members were accounted for, said Admiral Mike Gilday, Chief of Naval Operations.

“We are grateful for the quick and immediate response of local, base, and shipboard firefighters aboard USS Bonhomme Richard,” Gilday said in a statement.

The 23-year-old ship has the capacity to deploy and land helicopters, smaller boats and amphibious vehicles. Because of its age, a fire could be particularly destructive, especially if it reached the engine room and other tight spaces with machinery, said Lawrence B. Brennan, a professor of admiralty and international maritime law at Fordham University in New York.

“The heat of a fire of this nature can warp the steel, and that can be a major problem for any ship,” said Brennan. “On an older ship, it’s even more of a problem.”

Two other docked ships, USS Fitzgerald and USS Russell, were moved to berths away from the fire, officials said.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump team’s false comfort on schools, virus

By CALVIN WOODWARD, HOPE YEN and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump’s administration is providing misguided assurances on the safety of kids in school during a coronavirus epidemic.

In remarks Sunday, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos urged schools to provide full-time, in-person learning in the fall even with community transmission of COVID-19 rising in many parts of the U.S., suggesting that there is no danger “in any way” if kids are in school.

Her statement is unsupported. Some children have become seriously ill from the virus, and one of

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Trump's top health experts stresses that data remain incomplete about potential risks they could spread COVID-19 to adults.

Meanwhile, Trump continued to spread falsehoods about how well the U.S. is doing with the coronavirus even as the U.S. is taking a disproportionate hit from it globally and does not have it under control.

A look at recent claims and reality:

SCHOOLS

DEVOS: "There's nothing in the data that suggests that kids being in school is in any way dangerous." — interview on "Fox News Sunday."

THE FACTS: That's wrong. Although children are less likely than adults to develop COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has nevertheless counted tens of thousands of infections by the virus in Americans younger than 18. It's premature to claim that there are no risks "in any way" seen in data. How significant a risk has not been established.

Apart from potential risks to kids, there is also the chance that they would spread the disease to more vulnerable adults, such as teachers, parents and grandparents.

DeVos' false assurance overlooks severe COVID-19 illnesses and some deaths of children in the U.S., even though kids in general tend to get less sick from it than adults do. Doctors don't know which children are at risk.

The CDC in April studied the pandemic's effect on different ages in the U.S. and reviewed preliminary research in China, where the coronavirus started. It said social distancing is important for children, too, for their own safety and that of others.

"Whereas most COVID-19 cases in children are not severe, serious COVID-19 illness resulting in hospitalization still occurs in this age group," the CDC study says.

In May, the CDC also warned doctors to be on the lookout for a rare but life-threatening inflammatory reaction in some children who've had the coronavirus. The condition had been reported in more than 100 children in New York, and in some kids in several other states and in Europe, with some deaths.

The agency's current guidance for communities on the reopening of K-12 schools says the goal is to "help protect students, teachers, administrators, and staff and slow the spread of COVID-19." The guidance says "full sized, in person classes" present the "highest risk" of spreading the virus and advises face masks, spreading out of desks, staggered schedules, eating meals in classrooms instead of the cafeteria as well as "staying home when appropriate" to help avert spikes in virus cases.

Last week, Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House coronavirus coordinator, said the U.S. hasn't tested enough kids to actually know whether they may drive the spread of the coronavirus.

VIRUS

TRUMP: "Deaths in the U.S. are way down." — tweet on July 6, one of at least a half dozen heralding a drop in daily deaths from the virus.

THE FACTS: It's true that deaths dipped as infections spiked in many parts of the country. But deaths lag sickness. And now, the widely expected upturn in U.S. deaths has begun, driven by fatalities in states in the South and West, according to data analyzed by The Associated Press.

"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."

The new AP analysis of data from Johns Hopkins University shows the seven-day rolling average for daily reported deaths in the U.S. increased to 664 on Friday from 578 two weeks ago, as deaths rose in more than half the states. That's still well below the lethal numbers of April.

"It's consistently picking up," said William Hanage, a Harvard University infectious diseases researcher. "And it's picking up at the time you'd expect it to."

TRUMP: "For the 1/100th time, the reason we show so many Cases, compared to other countries that

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haven't done nearly as well as we have, is that our TESTING is much bigger and better. We have tested 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.

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.

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 rep-

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resenting 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 TEAM 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.

VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE: Biden "said that he would, quote, absolutely cut funding for law enforcement." — remarks Thursday in Philadelphia.

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 RNC 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.

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

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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.

Associated Press writers Mike Stobbe and Nicky Forster in New York and Lindsey Tanner in Chicago contributed to this report.

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

Find AP Fact Checks at <http://apnews.com/APFactCheck>

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The Latest: Mexico tops 35,000 deaths, 4th highest toll

By The Associated Press undefined

MEXICO CITY -- Mexican officials say the number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths has passed 35,000, making it the country with the fourth highest total.

A count by Johns Hopkins University has only the United States, Brazil and Britain with more confirmed deaths from the new coronavirus. Sunday's rise to 35,006 confirmed deaths moved Mexico, a country with 130 million inhabitants, past Italy.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador insisted the development of the pandemic in Mexico "is positive, it is good" because of the country's 32 states only nine had increases in infections.

"The bottom line is that the pandemic is on the downside, that it is losing intensity," Mexico's president said.

Nevertheless, some days this past week have seen record daily numbers of new infections.

Deputy Health Secretary Hugo López-Gatell said the number of confirmed cases of the new coronavirus rose to 299,750 on Sunday.

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

- Coronavirus deaths take a long-expected turn for the worse
- As U.S. grapples with virus, Florida hits record case increase
- Dengue prevention efforts stifled by coronavirus pandemic
- Coronavirus surge in eastern Europe prompts new restrictions
- Doctors say virus spread, not politics, should guide school reopenings.
- Churches amid the pandemic: Some outbreaks, many challenges

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

MELBOURNE, Australia — Australia's worst-hit Victoria state recorded only 177 new coronavirus cases on Monday, but a health official is warning the disease's spread might yet worsen.

The new cases were substantially down from 273 cases on Sunday and a record 288 on Friday.

Victoria's Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton said it was too early to say whether the lower count meant the spread was being contained.

"It's great it's lower than our peak. But it may not be our peak yet," Sutton said. "So I would like to see a week of decreasing numbers before I come and say I have greater confidence about the direction we're going in."

Melbourne, Australia's second-most popular city, and a part of its surrounds in Victoria returned to lockdown last week in a bid to contain the disease spread.

Australia has recorded around 10,000 COVID-19 cases and 108 deaths.

LOS ANGELES -- A heat wave has brought crowds to California's beaches, where people mostly heeded warnings to keep a safe distance from each other as the state grappled with a spike in coronavirus infections and hospitalizations.

Lifeguard Chief Jason Young said Sunday that people are spread out on Orange County beaches. Temperatures soared into the 90s in many areas from San Diego north to the San Francisco Bay Area.

The statewide death toll increased by 71 to hit 7,107. There are more than 320,800 positive cases statewide. Meanwhile, two more inmates from San Quentin State Prison have died.

HOUSTON, Texas — Top officials in Houston are calling for the city to lock back down as area hospitals strain to accommodate the onslaught of patients sick with the new coronavirus.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo, both Democrats, said this weekend that a stay-at-home order is needed for America's fourth-largest city to cope with the surge of COVID-19 cases.

The call comes after a week in which Texas continued to break records for confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths linked to the disease. State health officials reported 8,196 new cases Sunday, another 80 deaths and a total of 10,410 people hospitalized due to the virus.

The decision over a lockdown, however, rests with Republican Gov. Greg Abbott — who has resisted this step, saying it should be a last resort.

JACKSON, Miss. -- Students in Mississippi are scheduled to return to school in August amid rising cases of COVID-19 in the state, but campus life will be a lot different than what many are used to.

At Mississippi State, temperature check-in kiosks will be scattered around campus. Students who live in dorms will be required to log their temperature every 24 hours and fill out a health questionnaire. Employees and day students will be required to check temperatures at home and take a screening survey before arriving on campus.

At Mississippi State and the University of Mississippi, all members of the community will be required to wear masks inside and out of the classroom, where class sizes will be reduced by 50%.

"While we remain focused on preserving the on-campus experience, COVID-19 has forced us to rethink everything we do," University of Mississippi Chancellor Glenn F. Boyce said in a letter to the campus community in late June.

New cases of the disease caused by the new coronavirus and numbers of hospitalizations are still rising in Mississippi. On Friday, the state reported 1,031 new cases — one of its single highest increases.

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DICKINSON, N.D. — Metal band Great White has apologized for performing at an outdoor North Dakota concert where the crowd didn't wear masks despite the ongoing threat of the coronavirus.

The band drew criticism on social media after the performance Thursday night as part of the "First on First: Dickinson Summer Nights" concert series in Dickinson, in the southwest of the state. Spin magazine posted video showing the crowd packed in and not wearing face masks.

"We have had the luxury of hindsight and we would like to apologize to those who disagreed with our decision to fulfill our contractual agreement. The Promoter and staff were nothing but professional and assured us of the safety precautions," Great White said in a statement Saturday.

Although North Dakota health officials recommend social distancing and wearing masks when possible, there is no legal requirement to do so in the state and Great White said the band nevertheless was "not in a position to enforce the laws."

The band is best known for its version of "Once Bitten, Twice Shy." A different iteration of Great White that included longtime frontman Jack Russell and that performed under the name Jack Russell's Great White was involved in one of the most tragic concerts in U.S. history in 2003. During a show at The Station nightclub in Rhode Island, the band's pyrotechnics sparked a fast-moving blaze that caused a bottleneck as fans tried to flee. The fire killed 100 people.

BARCELONA, Spain — Regional authorities in northeast Spain have tightened a health lockdown and confined over 140,000 people to only leaving their homes for work and other essential activities.

Catalan authorities announced the confinement on Sunday, a week after they had already limited travel to and from the county of El Segria, population 210,000, because of an outbreak of the virus that causes COVID-19.

