

Groton Daily Independent

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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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GFP News for 7/24/2020

GFP Commission Finalizes River Otter Trapping Season

PIERRE, S.D. - The Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission finalized their proposal to create a conservative trapping season for river otters. The season will be limited to portions of eastern South Dakota.

This limited trapping season will be open from sunrise on November 1 to sunset on December 31 in the following counties in eastern South Dakota: Aurora, Beadle, Bon Homme, Brookings, Brown, Charles Mix, Clark, Clay, Codington, Davison, Day, Deuel, Douglas, Grant, Hamlin, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jerauld, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, Marshall, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, Moody, Roberts, Sanborn, Spink, Turner, Union and Yankton.

Other rules include:

Limit of one river otter per trapper per season.

Harvest limit of 15 river otters. Season will end prior to December 31 if the harvest limit is reached.

Trapping season open to residents only, with a furbearer license.

A river otter shall be reported to the Department of Game, Fish and Parks within 24 hours of harvest. At the time of reporting, arrangements will be made to check in the carcass and detached pelt at a GFP office or designated location for registration and tagging of the pelt within 5 days of harvest. Additionally, once the season has closed (last day of season or harvest limit reached), a person has 24 hours to notify the department of a harvested river otter.

The pelt shall be removed from the carcass and the carcass shall be surrendered to the department. After the pelt has been tagged, it shall be returned to the trapper. Upon request, the carcass may be returned to the trapper after the carcass has been inspected and biological data collected.

Any river otter harvested after the 24-hour period following the close of the season will be considered incidental take and shall be surrendered to the department.

A person may only possess, purchase or sell raw river otter pelts that are tagged through the eyeholes with the tag provided by the department or if the river otter was harvested on tribal or trust land of an Indian reservation or another state and is properly and securely tagged with a tag supplied by the governmental entity issuing the license.

GFP Commission Finalizes Local Fee Exemption for Yankton Sioux Tribal Members, Families

PIERRE, S.D. – The Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission, finalized a park entrance fee exemption in collaboration with the Yankton Sioux Tribe at their July meeting. The new rule will allow Yankton Sioux Tribal members and their families to access four park areas local to the Yankton Sioux Reservation without purchasing a park entrance license (PEL).

These areas include North Point Recreation Area, South Shore Lakeside Use Area, Randall Creek Recreation Area and the Spillway Lakeside Use Area.

GFP Commission Establishes Fees for Nonresident Landowner Deer and Antelope Licenses

PIERRE, S.D. – During the 2020 South Dakota Legislative Session, the legislature created a provision to allow for nonresident landowners to be eligible for west river deer and firearm antelope licenses for their own land. In response to this action, the Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission finalized fees for these licenses at their July meeting.

This rule will set these licenses at one-half the fee of the deer or antelope license which has been applied for. With a fee structure of one-half, the cost would be \$140 for an "any deer" license, \$140 for an "any antelope" license, and \$165 for an "any antelope + doe/kid" license.

GFP Commission Finalizes Fall Turkey Season

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission finalized their proposal to decrease the number of licenses available for the 2020 and 2021 fall turkey hunting seasons.

After receiving public comments, the Black Hills season will see a 50% reduction in tags with 100 resident and 8 nonresident, single-tag “any turkey” licenses. The prairie units will have 400 single-tag and 35 double-tag “any turkey” licenses for residents and 28 single and 3 double tag “any turkey” licenses available for nonresidents.

Gregory (Unit 30A), Mellette (50A) and Tripp (60A) counties will be closed for the fall turkey hunting season, with the opening of Bon Homme County (Unit 12A).

The seasons will run Nov. 1, 2020 – Jan. 31, 2021 and Nov. 1, 2021 – Jan 31, 2022.

GFP Commission Removes Lost License Fee

PIERRE, S.D. – The Game, Fish and Parks Commission removed the \$20 administrative fee for lost or destroyed licenses, permits or game tags. However, the license agent’s fee established by SDCL 41-6-66.1 will still be charged by license agents and the department.

This change is a direct action to provide enhanced customer service. The replacement cost was inadvertently creating a barrier to participation in certain circumstances.

Authorized license agents and the department, as per SDCL 41-6-66.1, will charge a license agent’s fee of \$4 for resident and \$8 for nonresident licenses.

GFP Commission Proposes Rule to Increase New Duck Hunters

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission proposed an experimental 2-tiered duck regulation for the 2021-2024 seasons.

To increase participation in duck hunting, the proposal would allow two options for hunters to choose from.

Tier 1 is the current rules package. Hunters would follow the current daily bag limits with all species specific regulations. For example, 2019 regulations allowed six ducks total with no more than five mallards (two of which could be hens), three wood ducks, three scaup, two redheads, two canvasback or one teal.

Tier 2, also known as the “3-Splash rule,” would allow hunters a bag limit of three ducks of any species and sex.

The proposal is a joint experiment with the Central Flyway, United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in an effort to simplify regulations and recruit more duck hunters.

“Duck hunters have been in steep decline across the country and South Dakota is no exception,” said GFP senior waterfowl biologist, Rocco Murano. “The ability to identify ducks in the air has been identified as a barrier to duck hunter recruitment, retention and re-activation. This experiment will hopefully give new or potential duck hunters the confidence to hunt and not worry about accidentally breaking any laws. At the same time, this structure allows experienced duck hunters the option to continue following more liberal daily bag limits and hunt as they always have.”

Commissions from both Nebraska and South Dakota will have to approve the experiment, which would begin in the 2021-22 duck hunting season and run for a minimum of 4 years.

Individuals can comment online at gfp.sd.gov/forms/positions or mail comments to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501.

To be included in the public record and to be considered by the commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and meet the submission deadline of 72 hours before the public hearing (not including the day of the public hearing).

The next GFP Commission meeting will be held Sept. 2-3, tentatively at the Outdoor Campus West in Rapid City.

GFP Commission Proposes More Spring Turkey Licenses

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission proposed an increase of 140 licenses for the 2021 spring turkey hunting season.

The increase would come for the prairie units and be one of several changes that would increase turkey hunting opportunities in the state.

Other proposed changes include:

Add Clark County to Hamlin County unit.

Remove Douglas County from Charles Mix County unit.

Create Unit 10A that includes both Aurora and Douglas counties.

Add Buffalo County to Brule County unit.

Add Beadle and Hand counties to Jerauld County unit.

Increase the number of archery turkey access permits for Adams Homestead and Nature Preserve from 20 to 30.

Establish 20 mentored turkey access permits for Adams Homestead and Nature Preserve that would be limited to a bow or crossbow.

For Adams Homestead and Nature Preserve, allow for uncased bows and crossbows for a resident hunter who possesses a valid mentored spring turkey license and an access permit.

The proposed season dates for the 2021 spring turkey hunting seasons are:

Archery	April 3 – May 31
Black Hills	April 10 – May 31
Single-Season Prairie Units	April 10 – May 31
Early Split season Units	April 10 – April 30
Late Split Season Units	May 1 – May 31
Black Hills late season	May 1 – May 31

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GFP Commission Proposes Unrestricted Shooting Preserve Licenses

PIERRE, S.D. – In response to requests from shooting preserve operators, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission proposed to create an unrestricted license option, allowing for unlimited bag limits on shooting preserves who choose to offer this option to clients.

Hunters who desire to purchase the unrestricted license at a proposed fee of \$150 would need to have already purchased a small game or preserve hunting license. They would also be required to purchase a habitat stamp, which is \$10 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents.

Additionally, if an individual would like to exercise their unrestricted license while party hunting, all members of the hunting party would be required to possess the unrestricted license.

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Rapid City.

GFP Commission Proposes Changing Dates for the Elk License Raffle

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission proposed to move the drawing time period for the elk license raffle.

By rule, the department has the ability to offer an “any elk” license to a non-profit, wildlife-related organization to use as a raffle fundraiser.

“The reasoning behind this proposal is to allow additional opportunity for unsuccessful applicants from the regular elk hunting season drawings to purchase raffle tickets for this license,” said Chad Switzer, Wildlife Program Administrator. “We’ve worked with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation to direct the proceeds from this raffle license for several years and it’s been a great collaboration. We have partnered on habitat projects on private and public lands, as well as research to learn more about the survival and habitat use of elk. This change would allow more time to sell raffle tickets and hold a successful fundraiser.”

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GFP Commission Proposes Expansion of Bobcat Season

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) proposed to expand the bobcat trapping and hunting season to the entire state at their July meeting.

The commission also proposed to modify the East River season to run from Dec. 26 – Feb. 15, bringing the East and West River seasons into alignment.

Hunters or trappers east of the Missouri River would still be limited to one bobcat per season.

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GFP Commission Proposes Additional Missouri River Tailrace Spearfishing Opportunity

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission proposed to extend spearfishing for gamefish on the Missouri River at their July meeting.

The proposal would allow the spearing of gamefish on the Missouri River from the Nebraska/South Dakota border to the Ft. Randall Dam from May 1 – March 31. This would align with current gamefish spearfishing season dates below other Missouri River dams.

The commission also proposed to extend gamefish spearing hours to end one-half hour after sunset. This would allow for additional opportunity for gamefish spearing. Rough fish spearing is currently allowed 24 hours a day.

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Pierre, SD 57501.

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GFP Commission Proposes Safety Signage and Marking Requirements for Aeration during Periods of Ice Cover

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Park (GFP) Commission proposed to require safety signage and marking of open water areas when aquatic aeration systems are being used on waters with public access during times of ice cover.

Aeration systems are used to prevent fish kills during the summer and winter, and to prevent ice from forming that may damage permanent docks or other structures anchored in the lakebed. Operation of aeration systems during the winter can cause significant public safety issues because they create open water and weakened ice conditions. Requiring signage would inform the public of potentially dangerous conditions.

Signs of highly visible size and design indicating "Danger Open Water," clearly showing the location of the open water created by the aeration system, would need to be posted at all boat ramps and public access points any time the aeration system is in operation. Conspicuous markers, sufficient to notify the public of the location of the aeration system, would be placed around the open water area during periods of ice cover.

All signage would have to be removed by March 30.

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GFP Commission Proposes Changes to Aquatic Invasive Species Rules

PIERRE, S.D. - With the creation of new aquatic invasive species laws (AIS) during the 2020 Legislative Session, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission proposed the following rule changes at their July meeting:

1. Remove the prohibition in administrative rule on possessing, transporting, selling, purchasing, or propagating AIS from administrative rule. The new laws prohibit all of these activities.
2. Create an additional exemption for possession of AIS to allow an owner or agent of the owner of a conveyance to transport the conveyance for decontamination using a department-approved process.
3. Remove prohibitions in administrative rule on launching a boat or boat trailer into the waters of the state with AIS attached. The new law prohibit these activities.
4. Repeal the rule allowing for the creation of local boat registries. With the expansion of zebra mussels within the state, local boat registries are impractical.
5. Remove the exemption to the decontamination requirement for boats in a local boat registry in association with repealing the rule allowing the creation of registries.
6. Create a new rule to define the department-approved decontamination protocol.

7. Update the list of containment waters to include Pickerel, Waubay, North and South Rush, and Minnewasta Lakes.

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GFP Commission Proposes Electric Motors Only on Two Black Hills Waters; Trout Limit Change on Border Waters

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission proposed to limit two waterbodies in the Black Hills to the use of electric motors only.

The city of Rapid City requested the commission limit boaters on Canyon Lake to electric motors and the United States Forest Service requested the same restriction on Bismarck Lake. These waters are utilized by kayakers and canoers and the regulation change would be for safety reasons.

The commission also proposed to change the trout daily limit from 7 to 5 on Nebraska/South Dakota border waters. This would align the daily limit with South Dakota inland and Nebraska border waters.

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#152 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

We are not doing better: 73,400 new cases today, a 1.8% increase from yesterday to 4,122,100. Our doubling time is now around 39 days. This shoves yesterday's second-worst number aside, moving into its place and extending us to a streak of our 25 worst days all in the last 25 days. Best estimates put us over five million cases sometime in the next two to three weeks and over six million in September.

Setting records for new cases were Hawaii, Montana, Utah, Oklahoma, and Indiana. We have 59,670 people hospitalized, almost as many as on April 15, when we had 59,940; so we're close to a record here too. The only hospital in Starr County in south Texas has activated an ethics committee to help decide which patients should receive treatment and which should be sent home to die. No one thinks this is a good idea, but the hospital can't handle any more patients, and there's nowhere to send them.

There were 1127 new deaths reported today, a 0.8% growth rate, putting us at 145,376 deaths so far. This is the fourth consecutive day over 1000 deaths, not a great trend. Record numbers of deaths were reported in Oregon and California, and a record-tying number in Montana. Records for seven-day average were reported in California, Texas, Georgia, and Florida; the record was tied in Hawaii, Oregon, Utah, Nevada, Tennessee, and South Carolina.

There isn't a great deal of news today. I'll be brief.

A new report from the CDC outlines lingering health effects, even of mild infections and even in what have been considered low-risk populations. Some 35% of patients who were not sick enough to be hospitalized were not back to their baseline state of health two to three weeks after diagnosis. The issue is seen across the age spectrum in 26% of 18 to 34 year-olds, 32% of 35-49 year-olds, and 47% of 50-and-overs reporting.

More hand sanitizers have been added to the list of those contaminated with toxic methanol. Since methanol is easily absorbed through the skin, you should not use these products at all. You can find a complete updated list on the CDC website at: <https://www.fda.gov/.../fda-updates-hand-sanitizers-methanol>

There is an interesting project underway attempting to teach dogs to sniff out Covid-19 in patients. A report from Germany says dogs were taught to do this very accurately within a few days. The dogs' success rate was 94%. The theory is that the dogs can detect metabolic changes that occur in infected people in the same manner some dogs can detect metabolic changes in diabetics. The dogs were trained using saliva from infected and uninfected persons. Further study is needed with special attention to the dogs' ability to differentiate between Covid-19 and other respiratory infections. This one will bear watching.

Even as a kid, Benjamin Canlas was kind: He once saw a food peddler in his native Philippines riding a beat-up bicycle without peddles and decided to dig into his savings to replace them. And so when his parents were dealing with his death last year at 17, they made their own decision not to let his kindness die with him. As the Philippines locked down this spring in the pandemic, they saw many people struggling to make ends meet. Hampered by restrictions on the public transportation system and jobs that dried up, folks were left to take odd jobs, completing them on foot, walking sometimes for hours.

The Canelas remembered the peddler and saw a way to connect donors with people in need, so they announced a giveaway of seven brand new bikes to deserving recipients from their Courage to be Kind Foundation. There was a problem though: The amount of need exceeded their initial offering. Undaunted, they went to work on that problem and were able to hand out 20 more bikes that would make lives just a little less difficult.

One recipient is a wife and mother who started selling food and delivering it on foot to support her family after her husband was furloughed from his job. She said, "I am so happy that I won't have to walk so far anymore." Another was a husband and father who'd lost his restaurant job and so was selling rice cakes and smoked fish, traveling many miles every day on a failing bike to make a living. He said he couldn't believe he was getting a new bike. "A bike isn't just a simple thing. A bike, for me, is what supports my life. A bike is my partner in my work every day."

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After the initial project, nominations of deserving people continued to come in, and the Foundation is working to extend its reach to more donors and more people in need. Benjamin's mother, Glenda, said, "We live in a world where it still takes courage to be kind. [W]ouldn't it be great when kindness is just the norm, kindness is just the baseline for everybody?" It would. It really, really would.

Be well. We'll talk again.

Hello, Tourism Friends!

We continue to receive emails from people from all over the country about how excited they are to visit our state and, in some cases, stating that they want to move here! In addition, we continue to receive some encouraging reports from partners, and it is clear that we are beginning to make some positive strides in travel spending and visitation in a few areas in the state. See below for the latest in our COVID-19 Weekly Research Update:

South Dakota was one of five states that surpassed the 50% occupancy rate mark in June, exceeding the national average of 42%.

The western region of South Dakota reached the highest occupancy levels in June at 54%, followed by the central region at 53%.

On the national level, the percentage of American travelers who now feel safe traveling outside their community has fallen again to 38%, also a low since mid-May.

The percentage of consumers who expect the coronavirus to worsen within the next month decreased from 62.7% last week to 59.8%.

Outdoor recreation, scenic drives, wildlife viewing and camping continue to lead the way as popular activities for our guests.

Visitation to our state parks increased by more than 20% for the month of June when compared to last year. This is a 30% increase calendar year-to-date.

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

I'd like to take this opportunity to call out a few additional items this week:

Funds remain available in the U.S. Small Business Administration's programs established to provide relief for businesses impacted by COVID-19. The Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) and Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) still have funds available for South Dakota businesses. The August 8th, 2020 application deadline for the PPP is fast approaching. Check with a South Dakota SBA Lender in your community for more information and to apply. If your primary lender is done accepting applications, you may use a different lender. EIDL applications are available directly through SBA Disaster Assistance.

605strong.com has been developed to provide mental health assistance to people struggling due to the impact of COVID-19. Please help us spread the word to your employees and others in your community. If they are in need of assistance, they can call 211 to speak with a counselor as well as access resources and support on 605strong.com. This is a positive step for you or those you care about to help with depression, anxiety and stress during this difficult time.

We'd like to thank all of our partners who joined us Wednesday for the South Dakota Department of Health webinar. Consumers have stated that their health and safety is the number one concern when traveling, and we must continue to ensure our communities and businesses are ready and able to provide that for them. If you were unable to participate, you can view the webinar recording and deck.

The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally is just around the corner, and we know many of you are fielding calls and taking questions from visitors about the upcoming event. We will be sharing a one-sheeter with you next week that covers some basic talking points about the best routes to take through our state to get to Sturgis. The one-sheeter will also share a few reminders about keeping our bikers and visitors safe while they are in our state.

Have a great weekend and keep up your efforts in taking good care of yourselves and our visitors.

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

First Human West Nile Virus Detection of 2020 Reported

PIERRE, S.D. – A McCook County resident is South Dakota's first human West Nile virus (WNV) case of the season, the state Health Department reported today.

"Active transmission of West Nile virus is occurring in South Dakota and people need to protect themselves, especially during evening outdoor activities," said Dr. Joshua Clayton, State Epidemiologist for the department.

Clayton said South Dakota has historically had a disproportionately high number of WNV cases compared to other states and he encouraged residents to reduce their risk by taking the following actions:

- Apply mosquito repellents (DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, 2-undecanone or IR3535) to clothes and exposed skin.

- Reduce mosquito exposure by wearing pants and long sleeves when outdoors.

- Limit time outdoors from dusk to dawn when Culex mosquitoes, the primary carrier of WNV in South Dakota, are most active.

- Get rid of standing water that gives mosquitoes a place to breed.

- Regularly change water in bird baths, ornamental fountains and pet dishes.

- Drain water from flowerpots and garden containers.

- Discard old tires, buckets, cans or other containers that can hold water.

- Clean rain gutters to allow water to flow freely.

- Support local mosquito control efforts.

These precautions are especially important for people at high risk for WNV, including individuals over 50, pregnant women, organ transplant patients, individuals with cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure or kidney disease, and those with a history of alcohol abuse. People with severe or unusual headaches should see their physicians.

The state's first human case was reported in 2001. Since then, South Dakota has reported 2,613 human cases and 46 deaths.

Visit the department's website at westnile.sd.gov for more information about WNV.

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October 30, 2020



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DF-CD-NP-Q320

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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	June 24	June 25
Minnesota	47,457	47,961	48,721	49,488
Nebraska	23,190	23,486	23,818	24,174
Montana	2,712	2,813	2,910	3,039
Colorado	41,059	41,698	42,314	42,980
Wyoming	1,830	1,864	1,923	1,972
North Dakota	5207	5367	5493	5614
South Dakota	8019	8077	8143	8200
United States	3,902,233	3,971,343	4,038,864	4,114,817
US Deaths	142,073	143,193	144,305	145,565

Minnesota	+350	+504	+760	+ 773
Nebraska	+343	+296	+332	+356
Montana	+91	+101	+97	+129
Colorado	+493	+639	+616	+455
Wyoming	+40	+34	+59	+49
North Dakota	+81	+160	+126	+121
South Dakota	+76	+58	+66	+57
United States	+70,828	+69,110	+67,521	+75,953
US Deaths	+1,164	+1,120	+1,112	+1,260

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July 24th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent
from State Health Lab Reports

A male in the 50-59 age group from Pennington county is the latest casualty from the COVID-19 virus. That makes 122 people that have died in South Dakota. Dewey County is up to 51 active cases with three more positive ones today. Pennington County is down to just 2 positive tests today. Turner County had five more positive tests today making their total active cases to 14. Minnehaha County had 21 positive tests but also had 18 recovered so they had a net gain of only 3 positive tests.

In South Dakota, those currently hospitalized dropped by five to 45. Brown County had two positive tests making the active cases at 18. North Dakota death number is 99. South Dakota is 122.

Brown County:

Active Cases: +2 (18)
Recovered: 0 (353)
Total Positive: +2 (373)
Ever Hospitalized: +1 (20)
Deaths: 2
Negative Tests: +29 (3804)
Percent Recovered: 94.6% (-.5)

South Dakota:

Positive: +57 (8200 total)
Negative: +897 (95,290 total)
Hospitalized: +4 (792 total). 45 currently hospitalized (down 5 from yesterday)
Deaths: +1 (122 total)
Recovered: +47 (7261 total)
Active Cases: +9 (817)
Percent Recovered: 88.5 -.1

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Harding (47), unassigned +151 (4467). Fully recovered from positive cases: 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: +1 positive (3 active cases)	Charles Mix: +1 positive (39 active cases)
Beadle (9): +1 positive (41 active cases)	Clark: 2 active cases
Bennett: 2 active cases	Clay: +2 positive, +2 recovered (12 active cases)
Bon Homme: Fully Recovered	Codington: 20 active cases
Brookings: +1 positive, +3 recovered (8 active cases)	Corson: +1 positive (3 active cases)
Brown (2): +2 positive (18 active cases)	Custer: Fully Recovered
Brule: +1 recovered (3 active cases)	Davison: +1 positive, +1 recovered (15 active cases)
Buffalo (3): +3 recovered (18 active cases)	Day: 2 active cases
Butte: +1 positive, +1 recovered (4 active cases)	Deuel: 1 active case
Campbell: Fully Recovered	Dewey: +3 positive (51 active cases)
	Douglas: 5 active cases

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Edmunds: Fully Recovered
 Fall River: 2 active cases
 Faulk (1): +1 positive (3 active cases)
 Grant: 1 active case
 Gregory: 1 active case
 Haakon: Fully Recovered
 Hamlin: 2 active cases
 Hand: Fully Recovered
 Hanson: +1 recovered (2 active cases)
 Harding: No infections reported
 Hughes (3): +2 recovered (11 active cases)
 Hutchinson: 2 active cases
 Hyde: Fully Recovered
 Jackson (1): Fully Recovered
 Jerauld (1): 1 active cases
 Jones: Fully Recovered
 Kingsbury: 1 active case
 Lake (2): +1 positive, +1 recovered (13 active cases)
 Lawrence: +1 positive (5 active cases)
 Lincoln (1): +8 positive, +1 recovered (48 active cases)
 Lyman (1): 8 active cases
 Marshall: 2 active case
 McCook (1): +1 positive (4 active cases)
 McPherson: 1 active case
 Meade (1): +1 positive (9 active cases)
 Mellette: 11 active cases
 Miner: 1 active case
 Minnehaha (62): +21 positive, +18 recovered (224 active cases)
 Moody: 3 active cases
 Oglala Lakota (1): +1 positive, +3 recovered (20 active cases)
 Pennington (24): +2 positive, +7 recovered (134

active cases)
 Perkins: Fully Recovered
 Potter: 1 active case
 Roberts: 6 active cases
 Sanborn: Fully Recovered
 Spink: +1 positive (4 active cases)
 Stanley: Fully Recovered
 Sully: Fully Recovered
 Todd (3): 6 active cases
 Tripp: Fully Recovered
 Turner: +5 positive (14 active cases)
 Union (2): +3 positive, +2 recovered (20 active cases)
 Walworth: +1 recovered (2 active cases)
 Yankton (2): +1 positive, +1 recovered (11 active cases)
 Ziebach: 2 active cases

North Dakota Dept. of Health Report COVID-19 Daily Report, July 24:

- 4,664 tests (1,892)
- 5,614 positives (+ 124)
- 4,545 recovered (+ 70)
- 99 deaths (+ 2)
- 970 active cases (+ 49)

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian, Non-Hispanic	717	9%
Black, Non-Hispanic	1000	12%
Hispanic	1168	14%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	1343	16%
Other	816	10%
White, Non-Hispanic	3156	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	26
Todd	3
Union	2
Yankton	2

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons
Aurora	37	34	341
Beadle	576	526	1726
Bennett	5	3	465
Bon Homme	13	13	692
Brookings	108	100	2303
Brown	373	353	3804
Brule	38	35	647
Buffalo	104	83	582
Butte	8	4	670
Campbell	1	1	78
Charles Mix	99	60	1110
Clark	16	14	361
Clay	103	91	1150
Codington	109	89	2458
Corson	24	21	355
Custer	11	11	703
Davison	76	61	2038
Day	20	18	527
Deuel	6	5	350
Dewey	52	1	1791
Douglas	16	11	374
Edmunds	10	10	360
Fall River	14	12	874
Faulk	25	21	159
Grant	18	17	641
Gregory	6	5	329
Haakon	1	1	269
Hamlin	14	12	563
Hand	7	7	246
Hanson	15	13	161
Harding	0	0	48
Hughes	81	67	1509
Hutchinson	21	19	819

Hyde	3	3	114
Jackson	7	6	404
Jerauld	39	37	255
Jones	1	1	47
Kingsbury	9	8	489
Lake	57	42	809
Lawrence	25	22	1842
Lincoln	448	399	5636
Lyman	84	75	848
Marshall	6	4	372
McCook	23	18	576
McPherson	6	5	187
Meade	64	54	1699
Mellette	21	10	296
Miner	11	10	227
Minnehaha	3941	3655	23849
Moody	26	23	558
Oglala Lakota	131	112	2830
Pennington	767	608	9508
Perkins	4	4	133
Potter	1	0	253
Roberts	62	56	1470
Sanborn	12	12	201
Spink	18	14	1037
Stanley	14	14	216
Sully	1	1	63
Todd	66	57	1811
Tripp	19	19	551
Turner	39	25	800
Union	171	149	1688
Walworth	18	16	512
Yankton	96	83	2787
Ziebach	3	1	252
Unassigned****	0	0	4467

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

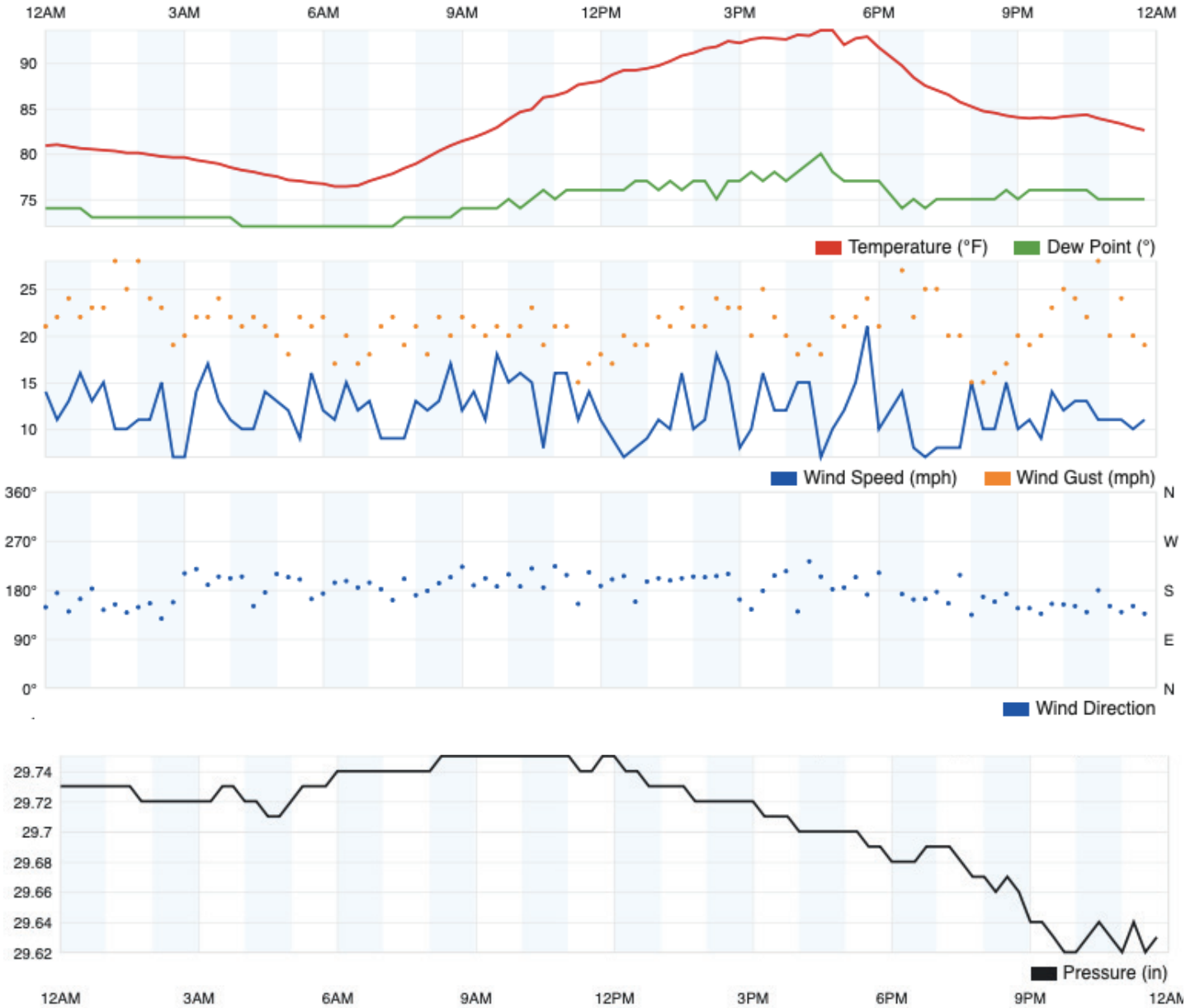
Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	3997	63
Male	4203	59

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	968	0
20-29 years	1717	1
30-39 years	1675	6
40-49 years	1278	7
50-59 years	1249	16
60-69 years	745	23
70-79 years	297	17
80+ years	271	52

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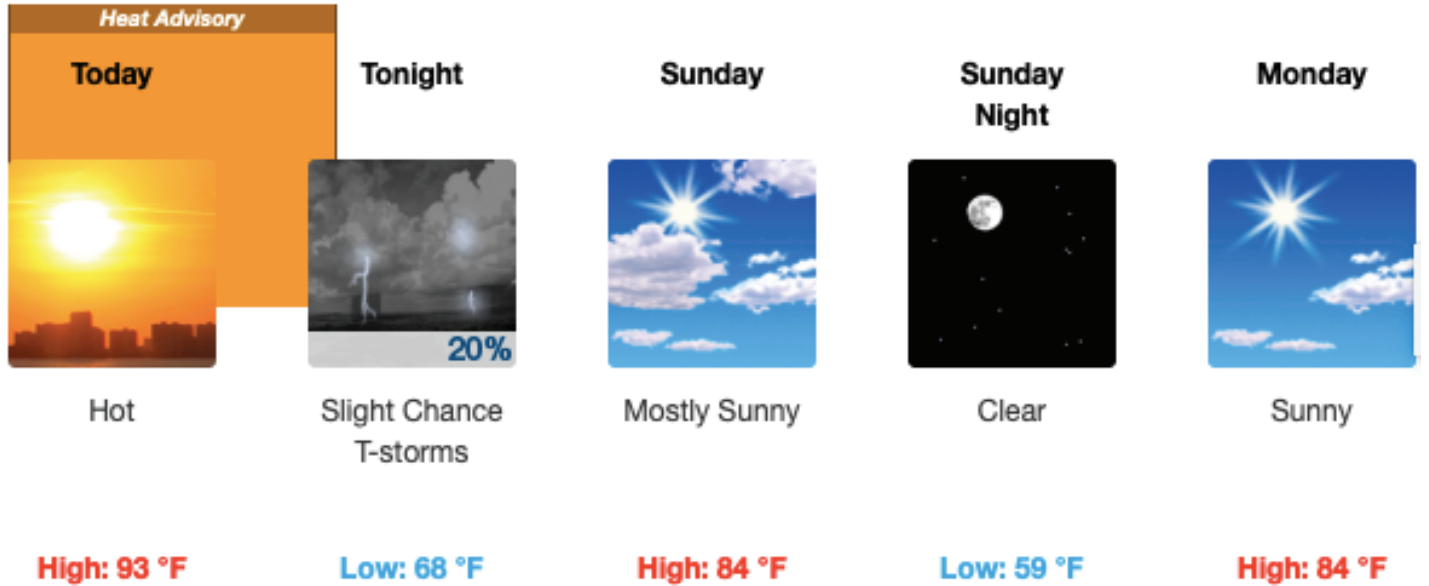
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Heat Today, Relief Sunday

Heat Advisory remains in effect through 9pm for most near/east of the Missouri River. **Limit time outdoors!**

A few thunderstorms are possible this afternoon and evening. **Can't rule out that they'd be strong to severe.** Heavy rain is also possible.

