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"SELF-COMPASSION
IS SIMPLY GIVING
THE SAME KINDNESS
TO OURSELVES THAT
WE WOULD GIVE TO
OTHERS."

-CHRISTOPHER
GERMER



Chicken Soup
for the Soul

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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








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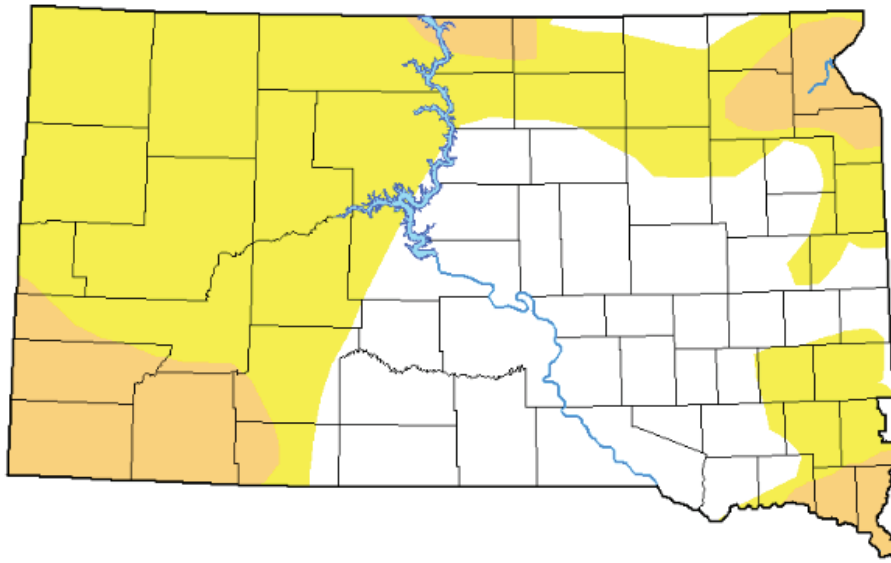
Drought Monitor

Intensity:

-  None
-  D0 (Abnormally Dry)
-  D1 (Moderate Drought)
-  D2 (Severe Drought)
-  D3 (Extreme Drought)
-  D4 (Exceptional Drought)
-  No Data

Author(s):

Richard Heim, NOAA/NCEI



High pressure dominated the southern half of the contiguous U.S. (CONUS) during this U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) week. Upper-level weather systems tracked across the U.S.-Canadian border, dragging surface lows and fronts along with them. The frontal systems tapped Gulf of Mexico moisture to drop locally heavy rain across parts of the Plains to Midwest, while convective thunderstorms peppered coastal areas of the Gulf. The high-pressure ridge inhibited precipitation across much of the southern Plains to Southeast, and across most of the West. It also kept temperatures unusually hot, with daily maximums exceeding 90 degrees F across the South throughout the week and across much of the West for most of the week. The excessive heat spread into the northern Plains, Midwest, and into the Northeast as the week wore on. The persistent heat increased evapotranspiration, which dried soils and stressed crops and other vegetation. The locally heavy rains brought temporary relief from the heat and dryness, but only for those areas in the Plains and Midwest lucky enough to receive the rain.

Areas of 2+ inches of rain were widespread across Kansas, eastern North Dakota, and parts of Nebraska, with locally over 5 inches in northeast Kansas and southeast Nebraska. But the spigot remained off across most of Wyoming and western and northern parts of Colorado. Drought contracted where the beneficial rains fell, including southeast Colorado, western Kansas to parts of Nebraska, northeast Wyoming, and parts of North Dakota. But drought and abnormal dryness expanded where it continued dry, including eastern Kansas, northeastern Colorado to adjoining parts of Nebraska, northeastern Nebraska, parts of the Dakotas, and especially in Wyoming. Moderate to severe drought expanded in, and extreme drought was added to, Wyoming.

GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

July 27, 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. Approve out-of-district transportation request from Webster Area School District pursuant SDCL 13-29-4.
2. Approve open enrollments #21-07 and #21-08.
3. Approve open enrollments #21-09, #21-10, and #21-11.
4. Acknowledge receipt of public school exemption #21-01.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Continued discussion and necessary action on District response to COVID-19.
 - a. Resuming School Protocols
 - b. Resuming School-Sponsored Athletics Protocols
3. Take from the table discussion on substitute teacher pay.
4. Discussion and necessary action on substitute teacher pay for 2020-2021 school year.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approve 2020-2021 GTA Negotiated Agreement.
2. Approve resignation of Chance Strom, Head Boys Soccer Coach.
3. Approve hiring Kristen Dolan, EL Paraprofessional, for 2020-2021 school year at \$11.85/hour.
4. Approve educational lane change for Sydney Wilkinson from BS+15 to MS, increase of \$3,000.
5. Approve educational lane change for Anne Zoellner from MS to MS+30, increase of \$1,500.

ADJOURN

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Unemployment Initial Weekly Claims Decrease

PIERRE, S.D. – During the week of July 12-18, a total of 698 initial weekly claims for state unemployment benefits were processed by the Department of Labor and Regulation. This is a decrease of 518 claims from the prior week's total of 1,216.

"The last week the additional \$600 weekly benefit is payable is claim week ending July 25," said state Labor and Regulation Secretary Marcia Hultman. "Eligible claimants waiting on FPUC payments or backdating requests for any claim weeks from April 4 through July 25 will receive those payments. We continue to process claims and resolve issues as quickly as possible."

A total of \$2.9 million was paid out in state benefits, in addition to \$9.8 million paid out in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), \$724,000 in Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and \$99,000 in Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) benefits.

The Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund balance July 19 was \$120.5 million.

The latest number of continued state claims is 18,722 for the week ending July 4. This indicates the number of unemployed workers eligible for and receiving benefits after their initial claim.

Work Search Waiver Will End Aug.1

PIERRE, S.D. – The Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) waived the requirement that workers filing for unemployment must actively search for work to be eligible for benefits starting March 21. This waiver will end on Aug. 1, 2020.

Claimants receiving benefits will be required to verify at least two work searches occurred each week when requesting their weekly benefit payment starting the week ending Saturday, Aug. 8 and after.

"Businesses are returning to normal and in need of quality applicants," said state Labor and Regulation Secretary Marcia Hultman. "We have many employment services and education and training programs to help find new work and connect with great opportunities in South Dakota."

Examples of qualified work search activities include submitting a job application online or in-person, attending a job interview, or participating in a DLR-approved reemployment services program, such as a job search workshop.

"Our SDWORKS jobs database at sdjobs.org has over 19,000 listings to search," said Secretary Hultman. "Employment specialists can meet with you virtually to help navigate the system and determine the best fit based on your needs, interests and experience."

Individuals receiving Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) who are self-employed or independent contractors are not required by federal law to conduct work searches and will continue to receive a waiver. Also exempted are individuals with an employer-submitted recall date.

In addition, DLR reminds all claimants the last payable benefit week for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), an additional benefit of \$600 per week, will be the week ending Saturday, July 25, 2020.

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#151 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

We did it: reached four million cases—fast. Exactly how fast depends who you ask. I have us with 2,957,200 on July 6 and 3,011,00 on July 7, I would say it took us 16 days. You will see some variation in news reports about that. As we discussed a while back, reported numbers for a given day depend on when the data source scrapes its figures from the reports, how frequently that source updates, and time of day I then pull my data for my work; these all play a role at the margins. I pull the numbers fairly far into the evening—almost 9:00 pm EDT on the 7th. If your daily cut-off is 5:00 pm—or noon, then that could have pushed it back to the 8th for you.

Everyone pretty much agrees we hit the first million on April 28, the 99th day; after that there's some divergence, probably because as the numbers grew, a fraction of a percentage point variance adds up to a lot of actual cases, enough to push that milestone forward or back in a day.

The second million is generally said to have been reached on June 10 or 11; I have it on the 10th, 43 days later. Third one gets listed as the 7th (27 days later) or 8th (28 days later); I have it on the 7th. As an amateur, I'm not going to quibble with the professionals, so I'm good with calling it 28 days. That means the fourth million which landed on today is another 15-16 days after that, depending who you ask. I'll call it whatever the experts settle on once they've spoken. Either way, it was too short.

We are now at 4,048,700 cases, 70,600 or 1.8% more than yesterday. This means things aren't getting better at all; today is our second-worst day. Our worst-days streak is up to 24 days. The rolling seven-day average has doubled in a month and is up to 66,000 per day. Record single-day new case reports were set in Hawaii, New Mexico, Missouri, Indiana, Alabama, and West Virginia.

We're up to 144,29 deaths. This increased by 1143 or 0.8% since yesterday. This is our second consecutive day over 1100 deaths since this new surge in cases. Deaths are increasing in Arizona, South Carolina, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Texas, Alabama, Nevada, Georgia, California, New Mexico, Tennessee, Arkansas, Idaho, Ohio, North Carolina, Iowa, Oklahoma, North Dakota, South Dakota, Missouri, Montana, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Oregon, Kansas, and Puerto Rico.

California, Idaho, Alabama, and Florida had record numbers of deaths. Death rates are rising among the young and are 41% higher than they were two weeks ago.

I fielded an interesting question today: We've reported around four million cases so far. How many of those have recovered?

Answer: No one really knows. There are trackers; most of them list around two million recovered. Add that to the 140,000+ who've died, and you have maybe 1.86 million unaccounted for. Some of the rest are, of course, still sick; after all, we're diagnosing them at the rate of 60,000+ per day, so there are going to be a whole bunch of active cases out there yet. We've also been reading about the so-called long-haulers, people who, two or three or even four months down the road are still weak, are short of breath, are fatigued, and can't work; and we don't really understand what's going on with them, although we are quite sure this is a real thing, not just malingering.

But there are a whole lot of people for whom we have no data at all, mostly people who never got

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sick enough to go to the hospital, who stayed home and got better, then went back to living their lives. There's been very little follow-up. No one has the personnel right now to call all those people, inquire how they're doing, and make a note in a computer somewhere. Hell, we don't even have the personnel to trace contacts. The official definition of recovery includes at least three days without a fever or fever-reducing medication, improvement in symptoms, being seven days post-onset of symptoms. There's some talk about two negative tests at least 24 hours apart too, but when you don't have the capacity to identify all of your active cases, you certainly don't have the capacity to go around testing people who've recovered.

Reporting is also a mess. Some states report recovered cases; many states don't. So there are vast swaths of the country which are simply a big black hole for recovery data. You can see this if you peruse the Johns Hopkins Covid dashboard; you can look up by state or county the number of diagnosed, deceased, and recovered individuals. If you do this, you will see nothing reported for recovered in many places; for those that report, those numbers don't add up because there is so much data missing.

So short answer, who knows? And now you can see why.

Last night we talked about how immunity works, and I indicated there's a whole lot we don't know about how well immunity develops or how long it might last, Let's tackle some of those issues tonight.

I am hearing a lot about people with "reinfections," where they recover and then within a short time get sick again; but honestly, no one knows whether these are actually reinfections or not and, if they are, how common that is. I'm going to venture, however, that it's not very common. Here's why: Consider we've had some 15 million cases so far worldwide, and we've heard speculation about maybe a few hundred alleged reinfections. Chances are at least some of these are something else, but even if they're not, we're looking at a miniscule percentage of cases who apparently did not develop even short-term immunologic memory. While I would like it better if that never happened, if this is a thing at all, I don't see this very small number as a significant problem on a population scale.

Possible non-reinfection explanations for these cases could include reactivation of virus that the host failed to clear from the body in the first place, a secondary infection with a different virus that causes similar symptoms, a false positive test due to the presence of non-infectious viral fragments lingering in the recovered host. It also could be the negative test used to indicate recovery after the initial infection was a false negative, so the person wasn't really recovered yet; false negatives are, unfortunately, all too common, even in the best of our tests.

I don't think anyone is dismissing the possibility that reinfection could occur, but it would be most surprising if it happened within a few weeks of the initial infection; nearly any infection to which we have a response at all will yield enough of a protective response to cover the host for a few weeks to a few months at least. We simply don't have sufficient testing or documentation for the vast majority of patients to show (1) with a positive test that they were infected initially and (2) with an accurate negative test that they were then recovered; and without that, it's difficult to know what's going on in those people. So reinfection is possible, but not supported by evidence at this time.

What would any of this mean to vaccine efforts? Another good question. One thing to remember is that the people whose antibody levels seem to fall off quickly and most of those who might be having reinfections are people who had very mild infections. It makes sense when you think about it that people with milder infections might not be having as big an immune response in the first place; just as infection seems to be dose-dependent, so are immune responses dose-dependent; after all a smaller exposure to the virus might reasonably be expected to elicit a smaller response, right?

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What we've seen in studies of people who had mild to moderate illness is that 90% of them had antibody responses that lasted at least three months; the antibodies seen were neutralizing antibodies, the most useful kind. And then there are those memory cells we talked about last night, memory T cells, in particular because those tend to have longer duration. Many scientists speculate that immunity will last one to three years; but it is important to remember that the only way to know for sure is to wait one to three years to see what happens.

There is another consideration here, and that is the nature of vaccines. Vaccines tend to provide a fairly large antigenic stimulus. This is the exposure to the pathogen that elicits a response; the part of the pathogen to which we respond is called an antigen. In addition, most vaccines are designed to provide a stimulus that lasts a while so that the immune system has ample opportunity to get revved up to produce a nice big response. It is common for a vaccine to produce a more durable response than a natural infection; we can't know for sure whether this will be true for Covid-19, but it's not a crazy idea. Once again, we'll wait and see—a lot of that going around these days.

Byron Woods grew up watching his mom cut and color hair in their home, but he never thought he would one day earn his living in the same way. However, after a stint in the Army, he found himself getting a barber's license; and he has now been cutting and coloring hair at his shop in Columbus, Ohio, for thirty years. Over those years, he's built up a loyal clientele, serving multiple generations of families, opened two additional locations, and provided a place to work for other barbers and beauticians. Back in the '90s, he started teaching his trade to inmates at a regional correctional facility so that they could become licensed while they were serving their sentences; and then he rented booth space in his shops to many of them when they were released, hoping to give them "a second chance to make something of their lives." He said, "We all appreciate each other and respect each other no matter where we come from."

It looked like all of that was going to come to an end back in March when his shops closed due to the pandemic; he simply couldn't afford to keep paying rent on all three locations with no money coming in. Money ran out on the government emergency loans before his application was processed, and he didn't see a way forward. He was interviewed by local news people and said, "I felt like I had no choice except to let it all go." Until, that is, he went into the shop to check the mail that had piled up during the shutdown and found the expected bills—water, electric, rent—and something else unexpected: checks.

Clients had mailed him money to keep his business afloat, and a GoFundMe was started on his behalf. A retired teacher sent her stimulus payment, saying, "I've wanted to give the money to someone who needed it more than I, someone who would use it wisely, someone who was worthy of help. I am so impressed with and thankful for your giving nature, for all you do for others. And for making ME happy."

Woods is back in business now and still providing a place to work for his family of workers; those donations did the trick. He is grateful and pleased to continue what he calls his barbershop ministry. He tells us, "the work we do is about love, compassion, and grace." As should be the work all of us do.

Is there someone in need of something you have in excess—money, food, time, caring, patience, opportunity, a listening ear? Of course there is: Almost everyone has some kind of excess—and some kind of need. Would you consider sharing, not even out of your need, but out of your abundance? No real sacrifice required, just a keen eye for the welfare of others. Find a way. We can't change the world without changing ourselves.

And take care. We'll talk again.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	July 15	July 16	July 17	July 18	July 19	July 20	July 21
Minnesota	43,170	43,742	44,347	45,013	45,470	46,204	47,107
Nebraska	21,717	21,979	22,134	22,361	22,481	22,583	22,847
Montana	1,952	2,096	2,231	2,366	2,471	2,533	2,621
Colorado	37,686	38,155	38,726	39,344	39,788	40,142	40,566
Wyoming	1581	1,605	1,644	1,678	1,713	1,728	1,790
North Dakota	4493	4565	4668	4792	4907	5019	5126
South Dakota	7572	7652	7694	7789	7862	7906	7943
United States	3,431,574	3,499,398	3,576,430	3,649,087	3,712,445	3,773,260	3,831,405
US Deaths	136,466	137,419	138,360	139,278	140,120	140,534	140,909

Minnesota	+398	+572	+605	+666	+457	+734	+903
Nebraska	+318	+262	+155	+227	+120	+102	+264
Montana	+109	+144	+135	+135	+105	+62	+88
Colorado	+444	+469	+571	+618	+444	+354	+424
Wyoming	+36	+24	+39	+34	+35	+15	+62
North Dakota	+51	+72	+103	+124	+115	+112	+107
South Dakota	+48	+80	+42	+95	+73	+44	+37
United States	+68,518	+67,824	+77,032	+72,657	+63,358	+60,815	+58,145
US Deaths	+861	+953	+941	+918	+842	+414	+375

	July 22	July 23	
Minnesota	47,457	47,961	48,721
Nebraska	23,190	23,486	23,818
Montana	2,712	2,813	2,910
Colorado	41,059	41,698	42,314
Wyoming	1,830	1,864	1,923
North Dakota	5207	5367	5493
South Dakota	8019	8077	8143
United States	3,902,233	3,971,343	4,038,864
US Deaths	142,073	143,193	144,305

Minnesota	+350	+504	+760
Nebraska	+343	+296	+332
Montana	+91	+101	+97
Colorado	+493	+639	+616
Wyoming	+40	+34	+59
North Dakota	+81	+160	+126
South Dakota	+76	+58	+66
United States	+70,828	+69,110	+67,521
US Deaths	+1,164	+1,120	+1,112

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July 23rd COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent
from State Health Lab Reports

Two more people age 80+ have died in South Dakota. One was in Pennington County and the other in Lake County. One male and one female were recorded in the deaths.

Custer, Hand and Perkins counties joined the fully recovered list, but Deuel, Grant and Kingsbury counties fell from that list with one positive case reported in each county. Potter County recorded its first positive case in the 249 tests performed. That leaves Harding County as the only county in the state with no reported infections. Harding County has done 48 tests.

Statewide, there were 66 positive tests, 55 recovered for a net loss of 11 to the active count, now at 808.

Brown County:

Active Cases: 0 (16)
Recovered: +2 (353)
Total Positive: +2 (371)
Ever Hospitalized: 0 (19)
Deaths: 2
Negative Tests: +47 (3775)
Percent Recovered: 95.1% (--)

South Dakota:

Positive: +66 (8143 total)
Negative: +1412 (94,393 total)
Hospitalized: +2 (792 total). 50 currently hospitalized (down 6 from yesterday)
Deaths: +2 (121 total)
Recovered: +55 (7214 total)
Active Cases: +9 (808)
Percent Recovered: 88.6 No Change

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests (Lost Potter): Harding (47), unsigned +212 (4316).

Fully recovered from positive cases (Gained Custer, Hand and Perkins, Lost Deuel, Grant and Kingsbury): Bon Homme 13-13, Campbell 1-1, Custer 11-11, Edmunds 10-10, Haakon 1-1, Hand 7-7, Hyde 3-3, Jackson 7-7, Jones 1-1, Perkins 4-4, Sanborn 12-12, Stanley 14-14, Sully 1-1, Tripp 19-19.

The following is the breakdown by all counties. The number in parenthesis right after the county name represents the number of deaths in that county.

Aurora: 2 active cases	Charles Mix: 38 active cases
Beadle (9): +1 positive (40 active cases)	Clark: 2 active cases
Bennett: 2 active cases	Clay: +1 positive, +1 recovered (12 active cases)
Bon Homme: Fully Recovered	Codington: +1 positive, +1 recovered (20 active cases)
Brookings: +2 recovered (10 active cases)	Corson: 2 active cases
Brown (2): +2 positive, +2 recovered (16 active cases)	Custer: +1 recovered (FULLY RECOVERED 11-11)
Brule: +1 recovered (4 active cases)	Davison: +2 positive, +3 recovered (15 active cases)
Buffalo (3): -1 positive, +1 recovered (21 active cases)	Day: 2 active cases
Butte: 4 active cases	Deuel: +1 positive (1 active case)
Campbell: Fully Recovered	Dewey: +2 positive (46 active cases)

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Douglas: +1 positive, +1 recovered (5 active cases)
 Edmunds: Fully Recovered
 Fall River: 2 active cases
 Faulk (1): 2 active cases
 Grant: +1 positive (1 active case)
 Gregory: 1 active case
 Haakon: Fully Recovered
 Hamlin: 2 active cases
 Hand: +1 recovered (FULLY RECOVERED 7-7)
 Hanson: +1 recovered (2 active cases)
 Harding: No infections reported
 Hughes (3): +3 positive, +1 recovered (13 active cases)
 Hutchinson: +2 recovered (2 active cases)
 Hyde: Fully Recovered
 Jackson (1): Fully Recovered (6-7)
 Jerauld (1): 1 active cases
 Jones: Fully Recovered
 Kingsbury: +1 positive (1 active case)
 Lake (2): +2 positive, -1 recovered (13 active cases)
 Lawrence: +2 positive (4 active cases)
 Lincoln (1): +9 positive, +3 recovered (41 active cases)
 Lyman (1): 8 active cases
 Marshall: 2 active case
 McCook (1): +1 positive (3 active cases)
 McPherson: 1 active case
 Meade (1): +3 positive, +2 recovered (8 active cases)
 Mellette: +4 positive, +1 recovered (11 active cases)
 Miner: 1 active case
 Minnehaha (62): +13 positive, +15 recovered (221 active cases)

Moody: 3 active cases
 Oglala Lakota (1): +2 recovered (22 active cases)
 Pennington (24): +9 positive, +12 recovered (140 active cases)
 Perkins: +1 recovered (FULLY RECOVERED 4-4)
 Potter: FIRST POSITIVE CASE
 Roberts: 6 active cases
 Sanborn: Fully Recovered
 Spink: 3 active cases
 Stanley: Fully Recovered
 Sully: Fully Recovered
 Todd (3): 6 active cases
 Tripp: Fully Recovered
 Turner: +1 positive (9 active cases)
 Union (2): +2 positive, +1 recovered (19 active cases)
 Walworth: +1 recovered (3 active cases)
 Yankton (2): +4 positive (11 active cases)
 Ziebach: 2 active cases

North Dakota Dept. of Health Report
 COVID-19 Daily Report, July 23:

- 4,318 tests (1,550)
- 5,493 positives (+128)
- 4,475 recovered (+ 68)
- 97 deaths (+ 1)
- 921 active cases (+ 57)

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian, Non-Hispanic	717	9%
Black, Non-Hispanic	996	12%
Hispanic	1165	14%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	1335	16%
Other	813	10%
White, Non-Hispanic	3117	38%

County of Residence	# of Deaths
Beadle	9
Brown	2
Buffalo	3
Butte	1
Faulk	1
Hughes	2
Jackson	1
Jerauld	1
Lake	2
Lincoln	1
Lyman	1
McCook	1
Meade	1
Minnehaha	62
Oglala Lakota	1
Pennington	25
Todd	3
Union	2
Yankton	2

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons
Aurora	36	34	338
Beadle	575	526	1721
Bennett	5	3	465
Bon Homme	13	13	685
Brookings	107	97	2281
Brown	371	353	3775
Brule	38	34	643
Buffalo	104	80	576
Butte	7	3	666
Campbell	1	1	78
Charles Mix	98	60	1096
Clark	16	14	359
Clay	101	89	1143
Codington	109	89	2428
Corson	23	21	305
Custer	11	11	698
Davison	75	60	2026
Day	20	18	524
Deuel	6	5	347
Dewey	49	1	1707
Douglas	16	11	374
Edmunds	10	10	356
Fall River	14	12	864
Faulk	24	21	156
Grant	18	17	636
Gregory	6	5	327
Haakon	1	1	268
Hamlin	14	12	558
Hand	7	7	241
Hanson	15	13	161
Harding	0	0	48
Hughes	81	65	1503
Hutchinson	21	19	813

Hyde	3	3	113
Jackson	7	6	402
Jerauld	39	37	255
Jones	1	1	46
Kingsbury	9	8	485
Lake	56	41	809
Lawrence	26	22	1821
Lincoln	440	398	5584
Lyman	84	75	841
Marshall	6	4	369
McCook	22	18	572
McPherson	6	5	186
Meade	63	54	1689
Mellette	21	10	290
Miner	11	10	227
Minnehaha	3920	3637	23780
Moody	26	23	555
Oglala Lakota	132	109	2825
Pennington	765	601	9427
Perkins	4	4	129
Potter	1	0	249
Roberts	62	56	1457
Sanborn	12	12	197
Spink	17	14	1022
Stanley	14	14	213
Sully	1	1	62
Todd	66	57	1775
Tripp	19	19	550
Turner	34	25	792
Union	168	147	1672
Walworth	18	15	504
Yankton	95	82	2761
Ziebach	3	1	252
Unassigned****	0	0	4316

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	3966	63
Male	4177	58

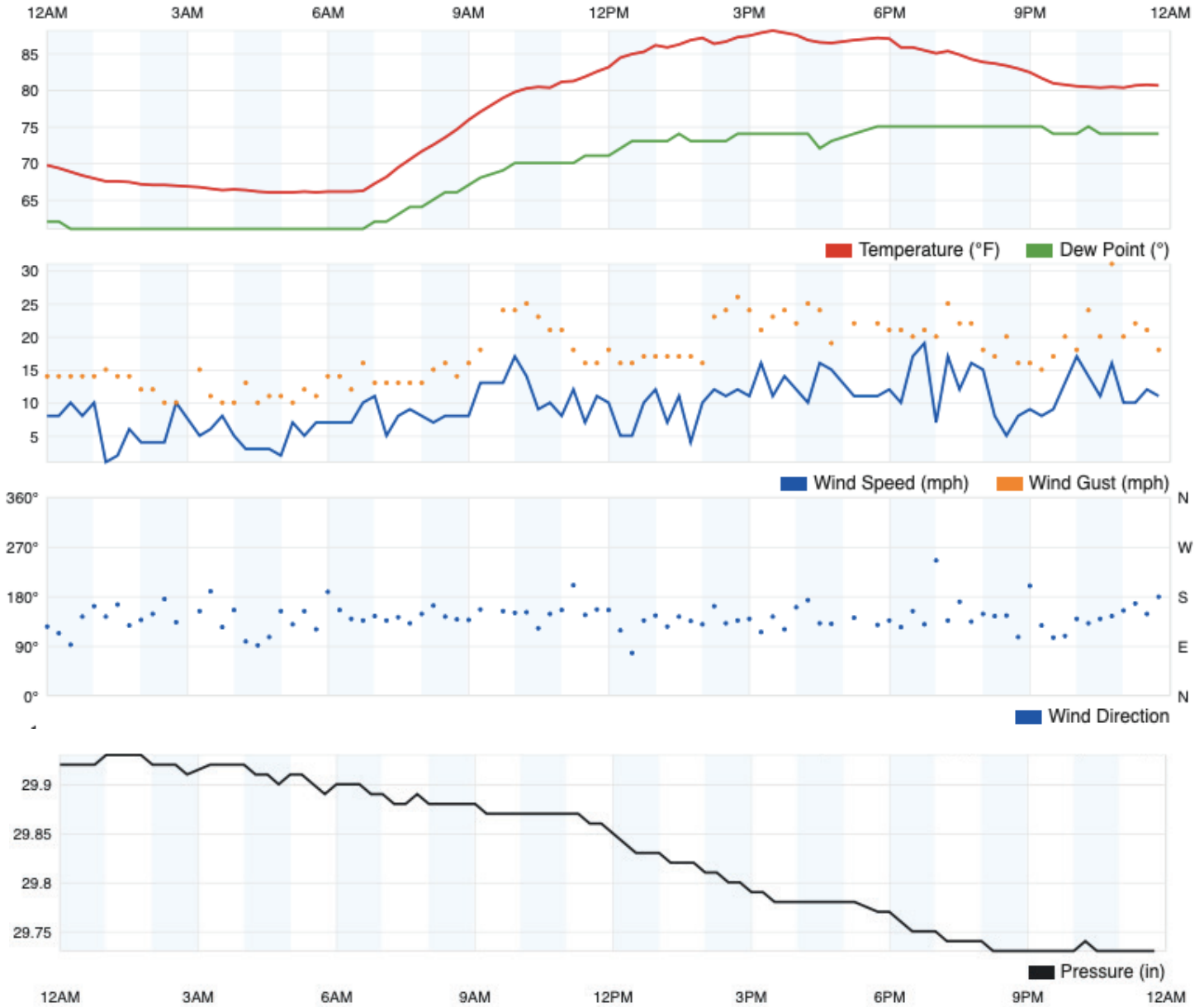
CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	952	0
20-29 years	1708	1
30-39 years	1666	6
40-49 years	1271	7
50-59 years	1240	15
60-69 years	740	23
70-79 years	296	17
80+ years	270	52

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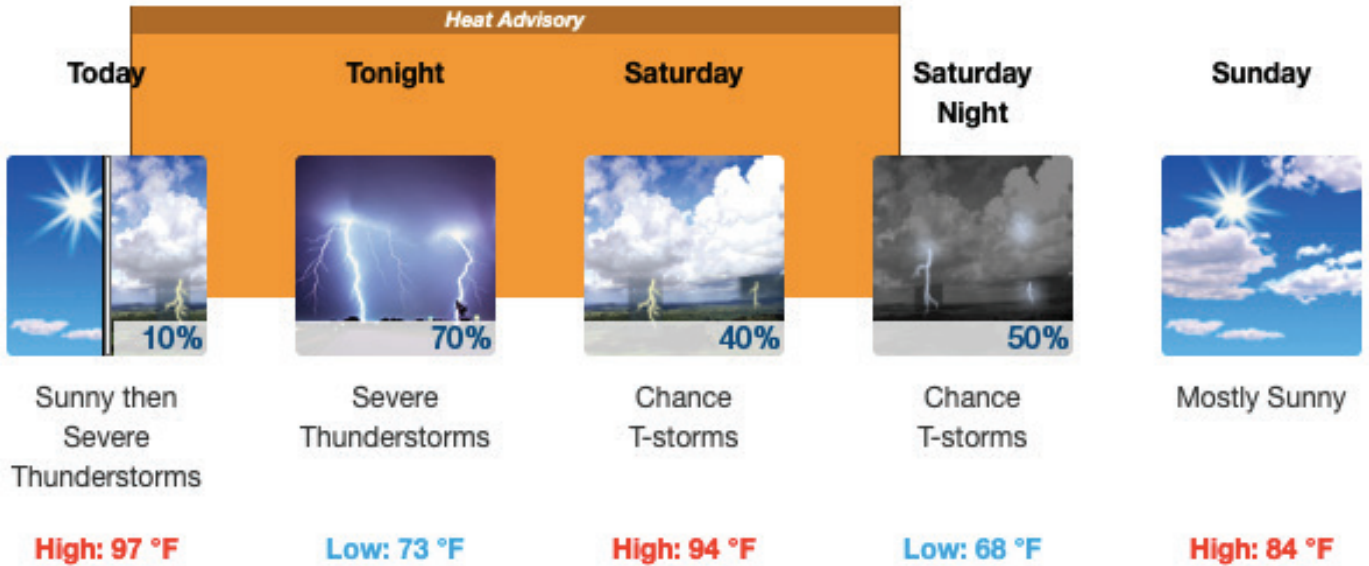
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Dangerous Heat Today

WHEN/WHERE

A Heat Advisory is in effect for all of central & northeastern SD and west central MN today, with peak heat during the afternoon & evening

WHAT

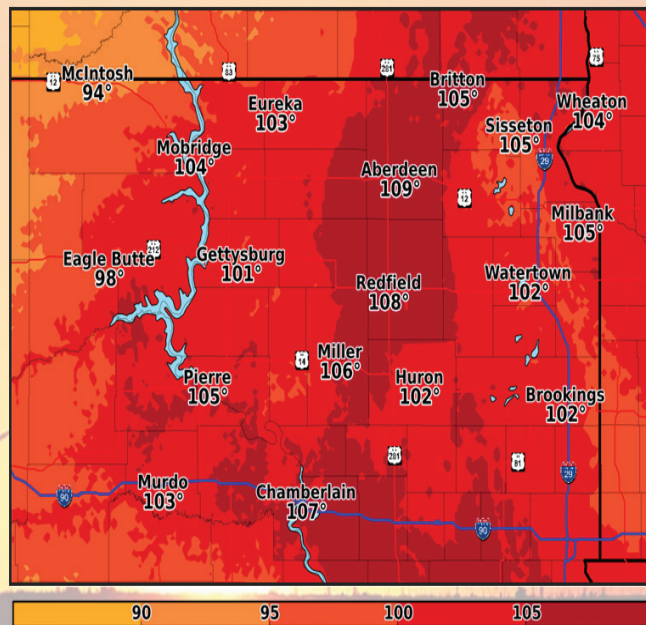
High temperatures of 92 to 100 F and Heat Index Values of 100 to 110 F.