Lleida, with 138,000 residents, is one of the municipalities in which people are confined to their homes. "We must break the chain of contagion," said regional health authority Alba Vergés. "We must limit our contact to those people we live with."

The outbreak in the rural area is connected to farm work and seasonal day laborers, many of whom work and live in precarious conditions.

Catalan health authorities are also keeping close watch on an outbreak in Hospitalet, a densely populated municipality in the greater Barcelona metropolitan area. In total, northeast Catalonia reported over 800 new cases on Sunday.

Spain emerged from a three-month nationwide lockdown in mid-June that it needed to rein in the virus that has officially claimed at least 28,000 lives.

JOHANNESBURG -- South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said Sunday the country will return to a ban of the sales of alcohol immediately to reduce the volume of trauma patients so that hospitals have more beds to treat COVID-19 patients.

Confronted by surging hospitalizations due to the coronavirus, South Africa is also reinstating a night curfew to reduce traffic accidents and has made it mandatory for all residents to wear face masks in public.

Ramaphosa said that top health officials warn of impending shortages of hospital beds and medical oxygen as South Africa reaches a peak of COVID-19 cases, expected between the end of July and September.

South Africa's rapid increase in reported cases has made it one of the world's centers for COVID-19, now the 9th country most affected by the disease, according to Johns Hopkins University. The country has reported increases of more than 10,000 confirmed cases for several days and the latest daily increase was nearly 13,500. South Africa accounts for 40% of all the confirmed cases in Africa, with 264,184, including 3,971 deaths, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

GENEVA — The World Health Organization has reported another record in the increase in the number of confirmed coronavirus cases over a 24-hour period, at over 230,000.

The U.N. health agency said Sunday the United States again topped the list among countries, with more than 66,000 cases recorded.

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The figures don't necessarily account for delays in reporting of cases, and are believed to far underestimate actual case totals.

Still, the trend line of confirmed cases continues to increase — with three largest counts coming in over the last three days.

The previous record was Friday, with more than 228,000 newly recorded cases worldwide in a 24-hour span.

Overall, the WHO has counted more than 12.5 million confirmed cases and more than 561,000 deaths from COVID-19.

NEW YORK — New York education officials are set to begin outlining what will need to be done to re-open schools as Gov. Andrew Cuomo says the state has maintained a "low and stable" number of people testing positive for coronavirus.

The state Education Department is scheduled to present a framework for the long-awaited reopening guidance to the Board of Regents on Monday, with the full guidance to come later.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio last week announced a hybrid plan for the nation's largest district that would put most students inside their physical schools just two or three days a week. Schools can't accommodate all their students and maintain safe social distancing, he said.

Cuomo, however, said it is up to him to decide whether the state's approximately 700 school districts can open at all. He said state officials will decide in the first week of August whether to accept plans submitted by districts — and whether schools will reopen in the fall at all.

New York reported five coronavirus deaths on Sunday, matching its lowest number since the pandemic emerged there. But Cuomo said the rising number of cases elsewhere is concerning.

"Today's numbers remain low and stable, but it is up to us to keep it that way," Cuomo said in a written statement, urging people to wear masks and socially distance.

WASHINGTON -- Surgeon General Jerome Adams said Sunday the Trump administration is "trying to correct" its guidance from earlier in the coronavirus epidemic that wearing face coverings was not necessary.

With virus cases surging and many states and cities now issuing orders to wear masks in public, Adams said he and other administration officials were wrong back in March. But he insists they were going with the scientific knowledge at the time, which suggested that people with COVID-19 who showed no symptoms were not likely to spread the virus.

Adams said on CBS' "Face the Nation" that "once upon a time, we prescribed cigarettes for asthmatics and leeches and cocaine and heroin for people as medical treatments. When we learned better, we do better."

Dr. Tom Inglesby, director of the Center for Health Security at Johns Hopkins University, told "Fox News Sunday" that he would have liked to have seen administration officials wear masks sooner. He says it should not be viewed as a "personal choice" but a public health imperative.

Trump was seen wearing a mask in public for the first time Saturday during a visit to a military hospital.

MEXICO CITY —The ashes of 245 Mexican migrants who died of COVID-19 in New York have arrived back into their home nation.

A Mexican Air Force plane carrying the remains arrived at near midnight Saturday in what the Foreign Relations Department called an "unprecedented" effort.

The urns were taken from the plane and placed on a table adorned with white flowers for a brief ceremony. "It's the way Mexico expresses its gratitude for so much that our migrants have contributed from abroad, and of course in addition to giving consolation to their families, who can give them a final goodbye in their land," said Roberto Velasco, the Foreign Relations Department's director-general for North America.

Roman Catholic Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the archbishop of New York, celebrated a Mass for the coronavirus victims on Saturday at St. Patrick's Cathedral, blessing the ashes.

The Mexican government says more than 1,500 Mexican migrants have died of COVID-19 in the United

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States, about half of them in New York.

ATHENS, Greece — Greek authorities reported 31 new COVID-19 cases Sunday, with no fatalities over the past 24 hours. Despite the decline in cases, authorities are still on the lookout for local outbreaks, especially in holiday spots. But only 4 arriving foreign tourists have tested positive since Saturday afternoon.

The total number of cases stands at 3,803, with 193 dead. There are 10 patients on ventilators, while 122 have exited intensive care units.

LE HAVRE, France — For the first time since the coronavirus shut down sports and chased away spectators, Neymar and Kylian Mbappe were starring in Sunday's return of fans to elite European soccer.

"Now it's for real ... we're back," Mbappe tweeted before the kick-off of Paris Saint-Germain against Le Havre, an exhibition match that was the first encounter in front of fans to feature one of Europe's elite clubs since the outbreak erupted.

Only 5,000 people were allowed inside Le Havre's 25,000-seat Stade Oceane to see the French League 2 club take on PSG's star-studded squad. Upper tiers of seating were empty.

Spectators had to wear face masks to get into the arena, although many then took them off once settled in their seats. Families and friends sat together in groups but groups stayed separated. Ball carriers wore masks and gloves. Loudspeakers broadcast appeals for social distancing. Pitch-side photographers were made to step with their shoes into trays of disinfectant.

WASHINGTON -- Education Secretary Betsy DeVos is downplaying the risk of sending kids back to school despite surging coronavirus cases in many parts of the U.S.

Speaking in Sunday TV interviews, DeVos stressed that kids attending school in the fall should be the rule, not the exception.

She asserted that "there's nothing in the data that suggests that kids being in school is in any way dangerous."

But she was contradicted by public health experts who said the virus can still be dangerous to kids, even if the risk is lower. Dr. Tom Inglesby, director of the Center for Health Security at Johns Hopkins University, said on "Fox News Sunday" that science is also unclear on how much kids can spread the disease to more vulnerable adults.

DeVos said the Trump administration is looking at "all the options" for pulling funding from schools if they don't provide full-time in person learning, calling American investment in education "a promise to students and their families."

She described Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance for keeping schools safe, such as face coverings and social distancing, as "guidelines" meant to be flexible.

LONDON — A British pilot who was Vietnam's most critical COVID-19 patient has arrived back home in Scotland.

Glasgow Airport said the man landed in Scotland on Sunday and was met by a waiting ambulance. He's now in a hospital recuperating.

The 42-year-old, identified by the official Vietnam News Agency as Stephen Cameron, had flown out of Ho Chi Minh City the day before.

Vietnam had gone all out to save Cameron, who was working for national carrier Vietnam Airlines when he tested positive for the coronavirus in March. He had been critically ill and spent 65 days on life support.

Cameron is known in Vietnam as "Patient 91," as he was the 91st person in the country confirmed to have the coronavirus. He was the Southeast Asian nation's last patient in an ICU, and his recovery means the country still has not had any COVID-19 deaths.

Grandson of Elvis Presley has died at age 27, agent says

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LOS ANGELES (AP) — The son of Lisa Marie Presley has died. He was 27.

Presley's representative Roger Widynowski said in a statement Sunday to The Associated Press that she was "heartbroken" after learning about the death of her son Benjamin Keough. He is the grandson of the late Elvis Presley.

TMZ reports that Keough died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound Sunday in Calabasas, California.

"She is completely heartbroken, inconsolable and beyond devastated but trying to stay strong for her 11-year-old twins and her oldest daughter Riley," Widynowski said in the statement. "She adored that boy. He was the love of her life."

Presley had Keough and actress Riley Keough, 31, with her former husband Danny Keough. She also had twins from another marriage.

Nancy Sinatra tweeted her condolences to Presley, writing, "I have known you since before your mama gave birth to you, never dreaming you would have pain like this in your life. I'm so very sorry."

Exit poll: Duda leads Poland's tight presidential runoff

By VANESSA GERA and MONIKA SCISLOWSKA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — A late exit poll in Poland's presidential runoff Sunday showed the conservative, populist incumbent, Andrzej Duda, leading against the liberal, pro-Europe mayor of Warsaw, but with the race still too close to call.

It appeared to be the closest election in Poland's history, reflecting the deep divisions in this European Union nation. Although the country is struggling with the coronavirus pandemic and problems in its health and education systems, the campaign was dominated by issues of culture and saw strains of homophobia and anti-Semitism.

The late exit poll by the Ipsos institute showed Duda with 50.8% of the vote and challenger Rafal Trzaskowski with 49.2%. An earlier exit poll had showed Duda with 50.4% and Trzaskowski 49.6%. The polls had margins of error of plus-or-minus 1 percentage point and 2 points, respectively.

Official results are not expected until Monday or Tuesday.

The results would lead Poland down starkly different political paths, at least until 2023, when the next parliamentary election is scheduled.

Duda, who is backed by the ruling right-wing Law and Justice party and the government, campaigned on traditional values and social spending in this mostly Catholic nation as he sought a second 5-year term.