A cold front sweeps out the heat and humidity by Sunday morning. Most areas will be dry Sunday too.

Max Heat Index Today

McIntosh	92°	Eureka	96°	Britton	97°	Wheaton	100°
Mobridge	98°	Aberdeen	101°	Sisseton	99°	Milbank	100°
Eagle Butte	92°	Gettysburg	95°	Redfield	102°	Watertown	98°
Pierre	99°	Miller	100°	Hurricane	102°	Brookings	100°
Murdo	98°	Chamberlain	105°				

High Temps Sunday

McIntosh	81°	Eureka	82°	Britton	80°	Wheaton	80°
Mobridge	85°	Aberdeen	84°	Sisseton	80°	Milbank	81°
Eagle Butte	83°	Gettysburg	81°	Redfield	82°	Watertown	80°
Pierre	84°	Miller	80°	Brookings	80°		
Murdo	82°	Chamberlain	83°				

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

One more day of heat index values of around 100 degrees is in store today, before a cold front sweeps through the area tonight. While the odds aren't overly high, keep an eye to the sky for a few thunderstorms late this afternoon into this evening if spending time outdoors.

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Today in Weather History

July 25, 1961: A thunderstorm started late in the evening on the 25th and went into the early morning hours of the 26th. A sizeable area suffered 50 to 100 percent loss of crops resulting from hail over the following counties, Bison, Perkins, Faulk, Sully, and western Hand. Corn was stripped of leaves and broken off. Oats and wheat were flattened. High winds with recorded gusts of 75 to 80 miles per hour cause numerous power failures and damaged trees in Pierre.

July 25, 1972: Unofficial rainfall amounts of 8 inches caused flash flooding in Ferney and surrounding area in Brown County. Water, over two feet depth was reported in a parking area. Basements were flooded, and foundations were damaged. The torrential rains caused extensive damage to crops in the area.

July 25, 1984: Severe thunderstorms caused considerable damage to the Pierre area. Winds were gusting to 83 mph at the Pierre airport, where thirteen planes, as well as several hangars, were destroyed. In town, a home and three businesses lost their roofs, and a trailer home was destroyed. Rains of four inches in thirty minutes produced flash flooding with some streets closed for some time. Some basements were reported to have 6 to 8 inches of water in them. At Dupree, high winds caused extensive damage to the grandstand roof at the fairgrounds. Along the entire path of the thunderstorms, hail and high winds broke windows, damaged cars, downed trees, damaged crops, and caused power outages.

July 25, 1993: Lake Kampeska, near Watertown, reached near record level at 37 inches over full mark due to runoff from heavy rains in previous days. Dozens of homes and two businesses were flooded out. About 100,000 sandbags were distributed to help prevent more flood damage to lakeside property owners.

July 25, 2000: A powerful F4 tornado hit the city of Granite Falls in Minnesota. The tornado first touched down in rural parts of the county west-northwest of Granite Falls. The tornado struck the city at 6:10 pm. After tearing through the residential sections of town, the tornado lifted at approximately 6:25 PM after being on the ground for over nine miles. The tornado caused one fatality and injured more than a dozen.

2005: The citizens of Sand Point, Alaska saw a rare tornado touchdown on two uninhabited islands. Sand Point is part of the Aleutian Chain and is located about 570 miles southwest of Anchorage.

1891 - The mercury hit 109 degrees at Los Angeles, CA, marking the peak of a torrid heat wave. (David Ludlum)

1936: Lincoln, Nebraska saw an all-time high temperature of 115 degrees. The low only dropped to 91 degrees and the average temperature was 103. Many people spent the night sleeping outside to escape the heat.

1956: The Andrea Doria sank in dense fog near Nantucket Lightship, Massachusetts. The Swedish-American liner, Stockholm, hit the ship forty-five miles off the coast of Massachusetts. Fifty-two persons drowned or were killed by the impact.

1956 - The Andrea Doria sank in dense fog near Nantucket Lightship, MA. The ship was rammed by the Swedish-American liner, Stockholm, forty-five miles off the coast of Massachusetts. Fifty-two persons drowned, or were killed by the impact. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1986 - Tremendous hailstones pounded parts of South Dakota damaging crops, buildings and vehicles. Hail piled two feet deep at Black Hawk and northern Rapid City. Hail an inch and a quarter in diameter fell for 85 minutes near Miller and Huron, piling up to depths of two feet. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Sixteen cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Beckley, WV, equalled their all-time record high of 91 degrees, established just the previous day. It marked their fourth day in a row of 90 degree heat, after hitting 90 degrees just twice in the previous 25 years of records. The water temperature of Lake Erie at Buffalo, NY, reached 79 degrees, the warmest reading in 52 years of records. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from central Kansas to western Kentucky and southern Illinois during the day. Thunderstorms produced tennis ball size hail at Union, MO, and winds gusts to 65 mph at Sedalia, MO. Five cities in Washington and Oregon reported record high temperatures for the date. Medford, OR, hit 107 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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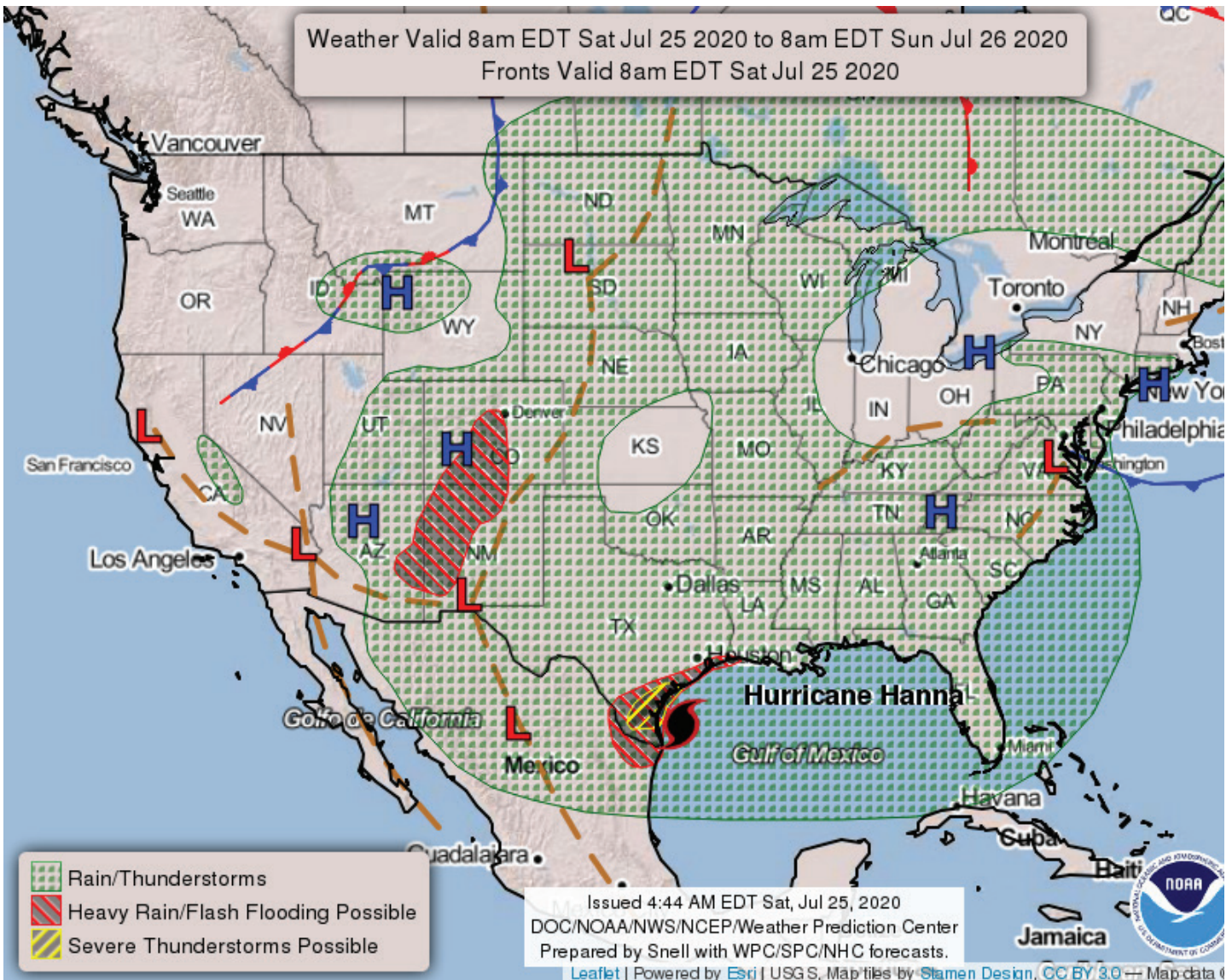
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 94 °F at 4:45 PM
Low Temp: 76 °F at 6:15 AM
Wind: 28 mph at 1:29 AM
Precip: .00 (.64 this morning)

Today's Info

Record High: 111° in 1931
Record Low: 44° in 1911
Average High: 84°F
Average Low: 59°F
Average Precip in July.: 2.43
Precip to date in July.: 0.69
Average Precip to date: 13.27
Precip Year to Date: 9.01
Sunset Tonight: 9:09 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:12 a.m.



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HUMILITY

A visitor to a monastery asked the monk who greeted him the main ministry of his order.

Offering the visitor a gracious smile, he said, "Well, when it comes to learning and teaching, we cannot compare to the Jesuits. When it comes to good works, we certainly cannot match the Franciscans. And, when it comes to preaching, we are far below the Dominicans. But when it comes to humility, we are at the top of the list."

The apostle Peter is well known for his boldness for his Lord. Yet he once wrote, "You young men...serve each other with humility, for God sets Himself against the proud, but He shows favor to the humble."

We often think that position and status are the marks of greatness. And, it is reasonable to want recognition and to be rewarded for the things that we accomplish. But here, Peter reminds us of a crucial fact: in the final analysis, we must remember that God's recognition and rewards, His blessings and approval, count more than all of the human praise we may ever get.

In His own time, God will honor and bless us for what we do to honor and bless Him. It is not the things that we do to draw attention to ourselves that matter to God. It is what we do to direct others to recognize His love that reflects His goodness and grace, mercy and salvation, and the hope that we have in and through Him. In the final analysis, we must make Him known.

Prayer: Lord, let us be alert for every opportunity to let others know that You are the "main attraction" in our lives. May what we do point others to Christ, our Savior. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today : So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. 1 Peter 5:6

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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

Ballooning Association soars in Sioux Falls

By ABIGAIL DOLLINS Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Ron Oppold casts a long silhouette against a technicolor backdrop. Oppold, a hot air balloon pilot, is focused on the task at hand: filling up his 90,000-cubic-foot balloon with air.

Nearly 10 years ago, Oppold entered the hot air balloon world through the invite of a friend. He began as a crew member, whose duties included holding onto the mouth of the balloon as the envelope filled with hot air. He was hooked. It wasn't just about the balloons; it was about the people he met.

"The thing that drew me to it besides the love of watching things float in the air and land, was the camaraderie and being around the crew," Oppold told the Argus Leader.

He later on earned his commercial pilot license and is one of several members of the Sioux Falls Ballooning Association.

The association, started in 1982, came out of a desire to connect with others in the hot air balloon world, according to founding member Orvin Oliver.

"We're a very connected association," Oliver said. "And when someone is thinking about flying, we enjoy flying in groups and together."

The modernized hot air balloon holds a unique significance to the association, because it was invented by Raven Industries in 1960 in Sioux Falls.

Crowds gather as pilots and their crews prepare to take off from Tuthill Park. Kids stare with excitement as one by one balloons lift from the ground and rise above the trees. Ron Oppold and his passengers disappear beyond the horizon.

"It's something fun to share with the passengers," he said. "It's almost indescribable."

Fans reflect on memories of Rapid City's Fitzgerald Stadium

By RICHARD ANDERSON Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — When you look around historic Floyd Fitzgerald Stadium at a Rapid City Post 22 American Legion baseball game, you don't just see people watching.

You see a community.

Fitzgerald Stadium, first home for the Basin League Rapid City Chiefs from 1957-1973 and a few years later home to the Post 22 Hardhats, will be out with the old and in with the new after the championship game on July 19 of the Veteran's Classic baseball tournament.

Construction begins July 20 on the \$5 million renovation project that is expected to be ready for the 2021 American Legion season.

Built in 1957 to be the new home of the Chiefs, the stadium was first named Sioux Park Stadium and was renamed Floyd Fitzgerald Stadium in the late 1970s for a longtime Rapid City businessman who later helped form Black Hills Sports, Inc. and served as president of the organization for eight years.

Fitzgerald was also instrumental in helping repair the stadium after it was damaged in the 1972 Rapid City flood.

Under the guidance of Hall of Fame coach Dave Ploof, Post 22 and Fitzgerald Stadium became one of the top Legion baseball stadiums in the region, if not the country. The stadium hosted four American Legion World Series tournaments from 1979 to 2005.

The Hardhats have played in eight American Legion World Series, winning the 1993 national title.

To this day, on a good night anywhere from 500 to 2,000 fans scatter around the large stadium to watch the Hardhats. Some of those fans have been coming since the early days of Sioux Park Stadium.

Dick Stone played for Post 22 in 1957-58 as a left fielder. He didn't play on this field then, but got to practice with some with the Rapid City Chiefs.

"I've been watching ever since," said Stone, who later became president of Black Hills Sports, Inc.

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"When we had the World Series here it was different and exciting," Stone told the Rapid City Journal. "We had people lined up by the streets wanting to get in. It was just a fun experience."

Stone said that some of his best experiences at Fitzgerald Stadium were just the games Post 22 won and the players he was able to see.

"Baseball is my favorite sport, far and away. Even two years ago (at the Firecracker), I'd come out here at 10 in the morning and stay until 10 at night," he said. "Now that I'm a little older, I don't come for quite as long. I just enjoy watching, I enjoy watching the kids. Good plays, bad plays, good pitching, bad pitching. All of it."

Stone, whose son, Randy Stone, played for the Hardhats for five seasons, said he will miss the old Fitzgerald Stadium.

"I've been through a lot here," he said.

Craig Ericks started coming to Fitzgerald Stadium in 1980 when he moved over to the west side of Rapid City. He could hear the crowds from his house and he could see the lights from his front yard. He and a neighbor would come over for a game or two on a summer evening just to enjoy the baseball atmosphere.

A couple of years later his nephew came to town in the Air Force, whose son played for the Bullets (Post 22 junior varsity team). They came on a regular basis when he was playing and Ericks has been hooked ever since.

"I've met a lot of neat people here, including all of these people (in the first-base side green shelter)," he said. "It's just a good time to talk to other people and watch baseball."

Ericks calls Fitzgerald Stadium the most nostalgic stadium he has ever been at.

"It is a beautiful setting," he said. "That background is like nothing anywhere else. There's a lot of history here. In our travels around the region and the state, in other stadiums, I know what a modern, new stadium looks like. They are beautiful too. There will be times I will be missing this, but I am looking forward to the new stadium."

Maybe Ericks' best memory here was the World Series Post 22 hosted after the Hardhats rallied back in Mandan, North Dakota, to qualify to play in it.

"We came back to play in Rapid City, to play in our own World Series that we were hosting," he said. "I think that has only happened one other time in history, before the World Series became permanent, that the host team played in its own tournament."

Landis Matson said it feels like forever since he has been coming to Fitzgerald Stadium, which was in 1957 to see the Chiefs "as a pup," shagging foul balls, like the current group of youngsters do now.

He looks forward to the Firecracker Tournament every year.

"This year, of course, with COVID-19, it wasn't like it should have been, but I remember the good teams coming in here, like Las Vegas. They appreciated us and we appreciated them for being here," he said.

When Matson first saw the artist renderings of the new Fitzgerald, he was impressed. He still is, but getting closer to the end of the old stadium, he's getting a little more nostalgic.

"I'm now thinking that I won't see this field anymore. I'm thinking, what is going to happen here?" he said. "It's going to be different, but I'll get used to that. It will be nice, a top-rated stadium. It will be good."

Looking around, Matson sees a lot of true baseball fans scattered around the stadium. And they see — or hear him — as well.

"If anybody knows me at the ballpark, they know my relationship with the umpires," he said with a laugh.

Steve Ringo bought his first Post 22 season pass in 1988 even though he didn't live here. His wife at the time was from Rapid City and they were here to visit for a couple of weeks when the Firecracker was going on. He has been a season-ticket holder ever since.

"I just fit right in," he said.

Fitzgerald Stadium is baseball, Ringo adds.

"I grew up in Omaha. When I first came to a game here, and before cell phones, I was on a pay phone telling somebody, 'I've figured out why they are always good.' I go, 'You should see this stadium,'" he said. "This would be the Rosenblatt Stadium (the former home of the College World Series) for us in Omaha. I look at this field, and I see 800 or 900 people watching a regular ballgame. It's all baseball."

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Ringo said he was 60-40 on renovating the stadium. The biggest thing he will miss is sitting right where he and his Fitzgerald cronies were Thursday night and most nights – under the green shelter on the first base side.

"This is the most knowledgeable group right here. We talk a lot of crap, but these guys know baseball history like you wouldn't believe," he said. "This stadium is like our own little community. You'll see the same people sitting with each other that I have seen in the last 30, 35 years. And they are sitting in the same seats."

Richard Hatzenbuehler calls himself a transplant from Mandan. He knew of Post 22 when he lived in Mandan, and he knew the Hardhats were a regional powerhouse, so he couldn't wait to watch them play when they came up to play.

It was a no-brainer for him to continue to watch them when he moved to Rapid City in 1984, although he said he didn't realize just how big of a baseball town Rapid City was until then.

"I was really impressed," Hatzenbuehler said. "I loved looking down on the field watching the games."

With three children — a boy and two girls — who joined the Harney Little League, he said when he really started following Post 22 when a couple Harney Little Leaguers that he watched moved up to the Hardhats.

"When they were national champions, two of them played at Harney (Brian Ogle and Nate Barnes) the same time my son was playing," Hatzenbuehler said. "When they came to Post 22, I've been here ever since. I hardly ever miss a game."

Chuck McCain's first visit to Fitzgerald Stadium was in 1957 watching the Rapid City Chiefs. His biggest memory from that time was, as an 8-year-old, standing next to 6-foot-7 slugger Frank Howard, who went on to have a good career with the Washington Senators and three other teams.

"I was probably three feet high and he looked like one of these light towers," McCain said. "I grew up about a mile north of here, so my dad brought me down to a lot of Chiefs games."

As an adult, McCain moved to Helena, Mont., but he followed Post 22 the best that he could. When he returned to Rapid City in 2000, he came back to Fitzgerald and has been a mainstay and season ticket holder since.

McCain said he has been drawn to Fitzgerald Stadium, partly because he grew up close by, and because of the program.

"I have mixed emotions about the renovations that are coming, but I realize they are necessary," he said. "I guess it is old, kind of like I am. I'll hate to see it go, but the memories will still be here. Baseball is always good no matter where you are at."

McCain, who retired eight years ago, used to take time off of work just to spend all day at Fitzgerald Stadium for the Firecracker. He said he recently talked to a mother of one of the Rocky Mountain Lobos (Fort Collins, Colorado) players, who said she was going to have to figure out a reason to come back to Rapid City next summer and see the new stadium, although her sons would be finished with American Legion baseball.

"She said, 'This is one of our favorite trips, if not the favorite trip that we take,'" McCain said. "I think there is a similar feeling for most of the teams that come here for the Firecracker. You want to come here, and you want to play here."

John Wheeler is celebrating his 50th year of coming to Fitzgerald Stadium. On a recent Thursday, he was wearing a T-shirt of a group picture of the 1996 Post 22 team that his son, Luke Wheeler, played on.

Wheeler moved here from Sioux Falls, and he said it was well known that Rapid City had the best baseball program back then. He started going to games right away.

"I just loved this stadium," he said. "I hate to see it torn down, but I guess it served its purpose, and it is time for a new one."

Because he has been coming to Fitzgerald Stadium for 50 years, Wheeler said it is like a second home.

"There's a lot of people here that you don't see anywhere else until baseball season," he said.

Al Sharp has been a Post 22 fan for about 33 years, and he has been sitting in the same seat in front of the press box for many of those years.

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"I've sat here for a long time," Sharp said with a big laugh.

Like most longtime fans, Sharp said he will miss the old stadium, but he understands why there is the need for a new one.

"We have to do things," he said. "I'm in my early 80s and I would miss it if they ever left. But I know I am coming to where I belong."

Regardless of who was to play in the championship game that Sunday, Rapid City baseball fans will celebrate with memories of the old Floyd Fitzgerald Stadium and will count the days until the new Fitzgerald Stadium opens in the spring of 2021 to make new memories.

"This is the home field. This is where I like to be," McCain said.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

08-33-39-54-58, Mega Ball: 17, Megaplier: 3

(eight, thirty-three, thirty-nine, fifty-four, fifty-eight; Mega Ball: seventeen; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$124 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$117 million

South Dakota man charged in 1974 slaying in Minnesota

WILLMAR, Minn. (AP) — A man who was questioned in 1974 about the killing of a woman who was stabbed 38 times in her western Minnesota home has now been charged with murder.

Algene Vossen was questioned shortly after the body of 74-year-old Mae Herman was discovered by her sister in Willmar on Jan. 27, 1974. But it was only after advances in DNA testing and another look at the case that the 79-year-old Vossen was arrested Thursday in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where he currently lives.

He was being held in the Minnehaha County Jail in South Dakota pending extradition to Kandiyohi County, where he has been charged with second-degree murder.

Investigators interviewed Vossen in February 1974, but he denied knowing anything about the slaying other than what others told him or what he heard on the radio or read in the newspaper, according to a criminal complaint. Vossen did admit to window peeping on two occasions, including once in Willmar, and said he selected the houses at random.

Detectives went to Vossen's Sioux Falls home with a search warrant to collect his DNA this month. Vossen again denied knowing Herman and said he wasn't at her house before she was killed because he was at the American Legion, according to the complaint.

He told the detectives he wasn't concerned about the DNA collection because he wasn't involved in the slaying, the complaint said.

The Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension completed a lab report on the DNA July 17 matching it to blood found on Herman's sweater, according to the complaint.

South Dakota reports 57 COVID-19 cases, one death

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials reported 57 cases of COVID-19 on Friday as the number of daily cases remained constant over the past two weeks.

A woman from Pennington County died after contracting COVID-19, according to data from the Department of Health. She was in her 50s.

The state has recorded a total of 8,200 cases of the coronavirus, but over 88% of them have recovered. A total of 122 people have died.

The number of people currently hospitalized with COVID-19 decreased to 45, while the number of active

infections increased slightly to 817.

Monument Health, the largest health care provider in the western part of the state, announced that it will allow limited visitors in its hospitals beginning on Monday. The hospitals are limiting the number of visitors allowed and requiring them to wear masks.

"We recognize the emotional and medical value of having someone at your bedside when you're ill, but it's vital that we keep COVID-19 out of our hospitals and other facilities," said Dr. Brad Archer, the Chief Medical Officer at Monument Health.

South Dakota federal coronavirus funds go to law enforcement

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — As South Dakota looks to use \$1.25 billion in federal coronavirus relief funds, one of the largest expenditures has been for law enforcement.

The money sent by Congress as part of a \$2.2 trillion stimulus was a major windfall for South Dakota, a state that prides itself on low taxes and a minimal state budget. Its share is equivalent to roughly a quarter of the state budget. But the funds came with the stipulation that they be used in addressing the pandemic and anything unused would be returned at the end of the year. Gov. Kristi Noem's administration opted to use the money to pay salaries for law enforcement officers.

That decision drew questions this week from legislators on a committee auditing the budget who wondered what portion of police officers' salaries should be justified as addressing the pandemic.

The entire salary of police officers can be paid from those funds, according to Liza Clark, the commissioner of the Bureau of Finance and Management. The U.S. Treasury's guidance is that public safety and public health officials are substantially dedicated to addressing COVID-19, she told lawmakers.

The designation for law enforcement will make up a substantial amount of the money spent from the coronavirus relief fund. The state has spent about \$75 million of the federal funds so far. Most of that — \$45.6 million — has gone to paying unemployment benefits. But the Department of Public Safety has received more funding than any other state agency besides the Department of Health and the Board of Regents.

So far, the state has used \$4.5 million to pay salaries and benefits in the Department of Public Safety, which mostly went to highway patrol officers. The state is also making \$200 million available to city and county governments, and they can pay police officers' salaries from the fund. Most of those grants have not been processed yet.

But the Legislature's auditor Bob Christianson warned lawmakers that it is not clear what exactly can be claimed under the federal relief fund. He cautioned against "aggressive" claims and pointed out that the Treasury has advised that the money can only cover salaries for employees "substantially dedicated towards COVID."

"It's caused a lot of concern by the auditors on whether or not this is what was intended," he said.

Clark countered that warning, saying that the state is so confident that police officers are covered under the federal funding that it is working with the Treasury to pay for salaries for court service officers, prison guards and parole officers.

While Congress stipulated that states cannot pay for expenses that were a part of a previously approved budget, Treasury guidance on using the funding appears to support the administration's interpretation.

South Dakota's approach helped the state end the fiscal year on June 30 with a \$19 million surplus — an unexpected development amid the economic downturn from the pandemic. The state was able to cover previously-budgeted salaries with the federal money.

Susan Wismer, a Democrat from Britton, said she was confident in Clark's judgment, but said it was clear that "COVID money is covering our government operations."

She said the state should be using the money to do as much coronavirus testing as possible, pointing out that South Dakota's rate of testing has lagged behind many neighboring states.

Speaker Steve Haugaard, a Sioux Falls Republican, said that paying for the police was a "stretch" of what Congress intended the money to be used for. He hoped lawmakers would come up with a way to

help struggling businesses with the money, but said that anything unnecessary should be sent back to the federal government.

Supreme Court says teen's sentence for murder not harsh

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Supreme Court has ruled a 90-year prison sentence for a teen who killed a Rapid City convenience store clerk doesn't violate his constitutional rights.

Carlos Quevedo argued his sentence for second-degree murder in the 2017 death of Kasie Lord was disproportionately harsh for a 17-year-old.

Quevedo, now 20, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder for stabbing Lord 38 times after she tried to stop him and his friend from stealing beer from the store.

South Dakota law says the sentence for juveniles convicted of homicide may be a "term of years" and not life in prison without the possibility of parole.

The Supreme Court unanimously decided this week the sentence did not violate the Eighth Amendment's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment.

Quevedo is eligible for parole at the age of 62, the Argus Leader reported. Justice Mark Salter noted in the opinion that it is within Quevedo's life expectancy.

"After considering the gravity of the offense and assessing the relative harshness of Quevedo's sentence, we conclude that he cannot meet the initial requirement to show that his sentence is grossly disproportionate to his crime," Salter wrote.

Trump talks up his rule-cutting, but courts saying otherwise

By KEVIN FREKING and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is positioning himself as a champion regulation-cutter in the leadup to the Nov. 3 election, but in between his showy red-tape-cutting events, his deregulatory agenda is taking a beating in the courts.

One day, he's hailing a massive rollback to one of the nation's most important environmental laws, which he hopes will speed up gas pipelines and all kinds of other big projects. Another, he's holding forth between two pickup trucks being used as props on the South Lawn of the White House — a blue one piled with weights identified as government regulations and a red one, of course, that has been unburdened.

"No other administration has done anywhere near," Trump declared.

But there's a sharp disconnect between the president's muscular rhetoric and the many courtroom battles he's lost.

Trump's deregulatory victories have been shrinking in number as courts uphold many of the lawsuits filed by states, environmental groups and others in response to his administration's sometimes hastily engineered rollbacks.

Just hours before Trump's South Lawn event, for example, a federal judge reinstated an Obama-era rule that required oil and gas companies operating on public lands to take reasonable measures to stop climate-damaging methane emissions.

The judge described the Trump administration's legal groundwork to justify the rollback as "wholly inadequate" and "backwards." "An agency cannot flip-flop regulations on the whims of each new administration," she wrote.

The defeat was the administration's third major loss in federal courts in just one week.

"Those were three really huge major decisions all across the span ... where the Trump administration was rebuked across the board," said Vickie Patton, general counsel of the Environmental Defense Fund, who had a role in all three cases.

Bethany Davis Noll, director of New York University's Institute for Policy Integrity, estimates the administration has emerged victorious in 15 percent of the regulatory lawsuits. Previous administrations generally won about 70 percent, she said.

To be sure, the president has had a few wins, and many important cases are not yet resolved.

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Among the administration's victories: It scrapped an Obama-era regulation that imposed tougher restrictions on hydraulic "fracking" operations. Trump also signed 15 resolutions of disapproval that passed a Republican-led Congress, overturning an array of rules issued by federal agencies in the final months of Barack Obama's presidency.