ACTION

Spending too much uninterrupted time in the heat could lead to heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Head warning signs! Take breaks if spending time outdoors, and drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.



Max Forecast Heat Index 7/24/2020



Beat the Heat, Check the Back Seat!

High temperatures in the 90s combine with dewpoints in the 70s today to yield heat index values near or over 100 degrees, particularly this afternoon and evening. Consider limiting time spend outdoors, and drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated!

Severe Storms Possible Today/Tonight

WHEN/WHERE

Storms fire across Central SD during the late afternoon, and then shift east through the evening. Activity gradually weakens as it approaches the SD/MN border late tonight.

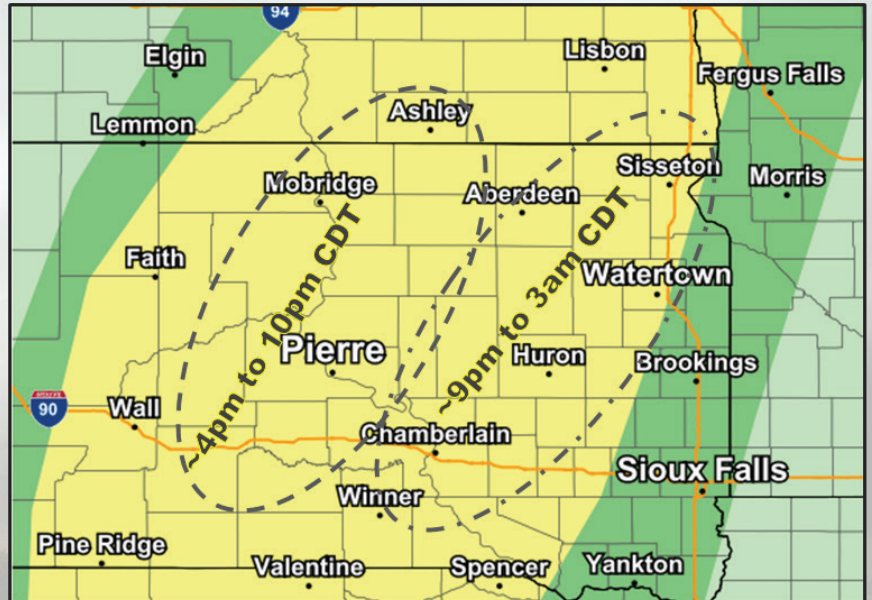
WHAT

Scattered severe storms possible & capable of producing large hail up to 2" plus, wind gusts up to around 70 mph, and torrential rainfall.

ACTION

Have a way to receive warning information, especially if spending time outdoors.

SPC Convective Outlook 7/24/2020



MARGINAL	SLIGHT	ENHANCED	MODERATE
Isolated Severe Storms Possible	Scattered Severe Storms Possible	Numerous Severe Storms Possible	Widespread Severe Storms Likely

Late afternoon thunderstorms may develop across portions of Central South Dakota, and then spread east through the evening and nighttime hours. These storms could be strong to severe, with plenty of instability to work with. Stay weather-aware, especially if spending time outdoors!

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Today in Weather History

July 24, 1993: A severe thunderstorm struck southern Hyde County, including the city of Highmore, with winds more than 60 mph and heavy rains of two to four inches. Near Stephan, in far southern Hyde County, an estimated of over four inches of rain in 20 minutes caused flooding damage to a bridge. Three to nine inches of rain caused widespread flash flooding and flood damage to Day, Roberts, and southeastern Marshall Counties. Especially hard hit was an area from Webster, northeastward through the Pickerell and Buffalo Lakes area, to Sisseton. A state of emergency was declared in Sisseton. The heavy rains overwhelmed a small creek that flows through Sisseton, swelling it to three blocks wide and up to five feet deep. The rushing water carried lumber, railroad ties, propane tanks, and several vehicles. Flood damage occurred to 70 percent of all buildings in Sisseton, including 100 homes. In Webster, the excessive rain flooded all the sewer lifts that pump water out of low-lying areas in town. The sewer system then backed up into homes and businesses. The rainstorm flooded nine of the 12 main floor rooms at the Super 8 motel in Webster. Roads and bridge damage was also extensive in Roberts, Day, and Marshall Counties with about 50 roads and bridges in Day County damaged by the flooding. Areas lakes, including Pickerell, Blue Dog, Enemy Swim, and Buffalo lakes rose over two feet, inundating areas around lake homes and submerging docks. Some estimated storm total rainfall amounts include; 4.60 inches in Webster; 3.91 in Waubay; 3.90 in Britton; and 3.60 inches near Ashton.

July 24, 1997: Over 6 inches of rain fell in the Conde area in far northeast Spink County. Water was over Highway 37, and many town basements were flooded. One basement filled with 5 feet of water. Nearly 7 inches of rain was received at Lake Poinsett, and over 6 inches of rain was received in Estelline. Hidewood Creek in Hamlin County overflowed its banks. Water went into many residences homes, and some people were evacuated. A small bridge was taken out by the high water, and Highway 28 was closed for an hour.

1930: An estimated, F5 tornado tore through Montello, Veneto, and Friuli in Italy. The tornado killed 23 people along its 50 miles path.

1952: The temperature at Louisville, Georgia soared to 112 degrees to establish a state record. The temperature also hit 112 degrees in Greenville, Georgia on August 20, 1983.

2008: A tornado fluctuated between the category EF1 and the more destructive EF2 strikes Northwood and Pittsfield, as well as nine other towns in New Hampshire. It first touches down in Deerfield, then travels through Northwood, Epsom, Pittsfield, Barnstead, and Alton. From there, it rages through New Durham, Wolfeboro, Freedom, Ossipee, and Effingham. The storm destroys several homes, damaged dozens of others and kills at least one person.

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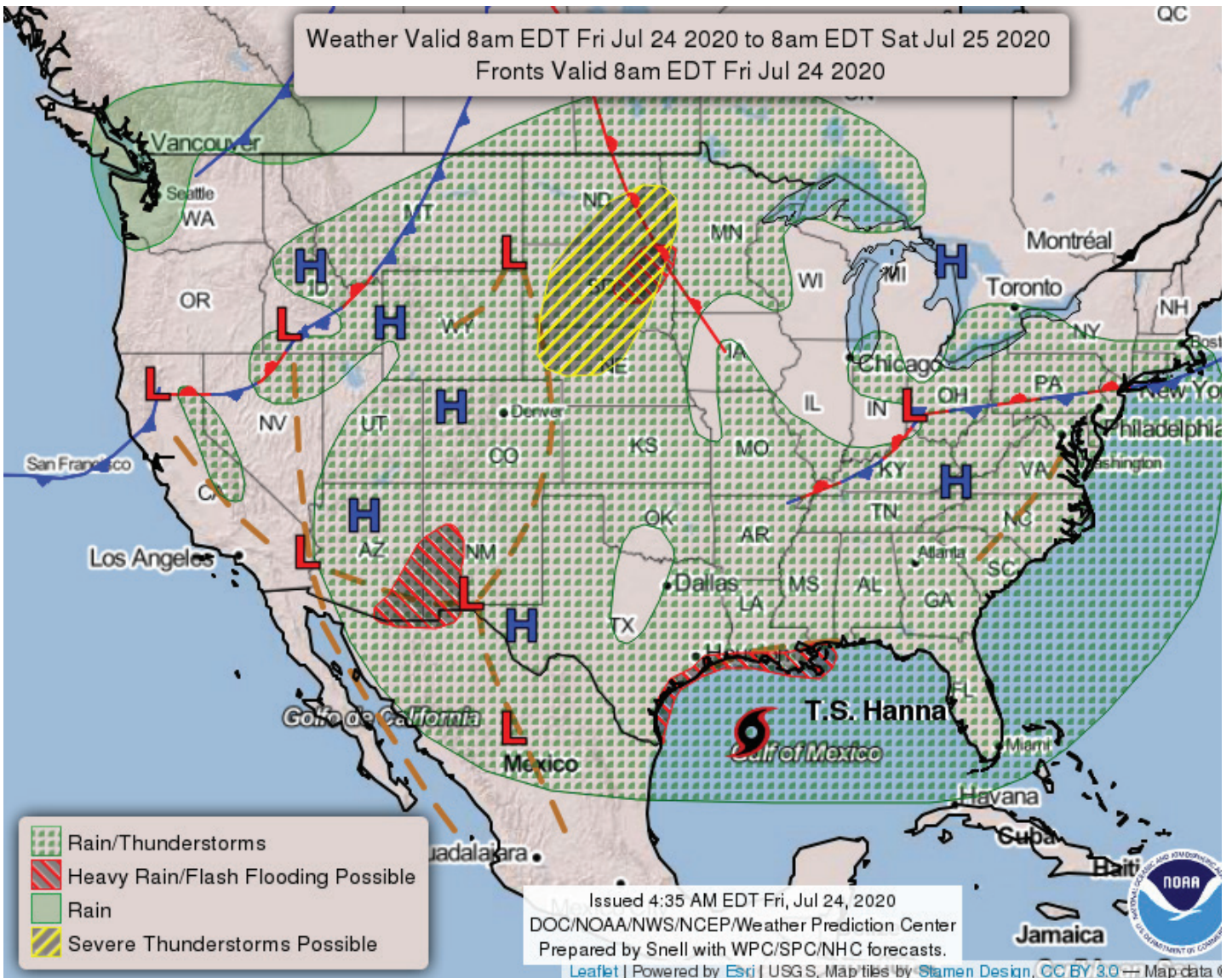
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 88 °F at 3:36 PM
Low Temp: 66 °F at 4:38 AM
Wind: 27 mph at 2:19 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 108° in 1931
Record Low: 46° in 1905, 1895
Average High: 84°F
Average Low: 60°F
Average Precip in July.: 2.34
Precip to date in July.: 0.69
Average Precip to date: 13.18
Precip Year to Date: 9.01
Sunset Tonight: 9:10 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:11 a.m.



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GOD'S MASTER PLAN

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle studied to be a physician. After completing his studies, he established a medical partnership with a friend. It did not go well, and they soon parted ways.

Shortly afterward, he opened his own practice. Initially, he had very few patients, and to pass away the long, boring days, he began to write fictitious crime stories. His first writings were not well received. But, since he had empty hours to fill, he continued to write.

Two of his characters were Sherlock Holmes and Watson. He framed his stories around much of the information he learned while studying to become a doctor. He also applied the concept of "differential diagnosis" from the field of medicine to his writings. This intriguing method of writing mystery stories brought great interest and attention to his works. Applying this idea to his books was genius, and he gave up medicine and began a new career.

Some may wonder why he did not go directly into writing crime stories rather than the field of medicine. Yes, that was an option. But it was his understanding of "differential diagnosis" that he learned in medical school that made his crime stories different and brought him success.

Often we have difficulty getting through "things" that seem stupid or foolish, troubling, and worthless, tedious, and even frustrating. However, God has an individual plan for each of us – and sometimes, the journey to get to the destination takes time. But the mission is worth it!

Prayer: Help us, Father, to be patient and open while You prepare us for our life's work. May we be willing to do our best to develop our talents carefully and wisely for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today : And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. Romans 8:28

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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
- 07/25/2020 City-Wide Rummage Sales
- **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

News from the Associated Press

Police arrest Sioux Falls man in 1974 Minnesota homicide

WILLMAR, Minn. (AP) — Police on Thursday arrested a South Dakota man in a 1974 cold-case homicide in Minnesota after using DNA to link him to the killing 46 years ago.

Authorities arrested the 79-year-old man without incident at his home in Sioux Falls. He was arrested on a warrant for second-degree murder in the fatal stabbing of 74-year-old Mae Herman of Willmar, in western Minnesota, Willmar Police Chief Jim Felt said in a news release.

Family members found Herman dead in her home on Jan. 27, 1974. Despite decades of investigation, no clear suspects emerged.

But a recent cold-case review found that the man was a suspect shortly after the killing, but evidence and interviews at that time were inconclusive. A search warrant was obtained for a DNA sample, which matched the suspect to evidence collected in the 1974 killing, Felt said.

The suspect is in the Minnehaha County Jail awaiting extradition to Minnesota.

Investigation: Sioux Falls police justified in use of force

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — An investigative report has found Sioux Falls police were justified in using force in the arrest of a juvenile that was caught on social media video last month.

Videos of the arrest drew accusations that officers had used excessive force while they responded to a call for an alleged assault in downtown Sioux Falls. The videos on social media show officers threatening to shoot someone in a car who did not obey their commands to stop the car.

Police then broke the car's window with a baton, dragged the 17-year-old driver from the vehicle and forced her to the ground. Officers also dragged a 19-year-old out of the backseat.

But Capt. Mike Colwill told KELO-AM the report says the use of force was reasonable under the circumstances.

South Dakota health officials weigh in on masks in schools

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials on Thursday said that one of their top priorities is helping schools reopen amid the coronavirus pandemic, but that they will leave it up to school administrators to decide whether to require masks.

With most South Dakota schools planning to allow students into classrooms in the coming months, requiring teachers and students to wear masks has been an item of debate at school board meetings statewide. The South Dakota State Medical Association, the largest group of doctors in the state, has urged school administrators to require them.

The Board of Regents announced this week it will require masks at public universities for at least the first 30 days of the fall semester. The Mitchell school district will also require masks on school property, but the Sioux Falls school district, the largest in the state, doesn't have a requirement for face coverings in its current reopening plan.

Josh Clayton, the state epidemiologist, said the Department of Health is pointing to recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and those aren't specific on calling for masks in schools. He encouraged a school-by-school approach that reacts to local conditions.

The CDC has said that there "is increasing evidence that cloth face coverings help prevent people who have COVID-19 from spreading the virus to others" and recommends people wear them in public.

Republican Gov. Kristi Noem has pushed for schools to return to in-person education, saying that when they closed in the spring, many students lost contact with their teachers.

Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said, "Kids thrive in the situation when they're able to go to

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school and interact with their teachers.”

But opening schools has also caused concern they could become hubs of coronavirus infections. Surges in cases have caused schools in some states to postpone plans for in-person classes. Malsam-Rysdon said the Department of Health is preparing to conduct contact tracing in schools to try to prevent clusters of infections.

In South Dakota, the daily rate of reported infections has remained mostly constant over the last two weeks. Health officials reported 66 cases of the virus on Thursday.

Over the course of the pandemic, 8,143 cases have been reported statewide, but 88% of those have recovered. Health officials reported two deaths on Thursday, bringing the state's tally of COVID-19 deaths to 121.

The number of infections is thought to be far higher because many people have not been tested, and studies suggest people can be infected with the virus without feeling sick.

Meanwhile, the number of South Dakota residents who made new claims for unemployment saw a significant decline, according to the Department of Labor and Regulation. The agency reports that 698 people made new claims for unemployment benefits during the week ending July 18, which is a more than 40% decrease from the previous week.

A total of 16,594 people in the state were receiving unemployment benefits as of July 11. That represents 4% of all eligible employees in the state.

Boy's drowning death under investigation in Brookings

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Police continue to investigate the drowning death of a 10-year-old boy earlier this month in Brookings and are now looking to speak with potential witnesses.

The body of Molu Zarpeleh's was found in a pond July 2 after the boy had been reported missing. His family said Molu had been out riding his bike and failed to return home. Police discovered his bike and sandals near the pond.

The Brookings Fire Department used pumps to remove about 300,000 gallons of water from the pond and found the boy's body.

Police have posted pictures of possible witnesses, hoping they will come forward.

Goldman Sachs \$3.9B settlement with Malaysia over 1MDB

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Goldman Sachs has reached a \$3.9 billion settlement with Malaysia over the 1MDB sovereign wealth fund that was used to launder money.

Malaysian and U.S. prosecutors had alleged that bond sales organized by Goldman Sachs for 1MDB provided one of the means for associates of former Malaysian leader Najib Razak to steal billions over several years from a fund that was ostensibly set up to accelerate Malaysia's economic development.

Najib was arrested as part of the scandal. Two former Goldman Sachs bankers have been charged for their role in helping 1MDB launder money.

Goldman on Friday said it had agreed to pay the government of Malaysia \$2.5 billion and to guarantee that it gets at least \$1.4 billion in proceeds from assets that have since been seized around the globe.

Investigations into the 1MDB scandal had been quashed by Najib's government. Its ousting in the 2018 elections ushered in Malaysia's first change of power since independence from Britain in 1957.

The new government soon reopened investigations that led to charges being filed against Najib, his wife Rosmah Mansor and several former senior government officials. Malaysia also charged U.S. bank Goldman Sachs with allegedly misleading investors over bond sales it organized for 1MDB.

Najib has called the prosecution a political attack. The ruling alliance that ousted him collapsed in March with two-time Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad resigning in protest over his party forming a Malay-centric government with Najib's party and several others.

The king subsequently appointed fellow party leader Muhyiddin Yassin as the new prime minister despite Mahathir's insistence that he has the support of a majority of lawmakers. Mahathir, 94, has called for a

no-confidence vote against Muhyiddin that has been delayed by the coronavirus, and could be held at the next sitting of Parliament in July.

Hungarian PM claims EU win but rule-of-law dispute not over

By PABLO GORONDI Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Hungary's prime minister on Friday touted what he called his victory at the European Union summit, where the bloc's leaders decided on a massive seven-year budget and coronavirus recovery plan, but acknowledged he did not achieve his goal of de-linking EU funds from rule of law considerations.

Hungary and Poland, two nations led by right-wing populist governments, are both in the midst of EU proceedings over concerns that they are violating EU standards with laws and practices that threaten the independence of judges and press freedoms, and could face sanctions. At the marathon EU summit that ended Tuesday, leaders had debated tying receiving EU funds to demands that member nations follow EU democratic standards but did not explicitly do so.

"Polish and Hungarians ... thwarted the attempt of others deciding about the money due to us," Prime Minister Viktor Orban said Friday on state radio about the EU deal worth just over 1.8 trillion euros (\$2 trillion) in which Hungary and Poland were considered to be among the greatest beneficiaries.

At the end of the summit, Orban said "any attempt to make a connection between the rule of law and the budget was ... successfully rejected," but on Friday he acknowledged the issue is far from settled.

"We didn't win the war but simply only a very important battle," Orban said.

According to news site portfolio.hu, Hungary may get as much as 52.8 billion euros (\$61.3 billion) from the EU in the seven-year budget period starting in 2021, about 35% more than in the last budget.

Orban arrived at the EU summit with a resolution from the Hungarian parliament demanding, among other things, an end to an EU sanctioning process launched against Hungary in 2018 due to rule of law concerns.

But German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, said the initiative to close the proceeding "must come from Hungary."

"Hungary would like — this is what Prime Minister Orban has told me — for this not to be such an impasse," Merkel at the end of the summit. "We will support Hungary in this. But the decisive paths must, of course, be specified by Hungary."

While Orban had mentioned even vetoing a deal at the summit if funds were tied to rule of law standards, it would have been highly risky to go directly against the wishes of Germany, which is Hungary's largest trading partner and was strongly behind the coronavirus recovery package.

"Viktor Orban understood that he could not fundamentally oppose German aspirations and interests, which were for there to be an agreement by all means," said Attila Tibor Nagy of the Center for Fair Political Analysis.

He said with Germany worried about a collapse of key export markets like Italy and Spain, "the Hungarian government realized that the rule of law clause was not worth vetoing over."

After the EU summit, however, EU officials reiterated that nations still must adhere to democratic standards. There are also concerns that Hungary and Poland have refused to join the EU public prosecutor's office, which will be investigating fraud connected to EU funds.

Hungary has built a rash of large soccer stadiums in small towns under Orban's rule. Some officials in Hungary and other EU nations have also been accused of obtuse land deals that gave them access to EU farm subsidies while impoverishing farmers.

"Protecting our budget and the respect for the rule of law go hand in hand," EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Thursday in the EU Parliament. "We must also do everything we can to protect European money by stepping up the fight against fraud."

"This means having the right controls in place, including a database that puts us in the position to know who the final beneficiaries of EU funding are," she added.

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Von der Leyen said the Commission would seek to again advance its proposal for funding cuts to member states that had a lack of judicial independence or other democratic failings. And EU Parliament President David Sassoli said this week that tying rule of law demands to disbursements was "a topic the Parliament cares a lot about."

The EU legislature on Thursday adopted a resolution by a wide majority which, while criticizing cuts to the 2021-2027 EU budget in research and health, also expressed lawmakers' desire to make sure that governments violating the bloc's "fundamental values" will have their access to EU funds blocked or limited.

The European Parliament has the final say in approving the budget.

Given that atmosphere, the Orban government is preparing supporters for new confrontations with the EU over its perceived democratic deficits.

Hungarian Justice Minister Judit Varga, who has faced strong criticism in the European Parliament while defending Hungarian policies, told the pro-government Magyar Nemzet newspaper that "the gist of the fight is yet to come."

"I expect a new series of tougher, more unscrupulous attacks than ever before to begin in the fall," Varga said.

Analysts said the trend in the EU was to reinforce rule of law principles.

"It's evident that Viktor Orban sees, as do others, that the EU is increasingly going moving toward the implementation of these kinds of conditions and the retention of funds," said Andrea Virag, strategic director at Republikon Institute, a Budapest-based liberal think-tank. "So while they may be talking about a victory, they are readying themselves and voters that a debate about this is still to come."

Associated Press writers Samuel Petrequin in Brussels and Geir Moulson in Berlin contributed to this report.

The Latest: UK's Johnson dismisses anti-vaxxers as 'nuts'

By The Associated Press undefined

LONDON — U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has dismissed campaigners seeking to oppose vaccinations, describing so-called anti-vaxxers as "nuts."

Johnson asked staff at a London medical center what they thought of anti-vaxxers while adding, "There's all these anti-vaxxers now. They are nuts, they are nuts."

Johnson was touring the east London center to promote a campaign for flu vaccinations ahead of winter.

The anti-vaccination movement was fueled by a now-discredited article in the medical journal Lancet by Andrew Wakefield, which alleged the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine was linked to autism. The article was later retracted and Wakefield lost his medical license.

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

- The global march of face masks: A mirror on humanity
- AP-NORC poll: 3 in 4 Americans back requiring wearing masks
- Pepcid as a virus remedy? Trump admin's \$21M gamble fizzled
- China's ruling Communist Party says a former chairman of a state-owned real estate company who publicly criticized President Xi Jinping's handling of the coronavirus pandemic has been expelled from the party and will be prosecuted on corruption charges.
- Even before the new coronavirus hit, Argentina's health care workers were struggling, most of them working more than 12 hours a day at multiple jobs to make ends meet amid the country's overheated inflation.
- South Africa is seeing a "huge discrepancy" between confirmed COVID-19 deaths and an unusually high number of excess deaths from natural causes, while Africa's top health official says the coronavirus is spreading there "like wildfire."

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HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

MADRID -- Spain's farm minister says authorities are pressing agricultural employers to provide decent accommodation and transport for seasonal migrant workers, amid fears that poor living conditions are creating coronavirus hot spots.

Farm Minister Luis Planas said Friday that "infections in rural areas don't happen on farms or in fields, they happen in transport and accommodation."

He said that, as in Germany and France, officials are concerned that the movement of tens of thousands seasonal workers spreads COVID-19. He said in an interview with Cadena Ser radio that employers must provide "dignified living conditions."

Spain's Health Ministry reported Thursday 971 new coronavirus infections over the previous 24 hours -- the country's biggest daily increase since a lockdown ended.

Planas' comments came on the same day that a United Nations report demanded that Spain improve the "deplorable" living conditions that some of its seasonal workers endure.

BRUSSELS — Belgian health authorities say a 3-year old girl has died after testing positive for the coronavirus amid a surge of infections in the country.

The announcement Friday came a day after Belgium decided to reinforce restriction measures to slow the spread of the virus, including mandatory masks in crowded outdoor public spaces.

The girl suffered from several severe associated diseases, according to a statement released by health authorities. She is believed to be the youngest person to die from COVID-19 complications in Belgium after a 12-year-old passed away in March.

Belgium has been hard hit by the coronavirus, with 64,847 cases and 9,812 deaths.

The average infection rate has largely increased over the past two weeks and the number of new infections went up 89% from the previous week from July 14-20.

BERLIN — The company that runs a German slaughterhouse that was at the center of a major outbreak last month says 30 employees have tested positive for the coronavirus in new tests -- but most of them were old cases.

Authorities have linked more than 2,000 cases to the outbreak at the Toennies slaughterhouse in the western town of Rheda-Wiedenbrueck, which led last month to a partial lockdown of the surrounding area. Those restrictions have since been lifted and the facility has reopened after a four-week closure.

Toennies spokesman Andre Vierstaedte said Friday that the 30 employees, along with all other workers, were tested on their return to work and sent into quarantine once the results arrived.

The company said that in most cases the employees had previously tested positive for the coronavirus and it was still detectable, news agency dpa reported. In the case of eight employees, it had yet to be determined whether or not they had previously been infected.

LONDON — The chief scientist at the World Health Organization estimates that about 50% to 60% of the population will need to be immune to the coronavirus for there to be any protective "herd immunity" effect.

Herd immunity is usually achieved through vaccination and occurs when most of a population is immune to a disease, blocking its continued spread.