As the race became tighter in recent weeks, Duda turned further to the right in search of votes. He seized on gay rights as a key theme, denouncing the LGBT rights movement as an "ideology" worse than communism.

Duda's campaign also cast Trzaskowski as someone who would sell out Polish families to Jewish interests, tapping into old anti-Semitic tropes in a country that was home to Europe's largest Jewish community before being decimated by Germany in the Holocaust.

On Sunday night Duda said he didn't regret anything he said in the campaign because "I said what I believe."

Trzaskowski, a former European Parliament lawmaker, jumped into the race relatively late to oppose Duda's and Law and Justice's erosion of democratic rights under the ruling party. He represented the centrist opposition Civic Platform party, which was in power in from 2007 to 2015.

Duda expressed confidence that the results would confirm his victory, and he called the high turnout "a beautiful testimony of our democracy."

Duda said the turnout was around 70%, which would be a record high for a presidential election in the 30 years since Poland threw off communism, embraced democracy and later gained membership in NATO and the EU.

Long lines outside some polling stations Sunday night forced them to stay open past their official closing time of 9 p.m. for what many considered to be one of the most crucial elections in these three decades of democracy.

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Those supporting Trzaskowski saw the election as possibly a last chance to halt an erosion of the rule of law and discriminatory rhetoric under Duda and the ruling party, both in power since 2015.

At an election night event, Trzaskowski said he still believed the numbers could turn in his favor. Exit polls do not reflect the votes cast from abroad, and a majority of them were expected to go to Trzaskowski.

He said he was still dreaming of a Poland "that knows how to rebuild a united society, that is proud of its tradition, that is looking to the future, that is just, European, tolerant, where no one divides us."

If Duda is reelected, the populist Law and Justice party will keep a close ally in the president and maintain its hold on almost all key instruments of power in the nation of 38 million people. A win for Trzaskowski would give him the power to veto laws passed by the ruling conservatives and give Poland a less contentious relationship with European Union officials.

Duda had the full mobilization of the government, public media, and the help of President Donald Trump, who welcomed him at the White House last month and said he was doing a "terrific job."

The ballot was supposed to be held in May but after much political wrangling was delayed by health concerns amid the coronavirus pandemic. Some 30 million voters were eligible to cast ballots. In the first round with 11 candidates, Duda got 43.5% support and Trzaskowski 30.5%.

The ruling party and Duda have won popularity through a welfare program that improved the lives of many impoverished retirees and families with children, especially in rural areas and small towns, and also through their attachment to Poland's traditional Roman Catholic values.

But the ruling party has drawn criticism from EU leaders for taking steps to politically influence the justice system and the media in Poland. It has also deepened social rifts with verbal attacks on urban liberals, Jews and the LGBT community.

Trzaskowski vowed to close the social rifts in Poland but keep the benefits payments coming. Sunday's exit polls showed his support strongest among younger people, in larger cities and among more highly educated people.

Due to the pandemic, the voting was held under strict sanitary regulations. Poland has registered over 37,000 infections and almost 1,600 virus-related deaths. Voters had to wear masks and gloves, maintain a safe distance and use hand sanitizer. They used their own pens to mark ballots.

Appeals court: 1st federal execution in 17 years can proceed

By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal appeals court ruled Sunday that the first federal execution in nearly two decades may proceed as scheduled on Monday.

The ruling from the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturns a lower court order that had put the execution of 47-year-old Daniel Lewis Lee on hold.

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

Chief District Judge Jane Magnus-Stinson ruled Friday in Indiana that the execution would be put on hold because of concerns from the family of the victims about the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 135,000 people and is ravaging prisons nationwide.

The Justice Department argued that the judge's order misconstrued the law and asked the appeals court to immediately overturn the ruling.

The appeals court found that the claim from the victims' family "lacks any arguable legal basis and is therefore frivolous."

The Justice Department also argued that while the Bureau of Prisons has taken measures to accommodate the family and implemented additional safety protocols because of the pandemic, the family's concerns "do not outweigh the public interest in finally carrying out the lawfully imposed sentence in this case."

But in a court filing Sunday, Justice officials said a staff member involved in preparing for the execution had tested positive for the coronavirus.

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The Justice Department said the development would not mean an additional delay in the government's timetable because the worker had not been in the execution chamber and had not come into contact with anyone on the specialized team sent to the prison to handle the execution.

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.

The victims' family had argued they weren't trying to overturn Lee's death sentence but instead they "seek to exercise their lawful rights to attend the execution of Lee, so that they can be together at that moment in time as they grieve their losses," according to the filing.

The family will appeal to the Supreme Court.

"The federal government has put this family in the untenable position of choosing between their right to witness Danny Lee's execution and their own health and safety," said family attorney Baker Kurrus. "Because the Government has scheduled the execution in the midst of a raging pandemic, these three women would have to put their lives at risk to travel cross-country at this time."

The family hopes there won't be an execution, ever. They have asked the Justice Department and President Donald Trump not to move forward with the execution and have long asked that he be given a life sentence instead.

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. Peterson, who is 81 and has not left the county where she lives since February, was told by her doctor she should not travel and should avoid contact with others as much as possible to during the pandemic, the filing said.

"Plaintiffs face the unacceptable choice between exercising their right to witness the execution and risking exposure to a deadly disease," the lawyers wrote in an appeals court filing on Saturday.

Attorney General William Barr told The Associated Press in recent days that he believes the Bureau of Prisons could "carry out these executions 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 injunction that was imposed late Friday 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 in the 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 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 been nearly 100 inmate deaths since late March.

As US grapples with virus, Florida hits record case increase

By TAMARA LUSH and PABLO GORONDI Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — With the United States grappling with the worst coronavirus outbreak in the world, Florida hit a grim milestone Sunday, shattering the national record for a state's largest single-day increase in positive cases.

Deaths from the virus have also been rising in the U.S., especially in the South and West, though still well below the heights hit in April, according to a recent Associated Press analysis of data from Johns Hopkins University.

"I really do think we could control this, and it's the human element that is so critical. It should be an effort of our country. We should be pulling together when we're in a crisis, and we're definitely not doing it," said University of Florida epidemiologist Dr. Cindy Prins.

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Adm. Brett Giroir, a member of the White House coronavirus task force, called mask-wearing in public, which has been met with resistance in some U.S. states, "absolutely essential."

Giroir, the assistant secretary at the Health and Human Services Department, told ABC's "This Week" on Sunday that "if we don't have that, we will not get control of the virus."

President Donald Trump wore a mask in public for the first time Saturday, something Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Sunday showed he has "crossed a bridge."

Pelosi told CNN's "State of the Union" that she hopes it means the president "will change his attitude, which will be helpful in stopping the spread of the coronavirus."

In hard-hit Houston, Texas, two top Democratic officials called for the nation's fourth-largest city to lock back down as area hospitals strained to accommodate the onslaught of sick patients.

In Florida, where parts of Walt Disney World reopened Saturday, 15,299 people tested positive, for a total of 269,811 cases, and 45 deaths were recorded, according to state Department of Health statistics reported Sunday.

California had the previous record of daily positive cases — 11,694, set on Wednesday.

The numbers come at the end of a record-breaking week as Florida reported 514 fatalities — an average of 73 per day. Three weeks ago, the state was averaging 30 deaths per day.

Researchers expect deaths to rise in the U.S. for at least some weeks, but some think the count probably will not go up as dramatically as it did in the spring because of several factors, including increased testing.

The World Health Organization, meanwhile, reported another record increase in the number of confirmed coronavirus cases over a 24-hour period, at over 230,000.

The U.N. health agency said the United States again topped the list among countries, with more than 66,000 cases. The figures don't necessarily account for delays in reporting cases, and are believed to far underestimate actual totals.

Countries in Eastern Europe were among those facing rising waves of new infections, leading to riots in Serbia, mandatory face masks in Croatia and travel bans or quarantines imposed by Hungary.

"We see worrisome signs about an increase in the number of cases in the neighboring countries, Europe and the whole world," said Gergely Gulyas, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's chief of staff. "Now, we have to protect our own security and prevent the virus from being brought in from abroad."

Hungarian authorities said Sunday they have sorted countries into three categories — red, yellow and green — based on their rates of new coronavirus infections, and will impose restrictions, including entry bans and mandatory quarantines, depending on which country people are arriving from.

Serbia, where health authorities are warning that hospitals are almost full due to the latest surge, reported 287 new infections on Sunday, although there have been increasing doubts about the accuracy of the figures. Officially, the country has over 18,000 confirmed infections and 382 deaths since March. Sunday's report of 11 coronavirus deaths was the country's second-highest daily death toll.

Serbian police clashed with anti-government protesters for four nights last week, demonstrations that forced the Serbian president to withdraw plans to reintroduce a coronavirus lockdown. Many of the increasing infections have been blamed on crowded soccer matches, tennis events and nightclubs.

In Bulgaria, authorities reintroduced restrictions lifted a few weeks ago because of a new surge in cases. Albania also has seen a significant increase in infections since mid-May, when it eased lockdown measures. The Balkan nation reported 93 new cases, over twice as many as the highest daily figures in March and April, and the health ministry called the situation at the main infectious disease hospital "grave."

Croatia, whose island-dotted Adriatic Sea coast is a major tourist destination, is making wearing masks mandatory in stores beginning Monday.

Yet the numbers of infections in Eastern Europe pale in comparison to daily coronavirus reports from India, South Africa and Brazil, whose virus-denying president has tested positive.

India, which has the most cases after the United States and Brazil, saw a record surge of 28,637 cases reported in the past 24 hours. Authorities also announced a weeklong lockdown beginning Tuesday in the key southern technology hub of Bangalore, where the offices of top tech companies like Microsoft, Apple

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and Amazon are located.

South Africa has reported over 10,000 new daily cases for several days in a row, including 13,497 new infections announced Saturday night. Johannesburg's densely populated Soweto township is one of the virus hot spots. With over 264,000 cases and 3,971 deaths, South Africa accounts for over 40% of all the reported coronavirus cases in Africa.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said Sunday the country would return to a ban of alcohol sales to reduce the volume of trauma patients so that hospitals have more beds to treat COVID-19. The country is also reinstating a night curfew to reduce traffic accidents and has made it mandatory for all residents to wear face masks in public.