But where Trump has really made his mark is throttling back new regulations, said Cary Coglianese, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School and director of the Penn Program on Regulation.

"There's just been much less new regulation of great consequence during the last three and a half years," Coglianese said.

With respect to peeling back existing regulations, Coglianese finds Trump efforts to be limited and mostly aimed at undoing the work of his predecessor. That includes throwing out Obama's legacy efforts to moderate climate change by mandating far more fuel-efficient vehicles and setting the first limits on carbon pollution from U.S. power plants.

Other administration efforts would greatly weaken the scope of two laws that have served as the foundation for a half-century of public health and environmental regulation, removing federal protections for millions of miles of waterways and wetlands and reining in environmental reviews and public input for major projects.

Among modern-day presidents, Coglianese said, Democrat Jimmy Carter was probably the most impactful, deregulating the airline, trucking and railroad industries. Democrat Bill Clinton systematically got rid of outdated regulations through a reinventing government initiative.

With Trump, "there's a lot more smoke-and-mirrors to the deregulatory picture than the administration paints," Coglianese said. "It's certainly not at all the driver of economic growth during the pre-COVID period of the administration and it's certainly not enough to take us out of the economic troubles we find ourselves in."

The president early in his administration directed agencies to scrap two regulations for every new one they create. The White House said this month that it has taken seven deregulatory actions for every significant new rule.

But even the White House's own records reflect that many of those rule-cutting measures were minor. The ratio falls to 2 to 1 over the past two years when only significant rules are considered.

The president's pose between the two pickups was designed as a reminder to supporters — not as an overture to win over new ones — that if you distrust regulations, Trump is still your guy, said Daniel Bosch, who tracks regulatory policy at the conservative American Action Forum.

"Those folks that are driven and motivated by deregulation know that the president is committed to that," Bosch said.

Trump also sees the regulatory issue as a chance to tie Vice President Joe Biden to the progressive wing of the Democratic Party. He argues that Biden's support for the Paris climate accord and other policies would lead to higher energy bills and job cuts.

If he wins, Biden pledges to do to Trump's regulatory record what Trump did to Obama's: obliterate it.

"We're not just going to tinker around the edges," Biden said in recent weeks. He pledged to "reverse Trump's rollbacks of ... public health and environmental rules and then forge a path to greater ambition."

Trump's regulatory legacy will be greatly shaped in coming months by court rulings in lawsuits challenging some of his most potentially consequential rollbacks.

"He needs to win reelection in order to defend those rules in court, and even then I think it's going to be a longshot to win some of those," Noll said.

Both sides know the end game for many of the rollbacks may be in the Supreme Court — and Trump may have a chance to name more justices to the court if he wins a second term.

If it comes to that, said Patton, the environmental group lawyer, then regulatory litigation could be "generation-defining."

Knickmeyer reported from Oklahoma City. Will Weissert contributed from Washington.

French infections rise, Spain cracks down on nightclubs

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France's coronavirus infection rate crept higher Saturday and Spain cracked down on nightlife but German authorities were confident enough to send a cruise ship out to sea with 1,200 passengers for a weekend test of how the cruise industry can begin to resume.

French health authorities said the closely watched "R" gauge is now up to 1.3, suggesting that infected people are contaminating 1.3 other people on average. That means the virus still has enough victims to keep on going instead of petering out.

France's daily new infections are also rising — up to 1,130 on Friday. Health authorities warned that the country is going backward in its battle against the pandemic, which has already killed at least 30,195 people in the country and that infection indicators now resemble those seen in May, when France was coming out of its strict two-month lockdown.

"We have thus erased much of the progress that we'd achieved in the first weeks of lockdown-easing," health authorities said, adding that the French appear to be letting down their guard during their summer vacations and those testing positive are making less of an effort to self-isolate.

They appealed for a return to "collective discipline," asking people to work from home and get tested if they have any suspicions of infection.

In Spain, Catalonia became the latest region to crack down on nightlife, trying to tamp down on new infection clusters. The wealthy northeast region home to Barcelona ordered all nightclubs to close for 15 days and put a midnight curfew on bars in the greater Barcelona area and other towns around Lleida that have become contagion hot zones.

Spain has reported over 900 new daily infections for the last two days as authorities warn that the country that lost over 28,000 lives before getting its outbreak under control could be facing the start of a second major outbreak.

Despite the concerns, some European countries kept up their gradual reopenings Saturday.

Swimming pools and gyms in England were back in business as public health officials extolled the benefits of exercise in fighting COVID-19. Britain announced a fresh attack on obesity as part of the move, hoping that a fitter nation might be able to minimize the impact of future waves of the virus.

A German cruise ship set sail for the first time since the industry was shut down. "Mein Schiff 2" sailed from the port of Hamburg toward Norway on Friday night, and passengers will spend the weekend at sea with no land stops before returning to Germany on Monday. The ship had only 1,200 people on board compared with its normal 2,900 capacity.

But with many other cruise companies now looking toward trips in 2021, interest was sure to be high in how Germany, which has been praised for its handling of the pandemic, can kick off the struggling cruise industry.

In other parts of the world, the pandemic appeared to have the upper hand.

India, which has the world's third-highest infections behind the United States and Brazil, reported its death toll rose by 740 to 30,601. It saw a surge of more than 49,000 new cases, raising its total to over 1.2 million. The Home Ministry issued an advisory calling for Independence Day celebrations on Aug. 15 to avoid large gatherings.

South Africa, Africa's hardest-hit country, reported more than 13,000 new cases, raising its total to over 408,000.

South Korea on Saturday reported more than 100 new coronavirus cases for the first time in four months. The 113 new cases included 36 workers returning from Iraq and 32 crew members of a Russian freighter.

Worldwide, more than 15.7 million infections and over 640,000 deaths have been reported, according to data compiled from government announcements by Johns Hopkins University. Experts say all those figures understate the true toll of the pandemic, due to limited testing and other issues.

In the United States, which has the world's worst outbreak, Texas, which has been struggling with the

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virus, braced for the arrival of Hurricane Hanna, which could make everything more difficult. The storm is heading for Nueces County, one of the state's coronavirus hotspots.

In Mississippi, Gov. Tate Reeves tightened controls on bars to protect "young, drunk, careless folks." Bars already were limited to operating at 50% capacity. Now patrons will have to sit down to order alcohol and sales stop at 11 p.m.

New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell ordered bars closed and banned restaurants from selling alcoholic drinks to take away. That came after more than 2,000 new cases were reported for the surrounding state of Louisiana, including 103 in New Orleans.

The United States has suffered more than 145,000 deaths and has over 4.1 million confirmed cases.

In Australia, Premier Daniel Andrews of the southern state of Victoria announced five deaths and 357 new cases. Victoria, where the death toll has risen to 61, earlier closed its border with neighboring New South Wales.

In Yemen, 97 medical workers have died of the virus, a serious blow to a country with few doctors that is in the midst of a 5-year-old war, the humanitarian group MedGlobal said in a report.

The "overwhelming death toll" will have "immense short-term and long-term health effects," said the report's lead author, Kathleen Fallon.

AP journalists around the world contributed to this report.

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

In a future bomber force, old and ugly beats new and snazzy

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WHITEMAN AIR FORCE BASE, Mo. (AP) — In the topsy-turvy world of U.S. strategic bombers, older and uglier sometimes beats newer and snazzier.

As the Air Force charts a bomber future in line with the Pentagon's new focus on potential war with China or Russia, the youngest and flashiest — the stealthy B-2, costing a hair-raising \$2 billion each — is to be retired first. The oldest and stodgiest — the Vietnam-era B-52 — will go last. It could still be flying when it is 100 years old.

This might seem to defy logic, but the elite group of men and women who have flown the bat-winged B-2 Spirit accept the reasons for phasing it out when a next-generation bomber comes on line.

"In my mind, it actually does make sense to have the B-2 as an eventual retirement candidate," says John Avery, who flew the B-2 for 14 years from Whiteman Air Force Base in western Missouri. He and his wife, Jennifer, were the first married couple to serve as B-2 pilots; she was the first woman to fly it in combat.

The Air Force sees it as a matter of money, numbers and strategy.

The Air Force expects to spend at least \$55 billion to field an all-new, nuclear-capable bomber for the future, the B-21 Raider, at the same time the Pentagon will be spending hundreds of billions of dollars to replace all of the other major elements of the nation's nuclear weapons arsenal. The Air Force also is spending heavily on new fighters and refueling aircraft, and like the rest of the military it foresees tighter defense budgets ahead.

The B-2's viability suffers from the fact that only 21 were built, of which 20 remain. That leaves little slack in the supply chain for unique spare parts. It is thus comparatively expensive to maintain and to fly. It also is seen as increasingly vulnerable against air defenses of emerging war threats like China.

Then there is the fact that the B-52, which entered service in the mid-1950s and is known to crews as the Big Ugly Fat Fellow, keeps finding ways to stay relevant. It is equipped to drop or launch the widest array of weapons in the entire Air Force inventory. The plane is so valuable that the Air Force twice in recent years has brought a B-52 back from the grave — taking long-retired planes from a desert "boneyard" in

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Arizona and restoring them to active service.

Strategic bombers have a storied place in U.S. military history, from the early days of the former Strategic Air Command when the only way America and the former Soviet Union could launch nuclear weapons at each other was by air, to the B-52's carpet bombing missions in Vietnam.

Developed in secrecy in the 1980s, the B-2 was rolled out as a revolutionary weapon — the first long-range bomber built with stealth, or radar-evading, technology designed to defeat the best Soviet air defenses.

By the time the first B-2 was delivered to the Air Force in 1993, however, the Soviet Union had disintegrated and the Cold War had ended. The plane made its combat debut in the 1999 Kosovo war. It flew a limited number of combat sorties over Iraq and Afghanistan and has launched only five combat sorties since 2011, all in Libya.

The last was a 2017 strike notable for the fact that it pitted the world's most expensive and exotic bomber against a flimsy camp of Islamic State group militants.

"It has proved its worth in the fight, over time," says Col. Jeffrey Schreiner, who has flown the B-2 for 19 years and is commander of the 509th Bomb Wing at Whiteman, which flies and maintains the full fleet.

But after two decades of fighting small wars and insurgencies, the Pentagon is shifting its main focus to what it calls "great power competition" with a rising China and a resurgent Russia, in an era of stiffer air defenses that expose B-2 vulnerabilities.

Thus the Pentagon's commitment to the bomber of the future — the B-21 Raider. The Air Force has committed to buying at least 100 of them. The plane is being developed in secrecy to be a do-it-all strategic bomber. A prototype is being built now, but the first flight is not considered likely before 2022.

Bombers are legend, but their results are sometimes regretted. A B-2 bomber scarred U.S.-China relations in 1999 when it bombed Beijing's embassy in the Serbian capital of Belgrade, killing three people. China denounced the attack as a "barbaric act," while the U.S. insisted it was a grievous error.

The Air Force had planned to keep its B-2s flying until 2058 but will instead retire them as the B-21 Raider arrives in this decade. Also retiring early will be the B-1B Lancer, which is the only one of the three bomber types that is no longer nuclear-capable. The Air Force proposes to eliminate 17 of its 62 Lancers in the coming year.

The B-52, however, will fly on. It is so old that it made a mark on American pop culture more than half a century ago. It lent its name to a 1960s beehive hairstyle that resembled the plane's nosecone, and the plane featured prominently in Stanley Kubrick's 1964 black comedy, "Dr. Strangelove."

More than once, the B-52 seemed destined to go out of style.

"We're talking about a plane that ceased production in 1962 based on a design that was formulated in the late 1940s," says Loren Thompson, a defense analyst at the Lexington Institute, a Washington think-tank.

Rather than retire it, the Air Force is planning to equip the Boeing behemoth with new engines, new radar technology and other upgrades to keep it flying into the 2050s. It will be a "stand off" platform from which to launch cruise missiles and other weapons from beyond the reach of hostile air defenses.

In Thompson's view, the Air Force is making a simple calculation: The B-52 costs far less to operate and maintain than the newer but finickier B-2.

"They decided the B-52 was good enough," he says.

Massive protest against governor's arrest challenges Kremlin

By YULIA KHOROVENKOVA and VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV undefined

KHABAROVSK, Russia (AP) — Tens of thousands of people marched Saturday across Russia's Far East city of Khabarovsk on the border with China to protest the arrest of the regional governor on murder charges, continuing a two-week wave of protests that has challenged the Kremlin.

Sergei Furgal has been in a Moscow jail since his arrest on July 9, and Russian President Vladimir Putin has named an acting successor. Protesters in Khabarovsk see the charges against Furgal as unsubstantiated and demand that he stand trial at home.

"People are offended," said protester Dmitry Kachalin. "I think people take to the streets because their

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vote in the 2018 election was taken away.”

Unlike Moscow, where police usually move quickly to disperse unsanctioned opposition protests, authorities haven't interfered with the unauthorized demonstrations in Khabarovsk, apparently expecting them to fizzle out in the city 3,800 miles (6,100 kilometers) east of the Russian capital.

But daily protests, peaking at weekends, have gone on for two weeks, reflecting anger against what residents see as Moscow's disrespect of their choice for governor and simmering discontent with Putin's rule. Local officials' attempts to discourage people from joining the demonstrations by warning about the risk of coronavirus infection have been unsuccessful.

“We had enough,” said protester Anastasia Schegorina. “We elected the governor and we want to be heard and decide ourselves what to do with him. Bring him here, and a fair and open trial will decide whether to convict him or not.”

Protesters chanted “Freedom!” and “Russia, wake up!” and carried placards voicing support for Furgal and denouncing Putin.

Demonstrations were also held in other cities of the Far East, and police didn't intervene. But in Moscow, police briefly detained several dozen activists who attempted to stage pickets in support of Furgal and other detainees protested the city's ban on rallies due to the pandemic.

Authorities suspect Furgal of involvement in several murders of businessmen in 2004 and 2005. He has denied the charges, which date to his time as a businessman with interests focusing on timber and metals.

A lawmaker on the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party ticket, Furgal won the 2018 gubernatorial election even though he had refrained from campaigning and publicly supported his Kremlin-backed rival.

His victory was a humiliating setback to the main Kremlin party, United Russia, which also lost its control over the regional legislature. During his time in office, Furgal earned a reputation as a “people's governor,” cutting his own salary, ordering the sale of an expensive yacht that the previous administration had bought and offering new benefits to residents.

“We want to protect Furgal,” said Evgenia Selina, who joined Saturday's protest. “If we hadn't elected him, he would have been living quietly with his family and working at the State Duma. He would have had a normal life.”

Mikhail Degtyaryov, a federal lawmaker whom Putin named Monday to succeed Furgal, is also a member of the Liberal-Democratic Party — a choice that was apparently intended to assuage local anger. If that was the plan, it hasn't worked.

Degtyaryov, who has refrained from facing the protesters, left the city on Saturday for an inspection trip across the region.

Isachenkov reported from Moscow.

Hanna becomes hurricane as it heads toward virus-weary Texas

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Tropical Storm Hanna was upgraded to a hurricane Saturday, moving toward the Texas coast and threatening to bring heavy rain, storm surge and possible tornadoes to a part of the country trying to cope with a surge in coronavirus cases.

The storm, which is the first hurricane of the 2020 Atlantic hurricane season, was expected to make landfall Saturday afternoon or evening south of Corpus Christi, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said Saturday morning. It had maximum sustained winds of 75 mph (120 kph) and was centered about 100 miles (160 kilometers) east-southeast of Corpus Christi and was moving west at 9 mph (15 kph).

Many parts of Texas, including the area where Hanna is expected to come ashore, have been dealing with a spike in coronavirus cases in recent weeks, but local officials said they were prepared for whatever the storm may bring.

“And don't feel like since we've been fighting COVID for five months, that we're out of energy or we're out of gas. We're not,” Corpus Christi Mayor Joe McComb said Friday. “We can do these two things together

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and we're going to win both of them."

Corpus Christi is in Nueces County, where health officials made headlines when they revealed that 60 infants tested positive for COVID-19 from July 1 to July 16.

Farther south in Cameron County, which borders Mexico, more than 300 confirmed new cases have been reported almost daily for the past two weeks, according to state health figures. The past week has also been the county's deadliest of the pandemic.

Cameron County Judge Eddie Treviño, the county's top elected official, said he was awaiting word Friday of whether hotels would be used to house recovering COVID-19 patients in order to free up hospital beds.

"If there's any benefit to be gained from this, it's that people have to stay at home for a weekend," Treviño said.

Officials reminded residents to wear masks if they needed to get supplies before the storm arrives or if they have to shelter with neighbors because of flooding.

The main hazard from Hanna was expected to be flash flooding, Chris Birchfield, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Brownsville, said Friday. Forecasters said Hanna could bring 6 to 12 inches (15 to 30 centimeters) of rain through Sunday night — with isolated totals of 18 inches (46 centimeters) — in addition to coastal swells that could cause life-threatening surf and rip current conditions.

Coastal states scrambled this spring to adjust emergency hurricane plans to account for the virus, and Hanna loomed as the first big test.

South Texas officials' plans for any possible rescues, shelters and monitoring of the storm will have the pandemic in mind. Gov. Greg Abbott said various resources to respond to the storm were on standby across the state, including search-and-rescue teams and aircraft.

Treviño said shelters would keep families socially distanced if any need to evacuate their homes.

In the Mexican city of Matamoros, located across the border from Brownsville, volunteers worried whether the tropical storm would affect a makeshift migrant camp near the Rio Grande where about 1,300 asylum seekers, including newborn babies and elderly residents, are waiting under the U.S. immigration policy informally known as "Remain in Mexico."

Erin Hughes, a volunteer at the camp who is a civil engineer from Philadelphia, said tropical storms pose a devastating threat since the camp is located on a floodplain, and that she and others were monitoring the river's water level.

As of Saturday morning, there was a storm surge warning in effect for a stretch of coast south of Corpus Christi from Baffin Bay to Port Mansfield. Storm surge up to 5 feet (1.5 meters) was forecast for that area. People were advised to protect life and property from high water.

Tornadoes were also possible Saturday for parts of the lower to middle Texas coastal plain, forecasters said Friday. A hurricane warning remained in effect for Port Mansfield to Mesquite Bay, which is north of Corpus Christi, and a tropical storm warning was in effect from Port Mansfield south to Barra el Mezquital, Mexico, and from Mesquite Bay north to High Island, Texas.

Forecasters said Hanna could bring 6 to 12 inches (15 to 30 centimeters) of rain through Sunday night — with isolated totals of 18 inches (46 centimeters) — in addition to coastal swells that could cause life-threatening surf and rip current conditions.

Meanwhile, Tropical Storm Gonzalo was still on track to move across the southern Windward Islands on Saturday afternoon or evening. Gonzalo was moving west near 18 mph (30 kph) with maximum sustained winds at 40 mph (65 kph), the National Hurricane Center said Saturday morning.

Gonzalo is forecast to bring 1 to 3 inches (3 to 8 centimeters) of rain, with isolated totals of 5 inches (13 centimeters). A tropical storm warning was in effect for Tobago and Grenada and its dependencies. The storm was expected to dissipate by Sunday night or Monday, forecasters said.

Gonzalo and Hanna broke the record for the earliest seventh and eighth Atlantic named storms, respectively, according to Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach. The previous records were Gert on July 24, 2005, and Harvey on Aug. 3, 2005, Klotzbach said.

Cristobal, Danielle, Edouard and Fay also set records for being the earliest named Atlantic storm for

their alphabetic order.

Associated Press writers Paul J. Weber and Acacia Coronado in Austin contributed to this report.

Follow Juan A. Lozano on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/juanlozano70>

Kyrgyzstan's rights activist Azimzhan Askarov dies at 69

MOSCOW (AP) — Azimzhan Askarov, a human rights defender in Kyrgyzstan who was serving a life term on charges of involvement in ethnic violence that were widely criticized as trumped-up, has died in a prison clinic. He was 69.

The U. N. Human Rights Committee and leading international human rights organizations have repeatedly urged the Central Asian nation's authorities to release Askarov, noting his deteriorating health.

Kyrgyzstan's state penitentiary service said Askarov died Saturday in a prison clinic, a day after he was hospitalized with pneumonia. It noted in a statement that Askarov was also suffering from a heart condition and other chronic illnesses.

His lawyer, Valeryan Vakhitov, said Askarov had a bad cough and experienced breathing difficulty when they last met recently, the Interfax news agency reported.

Askarov, an ethnic Uzbek rights activist, has been sentenced to life in prison for his alleged role in the deadly ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010.

Several days of clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and minority Uzbeks in the southern cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad killed 470 people, nearly three-quarters of whom were ethnic Uzbeks. Thousands of houses were destroyed and some 400,000 fled their homes.

International rights groups criticized Kyrgyz authorities for mostly targeting the Uzbek minority while investigating the ethnic violence and failing to ensure justice for its victims.

Before his detention, Askarov had led a human rights organization in southern Kyrgyzstan focused on prison conditions and police treatment of detainees. He documented violence and looting during the June 2010 violence.

In September 2010, Askarov was found guilty of participating in riots, inciting ethnic hatred and abetting the slaying of a police officer killed during the unrest. Human Rights Watch and other rights groups said Askarov's detention and trial were marred by serious human rights violations, including credible allegations of torture.

In 2016, the U.N. Human Rights Committee found that Askarov was arbitrarily detained, held in inhumane conditions, tortured and mistreated. It urged Kyrgyzstan to immediately release Askarov and quash his conviction.

Askarov's lawyers have repeatedly appealed, but Kyrgyz courts have upheld his conviction.

New book outlines Prince Harry's less-than-fond farewell

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Freedom for Prince Harry came with a price.

A new book on the Duke and Duchess of Sussex lays bare the turmoil in the House of Windsor before the pair walked away from senior roles in Britain's royal family, describing relations so frosty that Prince Harry, Prince William and their spouses were barely on speaking terms by time the saga came to a close.

The first installment of a serialized version of the book "Finding Freedom," which appeared Saturday in the Times of London, underscored the hurt feelings caused by the decision of Harry and Meghan to go into self-imposed exile. Authors Omid Scobie and Carolyn Durand highlight one moment in during Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey in March where the two brothers and their wives barely spoke despite not having seen each other since January.

"Although Meghan tried to make eye contact with Kate, the duchess barely acknowledged her," the

excerpt said.

In an interview with the Times that accompanied the excerpt, Scobie said to "purposefully snub your sister-in-law or your brother or brother-in-law in Kate's case . . . I don't think it left a great taste in the couple's mouths."

The service marked a low point after months of palace intrigue that worsened when the couple surprised the Royal Household in January by making public their plans to be more independent. It capped frustration on the part of the Sussexes, who are portrayed by the authors as seeking more control after being shut out by the machinations of other actors in the Royal Household despite their public popularity.

"As their popularity had grown, so did Harry and Meghan's difficulty in understanding why so few inside the palace were looking out for their interests," the excerpt said. "They were a major draw for the royal family."

Scobie and Durand suggest that some palace officials were actually troubled by the Sussexes' popularity and there were fears that more senior royals would be overshadowed. Harry is 6th in the line for the throne, behind his father, Prince Charles, his brother William, and William's three young children, George, Charlotte and Louis.

"The Sussexes had made the monarchy more relatable to those who had never before felt a connection," they wrote. "However, there were concerns that the couple should be brought into the fold; otherwise the establishment feared their popularity might eclipse that of the royal family."

The couple's plan to be part-time royals fell apart during talks with the family, and in January the queen outlined how the couple in March would step away from royal duties, at least for a while, but always remain part of the royal family.

Ahead of the book's release, Harry and Meghan issued a statement denying taking part in the publication.

"The Duke and Duchess of Sussex were not interviewed and did not contribute to 'Finding Freedom,'" it said. "This book is based on the authors' own experiences as members of the royal press corps and their own independent reporting."

Harry's departure was essentially uncharted territory for the House of Windsor. Only the messy abdication of Edward VIII in 1936 served as a guide to the potential pitfalls.

Follow all AP coverage of the royal family at <https://apnews.com/Prince Harry>.

Federal agents use tear gas to clear rowdy Portland protest

By GILLIAN FLACCUS and SARA CLINE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Thousands of protesters gathered outside the federal courthouse in Portland, Oregon, into the early hours Saturday, shooting fireworks at the building as plumes of tear gas dispensed by U.S. agents, lingered above.

The demonstration went until federal agents entered the crowd around 2:30 a.m. and marched in a line down the street, clearing remaining protesters with tear gas at close range. They also extinguished a large fire in the street outside the courthouse.

Portland has been roiled by nightly protests for two months following the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. President Donald Trump said he sent federal agents to Oregon's largest city to halt the unrest but state and local officials say they are making the situation worse.

The clashes in Portland have further inflamed the nation's political tensions and triggered a crisis over the limits of federal power as Trump moves to send U.S. officers to other Democratic-led cities he says are violent.

Late Friday a federal judge denied a request by Oregon's attorney general to restrict the actions of federal police.

The Federal Protective Service had declared the gathering in Portland that began Friday evening as "an unlawful assembly" and said that officers had been injured.

As the crowd dispersed, someone was found stabbed nearby, Portland police said. The person was taken

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to a hospital and a suspect was taken into custody.

By 3 a.m., most demonstrators had left, with only some small groups roaming the streets.

Earlier Friday night, the protest had drawn various organized groups, including Healthcare Workers Protest, Teachers against Tyrants, Lawyers for Black Lives and the "Wall of Moms." As the crowd grew — authorities estimate there were 3,000 present at the peak of the protest — people were heard chanting "Black Lives Matter" and "Feds go home" to the sound of drums.

Later, protesters vigorously shook the fence surrounding the courthouse, shot fireworks towards the building and threw glass bottles. Many times these actions were met by federal agents using tear gas and flash bangs.

The flow of tear gas caused protesters to disperse at times, as others remained toward the front of the courthouse with leaf blowers directing the gas back to the courthouse. Federal agents had leaf blowers of their own to counteract.

Daniel Pereyo was one protester who was tear-gassed.

Pereyo said he had been at the nearby park watching drummers and fireworks being shot, when his face and eyes began to burn.

"It's extremely painful," he said. "It's not the worst pain ever, but it is discomfoting and it's distracting."

As the clouds of gas floated down the street, protesters would swiftly regroup and return to chant and shake the fence that separates the people on the street from federal agents and the courthouse.

It was unclear whether anyone was arrested during the protest. The federal agents have arrested dozens during nightly demonstrations against racial injustice that often turn violent.

The state attorney general sued, saying some people had been whisked off the streets in unmarked vehicles. U.S. District Judge Michael Mosman ruled Friday the state lacked standing to sue on behalf of protesters because the lawsuit was a "highly unusual one with a particular set of rules."

Oregon was seeking a restraining order on behalf of its residents not for injuries that had already happened but to prevent injuries by federal officers in the future. That combination makes the standard for granting such a motion very narrow, and the state did not prove it had standing in the case, Mosman wrote.

Legal experts who reviewed the case before the decision warned that the judge could reject it on those grounds. A lawsuit from a person accusing federal agents of violating their rights to free speech or against unconstitutional search and seizure would have a much higher chance of success, Michael Dorf, a constitutional law professor at Cornell University, said ahead of the ruling.

"The federal government acted in violation of those individuals' rights and probably acted in violation of the Constitution in the sense of exercising powers that are reserved to the states, but just because the federal government acts in ways that overstep its authority doesn't mean the state has an injury," he said.

The lawsuit from Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum accused federal agents of arresting protesters without probable cause and using excessive force. She sought a temporary restraining order to "immediately stop federal authorities from unlawfully detaining Oregonians."

David Morrell, an attorney for the U.S. government, called the motion "extraordinary" and told the judge in a hearing this week that it was based solely on "a few threadbare declarations" from witnesses and a Twitter video. Morrell called the protests "dangerous and volatile."

Rosenblum said the ramifications of the ruling were "extremely troubling."

"Individuals mistreated by these federal agents can sue for damages, but they can't get a judge to restrain this unlawful conduct more generally," Rosenblum said in a statement.

Homeland Security acting Secretary Chad Wolf denied that federal agents were inflaming the situation in Portland and said Wheeler legitimized criminality by joining demonstrators, whom Trump has called "anarchists and agitators."

Wolf said Tuesday that at least 43 people have been arrested on federal charges at that point. Charges included assaulting federal officers, arson and damaging federal property, U.S. Attorney Billy J. Williams said. All the defendants are local and were released after making a court appearance.

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Sara Cline reported from Salem. Cline is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues.

Associated Press writer Andrew Selsky contributed from Salem, Oregon.

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

AP FACT CHECK: A more measured Trump doesn't mean accurate

By CALVIN WOODWARD and HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump in recent days suddenly acknowledged the gravity of the coronavirus pandemic and edged away from some of his most audacious falsehoods about it. That's not to say he gave the public an honest accounting.

Trump minimized the potential risk to children and those around them as he advocated reopening schools. He again marveled at the number of COVID-19 tests being performed in the U.S. even as the overwhelmed testing system crucially fails to deliver sufficient access and timely results.

And he cited a low U.S. death rate from COVID-19 compared with other countries, when the global statistics appear to contradict him.

All this while Trump canceled Republican National Convention events in Jacksonville, Florida, bowing to the reality that many Republicans were reluctant to go a state where the virus has been out of control.

Meantime his press secretary peddled false internet rumors that the "cancel culture" led to the cancellation of a cartoon about puppies.

A review of some statements from the past week:

TESTS

TRUMP, on the U.S. approaching 50 million tests: "This allows us to isolate those who are infected, even those without symptoms. So we know exactly where it's going and when it's going to be there." — briefing Tuesday.

THE FACTS: This is by no means true.

In many if not most parts of the country, people who manage to get a test can wait for many days for the results because labs are overwhelmed. In the meantime, those people could be and in some cases surely are spreading infection. And many people who want a test but report no symptoms can't get one.

Some labs are taking weeks to return COVID-19 results because of the crushing workload from the surge of new cases.

"There's been this obsession with, 'How many tests are we doing per day?'" said Dr. Tom Frieden, former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "The question is, how many tests are being done with results coming back within a day, where the individual tested is promptly isolated and their contacts are promptly warned?"

KIDS and COVID-19

TRUMP on young people and the virus: "Now, they don't catch it easily; they don't bring it home easily. And if they do catch it, they get better fast. We're looking at that fact." — briefing Wednesday.

THE FACTS: That isn't a fact. He doesn't have the science to reach this broad conclusion.

His coronavirus task force coordinator, Dr. Deborah Birx, and other public health officials have said repeatedly that while children appear to get less sick from the virus than adults, the threat to young people and their ability to spread the virus are not understood because not enough research has been done on kids and COVID-19.

Birx underscored the point Friday on NBC's "Today" show. Whether children under 10 spread the virus the same as older children "is still an open question" she said.

"We know that children under 18 are less sick, but there are some that suffer terrible consequences

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if they have underlying conditions," she added. "Children under 10 do get infected. It's just unclear how rapidly they spread the virus."

Trump has been pushing for schools to reopen and at one point threatened to withhold federal money if they don't.