During a social media event on Friday, Dr. Soumya Swaminathan said that studies done from some countries hit hard by COVID-19 show that about 5% to 10% of people now have antibodies, though in some countries, it has been as high as 20%.

She says: "As there are waves of this infection going through countries, people are going to develop antibodies and those people will hopefully be immune for sometime so they will also act as barriers and brakes to the spread."

Other experts have estimated that as much as 70% to 80% of the population need to have antibodies before there is any herd immunity effect.

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In the pandemic's earlier stages, countries including Britain proposed achieving herd immunity as an outbreak response strategy. But Swaminathan pointed out that achieving this effect with a vaccine is much safer than letting the virus rip through the population.

She says that to achieve herd immunity through natural infection, you need to have several waves and you will see the morbidity and mortality that we see now.

LONDON — New rules on wearing masks in England have come into force, with people going to shops, banks and supermarkets now required to wear face coverings.

Police can hand out fines of 100 pounds (\$127) if people refuse, but authorities are hoping that peer pressure will prompt compliance.

The move had been controversial, with the government offering mixed signals on the matter for weeks before coming up with a policy.

Guidance was issued Thursday, which says people should "assume" it is standard to wear a face covering when visiting a hospital, care home or community health care setting.

John Apter, the national chairman of the Police Federation of England and Wales, says officers will be available as a last resort but that he hopes the public "will continue to do the right thing and wear face coverings in stores to help protect fellow citizens to minimize the spread of the virus."

There are some exceptions to the new rules, with venues like restaurants, pubs, gyms and hairdressers exempt.

Other exemptions to face coverings include children under 11, people with breathing problems and people who can't wear a mask because of a disability.

BERLIN — The German government says a new update to the country's coronavirus tracing app has addressed a problem on many smartphones that reportedly resulted in some users receiving infection warnings late or not at all.

Germany's Corona-Warn-App has been downloaded more than 15.5 million times since its launch last month. If someone using it tests positive for COVID-19, they can inform others who were in close proximity for at least 15 minutes that they, too, might be infected.

On Thursday evening, the Bild newspaper reported that automatic warning notifications didn't work properly on some Android phones in the first five weeks because the app's background update function switched off automatically to save power when the app wasn't open.

The Health Ministry said Friday that the latest version of the app allows users to activate the background update function more easily.

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — Cambodia's Health Ministry announced Friday it has confirmed four new cases of the coronavirus, all members of a Cambodian military force that had been stationed in the African nation of Mali on a peacekeeping mission for the United Nations.

The three men and a woman were members of a team that had worked on land mine clearance. They were among 80 members who arrived back in Cambodia on July 10. The four were confirmed on Thursday to be infected.

Cambodia since 2006 has sent more than 6,000 soldiers to participate in demining and engineering work in U.N. peacekeeping operations in the Middle East and Africa. Officials have explained the deployments are partly in gratitude for a massive 1992-1993 U.N. peacekeeping operation in Cambodia that oversaw a transition from civil war to political stability.

Cambodia has confirmed 202 cases of coronavirus with no deaths. There have been no recent cases of local transmission. All new cases have involved arrivals from abroad, virtually all of them Cambodians but also including two U.S. diplomats.

NEW DELHI — India has surpassed 30,000 deaths and its COVID-19 fatalities are now sixth in the world. The Health Ministry on Friday added 740 deaths due to COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, increasing the toll

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to 30,601. The total now exceeds France's toll, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally.

India also registered a record 49,310 new cases, taking the country's tally to 1,287,945, third most in the world behind the United States and Brazil.

More than 60% have recovered.

As cases surge, the Home Ministry advised all government offices, states and officials to avoid congregations for Aug. 15 Independence Day celebrations.

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea will allow baseball fans to return to the stands beginning Sunday as health authorities outlined a phased process to bring back spectators in professional sports amid the COVID-19 epidemic.

Senior Health Ministry official Yoon Tae-ho also said fans will be allowed at professional soccer games starting on Aug. 1. However, professional golf tournaments will continue without galleries at least until late August, he said.

Both baseball and soccer teams will be initially allowed to sell only 10% of seats for each game and fans must register with smartphone QR codes for contact-tracing purposes if necessary. Fans will be banned from eating food and drinking beer, and discouraged from excessive shouting, singing and cheering during the game.

South Korea's baseball and soccer leagues returned to action in May without fans in the stands. Seats have been covered with cheering banners, dolls or pictures of fans as teams tried to mimic a festive atmosphere.

South Korea reported 41 new virus cases Friday, 28 of them local infections and 13 from overseas. South Korea has been reporting roughly 20-60 cases every day since it eased rigid social distancing rules in early May.

MELBOURNE, Australia — The premier of Australia's COVID-19 hot spot, Victoria state, says the military will be used to bolster contact-tracing efforts.

Premier Daniel Andrews said Friday that if someone who is a newly diagnosed coronavirus case does not answer after being telephoned twice, soldiers will accompany a health official to the infected person's home for a contact-tracing interview on the doorstep.

Anyone who is not at home will likely be fined for failing to home quarantine while awaiting a negative test result. Previously, failure to contact an infected person by phone was not followed up with a house call.

Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison said all states and territories had eradicated community transmission except for the most populous, New South Wales and Victoria states.

"There will always be cases that come because Australia has not completely shut itself off from the world. To do so would be reckless," Morrison said.

Victoria recorded 300 new cases on Friday and New South Wales seven, both declines from the previous day.

BEIJING — Chinese officials have reported two confirmed coronavirus cases in a northeastern province as China continues to see infection clusters develop even though it has largely contained the virus in most of the country.

Authorities in Liaoning province have closed theaters, night clubs and indoor tourist attractions trying to stem further infections.

The Liaoning infections mark China's latest cluster after one in the far northwestern region of Xinjiang earlier this month. That outbreak, focused on the regional capital of Urumqi, has infected dozens of people and officials have curbed travel and ordered widespread testing.

Elsewhere, China has largely contained the virus, with major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai opening up to increased economic activity and social interaction.

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Christopher Columbus statue taken down at Chicago park

CHICAGO (AP) — A statue of Christopher Columbus in downtown Chicago's Grant Park was taken down early Friday, a week after protesters trying to topple the monument to the Italian explorer clashed with police.

Crews used a large crane to remove the statue from its pedestal as a small crowd gathered to watch. The crowd cheered and passing cars honked as the statue came down about 3 a.m. Several work trucks were seen in the area, but it was unclear where the statue would be taken.

The Associated Press sent an email Friday seeking comment from Mayor Lori Lightfoot's office.

Plans to remove the statue were first reported Thursday night by the Chicago Tribune and the removal followed hours of vocal confrontations between opponents and supporters of the statue. And on July 17, protesters had clashed with police, who used batons to beat people and made arrests after they say protesters targeted them with fireworks, rocks and other items.

"This statue coming down is because of the effort of Black and Indigenous activists who know the true history of Columbus and what he represents," Stefan Cuevas-Caizaguano, a resident watching the removal, told the Chicago Sun-Times.

The removal also comes amid a plan by President Donald Trump to dispatch federal law enforcement agents to the city to respond to gun violence, prompting worries that the surge will inhibit residents' ability to hold demonstrations. A collection of activist groups had filed suit Thursday, seeking to block federal agents to combat violent crime from interfering in or policing protests.

State officials in Oregon had sued for similar requests following the arrival of federal law enforcement due to nearly two months of protests in Portland since the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Protesters across the county have called for the removal of statues of Columbus, saying that he is responsible for the genocide and exploitation of native peoples in the Americas. The Columbus statue in Chicago's Grant Park and another in the city's Little Italy neighborhood were vandalized last month, and statues of Columbus have also been toppled or vandalized in other U.S. cities.

This story has been corrected to indicate that the lawsuit by activists was filed Thursday, not Wednesday.

China tells US to close consulate in Chengdu in growing spat

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China ordered the United States on Friday to close its consulate in the western city of Chengdu, ratcheting up a diplomatic conflict at a time when relations have sunk to their lowest level in decades.

The move was a response to the Trump administration's order this week for Beijing to close its consulate in Houston after Washington accused Chinese agents of trying to steal medical and other research in Texas.

The Chinese foreign ministry appealed to Washington to reverse its "wrong decision."

Chinese-U.S. relations have soured amid a mounting array of conflicts including trade, the handling of the coronavirus pandemic, technology, spying accusations, Hong Kong and allegations of abuses against Chinese Muslims.

"The measure taken by China is a legitimate and necessary response to the unjustified act by the United States," said a foreign ministry spokesperson, Wang Wenbin.

"The current situation in Chinese-U.S. relations is not what China desires to see. The United States is responsible for all this," Wang said. "We once again urge the United States to immediately retract its wrong decision and create necessary conditions for bringing the bilateral relationship back on track."

Wang said some consulate personnel "interfered in China's internal affairs and harmed China's security interests" but gave no details. He said Beijing complained "many times" to Washington about that.

Also Friday, the U.S. State Department sent out a notice warning Americans in China of a "heightened risk of arbitrary detention."

"U.S. citizens may be subjected to prolonged interrogations and extended detention for reasons related

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to 'state security,'" the notice said.

Americans may be detained or deported for "sending private electronic messages critical" of the Chinese government, it said. The notice gave no indication of what prompted the warning.

On Tuesday, the Trump administration ordered the Houston consulate closed within 72 hours. It alleged Chinese agents tried to steal data from facilities including the Texas A&M medical system.

The ministry on Thursday rejected the allegations as "malicious slander." It warned the Houston consulate's closure was "breaking down the bridge of friendship" between the two countries.

The United States has an embassy in Beijing and consulates in five other mainland cities — Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Shenyang and Wuhan. It also has a consulate in Hong Kong, a Chinese territory.

The consulate in Chengdu is responsible for monitoring Tibet and other areas in the southwest inhabited by non-ethnic Chinese minorities that are considered especially sensitive by Beijing.

Asian stock markets, already uneasy about the uncertain pace of recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, fell Friday on the news of the closure.

China's market benchmark, the Shanghai Composite Index, lost 3.9%. Hong Kong's main index declined 2.2%.

"Alongside the eviction of the Houston Chinese Consulate, the risk of the U.S.-China conflict escalating into a 'Cold War' is worrying," Hayaki Narita of Mizuho Bank said in a report.

The consulate in Chengdu was in the news in 2012 when Wang Lijun, the police chief of the major city of Chongqing, visited and told American officials his concerns about the death of a British business associate of the wife of Chongqing's Communist Party secretary, Bo Xilai.

That prompted the British Embassy to ask for a new investigation, which led to the arrest and conviction of Bo's wife. Bo was later dismissed and sentenced to prison.

The consulate was surrounded by police while Wang was inside. He later emerged and was arrested and sentenced to 15 years on charges of corruption and defection. The U.S. government has refused to confirm whether Wang asked for asylum.

In March, American reporters for The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal were expelled from China. That was in response to the Trump administration's decision to limit the number of U.S. visas for Chinese employees of state media.

Operations of nine Chinese state media outlets in the United States have been required to register as "foreign missions" due to their ties with the ruling Communist Party. That doesn't affect their ability to conduct reporting but requires them to report their staff and real estate holdings as they would if they were embassies.

Also Thursday, the U.S. Justice Department said it believes the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco is harboring a Chinese researcher, Tang Juan, who is accused of lying about her background in the Communist Party's military wing on a visa application.

The department announced criminal charges of visa fraud against Tang and three other Chinese researchers. It said Tang lied on a visa application last October as she made plans to work at the University of California, Davis, and again during an FBI interview months later.

U.S. authorities this week announced criminal charges against two Chinese computer hackers who are accused of targeting companies that are working on vaccines for the coronavirus.

U.S. officials including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have stepped up accusations of technology theft. In a speech Thursday, Pompeo said some Chinese students and others "come here to steal our intellectual property and to take this back to their country."

Judge blocks US agents from arresting observers in Portland

By GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — A federal judge specifically blocked U.S. agents from arresting or using physical force against journalists and legal observers at protests in Oregon's largest city where President Donald

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Trump is testing the limits of federal power.

Federal agents appeared to deploy tear gas early Friday to force thousands of demonstrators from crowding around the federal courthouse.

Protesters had projected lasers on the building and attempted to take down a security fence that had been reinforced to keep demonstrators at a distance. The protesters moved away as clouds of gas rose from the area and flash grenades could be heard.

U.S. Judge Michael Simon made his ruling late Thursday, a day after Portland's mayor was tear-gassed by federal agents while making an appearance outside a federal courthouse during raucous demonstrations. Protesters have been kept up in the city for nearly two months since George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis.

Simon had previously ruled that journalists and legal observers are exempt from police orders requiring protesters to disperse once an unlawful assembly has been declared. Federal lawyers intervened, saying journalists should have to leave when ordered.

"This order is a victory for the rule of law," Jann Carson, ACLU of Oregon's interim executive director, said in a statement.

The judge said objections by law enforcement were outweighed by First Amendment concerns.

"None of the government's proffered interests outweigh the public's interest in accurate and timely information about how law enforcement is treating" protesters, he wrote.

Simon's order is in effect for 14 days. Journalists and observers must wear clear identification, he said. A freelance photographer covering the protests for The Associated Press submitted an affidavit that he was beaten with batons and hit with chemical irritants and rubber bullets this week.

The ACLU lawsuit is one of several filed in response to law enforcement actions during the protests. The state of Oregon is seeking an order limiting federal agents' arrest powers during the demonstrations.

On Wednesday, Mayor Ted Wheeler and hundreds of others were objecting to the presence of federal police sent by Trump, who labeled the demonstrators as "agitators & anarchists" after Wheeler was gassed.

Wheeler, a Democrat, appeared slightly dazed and coughed and said it was the first time he'd been tear-gassed.

He put on a pair of goggles someone handed him and drank water but did not leave his spot at the front of the raging demonstration — with protesters lighting a large fire between protective fencing and the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Courthouse amid the pop-pop-pop sounds of the federal agents deploying tear gas and stun grenades into the crowd.

It wasn't immediately clear if the agents knew that Wheeler, a 57-year-old sixth-generation Oregonian and longtime politician, was in the crowd when they used the tear gas.

Wheeler has opposed the federal agents' presence but has also faced harsh criticism from the protesters, who yelled and swore at him.

Earlier in the night, Wheeler was mostly jeered by protesters as he tried to rally the demonstrators who have clashed nightly with federal agents. But they briefly applauded when he shouted "Black Lives Matter" and pumped his fist in the air.

Trump in his tweet attempted to ridicule Wheeler, calling him the "Radical Left Mayor of Portland, who last night was booed & shouted out of existence by the agitators & anarchists."

The Justice Department's inspector general said Thursday it will review the conduct of federal agents who responded to unrest in Portland and in Washington, D.C., after concerns emerged from members of Congress and the public.

City council members accused Wheeler of not reining in police who used tear gas multiple times on protesters before federal agents arrived. And city business leaders have condemned the mayor for not bringing the situation under control before the agents showed up.

Department of Homeland Security acting Secretary Chad Wolf denied that federal agents were inflaming the situation. He told "CBS This Morning" that Wheeler legitimized criminality by going to the front of the crowd of demonstrators where the fires were lit and where people were trying to pull down a security fence.

Wheeler did not participate in lighting any of the fires or attempting to tear down the fence and was surrounded by his security team when he was gassed.

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Police said the crowd threw Molotov cocktails, lit fires in a park and in trash cans and released hundreds of gallons of water from fire hydrants.

Wheeler's appearance in the protest zone came hours after state attorneys for Oregon urged another judge to issue a restraining order against the federal agents. Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum's lawsuit accuses federal agents of arresting protesters without probable cause, whisking them away in unmarked cars and using excessive force. Federal authorities have disputed those allegations.

The hearing in U.S. District Judge Michael Mosman's court focused on the actions of the more than 100 federal agents responding to protests outside the Portland courthouse.

The state's motion asks Mosman to command agents from the Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection, Federal Protective Service and U.S. Marshals Service to immediately stop detaining protesters without probable cause, to identify themselves and their agency before arresting anyone, and to explain why an arrest is taking place.

Follow Gillian Flaccus on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/gflaccus>

Always rocky, China-US relations appear at a turning point

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Four decades after the U.S. established diplomatic ties with Communist China, the relationship between the two may have reached a turning point.

Tensions have risen to new heights on what has always been a rocky road, as the ambitions of a rising superpower increasingly clash with those of the established one. China ordered the closing of the U.S. Consulate in the southwestern city of Chengdu on Friday, in rapid retaliation for the closing of its consulate in Houston.

Two weeks ago, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi asked aloud if relations could stay on track. On Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivered an answer: The time has come to change course.

"The old paradigm of blind engagement with China simply won't get it done," he said in a speech at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library in southern California. "We must not continue it. We must not return to it."

It was Nixon's visit to China in 1972, the first by an American president since the Communists took power in 1949, that upended a Cold War paradigm and paved the way for the normalization of relations in 1979.

The United States had been a close ally of then-Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek in World War II and for three decades recognized Taiwan as the government of China after Chiang fled there when he lost control of the mainland in 1949.

Relations between Washington and the Communist government in Beijing began to thaw in the 1970s, as China's ties with the Soviet Union deteriorated and leader Mao Zedong sought a counterweight to its more powerful neighbor.

A new leader, Deng Xiaoping, visited the U.S. in 1979 after the establishment of diplomatic ties, smiling in photos as he tried on a cowboy hat in Texas. The Houston consulate that is being shut opened later the same year. It was China's first in the United States.

Setting aside political differences, the U.S. and China promoted economic, social and cultural ties that were briefly interrupted a decade later by China's military crackdown on the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

Economic links grew exponentially in the following years, with heavy investment by U.S. businesses in China and an accompanying Chinese trade surplus that has reached \$350 billion annually.

The relationship was punctuated by bouts of tension. The U.S. continues to support Taiwan militarily, and the Clinton administration sent an aircraft carrier through the Taiwan Strait in 1996 after China fired missiles toward the island.

In 2001, a Chinese fighter jet and a U.S. Navy surveillance plane collided over the South China Sea, a vital shipping lane in the Asia-Pacific region. China detained the U.S. crew for days after its plane made an emergency landing at a Chinese base.

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As China has grown into the world's second-largest economy, behind only the U.S., it is increasingly viewed as a competitor, both economically and militarily, and a potential challenger to the Western-led democratic model that has dominated the post-World War II era.

Election-year politics in the U.S. are fanning the flames, as President Donald Trump appears to be using friction with China to drum up support among his base. Whether or not he is reelected in November, underlying differences will remain.

"We are looking at a structural change in the relationship, which will continue even if Trump does not get a second term," said Steve Tsang, director of the China Institute at London's School of Oriental and African Studies.

Militarily, American and Chinese warships often jockey for position in the South China Sea. Economically, the U.S. is leaning on its allies to exclude Chinese telecom leader Huawei from their mobile networks, raising the specter of cybersecurity. On human rights, the U.S. is imposing sanctions over Chinese policies in Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang,

Tougher U.S. views on China have now been "baked into the system," Tsang said.

Pompeo's speech was the latest in a series of sharp criticisms aimed at China by Cabinet-level U.S. officials, including Defense Secretary Mark Esper and Attorney General Bill Barr.

Although Trump earlier played up what he called a warm relationship with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, communication between the sides has fallen to new lows.

"The kind of engagement we have been pursuing has not brought the kind of change in China that President Nixon hoped to induce," Pompeo said. "The truth is that our policies – and those of other free nations – resurrected China's failing economy, only to see Beijing bite the international hands that fed it."

Chu Yin, a professor at the University of International Relations in Beijing, said Americans who advocated engagement are disappointed that China's economic growth and the emergence of a middle class has enhanced the legitimacy of the ruling Communist Party rather than sparking democratic change.

Trump's domestic political strategy has added some explosive elements to the structural problems in the relationship, he said.

"China will not take Pompeo's speech seriously. It is the last cry of a lame duck," Chu said. "China wants to have dialogue with a U.S. politician who is more commensurate with the status of a major country."

He declined to forecast the future, saying: "Let us be more patient at this turbulent time."

Cognitive Test. Trump. Biden. Campaign. Flashpoint.

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, SETH BORENSTEIN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It doesn't quite have the ring of "Morning in America" and "I Like Ike."

But the phrase "Person. Woman. Man. Camera. TV." is getting an unlikely moment in the spotlight as President Donald Trump has taken a detour into the politics of dementia three months before the election.

Trump, 74, attempted to demonstrate his mental fitness by reciting five words — in order, importantly — over and over in a television interview broadcast Wednesday night. The Republican president said that collection of nouns, or ones like them, was part of a cognitive test he had aced while declaring that his likely Democratic opponent, 77-year-old Joe Biden, could not do the same.

In a battle of septuagenarians, the Trump campaign has long tried to paint Biden as having lost some of his mental sharpness. But the gambit has yet to prove successful in denting the former vice president's standing in the race. That leaves Trump trying to escalate the attacks while defending his own ability to handle the mental rigors of the job.

"The first questions are very easy," Trump told Fox News. "The last questions are much more difficult. Like a memory question. It's, like, you'll go: Person. Woman. Man. Camera. TV. So they say, 'Could you repeat that?' So I said, 'Yeah. It's: Person. Woman. Man. Camera. TV.'"

He then recalled that, at the end of the test, the doctor asked him to recite it again.

"And you go: 'Person. Woman. Man. Camera. TV.' If you get it in order, you get extra points," Trump said. "They said nobody gets it in order. It's actually not that easy, but for me, it was easy."

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Trump boasted that he dazzled the doctors because he has "a good memory, because I'm cognitively there" and delivered an unsubtle accusation about Biden.

"Now Joe should take that test because something's going on," Trump said. "And, I say this with respect. I mean — going to probably happen to all of us, right? You know? It's going to happen."

The subject of smarts — especially his own — has long fascinated the president.

Trump has been known to declare that he is "a very stable genius" and that "I have the best words" while noting that he attended the prestigious Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. And about a month ago, he began telling aides that a cognitive test he took as part of his physical in 2018 could be something he could weaponize against Biden.

The president has been known to recite five words to aides in the West Wing or on Air Force One — he'd tweak the list to make it appropriate for the setting — while claiming that Biden could not do the same.

But some of Trump's descriptions about the test and what it means don't quite fit with what experts describe about the most common of cognitive tests given to older people. There is no bonus, and it's meant to be easy, said Dr. James Galvin, a University of Miami professor of neurology who runs a dementia center.

Galvin said what Trump described sounds an awful lot like the Montreal Cognitive Assessment, often called MoCa. It takes about 10 minutes, and the top score is 30, said Galvin, who has administered thousands of the tests.

The MoCa "is a screening test," Galvin said. "It's not a diagnostic test. And more importantly, it's not an IQ test. It doesn't tell how smart someone is. It's designed to be a relatively easy test because what you want to do is pick up people who have problems or possible problems."

The last questions are not the hardest for most people, and they are usually naming the day of the week, date, month, year and where the person being tested is, Galvin said. The test does not get harder as it goes along but measures different parts of cognition, like memory, attention, spatial awareness and language. Additionally, the words the president cited would not be grouped together because they are all in some way related to one another, he said.

And the real concern would be if a subject did not do well on the test.

"I think he's thinking of it like some sort of IQ test or SAT test, something along those lines. But it's not anything like that. It's just basic," said Dr. Raymond Turner, professor of neurology and director of Georgetown University's Memory Disorders Program. "It's kind of a low bar to jump over. It's not necessarily something to brag about unless you are worried about decline or something."

Trump, whose father had Alzheimer's disease, has said that his former personal physician Dr. Ronny Jackson accompanied him to the test in 2018. Jackson, who is now running for Congress, did not respond to an interview request Thursday.

Questions about presidential health, mental or otherwise, tend to be closely guarded and rarely made the subject of national cable interviews. They have been part of the national dialogue before, including Ronald Reagan's mental health during his second term, though the health woes of Franklin Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were largely kept from the public.

But the Trump campaign has leaned in on the issue, despite the boomerang effect of highlighting the president's own verbal missteps, as a means of suggesting that Biden's blunders meant he was not up to the job.

"Any honest voter juxtaposing President Trump and Joe Biden can see the stark difference in mental acuity and wit," said Trump spokesperson Ken Farnaso, before adding that "it's their track records and not their ages that are in question here, and it's clear that President Trump's America First agenda is a winning platform."

When Biden was asked about cognitive testing last month, he responded, "I've been tested, and I'm constantly tested," before adding, "I can hardly wait to compare my cognitive capability to the cognitive capability of the man I'm running against."

The Biden campaign quickly clarified that its candidate was referring to the rigor of the presidential campaign -- not that he had undergone specific cognitive testing. And a campaign spokesperson wasted

no time rebutting Trump's claim on Thursday.

"Donald Trump is spectacularly failing every conceivable strategic test by ramping up mentions of this subject at all," said spokesperson Andrew Bates. "Joe Biden sounded the alarm about the outbreak early, whereas Donald Trump is still promising us the virus will magically 'disappear.' Joe Biden has highlighted the advice of medical experts throughout the pandemic, but Donald Trump publicly encouraged COVID-19 victims to inject themselves with disinfectant."

"And," Bates continued, "if that's not enough for you, 'Person. Woman. Man. Camera. TV.'"

5 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. CHINA-US DIPLOMATIC SPAT GROWS Beijing orders Washington to close its consulate in the western city of Chengdu, ratcheting up a conflict at a time when relations have sunk to their lowest level in decades.
2. DAILY CHECKLIST NOW INCLUDES FACE MASKS Reluctantly for many, the flimsy life-saving tissue have in mere months joined the list of don't-leave-home-without-them items for billions around the world.
3. COLUMBUS STATUE COMES DOWN IN CHICAGO The statue that drew chaotic protests in Grant Park was taken down by crews amid a plan by Trump to dispatch federal law enforcement agents to the city.
4. TRUMP SCRAPS GOP CONVENTION A "flare-up" of the coronavirus in Florida nixes plans for more than 10,000 people to attend the Republican National Convention in Jacksonville next month.
5. BASEBALL SEASON OPENS WITH A PALL Nationals star Juan Soto is diagnosed with the coronavirus, a grim reminder that the disease will overshadow anything that happens on the field this season.

Trump calls off Florida segment of GOP National Convention

By ZEKE MILLER and BRENDAN FARRINGTON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Bowing to the coronavirus threat, President Donald Trump has scrapped plans for a four-night Republican National Convention celebration in Florida that had been set to draw more than 10,000 people to a pandemic hot spot to mark his renomination.

Trump had already moved the convention's public events out of North Carolina because of virus concerns. But the spiking virus shifted to the South, too, and the planned gathering in Jacksonville increasingly appeared to be both a health and political risk. Trump and his advisers feared that going forward with big parties and "infomercial" programming in Florida would ultimately backfire on the president.

"It's a different world, and it will be for a little while," Trump said, explaining his decision at a Thursday White House coronavirus briefing. "To have a big convention is not the right time."

A small subset of GOP delegates will still formally renominate Trump on Aug. 24 in Charlotte, North Carolina, at an event scheduled to last just four hours.

Trump had decided last month to shift the ceremonial portions of the GOP convention to Florida because of a dispute with North Carolina's Democratic leaders over holding an indoor gathering with throngs of supporters taking a pass on face masks.

But his plans for a grand gathering in Florida started shrinking almost as quickly as the move was announced, as virus cases spiked in the state and other parts of the country.

Trump said he plans to deliver his nomination acceptance speech in an alternate form still to be determined — perhaps online. Trump campaign manager Bill Stepien said the campaign will still "provide exciting, informative, and enthusiastic programming so Republicans can celebrate the re-nomination of President Trump and Vice President Pence."

Trump said thousands of his supporters and delegates wanted to attend the events in Florida but "I just felt it was wrong" to gather them in a virus hot spot. Some of them would have faced quarantine requirements when they returned to their home states from the convention.

"We didn't want to take any chances," he added. "We have to be vigilant. We have to be careful, and we have to set an example."

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Democrats will hold an almost entirely virtual convention Aug. 17-20 in Milwaukee using live broadcasts and online streaming, according to party officials. Joe Biden plans to accept the presidential nomination in person, but it remains to be seen whether there will be a significant in-person audience.

The Biden campaign did not immediately respond to messages Thursday seeking comment on Trump's announcement.

In recent weeks, Trump aides and allies have encouraged the president to consider calling off the convention, arguing it was not worth going forward with the event if the focus would be on the pandemic. Trump acknowledged that consideration, saying, "I could see the media saying, 'Oh, this is very unsafe.'"

After a three-month hiatus, Trump has stepped back to the forefront of the government's handling of the virus with regular briefings aiming to stanch an erosion of support in public and private polls that has followed the surge in new virus cases.

Trump said he did not cancel the convention events at the request of local officials, but the Jacksonville City Council was set to meet Friday to discuss safety concerns around the gathering.

Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry, a former chair of the Florida Republican Party, said he appreciated Trump "putting health and public safety first."

"I know this was a difficult decision and just demonstrates and reaffirms once again his commitment to Jacksonville, the state of Florida and the people of the United States of America," he said. "I'm grateful for him and his leadership, and this was the right way to move forward."