Meanwhile, in Taiwan, which kept its coronavirus outbreak to a few hundred cases, an annual film festival wrapped up with an awards ceremony this weekend where actors and others lined up for photo shoots with no social distancing, and participants didn't wear masks.

Gorondi reported from Budapest, Hungary. Associated Press writers around the world contributed to this report.

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

Trump, Biden try to outdo each other on tough talk on China

By DEB RIECHMANN and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — China has fast become a top election issue as President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden engage in a verbal brawl over who's better at playing the tough guy against Beijing.

The Trump campaign put out ads showing Biden toasting China's Xi Jinping, even though Trump did just that with Xi in Asia and hosted the Chinese leader at his Florida club. Spots from the Biden campaign feature Trump playing down the coronavirus and praising Xi for being transparent about the pandemic, even though it's clear China hid details of the outbreak from the world.

"I think it's going to be absolutely critical, but I don't know who is going to have the advantage," said Republican pollster Frank Luntz. He has been reviewing the ads and thinks China is one of the three leading issues along with the economy and the handling of the coronavirus.

China is not just a foreign policy issue in the November election. It's an issue that runs deeply through the troubles with the virus, which tanked the U.S. economy. Voters also will be asking themselves whether Trump or Biden can best defend the U.S. against China's unfair trade practices, theft of intellectual property rights, rising aggression across the globe and human rights abuses.

"Which person looks more subservient to the Chinese leaders is the person who's in more jeopardy," Luntz said.

As the coronavirus spread throughout the U.S., a Pew Research Center poll in March found Americans with increasingly negative views of China, with 66% saying they had an unfavorable opinion. That was the most negative rating since the question was first asked in 2005. The same poll found 62% of Americans calling China's power and influence a major threat to the U.S., compared with 48% two years ago.

A NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll in late May and early June found registered voters about evenly divided over which of the candidates would be better at dealing with China, with 43% saying Trump compared with 40% for Biden. In the poll, 5% viewed Trump and Biden equally, while 10% said neither would be good.

Trump's advisers see China as an opportunity to portray Biden as deferential to Beijing when he was President Barack Obama's vice president and point person on Asia, according to three campaign officials and Republicans close to the White House. The campaign made a push in May to link Biden with China, complete with an advertising blitz, but the effort did little to raise Trump's poll numbers.

The Trump campaign credits the president with signing the first phase of a trade deal with China in

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January, which boosted stock markets and seemingly ended a bruising trade war. Republicans want to tether Biden to past multinational agreements and trade deals blamed for an exodus of manufacturing jobs across the Midwest. It's an argument they believe worked against Hillary Clinton when they tried to wrest Midwest states from the Democrats in 2016.

The White House lists more than two dozen actions the administration has taken since April to protect U.S. jobs, businesses and U.S. supply chains from damage caused by the Chinese Communist Party's policies. That includes last week's move to impose sanctions on Chinese officials for their roles in repressing religious and ethnic minorities. More than a few administration officials have recently delivered speeches calling out China's policies.

Peter Navarro, one of Trump's senior economic advisers, kept up the drumbeat on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures," saying "the Chinese Communist Party basically hit us with that deadly virus, that weaponized virus" and disrupted the U.S. economy. He suggested Beijing was using social media apps such as TikTok to steal American intellectual property as part of a plan to hurt Trump for his strong stands against China.

"Trump, buy American. Joe Biden, buy China," Navarro said.

The Trump campaign believes that could strike a chord with the increasing number of Americans who have an unfavorable view of the Asian power. There also is rising concern about U.S. dependence on China for supplies — something that drew attention during the scramble for protective gear for U.S. health workers.

One more line of off-and-on attack by Trump, despite no proof of impropriety, involves the business ties that Biden's son, Hunter, has had with China.

The Biden campaign is working to portray Trump as someone who talks tough but has failed to hold China accountable for its response to the virus and has signed only the first phase of a trade deal. The campaign says that while that deal was being negotiated, Trump was saying that COVID-19 would "miraculously" be gone in April and now it's July and cases are surging and the death toll rising.

"Trump said he'd get tough on China," one of Biden campaign ads says. "He didn't get tough. He got played."

The Biden camp highlights other Trump vulnerabilities on China that surfaced in former national security adviser John Bolton's new book, which claims Trump urged Xi to increase Chinese purchases of soybeans and wheat to help him Trump farm states in November. Bolton also wrote that Trump told Xi that building detention camps for hundreds of thousands of Muslim and other ethnic and religious minorities in western China was "exactly the right thing to do."

Trump claims he's been tougher on China than any other president. The Biden campaign says Trump has weakened relations with allies and pulled the U.S. out of international organizations, giving China more room to exert its own influence. Biden campaign officials say that if Biden is elected, he will restore relationships with U.S. allies and rally the international community to form a united front against China.

"What's striking to me is the extent to which the Trump campaign seems to have thought that China would be a winning issue for them," said Jeff Prescott, a foreign policy adviser for Biden.

"He was hiding from the warning signs coming in on the pandemic to get his trade deal done with Xi Jinping and then spent all of January and February and into March praising Xi — praising China's handling of the coronavirus — and talking up his very flimsy phase one trade deal," Prescott said.

Associated Press writer Hannah Fingerhut in Washington contributed to this report.

Virus spread, not politics should guide schools, doctors say

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

As the Trump administration pushes full steam ahead to force schools to resume in-person education, public health experts warn that a one-size-fits-all reopening could drive infection and death rates even higher.

They're urging a more cautious approach, which many local governments and school districts are already

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pursuing.

But U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos doubled down on President Donald Trump's insistence that kids can safely return to the classroom.

"There's nothing in the data that suggests that kids being in school is in any way dangerous," she told Chris Wallace on "Fox News Sunday."

Still, health experts say there are too many uncertainties and variables for back-to-school to be back-to-normal.

Where is the virus spreading rapidly? Do students live with aged grandparents? Do teachers have high-risk health conditions that would make online teaching safest? Do infected children easily spread COVID-19 to each other and to adults?

Regarding the latter, some evidence suggests they don't, but a big government study aims to find better proof. Results won't be available before the fall, and some schools are slated to reopen in just a few weeks.

"These are complicated issues. You can't just charge straight ahead," Dr. Tom Frieden, former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said Wednesday during an online briefing.

Children infected with coronavirus are more likely than adults to have mild illnesses, but their risk for severe disease and death isn't zero. While a virus-linked inflammatory condition is uncommon, most children who develop it require intensive care, and a few have died. Doctors don't know which children are at risk.

"The single most important thing we can do to keep our schools safe has nothing to do with what happens in school. It's how well we control COVID-19 in the community," Frieden said. "Right now there are places around the country where the virus is spreading explosively and it would be difficult if not impossible to operate schools safely until the virus is under better control."

Zahrah Wattier teaches high school in Galveston, Texas, where cases and deaths have been spiking. Until the state recently said schools must reopen to in-person classes, her district had been weighing options many others are considering, including full-time online teaching or a hybrid mix.

Wattier's school has mostly Hispanic and Black students, many from low-income families; almost 70% qualify for free or reduced-cost lunches and many have parents who work in "essential" jobs that increase potential exposure to the virus. Online education was hard for many with limited internet access, and Wattier knows in-person classes can help even the playing field.

But she's worried.

"My school has over 2,000 students. That's over 2,000 exposures in a day," said Wattier, whose parents live with the family and are both high-risk. "It's a lot to think about. It's my job. It's something I choose to do, it's something I love. Now it comes at a really high risk."

The American Academy of Pediatrics, whose guidance the Trump administration has cited to support its demands, says the goal is for all students to be physically present in school. But, it adds, districts must be flexible, consult with health authorities and be ready to pivot as virus activity waxes and wanes.

"It is not that the American Academy of Pediatrics thinks this is a done deal because we have put out guidance," said Dr. Nicholas Beers, a member of the academy's school health council. "But what we do know is that we need to have a more realistic dialogue about the implications of virtual learning on the future of children. We have left whole swaths of society behind, whether it's because they have limited access to a computer, or broadband internet," or because of other challenges that online education can't address.

DeVos said local school officials are smart enough to know when conditions are not right.

"There's going to be the exception to the rule, but the rule should be that kids go back to school this fall," she told CNN's "State of the Union."

"And where there are little flare-ups or hot spots, that can be dealt with on a school by school or a case by case basis."

Following CDC and academy guidelines would mean big changes for most schools. Mask-wearing would be strongly encouraged for adult staff and students except the youngest. Desks would be distanced at least 3 feet apart; the CDC recommends 6 feet. Both suggest limiting adults allowed in schools, including parents, and canceling group activities like choir and assemblies. Staggered arrival and dismissal times,

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outdoor classes, and keeping kids in the same classroom all day are other options.

President Trump has threatened federal funding cuts for districts that don't fully reopen.

DeVos defended that stance, saying, "American investment in education is a promise to students and their families."

"If schools aren't going to reopen and not fulfill that promise, they shouldn't get the funds, and give it to the families to decide to go to a school that is going to meet that promise," she said on "Fox News Sunday."

U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called DeVos' comments "malfeasance and dereliction of duty."

"They're messing, the president and his administration are messing with the health of our children," the California Democrat told CNN's "State of the Union."

While most funding typically comes from state and local sources, experts say schools will need more federal funding, not less, to reopen safely. Masks, extra cleaning supplies or janitors, additional classroom space, and mental health support for students and staff traumatized by the pandemic are among potential costs. And with more parents out of work, more children will qualify for federally funded school lunches.

Lynn Morales, 49, teaches 8th grade English at a high-poverty public school in Bloomington, Minnesota, that is considering several options including in-person classes; a final decision is expected Aug. 1.