While his assurances about children were unsupported, they were a step back from his earlier rhetoric that portrayed kids as practically immune to infection. "It's very unique how the children aren't affected," he said in early May. "Incredible."

U.S. DEATHS

TRUMP on the U.S. and other countries in the pandemic: "We've done much better than most. And with the fatality rate at a lower rate than most, it's something that we can talk about, but we're working, again, with them because we're helping a lot of countries that people don't even know about." — briefing Tuesday.

THE FACTS: No, the U.S. does not shine in comparison with other countries. The U.S. has experienced far more recorded infections and deaths from COVID-19 than any other country, including those with larger populations, and it lags a number of other nations in testing and containment.

Trump seems to have edged away from claiming that the U.S. mortality rate is the world's best, after being confronted on that point in his Fox News interview a week ago with Chris Wallace. His more modest boasts since, though, also are not correct.

Understanding deaths as a percentage of the population or as a percentage of known infections is problematic because countries track and report COVID-19 deaths and cases differently. No one can reliably rank countries in this regard.

The statistics that do exist fail to support his assertion.

In an analysis of the 20 countries currently most affected by the pandemic, the Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center finds the U.S. with the fourth worst rate of deaths per 100,000 people — only Britain, Peru and Chile are seeing more reported deaths as a proportion of their populations.

On another measure, looking at what percentage of reported cases lead to death, the U.S. is in the middle of that pack, with a case-fatality ratio of 3.6%

Looking at deaths among all countries, not just the ones most suffering at this stage of the pandemic, the U.S. fares somewhat better but still not among the best. Its recorded 44 deaths per 100,000 compares favorably with Britain (68.6 per 100,000) as well as Spain (60.8), Italy (58) and Sweden (55.7), for example, but poorly with Canada (24), Brazil (40), Mexico (33) and dozens more countries.

Disparities in reporting are only one reason not to take these numbers conclusively. Many factors are in play in shaping a death toll besides how well a country responded to the pandemic, such as the overall health or youth of national populations.

'CANCEL CULTURE'

KAYLEIGH McENANY, White House press secretary, on Trump: "He's also appalled by cancel culture, and cancel culture specifically as it pertains to cops. We saw a few weeks ago, 'Paw Patrol,' a cartoon show about cops was canceled." — briefing Friday.

THE FACTS: No, 'Paw Patrol' was not canceled. Fake rumors online said it was. And it's not about cops. It's a cartoon about puppies. The lead puppy is a cop. There's a firefighter puppy, too.

MASKS

McENANY, when asked about Trump's change in tone this past week in urging people to wear masks: "There has been no change. ...The president has been consistent on this." -- news briefing Friday.

THE FACTS: Trump's messaging has been inconsistent, to say the least.

Trump from the beginning has made clear that wearing masks is voluntary and shunned wearing one in public. He frequently ridiculed Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden for wearing a mask in public.

In May, when a reporter declined to pull down his mask to ask a question at a news briefing so Trump could hear better, the president mocked by saying, "OK, because you want to be politically correct."

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And Trump told The Wall Street Journal last month that some people may wear them as a political statement against him.

"People touch them," he said. "And they grab them and I see it all the time. They come in, they take the mask. Now they're holding it now in their fingers. And they drop it on the desk and then they touch their eye and they touch their nose. No, I think a mask is a — it's a double-edged sword."

This past week, as his poll ratings on the handling of the coronavirus have fallen, Trump on Monday tweeted a photo of himself wearing a mask and called it an act of patriotism.

That evening, he was seen maskless at the Trump International Hotel in apparent defiance of D.C. coronavirus regulations, according to video footage of the event.

"We're asking everybody that when you are not able to socially distance, wear a mask, get a mask," Trump said Tuesday at his first appearance at a coronavirus briefing since April. "Whether you like the mask or not, they have an impact."

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

TRUMP: "You know, one day, we had a virus come in, and I closed the borders, did a lot of things that were very good. ... And nobody wanted to do it. I wanted to do it. We closed the border to China. We put on the ban. We didn't want people coming in from heavily infected China." — briefing Tuesday.

THE FACTS: He didn't ban travel from China. He restricted it. Dozens of countries took similar steps to control travel from hot spots before or around the same time the U.S. did.

The U.S. restrictions that took effect Feb. 2 continued to allow travel to the U.S. from China's Hong Kong and Macao territories over the past five months. The Associated Press reported that more than 8,000 Chinese and foreign nationals based in those territories entered the U.S. in the first three months after the travel restrictions were imposed.

Additionally, more than 27,000 Americans returned from mainland China in the first month after the restrictions took effect. U.S. officials lost track of more than 1,600 of them who were supposed to be monitored for virus exposure.

VETERANS

TRUMP: "On the VA, we got Veterans Choice. Nobody thought that would be possible. That's been many decades. They've been trying to get Veterans Choice. It's called 'Choice,' where they can go get a doctor if they have to wait on line for two weeks or five weeks or two days." — briefing Tuesday.

THE FACTS: It's false that he achieved Veterans Choice when other presidents couldn't. President Barack Obama achieved it. Trump expanded it. It has not eliminated delays for care, including for those with waits of "two weeks" or "two days."

The program allows veterans to see a private doctor for primary or mental health care at public expense if their VA wait is 20 days (28 for specialty care) or their drive to a VA facility is 30 minutes or more. After the coronavirus outbreak, the VA took the step of restricting veterans' access to private doctors, citing the added risks of infection and limited capacity at private hospitals.

REALITY CHECK

TRUMP on the pandemic: "It will probably unfortunately get worse before it gets better." — briefing Tuesday.

THE FACTS: A rare departure from his bullish accounts of progress against the virus and, by all indications, true.

Associated Press writer Amanda Seitz in Chicago contributed to this report.

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

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US agency vows steps to address COVID-19 inequalities

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — If Black, Hispanic and Native Americans are hospitalized and killed by the coronavirus at far higher rates than others, shouldn't the government count them as high risk for serious illness?

That seemingly simple question has been mulled by federal health officials for months. And so far the answer is no.

But federal public health officials have released a new strategy that vows to improve data collection and take steps to address stark inequalities in how the disease is affecting Americans.

Officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stress that the disproportionately high impact on certain minority groups is not driven by genetics. Rather, it's social conditions that make people of color more likely to be exposed to the virus and — if they catch it — more likely to get seriously ill.

"To just name racial and ethnic groups without contextualizing what contributes to the risk has the potential to be stigmatizing and victimizing," said the CDC's Leandris Liburd, who two months ago was named chief health equity officer in the agency's coronavirus response.

Outside experts agreed that there's a lot of potential downside to labeling certain racial and ethnic groups as high risk.

"You have to be very careful that you don't do it in such a way that you're defining a whole class of people as 'COVID carriers.'" said Dr. Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association.

COVID-19's unequal impact has been striking:

— American Indians and Native Alaskans are hospitalized at rates more than five times that of white people. The hospitalization rate for Black and Hispanic Americans is more than four times higher than for whites, according to CDC data through mid-July.

— Detailed tracking through mid-May suggested Black people accounted for 25% of U.S. deaths as of that time, even though they are about 13% of the U.S. population. About 24% of deaths were Hispanics, who account for about 18.5% of the population. And 35% were white people, who are 60% of the population.

Other researchers have pointed out problems for minorities as they try access coronavirus tests or health care.

But while sometimes highlighting the disproportionate toll the virus has had on certain racial and ethnic groups, the CDC is being careful not to categorize them as high risk or meriting higher priority for certain health services.

Indeed, in May, the CDC took down guidelines it had posted that said minorities without symptoms should be among those prioritized for coronavirus testing. Government officials later said the posting had been a mistake.

Last month, the CDC revised its list of which Americans are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness, adding pregnant women and people with certain underlying conditions. Race and ethnicity were left out.

On Friday, the CDC issued a racial equity strategy document vowing better data collection on how the virus is impacting minorities. It also calls for improvements in testing, contact tracing, and safely quarantining, isolating and treating minorities at risk. The agency also said it will take steps to diversify the public health workforce responding to the epidemic.

The agency did not immediately provide details about any added funding for this work. But it's more than has been done by the agency in the past, some health experts said.

Dr. Richard Besser, chief executive of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, previously spent 13 years at CDC. He ran the agency's emergency preparedness response for four years and was acting director when a pandemic flu hit the U.S. in 2009.

"I can tell you that we spent very little time on talking about who was able to follow our recommendations and who was not," he said.

He sees many public health recommendations that “seem to have been created without any recognition of the conditions in which millions and millions of Americans live.”

People who are required to go to work to stock grocery store shelves or drive buses don't have the luxury of working at home. They also may not have a place to stay, away from others, if directed to go into quarantine or isolation. And many are minorities, experts said.

Dr. Michelle LaRue sees that. A senior manager at an organization called CASA that helps Latinos and immigrants in Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania, she said lack of paid sick leave in industries in which many Latinos work, such as construction, forces people to pick between “feeding their families or staying home to self-isolate.” And multi-generational and multi-family housing settings are often people's only choice.

The CDC appointed Liburd, an agency veteran, in May to better address such issues — the first time the agency had created that kind of leadership role for an epidemic. The goal was to make her a central figure in the agency's coronavirus work, with input on research and other tasks.

Data collection will be key.

When doctors order coronavirus tests for patients, standard forms ask for important patient information, said Janet Hamilton, executive director of the Atlanta-based Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists.

But physicians often don't ask. Race and ethnicity data is missing 80% to 85% of the time, and patient address and phone number is missing as much as 50% of the time, Hamilton said.

Advocates have pushed for improvements for years, she said, “but it's never been prioritized or incentivized.” Public health officials “find it painful — quite honestly — at how incomplete the data is,” she said.

David Holtgrave, dean of the School of Public Health at University at Albany, said he hoped CDC can help push progress in race and ethnicity data for testing, hospitalizations and deaths.

“Completeness of that data should be our goal,” Holtgrave said in an email.

Associated Press writer Regina Garcia Cano in Washington, D.C., contributed.

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.

'Unholy alliance' of power, money fueled corruption scheme

By MARK GILLISPIE and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — An accused co-conspirator called it an “unholy alliance” — dealings between a longtime Ohio politician seeking to restore his power and an energy company in desperate need of a billion-dollar bailout to rescue two nuclear plants in the state.

Both the politician, current Ohio House Speaker Larry Householder, and FirstEnergy Corp., identified in an FBI complaint as “Company A,” got what they wanted last year from what federal officials say was a \$60 million bribery scheme funded by an unidentified company the complaint makes clear is FirstEnergy and its affiliates.

What Householder and his alleged co-conspirators might not have realized until their arrests on Tuesday and the affidavit was made public was that the FBI had insider help from people who cooperated with agents, recorded phone calls and dinner conversations, and shared text messages from members of the alleged conspiracy.

Householder, one of the state's most powerful politicians, and FirstEnergy, which through its affiliates provided nearly all of the cash used to fund the alleged scheme, now face a reckoning that could upend Ohio's political landscape.

Both FirstEnergy and Householder were successful. Householder surged to power with his election as House speaker in January 2019, and FirstEnergy got its bailout. Tens of millions of dollars were then spent to fund a campaign that prevented Ohio voters from deciding in a ballot issue whether they were in favor of paying more on their electric bills to help keep the struggling plants afloat.

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Householder's attorney declined to comment on Friday.

FBI Agent Blane Wetzel's detailed 81-page affidavit in support of the criminal complaint against Householder and four others showed how the Perry County politician was connected to FirstEnergy. It painstakingly details how the alleged conspiracy to spend \$60 million of the corporation's money unfolded.

The affidavit lays out the speaker's ties to the corporation, starting with Householder and his son flying to President Donald Trump's inauguration in January 2017 on a FirstEnergy plane.

According to the affidavit, there were 84 telephone contacts between Householder and FirstEnergy President and CEO Chuck Jones between February 2017 and July 2019; 14 contacts with the corporation's vice president for external affairs; and 188 contacts with its Ohio director of state affairs.

"Let me be clear, at no time did our support for Ohio's nuclear plants interfere with or supersede our ethical obligations to conduct our business properly," Jones told investors Friday during a quarterly earnings call. "The facts will become clear as the investigation progresses."

Jones called it a "grave and disturbing situation," but said he had "no worries" that he or the company did anything wrong.

The affidavit supporting the criminal complaint names Householder's longtime political adviser, Jeffrey Longstreth, and two lobbyists for a FirstEnergy subsidiary, including former state Republican chair Matt Borges.

All the alleged members of the conspiracy benefited personally from the scheme, using sums Wetzel described colloquially as "bags of cash" from FirstEnergy. Householder spent around \$500,000 of FirstEnergy money to settle a business lawsuit, pay attorneys, deal with expenses at his Florida home and pay off credit card debt. Another \$97,000 was used to pay staff and expenses for his 2018 reelection campaign, Wetzel wrote.

Longstreth, as the affidavit details, wrote the checks from an account for Generation Now, a nonprofit through which most of the FirstEnergy-related money flowed. Longstreth also essentially ran the campaigns of Republican House candidates whom Householder needed to win so he could assume the speakership and push the divisive bailout bill through the Legislature.

According to the affidavit, Longstreth wired \$1 million to his personal brokerage account as the scheme wound down.

A message seeking comment was left Friday with Longstreth.

Roughly \$3 million of FirstEnergy-affiliated money was spent to help 15 Householder-backed House candidates in the May 2018 primaries and six more in the November general election.

"Having secured Householder's power as Speaker, the Enterprise transitioned quickly to fulfilling its end of the corrupt bargain with Company A — passing nuclear bailout legislation," Wetzel wrote.

It initially appeared that Householder lacked the votes to get bailout bill approved in the spring of 2019. A \$9.5 million FirstEnergy-funded media campaign targeted House members' districts and tipped the scale in Householder and FirstEnergy's favor, according to the affidavit.

A House member described as Representative 7 reached out to FBI agents after he grew concerned about pressure from Householder to back the bailout. The lawmaker later was asked to delete text messages from Householder by someone connected to the speaker, according to the affidavit.

Once the House approved the bill, \$7.4 million was spent on a pressure campaign to convince the Senate to follow suit. That worked, too, and Republican Gov. Mike DeWine signed the bill on July 29, the day the final version was approved by both chambers.

The final stage of the alleged conspiracy proved the most expensive: FirstEnergy affiliates through Generation Now spent \$38 million to keep a referendum on the bailout off the ballot, according to the affidavit.

The dirty tricks campaign included hiring some of the largest signature-gathering firms in the country so that they couldn't work for Ohioans Against Corporate Bailouts, hiring people to gather signatures for fake petitions to sow confusion and intimidating legitimate signature collectors, according to the affidavit.

Most of the \$38 million was spent on xenophobic commercials and mailings that rocked the state by warning that China would take over Ohio if the bailout was killed.

The citizen group failed to meet its Oct. 21 deadline to gather enough signatures and the measure

remains law.

Wetzel, in the affidavit, hinted there is more to come in the probe.

"I have not included every fact known to me concerning this investigation," Wetzel wrote. "I have set forth only the facts necessary to establish probable cause that federal crimes have been committed."

Gillispie reported from Cleveland. Associated Press writer John Seewer in Toledo contributed to this report.

Brazil's Bolsonaro says he tested negative for coronavirus

By DANIEL CARVALHO Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro said Saturday that he has tested negative for the new coronavirus, based on a fourth test since he said July 7 that he had the virus.

"Good morning everyone," Bolsonaro wrote on Facebook after reporting that the test was "negative."

The 65-year-old leader didn't say when he did the new test. On Wednesday, he had tested positive for the third time.

Bolsonaro also posted a photo of himself with a box of the anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine, although it has not been proven effective against the virus.

Now that Bolsonaro is clear of the virus, he is expected to return to mingling in crowds as he used to do before his diagnosis. He had spent many weekends since the beginning of the pandemic in close proximity to supporters, sometimes without wearing a mask.

On Thursday, he was photographed without a mask while talking to some sweepers in the garden of the presidential residence.

Brazil, Latin America's largest nation, is one of the outbreak's epicenters. According to the Brazilian government, on Friday there were 85,238 confirmed deaths due to the new coronavirus. The country has 2,343,366 confirmed cases. The real numbers are believed to be higher.

On Monday, two more ministers in the Cabinet of Brazilian President said they have tested positive for the new coronavirus: the 65-year-old minister of citizenship, Onyx Lorenzoni, and Milton Ribeiro, the 62-year-old minister of education.

Bolsonaro's administration last week completed two months without a health minister.

The interim minister, Gen. Eduardo Pazuello, who had no experience in the field before April, is facing pressure to leave the job. He took over after his predecessor, a doctor and health care consultant, quit in protest over Bolsonaro's support for the use of hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine, a related drug, as a treatment for COVID-19.

Black Catholics' history: Will US Catholic schools teach it?

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The history of Black Catholics in the U.S. is a dramatic mix of struggles and breakthroughs, but it has been largely ignored in the curriculum of Catholic schools. That may soon change.

Amid the national tumult over racial injustice, there are high-level calls for the schools to teach more about the church's past links to slavery and segregation, and how Black Catholics persevered nonetheless.

In the archdioceses of Chicago and New Orleans, top leaders are encouraging their schools to place a new emphasis on teaching about racial justice, as well as the history of Black Catholics. The National Catholic Educational Association is forming an advisory committee to study how similar initiatives could be launched in the thousands of Catholic schools nationwide.

"The teaching of anti-racism is pretty strong in Catholic schools," said Kathy Mears, the NCEA's interim president. "But teaching the contributions of Black Catholics to our history is not where it should have been. Whatever we can do to correct this error, we're all in."

Among those recruited to join the advisory committee is Henry Fortier, superintendent of Catholic schools in Orlando, Florida.

"We need to have an honest ongoing effort, not just something to placate people," he said. "There's a

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point in time where people are fed up.”

In a recent podcast, Fortier and another Black superintendent of Catholic schools, RaeNell Houston of New Orleans, challenged Mears to ensure that the NCEA’s leadership becomes more racially diverse.

“Challenge accepted,” Mears replied. “We will work on all those things at NCEA because we do want to be part of the solution. ... We want to do better.”

Fortier said a few Catholic schools with predominantly Black student bodies do teach Black Catholic history, but “it’s not a part of our mainstream curriculum across the country.”

He said it’s important for white students, as well, to learn this history.

“Prejudice is usually based on ignorance,” he said. “If we can eradicate the ignorance, we can eradicate future generations of racism.”

At present, there are about 3 million African American Catholics, roughly 4% of the nation’s 69 million Catholics.

Scholars who’ve studied Black Catholics’ history have been harsh in their assessments — for example, detailing how numerous Catholic institutions and civic leaders were major slaveholders. Among them were Georgetown University, which last year pledged financial support to descendants of people it enslaved; several orders of nuns; and Charles Carroll of Maryland, the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Even after the Civil War, many Catholic institutions practiced segregation, says Villanova University history professor Shannen Dee Williams. She has campaigned for this sobering history to be taught in every Catholic school and seminary.

“Black Catholic history reminds us that the Church was never an innocent bystander in the histories of colonialism, slavery or segregation,” Williams wrote in an email. “Black Catholic history encourages us to acknowledge, confront and atone for this painful history.”

Amid the pain, Black Catholics produced their own set of heroes and trailblazers, including the women who started two orders of Black Catholic nuns before the Civil War. Mother Mary Lange, who co-founded the Oblate Sisters of Providence in Baltimore in 1829, and Henriette Delille, who founded the Sisters of the Holy Family in New Orleans in 1842, are among six Black Catholic Americans formally placed in the canonization process that could lead to sainthood.

Both orders remain active, and have been pioneers in teaching Black history at the schools they run.

Also on the path to sainthood is Augustus Tolton, widely considered the first Black Catholic priest in the U.S. He was born into slavery in Missouri in 1854, escaped to freedom with his family during the Civil War, attended Catholic schools, and studied at a seminary in Rome before being ordained in 1886 and later heading a Black congregation in Chicago.

In the Archdiocese of Chicago, there’s a school and a ministry recruitment program named after Tolton. The archbishop, Cardinal Blase Cupich, has spearheaded Tolton’s canonization campaign.

Cupich is now asking the archdiocese’s school system to develop a curriculum for the coming academic year aimed at increasing awareness of racial justice issues. Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Perry said one of the goals will be to teach Black Catholic history — perhaps in a few schools at first, but eventually at all 129 schools in the archdiocese, whether their enrollment is predominantly Black or white.

“It’s necessary for white students to know this history,” said Perry, who is Black. “To appreciate people, you have to know something of their story.”

A similar initiative is envisioned in New Orleans, a center of Black Catholic life in the U.S. for more than 200 years.

The Rev. Daniel Green, who heads the Office of Black Catholic Ministries for the New Orleans archdiocese, said the initiative will strive to highlight Black Catholics’ culture and identity “so everyone has an appreciation for the struggle and the gifts they bring to the church.”

“We want to get all our schools equipped to do this so we can say to the rest of the country, ‘Here’s a model that we know works. We’d like to share that with you,’” Green said.

New Orleans is home to Xavier University of Louisiana, the country’s only historically Black Catholic

university. The director of Xavier's Institute for Black Catholic Studies, Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, hopes the university's education department will be able to produce schoolteachers capable of helping the Black Catholic history initiative succeed.

Bellow is a descendant of John Henry Dorsey, who in 1902 became one of a handful of Black ordained Catholic priests. Through much of his ministry, he was the target of discrimination, even from fellow members of the Josephite order that ministered to Black people.

"Those people suffered greatly," Bellow said. "We've got to tell that story, so that out of that suffering can come something glorious."

Of paramount importance, Bellow said, is that the story be told honestly.

"There's a white supremacy in the history of the Catholic church that needs to be dismantled," she said. "If we want to evangelize effectively, we've got to tell the truth. Young people can tell when we are not telling the whole truth."

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

Pregnant women at risk of death in Kenya's COVID-19 curfew

By TOM ODULA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Veronica Atieno remembers feeling her way through the dark alleys between the shacks that make up Nairobi's slums, picking her way past raw sewage and rusty, razor-sharp metal roofing with trepidation.

Her labor pains had crescendoed during Kenya's coronavirus dusk-to-dawn curfew, and there were no public or private means of transport to the hospital where she had planned to give birth. Fears of heavy-handed police enforcement of the curfew kept possible helpers away.

With time running out, her only option was to reach the home of a traditional birth attendant nearby, Atieno said. But she was scared.

"I had many concerns about the health of the baby if she was delivered by the traditional caregiver. How hygienic is her place? Does she have personal protection gear to prevent the spread of COVID-19? What if I need surgery?" she worried as her spasms intensified.

Her plight has played out every night for pregnant women across Kenya, putting some at deadly risk. That has inspired a local doctor to create an emergency service, Wheels for Life.

Kenya already had one of the worst maternal mortality rates in the world, and though data are not yet available on the effects of the new curfew, experts believe the number of women and babies who die in childbirth has increased significantly since it was imposed mid-March.

The concerns drove obstetrician and gynecologist Jemimah Kariuki at the government-run Kenyatta National Hospital to attempt a solution.

"When the curfew started we had open hospitals but no women, and we would hear reports of women delivering at home with very dire consequences: Women would come in the morning with babies who passed in the night or they had ruptured the uterus or had significant tears," she said.

When one mother was reported to have died while in labor, Kariuki felt she needed to do something.

She shared her phone number on Twitter, asking women who needed to consult about their pregnancies to reach out. The tweet quickly went viral.

"The response was overwhelming, I was getting 30 to 40 calls from women telling me, 'I was anxious, I did not know what to do.' In one week I had five mothers calling me like, 'I am in labor and I don't know what to do,'" she said.

Kariuki started to track down vehicles to provide transportation to health facilities, but few were on the road because of multiple reports of police brutality while enforcing the curfew. Human rights groups have reported at least 23 curfew violators allegedly killed by police, and videos have circulated of baton-wielding officers whipping people.

Kariuki reached out to companies and state organizations for support in providing free services such

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as transportation and medical personnel. The response was overwhelming, leading to the formation of Wheels for Life.

The Health Ministry, Nairobi University, taxi service Bolt and others pitched in to provide the free services. "It is really amazing when you can see that people are willing to go beyond the economic gain so that they can help the less privileged in society, especially at a time of COVID when everyone is thinking about cutting costs," Kariuki said.

Wheels for Life has a toll-free number which pregnant mothers call to be triaged and connected to a doctor. If a mother needs medical attention but it's not an emergency, a taxi is dispatched to take her to hospital. If it's an emergency, an ambulance is dispatched.

According to the United Nations' Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group, maternal deaths in Kenya had fallen from 9,100 a year in 2000 to 5,000 in 2017. That translates to 13 recorded maternal deaths daily, down from 24.

Still, the East African country remains among the top 21 in the world for maternal deaths.

Louisa Muteti, chair of the Midwives Association of Kenya, fears that mother and child deaths during childbirth have increased under the curfew.

Muteti said 68% of mothers who give birth in Kenya have access to skilled personnel. Others give birth at home using traditional birth attendants or by themselves, and when deaths occur they are not officially recorded.

Transport and security are the biggest challenges under curfew, Muteti said, especially in dimly lit informal settlements.

"That's why some mothers may die at home or struggle and go to hospital in the morning, only to die," she said.

According to the World Health Organization, women die as a result of mostly treatable complications during pregnancy and following childbirth such as severe bleeding, infections and high blood pressure.

WHO emphasizes the importance of skilled assistance during childbirth, saying "timely management and treatment can make the difference between life and death for the mother as well as for the baby."

Kariuki said Wheels for Life has handled 10,950 calls in the last 100 days while 890 women have been taken to hospitals for various issues with their pregnancies.

She envisions the service continuing beyond the curfew, targeting low-income residents and moving beyond Nairobi county. Most users are from informal settlement or low-income areas, she said.

"It's just given me perspective of just how many women are in dire need out there even without the curfew," she said. "Because if a lady tells you they have \$5, curfew or not, they were not going to make it to hospital."

Atieno, 23, knows how lucky she is to have survived the birth of her second child without reaching the hospital as planned. After eight hours of labor, she gave birth to a beautiful, healthy baby named Shaniz Joy Juma at the hands of the unskilled traditional birth assistant.

She continued bleeding after birth but managed to reach the hospital in time to treat it.

"Some things is just God's will. I could have died," she said.

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

Female priests now outnumber male ones in Church of Sweden

By DAVID KEYTON Associated Press

STOCKHOLM (AP) — The Church of Sweden has more female than male priests for the first time, according to numbers released this month, a sign of huge strides for gender equality since women were first allowed to be ordained in 1960.

The Lutheran institution, which was the official Swedish state church until 2000, now counts 1,533 women serving as priests and 1,527 men. Its archbishop and several bishops are also women.

"It's a mirror of the society, in a way," the Rev. Elisabeth Oberg Hansen said after giving a sermon in a

small church in Stockholm. "It's as it should be."

Oberg Hansen became a priest more than 30 years ago, and she clearly recalls the discrimination she faced when the first parish she was assigned to didn't accept her.

But times have changed. The European Institute for Gender Equality last year ranked Sweden at the top of its annual equality index, giving the country a score of 83.6 compared to an average of 67.4 for the European Union as a whole.

"It's a good thing, but I don't think so much about it nowadays," Oberg Hansen said of the gender issue in her work.

Sweden's path towards gender parity is shared across Scandinavia, with roughly equal numbers of men and women serving in the clergy ranks of the Church of Denmark and women well-represented in the priesthood of the Church of Norway.

Church of Sweden Bishop Eva Brunne, who retired after a decade leading the Stockholm diocese, helped push for the acceptance of women but stressed she does not think the priesthood should become an overwhelmingly female profession.

"I've been asked during my 10 years as a bishop, 'Where are all the men?' and all I can say is 'I don't know. I don't know,'" Brunne said in a telephone interview. "It's the same thing if you look at universities in Sweden — more women than men. That means more female lawyers, female doctors, etcetera."

Sweden's church has some 5.8 million members, representing some 57.7% of the country's population. But many pews are empty these days, and are more likely to be occupied by women as well.

"I do think it is something we should take as a warning, always, when we see that there is an imbalance," the Rev. Cristina Grenholm, the head of theology for the Church of Sweden, said, calling the gender imbalance among worshippers "striking."

"I do think that men have something to discover in the church," Grenholm said.

Anna Inghammer, 42, a mother of three studying theology and a candidate for the priesthood, said the balance of men and women in the church made sense to her, but she thinks more work is needed to bring equality in other areas.

"Jesus, in his time, was standing up for justice for people of all classes and all genders, so I think it's time for women to even more take a step forward," Inghammer said.

"Of course, representation is good, representation of women, but also ethnicity and class...and that's also something that we need to work on that," she said. "The church is for everyone."

Gazans defy taboos to rescue, neuter stray animals

By WAFAA SHURAFI and FARES AKRAM Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — In the impoverished Gaza Strip, where most people struggle to make ends meet amid a crippling blockade, the suffering of stray dogs and cats often goes unnoticed.

Said el-Er, who founded the territory's only animal rescue organization in 2006, has been trying to change that. He and other volunteers rescue dogs and cats that have been struck by cars or abused and nurse them back to health — but there are too many.

So in recent weeks they have launched Gaza's first spay-and-neuter program. It goes against taboos in the conservative Palestinian territory, where feral dogs and cats are widely seen as pests and many view spaying and neutering as forbidden by Islam.

"Because the society is Muslim, they talk about halal (allowed) and haram (forbidden)," el-Er said. "We know what halal is and what haram is, and it's haram (for the animals) to be widespread in the streets where they can be run over, shot or poisoned."

Islam teaches kindness toward animals, but Muslim scholars are divided on whether spaying and neutering causes harm. Across the Arab world, dogs are widely shunned as unclean and potentially dangerous, and cats do not fare much better.

El-Er and other advocates for the humane treatment of animals face an added challenge in Gaza, which has been under an Israeli and Egyptian blockade since the Islamic militant group Hamas seized power

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in 2007. Gaza's 2 million residents suffer from nearly 50% unemployment, frequent power outages and heavy travel restrictions.

With many struggling to meet basic needs, animal care is seen as a waste of precious resources or a luxury at best. El-Er's group, Sulala for Animal Care, relies on private donations, which can be hard to come by.

El-Er says his team can no longer keep up with the number of injured animals that they find or that are brought to the clinic. "The large number of daily injuries is beyond our capacity," he said. "That's why we resorted to neutering."

On a recent day, volunteers neutered a street dog and two cats that had been brought in. There are few veterinary clinics and no animal hospitals in Gaza, so they performed the operations in a section of a pet store that had been cleaned and disinfected.

"We have shortages in capabilities, tools, especially those needed for orthopedic surgeries," said Bashar Shehada, a local veterinarian. "There is no suitable place for operations."

El-Er has spent years trying to organize a spay and neutering campaign but met with resistance from local authorities and vets, who said it was forbidden. He eventually secured a fatwa, or religious ruling, stating that it is more humane to spay and neuter animals than to consign an ever-growing population to misery and abuse.

Once the fatwa was issued, el-Er said local authorities did not object to the campaign as a way of promoting public health and safety. The Hamas-run health and agriculture ministries allowed veterinarians to carry out operations and purchase supplies and medicine, he said.