Joe Gruters, current chair of the Florida Republican Party and a state senator from Sarasota, called it a "selfless move."

"Having our home-state candidate was going to be a really big deal for Florida, but listen, he had it right," Gruters said. "At the end of the day, it's about safety."

More than 10,000 people were expected in Jacksonville — already a fraction of the number that would typically attend a nominating convention. Only 336 delegates will be allowed to participate in Charlotte under extraordinary procedures approved last month by the Republican National Committee. The balance of the more than 2,500 delegates will vote by proxy.

Cory Burkarth, a spokesperson for the city of Charlotte, said Thursday, "We have an agreement in place with the Republican National Committee to host a substantially scaled down business meeting and that is what we are planning to do."

The RNC had raised more than \$35 million in contributions earmarked for the convention since 2017, according to an analysis of campaign finance disclosures by The Associated Press. The list of donors to the now-canceled event reads like a who's who of industry titans, power brokers and wealthy Republicans.

The RNC's convention committee had spent \$9.5 million through June. But that doesn't take into account the spending of the local host committee, which pledged to raise \$70 million.

The Charlotte City Council voted in April to accept a \$50 million federal grant for convention security. City Attorney Patrick Baker said the city had spent \$14 million prepping for the convention but expected Charlotte to get reimbursed through the grant.

Farrington reported from Tallahassee, Fla.

The global march of face masks: A mirror on humanity

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE, France (AP) — House keys, wallet or purse, mobile phone and oh, yes: face mask.

Reluctantly for many, but also inexorably in the face of a deadly invisible enemy, small rectangles of flimsy yet live-saving tissue have in mere months joined the list of don't-leave-home-without-them items for billions around the world.

Not since humans invented shoes or underwear has a single item of dress caught on so widely and quickly from Melbourne to Mexico City, Beijing to Bordeaux, spanning borders, cultures, generations and

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sexes with almost the same Earth-shaking speed as the coronavirus that has killed more than 600,000 and infected more than 15 million.

"There has, perhaps, never been such a rapid and dramatic change in global human behavior," says Jeremy Howard, co-founder of #Masks4All, a pro-mask lobbying group. "Humanity should be patting itself on the back."

But rarely, also maybe never, has anything else worn by humans sparked such furious discord and politicking, most notably in the United States. Did anyone on an American beach ever pull a gun on someone for wearing a bikini, as an unmasked man did on a masked shopper this month at a Florida Walmart?

As such, like other human habits, the mask has become a mirror on humanity. That so many people, with varying degrees of zeal, have adapted to the discomfort of masking their airways and facial expressions is powerful medicine for the belief that people are fundamentally caring, capable of sacrifice for the common good.

From Marsha Dita, a social media freelancer in Jakarta, Indonesia, comes a view succinctly put, and increasingly widely shared: "This is not the time to be selfish."

Yet also apparent from outbreaks of fierce resistance to masks, especially in democracies, is this: Plenty of people don't like being told what to do and distrust the scientific evidence that masks curb contamination.

Cries that masks muzzle freedom have been vociferously aired at rallies in the United States, Canada and, last Sunday, in London. There, a speaker at a protest against the introduction this Friday of mandatory mask-wearing in Britain's stores argued: "People die every year. This is nothing new."

Skepticism shared by, among others, Mohammed al-Burji, a 42-year-old civil servant in Lebanon. Walking to work without a mask, violating laxly enforced rules that they be worn everywhere outside the home, he said: "There is no coronavirus, brother. They're just deceiving people."

The country has reported over 3,100 infections and 43 deaths, and senior officials have made public appeals for people to stick to mask wearing and social distancing.

The same human reflexes that cause people to size up each other's fashion choices, haircuts and alike on first meeting are now instinctively applied to masks, too.

In Mexico City, Estima Mendoza says she cannot help but recoil at people without masks. "I feel defenseless. On one hand I judge them and on the other I ask myself 'Why?'" Mendoza said. "As human beings, we always judge."

As a Black Muslim woman in France, Maria Dabo knows that feeling all too well. For her, the adoption of masks has had an unexpected but welcome side effect: She no longer feels such a standout in the country that has legislated to prevent Muslim women from wearing face-covering veils. With masks required in all indoor public spaces, the French far-right's long obsession with Islamic veils has been muted.

"I feel like we are a bit better understood," Dabo said. "Everyone is obliged to do the same as us, which makes me believe that God is busy teaching people a lesson, that covering up isn't religious or anything else. It's about not being a fool and protecting oneself."

Also muddying and fueling global debate has been mixed messaging from government leaders who flip-flopped on the utility of masks and advised against their public use when stocks were so lacking that health workers cared for the sick and dying without adequate protection.

Chief among the U-turners is U.S. President Donald Trump, who first wore a mask in public only after COVID-19 had killed at least 134,000 Americans and tweeted this week that mask-wearing is a patriotic act.

Months of resistance preceded that tweet — resistance that causes head-scratching in autocratic China, which has quashed debate about how the pandemic started and was handled there.

"People in other countries ask for freedom. But they are actually losing it, because they have seen a rapid increase in infected cases," said Liu Yanhua, an insurance worker.

Even within households, masks divide. Yu Jungyul, a child-health worker in Seoul, South Korea, says she has to nag her husband to wear one, telling him: "We have to wear masks for other people now, rather than only for ourselves."

In Australia, the introduction this week of mandatory face coverings in Melbourne came with a plea from

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the region's premier, Daniel Andrews, for masks to be incorporated into life's routines.

"Most of us wouldn't leave home without our keys, we wouldn't leave home without our mobile phone. You won't be able to leave home without your mask," he said.

Trend-setters are setting the tone, too. Fashion historian Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, author of "Worn On This Day: The Clothes That Made History," notes that "fashions spread through emulation," and can sprint around the globe in minutes on social media. She suggests that "seeing more prominent people — like actors, models, social media personalities, or politicians — wearing them on TV or in social media would have an immense impact."

"The decision to wear a mask — or NOT wear one — also offers people the illusion of control at a time when everything seems wildly out of control," she argues.

Then there are the practicalities. Masks are an unaffordable luxury for those in extreme poverty and are making painful dents in the budgets of modest families. Says Wasim Abbas, a villager in Pakistan: "Some people are poor. They have not been given masks."

In heat, masks can be a torment. In Lagos, Nigeria, mask-less street trader Jibola Costello said he had to peel his off for a cool-down breather. "That's why I removed it."

And in France, fruit and vegetable seller Montassar Yoinis noticed that shoppers shun his stand if his face is uncovered. So he compensates by yelling loudly through his surgical mask: "Hello Monsieur, don't hesitate to taste the cherries!"

"It's a bit of a bother, but we have no choice," he said. "People are wary when you don't wear a mask. They don't come."

Shopping with her young kids (she was masked, they weren't), French museum worker Celine Brunet-Moret said she misses not being able to see faces and "all the emotions people have. You don't see people smiling or if they are OK or not."

"It's not the same life and it's not the normal life, so I'm thinking that we'll never get used to it, really get used to it," she said.

But across the street from the shop where Brunet-Moret was buying pungent cheese, fabric store worker Laure Estiez said venturing out without one of her growing collection of about 30 home-made masks now feels "almost unnatural." She says her new morning routine of picking colors and patterns to match her mood and outfits has "become a pleasure."

"We have a very strong capacity for adaptation," she said. "You get used to everything."

AP journalists around the globe contributed to this report. Follow AP coverage of the pandemic at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

Israeli police use water cannons on protesters, arrest 55

By ARIEL SCHALIT Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli police used water cannons to disperse protesters in central Jerusalem and arrested at least 55 of them as clashes broke out overnight after thousands staged a protest against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israelis have held a series of demonstrations in recent weeks calling on Netanyahu to resign, citing his trial on corruption charges and his fractious unity government's poor handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

The protest near the prime minister's residence began around sundown on Thursday and was initially largely peaceful. A smaller counterprotest in support of Netanyahu was held nearby, with the two camps separated by metal barricades and a large police presence.

Police say they moved in to disperse the protesters when they tried to stage a procession through the city. Police scuffled with demonstrators before four large trucks roared into action, spraying water cannons back and forth, scattering the protesters.

At times, it appeared the trucks were spraying protesters from behind as they tried to leave the area peacefully.

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Israel imposed a general lockdown when the first coronavirus cases appeared in March and by May had largely succeeded in containing the outbreak. But then it moved quickly to lift virtually all restrictions, and in the following weeks cases surged.

The country has reported a total of more than 57,000 cases and at least 442 deaths. More than 24,000 patients have recovered.

A unity government formed in May following three inconclusive elections in less than a year was supposed to prioritize the pandemic. Instead, it has been plagued by infighting and unable to agree on clear policies to combat the pandemic.

Netanyahu meanwhile faces charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust over a series of long-running corruption investigations. Critics say he is more focused on escaping legal accountability than on containing the pandemic. Many have speculated he intends to call yet another election, allegations he dismissed as "absurd" in a Thursday press conference.

At the same conference, held as the protests were underway, he called on demonstrators not to clash with police, saying it would "lead to anarchy."

Black protesters say focus on feds hasn't derailed message

By ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — After George Floyd's death at the hands of Minneapolis police, people in Portland came out in droves to protest police brutality and racism, chanting that "Black lives matter." As the weeks went by, the crowds dwindled to a few dozen and the protests increasingly turned violent.

Since President Donald Trump deployed militarized federal agents to the progressive city early this month, the numbers of protesters have swelled again into the thousands, including mothers wearing yellow shirts and dads armed with leaf blowers to drive away tear gas.

"Feds go home!" the mostly white demonstrators chant. But they also call for racial justice, often led by Black protesters with megaphones.

While the protests have taken on a new tone of opposition to federal intervention, Black leaders and protesters say the surge in activity — though often chaotic — hasn't distracted from their anti-racist message. Instead, it's shined a spotlight on it.

Portland City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, the first Black woman elected to that office, rejected the idea that the Black Lives Matter protests are being hijacked by white people.

"We cannot afford not to respond to this attack on our democracy, this attack on our Constitution," Hardesty said. "And we would be foolish to believe that we could stay focused just on Black lives and not address the physical assaults that are taking place."

Federal agents have used tear gas, less-lethal ammunition and other force against protesters who have been targeting the U.S. courthouse with fires and other vandalism during two months of nightly demonstrations. Peaceful protesters have also been tear-gassed and hit by impact munitions. U.S. authorities say they must act to protect federal property and officers, while local leaders say their presence has made the situation more volatile and urge the agents to leave.

By being subjected to tear gas, nightsticks and pepper spray, "white people are stepping up and they're seeing the brutality" that Black people normally experience, said white protester Carol Vogel Warner, who has an adopted Black son. "They're feeling it."

Portland police also have used tear gas and other force against protesters.

State Sen. Lew Frederick, a Black Democrat who's dodged pepper balls fired by federal agents at the protests, said the Trump administration "miscalculated" if it thought it could end the demonstrations with a show of force.

"It reignited the protest movement in Portland," Frederick said, adding that he's seen more Black people demonstrating now than in the early days.

Those attending the protests are overwhelmingly white, a reflection of Oregon's makeup. Its population is only 2% Black, compared with 13% for the entire U.S., largely due to the state's racist past. Its Consti-

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tution excluded Blacks from living in Oregon until the clause was repealed in 1927.

Even this week, with the nation focused on the deployment of the federal agents and their tactics, white protesters chanted the names of Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other Black Americans who have been killed by police.

Vogel Warner said thousands of people stopped marching Monday to remember them.

"We all raised a hand and we had some moments of silence, offering either prayers or chants or our silent love to those people who died," she recalled.

The intervention in Oregon could be just the beginning of a clash between the Trump administration and Democratic leaders in cities nationwide. The White House announced this week that federal agents also will deploy to Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee and Albuquerque, New Mexico, to combat rising crime.

The Movement for Black Lives, a coalition of more than 150 Black-led organizations across the U.S., said it remains "undeterred."

"As we witness Portland becoming a war zone, we understand clearly that this is an attempt to intimidate not just protesters on the streets of Portland but to derail our movement in defense of Black lives," said Chinyere Tutashinda, a coalition organizer. She called it "a failed strategy" designed to increase support for Trump's re-election.

Some Black protesters, however, say that white people who have been throwing water bottles at law enforcement and causing vandalism are setting back the movement.

"When we ask people to stop, they don't. I have been pushed tonight. I have been shoved tonight. I have been told to shut up," Portland demonstrator Julianne Jackson said. "If white people want to help us, this is not helping us."

The protests are just one prong of the move to end police violence and racial discrimination and serve underserved communities, Frederick said. Another is changing laws and providing assistance.

After Floyd's death, Oregon lawmakers passed police accountability measures proposed by the People of Color Caucus, to which Frederick belongs.

And on July 14, 10 days after the federal deployment in Portland, lawmakers provided \$62 million in federal coronavirus relief funding to Black people and businesses affected by the pandemic.

"That's because of the People of Color Caucus and the kind of momentum that has been fostered," Frederick said.

Associate Press reporters Aaron Morrison in New York and Aron Ranen and Gillian Flaccus in Portland, Oregon, contributed to this report.

Follow Andrew Selsky on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/andrewselsky>

MLB teams kneel to back Black Lives Matter; Fauci's toss off

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Sports Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a joint demonstration of support for the Black Lives Matter movement, players, managers and coaches of the New York Yankees and Washington Nationals knelt in unison before the opening game of the 2020 baseball season, then stood for the national anthem Thursday night.

"We wanted to do something united, something together," Yankees slugger Aaron Judge said after New York's 4-1 victory, called in the sixth inning because of rain at Nationals Park.

"We've got a lot of guys in this clubhouse with different beliefs, different feelings, different walks of life and from different countries," Judge said. "And we want to respect all that and as a team we came to the decision to kneel right before the anthem."

Nationals reliever Sean Doolittle called the moment "powerful."

It was part of an opening day pregame ceremony in the nation's capital that also featured references to the coronavirus pandemic -- including an off-the-mark first pitch by Dr. Anthony Fauci -- and the home team's 2019 championship.

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Fauci, the country's top infectious disease expert, was invited by the Nationals to throw out the ceremonial first pitch -- a fitting choice during the current medical crisis. Wearing a mask on the mound, Fauci sent his toss well wide of home plate, and the ball bounced past his "catcher," Doolittle.

Afterward, Fauci and Doolittle tapped gloves, instead of shaking hands.

Without any spectators present to appreciate the celebrations, flags noting the Nationals' first title were raised beyond right field and above the scoreboard, and "2019 World Champions" was written on a red mat that was wrapped around the batter's boxes during pregame introductions.

Players from both clubs wore T-shirts saying Black Lives Matter during batting practice in Washington, and the letters "BLM" were stenciled into the back of the mound at the center of the diamond.

Then, in a poignant reference to the racial reckoning happening in the U.S., players and other members of both teams held a long black ribbon while standing spaced out along the two foul lines. After they placed the ribbon on the ground, everyone got on their knees.

"We know there are issues in this country and we need changes. We need changes for the better. These guys all understand that," Nationals manager Dave Martinez said. "This was for a major cause, we believe in it, and we did what we could."

Hours later in Los Angeles, the Giants and Dodgers also held a black ribbon that wound along the baselines.

Dodgers outfielder Mookie Betts, who signed a 12-year, \$365 million contract on Wednesday, and some of the Giants kneeled as anthem singer Keith Williams Jr. stood in the new center field seating at Dodger Stadium instead of the usual spot near home plate. In a video, 98-year-old Rachel Robinson, whose husband, Jackie, broke the major league color barrier in 1947, gave the traditional call: "It's time for Dodger baseball."

Yankees players decided Wednesday they wanted to kneel for 60 seconds before the anthem.

"We've had conversations as an organization. We've had conversations as a team. We've had smaller group conversations. Conversations with one another," New York manager Aaron Boone said. "And we've kind of decided ... we'll, as a team, have our own demonstration on the field."

New York officials then asked Washington if that time could be added to the pregame script.

The Nationals decided they wanted to join the Yankees.

"It was important for us, and for the Yankees, that everybody bought in and we had full participation and presented a united front during that moment," Doolittle said. "Holding the ribbon, kneeling, to show support for the other athletes who have done it in other sports ... to show support for the movement of Black Lives Matter and ending police brutality and racism and injustice."

AP Baseball Writer Ronald Blum contributed.

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

Cole, Stanton lead Yanks past Nats 4-1 in stormy MLB opener

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Sports Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The coronavirus-shortened Major League Baseball season finally started amid the pandemic Thursday night with plenty of unusual elements — zero fans, umpires wearing masks, Washington star Juan Soto sidelined by COVID-19, all Nationals and Yankees kneeling together before the national anthem.

"It's hard to describe. That's 2020 in a nutshell," said Nationals pitcher Sean Doolittle, who was supposed to catch Dr. Anthony Fauci's way-off-the-mark ceremonial first pitch. "Very emotional day. Very, very emotional day."

And there was plenty that actually made it all seem something resembling normal: Gerrit Cole's five terrific innings, big hits from Giancarlo Stanton and Aaron Judge and a 4-1 storm-halted victory for the big-name Yankees over the defending champion Nationals.

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“It was a lot of fun. No one could have envisioned the type of year we’re having this year, but within those parameters, it exceeded every mark,” said Cole, who allowed only Adam Eaton’s first-inning homer and joked about recording a complete game. “I just had a blast.”

Max Scherzer, who struck out 11 but gave up all of New York’s runs, chose to look at the bright side, saying: “I’d rather be playing baseball than not. That’s the way I look at it. All the things we can get negative about and cry about, I’m just not going to do it.”

What began as a muggy evening turned into a dark, windy downpour, replete with rumbles of thunder and flashes of lightning, prompting a delay in the top of the sixth inning.

After waiting 1 hour, 58 minutes — 15 minutes more than were played — the game was called off and goes into the books as a win for New York.

Three-time Cy Young Award winner Scherzer (0-1) served up a two-run homer to 2017 NL MVP Stanton that traveled 459 feet in the first, an RBI double to 2017 AL Rookie of the Year Judge in the third, and an RBI single to Stanton in the fifth.

Cole (1-0) looked every bit the player the Yankees hoped for when they signed him as a free agent to a \$324 million, nine-year contract, the largest deal for a pitcher. He was terrific other than Eaton’s drive -- the ball landed on one of the blue advertising tarps now stretching over unused seats at Nationals Park.

This was the official beginning of what is planned as a regular season with just 60 games -- instead of the customary 162 -- with, at least at the outset, no spectators -- instead of the 40,000 or so that usually would be at opening day in D.C. -- and with key rules changes.

Those include Thursday’s agreement to expand the playoffs from 10 to 16 teams; using designated hitters in every game, not just at American League ballparks; and the gimmicky runner-on-second-base to start each half-inning in extras.

In these most polarized of times in the United States, there certainly were those pleased, and maybe relieved, that one of the main North American team sports -- the so-called national pastime -- finally was back, playing real games.

“I found it easy to get locked into the game,” Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. “I had a lot of butterflies today coming to the ballpark and sorting through all the different things to get ready

And there also were, to be sure, those wondering whether it’s a good idea to play these games as the COVID-19 outbreak grows worse in parts of the country.

The pregame ceremony included nods to the Nationals’ title and the Black Lives Matter movement -- players from both teams jointly held a long black piece of cloth, then knelt in unison.

“There’s a lot of injustice in this world and a lot of bad things going on, so we just wanted to show that we’re aware of it,” Judge said. “Start the conversation. Start the change.”

The 266 days between the final game of the World Series -- Scherzer started Game 7 for Washington against Cole’s former team, the Houston Astros -- and Thursday marked the longest gap between games since professional baseball leagues started in 1871.

“A long wait,” Yankees shortstop Gleyber Torres said.

There all sorts sorts of protocols intended to keep folks safe, including a ban on players spitting, umpires wearing masks, and frequent testing for the new coronavirus -- Soto went on the special injured list for the illness Thursday after his positive result came back.

“It was a really harsh reminder how tenuous this situation is,” Doolittle said about Soto.

Yankees closer Aroldis Chapman already was on that list. Two Nationals players who would have been on the roster — Ryan Zimmerman and Joe Ross — opted out of the season because of health-related concerns.

Even if the stadium was closed to the public, some folks did watch from balconies on at least one nearby high-rise building. Meanwhile, fake crowd noise was piped in through the stadium speakers, adding a bizarre element to an eerie atmosphere.

“It felt odd,” Judge said. “It definitely felt odd.”

UP NEXT

After Friday’s day off, the series resumes Saturday, with World Series MVP Stephen Strasburg pitching

against New York's James Paxton. There is rain in the forecast.

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

Portland standoff with US agents ongoing after mayor gassed

By GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The tense standoff between demonstrators and federal police dispatched to Portland, Oregon, dragged on Thursday after the city's mayor was tear-gassed by U.S. government agents as he made an appearance outside a federal courthouse during raucous protests.

Mayor Ted Wheeler and hundreds of others Wednesday night were objecting to the presence of federal police sent by President Donald Trump, who labeled the demonstrators as "agitators & anarchists" after Wheeler was gassed.

Also, late Thursday a federal judge specifically blocked federal agents from arresting or using physical force against journalists and legal observers at the ongoing Portland protests. The lawsuit was filed by the American Civil Liberties Union.

U.S. Judge Michael Simon previously ruled that journalists and legal observers are exempt from police orders requiring protesters to disperse once an unlawful assembly has been declared. Federal lawyers had said that journalists should have to leave when ordered.

"This order is a victory for the rule of law," Jann Carson, ACLU of Oregon's interim executive director, said in a statement.

A freelance photographer covering the protests for The Associated Press submitted an affidavit that he was beaten with batons, chemical irritants and hit with rubber bullets this week.

The ACLU lawsuit is one of several filed in response to law enforcement actions during the protests. The state of Oregon is seeking an order limiting federal agents' arrest powers during the demonstrations.

On Wednesday night Wheeler, a Democrat, appeared slightly dazed and coughed and said it was the first time he'd been tear-gassed.

He put on a pair of goggles someone handed him and drank water but did not leave his spot at the front of the raging demonstration — with protesters lighting a large fire between protective fencing and the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Courthouse amid the pop-pop-pop sounds of the federal agents deploying tear gas and stun grenades into the crowd.

It wasn't immediately clear if the agents knew Wheeler, a 57-year-old sixth-generation Oregonian and longtime politician, was among those in crowd when they used the tear gas.

Earlier in the night, Wheeler was mostly jeered by protesters as he tried to rally the demonstrators who have clashed nightly with federal agents. But they briefly applauded when he shouted "Black Lives Matter" and pumped his fist in the air.

Trump in his tweet attempted to ridicule Wheeler, calling him the "Radical Left Mayor of Portland, who last night was booed & shouted out of existence by the agitators & anarchists."

Wheeler has opposed federal agents' presence in Oregon's largest city but has also faced harsh criticism from the protesters, who yelled and swore at him.

Ignoring the pushback, Wheeler told those out gathered outside the courthouse that he wanted to "thank the thousands of you who have come out to oppose the Trump administration's occupation of this city."

The Justice Department's inspector general said Thursday it will conduct a review of the conduct of federal agents who responded to unrest in Portland and in Washington, D.C., after concerns emerged from members of Congress and the public.

Wheeler has been accused by critics including city council members of not reining in local police who used tear gas multiple times on protesters before federal agents arrived early this month in response to nearly two months of nightly protests since George Floyd was killed. And city business leaders have condemned Wheeler for not bringing the situation under control before the agents showed up.

On Thursday, City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, the first Black woman elected to that role, said the

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arrival of federal agents had reignited protests that had been starting to die down after weeks.

"The reason why we have thousands of people on the street every night is because Portlanders are not going to set back when they see an injustice happening. They're going to come and they're going to stand on a line," said Hardesty.

Hardesty also apologized for saying Wednesday that she believed police officers were setting fires to justify violence against protesters.

Department of Homeland Security acting Secretary Chad Wolf denied that federal agents were inflaming the situation in Portland. He told "CBS This Morning" that Wheeler legitimized criminality in the city by going to the front of the crowd of demonstrators where the fires were lit and that people were trying to pull down a fence erected to shield the federal courthouse.

Wheeler did not participate in lighting any of the fires or attempting to tear down the fence and was surrounded by his security team when he was gassed.

Earlier, protesters held signs saying "Tear Gas Ted" in a reference to Wheeler and his leadership of the Portland Police Bureau, which used the substance on protesters before federal agents arrived in the city in early July. As Wheeler left the protest zone about 12:40 a.m. Thursday, one person shouted that he should be there "every single night."

Less than an hour later, police said the crowd threw Molotov cocktails, lit fires in a park and in trash cans and released hundreds of gallons of water from fire hydrants. The police bureau in response declared that there was a riot at the site and threatened to use tear gas but officers never did and made no arrests.

Wheeler's appearance in the protest zone came hours after state attorneys for Oregon urged a judge to issue a restraining order against agents deployed to tamp down on the protests.

The arguments came in a lawsuit filed by Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, who accused federal agents of arresting protesters without probable cause, whisking them away in unmarked cars and using excessive force. Federal authorities have disputed those allegations.

The lawsuit is part of the growing criticism of Trump's order that sent the federal agents to Portland and pending orders for them to head to Chicago and Albuquerque, New Mexico, to fight rising crime.

The court hearing focused on the actions of the more than 100 federal agents responding to protests outside the Portland courthouse.

The motion asks U.S. District Judge Michael Mosman to command agents from the Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection, Federal Protective Service and U.S. Marshals Service to immediately stop detaining protesters without probable cause, identify themselves and their agency before arresting anyone, and explain why an arrest is taking place.

This story has been corrected to accurately refer to Customs and Border Protection.

Follow Gillian Flaccus on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/gflaccus>

Thousands in Puerto Rico still without housing since Maria

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Nearly three years after Hurricane Maria tore through Puerto Rico, tens of thousands of homes remain badly damaged, many people face a hurricane season under fading blue tarp roofs and the island's first major program to repair and rebuild houses hasn't completed a single one.

Maria hit more than 786,000 homes on Sept. 20, 2017, causing minor damage to some homes and sweeping others from their foundations. A federally funded program administered by local officials carried out relatively small repairs to some 108,000 homes the next year, while churches and nonprofits patched up thousands with private funds.

A Puerto Rican government program known as R3 is the first major effort by the U.S. territory to carry out major repairs and rebuilding of damaged and destroyed housing. Nearly 27,000 homeowners have applied. But nearly 1 1/2 years after federal funding was released to local officials, not a single repair or

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rebuilding job has been completed.

Puerto Rican officials say work is almost finished on the first 45 homes to benefit from the program, but it is not yet complete.

For many Puerto Ricans, the program's slow progress has become a symbol of their government's inability to address the long-term effects of the disaster.

"They talk about billions of dollars, but we're not seeing it," said Sergio Torres, mayor of the northern mountain town of Corozal. His municipality still has 60 homes with blue tarps as roofs and two families still living in school shelters. "It's a way of life here."

Hurricane Maria slammed into Puerto Rico with 155 mph (249 kph) winds, and its center spent eight hours over the U.S. territory, obliterating the electricity grid and causing more than an estimated \$100 billion in damage. An estimated 2,975 people died in the storm's aftermath.

A Puerto Rican government-run program known as Your Home Reborn, which operated from January-December 2018, repaired 108,487 residences with funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Some had to be repaired again due to shoddy work. Churches and nonprofits launched smaller-scale efforts around the island.

But tens of thousands of homes in Puerto Rico remain uninhabitable by modern standards, with damage ranging from total destruction to missing roofs. In the central mountain town of Villalba alone, 43 families still live under blue tarps as roofs. Mayor Luis Javier Hernández said one family used theirs for so long that it wore out and he had to give them a new tarp.

R3, which stands for repair, rebuild or relocate, aimed to address the backlog by paying contractors to make repairs for households that earn less than 80% of the region's median income.

The territory's government submitted its plans for using federal block grant money for R3 in June 2018. The first \$1.5 billion for the program became available in February 2019, with another \$1.7 million approved in February this year.

Nearly 27,000 households applied for help between R3's start date, July 31, 2019 through early January, when Puerto Rico's government stopped taking applications. Of the applications accepted, several hundred have been rejected and thousands remain in the preliminary stages. More than 900 people remain on a wait list.

"It's becoming apparent that Puerto Rico delays are a lot longer than we've seen anywhere else," said Carlos Martín, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute.

He said Puerto Rico's housing department is understaffed, and that the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development also has imposed an unusually large number of requirements on Puerto Rico's government to prevent fraud or misspending.

Puerto Rico's housing secretary, Luis Carlos Fernández, who took over the position recently, said officials have been trying to simplify the process of verifying and approving requests.

Fernández said he doesn't know if the federal funds received so far will even be enough to help everyone already accepted into the program. He said elderly applicants, disabled people and those who have significant property damage are first in line.

"We're not going to be finished for years," Fernández said.

Fernandez said that more than 2,600 of the applicants are still using blue tarps instead of roofs. Former Housing Secretary Fernando Gil said in September 2019 that an overall estimated 20,000 to 25,000 so-called "blue roofs" remained across the island.

It's a number that angers Ariadna Godreau, a human rights lawyer who runs a nonprofit legal organization.