Some colleagues are considering not returning to the classroom because their children's day care centers aren't reopening. Some say they won't come back until there's a vaccine.

"I am concerned and it's because of the age group," Morales said. "Middle school students ... are lovely and I love them, but they touch, they get close, they roughhouse. It is their nature. They're 13 years old. They are defiant."

"If masks are required and a kid isn't wearing a mask, is my job description going to be to chase down this kid and insist they wear a mask? And what if they don't?"

Dr. Emily Landon, a University of Chicago infectious disease specialist, is helping the university and a campus preK-12 school decide how to reopen safely.

"Things are evolving from, 'We can't do it unless it's perfectly safe' to more of a harm reduction model, with the caveat that you can always step back" if virus activity flares, Landon said.

Single-occupancy dorms, outdoor classes, socially distanced classrooms and mask-wearing by students and faculty are on tap for the university. Face coverings will be required at the school too. Policies may change depending on virus activity.

She dismisses complaints from some parents who say masks are a loss of personal freedom.

"It's not harmful for your child," she said. "If you see wearing masks as a loss of personal freedom, then you have to think the same of pants."

Dr. Tina Hartert of Vanderbilt University is leading a National Institutes of Health-funded study to determine what role children play in transmitting COVID-19. Almost 2,000 families are enrolled and self-test every two weeks. The idea is to find infected children without symptoms and see how easily disease spreads within families. Results may come by year's end.

"If we don't see significant transmission within households, that would be very reassuring," Hartert said.

She noted that in other countries where schools have reopened, evidence suggests no widespread transmission from children.

In France, public schools reopened briefly before a summer break, with no sign of widespread virus transmission. Masks were only required for upper grades, but students stayed in the same classroom all day. A better test will be when the new school year starts Sept. 1.

In Norway, schools closed in March for several weeks. Nursery schools reopened first, then other grades. Children were put in smaller groups that stay together all day. Masks aren't required. There have been only a few virus cases, said Dr. Margrethe Greve-Isdahl of the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, but she noted virus activity is much lower than in the U.S.

Kati Spaniak, a realtor in Northbrook, Illinois, says her five teenage daughters have struggled to cope with pandemic fears, school closures and deficits of online learning. She strongly supports getting kids back in the classroom, and all her girls will return to some form of that in the fall.

It's been hard for her high school senior, Kylie Ciesla. Prom, graduation and other senior rituals were

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canceled, and there were no good-byes. "Just to get ripped away from everything I've worked for 12 years, it's really hard," Kylie said.

At college, classes will be in person, masks mandated and a COVID-19 test required before she can move into her dorm. Kylie isn't sure all that is needed.

"I hate that this thing has become so political. I just want the science. I want to know what we need to do to fix it," she said.

AP reporters John Leicester and Arno Pedram in Paris contributed to this report.

Follow AP Medical Writer Lindsey Tanner at @LindseyTanner.

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

Chatham announces plan to buy newspaper publisher McClatchy

By TALI ARBEL AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Hedge fund Chatham Asset Management plans to buy newspaper publisher McClatchy out of bankruptcy, ending 163 years of family control.

The companies did not put a price on the deal in an announcement Sunday. The agreement still needs the approval of a bankruptcy judge; a hearing is scheduled for July 24.

McClatchy is one of the largest newspaper companies in the U.S. It owns 30 papers including the Miami Herald, the Charlotte Observer and the Sacramento Bee. It filed for bankruptcy protection because of a heavy debt load stemming from its \$4.5 billion purchase of the Knight-Ridder newspaper chain in 2006, just as the newspaper industry went into steep decline.

Chatham was McClatchy's largest shareholder and debt holder. It beat out a bid from Alden Global Capital, another hedge fund that has taken a leading role in the U.S. newspaper business.

Chatham's other media holdings include the Canadian newspaper chain Postmedia and National Enquirer publisher American Media Inc. But industry expert Ken Doctor has noted that it doesn't make financial sense to combine those with McClatchy in order to cut costs, as newspaper dealmakers like to do. And the emergence of Alden Global Capital as a bidder has given rise to speculation that Chatham will try to combine McClatchy with Alden's holdings or with another big newspaper company, like Gannett.

While national newspapers such as The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times are adding digital subscribers that help them navigate advertising declines, many local outlets have had a difficult time. That has contributed to a string of bankruptcies and consolidation, much of it involving investment firms, deepening concerns about declining quality as newsrooms shrink and papers close.

The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated ad-revenue declines and prompted furloughs, pay cuts, layoffs and more newspaper closings.

Several mayors of cities where McClatchy has a paper wrote to the bankruptcy court, asking the judge to consider the civic value of the paper.

"We want our newspaper to emerge from this bankruptcy with owners who are willing to invest in our community, and provide us with journalism at its best," Lexington, Kentucky, mayor Linda Gorton said of the Lexington Herald-Leader.

McClatchy's origins date to 1857, when it began publishing a four-page paper in Sacramento, California, following the California Gold Rush. The company remains headquartered in Sacramento.

Florida reports largest, single-day increase in COVID cases

By TAMARA LUSH and TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Florida shattered the national record Sunday for the largest single-day increase in positive coronavirus cases in any state since the beginning of the pandemic, adding more than

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15,000 cases as its daily average death toll continued to also rise.

According to state Department of Health statistics, 15,299 people tested positive, for a total of 269,811 cases, and 45 deaths were recorded.

California had the previous record of daily positive cases — 11,694, set on Wednesday. New York had 11,571 on April 15.

The numbers come at the end of a grim, record-breaking week as Florida reported 514 fatalities — an average of 73 per day. Three weeks ago, the state was averaging 30 deaths per day. Since the pandemic began in March, 4,346 people have died in Florida of COVID-19, the state says.

Testing has doubled over the last month, going from about 25,000 tests per day to almost 50,000, but the percentage of people testing positive has risen even more dramatically. A month ago, fewer than 5% of tests came up positive on a daily average. Over the past week, the daily average exceeded 19%.

About 10.7% of Saturday's 143,000 tests came up positive, with an average age of 38. "I still think we need to increase our testing a little bit more," said University of Florida epidemiologist Dr. Cindy Prins, adding that the state and local health departments should ramp up their contact tracing.

Prins said that she's still concerned about large crowds, gyms and some restaurants as being places of mass transmission. Reports of illegal clubs and raves in South Florida is also a worry, she said.

"I really do think we could control this, and it's the human element that is so critical. It should be an effort of our country. We should be pulling together when we're in a crisis, and we're definitely not doing it," she said. "I know people want to live their lives. There have been a lot of other times, people have made those sacrifices in order to benefit our society. It's almost like a war effort. That's what we need right now."

Terry Shaw, AdventHealth's president and CEO, said Sunday on CBS' Face the Nation that the peak of COVID-19 hospitalizations in Florida will be "sometime in front of us in July."

While on the program, he said that the health system, which has hospitals in nine states including 30 in Florida, has adequate PPE, a stockpile of ventilators and a clinical team that's learned how to better treat the disease.

"I give you an example. Our length of stay in our ICU for COVID patients has dropped in half. The number of people coming in to our hospital with COVID that need a ventilator, we've also been able to cut that in half. And because of those things, our death rate has also been cut in half" since the beginning of the pandemic," he said

The health system's ICU capacities in Florida are currently running at about 85% to 90%. He said the system could turn some "progressive care units" into ICU units if needed.

Hospitals in several counties have stopped doing elective surgeries. HCA West Florida have ceased inpatient elective procedures at hospitals in Hillsborough, Pinellas and six other nearby counties, said an HCA spokeswoman on Sunday. Florida ceased elective surgeries statewide from March until early May in order to free up beds, and to reserve personal protective equipment for health care workers caring for COVID-19 patients.

Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach are the top three counties for hospitalizations, with 3,232 people hospitalized — 42 percent of the 7,542 people in hospitals statewide for coronavirus.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez told CNN on Sunday that his county's hospitals will soon reach capacity, but he said more beds can be added, including for intensive care.

"We still have capacity, but it does cause me a lot of concern," he said.

Throughout May and into June, the state reopened much of its economy with some restrictions — and the number of positive cases began rising, but it wasn't until the last week that the daily death total began rising, too.

Because of the increase in cases and the positivity rate, doctors have predicted a rise in deaths, saying the mortality rate usually increases two to four weeks later as some of those infected get sicker and eventually die. Health experts are concerned that people are gathering in crowds, and have expressed concern that the Republican National Convention's nomination party for President Donald Trump will be held in Jacksonville in August.

On Saturday, the Magic Kingdom and Animal Kingdom reopened at Walt Disney World in Orlando, con-

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cerning health experts who urge people not to gather in groups. Guests at the park said that people were wearing masks and social distancing, and videos showed near-empty parks.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said that even with the rising rates, he still wants the schools to reopen as scheduled next month, saying children have not proven to be vectors for the disease in states and countries where campuses are open. He said while each county will have to come up with procedures, depending on their local infection rate, not opening the schools would exacerbate the achievement gap between high- and low-performing students.

"We know there are huge, huge costs for not providing the availability of in-person schooling," he said. "The risk of corona, fortunately, for students is incredibly low."

Helen Ferre, a spokeswoman for DeSantis, said Sunday that the state has tested more than 2.4 million people for COVID-19.

Ferre said the important statistic isn't the raw number of positives, but the percentage — on Sunday, it was just over 11%, about 8 percentage points lower than the weekly average.

"The more people who get tested and are proportionately reporting negative for this virus is meaningful," she wrote in an email to The Associated Press.

Meanwhile, a commissioner for a county near Jacksonville is seriously ill with the virus, according to a posting by his daughter on Facebook.

St. Johns County Commissioner Paul Waldron had recently voted against a county ordinance requiring masks, but not because he opposed them. He said he wanted more answers from county administrators about which masks are most effective and whether the county had enough for employees and visitors at government buildings.