The Gaza City municipality provided land for a shelter earlier this year. Before that, El-Er kept the rescued animals at his home and on two small tracts of land that he leased.

The new shelter currently houses around 200 dogs, many of them blind, bearing scars from abuse or missing limbs from being hit by cars. At least one was adjusting to walking with a prosthetic limb. A separate section holds cats in similar shape.

The group tries to find homes for the animals, but here too it faces both economic and cultural challenges. Very few Gazans would keep a dog as a pet, and there's little demand for cats. Some people adopt the animals from abroad, sending money for their food and care.

Over the past decade, international animal welfare groups have carried out numerous missions to evacuate anguished animals from makeshift zoos in Gaza and relocate them to sanctuaries in the West Bank, Jordan and Africa.

But there are no similar campaigns for dogs and cats, and Gaza has been sealed off from all but returning residents since March to prevent a coronavirus outbreak.

El-Er's phone rang recently and the caller said a dog had been hit by a car. Volunteers from Sulala brought it back to the shelter on the back of a three-wheeled motorbike and began treating it. El-Er says they receive around five such calls every day.

Baker wins debut, Astros top M's in 1st game post sign scam

By KRISTIE RIEKEN AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — Dusty Baker has managed thousands of games in his big league career, and none were quite like his debut with the scandal-ridden Houston Astros.

The 71-year-old manager posted a win in his first game as Houston's manager and the Astros, playing for the first time since their sign-stealing scam rocked baseball, opened the season by beating the Seattle Mariners 8-2 Friday night.

"The guys had a lot of energy, a lot of belief and a lot of relief, getting back and playing a real game, because it didn't look like this was even going to happen," Baker said.

Hoping to put a turbulent offseason behind them, the Astros started out with a victory at empty Minute Maid Park, the same place that was pulsating last October before Washington rallied late to win Game 7 of the World Series.

"You're on the road playing a team that was in the World Series last year and there's nobody there, and

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it's just crazy," Seattle manager Scott Servais said. "Just a different feeling."

Michael Brantley hit a three-run homer to back Justin Verlander.

Baker posted a victory in his 3,500th regular-season game as a manager.

"That was the strangest opener of my career," Baker said.

Baker took over after manager AJ Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow were fired after being suspended for a year for their roles in the cheating during Houston's run to the 2017 World Series title and again in the 2018 season.

Hooted and heckled on the road in spring training before camp was shut in mid-March, the Astros had no trouble with Seattle. No Houston batters were hit by pitches — in their last summer camp tuneup this week, stars José Altuve, Alex Bregman and George Springer were plunked in an exhibition game at Kansas City.

The Astros went 18-1 against the Mariners last season. They got six solid innings from Verlander (1-0) to help them to their 14th straight victory over Seattle, setting a franchise record for most consecutive wins against any opponent.

Verlander struck out seven and walked one as he became the ninth pitcher in MLB history to make 12 opening day starts. He allowed just three hits, but the first two were solo homers to give the Mariners an early lead.

He talked about what it was like to get back on the field amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"Obviously guys are risking a lot here, myself included with a young daughter at home, to bring America's pastime back to people and hopefully cheer them up and give them a little bit of a reprieve from a lot of the stuff that's been happening," he said.

The Astros trailed by one entering the fifth inning after a home run Kyle Seager in the fourth. Houston tied it at 2 on an RBI single by Altuve that chased starter Marco Gonzales (0-1). Zac Grotz took over and was greeted with Bregman's run-scoring single that put the Astros on top.

Brantley then sent an off-speed pitch deep into the seats in right field to extend the lead to 6-2.

Rookie Kyle Lewis, who was one of 10 Mariners to make their first opening day roster, hit a home run to the train tracks atop left field to open the second inning and make it 1-0.

Martín Maldonado tied it with an RBI single in the Houston third and added an RBI with a single in the sixth. Carlos Correa tacked on a run with an RBI double in the seventh.

Both teams wore Black Lives Matter T-shirts during batting practice and most players knelt during a moment of unity before the national anthem. No one from either team knelt during the anthem, but Seattle players Justus Sheffield, J.P. Crawford, Dee Gordon, Shed Long, Lewis and Mallex Smith all raised their right fists as Lyle Lovett sang it virtually.

VERLANDER TALKS RACE

When asked about most of the team kneeling before the anthem on Friday night, Verlander addressed it before speaking at length about his recent realizations about race and racism.

"When I look in the mirror now especially given my platform, it's not good enough just to say: 'OK, I'm not racist,'" he said. "I think that over the past six, seven years that's shown that that's not enough. There needs to be change in our culture. I think bringing attention to it the way we did is a good way to do it."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Astros: DH Aledmys Díaz left after the fifth inning with groin discomfort. ... DH Yordan Álvarez, the 2019 AL Rookie of the Year, and right-hander Jose Urquidy were cleared for baseball activities Friday and will report to the team's alternate training location in Corpus Christi, Texas. Neither player practiced with the team during camp and both were placed on the injured list on July 12 for undisclosed reasons.

UP NEXT

Houston RHP Lance McCullers will make his first start since 2018 after missing last season following Tommy John surgery when the series continues Saturday. He'll be opposed by Seattle RHP Taijuan Walker, who appeared in just one game last season after having Tommy John surgery in 2018.

More AP baseball: <https://apnews.com/MLBbaseball>

Chinese researcher charged with US visa fraud is in custody

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A Chinese researcher accused of concealing her ties to the Chinese military on a visa application she submitted so she could work in the U.S. was booked Friday into a Northern California jail and was expected to appear in federal court Monday.

Sacramento County jail records show Juan Tang, 37, was being held on behalf of federal authorities after she was arrested by the U.S. Marshals Service. It was unclear if she had an attorney who could comment on her behalf.

The Justice Department on Thursday announced charges against Tang and three other scientists living in the U.S., saying they lied about their status as members of China's People's Liberation Army. All were charged with visa fraud.

Tang was the last of the four to be arrested, after the justice department accused the Chinese consulate in San Francisco of harboring a known fugitive. The consulate did not immediately respond to email and Facebook messages seeking comment and it was not possible to leave a telephone message.

The Justice Department said Tang lied about her military ties in 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. Agents found photos of Tang dressed in military uniform and reviewed articles in China identifying her military affiliation.

UC Davis said Tang left her job as a visiting researcher in the Department of Radiation Oncology in June. Her work was funded by a study-based exchange program affiliated with China's Ministry of Education, the university said in a statement.

Agents have said they believe Tang sought refuge at the consulate after they interviewed her at her home in Davis on June 20. The FBI has been interviewing visa holders in more than 25 American cities suspected of hiding their ties to the Chinese military.

The allegations came as U.S.-China relations continued to deteriorate, particularly over allegations of Chinese theft of U.S. intellectual property.

China's consulate in Houston was scheduled to shut down Friday on order of U.S. authorities after Washington accused Chinese agents of trying to steal medical and other research in Texas.

"We can confirm that the PRC Consulate General in Houston is closed," a State Department spokesperson confirmed late Friday. The spokesperson spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to comment publicly.

In response, China on Friday ordered the U.S. to close its consulate in the city of Chengdu.

AP Diplomatic Writer Matthew Lee contributed to this report.

Huge Portland protest crowds, standoff with feds go on

By GILLIAN FLACCUS and SARA CLINE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Thousands of people gathered in Portland streets for another night of protests Friday, the same day a U.S. judge denied Oregon's request to restrict federal agents' actions when they arrest people during chaotic demonstrations that have roiled the city and pitted local officials against the Trump administration.

By 8 p.m. a few hundred people, most wearing masks and many donning helmets, stood near the fountain on Salmon Street Springs, one spot where groups meet before marching to the Hatfield Federal Courthouse and the federal agents there. They chanted and clapped along to the sound of thunderous drums, pausing to listen to speakers.

Among various organized groups, including Healthcare Workers Protest, Teachers against Tyrants, Lawyers for Black Lives and the "Wall of Moms," was Portland Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, who spoke to

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protesters outside the Justice Center.

By 9:40 p.m. crowds of people, pressed shoulder to shoulder, packed the streets chanting "Black Lives Matter" and "Feds go home" as they carried signs and marched to the courthouse.

The Federal agents, deployed by President Donald Trump to tamp down the unrest, have arrested dozens during nightly demonstrations against racial injustice that often turn violent. Democratic leaders in Oregon say federal intervention has worsened the two-month crisis, and the state attorney general sued to allege that some people had been whisked off the streets in unmarked vehicles.

U.S. District Judge Michael Mosman said the state lacked standing to sue on behalf of protesters because the lawsuit was a "highly unusual one with a particular set of rules."

Oregon was seeking a restraining order on behalf of its residents not for injuries that had already happened but to prevent injuries by federal officers in the future. That combination makes the standard for granting such a motion very narrow, and the state did not prove it had standing in the case, Mosman wrote.

Legal experts who reviewed the case before the decision warned that he could reject it on those grounds. A lawsuit from a person accusing federal agents of violating their rights to free speech or against unconstitutional search and seizure would have a much higher chance of success, Michael Dorf, a constitutional law professor at Cornell University, said ahead of the ruling.

"The federal government acted in violation of those individuals' rights and probably acted in violation of the Constitution in the sense of exercising powers that are reserved to the states, but just because the federal government acts in ways that overstep its authority doesn't mean the state has an injury," he said.

The clashes in Portland have further inflamed the nation's political tensions and triggered a crisis over the limits of federal power as Trump moves to send U.S. officers to other Democratic-led cities to combat crime. It's playing out as Trump pushes a new "law and order" reelection strategy after the coronavirus crashed the economy.

Protesters in Portland have been targeting the federal courthouse, setting fires outside and vandalizing the building that U.S. authorities say they have a duty to protect. Federal agents have used tear gas, less-lethal ammunition that left one person critically injured and other force to scatter protesters.

The lawsuit from Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum accused federal agents of arresting protesters without probable cause and using excessive force. She sought a temporary restraining order to "immediately stop federal authorities from unlawfully detaining Oregonians."

David Morrell, an attorney for the U.S. government, called the motion "extraordinary" and told the judge in a hearing this week that it was based solely on "a few threadbare declarations" from witnesses and a Twitter video. Morrell called the protests "dangerous and volatile."

Rosenblum said the ramifications of the ruling were "extremely troubling."

"While I respect Judge Mosman, I would ask this question: If the state of Oregon does not have standing to prevent this unconstitutional conduct by unidentified federal agents running roughshod over her citizens, who does?" Rosenblum said in a statement. "Individuals mistreated by these federal agents can sue for damages, but they can't get a judge to restrain this unlawful conduct more generally."

Before the federal intervention, Mayor Ted Wheeler and other local leaders had said a small cadre of violent activists were drowning out the message of peaceful protesters. But the Democrat, who was tear-gassed this week as he joined protesters, says the federal presence is exacerbating a tense situation and he's repeatedly told them to leave.

Homeland Security acting Secretary Chad Wolf denied that federal agents were inflaming the situation in Portland and said Wheeler legitimized criminality by joining demonstrators, whom Trump has called "anarchists and agitators."

In the lawsuit, Oregon had asked the judge to command agents from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Customs and Border Protection, the Federal Protective Service and the U.S. Marshals Service to stop detaining protesters without probable cause, to identify themselves before arresting anyone and to explain why an arrest is taking place.

Agents have arrested 28 people in Portland this week, including seven from Thursday night's protests,

when they again used tear gas to force thousands of demonstrators from crowding around the courthouse. Protesters projected lasers on the building and tried to take down a security fence. They scattered as clouds of gas rose up and agents fired crowd control munitions.

The Department of Homeland Security said that during Thursday's demonstrations one federal officer was injured and that "no injuries to protesters or rioters have been reported."

Wolf said Tuesday that at least 43 people have been arrested on federal charges at that point.

They face federal charges including assaulting federal officers, arson and damaging federal property, U.S. Attorney Billy J. Williams said. All the defendants are local and were released after making a court appearance.

U.S. officers "working to protect the courthouse have been subjected to nightly threats and assaults from demonstrators while performing their duties," according to a statement from Williams' office.

The Oregon attorney general's motion was one of several lawsuits against authorities' actions. A different federal judge late Thursday blocked U.S. agents from arresting or using physical force against journalists and legal observers at demonstrations.

Sara Cline reported from Salem. Cline is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues.

Associated Press writer Andrew Selsky contributed from Salem, Oregon.

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

Segregation, King meeting set Lewis on quest for justice

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

TROY, Ala. (AP) — Eighteen-year-old John Lewis stepped off a Greyhound bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1958 after receiving a round-trip ticket from the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

The teen had written King a letter because he was interested in trying to attend the all-white university in Troy just 10 miles (16 kilometers) from his family's farm in Pike County.

"So you're John Lewis. The boy from Troy," King said as he rose to greet the teen at a Montgomery church. "I just want to meet the boy from Troy."

Lewis, who became a civil rights icon and a longtime Georgia congressman, died July 17 at the age of 80. He will be remembered with services that begin this weekend in his home state of Alabama before moving to the U.S. Capitol, where he will lie in state, and then Georgia for his funeral next week.

A service celebrating "The Boy from Troy" will be held Saturday on the campus of Troy University. On Sunday, his casket will be carried across Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge, where he and other civil rights activists were beaten by state troopers in 1965, before lying in repose at the Alabama Capitol.

A lifetime of work can be traced back to his home in then-segregated Pike County, where Lewis winced at the signs designating "whites only" locations.

In 1958, Lewis met with King, the Rev. Ralph Abernathy and civil rights lawyer Fred Gray to discuss the possibility of a lawsuit to try to integrate the university, Gray recalled. The lawsuit ultimately did not happen because of concerns about retaliation his parents would face in the majority-white county.

"The fire inside John to do something about segregation continued to burn," Gray said. "Even before he met Dr. King, he was interested in doing something about doing away with segregation. And he did it all his life."

Lewis — then called by his middle name, Robert — was one of 10 children born into a sharecropping family. His parents saved enough money to buy their own farm where the Lewis children worked the fields and tended the animals. A young Lewis was less fond of field work — often grouching about the grueling task — but eagerly took on the job of tending the chickens. An aspiring minister, the young Lewis would

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preach to the chickens to practice his craft.

"He had a way of throwing them corn while he was preaching," younger sister Rosa Tyner remembered.

In his autobiography, "Walking with the Wind," Lewis described how as a youngster he longed to go to the county's public library but wasn't allowed because it was for whites only.

"That killed me. The idea that this was a public library, paid for with government money and I as supposedly a U.S. citizen, but I wasn't allowed in. Even an eight-year-old could see there was something terribly wrong about that," Lewis wrote.

He would eventually apply for a library card there, knowing he would be refused, in what he considered his first official act of resistance to racial apartheid.

"He saw those signs saying that black people go this way, white people go this way. He had a vision that things could, should and would be better with a lot of effort, and he was willing to sacrifice his life for it," younger brother Henry Lewis said.

In 1955, he heard a new voice on the radio: King, who was leading the Montgomery bus boycott about 50 miles (80 kilometers) away.

Lewis became a leader of the Freedom Riders, often facing violent and angry crowds, and was jailed dozens of times. In 1961, he was beaten after arriving at the same Montgomery station where he arrived three years earlier to meet King. In 1965, his skull was fractured in Selma as troopers beat civil rights demonstrators in the melee that became known as Bloody Sunday.

His parents and siblings watched the news footage of the Selma beatings, worried that he would become the next civil rights martyr.

"It was a very stressful time on my parents and the family, but you know, he was on a mission. He was on a mission," Henry Lewis said.

Some of the Lewis siblings live along the same winding, pine-lined road where the family farm stood. His parents' original home was demolished long ago but Lewis came home often to visit, making sure to attend graduations for nieces and nephews.

"He was so humble, and he was so unselfish. ... He would give the least person in the crowd the most attention," Henry Lewis said.

The Troy public library now has a sign outside honoring Lewis. Students at the university where he wasn't allowed to attend study his life and work.

Last year, Lewis announced he had been diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer.

Tyner said that about a week before his death she asked him about possibly seeing another doctor.

"He said, 'No, I'm at peace. I'm at peace and I'm ready to go,'" she said.

With no new law to curb drug costs, Trump tries own changes

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Unable to land the big deal with Congress to curb drug costs, President Donald Trump has moved on his own to allow imports of cheaper medicines, along with other limited steps that could have some election-year appeal.

At a White House ceremony Friday, Trump signed four executive orders. One was about importation. The others would direct drugmaker rebates straight to patients, provide insulin and EpiPens at steep discounts to low-income people, and use lower international prices to pay for some Medicare drugs.

Trump cast his directives as far-reaching, but they mostly update earlier administration ideas that have not yet gone into effect.

"I'm unrigging the system that is many decades old," he declared, promising "massive" savings.

Consumers may not notice immediate changes, since the orders must be carried out by the federal bureaucracy and could face court challenges.

Democrats, meanwhile, are eager to draw a contrast between Trump and their own sweeping plans to authorize Medicare to negotiate lower prices with pharmaceutical companies, an idea the president had backed as a candidate. A bill by Speaker Nancy Pelosi already passed the House and aligns with presi-

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dential candidate Joe Biden's approach.

Friday's event was definitely not the bill-signing the White House had once hoped for. Trump came into office complaining that pharmaceutical companies were "getting away with murder" and promising to bring them under control. Nearly four years later, things are much the same despite some recent moderation in price increases.

Trump pulled his punches, Pelosi said in a statement. "After promising that he would 'negotiate like crazy' for lower prescription drug prices, it is clear that President Trump meant not negotiate at all," she said, adding that if Trump is serious about lowering prices he should tell Senate Republicans to pass her bill.

A drive to enact major legislation this year stalled in Congress. Although Trump told Republican senators that lowering prescription prices is "something you have to do," many remain reluctant to use federal authority to force drugmakers to charge less.

Meanwhile, congressional Democrats calculate that the election will strengthen their hand, and they'll finally be able to enact a law that authorizes Medicare to negotiate prices directly. Neither side in Congress has had an incentive to deal, and the White House has been unable to work Trump's will.

Last year the House did pass Pelosi's Medicare negotiations bill, which would have capped out-of-pocket drug costs for older people and expanded program benefits as well. It had no path forward in the Republican Senate, and the White House calls it unworkable.

But there was an alternative. A bipartisan Senate bill backed by Trump stopped short of giving Medicare bargaining power, but would have limited annual price increases and capped costs for older people. The bill passed out of a Senate committee but was never brought to the full body.

"It's not clear why the administration hasn't made a bigger push to line up votes to get a bill through the Senate and a deal with Congress, given strong public support to lower drug costs," said Tricia Neuman, a Medicare expert with the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation.

Americans remain worried about drug costs, with nearly 9 in 10 saying in a recent Gallup-West Health poll that they're concerned the pharmaceutical industry will take advantage of the coronavirus pandemic to raise prices. Another Gallup-West Health survey found 65% saying the Trump administration had made little or no progress limiting increases in prescription drug costs.

It's a particularly important issue for older people, who rely on medications to manage the medical problems associated with advancing age. Trump's support has eroded among the elderly during the haphazard federal response to COVID-19.

Drugmakers remain adamantly opposed to government efforts to curb prices. Trump's administration "has decided to pursue a radical and dangerous policy to set prices based on rates paid in countries that he has labeled as socialist, which will harm patients today and into the future," Stephen Ubl, head of the pharmaceutical lobby, said in a statement.

Trump delayed the effective date of the international pricing order for a month, to see if he can get a deal with industry.

The four orders would:

- Allow states, wholesalers and pharmacies to import FDA-approved drugs from foreign countries and sell them in the U.S. Trump has long complained that countries where the government sets the price of drugs are taking advantage of American consumers. The order includes a special provision to allow wholesalers and pharmacies to re-import insulin and biological drugs.

- Use the lowest price among other economically advanced countries to set what Medicare pays for certain drugs administered in a doctor's office, including many cancer medications. This would apply to the most expensive medications covered by Medicare's "Part B," which pays for outpatient care. Drugmakers are particularly leery of the approach, since Democrats want to use it more broadly to allow Medicare to directly negotiate prices.

- Direct federally funded community health centers to pass discounts they now get for insulin and EpiPens directly to low-income patients.

- Ensure that rebates drugmakers now pay to benefit managers and insurers get passed directly to

patients when they buy a medication. The White House last year withdrew an earlier version of the proposal, after the Congressional Budget Office estimated it would cost taxpayers \$177 billion over 10 years.

Trump plays on fears in play for the suburbs

By SARA BURNETT and MICHAEL RUBINKAM Associated Press

QUAKERTOWN, Pa. (AP) — President Donald Trump this week sent a message to “The Suburban Housewives of America,” and in a single tweet summed up his strategy for shoring up support in communities critical to his reelection chances: Scare them.

“Biden will destroy your neighborhood and your American Dream. I will preserve it, and make it even better!” he wrote.

In tweets, campaign ads and new policies, Trump is trying to win over suburbanites by promising to protect their “beautiful” neighborhoods from the racial unrest that has gripped some U.S. cities this summer. He’s sent federal agents to stem violence in cities, warned of a way of life being “obliterated,” and raised the prospect of falling property values.

It’s a strategy with deep roots in presidential politics, racist overtones and some record of success. But even some GOP strategists and Republican voters note it doesn’t account for the rapid demographic changes in the suburbs and may be misreading the top concerns of voters he’s trying to retain.

“I think he’s just throwing stuff against the wall and seeing what sticks,” said Linda Abate, an unemployed bartender in this working-class suburb about a 45-minute drive from Philadelphia. Abate says she voted for Trump in 2016 and is likely, but has not decided, to do so again.

But she has more pressing things to worry about than threats of lawlessness in her quiet borough — namely the looming expiration of enhanced federal unemployment benefits.

“That \$600 runs out this week. I’m more worried about that than looting in Quakertown,” she said.

The commuter towns and leafy developments circling Philadelphia and other U.S. cities — areas with increasing racial diversity and a growing number of college-educated voters — have been a clear source of trouble for the president and his party.

Republicans lost more than three dozen suburban House districts in 2018, when suburban voters backed Democrats by an 11-point margin, according to AP VoteCast polling.

Recent polls show Democrats’ presumptive nominee, former Vice President Joe Biden, holding that edge — with a 9 percentage point margin in the recent Washington Post-ABC News poll and an 11 percentage point margin in a recent Fox News poll. Both surveys showed an especially wide advantage for the presumptive Democratic nominee among suburban women.

That’s a dire prospect for the president. Republicans have long relied on finding upper-income and white voters in the growing suburbs to build on their base in rural America and win elections. But those voters have been harder to win over in the Trump era, forcing the GOP to move farther away from cities, into less-populated exurbs and shrinking small towns, in search of votes.

In recent weeks, Trump has tried to regain his footing. His campaign launched ads claiming inaccurately that Biden wants to defund the police — a rallying cry for some of the protesters who took to the streets after George Floyd’s death in May. He revoked an Obama-era housing policy aimed at ending racial disparities in suburbs, saying it would lead to crime and lower home values. And this week, Trump announced he was activating federal agents to fight crime in Chicago and Albuquerque, after sending agents to Portland, where local officials say their presence has exacerbated tensions between protesters and police.

The Trump campaign believes these moves will resonate with both suburbanites and older voters who may be rattled by the violent images, and turned off by calls to restructure police departments. (One new ad depicted an elderly white woman calling 911 for help with a burglar at the door. The operator doesn’t pick up in time.)

There is some evidence to support that tack. The Washington Post-ABC News survey found 58% of suburban voters opposed reducing funding for police and spending the money instead on social services, while 37% supported it.

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"If we don't have law and order in this country, we don't have a country. It's outrageous to let this stuff go on," said Gloria Doak, a 70-year-old Trump backer in Bucks County, where Democrat Hillary Clinton only narrowly beat Trump four years ago.

But recent polls have also found strong support in the suburbs for the broader push for racial justice and the Black Lives Matter movement — a reminder that suburbs are becoming a more politically complex and diverse battleground.

In 2018, one in four suburban voters identified as nonwhite, according to AP VoteCast.

That includes Robert Jackson, a 39-year-old Black man and a Democrat who moved four years ago to the suburbs from Philadelphia with his family in search of better schools.

He says he saw plenty of Trump signs then around his hometown of Lansdale, in Montgomery County. Now, he thinks many of his neighbors who voted for Trump have buyer's remorse.

"Suburbanites took a gamble on him and it didn't pay off," said Jackson.

Back in Quakertown, Alex Whalen, 19, said she thinks Trump will lose just as many suburban voters as he gains with his law-and-order pitch. The Democrat doesn't think voters will recognize the sort of urban chaos he is describing.

"Anything that's happened in Quakertown has been peaceful," she said.

Christine Matthews, a GOP pollster and Trump critic, said the president's "law and order" strategy is based on an outdated idea of suburbia as the overwhelmingly white communities of 50 years ago.

"He doesn't have any idea what the suburbs are," she said.

Others linked it directly to Richard Nixon's "Southern Strategy," which played on white voters' racism to consolidate Republican control of the South for generations to come.

"He's gone to the well, gone to the old playbook, but it's a much different playing field" now, said Fletcher McClellan, a political scientist at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania.

Dan Johnson, a 72-year-old retired insurance agent from Brookfield, Wisconsin, outside Milwaukee, also see race politics in Trump's play.

"I think there's a lot of hidden racism among people who voted for Donald Trump," said Johnson, who voted for Republicans for president every election since 1980 but supported a third-party candidate in 2016 — a decision he now sees as a "wasted vote" — because he was turned off by Trump but didn't like Hillary Clinton. "I don't doubt for a minute that he's trying to mine that."

Still, in Texas, where Democrats are trying to flip several suburban House seats, Cynthia Rauzi said it's not far-fetched to think that Trump's dark warnings will resonate with her neighbors in suburban Round Rock, outside Austin.

When she joined a small rally against police brutality outside a private golf course this summer, one driver stopped to lay on the horn and wave a middle finger out his window. Trump won this district on the outskirts of liberal Austin by 13 points in 2016. Just two years later, Republican Rep. John Carter only narrowly escaped defeat.

Rauzi, a 57-year-old yoga instructor and mother of three, called Trump's tweet directed to "The Suburban Housewives of America" offensive.

"To suggest that suburban housewives are a bunch of pearl-clutchers who are afraid of everything ... we're smarter than that," she said.

Burnett reported from Chicago. Associated Press reporters Jonathan Lemire in New York, Emily Swanson in Washington, D.C., Paul Weber in Austin, Texas and Thomas Beaumont in Des Moines, Iowa, contributed to this report.

Blue Jays to play in Buffalo minor league park amid pandemic

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — The displaced Toronto Blue Jays will play in a minor league ballpark in Buffalo, New York, this year after being turned down by the Canadian government and blocked from playing in Pitts-

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burgh by the state of Pennsylvania.

The Blue Jays' home for the season will be Sahlen Field, where the Triple-A affiliate Buffalo Bisons usually play.

The team had been looking for a major league ballpark for its home games after the Canadian government wouldn't allow it to play in Toronto but the search was unsuccessful. Pennsylvania health officials rejected a deal to play in Pittsburgh because of rising COVID-19 cases there.

The team also held talks with the Baltimore Orioles about Camden Yards, but the Blue Jays didn't want to wait on Maryland officials with their season starting Friday.

"Baltimore never got to a situation to where we were denied," Blue Jays President Mark Shapiro said. "At some point continuing to explore and look at an option like Baltimore was not going to be a risk we could take. That risk of being turned down certainly existed. And so we obviously had to make a decision knowing we had a very good alternative, albeit not a major league one."

The Blue Jays opened the season on the road at with a 6-4 victory over Tampa Bay on Friday. Their first scheduled home series, against the Washington Nationals on July 29 and 30, will now also be on the road to accommodate infrastructure modifications at Sahlen Field to help it meet Major League Baseball standards and COVID-19 safety requirements.

The Blue Jays' first game in Buffalo will be either on July 31 against the Philadelphia Phillies or on Aug. 11 against the Miami Marlins.

"This whole year has been crazy but it has been especially with our team not being able to find a home and being turned away from Toronto and Pittsburgh," second baseman Cavan Biggio said after Toronto's season opening win.

"Landing in a Triple-A field, I think the team is playing with a little bit of a chip on our shoulder. We're just kind of tired of it and ready to play."

The team had also considered playing home games at its training facility in Dunedin, Florida, but that is among the states that are virus hot spots.

Health officials in Canada and Pennsylvania were worried about the frequent travel by players throughout the U.S., one of the countries hit hardest by the pandemic.

General manager Ross Atkins had said his team had more than five contingency plans for a home stadium.

"It was good to hear that we would finally have a home. One of the other options was to play all the games on the road and I thought it would take too much toll on the players and lead to fatigue," Blue Jays pitcher Hyun-Jin Ryu said through a translator.

Slugger Vladimir Guerrero Jr. expects the Buffalo park to favor pitchers because it is a larger field than the Rogers Centre in Toronto.

"It's going to be different because of the way it is in Toronto compared to Buffalo," Guerrero said through an interpreter. "There are no fans anyway. We're just going to go play baseball."

Blue Jays players had made it clear to the front office they wanted to play in a major league park. Outfielder Randal Grichuk had described Buffalo as a "worst case."

"This process has no doubt tested our team's resilience, but our players and staff refuse to make excuses," Shapiro said.

Shapiro said substantial new construction will be required to upgrade Sahlen Field. The locker room needs to be expanded so players can practice social distancing. The lights need to be upgraded as well. The team will bear the majority, if not all, of the costs, he said.

The team also reached out to the NHL's Buffalo Sabres about using some of their facilities.

U.S. Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York urged baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred this week to pick Buffalo.

"I've always been a Bisons and Bills fan so I guess now I'll be a Blue Jays fan, at least this year," Schumer said in an interview with The Associated Press. "It seemed so logical for the Blue Jays to go to Buffalo for geographic and market reasons. If they want to expand their market it's very good to be in western New York. It's a good facility."

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo had told reporters before the announcement that he spoke to Manfred

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on Friday morning.

"If we can get Toronto playing here, I say great. We have the protocols in place, it will be done safely," Cuomo said. "I'd rather it happen here. It's good for Buffalo."

At a news conference, Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz put on a Blue Jays cap and jersey in anticipation of what he said will be the first major league game to be played in Buffalo since 1885.

The Blue Jays and visiting teams and personnel will fill two hotels, Poloncarz said, and restaurants will cater their food. He told residents not to expect to bump into players around town. "They will basically be sequestered and quarantining in hotels," Poloncarz said.

At a separate news conference at the ballpark, Mike Buczkowski, president of Rich Baseball Operations, which manages the Bisons, said the team won't know when the first game will be played until it evaluates what modifications will be needed.

"We're further challenged in doing that by COVID and by the protocols and the safety measures that have to be in place for the players," Buczkowski said.

"Some of it will take days. Some of it is going to take probably longer than that. So that's why we really can't say exactly which day would be the first game that we would host here."

Associated Press Writer Carolyn Thompson in Buffalo, New York, contributed to this report.

US sued over expulsion of migrant children detained in hotel

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Legal groups sued the U.S. government Friday to try to stop the expulsion of children detained in hotel rooms by the Trump administration under an emergency declaration citing the coronavirus.