"We never expected this panorama," she said. "It's horrible."

Among those still waiting is 38-year-old Marián Colón, a single mother of two sons. The hurricane tore off her roof and caused a nearby landslide that put her home in jeopardy, and nothing has been fixed or repaired for nearly three years. During that time, she has bounced from home to home thanks to the generosity of relatives, but she is anxious to settle down.

Colón said she knows of several people who applied for the program and gave up after numerous failed tries. She noted some of them don't have access to the internet or own a car, making the mission nearly

impossible.

"It's been a very exhausting and very overwhelming process," she said.

Gov. Wanda Vázquez, who ascended to that position in August after the previous governor resigned following protests over corruption and other issues, has said she puts a priority on speeding up the reconstruction of hurricane-damaged homes.

"The excuses were plentiful, and they were unacceptable," she said. "Our people have waited too long and can't take it anymore."

Q&A: What charges might longest serving US speaker face?

By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Federal prosecutors recently answered the question about whether Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan, the nation's longest serving statehouse speaker, is a subject of a criminal investigation into influence peddling to benefit an energy utility. He is.

The looming question now is whether the Chicago Democrat will actually be charged — and if the 78-year-old is charged, when and with what possible crimes.

Here's a look at those and other questions:

A: HOW DO WE KNOW MADIGAN IS A TARGET?

Q: Multiple clues over the past 12 months raised the possibility that he was a federal investigative target, including charges against political allies. But a bombshell filing by the U.S. attorney's office in Chicago last Friday erased all doubts.

The deferred prosecution agreement revealed that ComEd agreed to pay \$200 million to resolve an investigation of a nearly decadelong bribery scheme in which the electric utility secured jobs and contracts for associates of a top-level official in return for favorable legislation action.

The document didn't name Madigan, but it may as well have. It referred to a "Public Official A" as the one ComEd sought to "influence and reward." The official, the filing went on to say, was "the Speaker of the House of Representatives." That could only be Madigan, who has been House speaker since 1983 — except for two years in the 1990s when Republicans controlled the House.

A: DOES THAT SUGGEST CHARGES ARE IMMINENT?

Q: "It means prosecutors are coming for him," said Phil Turner, a defense attorney and former prosecutor in the U.S. attorney's office in Chicago. "They have laid siege to the castle and it's only a question of time when they assault."

There's a history in Illinois of things ending up badly for those identified in court filings as Public Official A.

Rod Blagojevich was identified in criminal court filings as "Public Official A" long before the then-Illinois governor was charged in 2008 with lying to the FBI, attempted extortion, conspiracy to commit bribery and other counts. Blagojevich served half of a 14-year prison sentence before President Donald Trump commuted his sentence this year.

Q: DO OTHER CASES SHED LIGHT ON POSSIBLE CHARGES?

A: In Illinois, a state that's become a synonymous with pay-to-play corruption, there's no shortages of cases to look to for indications about charges Madigan could face.

Former state Sen. Martin Sandoval pleaded guilty just this year to bribery and tax charges for receiving \$250,000 from a red-light camera company for blocking proposed legislation that might have hurt its business. The bribery charge carries a maximum 10-year prison term, while the tax count carries up to three years behind bars.

Taxes charges are common in bribery cases because those accepting bribes never declare money under the table as income.

But bribery doesn't have to involve money. It can include providing jobs to a politician's associates.

Federal prosecutors can and often do slap on a wire fraud charges if someone ever uses a phone in carrying out a crime. Each time a suspect uses a phone to do something illegal is a potential wire fraud count. A single count carries a sentence of up to 20 years in prison.

Q: HOW CLOSE COULD CHARGES BE?

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A: That prosecutors took the unusual step of identifying Madigan as a chief suspect before any indictment suggests charges could come any day, said Turner.

As a lawyer himself, Madigan likely knows that.

Even though it was widely known prosecutors were investigating Blagojevich, it came as a surprise — including to Blagojevich — that agents arrested the Democratic governor at his home, waking him up at dawn and leading him away in handcuffs.

“The lesson that Madigan has to learn from Blagojevich is that he has to be prepared to be arrested,” said Turner.

Q: MIGHT MADIGAN BE FORCED TO RESIGN?

A: It’s not at all clear that Madigan, who also heads the state Democratic Party, will succumb to pressure to step down, even if he is charged. Bending to pressure hasn’t been a characteristic of the famously intransigent speaker.

Cracks, though, are starting to show in his once-rock solid support across the Democratic establishment.

On Monday, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot stopped just short of calling for Madigan to resign, telling reporters that, “If those allegations are true, obviously he should resign.” She added: “We don’t know that they are true yet.” Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker made similar statements.

Q: WHAT HAS MADIGAN SAID?

A: Madigan rarely speaks publicly. After the Friday ComEd filing, he released a statement through party spokeswoman Maura Possley, who said Madigan “has never made a legislative decision with improper motives and has engaged in no wrongdoing here.”

Follow Michael Tarm on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/mtarm>

Tropical Storm Hanna forms; Gonzalo strength remains steady

MIAMI (AP) — Two tropical storms that broke records for being the earliest named Atlantic storms of their respective place in the alphabet have triggered watches and warnings both in the Caribbean and along the southern coast of the continental United States.

Tropical Storm Hanna formed late Thursday in the Gulf of Mexico, about 385 miles (620 kilometers) east, southeast of Corpus Christi, Texas, according to the 10 p.m. CDT advisory from the National Hurricane Center. It has maximum sustained winds around 40 mph (65 kph) and was expected to make landfall along the Texas coast on Saturday.

A tropical storm warning for Hanna was in effect from the mouth of the Rio Grande to San Luis Pass, Texas, forecasters said. A tropical storm watch was in effect from San Luis Pass to High Island, Texas.

The formation of Hanna came as Tropical Storm Gonzalo continued to move across the Atlantic about 730 miles (1,170 kilometers) east of the southern Windward Islands. Forecasters said Gonzalo had maximum sustained winds of 60 mph (95 kph). A U.S. National Hurricane Center advisory said the storm was heading west at 14 mph (22 kph). Tropical-storm-force winds extended outward up to 25 miles (35 km) from the center.

The Hurricane Center said that those in the Windward Islands should monitor the storm as it is expected to approach the islands late Friday and Saturday. As some strengthening is forecast, there is still a chance that Gonzalo could become a hurricane, but the storm is expected to weaken as it moves into the Caribbean Sea.

A hurricane watch has been issued for Barbados and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. A tropical storm watch is in effect for Tobago and Grenada.

Tropical Storm Hanna was the earliest eighth Atlantic named storm on record, breaking the previous record of Harvey in 2005. When Gonzalo strengthened into a named storm Wednesday, it became the earliest named seventh tropical storm of the Atlantic hurricane season. The previous record was held by Tropical Storm Gert, which formed on July 24, 2005. So far this year, Cristobal, Danielle, Edouard and Fay also set records for being the earliest named Atlantic storms of their respective place in the alphabet.

Movie theaters implore studios: Release the blockbusters

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A long time ago in a pre-COVID universe far, far away, blockbusters opened around the globe simultaneously or nearly so. In 1975, "Jaws" set the blueprint. Concentrate marketing. Open wide. Pack them in.

Since then, Hollywood has turned opening weekends into an all-out assault. Staggered rollouts still happen, of course, but the biggest films are dropped like carpet bombs. Anything less risks losing the attention of moviegoers. Global debuts north of \$300 million became commonplace. Last year, "Avengers: Endgame" made well north of \$1 billion in a couple days.

Hollywood has now gone more than four months without a major theatrical release. While some films have found new streaming homes, the biggest upcoming ones — "Tenet," "Mulan," "A Quiet Place Part II" — remain idled like jumbo jets on the tarmac. The leading chains are still shuttered. Recent coronavirus spikes have forced release dates to shuffle and chains to postpone reopening to August.

Now, movie houses say that despite far from ideal circumstances, it's time for new movies. Four months of near zero revenue has brought the \$50 billion annual business to its knees. While the beleaguered restaurant industry still has takeout and airlines continue to operate with masked flyers, the vast majority of U.S. movie theaters haven't punched a single ticket since March. Some have turned to selling popcorn curbside.

"The problem is, we need their movies," says John Fithian, president and chief executive of National Association of Theater Owners. "Distributors who want to play movies theatrically, they can't wait until 100% of markets are allowed open because that's not going to happen until there's a vaccine widely available in the world."

"The old distribution models of big blockbusters," adds Fithian, "need to be rethought."

That may mean returning to a more old-fashioned release pattern, opening films overseas first and, in the U.S., opening at different times in different areas. When Warner Bros. earlier this week announced it was delaying the release of Christopher Nolan's "Tenet" because of the rise in cases, Warner Bros. Pictures Group chairman Toby Emmerich said the studio is "not treating 'Tenet' like a traditional global day-and-date release."

Right now, the biggest movies are getting further away, not closer. AMC, the world's largest circuit, on Thursday delayed its reopening from the end of July to mid-to-late August. After "Tenet" earlier this week postponed indefinitely, Disney's "Mulan" followed suit Thursday. Disney also pushed back numerous releases, including films in the "Avatar" and "Star Wars" franchises, back by a year.

"A Quiet Place Part II" also joined the exodus Thursday, uprooting from Sept. 4 to April 23 next year.

The coronavirus crisis has ushered in new chapter in the often symbiotic, occasionally quarrelsome relationship between distributors and exhibitors. Splitting ticket sale revenue approximately in half, their fortunes have often been closely linked.

The largest studios — the Walt Disney Co., Warner Bros., Universal — now all have streaming services of their own now, along with television operations. So they have options. The on-demand release of "Trolls" caused a rift between Universal and AMC. But the two halves of theatrical moviegoing have worked largely in concert through the pandemic thus far.

It's in their own self-interest. Studios have been loath to sacrifice billions in box office for their priciest and most popular releases. On Thursday, John Stankey, chief executive of Warner Bros. parent company AT&T said direct release to HBO Max could be option for some Warner Bros. movies but not the \$200 million "Tenet."

With distancing protocols and other measures, cinemas have reopened in parts of Europe, the Middle East and South Korea, where last weekend Yeon Sang-ho's "Train to Busan" action sequel "Peninsula" debuted with \$13.2 million. Theaters in China, the world's second largest movie market, this week reopened with theaters limited to 30% capacity.

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North America, usually the main event of a blockbuster release, may have to learn to follow the rest of the world.

Despite the virus surge in much of the U.S., exhibitors believe they can operate relatively safely by adhering to health officials, decreasing theater capacity and cleaning in between showings. After initially flip-flopping, AMC will require patrons to wear masks.

Some moviegoers, naturally, don't anticipate going, regardless of what comes out. Jeffrey Shaman, an epidemiologist at Columbia University, isn't planning to go to the movies this year.

"It seems prudent to think that indoors is where the lion share of transmission takes place," says Shaman. "You could think: well, it's a movie theater. If you space people out, it's a big room, tall ceilings. If they get the ventilation cranked up, it's actually not the most concentrated environment. It's not liked a packed bar with a low ceiling. It's probably not as dangerous as that scenario. But is it more dangerous than sitting home and watching Netflix? Yes, of course it is."

But imperfect may be all cinemas and studios have for now. Fithian believes 75% of U.S. theaters could be open within days if they had new movies. (Those currently open are mainly playing older films.) Theaters are closed in California and have yet to reopen in New York despite the state's relative success in combating the virus. That removes the two top cities in ticket sales, Los Angeles and New York.

"The longer this goes, there will be bankruptcy filings and reorganizations and there will be people who go out of business," says Fithian who's currently lobbying for greater Congressional support for theaters. "But if there are no new movies until that's a vaccine, that's a dire situation for a lot of companies."

AMC recently raised \$300 million in debt relief to help itself remain solvent. Throughout the industry, some 150,000 workers remain furloughed.

Jonathan Kuntz, a film historian and professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, says "Tenet" "was made for a world that no longer exists."

But as much as the familiar kind of worldwide launch is now impossible, the downside of improvising might not be as bad as it seems — provided piracy isn't widespread. There will be scant competition. "Tenet" can take up most screens. Its opening can be spread out through the week. Advertising will be cheaper. Audiences will have little to distract them.

"They're going to have to be very inventive and very nimble to squeeze what they can out of this movie and maybe set a pattern for this kind of COVID theatrical universe we're moving into," says Kuntz. "If they don't do something, if they just keeping holding the films back, the theaters are going to die. Then everything's going to just be streaming and we'll have lost something a lot of people — not just Christopher Nolan — treasure."

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

John Lewis funeral to be held at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist

ATLANTA (AP) — The funeral for the late civil rights icon and congressman John Lewis will be held Thursday at Atlanta's historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, which the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. once led.

Lewis' family announced that the funeral will be private, but the public is invited to pay tribute over the coming days during a series of celebrations of Lewis' life beginning Saturday in his hometown of Troy, Alabama. On Sunday morning, a processional will be held in which Lewis' body will once more cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge, where he and other voting rights demonstrators were beaten 55 years ago on "Bloody Sunday."

Lewis' body will also lie in state at the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery, the Georgia State Capitol in Atlanta and the U.S. Capitol in Washington.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell announced Thursday that the public will be allowed to pay their respects in Washington to the longtime Georgia congressman Monday night and all day Tuesday.

Due to coronavirus precautions, Lewis will lie in state for public viewing at the top of the east front steps

of the Capitol rather than in the Rotunda, and the public will file past on the East Plaza. Face masks will be required and social distancing will be enforced.

Lewis' family has asked members of the public not to travel from across the country to pay their respects. Instead, they suggested people pay virtual tribute online using the hashtags #BelovedCommunity or #HumanDignity.

Lewis, 80, died last Friday, several months after he was diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer. He served 17 terms in the U.S. House. Following the funeral at the Ebenezer Baptist Church Horizon Sanctuary, he will be interred at South View Cemetery in Atlanta.

Trump calls off Florida segment of GOP National Convention

By ZEKE MILLER and BRENDAN FARRINGTON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Bowing to the coronavirus threat, President Donald Trump on Thursday scrapped plans for a four-night Republican National Convention celebration in Florida that had been set to draw more than 10,000 people to a pandemic hot spot to mark his renomination.

Trump had already moved the convention's public events out of North Carolina because of virus concerns. But the spiking virus shifted south, too, and the planned gathering in Jacksonville increasingly appeared to be both a health and political risk. Trump and his advisers feared that going forward with big parties and "infomercial" programming in Florida would ultimately backfire on the president.

"It's a different world, and it will be for a little while," Trump said, explaining his decision at a White House coronavirus briefing. "To have a big convention is not the right time."

A small subset of GOP delegates will still formally renominate Trump on Aug. 24 in Charlotte, North Carolina, at an event scheduled to last just four hours.

Trump had decided last month to shift the ceremonial portions of the GOP convention to Florida because of a dispute with North Carolina's Democratic leaders over holding an indoor gathering with throngs of supporters taking a pass on face masks.

But his plans for a grand gathering in Florida starting shrinking almost as quickly as the move was announced, as virus cases spiked in the state and other parts of the country.

Trump said he plans to deliver his nomination acceptance speech in an alternate form still to be determined — perhaps online. Trump campaign manager Bill Stepien said the campaign will still "provide exciting, informative, and enthusiastic programming so Republicans can celebrate the re-nomination of President Trump and Vice President Pence."

Trump said thousands of his supporters and delegates wanted to attend the events in Florida, but "I just felt it was wrong" to gather them in a virus hot spot. Some of them would have faced quarantine requirements when they returned to their home states from the convention.

"We didn't want to take any chances," he added. "We have to be vigilant. We have to be careful, and we have to set an example."

Democrats will hold an almost entirely virtual convention Aug. 17-20 in Milwaukee using live broadcasts and online streaming, according to party officials. Joe Biden plans to accept the presidential nomination in person, but it remains to be seen whether there will be a significant in-person audience.

The Biden campaign did not immediately respond to messages Thursday seeking comment on Trump's announcement.

In recent weeks, Trump aides and allies have encouraged the president to consider calling off the convention, arguing it was not worth going forward with the event if the focus would be on the pandemic. Trump acknowledged that consideration, saying, "I could see the media saying, 'Oh, this is very unsafe.'"

After a three-month hiatus, Trump has stepped back to the forefront of the government's handling of the virus with regular briefings aiming to stanch an erosion of support in public and private polls that has followed the surge in new virus cases.

Trump said he did not cancel the convention events at the request of local officials, but the Jacksonville City Council was set to meet Friday to discuss safety concerns around the gathering.

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Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry, a former chair of the Florida Republican Party, said he appreciated Trump "putting health and public safety first."

"I know this was a difficult decision and just demonstrates and reaffirms once again his commitment to Jacksonville, the state of Florida and the people of the United States of America," he said. "I'm grateful for him and his leadership, and this was the right way to move forward."

Joe Gruters, current chair of the Florida Republican Party and a state senator from Sarasota, called it a "selfless move."

"Having our home-state candidate was going to be a really big deal for Florida, but listen, he had it right," Gruters said. "At the end of the day, it's about safety."

More than 10,000 people were expected in Jacksonville — already a fraction of the number that would typically attend a nominating convention. Only 336 delegates will be allowed to participate in Charlotte under extraordinary procedures approved last month by the Republican National Committee. The balance of the more than 2,500 delegates will vote by proxy.

Cory Burkarth, a spokesperson for the city of Charlotte, said Thursday, "We have an agreement in place with the Republican National Committee to host a substantially scaled down business meeting and that is what we are planning to do."

The RNC had raised over \$35 million in contributions earmarked for the convention since 2017, according to an analysis of campaign finance disclosures by The Associated Press. The list of donors to the now-canceled event reads like a who's who of industry titans, power brokers and wealthy Republicans.

The RNC's convention committee had spent \$9.5 million through June. But that doesn't take into account the spending of the local host committee, which pledged to raise \$70 million.

The Charlotte City Council voted in April to accept a \$50 million federal grant for convention security. City Attorney Patrick Baker said the city had spent \$14 million prepping for the convention so far but expected Charlotte to get reimbursed through the grant.

Farrington reported from Tallahassee, Fla.

Jobless claims rise as cutoff of extra \$600 benefit nears

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The nation got another dose of bad economic news Thursday as the number of laid-off workers seeking jobless benefits rose for the first time since late March, intensifying concerns the resurgent coronavirus is stalling or even reversing the economic recovery.

And an extra \$600 in weekly unemployment benefits, provided by the federal government on top of whatever assistance states provide, is set to expire July 31, though this is the last week recipients will get the extra funds. It is the last major source of economic help from the \$2 trillion relief package that Congress approved in March. A small business lending program and one-time \$1,200 payment have largely run their course.

With the count of U.S. infections passing 4 million and the aid ending, nearly 30 million unemployed people could struggle to pay rent, utilities or other bills, and economists worry that overall consumer spending will drop, adding another economic blow.

"I'm going to be broke," said Melissa Bennett, who was laid off from her job at a vacation time-share in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. "I'll be broke-broke. I want to go to work, I want health insurance, I want a 401K. I want a life; I have no life right now."

Without the extra unemployment benefits, Bennett will receive just \$200 a week, and she'll have to decide whether to pay her mortgage or her utilities first.

More than 1.4 million people applied for jobless benefits last week, the Labor Department said Thursday, up from 1.3 million the previous week. That is the first increase since March and 18th straight week that it has topped 1 million. Before the pandemic, applications had never exceeded 700,000. An additional 975,000 people applied for aid under a separate program that has made self-employed and gig workers

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eligible for the first time.

The news sent stocks slumping on Wall Street, with the S&P 500 recording its worst loss in nearly four weeks. Uncertainty across markets helped gold touch its highest price in nearly nine years.

The weakening of the labor market has raised fears the economy will shed jobs again in July, after two sharp hiring gains in May and June.

Analysts say the economy can't improve until authorities can control the spread of the virus, a need that is complicating the reopening of businesses and schools.

Adm. Brett Giroir, assistant secretary of health and a member of the Trump administration's coronavirus task force, even suggested another shutdown might be necessary. He noted that nearly universal mask-wearing, sharp restrictions on restaurant occupancy and shutting down bars were nearly as effective in controlling the virus as another shutdown of all nonessential businesses.

"Now, if you don't do that, and people don't achieve those goals, particularly mask-wearing, there may be no alternative," Giroir said on MSNBC.

Congress is negotiating another aid package that could extend the extra unemployment support, though likely at less than \$600. With the extra \$600, roughly two-thirds of the unemployed are receiving more than they earned at their former jobs, research has shown. Republicans argue that it's discouraging people from returning to work.

On Thursday, Senate Republicans unveiled a \$1 trillion package that would replace the \$600 with an amount that would bring a laid-off worker's jobless benefits to 70% of their previous income. Both parties have agreed on another \$1,200 stimulus check.

Democrats in the House approved a \$3 trillion package last month that would extend the \$600 through January. Given the limited time available, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin urged a bill dealing with jobless benefits and aid to schools be considered next week. Democrats say the Republican plans are not enough.

The economic woes come as outbreaks worsen, particularly in the South and West. Florida officials reported 173 new virus deaths Thursday, a daily high that brings the overall number to more than 5,500. With cases surging, President Donald Trump scrapped plans for a Republican National Convention celebration in the state.

California saw a record 157 new deaths, raising its toll to 8,027. An additional 89 deaths in Arizona pushed its total to 3,000, with over 1,000 deaths reported in the past 15 days.

Desperate to stop the spread of the virus and its resulting economic impact, more states are adding or broadening mask requirements. A new survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research says three out of four Americans, including a majority of Republicans, favor requiring people to wear face coverings outside their homes.

In a small step toward normalcy, many Americans eagerly welcomed baseball's opening day, which arrived four months late.

In contrast to the U.S., the outlook has brightened for some other major economies. Europe is forecast to rebound next year after it managed to shrink its coronavirus caseload. Unemployment in the 19 countries that use the euro has remained contained, reflecting aggressive government efforts to keep workers on payrolls.

China has become the first major economy to grow since the start of the pandemic. Economists say China will likely recover relatively fast because of the Communist Party's move to impose early and intensive anti-disease measures.

In the U.S., applications for unemployment benefits declined in many states hard hit by the virus, including Texas, Florida, Georgia and Arizona. But claims rose in other states seeing increases, including Louisiana, California and Tennessee.

The U.S. government said the total number of people receiving jobless benefits fell 1.1 million, to 16.2 million. It's a hopeful sign that even as layoffs remain high, some companies are recalling workers. Yet that figure is still roughly 10 times what it was before the pandemic.

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Unemployment aid accounted for 6% of all U.S. income in May, a greater share than even Social Security. Economists say it's one reason why retail spending rebounded as quickly as it did in May and June.

The end of the added benefit coincides with the expiration of a federal moratorium on evictions Saturday. Without it, about 22 million people are at risk of losing their federally subsidized housing.

"It's scary, it's really scary," said Victorita Raaen, 46, who was laid off in March from her job as a light and sound technician in Boise, Idaho.

The extra payments helped her build a thin financial cushion, but once it goes away, things will get significantly tighter. She figures she can live on ramen, hot dogs and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for a while but might not be able to pay for gas.

"I want to go back to work," she said. "I'd rather go back than sitting here earning unemployment."

Real-time measures of the economy suggest companies are pulling back on hiring and more small businesses are closing permanently. Credit card spending has been stuck at about 10% below year-ago levels for nearly a month, according to JPMorgan Chase, after having risen steadily from mid-April to mid-June.

Data from the consumer-review website Yelp, which tracks millions of small businesses, shows more such companies are permanently shutting down. Nearly 73,000 small businesses have closed for good since the pandemic intensified in March, up 28% from mid-June.

"Every time a business closes, that makes the recovery longer and harder, so that worries me," said Ernie Tedeschi, an economist at the investment bank Evercore ISI.

Associated Press writers Matt Sedensky in Philadelphia; Michelle Liu in Columbia, South Carolina; Lindsay Whitehurst in Boise, Idaho, and Rebecca Santana in New Orleans contributed to this report.

Federal review: Alabama inmates subjected to excessive force

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Alabama prisons have a pattern of using excessive force against male inmates, the U.S. Department of Justice announced in an investigation released Thursday, as it again accused the state of keeping prisoners in unconstitutional conditions.

In its report, the Justice Department detailed a chilling litany of incidents, including a prison guard beating a handcuffed prisoner in a medical unit while shouting, "I am the reaper of death, now say my name!" as the prisoner begged the officer to kill him. It is the second time within 18 months that the Justice Department has accused Alabama of housing male inmates in unconstitutional conditions in a prison system considered one of the most understaffed and violent in the country.

"Our investigation found reasonable cause to believe that there is a pattern or practice of using excessive force against prisoners in Alabama's prisons for men," Assistant Attorney General Eric Dreiband for the Civil Rights Division said in a statement. Dreiband said the Justice Department hopes to work with Alabama to resolve the department's concerns.

In findings sent to the state, federal investigators wrote that officers have beaten handcuffed or restrained prisoners, excessive force is sometimes used as retribution, the state prison system fails to investigate incidents and the violence is so common that some officers consider it normal.

"Ultimately, Alabama does not properly prevent and address unconstitutional uses of force in its prisons, fostering a culture where unlawful uses of force are common," the report read.

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey said in a statement that her administration remains hopeful that they will reach a resolution to all of the department's allegations.

"I am as committed as ever to improving prison safety through necessary infrastructure investment, increased correctional staffing, comprehensive mental-health care services, and effective rehabilitation programs, among other items," the Republican governor said.

The report noted that at least two inmates died at the end of 2019 after use of force by officers.

Steven Davis died in October 2019 after an altercation with corrections officers at William E. Donaldson Correctional Facility. The department said at the time that Davis rushed the officers with a makeshift weapon.

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In an apparent reference to the incident, the report said other inmates said "correctional officers continued to strike the prisoner after he dropped any weapons and posed no threat." The report said an autopsy listed 16 distinct injuries to the prisoner's head and neck — including multiple skull fractures— in addition to multiple fractured ribs and bleeding around a kidney

Davis' mother last year showed a state task force a photograph of her son's battered face.

"This is my son," Sandy Ray said as she held his photo. "He is beaten beyond recognition. I had to have a closed casket because of what they had done to him. No one, not even a dog, deserves this."

The 28-page Justice Department report listed other examples of violence by staff after reviewing files and visiting several state prisons. The Justice Department said those included:

— In December 2018, a correctional officer brutally punched, kicked and struck a handcuffed prisoner with an expandable baton in the Ventress medical unit. During the beating, four nurses heard the officer yell something to the effect of, "I am the reaper of death, now say my name!" and the prisoner begged to die.

— In September 2019, a lieutenant at Ventress prison lifted a handcuffed inmate off the ground and slammed him on a concrete floor several times, knocking him unconscious.

— In February 2019, a sergeant at Elmore prison beat two handcuffed prisoners, suspected of retrieving contraband, striking one prisoner with a collapsible baton approximately 19 times on his head, legs, arms, back and body. The sergeant who assaulted the prisoners later filed a false report about the incident. The sergeant and two correctional officers pleaded guilty in federal court.

The announcement comes more than a year after the Justice Department released a scathing report that said male inmates face excessive inmate-on-inmate violence and sexual abuse in facilities that are not sanitary, safe or secure. The department is in negotiations with the state in an attempt to reach an agreement.

The findings released Thursday were the continuation of the investigation first launched in 2016.

"What does it take to get fired?" said Rep. Chris England, a Tuscaloosa lawmaker who has called for the new leadership at the state Department of Corrections. "Our whole system of corrections and pardons and paroles has got to be the worst in the country."

Advocacy groups said the findings reflect concerns they have been expressing for years. Charlotte Morrison of the Equal Justice Initiative said they hear "every week" from inmates, parents and sometimes staff concerned about abuses.

"We've been asserting that the prisons need serious reform, and most of the time the state responds with cosmetic changes, but these problems are much deeper than that and that is what this report details," Morrison said.

Vivian remembered as courageous, humble Civil Rights warrior

By JEFF MARTIN Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The nation paid its final respects Thursday to the Rev. C.T. Vivian, a pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement who helped end segregation across the South and left an abiding imprint on U.S. history.

Vivian, a close ally of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., was mourned by civil rights icons along with TV personality and author Oprah Winfrey and baseball legend Hank Aaron — both of whom delivered remarks via pre-recorded video — during a funeral at Providence Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta. Vivian died July 17 at age 95.

"C.T. was truly a remarkable man, a man whose physical courage was exceeded only by his moral courage, whose capacity for love overwhelmed incredible hatreds, whose faith and the power of nonviolence helped forever change our nation," former Vice President Joe Biden said in a video tribute aired during the service.

"In Illinois, and in Tennessee and Florida, and Mississippi — in the north and in the south — CT was there fighting to turn us back toward justice," Biden added.

Vivian's death came the same day as the passing of another civil rights icon, U.S. Rep. John Lewis, 80. In 1965, Alabama state troopers beat Lewis in Selma, Alabama, helping to galvanize national opposition

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to racial segregation. Details of Lewis' funeral have yet to be announced.