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

It's Trump's call on what the GOP convention will look like

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After months of insisting that the Republican National Convention go off as scheduled despite the pandemic, President Donald Trump is slowly coming to accept that the late August event will not be the four-night infomercial for his reelection that he had anticipated.

After a venue change, spiking coronavirus cases and a sharp recession, Trump aides and allies are increasingly questioning whether it's worth the trouble, and some are advocating that the convention be scrapped altogether. Conventions are meant to lay out a candidate's vision for the coming four years, not spark months of intrigue over the health and safety of attendees, they have argued.

Ultimately, the decision on whether to move forward will be Trump's alone.

Already the 2020 event has seen a venue change — to more Trump-friendly territory in Jacksonville, Florida, from Charlotte, North Carolina — and it has been drastically reduced in scope. For technical reasons, the convention will be unable to formally adopt a new party platform. And what is normally a highlight of the convention — the roll call of the states to renominate the president — is set to be conducted through proxy votes in the original host city.

Still, Trump and his aides had pinned their hopes on creating the pageantry of a formal acceptance speech in Jacksonville, envisioning an arena of packed with supporters, without face masks. Outwardly, the White House and the RNC have said they're full-steam ahead with the revised plan.

"We're still moving forward with Jacksonville," White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said last week. "It'll be a safe event. It will be a good event."

But privately, concerns are mounting, and plans are being drawn up to further scale back the event or even shift it to entirely virtual. Officials who weeks ago had looked for the convention to be a celebration of the nation's vanquishing of the virus now see it as a potent symbol of the pandemic's persistence.

"There's a lot of people that want to do it. They want to be enthusiastic. But we can do that and we can do it safely," Donald Trump Jr. said. He told Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures" that "it's

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going to be an awesome event.”

Jacksonville, whose mayor is a former Florida Republican Party chairman, issued a public mask order two weeks ago as virus cases in the area surged. That mandate is unlikely to be lifted before the convention. Also, Florida has limited facilities statewide to operating at 50% of capacity.

Organizers now plan to provide COVID-19 testing to all attendees daily, conduct frequent temperature checks and offer face coverings. Even so, Trump aides and allies fear that the entire spectacle will be overshadowed by attendee concerns and already heightened media scrutiny on the potential for the convention to be a “super-spreading” event.

Key decisions about the event, including precisely where or if Trump will appear, need to be made in the coming days to allow sufficient time for the build-out of the space.

Increasingly, aides are pushing Trump to move his acceptance speech outdoors to minimize the risk of virus transmission. But Trump has expressed reservations about an outdoor venue, believing it would lack the same atmosphere as a charged arena.

Despite the economic downturn, GOP officials insist they will have the financial resources needed to hold the convention. Vice President Mike Pence flew to Florida on Saturday to hold a fundraiser for the event.

“The convention is still a month and a half away, so there is time to adjust and make the most appropriate decisions regarding venue options and an array of health precautions that will allow us to have a safe and exciting event for all,” RNC spokesman Mike Reed said. “We will continue to coordinate with local leadership in Jacksonville and in Florida in the weeks ahead.”

The Trump team’s worries were compounded after the president’s embarrassing return to campaign rallies after a three-month hiatus caused by the virus. The empty seats at his rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, brought about a shakeup to Trump’s campaign and renewed fears that the president would not be able to return to his signature campaign events in their traditional form before Election Day in November.

A Saturday rally in New Hampshire that was meant to be the president’s second attempt at a return to campaign travel was called off on Friday, ostensibly because of weather concerns from then-Tropical Storm Fay. But aides acknowledged they also were worried about attracting enough of a crowd to fill the Portsmouth aircraft hangar.

The challenge in Jacksonville may be more daunting. The administration’s top health officials have demurred when pressed on whether the convention could be held safely. Many among the party’s leadership and the donors who attend conventions are older, putting them in a higher-risk category for the coronavirus.

Already a half-dozen Republican senators have indicated they won’t attend the convention. Even Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky has expressed reservations.

“I’m not going to go, and I’m not going to go because of the virus situation,” 86-year-old Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley said on a conference call with Iowa reporters last week.

Asked whether he’d want to limit the gathering if the state’s coronavirus cases continue to rise, Trump replied that the decision “really depends on the timing.”

“We’re always looking at different things,” Trump said during an interview on Gray Television’s “Full Court Press with Greta Van Susteren.”

“When we signed a few weeks ago, it looked good,” the president continued. “And now, all of a sudden, it’s spiking up a little bit. And that’s going to go down. It really depends on the timing. Look, we’re very flexible.”

Associated Press writer Scott Bauer in Madison, Wisconsin, contributed to this report.

Maryland governor says GOP needs ‘bigger tent’ after Trump

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Republican governor rumored to be eyeing a run for the White House in 2024 said Sunday that the GOP needs to be a “bigger tent party” after President Donald Trump leaves office.

Maryland’s Larry Hogan, who has been known to break with Trump, told NBC’s “Meet the Press” that he doesn’t “know what the future holds in November.”

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"But I know that the Republican Party is going to be looking at what happens after President Trump and whether that's in four months or four years," Hogan said. "And I think they're going to be looking to, 'How do we go about becoming a bigger tent party?'"

The rebuke was a rarity from Republicans, who have largely been afraid to criticize a president still popular with the GOP rank-and-file despite questions about how he has handled the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hogan did not rule out voting for Joe Biden, the Democrat challenging Trump in the November election. In 2016, Hogan wrote in the name of his father, a former Republican congressman from Maryland.

"It's a difficult choice," he said. "I think most people would like to see something different, and maybe we'll figure that out in 2024."

The governor pointed to his 2018 reelection as a model, when he won in deep-blue Maryland by almost 12 percentage points "by reaching out, by trying to find that middle ground where people can stand together" and by eschewing "divisive rhetoric." He also noted that he did well with suburban women, a group that polls suggest has largely abandoned Trump.

Hogan also raised questions with Trump's decision on Friday to commute the sentence of longtime political ally, Roger Stone, who had been convicted of lying to help the president, and said "it's certainly going to hurt politically."

As virus rages in US, New York guards against another rise

By JENNIFER PELTZ, MICHAEL R. SISAK and MARINA VILLENEUVE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — As coronavirus rages out of control in other parts of the U.S., New York is offering an example after taming the nation's deadliest outbreak this spring — while also trying to prepare in case another surge comes.

New York's early experience is a ready-made blueprint for states now finding themselves swamped by the disease. It could also come in handy at home, as the region readies for a potential second wave of infection that experts predict will likely come at some point.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has offered advice, ventilators, masks, gowns and medicine to states dealing with spikes in cases and hospitalizations and, in some places, rising deaths. Some health care workers are heading to other states to help fight the virus, reciprocating the influx that gave New York hospitals some much-needed relief just months ago.

At the same time, the Democratic governor has ordered travelers from more than a dozen states to quarantine for 14 days, while urging New Yorkers not to let up on wearing masks or social distancing.

Yet with the virus tearing through the South and West, Cuomo warned Friday it would eventually rear up again in New York.

"We're doing everything we can," he told WAMC radio, but "I can feel it coming."

A widely cited University of Washington model doesn't project spikes — at least through its Nov. 1 time frame — in New York, New Jersey or Connecticut, whose Democratic governors have coordinated on traveler quarantines and, earlier, some shutdown policies. But that doesn't mean the densely populated tri-state area is in the clear.

"We expect the virus to return in all of those states," said Dr. Christopher Murray, head of the university's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. "The question is one of timing."

As cases spiked in March and April, New York became the nation's coronavirus nightmare, with New York City at the crux of it. Statewide, over 18,000 COVID-19 patients were in hospitals at one point in April. Daily deaths peaked at 799 in April, and have totaled over 24,000.

Now, as states from Florida to Texas to California see new confirmed cases soar, hospitals fill up and daily death tolls hit new records, numbers have dropped precipitously in the tri-state region. New York reported five new deaths statewide Sunday, when hospitals were caring for a total of about 800 coronavirus patients.

While New York has been gradually reopening, it also has been quietly preparing to handle another surge if it comes.

After health workers in New York and elsewhere grappled with shortages of masks, gowns and other

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protective gear this spring, Cuomo said he would order hospitals to have a 90-day supply on hand. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said the city would build its own reserve of ventilators, protective equipment and coronavirus test kits, identifying local suppliers and manufacturers rather than looking to federal authorities or global markets.

"We've learned a tough lesson that we have to create, and we have to protect ourselves," said de Blasio, a Democrat, who also said the city would stockpile as many as 18 million shelf-stable meals.

Others are preparing, too.

Mount Sinai Hospital expanded from 94 intensive-care beds to 235 and converted an atrium and lobby into wards for less-critical patients at the height of the crisis. Now, it's developing a coronavirus playbook of sorts, so clinicians will have how-tos immediately at hand, said Dr. Roopa Kohli-Seth, who oversees intensive care.

New York's nursing homes, which lost more than 6,400 residents to the virus, have set up wings to separate infected residents. They're now required to test staffers weekly and have at least a two-month supply of protective gear. And they are no longer accepting recovering COVID-19 patients from hospitals, as the state initially directed them to do. They admitted over 6,300 patients before Cuomo reversed the policy under pressure May 10.

"We know how to fight this virus now. We have the resources," said Stephen Hanse, who heads an association of New York nursing homes.

The health care system overall is better prepared now, said Dr. W. Ian Lipkin, a Columbia University epidemiology professor.

"The difference now is we know the capacity of this virus to rapidly spread to cause disease, its impact on the health care system and our needs in terms of testing, personal protective equipment, ventilators — all the other things we didn't know six months ago," said Lipkin, who is working with the city to test hundreds of thousands of people a week.

New York has taken reopening relatively slowly — and braked, postponing the resumption of indoor restaurant service in New York City, after cases began surging elsewhere. Thousands of contact tracers have been hired to try to keep the virus in check. And mask-wearing has been widespread in the nation's biggest city since a city recommendation and subsequent state requirement in April, while some other states have only recently started telling residents to don masks in public.