The owners of the Hampton Inn & Suites in McAllen, Texas, said Friday night that they ended any reservations on rooms used to detain minors. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement also confirmed that all children had been taken away from the hotel, two days after The Associated Press reported that it was one of three hotels used nearly 200 times for detention of children as young as 1.

But ICE repeatedly refused to answer questions about where contractors have taken the children, citing a potential security risk.

"The Trump administration is holding children in secret in hotels, refusing to give lawyers access to them so it can expel them back to danger without even a chance for the children to show they warrant asylum," said Lee Gelernt, a lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union, which filed suit on behalf of the Texas Civil Rights Project.

Gelernt said suing on behalf of unnamed children was necessary "because the government is refusing to provide any information about the children." The lawsuit was filed in Washington federal court, and Gelernt said he would seek to include any minors detained at the hotel as of Thursday.

Government data obtained by AP shows children were detained 123 times at the McAllen hotel in April and June. Castle Hospitality, which operates the McAllen location, refused to say how many rooms had been booked for use by ICE or its private contractor, MVM Inc.

The other Hampton Inns are near the airports in Phoenix and El Paso, Texas, according to the data obtained by AP.

Under federal anti-trafficking law and a court settlement, most children who cross the U.S.-Mexico border are supposed to go to facilities operated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and eventually placed with family sponsors.

But the Trump administration says it must expel children to prevent the spread of COVID-19, citing an emergency declaration in March by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. At least 2,000 children have since been expelled without getting the chance to seek refuge in the U.S.

Some children are as young as 1 and others have been held in hotels two weeks or longer, according to government data obtained by AP for April and June.

Roberto Lopez of the Texas Civil Rights Project said when he entered the hotel last Friday, he saw people in scrubs going room to room on the fourth and fifth floors of the Hampton Inn caring for children. He

saw one small child holding on to a gate in a doorway as an adult on the other side played with him.

But on Thursday, when another advocate from the group went to the fourth floor, three men dressed in plainclothes stopped him, according to a video the group posted online. After the men asked for his identity, the advocate yelled in Spanish that he was a lawyer trying to help. The video shows the men in plainclothes shoving him and forcing him into an elevator, repeatedly refusing to identify themselves.

On Friday, ICE described the lawyer and another person with him as people who "attempted to forcefully gain access" to an area its contract officers were restricting.

A group of Congressional Democrats wrote Friday to Acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf expressing "deep alarm" about the detention of children in hotels.

"We are gravely concerned that the CDC order is being grossly misused to circumvent asylum and child welfare protections," the letter said.

US Supreme Court denies Nevada church's appeal of virus rule

By SCOTT SONNER Associated Press

RENO, Nev. (AP) — A sharply divided U.S. Supreme Court denied a rural Nevada church's request late Friday to strike down as unconstitutional a 50-person cap on worship services as part of the state's ongoing response to the coronavirus.

In a 5-4 decision, the high court refused to grant the request from the Christian church east of Reno to be subjected to the same COVID-19 restrictions in Nevada that allow casinos, restaurants and other businesses to operate at 50% of capacity with proper social distancing.

Calvary Chapel Dayton Valley argued that the hard cap on religious gatherings was an unconstitutional violation of its parishioners' First Amendment rights to express and exercise their beliefs.

Chief Justice John Roberts sided with the liberal majority in denying the request without explanation.

Three justices wrote strongly worded dissenting opinions on behalf of the four conservatives who said they would have granted the injunctive relief while the court fully considers the merits of the case.

"That Nevada would discriminate in favor of the powerful gaming industry and its employees may not come as a surprise, but this Court's willingness to allow such discrimination is disappointing," Justice Samuel Alito wrote in a dissent joined by Clarence Thomas and Brett Kavanaugh.

"We have a duty to defend the Constitution, and even a public health emergency does not absolve us of that responsibility," Alito said. "The Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion. It says nothing about freedom to play craps or blackjack, to feed tokens into a slot machine or to engage in any other game of chance."

Kavanaugh also wrote his own dissent, as did Justice Neil Gorsuch, who said today's world "with a pandemic upon us, poses unusual challenges."

"But there is no world in which the Constitution permits Nevada to favor Caesars Palace over Calvary Chapel," Gorsuch wrote.

David Cortman, senior counsel for Georgia-based Alliance Defending Freedom representing the church, said in an email sent to The Associated Press late Friday that they were disappointed in the ruling but will continue to work to protect Calvary Chapel and others "from discriminatory policies that put religious groups at the back of the line for reopening."

"When the government treats churches worse than casinos, gyms, and indoor amusement parks in its COVID-19 response, it clearly violates the Constitution," he said.

The governor's office didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Calvary Chapel Dayton Valley appealed to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals last month after a U.S. judge in Nevada upheld the state's policy that allows casinos and other businesses to operate at 50% of normal capacity.

The appellate court in San Francisco is still considering the appeal, but it has denied the church's request for an emergency injunction in the meantime. Its ruling July 2 pointed to the Supreme Court's refusal in May to strike down California's limit on the size of religious gatherings.

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The church in Nevada's Lyon County appealed to the Supreme Court six days later, asking for an emergency injunction prohibiting the state from enforcing the cap on religious gatherings at least temporarily while the justices consider the merits of the case.

"The governor allows hundreds to thousands to assemble in pursuit of financial fortunes but only 50 to gather in pursuit of spiritual ones. That is unconstitutional," its lawyers wrote in their most recent filing to the high court last week.

The church wants to allow as many as 90 people to attend services at the same time — with masks required, sitting 6-feet apart — at the sanctuary with a capacity of 200. Other secular businesses in the state that are allowed to operate at half capacity include gyms, hair salons, bowling alleys and water parks.

Nevada's lawyers said last week several courts nationwide have followed the Supreme Court's lead in upholding state authority to impose emergency restrictions in response to COVID-19.

"Temporarily narrowing restrictions on the size of mass gatherings, including for religious services, protects the health and well-being of Nevada citizens during a global pandemic," they wrote.

Alito said in the lead dissent that by allowing thousands to gather in casinos, the state cannot claim to have a compelling interest in limiting religious gatherings to 50 people — regardless of the size of the facility and the measures adopted to prevent the spread of the virus.

"The idea that allowing Calvary Chapel to admit 90 worshipers present a greater public health risk than allowing casinos to operate at 50% capacity is hard to swallow," he wrote.

Kavanaugh said he agreed that courts should be "very differential to the states' line-drawing in opening businesses and allowing certain activities during the pandemic."

"But COVID-19 is not a blank check for a state to discriminate against religious people, religious organizations and religious services," he wrote in his own dissent. "Nevada is discriminating against religion."

With no new law to curb drug costs, Trump tries own changes

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Unable to land the big deal with Congress to curb drug costs, President Donald Trump on Friday moved on his own to allow imports of cheaper medicines, along with other limited steps that could have some election-year appeal.

At a White House ceremony, Trump signed four executive orders. One was about importation. The others would direct drugmaker rebates straight to patients, provide insulin and EpiPens at steep discounts to low-income people, and use lower international prices to pay for some Medicare drugs.

Trump cast his directives as far-reaching, but they mostly update earlier administration ideas that have not yet gone into effect.

"I'm unrigging the system that is many decades old," he declared, promising "massive" savings.

Consumers may not notice immediate changes, since the orders must be carried out by the federal bureaucracy and could face court challenges.

Democrats, meanwhile, are eager to draw a contrast between Trump and their own sweeping plans to authorize Medicare to negotiate lower prices with pharmaceutical companies, an idea the president had backed as a candidate. A bill by Speaker Nancy Pelosi already passed the House and aligns with presidential candidate Joe Biden's approach.

Friday's event was definitely not the bill-signing the White House had once hoped for. Trump came into office complaining that pharmaceutical companies were "getting away with murder" and promising to bring them under control. Nearly four years later, things are much the same despite some recent moderation in price increases.

Trump pulled his punches, Pelosi said in a statement. "After promising that he would 'negotiate like crazy' for lower prescription drug prices, it is clear that President Trump meant not negotiate at all," she said, adding that if Trump is serious about lowering prices he should tell Senate Republicans to pass her bill.

A drive to enact major legislation this year stalled in Congress. Although Trump told Republican senators that lowering prescription prices is "something you have to do," many remain reluctant to use federal

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authority to force drugmakers to charge less.

Meanwhile, congressional Democrats calculate that the election will strengthen their hand, and they'll finally be able to enact a law that authorizes Medicare to negotiate prices directly. Neither side in Congress has had an incentive to deal, and the White House has been unable to work Trump's will.

Last year the House did pass Pelosi's Medicare negotiations bill, which would have capped out-of-pocket drug costs for older people and expanded program benefits as well. It had no path forward in the Republican Senate, and the White House calls it unworkable.

But there was an alternative. A bipartisan Senate bill backed by Trump stopped short of giving Medicare bargaining power, but would have limited annual price increases and capped costs for older people. The bill passed out of a Senate committee but was never brought to the full body.

"It's not clear why the administration hasn't made a bigger push to line up votes to get a bill through the Senate and a deal with Congress, given strong public support to lower drug costs," said Tricia Neuman, a Medicare expert with the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation.

Americans remain worried about drug costs, with nearly 9 in 10 saying in a recent Gallup-West Health poll that they're concerned the pharmaceutical industry will take advantage of the coronavirus pandemic to raise prices. Another Gallup-West Health survey found 65% saying the Trump administration had made little or no progress limiting increases in prescription drug costs.

It's a particularly important issue for older people, who rely on medications to manage the medical problems associated with advancing age. Trump's support has eroded among the elderly during the haphazard federal response to COVID-19.

Drugmakers remain adamantly opposed to government efforts to curb prices. Trump's administration "has decided to pursue a radical and dangerous policy to set prices based on rates paid in countries that he has labeled as socialist, which will harm patients today and into the future," Stephen Ubl, head of the pharmaceutical lobby, said in a statement.

Trump delayed the effective date of the international pricing order for a month, to see if he can get a deal with industry.

The four orders would:

— Allow states, wholesalers and pharmacies to import FDA-approved drugs from foreign countries and sell them in the U.S. Trump has long complained that countries where the government sets the price of drugs are taking advantage of American consumers. The order includes a special provision to allow wholesalers and pharmacies to re-import insulin and biological drugs.

— Use the lowest price among other economically advanced countries to set what Medicare pays for certain drugs administered in a doctor's office, including many cancer medications. This would apply to the most expensive medications covered by Medicare's "Part B," which pays for outpatient care. Drugmakers are particularly leery of the approach, since Democrats want to use it more broadly to allow Medicare to directly negotiate prices.

— Direct federally funded community health centers to pass discounts they now get for insulin and EpiPens directly to low-income patients.

— Ensure that rebates drugmakers now pay to benefit managers and insurers get passed directly to patients when they buy a medication. The White House last year withdrew an earlier version of the proposal, after the Congressional Budget Office estimated it would cost taxpayers \$177 billion over 10 years.

Thousands of families evicted in Sao Paulo amid pandemic

By TATIANA POLLASTRI and MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Jussara de Jesus never thought that her family would live in a shack.

But work as a hairdresser dried for up after the novel coronavirus hit Brazilian metropolis Sao Paulo. She couldn't afford \$150 a month in rent for the small house where she and her three children lived. Three months ago, they were evicted.

They moved to Jardim Julieta, one of Brazil's newest favelas, or shantytowns. With more than 800 shacks

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of wood and plastic sheeting, there are already several thousand people living in what used to be a parking lot for trucks in one of the poorest areas of the city.

"We didn't even have the means to build the shack. We came with some plastic sheets," de Jesus said.

The growing number of evictions driven by Brazil's COVID-19 pandemic is worsening an already serious housing problem in the country. Before the pandemic, local authorities counted more than 200,000 families waiting for adequate housing in Sao Paulo, a city of 12 million.

The human rights and research group LabCidade estimates more than 2,000 families have lost their homes in Sao Paulo state since March, with another 1,000 facing the same risk in upcoming weeks. It is a high figure for a state with 46 million residents, about the same population as Spain.

Raquel Rolnik, a former U.N. special investigator on adequate housing and a coordinator for LabCidade, says similar evictions have happened all over Brazil.

"We will see many more people on the streets soon," Rolnik told The Associated Press on the phone. "There is no public policy to handle these cases."

Since the first wave of 35 residents built shacks in Jardim Julieta in mid-March, another 765 families joined and 200 are in line. Most were evicted from their homes during the new coronavirus pandemic, at a time local authorities said they should stay home.

Judges, mayors and, realtors and landlords have often ignored pleas to suspend rent due to the virus, despite requests from prosecutors and human rights groups. Congress passed a bill to address the issue in June, but it was vetoed by President Jair Bolsonaro. Not even moving into a favela assures residents will have shelter for now, since police can still force them out.

Sao Paulo state is the epicenter of pandemic in Brazil, with more than 20,000 fatalities of the country's 82,000.

Karina Valdo, 38, was cleaning hospitals before she got pregnant with her third son, now eight months old. She and her husband depended on day labor to survive, but still managed to pay their \$120 rent. When the virus struck she sold many of her household appliances to keep her one-bedroom house. But that was not enough to convince her landlord to suspend her payments.

"If you don't pay, you go to the streets," she said.

De Jesus, Valdo and their neighbors, who often share meals without any regard for social distancing, are constantly worried about the police. Officers have recently told them they must leave by Aug. 8. Prosecutors and activists are trying to block that move in court.

Many residents of Jardim Julieta were evicted from another favela that was dismantled by police on June 16 after a judge's decision to return the land to its owner. Sao Paulo city hall said it offered shelter to the hundreds of affected families on the east edge of the city.

Nearly 30,000 families get an \$80 subsidy from the city Sao Paulo for rent, but experts consider that amount too small. Brazil's far-right administration has cut federal investment in housing programs.

Francisco Comaru, an urban planning professor at university UFABC, said the city of São Bernardo do Campo, outside Sao Paulo, has been one of the most aggressive with evictions. Dozens have been made through administrative decisions, with no judiciary intervention.

"Authorities are doing exactly the opposite of what they should be doing now," Comaru added. "It is as if they didn't understand what we are going through."

Valdo said she is hoping for a judge's decision to stop the evictions from Jardim Julieta. She said she is more afraid of being thrown out again with her three children than contracting coronavirus.

"For the government, people like us are just dust," she said. "We don't exist."

At 88, former Sheriff Joe Arpaio makes 2nd comeback bid

By JACQUES BILLEAUD Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Joe Arpaio is trying to win back the sheriff's post in metro Phoenix that he held for 24 years, facing his former second-in-command in the Aug. 4 Republican primary in what has become his second comeback bid.

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The 88-year-old lawman, who was unseated in the 2016 sheriff's race by a Democratic challenger and was trounced in a 2018 U.S. Senate race, has based much of his campaign around his support for President Donald Trump.

He has vowed to bring back things that the courts have either deemed illegal or his successor has done away with — immigration crackdowns, a complex of jail tents and other now-discarded trademarks.

"I'm telling you right now: I am going to do 90% of what I did during my 24 years," Arpaio said. "That's the way it's going to be."

Arpaio and his former second-in-command, Jerry Sheridan, are considered front-runners in GOP primary. Glendale Officer Mike Crawford and Mesa security guard Lehland Burton also are seeking the Republican nomination.

The winner will go to face Democrat Paul Penzone, who crushed Arpaio in 2016 and is running unopposed in his primary.

Arpaio and Sheridan were forced out of the agency amid heavy criticism for being found in civil contempt of court for disobeying a judge's order 2011 to stop Arpaio's traffic patrols that targeted immigrants.

Arpaio said he's out to prove his 2016 defeat was a fluke. But he has far less campaign money than he used to have and acknowledges some voters don't even know he's on the ballot this year.

Sheridan, who said Arpaio backed out a promise to support him, said his 38 years in law enforcement could help turn around a tarnished agency and insisted that he is his own man.

"I would argue with him when I disagreed with him," Sheridan said. "A lot of the time he would listen to what I said. Other times he would brush me off. I am not Joe Arpaio."

Mike O'Neil, a longtime Arizona pollster who has followed Arpaio's career, believes general election voters would vote down Arpaio. But he said it's an open question whether primary voters — his most faithful supporters — would reject him. "In a Republican primary, it's anybody's guess," O'Neil said.

Over the last seven years, the sheriff's office has been undergoing a court-ordered overhaul after a judge ruled sheriff's deputies had racially profiled Latinos in Arpaio's immigration patrols. The civil contempt findings against Arpaio and Sheridan were made in the profiling case.

Arpaio was later convicted of criminal contempt for defying the order, but he was spared a possible jail sentence when Trump pardoned him. Sheridan wasn't charged with criminal contempt.

Arpaio and Sheridan vigorously dispute the contempt findings. Sheridan said he was unaware of the highly publicized court order and didn't run the unit that carried out the immigration patrols.

Taxpayer costs from the case are projected to reach \$178 million by next summer. No one in county government can say when the spending will subside or end.

A report on the agency's traffic enforcement said stops of Hispanic and Black drivers in 2019 were more likely to last longer and result in searches than those of white drivers.

Penzone declined to an interview request.

Crawford, a 28-year police veteran who works as a patrol officer, said the scandals stemming from the profiling case drove him to run. "We definitely need to get rid of those types of behavior in law enforcement," he said.

Burton, a write-in candidate who hasn't worked in law enforcement, said the agency's biggest challenge is its biased treatment of Blacks and Hispanics.

Burton said he can speak credibly to those who have been discriminated against because he's an outsider to police culture and, as a Black man, has been hassled and mistreated by officers in the past.

Arpaio's political liabilities have been piling up for years: \$147 million in taxpayer-funded legal bills, a failure to investigate more than 400 sex-crimes complaints made to the office and launching criminal investigations against judges, politicians and others who were at odds with him.

His first political comeback attempt ended badly when he placed third in a 2018 U.S. Senate primary, even losing his adopted hometown of Fountain Hills.

Though Arpaio is leading among sheriff's candidates in fundraising with \$1.2 million — most of his donations came from other states — the total pales in comparison to the \$10 million he raised at this point in 2016.

Arpaio said he remains mentally sharp and physically healthy. If he were to win and serve the full four years, he would finish that term six months before his 93rd birthday.

He is quick to point out that 77-year-old former Vice President Joe Biden and 87-year-old Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg continue to work as they are getting up in age.

"No one is indispensable," Arpaio said. "If I die in office, then you appoint someone else."

26 deaths in 3 US convents, as nuns confront the pandemic

By MIKE HOUSEHOLDER and DAVID CRARY Associated Press

LIVONIA, Michigan (AP) — At a convent near Detroit, 13 nuns have died of COVID-19. The toll is seven at a center for Maryknoll sisters in New York, and six at a Wisconsin convent that serves nuns with fading memories.

Each community perseveres, though strict social-distancing rules have made communal solidarity a challenge as the losses are mourned.

Only small, private funeral services were permitted as the death toll mounted in April and May at the Felician Sisters convent in Livonia, Michigan — a spiritual hardship for the surviving nuns.

"The yearnings, throughout the pandemic, were to be with our dying sisters and hold our traditional services, funeral Mass and burial, to comfort each other," said Sister Mary Christopher Moore, a leader of the Felician Sisters of North America.

For weeks the Livonia nuns went without Mass and dined in shifts, only one per table.

Those and other restrictions have eased in recent weeks as regular activities slowly resume.

But strict social-distancing rules remain in effect at the Our Lady of the Angels convent in Greenfield, Wisconsin, which provides memory care for nuns of the School Sisters of St. Francis and the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

Nearly all communal activities have been suspended since March, and the 40 remaining residents are not allowed to see visitors, said Michael O'Loughlin, communications director for the School Sisters of St. Francis.

"The changes are confusing for the sisters — the loss of their religious activities has been very difficult, with no Masses or daily Rosary in chapel," he said. "They do not understand the virus and find it difficult to stay confined to their rooms."

At the Maryknoll Sisters' center in Ossining, New York, as at the Greenfield convent, there have been no new coronavirus cases in recent weeks.

"Thank God things are stable," said a Maryknoll spokeswoman, Chelsea Lopez. She said 177 sisters are still residing there and abiding by health officials' recommended social-distancing protocols.

In several important respects, convents share some of the same health vulnerabilities as nursing homes, the hardest-hit sector in the U.S. in terms of COVID-19 deaths. In many cases, their populations are elderly and live in close quarters with one another.

"We realize that our communal lifestyle makes us, along with other religious communities, a target for this virus," Sister Mary Christopher acknowledged back in May.

In Livonia, some of the nuns who survived COVID-19 infections have continued to experience weakness and respiratory problems, according to Sister Mary Christopher. Though in-person Masses have resumed, some of the sisters continue to participate via closed-circuit television or other electronic devices.

The 13 deaths — more than 20% of the convent's population — have been a huge blow for the surrounding community, where the nuns played important roles. Those who died ranged in age from 69 to 99; they included a librarian, a nurse and several teachers.

The Felician Sisters "have been taking care of people in our community literally from cradle to grave," said Livonia Mayor Maureen Miller Brosnan. "Now we have less nuns that are available to work in the hospital, less nuns that are available in our teaching institutions, less nuns that are out there taking care of making sure our souls are protected."

Brosnan, who took over as mayor of the city of about 93,000 in January, cited the nuns' role in a school,

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a university, a hospital, a home for retired clergy and a hospice, all within walking distance of their Livonia compound.

"They're responsible for my education through grade school," she said. "They've educated my husband. They educated my three children. We put our hearts in their hands."

At Our Lady of the Angels in Wisconsin, the nuns who died in March and April had retired years ago. Some moved into the facility when it opened in 2011.

Among them were Sister Josephine Seier, 94, who had been with the School Sisters of St. Francis for 79 years, and Sister Mary Francele Sherburne, 99, who spent 34 years as an English professor at Mount Mary University.

The eldest was Sister Annelda Holtkamp, 102, who spent 33 years at St. Joseph's High School Convent in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

According to her order, Sister Annelda grew up with six siblings on a farm in St. Paul, Iowa, walking more than 4 miles each way to the Catholic school she attended.

In her 20s she joined the School Sisters of St. Francis. Her first duties were working in a convent laundry facility.

Her last assignment was at St. Mary's Convent in Chilton, Wisconsin, where, according to the order, she was known for her embroidery skills: "I could make almost anything," she said after winning ribbons at the county fair.

O'Loughlin praised the work of Our Lady of the Angels' staff as the pandemic took its toll — working double shifts without any days off for weeks.

"The staff focused on all aspects of caregiving and, because of restrictions, also had to do their own shipping and receiving, housekeeping, pastoral care, maintenance and technical support," he said. "They truly are heroes who have been going above and beyond the call for months."

Crary reported from New York City.

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Extra unemployment aid expires as virus threatens new states

By GEOFF MULVIHILL, JUSTIN PRITCHARD and DAVE KOLPACK Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — As public health officials warned Friday that the coronavirus posed new risks to parts of the Midwest and South, enhanced federal payments that helped avert financial ruin for millions of unemployed Americans were set to expire — leaving threadbare safety nets offered by individual states to catch them.

Since early in the pandemic, the federal government has added \$600 to the weekly unemployment checks that states send. That increase ends this week, and with Congress still haggling over next steps, most states will not be able to offer nearly as much.

The extra federal aid helped keep Wally Wendt and his family afloat.

Wendt, 54, of Everett, Washington, was laid off from the fitness company where he worked for 31 years. The extra federal benefits helped him pay a loan to put a new roof on his house that he took out before the virus struck and the economy cratered.

The money also helps his daughter, who lost her restaurant job. With the boost, she can afford diapers, baby formula, rent and utilities. Without it, Wendt said, his daughter and her two children might move in with him.

"The politicians need to get their ducks in a row," Wendt said. "The pressure's not on them, it's on all of us blue-collar workers who are struggling to make a living."

In addition to the end of the \$600 payments, federal protections against evictions also are set to expire. Standard unemployment benefits often leave recipients with poverty-level incomes, but they are sure

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to continue, even as states wrestle with diminishing unemployment trust funds.

Every state offers assistance for at least some unemployed workers based on a portion of their previous earnings. The maximum amounts vary widely, from \$235 a week in Mississippi to \$1,234 in Massachusetts. Benefits are available for as few as six weeks in Georgia and up to 28 weeks in Montana. Most states normally cut people off after 26 weeks.

The potential loss of benefits comes at a time of increasing pessimism about job prospects. Nearly half of Americans whose families experienced a layoff during the pandemic now believe those jobs are lost forever, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Aside from the pandemic's economic damage, the virus itself threatens to overwhelm parts of the country that have been relatively unscathed.

White House coronavirus response coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx warned in a television interview that the surge of cases in the South and Southwest could make its way north.

"What started out very much as a Southern and Western epidemic is starting to move up the East Coast, into Tennessee, Arkansas, up into Missouri, up across Colorado," Birx told NBC's "Today" show. She implored people to wear masks, wash hands and keep at least 6 feet apart.

In Missouri, confirmed cases have risen sharply since Republican Gov. Mike Parson allowed the state to reopen in mid-June. The number of positive tests set a record three days in a row this week.

Birx said health professionals have "called out the next set of cities" where they see early warning signs because if those cities make changes now they "won't become a Phoenix." Arizona's sprawling capital has suffered a severe outbreak, though Birx said Friday the federal government was seeing encouraging declines in positive test results there and in San Antonio, which like much of Texas has been hard hit.

The governor of Vermont, where cases have been among the nation's lowest, responded Friday by issuing an order requiring people to wear masks in public. "We are still in very good shape, but it is time to prepare," Republican Gov. Phil Scott said. Also Friday, McDonald's announced it would soon start requiring masks in its restaurants.

Masks continue to be a national flashpoint. Police in Green Bay, Wisconsin, were investigating death threats made against elected city officials over a new mandate requiring face coverings in public buildings. Indiana's governor dropped a planned criminal penalty from the statewide face mask mandate that he signed Friday after objections from many law enforcement officials and some conservative legislators.

Sunbelt states that have been besieged in recent weeks are still struggling. Florida, for example, reported 135 new deaths and 12,000 new cases, pushing its total of identified infections past 400,000. In California, officials reported a record 159 deaths Friday, bringing total deaths to around 8,200. California now has more than 435,000 confirmed cases.

Meanwhile, lawmakers in Washington were negotiating a new coronavirus relief bill as state and local governments, schools, businesses and others pushed for a new dose of aid. Congressional Democrats have sought to keep the extra \$600 in unemployment checks rolling. Republicans who control the Senate have proposed benefits worth 70% of what people made before.

The \$600 weekly bonus is technically set to expire July 31, but the cutoff is effectively Saturday owing to how states process payments.

Other aspects of the enhanced benefits will continue, including coverage for some gig workers and freelancers who are usually ineligible for unemployment, as well as a 13-week extension of regular payments that the federal government is helping to subsidize.

Critics noted that the extra cash payments meant many workers were receiving more for not working than they did working — a possible disincentive for returning to the job. Supporters cast that as an acknowledgement that wages were too low, and said the extra money was a chance for workers to build up a cushion in case they remained unemployed after benefits expire.

The federal government is offering interest-free loans to states that deplete their unemployment insurance trust funds, and 10 states have received them so far. But paying the U.S. back after a crisis can keep states from building up reserves. Pennsylvania just finished paying off its loans from the Great Recession.

Hawaii is one state that is preserving part of the boost, increasing unemployment checks by \$100 a

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week for the rest of the year. To pay for it, the tourism-dependent state is using nearly one-fifth of its main pot of federal coronavirus aid.

Georgia is allowing people to earn more from part-time jobs while still receiving unemployment benefits. In most places, however, similar measures have not taken hold.

The New Hampshire Legislature, controlled by Democrats, approved a bill to increase the maximum payment by \$100 weekly, to \$527. Republican Gov. Chris Sununu vetoed it, saying that some of the details could have jeopardized federal funding.

In Arizona, Democrats have also pushed for adding \$100 to the maximum weekly benefit of \$240, but Gov. Doug Ducey, a Republican, deferred to Congress.

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Trump, GOP ally vow Confederate base names won't change

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump and a top Senate Republican are pushing Congress to preserve the names of military bases that honor Confederate generals, even though the House and Senate have overwhelmingly approved bills that rename them.

Trump said in a tweet Friday that he had spoken to Oklahoma Sen. Jim Inhofe, the Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, "who has informed me that he WILL NOT be changing the names of our great Military Bases and Forts, places from which we won two World Wars (and more!)."

Like him, Inhofe "is not a believer in 'Cancel Culture,'" Trump said.

Inhofe, a staunch conservative and close Trump ally, also opposes the name change, even though he led Senate approval of the defense bill that would mandate name changes at Fort Bragg, Fort Benning and other Army posts named for Confederate generals.

Inhofe told The Oklahoman newspaper that he spoke with Trump on Thursday about the base names, adding: "We're going to see to it that provision doesn't survive the bill. I'm not going to say how at this point."

Defense policy bills approved by both the House and Senate would change the names of 10 Army posts that honor Confederate leaders. The two versions must be reconciled, but both bills were approved by veto-proof margins this week.

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said Friday the White House would "leave that to Senator Inhofe as to how that works legislatively speaking," but said Trump "was assured by Sen. Inhofe that that (provision) would be changing and that Republicans stood with the president on this."

The top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services panel said Trump was "on the wrong side of history" in trying to defend traitors who "fought to preserve slavery."

"Nobody wants to erase history," said Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I. "We want to be truthful and honest about it and build a brighter, more inclusive future that lives up to our nation's promise and core values."

There are 10 Army posts named for Confederate military leaders, including Fort Hood in Texas, Fort Benning in Georgia, Fort Bragg in North Carolina and Forts Robert E. Lee and A.P. Hill in Virginia. The House bill would require the base names to be changed within a year, while the Senate would give the military three years to rename them.

Reed said Friday he is confident Congress will include the name-change provision in the final bill, and he urged Trump to "read up" on men like Lee, Braxton Bragg and Henry Benning and learn "what they

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believed and why they fought against the United States." Trump also should listen to uniformed and civilian military leaders "who know that racism has no place in the ranks," Reed said.

If Trump vetoes a bill with a 3% pay raise for U.S. troops, that would be a rare event, Reed said: "But rarer still is an American president who would put the interests of a handful of pro-slavery Confederates above the well-being and national security of the entire nation."

Forty-nine GOP senators voted for the defense bill that includes the base-renaming, while just four Republicans voted against it. Thirty-seven Democrats supported the bill, and 10 opposed it. The \$741 billion measure would authorize all defense programs worldwide.

Colorado Sen. Cory Gardner, one of the GOP's most vulnerable incumbents in the election, said he had no problem with renaming the bases. "If it's something we can do to heal this country and bring people together, let's do it," Gardner told reporters Friday after an event with Ivanka Trump, the president's daughter, in a Denver suburb.

"Let's learn from the last several months of division and put the country together," Gardner said.

Gardner's comment illustrated how Trump's tweet had unsettled GOP allies on a high-profile issue they thought had been resolved involving race and the military.