At Vivian's funeral in Atlanta on Thursday, those in attendance were reminded to remain socially distanced due to the coronavirus pandemic. Many of those who eulogized Vivian described him as a courageous soldier for God and civil rights who always remained humble.

"He didn't want attention, he didn't want money, he only wanted to do God's will and bring out the best in these United States of America and its people regardless of their race, creed, color or national origin," Ambassador Andrew Young said in his videotaped remarks.

Vivian's preaching was described as "an echo from heaven" by civil rights activist Bernard Lafayette.

But it was his work during the Civil Rights Movement and the decades that followed that left an impression on Winfrey. She worked with Vivian on a series of racial seminars that aired on her TV show in the 1990s, she recalled in her video tribute during the funeral.

"In his presence we were always learning more about our country, about ourselves, about what it means to stand for what is right," Winfrey said. "He was a giant for justice."

More than a decade before lunch-counter protests made headlines during the Civil Rights Movement, Vivian began organizing sit-ins against segregation in Peoria, Illinois, in the 1940s. He later joined forces with King and organized the Freedom Rides across the South to halt segregation.

Vivian was passionate about voting rights. In 1965, he led dozens of marchers to a courthouse in Selma, Alabama, and confronted the local sheriff on the courthouse steps, telling him the marchers should be allowed to register to vote. The sheriff responded by punching Vivian in the head. Vivian later discussed the experience in a video that includes film footage of the confrontation and attack.

"The number of times he faced down being drowned, being beaten, being reviled only to stand up straight as a ramrod, bloodied but unbent, and declare the truth he saw so clearly: you can not turn your back on the idea of justice," Biden said.

Vivian was honored by former President Barack Obama with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2013.

On Wednesday, the eve of his funeral, a horse-drawn carriage took his casket from the Georgia Capitol, where a memorial service was held, to King's tomb in Atlanta.

At Thursday's funeral, Aaron said, "I got to love him really, not know him."

"I loved him for what he stood for and what he did, the things that he did," Aaron said in videotaped remarks shown during the service.

Several friends said Vivian's legacy will live on in the nation's continuing struggle for civil rights for all.

"For me, C.T. was a dream keeper, always holding fast for dreams of a better world," said Vivian's long-time friend David McCord.

White House drops payroll tax cut after GOP allies object

By ANDREW TAYLOR and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Thursday reluctantly dropped his bid to cut Social Security payroll taxes as Republicans stumbled anew in efforts to unite around a \$1 trillion COVID-19 rescue package to begin negotiations with Democrats who are seeking far more.

Frustrating new delays came as the administration scrambled to avert the cutoff next week of a \$600-per-week bonus unemployment benefit that has helped prop up the economy while staving off financial disaster for millions of people thrown out of work since the coronavirus pandemic began.

Trump yielded to opposition to the payroll tax cut among his top Senate allies, claiming in a Twitter post that Democratic opposition was the reason. In fact, top Senate Republicans disliked the expensive idea in addition to opposition from Democrats for the cut in taxes that finance Social Security and Medicare.

"The Democrats have stated strongly that they won't approve a Payroll Tax Cut (too bad!). It would be great for workers. The Republicans, therefore, didn't want to ask for it," Trump contended.

"The president is very focused on getting money quickly to workers right now, and the payroll tax takes time," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said at the Capitol. Only Sunday, Trump said in a Fox News interview that "I would consider not signing it if we don't have a payroll tax cut."

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The long-delayed legislation comes amid alarming new cases in the virus crisis. It was originally to be released Thursday morning by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. But the Kentucky Republican instead hosted an unscheduled meeting with Mnuchin and White House acting chief of staff Mark Meadows and delayed the planned release of the proposal until next week.

The rocky developments coincide with a higher-profile role by Meadows, a former tea party lawmaker from North Carolina with a thin legislative resume. The delays increase the chances that efforts to pass the COVID rescue, the fifth coronavirus response bill this year, could drag well into August as both parties are formally nominating their presidential candidates.

Mnuchin claimed there was "fundamental agreement" on the GOP side, but irritation was growing among Republicans with the Trump negotiating team, which floated the idea of breaking off a smaller bill that would be limited to maintaining some jobless benefits and speeding aid to schools. Democrats immediately panned that idea, saying it would strand other important elements such as aid to state and local governments.

"We cannot piecemeal this," declared House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California.

As a practical matter, Democrats say, the only way to prevent a cutoff of the pandemic jobless benefit next month is to simply extend it in full, at least in the short term. Balky and ancient state unemployment systems can't be adjusted in time to immediately implement a new compromise.

"Due to ancient technology, states need between one and four weeks to adjust the \$600 boost. At this late hour, the only option to guarantee benefits do not lapse is the Democratic plan to extend the \$600 weekly benefit," said top Finance Committee Democrat Ron Wyden of Oregon. "Republicans rejected that plan outright. They were never serious about preventing a lapse in benefits."

McConnell scrapped a choreographed rollout that would have featured Republicans with tough reelection races claiming credit for provisions like a \$15 billion appropriation for child care assistance for parents trying to go back to work while many schools will remain closed this fall.

McConnell now says the rollout won't come out until next week.

"Our Republican colleagues have been so divided, so disorganized and so unprepared that they have to struggle to draft even a partisan proposal within their own conference," said Democratic leader Chuck Schumer.

The must-have centerpiece for McConnell is a liability shield to protect businesses, schools and others from coronavirus-related lawsuits.

The still-unreleased GOP measure does forge an immediate agreement with Democrats on another round of \$1,200 checks to most adults.

The \$600 weekly unemployment benefit boost that is expiring Friday would be cut back, and Mnuchin said it would ultimately be redesigned to provide a typical worker 70% of his or her income. Republicans say extending it in full would be a disincentive to work.

"You can't continue to pay people more to not work than to work," said Sen. John Barrasso of Wyoming.

The Republican package will also include tax breaks for businesses to hire and retain workers and to help shops and workplaces retool with new safety protocols. A document circulating among lobbyists claims the package would increase the deduction for business meals to 100%, offering help to the restaurant industry.

Mnuchin said there is bipartisan agreement on changes to a popular subsidy program for businesses called the Paycheck Protection Program that would permit businesses especially hard hit by the pandemic — companies with fewer than 300 workers and revenue losses of 50% — to receive a second PPP payment.

A breakthrough on \$25 billion in virus-testing money was key after days of wrangling between Republicans on the powerful Appropriations Committee and the White House. There will also be \$26 billion for vaccines and \$15 billion for research programs at the National Institutes of Health.

At the White House, Trump touted the GOP plan's massive \$105 billion to help schools and universities reopen. It contains \$70 billion to help K-12 schools reopen, \$30 billion for colleges and \$5 billion for governors to allocate. Trump said he wants the school money linked to reopenings. In McConnell's package, the money for K-12 would be split between those that have in-person learning and those that don't.

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If local public schools don't reopen, the money should go to parents to send their children to other schools or teach them at home, Trump said. "If the school is closed, the money should follow the student," he said.

Democrats back a much more sweeping package, including almost \$1 trillion for state and local governments. They also want a fresh round of mortgage and rental assistance and new federal health and safety requirements for workers — ideas strongly opposed by Republicans.

Congress in March approved a massive \$2.2 trillion CARES package, the biggest of its kind in U.S. history. The current effort, once Democratic priorities are added, is likely to total almost \$2 trillion.

GOP conservatives are already squirming at the price tag, signaling that this bill won't have anywhere near the unanimous support that the CARES Act had in March. The deficit for the 2020 budget year is already topping \$2.7 trillion.

HUD revokes Obama-era rule designed to diversify the suburbs

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration said Thursday that it is revoking an Obama-era housing regulation designed to eliminate racial disparities in the suburbs, a move that fair housing advocates have decried as an election year stunt designed to manipulate the fears of white voters.

In a tweet addressed to "The Suburban Housewives of America," President Donald Trump made his intended audience clear. "Biden will destroy your neighborhood and your American Dream," he said. "I will preserve it, and make it even better!"

Trump has repeatedly characterized the 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing regulation as an existential threat to the suburban way of life that will bring about more crime and lower home prices.

In a statement, Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson said the regulation known as AFFH, was "unworkable and ultimately a waste of time for localities to comply with."

It will be replaced by a new rule that reduces the burden on local jurisdictions to prove that they are actively taking steps to address historical patterns of racial segregation in order to qualify for HUD financing.

"Washington has no business dictating what is best to meet your local community's unique needs," Carson said.

Fair housing advocates said the new regulations water down the previous requirements to the point of meaninglessness.

"What's surprising is they're going this far and essentially rendering the rule null and void. This is as far as this administration could have possibly gone," said Kristen Clarke, president of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. "It feels like a real gutting of the rule."

Debby Goldberg, vice president of housing policy and special projects for the National Fair Housing Alliance, said that HUD has removed almost any oversight or burden of proof for jurisdictions to show they are addressing racial disparities.

"They're not even going to check. It's completely hands off. It's completely the honor system," she said. "And for jurisdictions that really want to figure this out, it's almost totally useless"

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi called the move, "a betrayal of our nation's founding values of equality and opportunity for all."

Pelosi, a California Democrat, said in a statement: "It is a shameful abdication of our government's responsibility to end discriminatory housing practices and to lift up our nation's most vulnerable communities. The Administration must reverse this outrageous decision and uphold the law."

The topic has become a potential hot-button issue in an election year as Trump, using language that housing advocates describe as openly racist, has repeatedly said the rule would force the construction of low-income housing in the suburbs.

"Your home will go down in value and crime rates will rapidly rise," Trump said last week. "People have worked all their lives to get into a community, and now they're going to watch it go to hell. Not going to happen, not while I'm here."

HUD had already floated the idea of changing the rule earlier this year, but ultimately decided to cancel

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it entirely. Fair housing advocates says the latest HUD move attempts to skip over the traditional months-long notice and comment process where stakeholders are invited to weigh in on a proposed rule change.

The 2015 rule established a 92-question survey and grading tool requiring local jurisdictions to assess their own racial and economic disparities and present detailed plans on how to address them. Carson said the jurisdictions were "forced to comply with complicated regulations that require hundreds of pages of reporting."

The issue has been a long-standing issue for Carson, and fair housing advocates say the program never truly got off the ground because Carson suspended its implementation shortly after taking office.

Trump has used the AFFH rule as a means of contrasting himself with Joe Biden, his Democratic challenger and Barack Obama's vice president. Biden has said he would implement the Obama administration's housing rule.

Biden campaign spokesman Andrew Bates said, "Donald Trump is yet again attempting to distract from his catastrophic, failed response to the pandemic by trying to divide our nation. Turning Americans against each other with total lies is unacceptable for a commander-in-chief at any time, but it's especially heinous to do so in a moment of worsening crisis."

Cognitive Test. Trump. Biden. Campaign. Flashpoint.

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, SETH BORENSTEIN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It doesn't quite have the ring of "Morning in America" and "I Like Ike."

But the phrase "Person. Woman. Man. Camera. TV." is getting an unlikely moment in the spotlight as President Donald Trump has taken a detour into the politics of dementia three months before the election.

Trump, 74, attempted to demonstrate his mental fitness by reciting five words — in order, importantly — over and over in a television interview broadcast Wednesday night. The president said that collection of nouns, or ones like them, was part of a cognitive test he had aced while declaring that his likely Democratic opponent, 77-year-old Joe Biden, could not do the same.

In a battle of septuagenarians, the Trump campaign has long tried to paint Biden as having lost some of his mental sharpness. But the gambit has yet to prove successful in denting the former vice president's standing in the race. That leaves Trump trying to escalate the attacks while defending his own ability to handle the mental rigors of the job.

"The first questions are very easy," Trump told Fox News. "The last questions are much more difficult. Like a memory question. It's, like, you'll go: Person. Woman. Man. Camera. TV. So they say, 'Could you repeat that?' So I said, 'Yeah. It's: Person. Woman. Man. Camera. TV.'"

He then recalled that, at the end of the test, the doctor asked him to recite it again.

"And you go: 'Person. Woman. Man. Camera. TV.' If you get it in order, you get extra points," Trump said. "They said nobody gets it in order. It's actually not that easy, but for me, it was easy."

Trump boasted that he dazzled the doctors because he has "a good memory, because I'm cognitively there" and delivered an unsubtle accusation about Biden.

"Now Joe should take that test because something's going on," Trump said. "And, I say this with respect. I mean — going to probably happen to all of us, right? You know? It's going to happen."

The subject of smarts — especially his own — has long fascinated the president.

Trump has been known to declare that he is "a very stable genius" and that "I have the best words" while noting that he attended the prestigious Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. And about a month ago, he began telling aides that a cognitive test he took as part of his physical in 2018 could be something he could weaponize against Biden.

The president has been known to recite five words to aides in the West Wing or on Air Force One — he'd tweak the list to make it appropriate for the setting — while claiming that Biden could not do the same.

But some of Trump's descriptions about the test and what it means don't quite fit with what experts describe about the most common of cognitive tests given to older people. There is no bonus and it's meant to be easy, said Dr. James Galvin, a University of Miami professor of neurology who runs a dementia center.

Galvin said what Trump described sounds an awful lot like the Montreal Cognitive Assessment, often

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called MoCa. It takes about 10 minutes and the top score is 30, said Galvin, who has administered thousands of the tests.

The MoCa "is a screening test," Galvin said. "It's not a diagnostic test. And more importantly, it's not an IQ test. It doesn't tell how smart someone is. It's designed to be a relatively easy test because what you want to do is pick up people who have problems or possible problems."

The last questions are not the hardest for most people, and they are usually naming the day of the week, date, month, year and where the person being tested is, Galvin said. The test does not get harder as it goes along but measures different parts of cognition, like memory, attention, spatial awareness and language. Additionally, the words the president cited would not be grouped together because they are all in some way related to one another, he said.

And the real concern would be if a subject did not do well on the test.

"I think he's thinking of it like some sort of IQ test or SAT test, something along those lines. But it's not anything like that. It's just basic," said Dr. Raymond Turner, professor of neurology and director of Georgetown University's Memory Disorders Program. "It's kind of a low bar to jump over. It's not necessarily something to brag about unless you are worried about decline or something."

Trump, whose father had Alzheimer's disease, has said that his former personal physician Dr. Ronny Jackson accompanied him to the test in 2018. Jackson, who is now running for Congress, did not respond to an interview request Thursday.

Questions about presidential health, mental or otherwise, tend to be closely guarded and rarely made the subject of national cable interviews. They have been part of the national dialogue before, including Ronald Reagan's mental health during his second term, though the health woes of Franklin Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were largely kept from the public.

But the Trump campaign has leaned in on the issue, despite the boomerang effect of highlighting the president's own verbal missteps, as a means of suggesting that Biden's blunders meant he was not up to the job.

"Any honest voter juxtaposing President Trump and Joe Biden can see the stark difference in mental acuity and wit," said Trump spokesperson Ken Farnaso, before adding that "it's their track records and not their ages that are in question here, and it's clear that President Trump's America First agenda is a winning platform."

When Biden was asked about cognitive testing last month, he responded, "I've been tested and I'm constantly tested," before adding, "I can hardly wait to compare my cognitive capability to the cognitive capability of the man I'm running against."

The Biden campaign quickly clarified that its candidate was referring to the rigor of the presidential campaign -- not that he had undergone specific cognitive testing. And a campaign spokesperson wasted no time rebutting Trump's claim on Thursday.

"Donald Trump is spectacularly failing every conceivable strategic test by ramping up mentions of this subject at all," said spokesperson Andrew Bates. "Joe Biden sounded the alarm about the outbreak early, whereas Donald Trump is still promising us the virus will magically 'disappear.' Joe Biden has highlighted the advice of medical experts throughout the pandemic, but Donald Trump publicly encouraged COVID-19 victims to inject themselves with disinfectant."

"And," Bates continued, "if that's not enough for you, 'Person. Woman. Man. Camera. TV.'"

On House floor, Dem women call out abusive treatment by men

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's outrage over a Republican lawmaker's verbal assault broadened into an extraordinary moment on the House floor Thursday as she and other Democrats assailed a sexist culture of "accepting violence and violent language against women" whose adherents include President Donald Trump.

A day after rejecting an offer of contrition from Rep. Ted Yoho, R-Fla., for his language during this week's

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Capitol steps confrontation, Ocasio-Cortez and more than a dozen colleagues cast the incident as all-too-common behavior by men, including Trump and other Republicans.

"This issue is not about one incident. It is cultural," said Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., calling it a culture "of accepting a violence and violent language against women, an entire structure of power that supports that."

The remarkable outpouring, with female lawmakers saying they'd routinely encountered such treatment, came in an election year in which polls show women leaning decisively against Trump, who has a history of mocking women.

"I personally have experienced a lifetime of insults, racism and sexism," said Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif. "And believe me, this did not stop after being elected to public office."

Trump was captured in a 2005 tape boasting about physically abusing women, and his disparagement of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has included calling her "crazy." In an apparent reference to that tape, which drew attention during the 2016 presidential campaign, Ocasio-Cortez said men accost women "with a sense of impunity" every day, including when "individuals who hold the highest office in this land admit, admit to hurting women."

She also recalled that last year, Trump said she and three colleagues on the "squad" of progressive Democratic women of color should "go back" to their home countries — even though all but one were born in the U.S. and all are American citizens.

The lawmakers joining Ocasio-Cortez represented a wide range of the chamber's Democrats, underscoring their unity over an issue that is at once core to the party and capable of energizing its voters.

On the establishment side was No. 2 House leader Steny Hoyer of Maryland, a moderate 20-term veteran. His appearance, along with supportive words at a separate news conference by Pelosi, D-Calif., were a noteworthy contrast to occasional clashes Ocasio-Cortez has had with party leaders.

Ocasio-Cortez, 30, is a freshman who has made her mark as one of Congress' most insistent and outspoken progressives. Those speaking up included the three other "squad" members — Reps. Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan.

No Republicans spoke on the House floor. A Yoho spokesman emailed a statement in which the lawmaker said "no one was accosted, bullied, or attacked" during what he called a brief policy discussion.

Yoho, one of Congress' most conservative lawmakers, said Ocasio-Cortez doesn't have the "right to inflate, talk about my family, or give an account that did not happen for political gain. The fact still remains, I am not going to apologize for something I didn't say."

In a separate appearance, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., defended Yoho, 65, who will retire in January.

"When someone apologizes they should be forgiven," McCarthy said. He added later, "I just think in a new world, in a new age, we now determine whether we accept when someone says 'I'm sorry' if it's a good enough apology."

But Bread for the World, a nonpartisan Christian group that combats hunger, suggested it was reconsidering Yoho's continued membership on its board. Asked about his status, the organization said his recent behavior "does not reflect the values of respect and compassion that Jesus calls on us to exhibit." They said they have asked to speak to him "before we determine any further action."

Pelosi herself weighed in a separate news conference.

"It's a manifestation of attitude in our society really. I can tell you that firsthand, they've called me names for at least 20 years of leadership, 18 years of leadership," Pelosi said of Republicans.

Pelosi, who has five children, recounted that during a debate years ago on women's reproductive health, GOP lawmakers "said, on the floor of the House, Nancy Pelosi think she knows more about having babies than the Pope."

In an encounter Monday witnessed by a reporter from The Hill, Yoho berated Ocasio-Cortez on the House steps for saying that some of the increased crime during the coronavirus pandemic could be traced to rising unemployment and poverty.

Ocasio-Cortez described it on the House floor Thursday. She said Yoho put his finger in her face and

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called her disgusting, crazy and dangerous.

She also told the House that in front of reporters, he called her, "and I quote, a fucking bitch." That matched The Hill's version of what Yoho had said. Ocasio-Cortez was not there for that remark.

Ocasio-Cortez said Yoho's references to his wife and daughters as he explained his actions during brief remarks Wednesday actually underscored the problem.

"Having a daughter does not make a man decent. Having a wife does not make a decent man. Treating people with dignity and respect makes a decent man," she said. She added that a decent man apologizes "not to save face, not to win a vote. He apologizes, and genuinely, to repair and acknowledge the harm done, so that we can all move on."

Her voice trembled slightly as she said that her father, "thankfully," was no longer alive to see Yoho's treatment of her. But she said her mother saw it, "And I am here because I have to show my parents that I am their daughter, and that they did not raise me to accept abuse from men."

Other Democrats recalled their own experiences, taunted House Republicans' overwhelmingly white male membership and warned that the numbers of women lawmakers will only grow. Eighty-eight House Democrats and 13 Republicans are women.

"We're not going away," said Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash. "There is going to be more power in the hands of women across this country."

AP reporter Elana Schor contributed from New York.

Judge orders Michael Cohen to be released from prison

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A judge on Thursday ordered the release of President Donald Trump's former personal lawyer from prison, saying the government retaliated against him for planning to release a book critical of Trump before November's election.

Michael Cohen's First Amendment rights were violated when he was ordered back to prison on July 9 after probation authorities said he refused to sign a form banning him from publishing the book or communicating publicly in other manners, U.S. District Judge Alvin K. Hellerstein said during a telephone conference.

Hellerstein ordered Michael Cohen released from prison to home confinement by 2 p.m. on Friday.

"How can I take any other inference than that it's retaliatory?" Hellerstein asked prosecutors, who insisted in court papers and again Thursday that Probation Department officers did not know about the book when they wrote a provision of home confinement that severely restricted Cohen's public communications.

"I've never seen such a clause in 21 years of being a judge and sentencing people and looking at terms of supervised release," the judge said. "Why would the Bureau of Prisons ask for something like this ... unless there was a retaliatory purpose?"

In ruling, Hellerstein said he made the "finding that the purpose of transferring Mr. Cohen from furlough and home confinement to jail is retaliatory." He added: "And it's retaliatory for his desire to exercise his First Amendment rights to publish the book."

Cohen, 53, sued federal prison officials and Attorney General William Barr on Monday, saying he was ordered back to prison because he was writing a book: "Disloyal: The True Story of Michael Cohen, Former Personal Attorney to President Donald J. Trump."

The Bureau of Prisons issued a spirited defense of its intentions after the ruling Thursday, calling any assertion that the reimprisonment of Cohen "was a retaliatory action is patently false."

It said the terms of his home confinement were determined by the U.S. Probation Office, which is run by the courts, rather than the bureau.

"During this process, Mr. Cohen refused to agree to the terms of the program, specifically electronic monitoring. In addition, he was argumentative, was attempting to dictate the conditions of his monitoring, including conditions relating to self-employment, access to media, use of social media and other accountability measures," the statement said.

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The Bureau of Prisons also said it was not uncommon for it to place restrictions on inmates' contact with the media. Still, it said Cohen's refusal to agree to those conditions or his intent to publish a book played "no role whatsoever" in his return to prison.

In a written declaration, Cohen said his book "will provide graphic and unflattering details about the President's behavior behind closed doors," including a description of anti-Semitic and "virulently racist remarks" against Black leaders including President Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first Black president.

He said he worked openly on his manuscript until May at Otisville's prison library and discussed his book with prison officials. He said he was told in April that a lawyer for the Trump Organization, where he worked for a decade, was claiming he was barred from publishing his book by a non-disclosure agreement. Cohen disputes that.

Cohen has been in isolation at an Otisville, New York, prison camp, quarantined while prison authorities ensure he does not have the coronavirus.

Prosecutors declined through a spokesperson to comment on Hellerstein's ruling.

Cohen's attorney, Danya Perry, said in a statement that Hellerstein's order was "a victory for the First Amendment" and showed that the government cannot block a book critical of the president as a condition of release to home confinement.

"This principle transcends politics and we are gratified that the rule of law prevails," she said.

Cohen was initially released in May along with other prisoners as authorities tried to slow the spread of the COVID-19 in federal prisons.

He was one year into a three-year prison sentence after pleading guilty to campaign finance charges and lying to Congress, among other crimes.

Campaign finance charges stemmed from his efforts to arrange payouts during the 2016 presidential race to keep the porn actress Stormy Daniels and model Karen McDougal from making public claims of extramarital affairs with Trump. Trump has denied the affairs.

Associated Press writer Michael Balsamo in Washington contributed to this report.

Watchdogs to review conduct of US agents in Portland, DC

By ERIC TUCKER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two government watchdogs said Thursday that they had opened investigations into the conduct of federal agents responding to unrest in Portland, Oregon, following abuse of power allegations by members of Congress, local officials and the public.

The Justice Department watchdog said that it would investigate use of force allegations in Portland, while its counterpart at the Department of Homeland Security said it would examine whether officers from the agency improperly detained and transported protesters in the city last week.

The Justice Department is also examining the training and instruction provided to the federal agents who responded last month to protest activity at Lafayette Square, near the White House. Among the questions being studied are whether the agents followed department guidelines on the use of chemical agents and less lethal munitions and whether they followed identification requirements.

Democrats in Congress cheered the announcement of the investigations. The chairs of the Judiciary, Homeland Security and Oversight committees issued a joint statement saying many federal agents are dressed as soldiers, driving unmarked vehicles and refusing to identify themselves or the agencies where they work.

"Congress will continue to check this reckless Administration, but it is deeply important that these independent inspectors general get to the bottom of President Trump's use of force against his own citizens," the statement said.

The investigations were announced amid ongoing chaos in Portland, where Mayor Ted Wheeler was tear-gassed by federal agents as he stood outside the courthouse there.

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Local authorities have complained that the presence of federal agents have exacerbated tensions on the streets, while residents have accused the government of violating their constitutional rights.

Civil unrest escalated in Portland after federal agents were accused of whisking people away in unmarked cars without probable cause. And in Washington, peaceful protesters were violently cleared from the streets by federal officers using tear gas ahead of a photo op by President Donald Trump in front of a nearby church.

The decision to dispatch federal agents to American cities is playing out at a hyperpoliticized moment when Trump is grasping for a new reelection strategy after the coronavirus upended the economy, dismantling what his campaign had seen as his ticket to a second term.

Trump has seized on a moment of spiking violence in some cities, claiming it will only rise if his Democratic rival Joe Biden is elected in November and Democrats have a chance to make the police reforms they have endorsed after the killing of George Floyd and nationwide protests demanding racial justice.

The federal response to the demonstrations is likely to be a major topic of discussion next week when Attorney General William Barr appears before the House Judiciary Committee for a hearing.

Portland's mayor tear-gassed by US agents as protest rages

By GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The mayor of Portland, Oregon was tear-gassed by U.S. government agents as he stood outside a federal courthouse during another night of protests against the presence of federal police sent by President Donald Trump to quell the city's ongoing unrest.

Mayor Ted Wheeler, a Democrat, appeared slightly dazed and coughed and said Wednesday night it was the first time he'd been tear-gassed.

He put on a pair of goggles someone handed him and drank water but did not leave his spot at the front of the protest and continued to take tear gas as the demonstration raged — with protesters lighting a large fire between protective fencing and the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Courthouse amid the pop-pop-pop sounds of the federal agents deploying tear gas and stun grenades into the crowd.

It wasn't immediately clear if the agents knew Wheeler was among those in crowd when they used the tear gas.

Earlier in the night, Wheeler was mostly jeered as he tried to rally demonstrators who have clashed nightly with federal agents but was briefly applauded when he shouted "Black Lives Matter" and pumped his fist in the air.

In a tweet Thursday, Trump referred to Wheeler as the "Radical Left Mayor of Portland, who last night was booed & shouted out of existence by the agitators & anarchists."

Wheeler has opposed federal agents' presence in Oregon's largest city. He has faced harsh criticism and his presence wasn't welcomed by many demonstrators who yelled and swore at him.

"I want to thank the thousands of you who have come out to oppose the Trump administration's occupation of this city," Wheeler told hundreds of people gathered downtown. "The reason this is important is it is not just happening in Portland ... we're on the front line here in Portland."

Wheeler has been accused by critics including city council members of not reining in local police who used tear gas multiple times on protesters before federal agents arrived early this month in response to nearly two months of nightly protests since George Floyd was killed. And city business leaders have condemned Wheeler for not bringing the situation under control before the agents showed up.

Department of Homeland Security acting Secretary Chad Wolf denied that federal agents were inflaming the situation in Portland. He told "CBS This Morning" on Thursday that Wheeler legitimized criminality in the city by going to the front of the crowd of demonstrators where the fires were lit and people were trying to pull down the protective fence.

Wolf said Wheeler had cited violence in the city before federal officers arrived.

Wheeler did not participate in lighting any of the fires or attempting to tear down the fence and was surrounded by his security team when he was gassed.

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Earlier, protesters held signs saying "Tear Gas Ted" in reference to the Portland Police Bureau's use of the substance before federal agents arrived. As Wheeler left the protest zone about 12:40 a.m. Thursday, one person shouted that he should be there "every single night."

Less than an hour after Wheeler left, the Portland Police Bureau declared there was a riot at the site and threatened to use tear gas but officers never did and made no arrests.

In a statement later Thursday, police said the crowd threw Molotov cocktails, lit fires in a park and in trash cans and released hundreds of gallons of water from fire hydrants.

Before he was tear-gassed, Wheeler was criticized for cutting the local police budget and for not assigning Portland police to protect protesters from federal agents.

Wheeler's appearance in the protest zone came hours after state attorneys for Oregon urged a judge to issue a restraining order against agents deployed to tamp down on the protests.