Still, with more New Yorkers getting out and about and riding mass transit, and police taking a hands-off approach to enforcing mask and distancing rules after several violent clashes caught on video, experts worry it's inevitable case numbers will spike.

"I'm not sure how long this progress is going to hold," said Dr. Irwin Redlener, the director of the Pandemic Resource and Response Initiative at Columbia University.

Rob Griffin, a professor of emergency management at the University of Albany, said the state needs to spell out rules for any future shutdowns, "so you don't have to make a decision on the fly."

Some experts have said New York didn't move quickly enough early on. New York City's massive public school system closed March 16, and a statewide stay-at-home order took effect March 22.

If such measures had been implemented by March 8, Columbia University researchers estimate about 17,500 lives could have been saved.

To New York City's elected public advocate, Jumaane Williams, the city and state responses to the crisis were frustratingly blind to foreseeable inequities.

The city's Black and Hispanic residents were hospitalized and died of the virus at more than twice the rates of whites and Asians, and people from very poor neighborhoods at twice the rate of residents of wealthy areas.

Williams feels New York's shutdown was too slow and limited, leaving too many workers — many of them people of color — obliged to commute to jobs that might not have been able to provide protective equipment. That can't happen again, the Democrat said.

"The big thing, for me, is to shut down swiftly, open up slowly and make sure there's an infrastructure for communities we know are going to be impacted the most," Williams said. "We learned lessons that

we didn't need to learn, and hopefully other people will, too."

Villeneuve reported from Albany, New York.

On Twitter, follow Jennifer Peltz at twitter.com/jennpeltz, Michael Sisak at twitter.com/mikesisak, and Marina Villeneuve at twitter.com/ReporterMarina

City mulls razing site where 1st Alaska flag flew

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — The fate of one of Alaska's most historic yet neglected structures could be decided Monday as city officials in Seward weigh whether to demolish a former Methodist boarding school where the Alaska territorial flag was first flown almost a century ago and where its Alaska Native designer lived.

Benny Benson was among the orphans and displaced children who lived at the Jesse Lee Home, many of whom were sent there after the Spanish flu devastated Alaska Native villages. Benson, a 13-year-old Aleut boy sent to the home after his mother died of the flu, won a territory-wide contest in 1927 to design the flag, which became the state flag after statehood was granted in 1959.

Benson is believed to be the only Indigenous person to design a state flag, said Dorene Lorenz, a former Seward City Council member who has been behind efforts to save the structure for years.

"I don't understand why you would rush to destroy a landmark when there's obvious interested parties wanting to present to you other options," she said.

One such group, the Alaska Association for Historic Preservation, plans to make a last-ditch effort to save the structure by making a presentation during a public hearing before Monday's scheduled vote. If successful, they will bring together those with historic preservation expertise to formulate a plan.

"We got a lot of people who are anxious to get working on this," the group's president, Trish Neal, said. "And so I have no qualms that we can't pull this off. It's just we have to get the city council to back off and let us do this."

What to do with the site has been a source of contention since the home was heavily damaged in a magnitude 9.2 earthquake in 1964, the second most powerful ever recorded. One of the three main buildings was damaged and demolished after the quake. The boarding school was eventually moved to Anchorage, and the Seward site has sat unused since.

City officials said the home has deteriorated more in the last decade between engineering studies, but Neal offered another engineer's report from this spring that concluded while there has been deterioration in the last seven years, "restoration is a viable option," but must be done quickly.

Attempts by individuals and a group over the years to refurbish the home have sputtered and stalled. Seward Mayor Christy Terry said when the Friends of the Jesse Lee Home lost a multimillion-dollar state grant a few years ago, ownership reverted to the city. The Legislature allocated \$1 million of that to the city.

"We do not have the capacity right now to have an homage to a building that's so degraded because of the inaction, frankly, of a group that was their very last chance to make that happen, that the state funded incredibly well," Terry said. "Something like that is never going to happen again."

She said there is no rush to demolish the site but the council has a June 30, 2021, deadline to use state funding.

"For them to blame us for where we are now, they are sorely mistaken," she said. "So people want to come in at the 13th hour. No one has a check. No one has any ideas about how that property can be operated or what to do with it."

If the council approves the demolition measure, the city would use the state money to remove hazardous materials like asbestos, demolish the remaining two buildings and haul the material away. The proposal also calls for building a memorial at the site.

That design would involve community input, Terry said, adding she has her own ideas on what a memo-

rial would include.

She would like to salvage any usable beams and incorporate them into a pavilion that would include storyboards spelling out the home's place in Alaska history. The pavilion could be rented out, she said. Terry would also like to include a new playground at the site and close another nearby playground, turning that lot into single-family housing.

If the council doesn't vote for demolition, they will then later consider other options, including one that would begin refurbishing the buildings.

Retired Alaska State Historian Jo Antonson said the Jesse Lee Home was an important institution in state history, noting that the Army used the buildings during World War II and even camouflaged them using paint to protect them from the enemy.

"It's just sort of disappointing that the city and the residents have never embraced trying to fix up the buildings that remain and find a good use for them," she said.

Trump rips private Texas border wall built by his supporters

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Sunday criticized a privately built border wall in South Texas that's showing signs of erosion months after going up, saying it was "only done to make me look bad," even though the wall was built after a months-long campaign by his supporters.

The group that raised money online for the wall promoted itself as supporting Trump during a government shutdown that started in December 2018 because Congress wouldn't fund Trump's demands for a border wall. Called "We Build the Wall," the group has raised more than \$25 million promoting itself as supporting the president.

Former Trump chief strategist Steve Bannon joined the group's board and Trump ally Kris Kobach became its general counsel. Kobach is now seeking the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate in Kansas.

The company that built the private section in January, North Dakota-based Fisher Industries, has since won a \$1.3 billion border wall contract from the federal government, the largest award to date.

The section in question is a roughly 3-mile (5-kilometer) fence of steel posts just 35 feet (10 meters) from the Rio Grande, the river that forms the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas. That's much closer to the river than the government ordinarily builds border barriers in South Texas because of concerns about erosion and flooding that could violate U.S. treaty obligations with Mexico.

Trump tweeted Sunday in response to a ProPublica-Texas Tribune report that the riverbank has started to erode. A federal judge on Wednesday ordered attorneys for Fisher Industries and opponents of the private wall to set a schedule for experts to visit the site and inspect any erosion.

"I disagreed with doing this very small (tiny) section of wall, in a tricky area, by a private group which raised money by ads," Trump wrote. "It was only done to make me look bad, and perhaps it now doesn't even work. Should have been built like rest of Wall, 500 plus miles."

Tommy Fisher, CEO of Fisher Industries, said Sunday that he thought the president "just got some misinformation on this stuff" and that he had "complete respect" for Trump.

Fisher acknowledged that there had been some erosion on the land in front of the fencing caused by rain and the natural flow of the river. He said his crews planned to install more organic material to fill the gaps or insert rock if erosion continues, but that other parts of the wall remained untouched.

"The wall will stand for 150 years, you mark my words," Fisher said.

Experts and people who live and work near the property have warned that building so close to the river would cause flooding or a break in the fence. And a binational commission earlier this year found that the project violates U.S. treaty obligations and called on Fisher to make changes.

Marianna Trevino Wright, executive director of the nonprofit National Butterfly Center, has long opposed the project and warned it could damage the center, which is adjacent to where the private wall was being built.

"It is troubling that President Trump admits to prior knowledge of this project — one he should have

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insisted comply with U.S. law, rather than proceed in violation of it," she said Sunday.

Originally promoted by We Build the Wall, the private section instead became a showcase for Fisher, who has promoted his company heavily on Fox News and conservative media. We Build the Wall ultimately provided about \$1.5 million for the project and Kobach said in a previous court hearing that his group was mostly providing "social media cheerleading." We Build the Wall's founder, Brian Kolfage, did not return a phone message Sunday.

In May, Fisher Industries won a \$1.3 billion contract to build 42 miles (68 kilometers) of wall in Arizona. The wall will be painted black because "that's what the president wanted, plain and simple," said U.S. Sen. Kevin Cramer, a North Dakota Republican, in May. Cramer said then that he personally pitched the company to Trump.

Another \$400 million contract Fisher won last year was placed under review by the defense department's inspector general.

Nearly 600,000 vote in Hong Kong pro-democracy primaries

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong residents turned up over the weekend to vote in an unofficial primary election held by the city's pro-democracy camp as it gears up to field candidates for an upcoming legislative poll.

The primaries were held two weeks after Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law on the semi-autonomous territory in a move widely seen as chipping away at the "one country, two systems" framework under which Britain handed Hong Kong over to China in 1997. It was passed in response to last year's massive protests calling for greater democracy and more police accountability.

Thronges of people lined up at polling booths in the summer heat to vote despite a warning last week by Hong Kong's constitutional affairs minister, Eric Tsang, that the primaries could be in breach of the new national security law because it outlaws interference and disruption of duties by the local government.

Organizers dismissed the comments, saying they just want to hold the government accountable by gaining a majority in the legislature.

The new law prohibits what Beijing views as secessionist, subversive or terrorist activities or as foreign intervention in Hong Kong affairs. Under the law, police now have sweeping powers to conduct searches without warrants and order internet service providers and platforms to remove messages deemed to be in violation of the legislation.

On Friday, police raided the office of the Public Opinion Research Institute, a co-organizer of the primaries. The computer system was suspected of being hacked, causing a data leak, police said in a statement, and an investigation is ongoing.

Hong Kong's pro-democracy camp, which includes multiple parties, is attempting to join forces and use the primaries as a guide to field the best candidates in the official legislative election in September. Its goal is to win a majority in the legislature, which is typically skewed toward the pro-Beijing camp.

To hold the primaries, pro-democracy activists had raised money via crowd funding. They pledged to veto the government's budget if they clinch a majority in the legislature. Under Hong Kong's mini-constitution, known as the Basic Law, the city's leader must resign if an important bill such as the budget is vetoed twice.