The debate over the military bases comes amid a reckoning over racism sparked by the police killing of George Floyd, a Black man in Minneapolis. The Democratic-controlled House has approved a bill to remove statues of Lee and other Confederate leaders from the Capitol, and Speaker Nancy Pelosi last month ordered that the portraits of four speakers who served the Confederacy be removed from the ornate hall just outside the House chamber.

A spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican who also is seeking reelection and voted in favor of the defense bill, declined to comment Friday. The aide steered a reporter to a statement McConnell made on the Senate floor praising the defense bill and its strong bipartisan support.

The Senate's top Democrat, Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York, has dared Trump to veto the defense bill over Confederate base names. "It's in the bill. It has bipartisan support. It will stay in the bill," Schumer said earlier this month.

Congress has approved the annual defense measure every year for almost six decades. It typically enjoys veto-proof support, though various controversies often delay final passage until late in the year.

Associated Press writers Darlene Superville in Washington and Nicholas Riccardi in Denver contributed to this story.

Lost toy dog returns home with help of Cincinnati airport

By THALIA BEATY Associated Press

The Cincinnati-area airport took a child's beloved stuffed animal for an impromptu tour, reaching many on social media, before uniting the toy Dalmatian with its family in Florida.

Staff at the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport were sending the toy back to Florida on Friday. The airport's Facebook posts about the missing plaything reached 1 million people, airport spokesperson Mindy Kershner said.

Airport employees found the toy left behind in the terminal, Kershner told The Associated Press, and snapped photos of the lost traveler outfitted in a mask at the airport's restaurants, on the runway and with a K9 team.

Doug and Phyllis Ronco, of Madeira Beach, Florida, said they were driving to the St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport to retrieve their son's stuffed animal Friday morning.

The family's flight out of the southern Ohio airport had left early in the morning the day the toy was lost, Doug Ronco said.

"I think our son was half a sleep when he left Masch-Masch (the dog's nickname) at the terminal," Ronco said. "Under normal circumstances, he would never forget him."

The family was traveling to visit relatives and friends in Ohio and Indiana with their three children, one of whom keeps the stuffed dog as his companion, Ronco said.

A judge gave Ronco's son, Jaydence, the stuffed Dalmatian on the day he was adopted by the couple. "So it's very special to him," he said.

Ronco said the airport contacted him by email to let the family know the dog was left behind. He thinks they were the only family with children on the flight, and acknowledged the story had taken on a life of its own on social media.

"The times we are in, some people sees the humor in something lighthearted, and others say, 'Is this all you can do, talk about this stupid stuffed animal?'" he said, laughing.

The family is bringing Oreo cookies to the airport to thank those who helped arrange the journey of their son's special toy back home.

US appeals court says jury should decide ex-player's lawsuit

By DAN SEWELL Associated Press

CINCINNATI (AP) — A federal appeals court has ruled that a jury should decide on a former university softball player's charge that her coach violated her First Amendment rights after a sexual assault on campus in Ohio.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals on Thursday overturned a lower court's dismissal of the lawsuit, reinstating one of several legal claims the young woman made. The court agreed that Lauren Kesterson should be able to present her case that she was subjected to retaliation from her coach that violated her First Amendment rights.

Kesterson said she was sexually assaulted by the son of Coach Karen Linder when both students were freshmen at Kent State University in 2012. Kesterson told her coach at the end of the 2014 season. Kesterson said she didn't want to seek charges and the coach advised her to not tell anyone else. There were no criminal charges in the case.

The Associated Press does not typically identify victims of sexual assault, but Kesterson is allowing her name to be used publicly. She said her playing time became limited and she was called out by her coach for being emotional.

Linder resigned as coach in 2015, just days after Kesterson filed a Title IX complaint with the university.

"Case law by 2014 had put beyond debate that a coach at a state university cannot retaliate against a student-athlete for speaking out by subjecting her to harassment and retaliation," the Cincinnati-based federal panel's ruling stated.

The judges declined to reinstate complaints that were dismissed against the university and an interim coach.

"Obviously, we're pleased to see that the court agreed our client is entitled to a trial for First Amendment retaliation," said Kesterson's attorney, Ashlie Case Sletvold of Cleveland.

However, she said they will consider appealing the ruling against the other charges.

The Ohio Attorney General's office, which had argued on behalf of Kent State University and its former coach, declined to comment Friday, citing pending litigation.

Judge Jane Stranch wrote a separate opinion agreeing with the First Amendment ruling but saying she thought the court should also have reinstated Title IX and equal protection violation claims.

Follow Dan Sewell at <https://www.twitter.com/dansewell>

Pepcid-COVID study raised red flags weeks after \$21M grant

By RICHARD LARDNER and JASON DEAREN Associated Press

Two months after the Trump administration awarded \$21 million to study whether a common heartburn drug was effective against COVID-19, government health officials raised serious concerns about patient safety and scientific integrity, according to internal documents obtained by The Associated Press.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services outlined a long list of concerns in a June 8 letter, concluding there was "a high probability" that the companies doing the research would fail to honor the

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terms of the deal to assess famotidine, the active ingredient in Pepcid, as a coronavirus treatment.

The AP reported Thursday that the contract with Florida-based Alchem Laboratories and its subcontractor, Northwell Health in New York, was the subject of ridicule by some government scientists who did not think the Pepcid study merited millions of federal research dollars. A federal whistleblower, Dr. Rick Bright, cited the contract as a key example of what he called unethical conduct by agency leadership in deciding how to spend taxpayer dollars to combat the coronavirus.

Despite the problems, the HHS office spearheading the federal response to the coronavirus crisis has not canceled the contract. Northwell, the state's largest health care provider, told AP earlier this week that the famotidine trial has been paused indefinitely because of a shortage of new COVID-19 patients in New York.

In the four-page "cure notice," HHS raised a litany of red flags about the Pepcid trial, which delivers a large dose of famotidine intravenously to patients in the study. Among them: a "lack of adequate documentation of good clinical practices related to ensuring patient safety."

HHS's letter also said the researchers failed to implement a system to track harm to patients, lacked an independent data monitor to ensure the integrity of the trial's findings and failed to provide government scientists overseeing the contract with proper Food and Drug Administration documentation.

"These are very serious concerns and are most shocking in the lack of attention to possible safety risks for what is a very high dose of famotidine, far above the FDA-approved dosing parameters for its currently-approved uses," said Dr. Aaron Kesselheim, a Harvard Medical School professor who reviewed the the HHS letter for the AP.

"It would be unethical to run any clinical trial without a plan for tracking adverse events experienced by patients," he said, "so that it can inform the decision about whether any benefits of the drug being studied that might be identified in the trial outweigh any risks."

An HHS spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request seeking comment on the letters.

James Talton, Alchem's president and CEO, in a June 19 response to the letter, told HHS that frequent changes in standards of care for patients required a redesign of the trial. Talton didn't respond to AP's request for comment.

On April 14, the Trump administration signed the contract to test famotidine in COVID-19 patients in New York despite a lack of published data or studies to suggest heavy doses would be safe or effective against the novel coronavirus. When government scientists learned of the hastily produced proposal to spend millions in federal funding on the research, they considered it laughable, according to Bright's whistleblower complaint.

But the June letter from HHS would indicate that the trial was plagued by poor management from the start.

"The manner in which the clinical trial has been conducted by the Alchem/Northwell team does not meet the standards specified (in) the contract and suggests a high probability that Alchem will be unable to meet the terms of the contract," the letter stated, noting that it's purpose was to "communicate the government's concerns."

Dr. Robert Kaplan, a Stanford University medical professor and former associate director of the National Institutes of Health, said when HHS sends a cure notice about a clinical trial, it is "a fairly serious step" by the agency in voicing concerns that had been reached through consensus internally.

"The (HHS) boards have the responsibility to stop the trial if there is a safety concern. They can also stop the trial for futility, if it is unlikely to produce a significant benefit."

Critics, including Bright, who opposed funding the trial while director at HHS' Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, or BARDA, said the Pepcid project underscores the Trump administration's disregard for science and anti-corruption rules — rules meant to protect taxpayer dollars from going to political cronies or funding projects that aren't based on more rigorous science.

The government had very little data on which to base a funding decision about Pepcid and COVID-19, critics say; there was no high-grade research on famotidine's coronavirus-fighting potential to underpin a clinical trial involving hundreds of patients.

Bright filed a complaint accusing a senior administration health official of rushing the deal through without

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the scientific oversight necessary for such a large federal award.

Alchem's Talton outlined in his response to HHS how his company and Northwell had addressed the concerns. The companies agreed to assign an independent medical monitor to audit all of the data produced by the trial, according to Talton, and he also vowed to implement a system to deal with "the backlog of collected adverse events," as specified by HHS.

Neither Northwell nor Alchem have reported publicly any patient harm, or "adverse events," from the administration of intravenous famotidine to COVID-19 patients

"The clinical trial is currently suspended." Talton wrote. "I urge BARDA to continue the studies related to famotidine as a treatment for COVID-19 under (the contract)."

Northwell Health spokesman Matthew Libassi said the cure notice had "nothing to do with our decision to put the trial on hold." The HHS letter refers "to administrative matters and how they are communicated, particularly regarding the collection and analysis of data," he added.

NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week

By AMANDA SEITZ, ALI SWENSON, BEATRICE DUPUY, and ARIJETA LAJKA Associated Press

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

CLAIM: There is no coin shortage. Coins get recirculated, they don't just disappear. The government is trying to usher in a cashless society.

THE FACTS: Not so, says The Federal Reserve, which manages the country's coin inventory. Coins aren't being circulated because businesses are closed and sales are down during the pandemic. And the government isn't pushing the U.S. into a cashless society, either. The U.S. Mint is actively producing more coins to alleviate the short supply. Despite that, posts circulating widely on Facebook are suggesting that the shortage of coins in the U.S. is a hoax because it doesn't make sense for the currency to have "disappeared." The posts suggest a larger conspiracy is at play to usher us all into a "cashless" era. The Federal Reserve has explained that the supply chain is severely disrupted by the pandemic. "With establishments like retail shops, bank branches, transit authorities and laundromats closed, the typical places where coin enters our society have slowed or even stopped the normal circulation of coin," the Federal Reserve said in a June statement. The Federal Reserve has asked banks to only order the coins they need and to make depositing coins easy for customers. It also put together a task force of retail, bank and armored cash carrier leaders to brainstorm ways to normalize coin circulation again. The U.S. Mint, meanwhile, is moving at full speed to mint more coins, while minimizing its employees risk to COVID-19 exposure, the agency's spokesman Michael White told The Associated Press in an email. The Mint produced nearly 1.6 billion coins last month, White said, and is on track to average about 1.65 billion per month for the rest of the year. That's up from an average of 1 billion coins per month last year, he added.

CLAIM: Former President Barack Obama signed the law authorizing federal agents to "snatch" protesters off the streets in Portland, Oregon.

THE FACTS: The White House says 40 U.S Code 1315, under the Homeland Security Act of 2002, gives the Trump administration the authority to send armed federal agents to confront protesters in Portland. It was signed into law by President George W. Bush, not Obama. A false claim circulating on social media says people criticizing President Donald Trump for sending federal agents into Portland to clear protesters are ignoring the fact that Obama signed the law that allows for that to happen. "When everyone just blames Trump but forgets who actually signed the law authorizing federal agents to snatch protestors off the streets in Portland," says an erroneous Facebook post shared more than 1,300 times with a photo of Obama smiling. In early July, Trump sent federal agents to Portland to halt protests, arguing that it was necessary to protect federal buildings from protesters. State and local authorities oppose federal inter-

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vention and a lawsuit has been filed to stop the action. Trump is relying on the Department of Homeland Security in unprecedented ways as he tries to bolster his law and order credentials by making a heavy-handed show of force in cities around the nation in the lead-up to the November elections, the AP has reported. According to Stephen Vladeck, professor at the University of Texas School of Law, social media posts are falsely referencing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 signed by Obama, saying that law authorizes the Trump Administration to deploy federal agents. "It's simply preposterous," Vladeck said. "That statute includes a controversial set of provisions concerning military detention, but it has absolutely nothing to do with what's happening in Portland." The law, often referred to as NDAA, included detention provisions that could be interpreted to authorize indefinite military detention without charge or trial. When questioned about the legality of sending agents with tactical gear to confront protesters against the will of local officials in those cities, White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany cited Section 1315 during Tuesday's press briefing. McEnany claimed that Section 1315 "gives DHS the ability to deputize officers in any department or agency, like ICE, Customs and Border Patrol, and Secret Service" to protect property owned by the federal government. "And when a federal courthouse is being lit on fire, commercial fireworks being shot at it, being shot at the officers, I think that that falls pretty well within the limits of 40 U.S. Code 1315," she added.

CLAIM: A video from a 1985 hearing exposes Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden for using the N-word, stating: "We already have a n----- mayor, we don't need any more n----- big shots!"

THE FACTS: Social media users are twisting Biden's words from a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing in 1985 for the nomination of William Bradford Reynolds as U.S. deputy attorney general. Biden was reading a racist statement made by a state legislator during a redistricting process in Louisiana that was overseen by the nominee, who was being questioned under oath. Biden was using those comments to build a case against Reynolds' nomination, pointing out that as the assistant attorney general for civil rights he ignored racist comments by lawmakers and signed off on a plan that gerrymandered Louisiana's congressional districts to deprive Black residents of representation. Biden specifically questioned Reynolds about a Louisiana congressional map redistricting proposal called the Nunez plan. C-Span video footage of Reynolds' 1985 nomination hearing shows that Biden repeatedly asked Reynolds if he heard or saw any evidence that Louisiana's politicians intentionally drew the map in a way that discriminated against Black residents in New Orleans. Reynolds said he did not find any evidence that this was the case. Biden pointed out that Reynolds did, however, receive a memo from his staff that highlighted racist comments made by legislators who opposed the majority Black district. Using the N-word in the quote, Biden said: "They brought to your attention the allegation that important legislators in defeating the Nunez plan, in the basement, said, 'We already have a n----- mayor, we don't need any more n----- big shots.'" Biden argued that those comments, as well as other problems with the Louisiana governor's plan, should have been a red flag for Reynolds, who should have never signed off on the plan. The Senate Judiciary Committee ultimately rejected Reynolds' nomination in a 10-8 vote.

CLAIM: Black tour buses wrapped with "Black Lives Matter" were seen in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, bringing in Black Lives Matter and antifa rioters for protests.

THE FACTS: The photos being shared online show tour buses that were wrapped with the "Black Lives Matter" slogan for the Toronto Raptors basketball team. Social media users are misrepresenting photos online to say they show that Black Lives Matter protesters and activists associated with antifa -- an umbrella term for anti-fascists -- are being bused into cities for protests. "At a truck stop in Ft. Lauderdale Florida. Notice the number and immense cost of the custom buses bringing in Black Lives Matter and Antifa Rioters. This is huge money and organization. @realDonaldTrump. This should be attacked by going after those with the deep pockets," one post on Twitter with more than 7,000 retweets said. The photo shows a bus yard where tour buses wrapped with the "Black Lives Matter" slogan are parked. The buses were part of a Toronto Raptors effort to show support for the Black Lives Matter movement. The team used

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the buses for only a day and they were moved to a Fort Lauderdale bus yard on July 10. They have not moved since. A spokesperson for the Toronto Raptors confirmed to The Associated Press that the buses were wrapped for the team and were provided by a bus company that transported the team in Florida from their training camp in Naples to Orlando, where the NBA constructed a social "bubble" to resume the NBA season and protect 22 teams from COVID-19. The Toronto Raptors posted photos of the buses with the "Black Lives Matter" wrapper to Twitter on July 9, tweeting, "Silence is not an option." The team also included the buses in an Instagram video where team members boarded them in T-shirts that also said "Black Lives Matter." The bus company that transported the team confirmed to the AP that the buses have been out of service since they were used by the basketball team. The posts misrepresenting the photos online coincided with Monday's "Strike for Black Lives," where essential workers picketed during their lunch breaks and held moments of silence in support of Black Lives Matter.

CLAIM: In a July 17 tweet, President Donald Trump says he is "SO MAD" the Pentagon abolished the Confederate flag and calls the flag a symbol of love.

THE FACTS: This tweet was fabricated. It does not appear on either archived versions of Trump's Twitter feed or databases that track deleted tweets by politicians. On July 17, the same day the Pentagon announced a policy banning displays of the Confederate flag on military installations, an image of a tweet allegedly sent by Trump's account began circulating on Facebook and Instagram. "SO MAD!!!" the fake tweet read. "Pentagon abolished Confederate flag today. The flag is TREMENDOUS part of our history. It's a symbol of LOVE!! Plantations kept black people employed and gave them free food and housing!!! Black unemployment was VERY low back then like now with ME as your President!!!" Several social media users sharing the image posted it alongside criticism of Trump. "Remember Trump's Tweets when it's time to vote!" wrote one Facebook user in a post viewed more than 22,000 times in two days. Another Facebook post with the image, shared without context or a caption, racked up more than 158,000 views. But there is no evidence Trump ever tweeted this. The alleged tweet does not appear on his Twitter timeline, nor does it show up in a search of archived versions of his profile. In ProPublica's Politwoops, a tool that tracks deleted tweets by politicians, a search for Trump's account does not turn up any deleted tweets with this message, nor any deleted tweets from July 17. In previous interviews, Trump has defended people's rights to display the Confederate flag, referring to it as a First Amendment issue. "Like it, don't like it, it's freedom of speech," he told CBS in a July 14 interview.

CLAIM: NASA has officially announced a 13th zodiac sign, Ophiuchus, after discovering a new constellation, meaning your zodiac star has changed.

THE FACTS: NASA is the federal agency dedicated to studying and exploring astronomy, not astrology, and has not made any such announcement. Social media users are passing around an old hoax once again, claiming that NASA has officially established a 13th zodiac sign. The claim, which also contends that the entire zodiac system has now been realigned, is circulating in popular Facebook posts. NASA debunked the social media posts on its website and Twitter account. "We see your comments about a zodiac story that re-emerges every few years," NASA said in a July 16 tweet, sharing a link to a 2016 blog post that explains the zodiac's history. "No, we did not change the zodiac." In an online statement, NASA said the Babylonians created the zodiac 3,000 years ago, centering it around 12 constellations to pair with each month of their 12-month calendar. That statement did note that the Babylonians' ancient stories identified 13 constellations and they left off one -- Ophiuchus -- to match the calendar. Though that's been known for centuries -- it isn't a new discovery by NASA or anyone else. "So, we didn't change any zodiac signs ... we just did the math," NASA said in the online post.

CLAIM: In an April 9 interview with CNBC's "Squawk Box," Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates said he expects 700,000 people to develop negative side effects from a coronavirus vaccine.

THE FACTS: Gates used the number in a hypothetical example, but social media users are misconstruing

his words to claim he expects 700,000 vaccine injuries. Ever since Gates' interview about the coronavirus aired in April, posts and false news articles have claimed he had grim projections for the vaccine. "He's expecting 700,000 people to have negative side effects," wrote one Facebook user, in a post viewed by more than 40,000 people in two days. But these posts don't accurately represent Gates' words. Asked about the timeline for the development of a COVID-19 vaccine, Gates said creating effective vaccines for older populations is always a challenge. He then referred to the number 700,000 in a hypothetical example to illustrate the importance of creating a vaccine that is effective without side effects. "Here, we clearly need a vaccine that works in the upper age range because they're most at risk of that," Gates said. "And doing that so that you amp it up so it works in older people and yet you don't have side effects ... you know, if we have 1 in 10,000 side effects, that's way more, 700,000 people who will suffer from that. So, really understanding the safety at gigantic scale across all age ranges — you know, pregnant, male, female, undernourished, existing comorbidities — it's very, very hard. And that actual decision of, OK, let's go and give this vaccine to the entire world — governments will have to be involved because there will be some risk and indemnification needed before that can be decided on." The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation confirmed in a statement that the reference was hypothetical. "Strong scientific evidence shows that vaccines are safe and they have a proven track record of preventing diseases," the statement said. "Experts believe that a vaccine against COVID-19 will be critical to ending this pandemic once clinical trials show that they are safe and effective in a broad group of people."

This is part of The Associated Press' ongoing effort to fact-check misinformation that is shared widely online, including work with Facebook to identify and reduce the circulation of false stories on the platform.

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Rising virus cases spark concern in Florida nursing homes

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and KELLI KENNEDY Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — The coronavirus transformed Florida's nursing homes into closely guarded fortresses beginning in March, with the state banning family visits, isolating infected residents in separate wings and now requiring staff be tested every two weeks. But the explosion of cases statewide is proving that is not enough.

The numbers are already showing the grim reality, underscoring how mask compliance and restrictions in the outside world impact the state's most vulnerable. In the past three weeks, cases have gone from about 2,000 to some 4,800 at Florida nursing homes. Roughly 2,550 long-term care residents and staff have died overall, accounting for about 45% of all virus deaths in Florida.

"Where you see COVID hot spots, our anxiety level in our centers automatically goes up. Our vigilance goes through the roof," said Luke Neumann, a vice president at Palm Garden, which has 14 facilities across Florida.

"That's how societies are judged in part — by how you care for the weak and aged," Neumann said.

Florida recorded 173 new coronavirus deaths Thursday, a daily high that pushed its toll from the pandemic to more than 5,500. Deaths inside nursing homes have also been on the rise, averaging about 40 per day in the last week after those numbers had dropped in mid-June to lower than 20 deaths per day.

About 180 out of every 10,000 long-term care facility residents have died so far in Florida, a toll that is still far lower than some northeastern states, which saw deaths surge at the height of the pandemic in March and April. New York had about 400 deaths per 10,000 nursing home residents and New Jersey more than 1,100.

Florida has set up dedicated isolation facilities for nursing home residents who have been discharged from a hospital yet still continue to test positive for the virus, but those nearly 1,400 beds in about 20

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facilities spread across the state likely aren't enough, industry representatives said.

Nursing homes with scant resources may feel pressured to set up isolation wards that they're not fully equipped to create safely, said Dr. Paul Katz, chair of the Department of Geriatrics at Florida State University.

"The more positive cases you get in nursing homes, the higher the risk of it spreading within the incredibly susceptible population of residents," Katz said.

Facilities already are strapped with requirements for extra cleaning, protective gear and testing.

Jay Solomon, CEO of Aviva senior home in Sarasota, said \$500,000 in stimulus aid his Sarasota facility received from the federal government will run out in a week.

The federal government sent 14 million masks and 13 million gowns to nursing homes, but some Florida providers said they were unusable. Others didn't receive them at all.

Solomon compared protective gowns sent by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to "garbage bags" and said a shipment of masks were flimsy and had to be tossed.

"No provider should have to decide between, 'Do we test the staff this week or do we test the residents this week?'" Solomon said.

Florida is paying for COVID-19 tests for all nursing home staff once every two weeks until September and it's unclear if it will be extended.

Larger facilities say testing of staff and residents — at \$75 to \$125 per kit — can run them up to \$300,000 per month. And testing is of only limited benefit if the turnaround in obtaining results does not improve beyond the current seven to 10 days.

"It's almost like, 'What are we accomplishing in that time?'" Solomon said of the lag in getting results. "If that person is not quarantined in that seven to 10 days, are they spreading without realizing it?"

But without test data, experts say it will be nearly impossible to squelch the spread.

"The overwhelming majority of staff members who are testing positive are asymptomatic. It is an insidious virus that is very difficult to detect, absent the testing," said Jeffrey Freimark, CEO of Miami Jewish Health nursing home.

Meanwhile, facilities are struggling to maintain adequate staffing levels because some workers are out sick and other prospective hires may be leery of working at a nursing home. There's been a 148% increase in staff cases since June 14, according to state figures.

Anne-Mercie Blot, who has been a certified nursing assistant at Hampton Court nursing home in Miami for 16 years, gets her temperature checked every morning along with the mandated bi-monthly tests. She sometimes works 16-hour shifts and worries about bringing the virus home to her family, as well as bringing it into the nursing home.

"The facilities might be willing to hire more workers, but because of COVID those workers don't want to come into a facility," she said.

Industry leaders said a statewide mask mandate would help protect staff members, and consequently residents, from the virus.

Palm Gardens even created its own public health announcement, reminding the public in their communities that wearing masks and social distancing can be a matter of life or death.

With restrictions not likely to go away any time soon, facilities say the isolation and loneliness is taking a toll on residents and their families. Miami Jewish Health has connected more than 5,000 video calls and allowed drive-by visits where friends and family emerge through sun roofs to see their loved ones.

Frances Reaves recently visited her friend Margaret Choinacki, who has no living family members. They also FaceTime twice a day. In her youth, the now 87-year-old Choinacki modeled for the covers of romance novels.

"She now realizes how important people are for her," Reaves said.

Virus-shadowed Emmy nods could bring surprises, diversity

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Television has been America's constant companion amid an unyielding virus and whirlwind of racial reappraisal.

But will the Emmy nominations arriving Tuesday reflect the times or retreat to the familiar? The announcement itself was forced to bow to health safeguards, going virtual and without the usual mini-swarm of reporters and anxious publicists on hand at the TV academy's Los Angeles headquarters.

How September's ceremony airing on ABC will look is anybody's guess. As emcee Jimmy Kimmel said in June, it's unknown where, how or why it will be held, "but we are doing it and I am hosting it."

The first major entertainment awards of the pandemic era clearly is a traveler without a map.

"Everything is different," said Tom O'Neil, editor of the Gold Derby awards website. Among the changes: "for your consideration" promotional events to woo Emmy voter support were abandoned out of COVID-19 concerns.

With isolation-forced time on their hands, TV industry members may have been more diligent about searching out potential nominees that otherwise would have been overlooked. That also required adjusting to the academy-mandated switch from series DVDs to online screenings (aimed at saving resources).

"We have to be prepared for everybody to be blown away by lots of surprises on nominations morning," O'Neil said, quoting a veteran Gold Derby prognosticator.

Which may be a good thing. Newly expanded categories and the departure of last year's dominant series winners, "Game of Thrones" and "Fleabag," opened the door for newcomers and under-valued series, among them the inclusive comedies "Ramy" and "Insecure."

The academy has ground to make up in diversity. In 2019, less than a quarter of the acting bids went to people of color, down from more than a third of the nominations in 2018. Last year's ceremony proved groundbreaking in one regard, as "Pose" star Billy Porter became the first openly gay winner of the top drama acting trophy.

The 72nd annual Emmy nominations, if not ultimately the awards, could make progress because of the racial reckoning that's underway, said Eric Deggans, TV critic for National Public Radio and author of "Race Baiter: How the Media Wields Dangerous Words to Divide a Nation."

"A lot of Black creators are talking up 'Insecure' now, hoping that the moment combined with the show having a really good season" will earn it deserved nods, Deggans said. Since its 2016 debut, "Insecure" has just one top Emmy nomination, an acting nomination for Black creator-star Issa Rae.

"Ramy" had a notable season, one bolstered by the addition of Oscar-winning Mahershala Ali, a contender for best supporting actor, said Deggans, who also cited OWN's Black coming-of-age drama "David Makes Man" as worthy of attention.

Ramy Youssef's series about a millennial Muslim American earned him a 2020 Golden Globe for best comedy actor and a vaunted Peabody honor, but it's hunting for its first Emmy recognition after two seasons.

Other likely comedy nominees include past winner "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" from Amazon and Pop's singularly quirky "Schitt's Creek," which drew increasing buzz in its final season. The farewells of "The Good Place," "Silicon Valley" and one-time Emmy favorite "Modern Family" also are contenders.

Top drama series contenders include newcomer Apple TV's drama series "The Morning Show" and its lead actresses Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon. Likely to face them: past winners "The Crown" (Netflix) and "The Handmaid's Tale" (Hulu), and their respective stars Olivia Colman and Elisabeth Moss, who is seeking to repeat her 2017 best-actress win.

The academy's decision to tie the number of nominees to submissions has increased the slots in some categories, which could mean newcomers like Zendaya, star of HBO's teenage drama "Euphoria," are brought into the Emmy fold.

More than bragging rights are at stake, with the ballooning ranks of streaming services seeking awards validation to lure subscribers. Their growth is bad news for traditional broadcast networks including ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox, largely squeezed out of Emmy recognition for scripted series and relegated to reality

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and talk show categories.

Last year, only "This Is Us" and "The Good Place" — both on NBC — earned best series nominations.

Among limited series, the graphic-novel inspired HBO's "Watchmen," with a diverse cast led by Regina King and a dystopian theme that jibes with the zeitgeist, is a front-runner. FX's "Mrs. America" and Netflix's "Unbelievable" are among other top contenders.

Leslie Jones will host the online nominations announcement. The Emmys, which rotate among the major broadcast networks, will air Sept. 20 on ABC .

Online: <https://www.Emmys.com>

Lynn Elber can be reached on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/lynnelber>.

Despite COVID crisis, Congress seeks to do its day job

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Even as lawmakers stumble in their quest to pass another coronavirus response measure, both the House and Senate sought to return to some semblance of normal business this week, passing annual must-do measures on spending and defense policy despite the challenges of legislating during a pandemic.

On Friday, the House passed a \$259 billion funding bill for foreign aid and the Interior, Agriculture, and Veterans Affairs departments along party lines. The measure is the first annual spending measure to pass either the House or Senate this year, but it has scant chance of becoming law, serving instead as a springboard for negotiations down the line.

The annual process of appropriating federal spending — which has been a refuge of bipartisan deal-making during Trump's presidency — has been eclipsed this year by coronavirus relief efforts. But funding the government remains the biggest must-do item for lawmakers on a legislative agenda that, due to the virus, has been trimmed back to the essentials.

Friday's spending legislation is studded with \$38 billion in emergency funding that violates the spirit of last year's nearly-forgotten budget and debt accord, along with other provisions that are controversial with Republicans, but many of its nuts and bolts elements were generated in the Appropriations Committee's tradition of bipartisan collaboration.

"The bipartisan budget agreement that was made last year has been completely ignored. Not only do these bills increase deficit spending, they include reckless partisan language," said Rep. Kay Granger of Texas, top Republican on the Appropriations panel. "I hope that we can get back on track and send bills to the President that he can sign into law."

Action on the measure followed passage by both the House and Senate this week on the annual defense bill, which has been passed every year since the Kennedy era.

On the defense measure, both the Democratic-controlled House and GOP-held Senate defied a veto threat from President Donald Trump to pass a defense bill with Democratic-drafted language to remove the names of Confederate officers from American military bases such as Fort Bragg and Fort Benning. Both House and Senate measures call for \$741 billion for the military.

The Senate's 86-14 vote suggests more than enough support to override a potential Trump veto in a post-election lame-duck session. The president is pushing Republicans to reconsider their support.

The House approved its version on Tuesday by a veto-proof margin of 295-125. Any veto confrontation would come after the election, but passage of the measure in December is needed in order to guarantee a 3% pay raise for the troops.

The White House said in a statement this week that it supports the overall spending figure but says it "strongly objects" to the edict to force the military to strip bases of their Confederate names.

In an unusual twist, the House Armed Services panel, chaired by Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., voted to name the annual measure for its much respected top Republican, Texas Rep. Mac Thornberry, who is

retiring at the end of the term.