The arguments came in a lawsuit filed by Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, who accused federal agents of arresting protesters without probable cause, whisking them away in unmarked cars and using excessive force. Federal authorities have disputed those allegations.

The lawsuit is part of the growing criticism of Trump's order that sent the federal agents to Portland and pending orders for them to head to Chicago and Albuquerque, New Mexico, to fight rising crime.

Trump's move has deepened the country's political divide and has potentially set up a constitutional crisis months ahead of the presidential election. Democratic mayors of 15 cities have condemned the use of federal officers in a letter to the U.S. attorney general.

The court hearing focused on the actions of the more than 100 federal agents responding to protests outside the Portland courthouse.

The motion asks U.S. District Judge Michael Mosman to command agents from the Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Patrol, Federal Protective Service and U.S. Marshals Service to immediately stop detaining protesters without probable cause, identify themselves and their agency before arresting anyone, and explain why an arrest is taking place.

On Thursday, a judge is expected to hear arguments in a legal challenge that the American Civil Liberties Union filed on behalf of journalists — including a freelance photographer for The Associated Press — and legal observers who say they were targeted by Portland police while documenting demonstrations.

The ACLU filed a lawsuit Wednesday on behalf of volunteer medics who have been attending to injured protesters.

Wheeler, 57, a sixth-generation Oregonian was born and raised in Portland and attended local public schools.

Follow Gillian Flaccus on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/gflaccus>.

Pepcid as a virus remedy? Trump admin's \$21M gamble fizzled

By RICHARD LARDNER and JASON DEAREN Associated Press

As the coronavirus began its deadly march through the world, two well-respected American doctors identified a possible but seemingly unlikely remedy: Pepcid, the heartburn medication found on drugstore shelves everywhere.

There were no published data or studies to suggest that famotidine, the active ingredient in Pepcid, would be effective against the novel coronavirus.

And in early April, when government scientists learned of a proposal to spend millions in federal research funding to study Pepcid, they found it laughable, according to interviews, a whistleblower complaint and internal government records obtained by The Associated Press.

But that didn't stop the Trump administration from granting a \$21 million emergency contract to researchers trying it out on ailing patients. The Food and Drug Administration gave the clinical trial speedy approval even as a top agency official worried that the proposed daily injections of high doses of famotidine for already sick patients pushed safety "to the limits," internal government emails show.

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That contract is now under scrutiny after a government whistleblower accused a senior administration official of rushing the deal through without the scientific oversight necessary for such a large federal award. And the doctors who initially promoted the Pepcid idea are locked in a battle for credit and sniping over allegations of scientific misconduct.

Meantime, the trial itself is on pause due to a shortage of hospitalized COVID-19 patients in New York, delaying it indefinitely. A vaccine or effective treatment could be available before the study is complete.

The Pepcid project has underscored what critics describe as the Trump administration's casual disregard for science and anti-corruption rules that are meant to guard against taxpayer dollars going to political cronies or to fund projects that aren't rigorously designed.

"The evidence used to support the trial is extremely weak," said Dr. Steven Nissen, a Cleveland Clinic cardiologist who has been a frequent adviser to the FDA.

"And I've been very critical of this approach to the COVID-19 epidemic, which I've likened to throwing spaghetti at the wall and seeing what sticks. I consider trials like this one to be largely a waste of time and money when they're very unlikely to show positive results."

The story of how an over-the-counter heartburn remedy garnered top-level government interest as a COVID-19 medicine began several months ago in eastern China. Or maybe it was in rural Virginia -- even that point is in dispute.

Dr. Robert Malone said he got a call on Jan. 4 from Michael Callahan, a fellow American doctor working in China, according to Malone's own written summary and an interview with AP. The doctor told Malone -- a molecular virologist who was chief medical officer of the Florida-based pharmaceutical company Alchem Laboratories -- about a new coronavirus-like disease outbreak in Wuhan, the provincial capital of China's Hubei province.

Malone, a prolific social media poster who raises a rare breed of Portuguese horses on a farm in Virginia, also serves as a consultant to a Pentagon-funded program that develops medications to protect American troops from biological threats. Malone said he recognized such a threat in the pathogen tearing through Wuhan. The virus was moving so fast that there did not appear to be enough time to develop a vaccine.

Malone and a team of volunteers began looking for existing drugs that might be useful. About a week after the call about Wuhan, Chinese scientists published the virus' genetic fingerprint. Malone ran the sequence through computer models designed to find already-approved drugs that might work to thwart the virus.

One of the most promising leads was famotidine, he said.

By late February, Malone was convinced of famotidine's safety and efficacy as a COVID-19 drug -- so much so that, when he contracted the disease, he took the drug himself. He reported on his LinkedIn page that he'd figured out the proper dose and became "the first to take the drug to treat my own case."

But Callahan says it was he, not Malone, who first recognized famotidine's potential. Callahan is a well-connected infectious disease expert at Massachusetts General Hospital and an adviser to Dr. Robert Kadlec, a retired Air Force colonel who is assistant secretary for preparedness and response at the Department of Health and Human Services. Kadlec's job is to help guide the country through public health emergencies.

When the virus hit in late 2019, Callahan was already in Wuhan working with Chinese infectious disease researchers. Callahan said he and the Chinese doctors analyzed the medical records of more than 6,000 hospitalized patients, 1,100 of whom had severe COVID-19 disease, according to information released by researchers conducting the clinical trial.

Callahan did not respond to requests from The AP for comment, but his account is detailed in promotional materials about a potential Pepcid trial.

About 600 of the severely ill Chinese COVID-19 patients were on famotidine antacids and their disease was found to be milder than others of similar age and health.

Callahan hasn't published or made public any data to back up the Wuhan account. But his credentials and recent experience in China were enough for Kadlec. In January, Kadlec, who for years had traveled in the same biodefense circles as Callahan, tapped the doctor as a key adviser.

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By the second week of March, after Trump had declared the coronavirus a national emergency, the administration was scrambling for treatments. But the president's interest in speedy solutions conflicted with the methodical procedures meant to ensure decisions are backed by science, not political influence.

Science and political impatience clashed quickly, documents show. A week after Trump's emergency declaration, Kadlec received a blunt warning from the White House.

Peter Navarro, Trump's top assistant for trade and manufacturing policy, said in a March 19 email that he would soon be "flooding" Kadlec's office with contracts "and I cannot have these kind of bullshit delays at HHS."

Navarro didn't specify which contracts and there's no indication he advocated famotidine as a COVID-19 treatment.

"Your shop is now officially a bottleneck," Navarro told Kadlec.

Kadlec took action the next day, according to internal government correspondence. He contacted a longtime colleague of Callahan's at Northwell Health, New York state's largest health care provider, to request the expedited clinical trial of famotidine and the anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine. Trump had been touting hydroxychloroquine though it too was unproven against COVID-19. Its emergency use would later be revoked by the FDA amid growing evidence the drug failed at treating the disease and could cause serious side effects.

On March 20, Kadlec wrote to Dr. Kevin Tracey, Northwell's executive vice president for research. He instructed Tracey to work with Callahan to prepare a contract proposal and a draft budget for the Pepcid trial.

Federal pandemic response scientists at the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, or BARDA, were shut out of these early conversations about famotidine. Rick Bright, BARDA's director at the time, would later file a whistleblower complaint alleging unethical conduct by agency leadership, and point to the Pepcid trial as a key example.

"By directing a member of his staff (Callahan) to work as an agent of both the company and the government regarding the proposal, Dr. Kadlec was inviting violations of federal procurement law," Bright said in his complaint.

Kadlec did not respond to questions about Bright's allegations, but an HHS spokesperson said federal senior executives often seek advice from experts both inside and outside of the government. "In that regard, Kadlec is no different in seeking insight and perspective from multiple experts," the agency's spokesperson said in an email.

But two other federal scientists on Bright's team shared his worries that Callahan's involvement appeared to be a conflict of interest. Several of them initially saw the Pepcid proposal as a joke; the request was based purely on anecdotal evidence for a trial that would cost millions and take months.

Their concerns were ignored, according to Bright's complaint and government records. Kadlec oversees Bright's agency, and wanted the Pepcid contract approved. Fast.

Soon, Bright was reassigned to a lesser role at the department.

The fast-moving Pepcid proposal, however, snared the interest of the HHS's senior leadership, including Secretary Alex Azar, according to the internal emails.

Scientifically, the government had very little data on which to base a funding decision about Pepcid and COVID-19. There was no specific research on famotidine's coronavirus-fighting potential to underpin a clinical trial involving hundreds of COVID-19 patients. Kadlec had only Callahan's anecdotal experience with the heartburn drug in Wuhan, and Malone's computer modeling results which indicated famotidine might work against the virus.

And Northwell's work with Pepcid was at too early a stage to provide meaningful data for a trial. The health care provider had just begun drafting plans for studying famotidine when Kadlec contacted them, according to dates provided by Northwell. Within days, Northwell would team up with Malone's employer, Alchem Laboratories, to study the heartburn drug's potential as a COVID-19 therapy.

Experts who conduct clinical trials said this Pepcid study would not have been funded under normal,

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non-pandemic circumstances.

"We don't have enough small studies to show that this is a drug worth pursuing," said Dr. George Abraham, chair of the American Board of Internal Medicine's infectious disease group.

In late March, with so little data, the trial hit a snag at FDA, according to internal emails. The agency is responsible for approving clinical trials. A senior FDA official expressed concern over the large amount of famotidine that Northwell was proposing to give COVID patients each day. Plans for the trial would need to slow down so FDA could ensure it was safe.

Jeff Murray, deputy director of FDA's antivirals division, told Northwell to limit the dosage, according to the emails. Even after Northwell did so, Murray said its doctors were still "pushing the levels of intravenous famotidine (even with your recent dose reduction) to the limits" when compared to previous clinical tests and toxicology studies in animals.

On March 31, Northwell's Tracey emailed Kadlec. He said Callahan had been assisting and that Northwell had designed "a fully implementable trial under emergency status." Azar, the administration's top-ranking health official, and his assistant secretary for health, Admiral Brett Giroir, were copied on the message. Giroir also is the admiral who leads the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps.

"It is my understanding that ADM Giroir and Secretary Azar have been briefed and express interest in supporting a randomized clinical trial to determine the safety and potential efficacy for the use of famotidine in COVID-19," Tracey wrote in the email to Kadlec.

The FDA roadblock lifted suddenly. Northwell agreed to restrict the duration of the IV doses to 14 days, and the FDA's Murray wrote in an April 2 email the trial could move forward. Northwell Health spokesman Matthew Libassi described the dialogue between with the FDA as the normal back and forth when starting a new clinical trial.

"Famotidine is a very safe drug, even at high doses," he said. "The dosage we looked to establish was designed to overwhelm the virus and stop it from replicating."

With FDA's approval to move forward, Northwell sent Kadlec a preliminary trial budget, a copy of which was obtained by The AP. This initial budget document was a confusing spreadsheet and sought about \$250,000 -- a paltry amount compared to the \$20.7 million eventually allotted for the contract.

Malone said the initial low estimate was Northwell's mistake, and that the nearly \$21 million sum was reached after his team got involved. "We stepped in to do it on behalf of Northwell (which) knows nothing about federal contracting," Malone told The AP.

Northwell spokesman Libassi disputed that Malone took control of preparing the contract proposal and said he became "difficult to work with" as the plans for trial progressed.

By early April the Pepcid trial was still viewed by some in BARDA's upper ranks as amateurish and not worthy of federal research dollars and resources.

"Can you believe they want to use Pepcid AC now?" Bright quoted his then-deputy, Gary Disbrow, as saying during a phone call between the two. In an email, Disbrow, now BARDA's acting director, called the proposal a "Callahan thing." Bright recounted the exchange in the whistleblower complaint he filed in early May with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel.

The standard way for a pandemic-related research project to get funding is through BARDA, and only after rigorous reviews. The Pepcid project took a different route. The study was vetted through a fast-track program created by Kadlec called ASPR Next, which Bright alleges was designed to circumvent BARDA's scientific review. In the end, though, BARDA's then-director Bright's complaint said that he "was entirely excluded by Dr. Kadlec from the award process on this contract" even though the money came from his office's budget.

Northwell's Libassi declined to comment on the allegations of misconduct in Bright's whistleblower complaint. "With respect to the famotidine trial, we are confident it is based on sound science and we look forward to completing it," he said.

On April 14, the federal government awarded a \$20.7 million contract to Malone's employer, Alchem, and its subcontractor, Northwell, for a trial to assess the safety and effectiveness of "the combination of

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hydroxychloroquine and famotidine for the treatment of moderate to severe COVID-19 disease," according to a brief summary of the award.

Malone resigned as Alchem's chief medical officer a week later, citing what he described as a difficult work environment. He has since been critical of Callahan and the project. Meantime, the trial has been paused indefinitely because of a dearth of new patients in New York.

"The Northwell trial is just a zombie at this point," Malone said. "Completely irrelevant, except in a negative sense."

Still, Kadlec said through a spokeswoman he would choose to fund the trial again. "If it could save lives, yes."

About two weeks after the Pepcid contract was awarded, Science Magazine published an article describing the deal. In the piece, Callahan was credited as the "first to call attention to the drug in the United States." The article mentioned Malone's work briefly, with the lion's share of the credit going to Callahan and Tracey for the trial of a drug that had yet to show any ability to help people infected with coronavirus.

In an email to the magazine's editors, Malone challenged Callahan's China story. "No one that I am aware of has or had ever seen the data from Wuhan that Michael (Callahan) alludes to," he told the Science editor. "He had promised to show me those data, but never did."

A senior Science editor responded that the magazine had also been unable to independently confirm Callahan's account, but was not going to run a correction because he considered Callahan's version of the story to be anecdotal.

Soon after the Science piece was published there was a national shortage of Pepcid AC and other antacids containing famotidine, according to the FDA.

And Malone went to war with his fellow doctors. In LinkedIn posts, Malone has accused Tracey and another doctor of improperly demanding to be included as authors in a new study about famotidine's possible effectiveness against COVID-19.

A senior Northwell official advised Tracey a few weeks later to "studiously ignore" Malone, and attorneys for Tracey and another doctor have sent Malone cease-and-desist letters demanding he stop disparaging them. "(Malone) just wants back into the discussion and primary credit for the discovery, such as it is at this stage," the Northwell official's email to Tracey read.

Even before Northwell's Pepcid trial was put on hold indefinitely, Pepcid was a long shot as an effective remedy, said Peter Lurie, a former FDA associate commissioner and president of the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

"But the irregular process by which the contract was granted raises real questions about whether scarce government resources are being committed to the most promising therapeutic candidates," Lurie said.

Obama blasts Trump, praises Biden in new 2020 campaign video

By BILL BARROW and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden and former President Barack Obama stepped up their attacks on President Donald Trump and defended their time in the White House in a new video showing their first in-person meeting since the coronavirus outbreak began.

The 15-minute video, posted online Thursday, is the latest effort to get the former president more involved in the 2020 campaign as his former vice president tries to rebuild Obama's winning coalition. Obama has promised an active role on the campaign trail this fall.

The former White House partners used an interview-style conversation to amplify Biden's arguments against Trump, with Obama emphasizing Biden's experience and personal attributes. They pointed to their administration's 2010 health care law and blamed Trump for stoking division among Americans. They also were sharply critical of the Republican president's efforts to combat the coronavirus, which has killed more than 140,000 Americans.

"Can you imagine standing up when you were president and saying, 'It's not my responsibility, I take no responsibility?'" Biden said, offering a line of attack similar to his recent campaign speeches when he

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asserted that Trump “quit” on the country and has “waved the white flag” in the pandemic.

“Those words didn’t come out of our mouths while we were in office,” Obama replied. Trump slammed the pair Thursday afternoon in a Tweet, accusing them of doing a “terrible job” in office and allowing his election. The Republican National Committee issued a scathing assessment of “slickly produced, substance-free love fests,” dubbing the effort “Biden and Obama’s fiction.”

The two men are shown wearing masks while arriving at an office, then sitting down well apart from each other to observe social distancing for an unmasked chat. Biden’s campaign billed it as their first in-person meeting during the pandemic.

Obama compared the nation’s current economic circumstances to what he inherited in 2009 after the financial collapse that played out during his general election campaign the previous year.

“We had to move fast, not just 100 days,” Obama said. “We had to move in the first month to get the recovery act passed.” Calling Obama “Mr. President,” Biden answered that he’d repeat what he learned: “We have got to sustain and keep people from going under forever.”

The former president largely stayed out of the once-crowded Democratic primary but endorsed Biden in April, when he was the last candidate standing. Obama hosted a virtual fundraiser for his former vice president last month that raised \$7.6 million, the most of any Biden campaign event so far. He warned then against Democrats becoming “complacent and smug.”

In other exchanges, Obama and Biden blasted Trump’s view of American society, and Obama praised Biden as possessing empathy that he said Trump lacks.

“He ran by deliberately dividing people from the moment he came down that escalator, and I think people are now going, ‘I don’t want my kid growing up that way,’” Biden said, recalling Trump’s 2016 campaign launch.

Obama said he has confidence in Biden’s “heart and your character.” Governing, the former president said, “starts with being able to relate. If you can sit down with a family and see your own family in them ... then you’re going to work hard for them, and that’s always what’s motivated you.”

Building on the point, Biden discussed the final months before his son Beau died of brain cancer and tied it to the 2010 health care law. Biden said he recalled thinking “what would happen if his insurance company was able to come in — which they could have done before we passed Obamacare — and said, ‘You have outrun your insurance.’”

Obama said he “couldn’t be prouder of what we got done” and alluded to the Trump administration’s continued efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act through Congress and have it invalidated by the courts. “It is hard to fathom anybody wanting to take away people’s health care in the middle of a major public health crisis ... and a time when unemployment is at double digits,” he said. The Republican National Committee insisted, “President Trump and Republicans will always protect pre-existing conditions.” However, when the GOP controlled Congress during Trump’s first two years in office, it failed to pass a promised ACA replacement that would preserve the law’s ban on insurers denying coverage based on a person’s medical history.

The RNC also noted that Obama pledged repeatedly in his first term that the new law would allow anyone to keep his existing private coverage. In fact, minimum coverage standards in the law did effectively force some policyholders to obtain different plans.

Obama remains a go-to foil for Trump and the Republican base, just as he was throughout his two terms as president. But the 44th president’s two winning coalitions remain the rough model for a Biden victory in November. At the time of the 2016 election, Obama had a 53% Gallup job approval rating, with 45% disapproving, for a net positive approval of 8 percentage points. When he left office a few months later, that net positive had risen to 22 percentage points: 59% approve, 37% disapprove. In 2018, when Gallup assessed past presidents’ standing, Obama notched a retrospective approval of 63%.

For Trump, meanwhile, Gallup has measured just three net positive approval ratings during his three-plus years in office, all coming earlier this year and none of them higher than 4 percentage points.

Pandemic tough on Argentina's already overworked care givers

By DEBORA REY Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Even before the new coronavirus hit, Argentina's health care workers were struggling, most of them often working more than 12 hours a day at multiple jobs to make ends meet amid the country's overheated inflation.

The pandemic has meant even tougher times on the job, providing medical care for the gravely ill and also giving what comfort they can to patients dying of COVID-19 while cut off by quarantine from saying goodbye to family and friends.

Some still go home at night to their families, after taking precautions. Others, fearing for loved ones, have moved into hotels. Some have sent their children to stay with relatives.

Dr. Matías Norte, a surgeon who specializes in cancer cases but is also helping treat COVID-19 cases at the three hospitals where he works, sometimes has to drive an hour to get home to the apartment he shares with his wife, Silvina Cáceres Monié, in the capital. A kiss and embrace must wait until he showers.

"When I come in, it's such a great joy that you forget everything. You're happy to get home," Norte says.

Andrea Cortes, a nurse, also goes home to be with her partner, Ariel, but they have not kissed or embraced in nearly four months. She hasn't seen her 27-year-old daughter for nearly that long.

Cortes, who puts in an average of 17 hours a day at two hospitals in Buenos Aires, worries constantly about bringing the virus home.

"That fear and doubt make me hold this distance with the family until it's all over because I love them and I have to take care of them," she says.

Doctors, nurses and other health workers account for 7% of the more than 130,000 confirmed infections reported by Argentina's government.

Juan José Comas began working as a volunteer when the pandemic began. He tested positive for the coronavirus with a blood exam and negative with a swab test, meaning that while he had the virus in the past, he no longer did. He never showed any symptoms.

He got his medical degree last year but still must do training before taking his resident's examination, for which he has now gotten a crash course in treating patients.

Comas has been sharing a hotel room with three doctors he didn't know since moving out of his parent's home in April to protect them. "I went a couple of times to see them behind the gate," he said.

A doctor who shares the room with Comas tested positive and all four had to stay in the hotel in quarantine for 10 days.

It has been three months since nurse Marcela Brancati last saw her 9-year-old daughter, Agostina. She only gets to watch her daughter through photos sent on WhatsApp by her mother, who is caring for the girl.

"We've never been apart so long. It's very difficult," Brancati says. "Sometimes she calls me crying. She can't stand it and she wants to go back (home)."

Virus means Mexican emigrants send fewer dollars to hometown

By CLAUDIA TORRENS and MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — In the weeks he spent flat on his back in his Brooklyn bunk, wracked with pain and struggling to breathe, Axayacatl Figueroa could think of nothing but the small town and the family he had left behind in Mexico.

Each month, he had sent \$300 or \$400 to his wife and son in San Jerónimo Xayacatlán. The money was hard earned: For more than a decade, he cleaned pork, cut meat and boned chickens in the basement kitchen of a Vietnamese restaurant.

But now, Figueroa had COVID-19. There was no work, and there was no money to send home.

"I felt desperate. I couldn't do anything," he said.

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For as long as Mexicans have gone north to find work, money has gone in the opposite direction. These remittances from expatriates working in the United States and other countries have been the life blood of places like San Jerónimo, a village of nearly 4,000 people in central Mexico.

But these days, fear accompanies the money that crosses the border. And it travels both ways.

Those who went to live in New York and other American cities are worried about how to keep supporting their families. They also send home warnings about the terrors of a virus that many in Mexico still don't believe is dangerous.

Those who live in San Jerónimo and other towns and cities in Mexico fear for their relatives in the north, watching from afar as they lose their jobs, fall sick alone or without the documents that would allow them to move around freely -- and, too often, die in a foreign land.

The impact of COVID-19 has many questioning whether the years of struggle, absence and badly paid work were worth it.

Figueroa still believes it is. His son, a nursing student he left behind 15 years ago, is not so sure.

"I would have preferred to have him here," said Ariel Juan Figueroa, though he knows that won't happen anytime soon. His father is as persistent as he is.

"He won't be back until he retires or can't work," said the son.

San Jerónimo is a Mixtec village that sits among low, dry hills that turn green in the rainy season. There is no cell service in a place where running water was not common until just a few years ago.

Nearly a third of its people have emigrated to New York. Most departed in the 1990s or the first decade of the 21st century, leaving farm work behind to cross illegally into the United States.

The wages they've earned in New York's kitchens and bodegas have paid for so much:

For medicine and schooling for the people who stayed behind. For the town church's adornments of brick and turquoise filigree, and a three-story bell tower visible across San Jerónimo. For two-story cement homes that line the streets, dominating the few remaining adobe structures owned by families that didn't send migrants to the U.S. -- or whose migrants disappeared on the way north.

Mayor Ibaan Olguín Arellano estimates that the town's people received some \$500,000 a month in remittances before the new coronavirus struck New York and other places where migrants are working.

Then, in April and May, as the situation grew dire in New York, far fewer people picked up remittances at money-wiring offices in the neighboring town Acatlán de Osorio.

"It had never fallen off like that," Olguín Arellano said.

The World Bank and United Nations estimate that remittances to Latin American countries will fall nearly 20% this year, but Mexico appears to be holding on. Mexican migrants sent home a record \$4 billion in March. After a dip in April, numbers were strong again in May.

Duncan Wood, director of the Mexico Institute at the Wilson Center, says much of that money came from emigrants who received unemployment benefits in the U.S.

Emigrants from San Jerónimo typically work off the books and are paid in cash, so they receive no benefits and did not receive stimulus payments, Wood said.

He predicted that Mexico will feel the pain in coming months, when unemployment benefits run out. The country has long depended on that money; remittances bring in more money from overseas than oil exports or tourism.

As remittance money dried up in San Jerónimo, home-building came to a halt and people started eating only what they could slaughter from their herds or harvest from their fields.

Family in New York told them to prepare for the coronavirus to reach their remote corner of Mexico.

"The people are suffering here and it will happen there, too," Clara Lara's son warned her from Staten Island. He sent her money with one request -- buy cloth and make face masks.

In March, almost no one in Mexico was talking about wearing masks. The president himself was still mixing, unprotected, with crowds of supporters. But Lara followed her son's instructions and bought the cloth. One neighbor cut the fabric. Another folded it, and two others sewed masks in the house that the

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son had built which serves as a community center until the day he comes home and takes up residence.

In five weeks they made nearly 500 masks and distributed them to neighbors with clear instructions from Doña Clara: Drink hot soup and tea and, if you notice any symptoms, isolate yourself at home.

So even before Mexico began debating quarantines, emigrants from this town imposed one on their families from 2,500 miles away. San Jerónimo stopped moving. To date, not a single villager has been infected; the mayor says six townspeople living in the U.S. have died.

On April 17, the church bells tolled for the first victim from the town, a young man living in New York. Four days later, another died.

"I didn't believe it until I lived it in the flesh," said Wilfrido Martínez, 69, who lost his 39-year-old son.

Mauricio worked in a restaurant kitchen in New York. He was diabetic and didn't protect himself against infection, Martínez said. Until his son died, he had believed the virus was a fraud perpetrated by politicians for reasons he did not understand.

On July 11, nearly three months after his death, his son's ashes were sent from New York, destined for the town's cemetery alongside his mother.

From the speakers on the bell towers, prayers ring out daily, pleading for the end of the pandemic and praying for its victims.

"They go with the dream of achieving something but now, with the epidemic, many people have died," Martínez said. "Their dreams die there."

Sitting in the small, windowless kitchen of his apartment -- the only decoration on the wall, a framed painting of skyscrapers and the Statue of Liberty -- Axayacatl Figueroa calmly told the story of his illness.

He lost 15 pounds. He drank only the tea that his roommates, also from San Jerónimo, left on the other side of his closed door.

"When I stopped coughing they would ask me, 'What happened? We can't hear you anymore,'" he recalled.

Partly due to their often-cramped living conditions, New York's Latinos have relatively high rates of death from COVID-19. At least 760 Mexicans have died there, more than in any other state and nearly half of all Mexican deaths due to the virus in the United State. No one knows how many have fallen ill.

Figueroa, 42, left his wife and son behind in San Jerónimo in 2005. Their plan was for her to follow and then send for their son, who was 3 at the time. But border agents caught her trying to cross the border five times, and she gave up.

Every month, Figueroa sent money to Mexico. He dreamed of finishing his home, built slowly over the years and still incomplete, and educating his son.

Once, when he was particularly ill, he called his wife and said something that he'd never brought up before. If he could, he said, he would return home. She froze.

"A lot went through my mind," says Elisabeth Alvarado. Nearly a decade ago, she had asked him to come home, but he had said no -- he needed to make money for the family. How sick must he be, that he was reconsidering now?

Figueroa recovered after three weeks. His finances have not. Like many migrants, he lost his full-time job; according to the Migration Policy Institute, unemployment among the Latino foreign-born population in the U.S. has nearly quadrupled during the pandemic. Worst affected are those who, like Figueroa, are not here legally.

In Latino neighborhoods across New York, people wait in long lines for food aid being distributed by churches and charities.

Figueroa was able to return to the Vietnamese restaurant part-time. He arrives to work by bike, pedaling past vendors selling face masks and gloves for a dollar. But he is just making ends meet and hasn't sent money home since March.

His wife tells him not to worry, to look after himself. The family will tighten their belts, use some savings, eat more basic food; they won't sell a goat or turkey until it is absolutely necessary.

But Figueroa feels powerless.

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"You leave to improve yourself, to help your family, to support them, and I feel like I'm not doing that," he says. "I'm failing."

Emigration from San Jerónimo has slowed greatly since 2015. Town historian Tamara Cardoso says that after a generation of emigration, the quality of life has improved in San Jerónimo and there's less urgency for a decision "that means going far from everything, starting a new life, watching your children grow from far away."

Many of the new concrete houses in San Jerónimo are finished, but empty. The emigrants who built them haven't yet come back to live in them.

A few of the emigrants have come back over the years, however. On Sept. 11, 2001, Jorge Vázquez was working in a New York restaurant. After the attack on the Twin Towers, business dropped off and he was fired.

He remembers the fear of another attack, so similar to the fear of contagion.

"History's repeating itself in some way," he says.

Three months later, he returned to San Jerónimo. Though he tried to go north in 2003, he ended up staying in Mexico to care for his mother and for the three daughters of his sister, Magnolia Ortega, who remained in the United States.