Organizers said Sunday that nearly 600,000 people voted at polling booths set up across the city, exceeding organizers' estimates of a turnout of 170,000.

"Despite the threat of the national security law, there are still nearly 600,000 people coming out to vote," said Au Nok-hin, one of the organizers of the primaries. "We can see Hong Kongers are really brave."

'Moving target': Schools deal with new plans, Trump demands

By JOHN SEEWER and JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — With little more than a month before millions of U.S. schoolchildren go back to class,

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much is still up in the air - and not just because of the surging number of coronavirus cases nationwide.

Last week, President Donald Trump and his administration demanded schools fully reopen right away, calling for new guidance from federal health officials and slamming schools that want to bring students back for only a few days a week.

At the same time, some states are just now issuing their own directives, and school district leaders say they expect those guidelines to be revised again before the classroom bells ring.

While there's no indication school administrators are changing their plans yet because of the latest word from the White House, they are working on multiple reopening scenarios. Those cover everything from where students will eat lunch to navigating online learning.

Here is a look at what several school districts are planning and discussing.

NEW DANCE

Like many schools, the Forth Worth Independent School District in Texas will give parents a choice between in-person and remote learning. So far, about 40% have opted for virtual school, said Clint Bond, district spokesman.

The district is designing its plan with guidance released by the Texas Education Agency on Tuesday, but administrators are paying attention to the debate in Washington and waiting to see whether any new rules or clarified guidance comes from the Centers for Disease Control, Bond said.

"It hasn't caused us to do anything right now," he said.

Schools will adjust to allow for social distancing depending on the number of students who opt to attend. Among the considerations: Plexiglas separators for multi-student desks, separating individual desks and even using gyms, cafeterias and auditoriums as spaces distancing students.

"This is a dance we're learning as we go," Bond said.

HOLDING PATTERN

In suburban Cincinnati, the Lakota School District's reopening framework has four different outlines, from nearly all students returning to their classrooms to entirely online instruction.

While the intent now is for classrooms to reopen fully next month, Superintendent Matthew Miller's message to parents has been this: "What I'm telling you now could change in an hour."

The district's decisions, he said, are being based on advice from education and health experts, not politicians. A lot of what's coming out of Washington and the state capital isn't helping, he said.

"It just puts us in a bad situation because we know how polarizing this can be," Miller said.

For now, the district is "in a holding pattern" while it waits to see if there is any new guidance, he said. "This is probably going to change two or three times before school starts."

TWO APPROACHES

All students in Tennessee's second-biggest district will start the year virtually, an announcement made Thursday on the heels of Trump's threat to hold back federal money if districts don't open their buildings.

Metro Nashville Public Schools Director Adrienne Battle said students won't return to classrooms until at least after Labor Day.

"This will allow social distancing, mask mandates and other measures to take effect and reduce the spread of COVID-19 before tens of thousands of students and staff return to our schools," she said.

Nashville has seen some of its worst daily totals for COVID-19 confirmed cases in the past week.

In northeastern Tennessee, schools in Sullivan County are on schedule to fully open as long as the coronavirus cases don't rise, said David Cox, the director of schools.

The district is working off a plan it devised with local health officials and is modeled after the Nashville district's plan, he said. "I don't think any plan is rigid," he said.

LUNCH LIMITS

Davis School District, just outside Salt Lake City, is working to reconfigure its classrooms to allow more

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space between students, but that's proving to be a challenge.

"You know, we don't have the ability, unfortunately, to move our classroom walls," said spokesman Chris Williams.

There will be no salad bars at lunch and students will no longer be able to spoon out their own food servings in the cafeteria. Lunches will be "grab-and-go," eaten during multiple periods so fewer students are mingling in the cafeteria.

The district, he said, hasn't altered its plans because of the Trump administration's recent statements, but it now will require masks after Utah Gov. Gary Herbert announced a mandate.

MOVING TARGET

"It's an ever-moving target," Superintendent Chris Knutsen said about the reopening framework for the Florence Unified School District, southeast of Phoenix.

He, too, said Trump's comments haven't affected the district's intentions, but he does want more guidance from state officials, especially on wearing masks when social distancing isn't possible in classrooms or on buses, he said.

The district, which has students coming from across 1,000 square miles, can't reduce capacity on its buses. "We would have to run our buses 24 hours a day to try to get our kids back to school," he said.

Classrooms pose a similar problem, trying to space desks six feet apart, Knutsen said.

"So you put masks on everybody on the bus and in the classroom and you try to go back to school as normal," he said. "So, I don't know. I mean, it's a mess."

Kelleher reported from Honolulu. Associated Press writers Carolyn Thompson in Buffalo, New York, and Jonathan Mattise in Nashville, Tennessee, contributed.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, July 13, the 195th day of 2020. There are 171 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 13, 2013, a jury in Sanford, Florida, cleared neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman of all charges in the shooting of Trayvon Martin, the unarmed Black teenager whose killing unleashed furious debate over racial profiling, self-defense and equal justice.

On this date:

In 1787, the Congress of the Confederation adopted the Northwest Ordinance, which established a government in the Northwest Territory, an area corresponding to the present-day Midwest and Upper Midwest.

In 1812, New York became the first U.S. city to adopt regulations on how pawnbrokers could conduct business.

In 1863, deadly rioting against the Civil War military draft erupted in New York City. (The insurrection was put down three days later.)

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson nominated Thurgood Marshall to be U.S. Solicitor General; Marshall became the first Black jurist appointed to the post. (Two years later, Johnson nominated Marshall to the U.S. Supreme Court.)

In 1973, former presidential aide Alexander P. Butterfield revealed to Senate Watergate Committee staff members the existence of President Richard Nixon's secret White House taping system. (Butterfield's public revelation came three days later.)

In 1974, the Senate Watergate Committee proposed sweeping reforms in an effort to prevent another Watergate scandal.

In 1985, "Live Aid," an international rock concert in London, Philadelphia, Moscow and Sydney, took place to raise money for Africa's starving people.

In 1990, the romantic fantasy "Ghost," starring Patrick Swayze and Demi Moore, was released by Para-

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mount Pictures.

In 1999, Angel Maturino Resendiz (ahn-HEHL' mah-tyoo-REE'-noh reh-SEHN'-deez), suspected of being the "Railroad Killer," surrendered in El Paso, Texas. (Resendiz was executed in 2006.)

In 2005, a suicide car bomb exploded next to U.S. troops handing out candy and toys in Iraq, killing more than two dozen people, including 18 children and teenagers and an American soldier.

In 2006, Israel imposed a naval blockade against Lebanon and blasted the Beirut airport and army air bases; Hezbollah fired dozens of rockets into Israel.

In 2018, a grand jury indictment, sought by special counsel Robert Mueller, alleged that the Russian government was behind a sweeping conspiracy to interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential election; the grand jury indicted 12 Russian military intelligence officers on charges that they had hacked Hillary Clinton's campaign and the Democratic Party.

Ten years ago: New York Yankees owner George Steinbrenner died in Tampa, Florida, nine days after turning 80. The National League won the All-Star Game, defeating the American League 3-1 in Anaheim, California, to capture its first Midsummer Classic since 1996. Vernon Baker, a Black U.S. soldier who belatedly received the Medal of Honor for World War II valor in 1997 after historians concluded he'd been wrongly denied the award because of his race, died at his home near St. Maries, Idaho; he was 90.

Five years ago: Calling America "a nation of second chances," President Barack Obama cut the prison sentences of 46 non-violent drug offenders. Sandra Bland, a 28-year-old woman from suburban Chicago, was found hanged in a Waller County, Texas, jail cell three days after being arrested during a traffic stop; her death was ruled a suicide, a finding disputed by her family. New York City reached a \$5.9 million settlement with the family of Eric Garner, a Black man who died after being placed in a white police officer's chokehold. Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker declared his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination.

One year ago: After briefly becoming a hurricane, Tropical Storm Barry made landfall about 160 miles west of New Orleans, bringing heavy rain that tested the levees and pumps that were bolstered after Hurricane Katrina in 2005; the storm spared New Orleans and Baton Rouge from catastrophic flooding. Simona Halep won her first Wimbledon title, defeating Serena Williams 6-2, 6-2 in the women's final. A power outage crippled the heart of Manhattan just as Saturday night Broadway shows were set to go on, sending theater-goers into the streets and bringing subways to a near halt; electricity was restored by about midnight.

Today's Birthdays: Game show announcer Johnny Gilbert (TV: "Jeopardy!") is 96. Actor Patrick Stewart is 80. Actor Robert Forster is 78. Actor Harrison Ford is 78. Singer-guitarist Roger McGuinn (The Byrds) is 78. Actor-comedian Cheech Marin is 74. Actress Daphne Maxwell Reid is 72. Actress Didi Conn is 69. Actor Gil Birmingham is 67. Singer Louise Mandrell is 66. Rock musician Mark "The Animal" Mendoza (Twisted Sister) is 64. Actor-director Cameron Crowe is 63. Former tennis player Anders Jarryd is 59. Rock musician Gonzalo Martinez De La Coteria is 58. Comedian Tom Kenny is 58. Country singer-songwriter Victoria Shaw is 58. Bluegrass singer Rhonda Vincent is 58. Actor Kenny Johnson is 57. Roots singer/songwriter Paul Thorn is 56. Country singer Neil Thrasher is 55. Actor Ken Jeong is 51. Bluegrass musician Mike Barber (The Gibson Brothers) is 50. Singer Deborah Cox is 47. Actress Ashley Scott is 43. Rock musician Will Champion (Coldplay) is 42. Actor Fran Kranz is 39. Actress Aya Cash is 38. St. Louis Cardinals catcher Yadier Molina is 38. Actor Colton Haynes is 32. Actor Steven R. McQueen is 32. Soul singer Leon Bridges is 31. Actress Hayley Erin ("General Hospital") is 26. Actor Kyle Harrison Breitkopf is 15.