Vázquez, 42, works in the fields. But he was trained as a nurse, and occasionally puts his old skills to work treating a scorpion bite or injecting a goat.

In recent days, he's been preparing the soil for a new planting of corn, spraying the last mangoes of the season and picking some fruit to sell in the market, which opened at the end of June after a nearly three-month shutdown.

The closure left Vazquez without income just as his sister lost her job cleaning houses in New York, and reduced the amount she sent home from \$800 to \$300 a month.

The money has come year after year, aside from when Ortega was diagnosed with cancer in 2011. The family used the money to add rooms to the house; to build a kitchen where modern appliances coexist with a cooking fire and corn-grinding stone; to buy medicine for their aging mother and pay for one of the young women, Ivette Guzmán, to study psychology. There wasn't enough money to pay tuition for her sister, too.

"Things have been achieved here through their efforts," said Guzmán, 25, as she stripped corn with her grandmother, her sister and her 2-year-old daughter amid goats and cacti. "But we're worried."

Vázquez had a telephone installed in the house so the family can stay in touch with Ortega. They know that though her cancer is in remission, she remains vulnerable to coronavirus. They know from watching television that even healthy people fall ill with coronavirus. They are terrified.

Ortega is considering returning to San Jerónimo with her second husband and their daughter, who was born in the United States. But there is no work there either, she said, and if she was to return there would be one less emigrant, sending back one less monthly check.

"If I go back," she said, "we won't have anything."

María Verza reported from San Jerónimo Xayacatlán, México.

China launches ambitious attempt to land rover on Mars

By SAMUEL McNEIL and ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China launched its most ambitious Mars mission yet on Thursday in a bold attempt to join the United States in successfully landing a spacecraft on the red planet.

Engines blazing orange, a Long March-5 rocket took off under clear skies from Hainan Island, south of China's mainland, as space enthusiasts gathered on a beach across the bay from the launch site.

"This is a kind of hope, a kind of strength," said Li Dapeng, co-founder of the China branch of the Mars Society, an advocacy group. He watched with his wife, 11-year-old son and 2,000 others on the beach.

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Launch commander Zhang Xueyu announced to cheers in the control room that the rocket was flying normally about 45 minutes later. "The Mars rover has accurately entered the scheduled orbit," he said in brief remarks shown live on state broadcaster CCTV.

China's space agency said that the rocket carried the probe for 36 minutes before successfully placing it on the looping path that will take it beyond Earth's orbit and eventually into Mars' more distant orbit around the sun.

Liu Tongjie, spokesman for the mission, said in a press briefing that the launch was a "key step of China marching towards farther deep space." He said that China's aim wasn't to compete with other countries, but to peacefully explore the universe.

It marked the second flight to Mars this week, after a United Arab Emirates orbiter blasted off on a rocket from Japan on Monday. And the U.S. is aiming to launch Perseverance, its most sophisticated Mars rover ever, from Cape Canaveral, Florida, next week.

"It's amazing that another nation has launched the case for Mars," said Katarina Miljkovic, a planetary scientist at Curtin University in Australia. "It's more like this marathon of space that we all want to be running."

China's tandem spacecraft — with both an orbiter and a rover — will take seven months to reach Mars, like the others. If all goes well, Tianwen-1, or "quest for heavenly truth," will look for underground water, if it's present, as well as evidence of possible ancient life.

This isn't China's first attempt at Mars. In 2011, a Chinese orbiter accompanying a Russian mission was lost when the spacecraft failed to get out of Earth's orbit after launching from Kazakhstan, eventually burning up in the atmosphere.

This time, China is going at it alone. It also is fast-tracking, launching an orbiter and rover on the same mission instead of stringing them out.

China's secretive space program has developed rapidly in recent decades. Yang Liwei became the first Chinese astronaut in 2003, and last year, Chang'e-4 became the first spacecraft from any country to land on the far side of the moon.

Conquering Mars would put China in an elite club.

"There is a whole lot of prestige riding on this," said Dean Cheng, an expert on Chinese aerospace programs at the Heritage Foundation in Washington.

The launch was "gutsy," said Jonathan McDowell, an astronomer at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. The next challenge is for the spacecraft to be "still working when it gets to Mars and survives entry and landing."

Landing on Mars is notoriously difficult. Only the U.S. has successfully landed a spacecraft on Martian soil, doing it eight times since 1976. NASA's InSight lander and Curiosity rover still operate today. Six other spacecraft are exploring Mars from orbit: three American, two European and one from India.

Unlike the two other Mars missions launching this month, China has tightly controlled information about the program — even withholding any name for its rover. National security concerns led the U.S. to curb cooperation between NASA and China's space program.

In an article published earlier this month in *Nature Astronomy*, mission chief engineer Wan Weixing said Tianwen-1 would slip into orbit around Mars in February and look for a landing site on Utopia Planitia — a plain where NASA has detected possible evidence of underground ice. Wan died in May from cancer.

The landing would then be attempted in April or May, according to the article. If all goes well, the 240-kilogram (530-pound) golf cart-sized, solar-powered rover is expected to operate for about three months, and the orbiter for two years.

Though small compared to America's hulking, car-sized 1,025-kilogram (2,260-pound) Perseverance, it's almost twice as big as the two rovers China has sent to the moon in 2013 and 2019. Perseverance is expected to operate for at least two years.

This Mars-launching season — which occurs every 26 months when Earth and Mars are at their closest — is especially busy.

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The UAE spacecraft Amal, or Hope, which will orbit Mars but not land, is the Arab world's first interplanetary mission. NASA's Perseverance rover is up next.

"At no other time in our history have we seen anything like what is unfolding with these three unique missions to Mars. Each of them is a science and engineering marvel," the Space Foundation's chief executive officer Thomas Zelibor said in an online panel discussion earlier this week.

China's road to Mars hit a few bumps: A Long March-5 rocket, nicknamed "Fat 5" because of its bulky shape, failed to launch earlier this year. The coronavirus pandemic forced scientists to work from home. In March, when instruments needed to be transported from Beijing to Shanghai, three team members drove 12 hours to deliver them.

While China is joining the U.S., Russia and Europe in creating a satellite-based global navigation system, experts say it isn't trying to overtake the U.S. lead in space exploration.

Instead, Cheng of the Heritage Foundation said China is in a "slow race" with Japan and India to establish itself as Asia's space power.

Ghosal reported from New Delhi. Follow him and McNeil on Twitter: @aniruddhg1 and @stmcneil. Associated Press researcher Chen Si in Shanghai and researcher Yu Bing and producer Olivia Zhang in Beijing contributed to this report.

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

Column: Fake baseball fans, and the 'roar' of the 'crowd'

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

Random midsummer baseball moment: Chicago Cubs first baseman Victor Caratini knocks a sharp seventh-inning single to center off White Sox reliever Jimmy Lambert. As Caratini darts toward first, the crowd erupts in cheers.

Or, rather: The "crowd" erupts in "cheers."

On this day, and on all coming days as the 2020 baseball season finally begins, there is — and will be — no crowd. The seats of storied Wrigley Field are empty, its fans scattered to the virus-era winds.

And the "cheers" — air quotes hanging heavy — are recorded snippets amplified from an electronic soundboard after being airlifted out of "MLB The Show," a video game about, yes, Major League Baseball.

MLB has its reasons to deploy its version of a laugh track. First, a game without ambient sound feels dull — a ghostly incarnation of its usual self and something baseball can't afford right now, particularly after the tone-deaf weeks of union-management acrimony that made the season even shorter than it might have been. Completely noiseless games would simply draw more attention to the fact that something's not quite right.

Also, as some players have said, the "crowd" noise obscures the muted strategy chatter and prevents the opposing team from pilfering in-game intel — also not something MLB wants right now (cough-Astros-cough).

Over the past few days' exhibition games, everyone's been getting used to it. Announcers, many perched in booths over deserted ballparks listening to the reactions of crowds that aren't there, are hashing through the notion.

"I wasn't necessarily in favor of it, but after last night's game, I'm now a proponent. It really does add at least a little atmosphere," Pittsburgh Pirates announcer Greg Brown said this week. "I think that some crowd noise is especially important for the TV viewers and radio audiences."

Reasonable enough. But what's lost — for players and living, breathing fans alike — when the canned relieves the real?

One of baseball's appeals — and, not incidentally, a branding strength even among those younger fans it so covets — is its perceived authenticity, its continuity as time-tested national pastime.

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Sure, these days analytics rule the roost, video replays decide challenges and automated balls and strikes are looming. But those are, in essence, mechanical changes.

The fake-fan baseball universe of 2020 — well, that touches something more spiritual. It's about the nature of experience itself — the value of the real and the emptiness of its synthetic counterpart, even if you're only watching the game on TV.

What makes going to a live baseball game special? You're there. You're immersed. You can hear and see and smell and FEEL it. Same story, but to a lesser extent, when you're watching on a screen. In both cases, you know that the players are real, their competition is genuine and the experience is really happening somewhere and being delivered to you.

Part of that implicit agreement involves the crowd. For fans are key to the story of baseball.

There is something kinetic, something intangibly sweet, about the live reaction from the stands to a big play. It both heightens the game and changes it. Energy is traded between players and fans. Together, it all forms a baseball recipe that's more than its ingredients.

OK, you say. But the virus. And besides, we just want baseball.

Fair points. Trouble is, the crowd isn't merely being eliminated. As in the old "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" movie, it's being replaced with a nonreactive shadow duplicate of itself.

Recorded in years past to make a video game feel real, the sounds (about 75 of them in all) are themselves ghosts, phantoms from exciting moments that have already had their day. They come from crowds riled up by an entirely different event than the one you're hearing or watching.

The connection between action and reaction is completely severed. The "aura" — as cultural critic Walter Benjamin wrote almost a century ago while considering "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" — is no more.

"You can't replace 40,000 real people," Cubs announcer Len Kasper said Sunday on Marquee Sports Network.

No SABRmetrics will measure this, but still: With fake excitement deployed day in and day out for who knows how long, how can the integrity of a very intimate game not be affected?

It's easy, in baseball, to be an annoying purist, to say that every adjustment designed to modernize, to keep pace with the times, threatens the "integrity of the game." Yes, baseball is inherently conservative. That's part of its allure — and a big part of what's held it back.

But in benefiting from its market-driven dedication to authenticity, doesn't baseball take on the responsibility of being something real in a world that increasingly feels anything but?

Of course, the game itself is bound to the carefully polished mythology of the nation, which has its own challenges these days, some directly related to the reasons fake crowds must exist at all.

Still, in an era of abundant obfuscation — when jeans are pre-ripped to look like you've lived in them for years, when you can erase your blemishes automatically on Zoom, when politicians call truth lies and lies truth — this is more reinforcement not to believe your own ears.

Necessary though they may be, fake-fan sounds are kind of the PEDs of audio. They're intellectually dishonest. They're artificial excitement, audio juicing, a constant reminder that something in the world isn't quite right. Which, of course, is true.

In "Ballpark: Baseball in the American City," Paul Goldberger explores the relationship between field and seats. "The exquisite garden of the baseball field without the structure around it," he writes, "would be just a rural meadow, bereft not only of the spectators themselves but of the transformative energy they bring."

The 2020 season will have none of that transformative energy, only its artificially flavored substitute.

And, as of Thursday, we're tilting in that direction even more: Fox Sports now says that whenever it televises a game, it'll add computer-generated fans to the stands — not to fool anyone, says vice president Brad Zager, but in the spirit of "creating a natural viewing experience." These electronic "people" can even high five "each other" or do the wave. That's certainly one way to increase baseball's fan base.

But wait. That's all easily forgotten, right? Mere details. Baseball's finally back, and its fans (as opposed to its "fans") can't wait.

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Just ask the Cleveland Indians, who exited Progressive Field smiling Monday night after an 11-7 exhibition victory over the Pirates. As players trotted toward the clubhouse, that feeling of a regular summer prevailed — complete with a volley of winning-team fireworks overhead.

Well, maybe fireworks. It sure sounded like them. Who really knows.

Ted Anthony, director of digital innovation for The Associated Press, has been writing about American culture since 1990. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/anthonyted>

AP-NORC poll: 3 in 4 Americans back requiring wearing masks

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Three out of four Americans, including a majority of Republicans, favor requiring people to wear face coverings while outside their homes, a new poll finds, reflecting fresh alarm over spiking coronavirus cases and a growing embrace of government advice intended to safeguard public health.

The survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research also finds that about two-thirds of Americans disapprove of how President Donald Trump is handling the outbreak, an unwelcome sign for the White House in an election year shaped by the nation's battle with the pandemic.

More than four months after government stay-at-home orders first swept across the U.S., the poll spotlights an America increasingly on edge about the virus. The federal government's response is seen as falling short, and most Americans favor continued restrictions to stop the virus from spreading even if they might hamstring the economy.

Support for requiring masks is overwhelming among Democrats, at 89%, but 58% of Republicans are in favor as well. The poll was conducted before Trump, who for months was dismissive of masks, said this week that it's patriotic to wear one.

"Not wearing a mask, to me, poses a greater risk of spreading the COVID," said Darius Blevins, a 33-year-old Republican-leaning independent from Christiansburg, Virginia, who works in bank operations. Blevins said he wears a mask in public because "it's much more effective than not wearing the mask."

It's an opinion echoed by data analyst James Shaw, an independent who tilts Democratic. "If you understand the facts, there is really no issue," said Shaw, 56, of Noble, Illinois. "The data is crystal clear."

For months health officials have said several simple steps could save lives — washing hands frequently, staying away from crowds, especially while indoors, and pulling on a mask when heading out to the supermarket, the office or a restaurant. And despite heated rhetoric about masks in some corners, 95% of Democrats and 75% of Republicans said they're wearing face coverings when leaving the house. Overall, 86% of Americans say they're doing so, compared with 73% in May.

As the tally of coronavirus infections continues to climb, state and local governments have tried to find a balance between restrictions intended to limit the virus' spread, such as closing bars and indoor dining at restaurants, and getting workers back on the job after many businesses were idled and millions of people were left jobless by the initial stay-at-home orders.

The U.S. has more than 3.9 million known cases of the coronavirus, with many more undetected, and more than 140,000 people have died of it this year. The U.S. leads the world in confirmed cases and deaths and ranks near the top on a per-capita basis. California, which earned plaudits from health officials for aggressive early action that included the first statewide stay-at-home order, is among states seeing a surge. On Wednesday, California passed New York for the most confirmed cases with 409,000.

About half of Americans now say they're extremely or very worried about themselves or someone in their families being infected with the virus — about the same as in March, but a steep increase from June, when just 32% said they were that concerned. Republicans were less likely to be anxious about the illness, but concern rose among members of both parties.

There were other signs of continued unease. Support for limiting the size of gatherings ticked back up to 66%, after sliding for several months to a low of 59% in June. Eighty-five percent of Americans say they're avoiding large groups.

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About half say they favor requiring people to stay in their homes except for essential trips. That number remained about steady since June. About half also favor requiring bars and restaurants to close.

Nearly three-quarters of Americans said restrictions to slow the spread of the virus should override concerns about damaging the economy, but California retiree Kimberly Greenan said she favors relaxing rules and allowing people to get back to work. Greenan says she wears a mask on trips to the grocery store and at church, but not if she's walking in a park, away from other people.

"If people are vigilant, if they do what's right, this economy could come back," said Greenan, 67, a Republican and former accountant and teacher from Santee, in the San Diego suburbs.

While tough steps were needed initially, "for the most part people are ready to get on with their lives," she said. "I don't think tying everyone down is the right move."

The poll finds that only 24% of Americans approve of the federal government's response to the outbreak, with disapproval hitting 55%, ticking up 7 percentage points from May. The remainder did not have an opinion either way.

Trump's recent endorsement of masks came after he said in April that "I just don't want to wear one." The Republican president was not seen wearing a mask in public until July 11, months after the coronavirus took hold in the U.S. Trump has recently suggested the virus is under control, but he changed course Tuesday, saying it will "get worse before it gets better."

Democratic California Sen. Dianne Feinstein on Wednesday again called for a national mask requirement. "We need a mandate at the federal level that will uniformly require masks across the country," she said in a statement. "This isn't a political issue."

Swanson reported from Washington.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,057 adults was conducted July 16-20 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.3 percentage points.

Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>.

VIRUS DIARY: Pandemic life, captured digitally (literally)

By DAVE CLARK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — In journalism, when we're trying to explain a complicated story, we often start with raw data. How many? How much? How long? How far?

I decided to use this same approach to document my life during the lockdown.

I began working from home in mid-March. Since then, I have left my one-bedroom apartment in Manhattan's Washington Heights neighborhood only for exercise and to buy groceries and other necessities.

As someone who is generally a homebody, lockdown really hasn't been much of a hardship for me. If you're lucky enough to still have your job, lockdown has its opportunities. You take up a new hobby, learn a new skill or get those projects done that you've been putting off.

Of course, you can also feel pangs of guilt for not taking full advantage of those opportunities. I've done my share of that. My Great American Novel remains unwritten.

Everyone's lockdown story is a bit different. Here are some of the numbers that tell mine.

Approximate distance from my apartment to the park that marks the furthest limit of my travels since the lockdown began: 1/2 mile

Number of times I've gone to that park: 5

Approximate area I have lived my life in since mid-March, in acres: 41

Number of times I've been in a car: 0

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Number of times I've used public transportation: 0
Number of times I've used a bicycle: 0
Number of times I've used any form of conveyance other than the elevator in my apartment building: 0
Approximate number of hours I spent each day commuting to and from my job pre-pandemic: 2
Kilowatt hours I used in the April-May 2019 billing cycle: 103
Kilowatt hours I used in the April-May 2020 billing cycle, my first full month of working from home: 145
Percentage change year over year: +40.8
Kilowatt hours I used in the May-June 2019 billing cycle — the month that I typically start using the air conditioner: 174
Kilowatt hours I used in the May-June 2020 billing cycle, the first month that I worked from home while using the air conditioner: 352
Percentage change year-over year: +102.3
Number of steps I took on an average day in 2019: 5,092
Number of steps I took on an average day in June 2020: 1,162
Percentage change: -77.2
Number of times I went to the gym between the time I joined in early January and when it closed in mid-March: 25
Number of pounds I lost during that time: 7.8
Number of pounds I've gained since then: 10.8
Number of times I've taken money out of an ATM: 1
Number of times I've used cash to pay for something other than to fill the card needed to operate the laundry machines in my apartment building: 1
Number of episodes in a lecture series on the Black Death that I added to my Amazon Prime Video queue thinking it was a two- or three-part documentary: 24
Number of those half-hour lectures that I watched: 24
Rank of reading books among the leisure activities I hoped to do more of during lockdown: 1
Number of books I have purchased on my Kindle since lockdown began: 3
Number of those books I have read in their entirety: 1
Number of pairs of shoes that I own: 6
Number I have worn during lockdown: 1
Number of cloth masks that I own: 2
Number of cloth masks I tried to make: 1
Number of those attempts that were successful: 0
Number of weeks I let my beard grow when the lockdown began: 7
Cost of a beard trimmer I bought on Amazon (probably while I was watching the lecture series on the Black Death): \$22.99
Number of times I used it to trim my beard: 1
Number of times I used it to shave off most of my beard before finishing the job with a razor: 1

Viruses Diary, an occasional feature, showcases the coronavirus pandemic through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world. Dave Clark is the mobile editor at The Associated Press. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/dclark5>

'Squad' member Tlaib may be vulnerable in tough primary

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

Rep. Rashida Tlaib had been in Congress for a matter of hours when she was seen on video telling supporters that she and other Democrats were going to impeach President Donald Trump, using an expletive rather than Trump's name. The room full of activists cheered, but some people back home — and in Democratic leadership — were not pleased.

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It wasn't the last time Tlaib's approach to governing — an unapologetic fighter, taking aim at the status quo alongside three other first-term congresswomen of color who make up "the squad" — would make her a target, both of the GOP and her own party.

And every time, Detroit City Council President Brenda Jones says, agitated constituents would call and encourage her to challenge her fellow Michigan Democrat to a rematch of their 2018 battle for the party's congressional nomination. Now Tlaib is the squad's most vulnerable member, as she and Jones are set to square off again in Michigan's Aug. 4 primary.

The contest points to the broader debate in the Democratic Party between the establishment and largely younger, more progressive activists, as well as the racial dynamics of a heavily Democratic Detroit-area district at a time when racial injustices are getting renewed attention. To Jones, it all boils down to one thing for a district that is among the country's poorest: who can "bring home the bacon."

"There are things that I might feel, but I just don't say in public and an example is 'impeach the M-F' on the very first day," said Jones, 60. "Not to say you're going to always agree, but you have to be able to work with those people because you never know who you're going to need in order to get things done that need to be done."

The two candidates have a history. In 2018, Jones finished a close second to Tlaib in a six-person primary for the seat long held by Democratic Rep. John Conyers, who stepped down amid sexual harassment allegations. But Jones defeated Tlaib in a two-person special election to finish the final weeks of Conyers' term — which she did, spending five weeks in Washington before Tlaib was sworn in for the full term in January.

Tlaib says that she has legislated exactly the way she promised and that she's gotten results by pushing back against those who are too cozy with corporations and big developers.

She notes that Trump signed into law a bill she sponsored to protect retirees' pension benefits — even if she didn't get invited to the White House for the signing — and that she's gotten amendments approved with bipartisan support, including a measure that provides billions to replace lead pipes and prioritizes low-income communities.

"I'm pretty tenacious and it's resulting in actual things getting done," Tlaib said. "It's not just about me as a person, but all of the various social justice issues that I've been standing up for for the last year and a half that have not been popular among the wealthy."

The only other member of the squad still facing a primary challenge is Minnesota Rep. Ilhan Omar, whose top challenger on Aug. 11 is a political newcomer who raised millions more than the incumbent congresswoman last quarter. Some of Antone Melton-Meaux's donations came from pro-Israel groups and conservative donors. Omar has apologized for tweets suggesting members of Congress support Israel because they are paid to do so. New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez easily won her primary last month, while Massachusetts Rep. Ayanna Pressley is unopposed.

Race and religion are also factors in Tlaib's diverse district, where over half of the residents are Black, while the rest are a mix of white, Arab American, Latino and other races. Tlaib, a Palestinian who was born and raised in Detroit, was one of the first two female Muslim members of Congress; Jones is Black. Conyers was also Black and was the longest-serving Black member of Congress, holding office for over five decades.

Ian Conyers, whose grandfather was the former congressman's brother, said the district was drawn to ensure a voice for Black residents, and he believes it should continue to have a Black representative, particularly following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the elevation of racial justice issues.

"Folks are wanting someone to make their case in their own words," said Conyers, who also ran in the 2018 primary. He said other candidates of color should look to gain political power in white districts, "and not simply look at urban areas and the African American community as a place to win a seat."

Some Black voters who plan to support Tlaib said race didn't matter. William Clark, 74, thinks Jones is too conservative.

"Black, white, Hispanic, Martian, I don't care who is in power, just do what you say you're going to do," he said. "Rashida will speak. She is real."

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Branden Snyder, who leads the grassroots organization Detroit Action, called Tlaib a "visionary" and praised her candor and willingness to fight, saying she isn't beholden to "the same old status quo."

"Right now politics as usual ain't been working for our communities," Snyder said during an event announcing the organization's endorsement of Tlaib.

Tlaib has a huge financial advantage over Jones, having raised more than \$2 million, and she has backing from the political action committee Justice Democrats and other progressive groups.

Jones has brought in about \$140,000 but was far outraised in 2018 and lost by only 1 percentage point. The four other candidates are now backing Jones.

Besides the racial issues, Conyers said Tlaib has been too focused on issues outside the district. Jones points to moments like last summer, when Tlaib booed Hillary Clinton at an event for Clinton's former rival, Sen. Bernie Sanders, in his 2020 presidential bid.

Tlaib remains unapologetic.

"I didn't have to change who I am" to please voters, Tlaib said. "I didn't sell out. That's one thing I promised them, that I wouldn't do it. And I didn't."

Associated Press writer Corey Williams in Detroit contributed to this report.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, July 24, the 206th day of 2020. There are 160 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 24, 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that President Richard Nixon had to turn over subpoenaed White House tape recordings to the Watergate special prosecutor.

On this date:

In 1847, Mormon leader Brigham Young and his followers arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley in present-day Utah.

In 1858, Republican senatorial candidate Abraham Lincoln formally challenged Democrat Stephen A. Douglas to a series of political debates; the result was seven face-to-face encounters.

In 1862, Martin Van Buren, the eighth president of the United States, and the first to have been born a U.S. citizen, died at age 79 in Kinderhook, New York, the town where he was born in 1782.

In 1866, Tennessee became the first state to be readmitted to the Union after the Civil War.

In 1911, Yale University history professor Hiram Bingham III found the "Lost City of the Incas," Machu Picchu, in Peru.

In 1915, the SS Eastland, a passenger ship carrying more than 2,500 people, rolled onto its side while docked at the Clark Street Bridge on the Chicago River; an estimated 844 people died in the disaster.

In 1937, the state of Alabama dropped charges against four of the nine young Black men accused of raping two white women in the "Scottsboro Case."

In 1969, the Apollo 11 astronauts — two of whom had been the first men to set foot on the moon — splashed down safely in the Pacific.

In 1975, an Apollo spacecraft splashed down in the Pacific, completing a mission which included the first-ever docking with a Soyuz capsule from the Soviet Union.

In 1980, comedian-actor Peter Sellers died in London at 54.

In 2002, nine coal miners became trapped in a flooded tunnel of the Quecreek (KYOOK'-kreek) Mine in western Pennsylvania; the story ended happily 77 hours later with the rescue of all nine.

In 2018, the Trump administration said it would provide \$12 billion in emergency relief to farmers hurt by trade disputes with China and other countries. Ivanka Trump announced the shutdown of her fashion line, which had been targeted by boycotts and prompted concerns about conflicts of interest.

Ten years ago: A stampede inside a tunnel crowded with techno music fans left 21 people dead and

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more than 500 injured at the famed Love Parade festival in western Germany. Fourteen-year-old Jim Liu beat Justin Thomas 4 and 2 to become the youngest U.S. Junior Amateur golf champion at Egypt Valley Country Club in Ada, Michigan.

Five years ago: Fulfilling the hopes of millions of Kenyans, Barack Obama returned to his father's homeland for the first time as U.S. president, a visit long sought by a country that considered him a local son. In a stunning, public attack on his own party leader, Republican Sen. Ted Cruz accused Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of lying, saying he was no better than his Democratic predecessor, Harry Reid, and couldn't be trusted. Two teenage fishermen, Perry Cohen and Austin Stephanos, went missing off Florida's Atlantic coast; their capsized boat was found two days later. AT&T became the country's biggest traditional TV provider with its \$48.5 billion purchase of DirecTV.

One year ago: In a day of congressional testimony, Robert Mueller dismissed President Donald Trump's claim of "total exoneration" in Mueller's probe of Russia's 2016 election interference. Boris Johnson took office as Britain's prime minister, vowing to break the impasse that defeated his predecessor, Theresa May, and lead the country out of the European Union. Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló said he would resign, in the face of a public uproar over an online chat in which the governor and close advisers insulted women and mocked constituents. A Pennsylvania appeals court overturned rapper Meek Mill's conviction in a drug and gun case that had kept the rapper on probation for a decade. Federal regulators announced a settlement under which Facebook was being fined \$5 billion over privacy violations; the company would also face new oversight and restrictions on its business.

Today's Birthdays: Actor John Aniston is 87. Political cartoonist Pat Oliphant is 85. Comedian Ruth Buzzi is 84. Actor Mark Goddard is 84. Actor Dan Hedaya is 80. Actor Chris Sarandon is 78. Comedian Gallagher is 74. Actor Robert Hays is 73. Former Republican national chairman Marc Racicot (RAWS'-koh) is 72. Actor Michael Richards is 71. Actress Lynda Carter is 69. Movie director Gus Van Sant is 68. Former Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., is 67. Country singer Pam Tillis is 63. Actor Paul Ben-Victor is 58. Basketball Hall of Famer Karl Malone is 57. Retired MLB All-Star Barry Bonds is 56. Actor Kadeem Hardison is 55. Actress-singer Kristin Chenoweth is 52. Actress Laura Leighton is 52. Actor John P. Navin Jr. is 52. Actress-singer Jennifer Lopez is 51. Basketball player-turned-actor Rick Fox is 51. Director Patty Jenkins ("Wonder Woman") is 49. Actress Jamie Denbo (TV: "Orange is the New Black") is 47. Actor Eric Szmanda is 45. Actress Rose Byrne is 41. Country singer Jerrod Niemann is 41. Actress Summer Glau is 39. Actor Sheaun McKinney is 39. Actress Elisabeth Moss is 38. Actress Anna Paquin is 38. Actress Sarah Greene is 36. NHL center Patrice Bergeron is 35. Actress Megan Park is 34. Actress Mara Wilson is 33. Actress Sarah Steele is 32. Rock singer Jay McGuiness (The Wanted) is 30. Actress Emily Bett Rickards is 29. Actor Lucas Adams is 27. TV personality Bindi Irwin is 22.