On the annual spending bills, this week's 224-189 House vote — and a vote next week on a larger measure combining seven spending bills into one — is likely to represent a high point for the year. None of the bills have a chance to become law before Election Day. And if Trump loses the election, Democrats are likely to wait until the Biden administration is in place before wrapping up the annual bills, which fund the annual operations of federal Cabinet agencies.

Among the many provisions in the legislation is \$10 billion in emergency foreign aid funding for the U.S. to help poorer nations respond to the coronavirus scourge.

The Senate Appropriations panel canceled plans for drafting its 12 annual bills after Democrats served notice they would offer amendments on COVID relief and policing reform that Chairman Richard Shelby, R-Ala., deemed too politically troublesome.

Either way, the real action on Capitol Hill involves the upcoming effort to pass a fifth bipartisan COVID-19 relief bill, which is stuck in the Senate, where GOP discord is running high. As a result, Congress is likely to return to Washington in September to handle a stopgap funding bill that would last until December to prevent a campaign season government shutdown.

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US prison populations down 8% amid coronavirus outbreak

By DAMINI SHARMA and WEIHUA LI of The Marshall Project and DENISE LAVOIE and CLAUDIA LAUER of The Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Stephanie Parris was finishing a two-year prison sentence for a probation violation when she heard she'd be going home three weeks early because of COVID-19.

It made her feel bad to leave when she had so few days left at the Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women. She said she wasn't sick and there were no cases at the facility. But there were others still inside who could have used the reprieve.

"I would have helped someone who had nine or 10 months, someone who absolutely needed it," she said recently. "There was a lady in there who was very elderly, and she has very bad health problems. I would have given my place to her."

There has been a major drop in the number of people behind bars in the U.S. Between March and June, more than 100,000 people were released from state and federal prisons, a decrease of 8%, according to a nationwide analysis by The Marshall Project and The Associated Press. The drops range from 2% in Virginia to 22% in Connecticut. By comparison, the state and federal prison population decreased by 2.2% in all of 2019, according to a report on prison populations by the Vera Institute of Justice.

But this year's decrease has not come because of efforts to release vulnerable prisoners for health reasons and to manage the spread of the virus raging in prisons, according to detailed data from eight states compiled by The Marshall Project and AP. Instead, head counts have dropped largely because prisons stopped accepting new prisoners from county jails to avoid importing the virus, court closures meant fewer people were receiving sentences and parole officers sent fewer people back inside for low-level violations, according to data and experts. So the number could rise again once those wheels begin moving despite the virus.

This story is a collaboration between The Associated Press and The Marshall Project exploring the state of the prison system in the coronavirus pandemic. Damini Sharma and Weihua Li reported for The Marshall Project.

In Virginia, about 250 prisoners were released as corrections officials scrambled to minimize the spread

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of the virus, accounting for less than half of the decrease in population in that state between March and June, the news organizations found.

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom last week ordered the release of up to 8,000 people by the end of August after a series of coronavirus outbreaks in the state's prisons. Between mid-March and mid-June, California's prison population dropped by more than 7,000, less than half of which can be attributed to an earlier decision by the state to let vulnerable prisoners out early.

More than 57,000 prisoners have tested positive for the coronavirus in facilities across the country since the outbreak began. Of those, at least 34,000 have recovered, and at least 651 have died, the data showed. Over 12,400 infections have been reported among staff, including 46 deaths.

Experts and advocates said whether the public perceives a public safety threat from people who are released early because of COVID-19 is likely to affect the larger criminal justice reform movement, especially the push to decrease prison populations.

While many people may be qualified for early releases, very few actually got out. In April, Pennsylvania launched a temporary reprieve program, allowing the state's corrections department to send people home under the condition that they return to finish their sentences once the pandemic passes. The governor's office predicted more than 1,500 would be eligible for release.

So far, the state's corrections department has recommended 1,200 people for reprieves, but the application process is slow and tedious, said Bret Bucklen, the department's research director. Each application needs approval from the governor, the secretary of corrections and the assistant district attorney who oversaw the initial conviction.

Nearly three months later, fewer than 160 people have been released through the reprieve program, while Pennsylvania's total prison population dropped by 2,800.

As in Pennsylvania, data from states such as North Carolina, Illinois and New Jersey shows coronavirus releases only account for less than one-third of the decrease in prison population, which suggests something else is driving the drop. According to Martin Horn, professor emeritus at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and a former corrections commissioner for New York City, the pandemic has slowed the entire criminal justice system, which means fewer people are going to prisons.

Before the pandemic, parolees were required to meet with their parole officers in person. For the last four months, those meetings have mostly been by phone, and people on parole are under less scrutiny and less likely to be returned to prison for violating the rules right now, Horn said.

Even many who have been sentenced for crimes are not being transferred to state prisons. In North Carolina, the courts enacted a two-month moratorium on accepting newly sentenced individuals into prisons. By the time the moratorium was lifted in May, about 1,800 people were in county jails awaiting transfer to state prisons, said John Bull, a spokesman for North Carolina's Department of Public Safety.

Whether prison populations rise once the pandemic eases will depend in part on how the public perceives people who are released early now, said Wanda Bertram, spokeswoman for the Prison Policy Initiative, a nonpartisan think tank that focuses on mass incarceration.

For example, if people leaving prison have little support and end up homeless, Bertram said she fears they may be more likely to get arrested for things like sleeping on the street, and the community may in turn associate early releases with more crime.

Garland King, who will turn 78 in a few weeks, spent 12 years in a North Carolina prison for shooting and killing his son-in-law during an argument. Like many older prisoners, he has mounting medical issues, including asthma and arthritis.

King was scheduled to be released in June, but on April 17 he became one of almost 500 prisoners who were let go early for good behavior. Since his wife died two years ago, he needed to find housing and apply for social services. He fretted over everything so much that he barely ate in the days leading to his freedom and nearly had a medical crisis as a result. He eventually found housing through a community health program in Durham, North Carolina.

Nazgol Ghandnoosh, a senior research analyst at the Sentencing Project, a group that advocates for sentencing reform, said that while the prison population decreases are a step in the right direction, she

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is disappointed by the numbers. Even if the COVID-19 release policies work as intended, they might not lower the prison population enough because states often exclude violent offenders from such releases, Ghandnoosh said.

"Even though we are sending too many people to prison and keeping them there too long, and even though research shows people who are older have the highest risk from COVID-19 and the lowest risk of recidivism, we are still not letting them out," Ghandnoosh said.

Lauer reported from Philadelphia. Sharma reported from Mountainview, California, and Li from Stamford, Connecticut.

In a story July 16, 2020, about prisoners released during the COVID-19 pandemic, The Associated Press, relying on numbers provided by Rhode Island's Department of Corrections, incorrectly reported the number of sentenced prisoners in the state had dropped by 32%. It was 18%.

Barred presidential candidate flees Belarus, fearing arrest

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

MINSK, Belarus (AP) — An opposition candidate who planned to challenge Belarus' longtime authoritarian leader in next month's presidential election has fled the country with his children, fearing arrest. His wife stayed behind to campaign, blasting authorities for trying to use their children as hostages.

Valery Tsepkalo, a former ambassador to the United States and founder of a successful hi-tech park, had been widely seen as President Alexander Lukashenko's top rival in the Aug. 9 vote but he was denied a spot on the ballot last week.

Lukashenko, 65, has run Belarus with an iron fist for a quarter century, relentlessly suppressing free speech in the ex-Soviet country of 9.5 million and cracking down on political opposition. The presidential campaign has sparked unrest in Belarus amid the coronavirus outbreak and a weakening economy.

The government's decision not to impose a lockdown during the pandemic and its crackdown on opposition candidates has elicited outrage and prompted protests. Opposition rallies have attracted thousands in cities across Belarus in the largest outpouring of discontent the nation has ever seen.

Tsepkalo told reporters Friday that he moved to Russia with his two children after unnamed sources in the Belarus's Interior Ministry and the State Security Committee (the KGB) warned him about a looming arrest and plans to strip him of his parental rights and take his children away.

"An order has been given to arrest me," Tsepkalo said. "Prosecutor's office agents came to (my) children's school and started asking teachers and administrators to sign some kind of papers."

Authorities in Belarus have not commented on his allegations.

"We had no other choice, it took us five minutes to decide that my husband should leave Belarus to save himself and our children," Tsepkalo's wife, Veronika, said at an opposition rally. "They don't allow us to live in the country, they are using shameless methods, with our children as hostages, to try to expel us."

She has remained in Belarus, joining forces with Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, the only opposition candidate allowed on the ballot.

Tikhanovskaya, the wife of jailed popular opposition blogger Sergei Tikhanovsky, earlier this week also said she took her children to an EU country after she received threats in connection with her campaign. She told a rally Friday that she is deeply worried about her husband but will not back down.

"It's painful to see Sergei in jail, but seeing the situation that Belarus and the Belarusian people have found themselves at gives me even more pain, so I'm not afraid to stand here, no matter how the authorities try to scare us," Tikhanovskaya said.

Another top potential challenger for Lukashenko, Viktor Babariko, the former head of a major Russia-owned bank, was arrested last month on money-laundering and tax evasion charges that he denied as politically-driven.

On Friday, 3,000 people turned out at an opposition gathering in Novopolotsk, north of the Belarusian

capital. And in the town of Hlybokaje, which has a population of 18,000, more than 1,000 attended Tilkhanovskaya's campaign rally.

Human rights advocates say more than 1,000 activists have been detained during the protests since the start of the campaign.

The World Bank has forecast that the Belarusian economy will shrink at least 4% this year, the largest decline in a quarter-century.

Tsepkalov said he plans to return to the country after the election.

"Everything will depend on the outcome (of the vote), but if things heat up in Belarus, I will come back earlier than Aug. 9," he said.

Lukashenko alleged Friday that his opponents may resort to hiring mercenaries abroad to fuel unrest at home. He offered no proof for the claim.

In VP search, Biden has a known quantity in Susan Rice

By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — As then-Vice President Joe Biden left the West Wing each evening to head home, he often popped his head into national security adviser Susan Rice's nearby suite of offices to check in — sometimes on pressing foreign policy matters, sometimes just to shoot the breeze.

"My favorite unannounced visitor was Vice President Joe Biden," Rice wrote in her book "Tough Love."

In those casual visits, as well as in daily national security briefings, Biden and Rice forged an easy working relationship, according to people who worked alongside them during their eight years in the Obama administration. It's that personal relationship, and Biden's firsthand knowledge of how Rice would operate in close proximity to a president, that are now seen as among her strongest attributes as Biden considers her to be his running mate on the Democratic presidential ticket.

Rice was initially seen as a surprise candidate for the role. The 55-year-old has a long pedigree in foreign policy, but has never held elected office. She is close to former President Barack Obama and his network of policy and political advisers, but has a lower public profile than other women Biden is considering. She has also been a lightning rod for criticism from Republicans, who contend she put politics ahead of national security.

Yet Rice has quietly gained support among some Democrats in recent weeks as Biden's advisers grapple with the enormity of what he would inherit if he defeats President Donald Trump in November. Rice is seen as a No. 2 who could shoulder much of the early workload on foreign policy while Biden focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and reviving the economy.

And though Rice briefly flirted with running for Senate from Maine this year, she's seen as less likely to be eyeing the presidency herself — a bonus among some Biden advisers who worry about speculation that the 77-year-old Biden might only serve one term if elected. Some of Rice's supporters also note she didn't challenge Biden for the Democratic nomination in 2020, drawing a pointed contrast with Sens. Kamala Harris and Elizabeth Warren, who have also been vetted for the No. 2 spot.

But it's the close working relationship Rice forged with Biden during the Obama administration that is seen as a key intangible that other contenders simply don't have.

"His entire theory of politics is personal relationships," Ben Rhodes, who served as Obama's deputy national security adviser, said of Biden. "The idea of him taking a leap of faith on someone he really doesn't know because it seems to check a political box seems very unlikely to me."

Biden is in the final stages of selecting his running mate, and is believed to soon be holding in-person conversations with a short list of contenders. He's said his running mate will be a woman, and is considering several women of color. Rice, who is Black, is among them.

Rice spent the first four years of the Obama administration as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. She commuted to Washington on weekends to be with her family, and sometimes offered the luxury apartment set aside for the UN ambassador to Biden and his wife, Jill, when they were in New York.

Rice was on track to become Obama's second term secretary of state, but became ensnared in the po-

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litical controversy over the administration's handling of the 2012 attack on Americans in Benghazi, Libya. After Republicans vowed to fight her confirmation to the top State Department job, Rice bowed out of contention.

Obama instead named Rice his national security adviser, a powerful position that gave her regular, high-level access to both the president and vice president. She briefed Obama and Biden together in the Oval Office most mornings on the most crucial aspects of their daily national security briefings, and advised Biden on the foreign policy matters he led, including Ukraine's efforts to combat Russian aggression and instability in Iraq.

"They've worked together closely on some of the most delicate issues a president has to deal with, on literally war and peace," said Denis McDonough, who served as Obama's chief of staff.

People who worked with Biden and Rice, some of whom insisted on anonymity to discuss private meetings and conversations, described them as something of an odd couple. Rice is seen as highly disciplined and can be brusque in meetings and deliberations. Biden, a lifelong politician, is verbose and more likely to make emotional connections even with strangers.

They were sometimes on opposite sides of foreign policy debates within the Obama administration, including during the Arab Spring. Rice advocated aggressively at the United Nations for authorization to stand up a no-fly zone and launch airstrikes in Libya; Biden has said he argued strongly against the campaign.

Both prided themselves on their willingness to give Obama blunt, unvarnished advice — and respected that about each other, according to the people who worked with them. But Biden and Rice also developed a lighter relationship, bantering back and forth in meetings and in the after-hours visits in Rice's offices.

"They developed this kind of mutual respect, but also casual nature to their relationship that he didn't have with everybody," Rhodes said.

Biden and Rice got to know each other in the mid-1990s, when she was nominated to serve as assistant secretary of state for African Affairs in President Bill Clinton's administration. At 32, Rice was one of the youngest people to reach that level of the State Department, and she was also pregnant with her first child.

When she arrived at her subcommittee confirmation hearing with her infant son in tow, Biden — then the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee — showed up to vouch for her and wish her well. They also worked together when Rice served as a foreign policy adviser to the 2004 presidential campaign of Sen. John Kerry, one of Biden's longtime Senate friends.

Biden hasn't mentioned Rice as prominently in public as he has other potential running mates. He holds regular policy talks with Warren, and has headlined online fundraisers with Harris. He's also singled out Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms and Georgia voting rights advocate Stacey Abrams as rising Democratic stars.

But Democrats say Biden has kept an eye on Rice in recent months. In public appearances last year, she defended Biden's work in the Obama administration on Ukraine at a time when it was under vigorous attack from Trump — and at a time when Biden's candidacy appeared to be on shaky ground.

Biden, according to people with knowledge, took notice.

AP writer Bill Barrow contributed to this report.

Follow Julie Pace at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>

Speaker snared in Ohio bribery probe liked to play long game

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Tension was thick in the air. After 10 consecutive votes in which another man had garnered more support than Larry Householder's favored candidate to be the next Ohio House speaker, Householder leaned back quietly in his chair, arms confidently propped behind his head.

As usual, he was playing the long game.

The Republican now accused in a \$60 million federal bribery probe had contributed to a monthslong

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impasse over the speakership that brought Ohio lawmaking to a standstill in 2018 and left a trail of intimidated, disheartened representatives in its path.

The previous House speaker had resigned amid scandal. Householder wanted a proxy in the job until he could run for the full two-year term himself a few months later. Even if his man lost now, though, he was counting votes and sizing up loyalties for the future as the roll was taken again and again.

The leading candidate, then-Rep. Ryan Smith, became speaker that day on the 11th vote. But Householder would take the job six months later with crucial support he had lined up — from Democrats. With promises of bipartisan cooperation, the master dealmaker had once again gotten what he wanted.

"Either over the last 18 years, this dais has gotten smaller or I have gotten larger," Householder, who had put on a few pounds since last serving as speaker from 2001 to 2004, quipped in his slight southern Ohio drawl as he took the gavel.

His triumphant return had been achieved, a feat federal prosecutors now say was fueled by millions of dollars of bribe money funneled to Householder and his associates for the passage of a nuclear bailout bill he would champion soon after his ascendancy.

According to the criminal complaint, Householder and his associates spent the money to boost themselves politically and personally, to stage often nasty campaigns to elect Householder loyalists, to buy votes for the bailout bill and to poison subsequent efforts to repeal it.

Householder, 61, was widely believed to have been positioning himself to run for governor. With a down-home demeanor and a degree in political science, the farm kid and one-time insurance agent who's the father of six has the rural Appalachian profile that tends to work with Ohio voters. Two icons of Ohio politics — four-term governor James Rhodes and Democrat Vern Riffe, the battleground state's longest-serving House speaker — were from the same southeastern Ohio region.

Dressed in full camo, Householder declared himself "a pro-gun, pro-life, Christian conservative" in a sharply produced 2018 campaign ad in which he shot a television set with a rifle. He's a Trump supporter who clashed with GOP Gov. Mike DeWine over wearing masks to curb the spread of the coronavirus, refusing to don one until after his arrest Tuesday, when he wore a mask as he exited the federal courthouse.

Republican Richard Finan, who was Ohio Senate president when Householder was last speaker, remembers Householder being under the cloud of a different FBI investigation when he left office due to term limits in 2004.

The earlier FBI probe of Householder resulted in no charges and was ultimately dropped, but Finan said he was questioned by the FBI. It stemmed from allegations of heavy-handed fundraising tactics used by Householder and his team, including aides who had authored a secret memo outlining a plot to "dismantle" the political career of then-Secretary of State Ken Blackwell, a Black Republican whose rising political star stood to outshine Householder's.

"I was not surprised," Finan said of Householder's arrest. "My dealings with him when I was there were not good."

It began with Finan having to find a place in the Senate for then-state Rep. Bill Harris after that era's ugly speaker fight. Then-Speaker JoAnn Davidson had struck a deal allowing Harris and Householder to share the speakership, each taking a year. Householder worked secretly against the deal for months until he lined up enough votes to call it off and take the job for himself.

Finan has a vivid memory of participating in hourslong budget negotiations with Householder and then-Gov. Bob Taft, all three Republicans, as they tried to resolve a \$1.5 billion shortfall back in 2001. Finan said the deal was finally hammered out around midnight and Taft suggested the "Big Three" go out into the hall as a group and tell the press.

"We walked out the door of the governor's office, I turned around and looked for Larry. He wasn't there. He had gone out the back door," Finan said. "He went back over to the House and the next day he announced a totally different proposal supported by the OEA."

The Ohio Education Association is the state's largest teachers union, a generous political player.

Ohio is a closely divided state when it comes to politics, though, so not everyone saw that 2001 school-

funding deal, which ultimately went nowhere, as a negative.

Bill Phillis, an education lobbyist who helped negotiate it, said he didn't have a problem with Householder bucking fellow Republicans. In Householder's nearly two-decade absence from the Statehouse, the state's unconstitutional school-funding system has never been fixed. Phillis said the speaker was trying to spearhead a bipartisan solution.

"I'm distraught that the school funding issue is not yet resolved, and I think Larry Householder had in mind resolving it," he said.

Householder has thus far ignored calls for his resignation from Democrats and Republicans alike. But, with his preliminary hearing in the federal probe set for August, the long game on Householder's policy agenda and political aspirations is now on a different timetable.

Well-preserved mammoth skeleton found in Siberian lake

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian scientists are working to retrieve the well-preserved skeleton of a woolly mammoth, which has some ligaments still attached to it, from a lake in northern Siberia.

Fragments of the skeleton were found by local reindeer herders in the shallows of Pechevalavato Lake on the Yamalo-Nenets region a few days ago. They found part of the animal's skull, the lower jaw, several ribs, and a foot fragment with sinews still intact.

Woolly mammoths are thought to have died out around 10,000 years ago, although scientists think small groups of them may have lived on longer in Alaska and on Russia's Wrangel Island off the Siberian coast.

Russian television stations on Friday showed scientists looking for fragments of the skeleton in the lakeside silt.

Scientists have retrieved more bones and also located more massive fragments protruding from the silt. They said it would take significant time and special equipment to recover the rest of the skeleton — if it had all survived in position.

Yevgeniya Khozyainova of the Shemanovsky Institute in Salekhard said in televised remarks that finding the complete skeleton of a mammoth is relatively rare. Such finds allow scientists to deepen their understanding of mammoths.

Several well-preserved frozen carcasses of mammoths have been found in the permafrost of northern Siberia.

Siberia is undergoing a heat wave and the U.N. weather agency warned Friday that average temperatures were 10 degrees Celsius (18 Fahrenheit) above average last month.

Curve ball: Red Sox flip flop on governor's first pitch

BOSTON (AP) — Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker will be throwing out the first pitch on Opening Day for the Boston Red Sox. Wait, no, he's not. Actually, yes, he is.

Hours before the first game at Fenway Park this season was set to begin Friday evening, there was confusion about whether the Republican governor would be participating in the ceremonial first pitch.

Baker's office sent out an email early Friday saying he would.

But Red Sox President and CEO Sam Kennedy denied it, telling WEEI radio: "We hope he's going to be there, but I can confirm he's not throwing the pitch."

A bit later, a spokesperson for the team said Kennedy misspoke.

"The Governor is, in fact, one of the participants in tonight's ceremonial first pitch," Zineb Curran said in an email.

The Sox are set to take on the Baltimore Orioles for the first game of the shortened season delayed by the coronavirus pandemic. No fans will be in the stands.

'Clear as mud' housing refund plans irk college students

By BRYAN ANDERSON Associated Press/Report for America

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RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — When Laura Comino opened the housing email from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in June, she knew she had to take action.

At the direction of the state's public university system, UNCG asked her to sign a housing contract addendum acknowledging that she might not get a refund if the school kicks her out of her dorm in the fall because of the coronavirus pandemic.

An online petition Comino circulated days later collected nearly 40,000 signatures from people demanding that all 16 UNC System colleges offer prorated refunds and return deposits if the virus closes dorms.

"People got so incredibly upset thinking this would affect all of us, and there's a possibility where it still might," Comino said.

With classes scheduled to begin in August, the possibility of no refunds has left students and administrators alike with questions. Comino and the dean of her school, Andrew Hamilton, both called the policy "clear as mud."

Like Comino, students across the country are facing uncertainty about whether they'll get housing refunds if they're displaced from campus by the pandemic. And they are pushing back against policies they view as prioritizing university revenue over their financial well-being.

The University of South Florida and the University of Maryland have said they would not be obligated to refund students if COVID-19 prompts them to close residence halls. Washington State University issued a similar policy, but then reversed it. And Stanford University students have complained about having to move abruptly to make room for a quarantine area.

The flagship UNC campus at Chapel Hill plans to offer refunds or credits if students are kicked out of their units, creating concerns about unequal treatment at different campuses.

"We're going to have to find out from the system what they want us to do, because some schools can afford to do it and some schools can't," UNCG Chancellor Franklin Gilliam said.

UNC System spokesman Josh Ellis said the guidance was meant to inform students that housing and dining refunds might be unavailable, but no definitive decisions have been made. The system announced Thursday that tuition and fees will not be prorated if classes go entirely online, but refund policies for housing and dining costs remain unchanged.

"No plan has been put out to say: If you're vulnerable, here's what we're going to do," Comino said of the system's clarification.

On July 1, Washington State emailed students a contract addendum saying they must pay housing and dining costs even if COVID-19 forces them to leave campus.

The move prompted substantial backlash, including a petition that gathered more than 7,000 signatures. The university reversed course the following week and said it would refund students living on its five physical campuses if public health officials ordered residential areas closed.

WSU spokesman Phil Weiler said the policy was initially drafted to give financial stability to the housing and dining departments, which face a \$20 million loss this fall because 2,000 fewer students will be housed.

"They are in extreme financial distress and were making a decision in the best interest for the long-term viability of the operation," Weiler said.

Weiler said WSU won't refund students choosing to leave. If classes go entirely online without a public health order, a student who goes home will still owe housing costs.

Curtis Cohen, a rising senior who is WSU's student body president, said the updated policy doesn't satisfy concerns he's heard from his classmates. A tuition rate increase disappointed him, and he would have liked to see "more transparency" about the school's finances before it passed operation costs onto students.

At Stanford University, some students were forced to move to make space for isolation areas needed if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs.

Stanford Law School student Tierra Rogers, who paid \$1,667 a month with her boyfriend for their 325-square-foot campus apartment, lived in one of six vacated graduate student studios.

Her lease expires Aug. 16, but she moved out in July after finding a new apartment that's bigger but more expensive. She anticipates being refunded about \$2,000 to cover the difference between her lease expiration and move-out dates but has had trouble reaching the housing office.

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"When I found a new apartment, I called them 22 times over three days and was never able to reach a person," Rogers said. "It's frustrating and doesn't feel like they always have students' best interest in mind."

As co-president of a group supporting low income and first-generation students at the private school, she worries Stanford isn't doing enough to assist students who can't afford to finance a hasty move.

Stanford spokesman E.J. Miranda noted students forced to move for the quarantine area had the option of renewing into the same type of apartment at the same cost and said the school paid professional movers to help students.

AP-NORC poll: Nearly half say job lost to virus won't return

By JOSH BOAK and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nearly half of Americans whose families experienced a layoff during the coronavirus pandemic now believe those jobs are lost forever, a new poll shows, a sign of increasing pessimism that would translate into roughly 10 million workers needing to find a new employer, if not a new occupation.

It's a sharp change after initial optimism the jobs would return, as temporary cutbacks give way to shuttered businesses, bankruptcies and lasting payroll cuts. In April, 78% of those in households with a job loss thought they'd be temporary. Now, 47% think that lost job is definitely or probably not coming back, according to the latest poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The poll is the latest sign the solid hiring of May and June, as some states lifted stay-at-home orders and the economy began to recover, may wane as the year goes on. Adding to the challenge: Many students will begin the school year online, making it harder for parents to take jobs outside their homes.

"Honestly, at this point, there's not going to be a job to go back to," said Tonica Daley, 35, who lives in Riverside, California, and has four children ranging from 3 to 18 years old. "The kids are going to do virtual school, and there is no day care."

Daley was furloughed from her job as a manager at J.C. Penney, which has filed for bankruptcy protection. The extra \$600 a week in jobless benefits Congress provided as part of the federal government's coronavirus relief efforts let her family pay down its credit cards, she said, but the potential expiration or reduction of those benefits in August would force her to borrow money to get by.

The economy's recovery has shown signs of stalling amid a resurgence of the coronavirus. The number of laid-off workers seeking jobless benefits rose last week for the first time since March, while the number of U.S. infections shot past 4 million — with many more cases undetected.

The poll shows that 72% of Americans would rather have restrictions in place in their communities to stop the spread of COVID-19 than remove them in an effort to help the economy. Just 27% want to prioritize the economy over efforts to stop the outbreak.

"The only real end to this pandemic problem is the successful application of vaccines," said Fred Folkman, 82, a business professor from Long Island, in New York.

About 9 in 10 Democrats prioritize stopping the virus, while Republicans are more evenly divided — 46% focus on stopping the spread, while 53% say the economy is the bigger priority.

President Donald Trump and Congress have yet to agree to a new aid package. Democrats, who control the House, have championed an additional \$3 trillion in help, including money for state and local governments. Republicans, who control the Senate, have proposed \$1 trillion, decreasing the size of the expanded unemployment benefits.

Overall, about half of Americans say they or someone in their household has lost some kind of income over the course of the pandemic. That includes 27% who say someone has been laid off, 33% been scheduled for fewer hours, 24% taken unpaid time off and 29% had wages or salaries reduced.

Eighteen percent of those who lost a household job now say it has come back, while another 34% still expect it to return.

The poll continues to show the pandemic's disparate impact. About 6 in 10 nonwhite Americans say they've lost a source of household income, compared with about half of white Americans. Forty-six percent of those with college degrees say they've lost some form of household income, compared with 56% of those without.

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Trump's approval rating on handling the economy stands at 48%, consistent with where it stood a month ago but down from January and March, when 56% said they approved. Still, the economy remains Trump's strongest issue. Working to Trump's advantage, 88% of Republicans — including 85% of those whose households have lost income during the pandemic — approve of his handling of the economy. Eighty-two percent of Democrats disapprove.

"A lot of people criticize our president, but he's a cheerleader," said Jim Russ, 74, a retired state worker from Austin, Texas. "As long we keep that, the American public will think positive and look positive."

The poll finds that 38% of Americans think the national economy is good. That's about the same as in June and up from 29% in May but far below the 67% who felt that way in January.

Sixty-four percent of Republicans think the economy is good, compared with 19% of Democrats. Likewise, 59% of Republicans expect the economy to improve in the next year, while Democrats are more likely to expect it to worsen than improve, 47% to 29%.

Sixty-five percent of Americans also call their personal financial situation good. That's about the same as it's been throughout the pandemic and before the crisis began. Still, Americans are slightly less likely than they were a month ago to expect their personal financial situation to improve in the next year. Thirty-three percent say that now, after 38% said so a month ago. Another 16% expect their finances to worsen, while 51% expect no changes.

So much of what happens in the economy will depend on the trajectory of the virus, said Danny Vaughn, 72, from Dade City, Florida.

"I don't disagree with everything the president does, but his leadership on the coronavirus issue has been lacking," Vaughn said. "And that's the number one issue facing the American people right now."

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/>.

China tells US to close Chengdu consulate 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.

China appealed to Washington to reverse its "wrong decision," and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the current difficulties are completely created by the U.S. side.

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

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risk of arbitrary detention.”

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

AP Education writer Collin Binkley in Boston contributed to this report

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

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

To photograph comet Neowise, it takes patience and placement

By GERRY BROOME Associated Press

LINVILLE, N.C. (AP) — The newly discovered comet Neowise is only visible from Earth once every 6,800 years, and photographers who want to document it seek places with high elevation and little smog or light pollution. A place like North Carolina's famed Grandfather Mountain.

On a recent weekend, Associated Press photographer Gerry Broome was granted special after-hours access to the iconic peak to accompany photographer and amateur astronomer Johnny Horne on a trip to make images of the comet discovered in March.

The moment came on a Saturday night when Comet Neowise first appeared as a tiny smudge in the northern sky. A pair of binoculars revealed its tail of gas and dust. It was just past 9:30 p.m., and the northern sky had cleared enough to spot the comet with the naked eye. It was as if the heavens opened up and provided a celestial show that wouldn't be repeated in our lifetimes and for many to come.

"If we don't attempt to experience these natural wonders, we never see any of them except by chance. I'd rather be deliberate about it," said Horne, who has traveled to Australia to photograph Halley's comet, Zambia and Mexico's Baja peninsula for eclipses and Iceland for the northern lights. The retired news photographer and photo editor, who spent 44 years at The Fayetteville Observer, has contributed to Sky & Telescope magazine since the 1990s.

To see Neowise, Grandfather Mountain was chosen for its clear view at an elevation of nearly 6,000 feet (1,828 meters) But to benefit from the view, the weather has to cooperate. On Friday night, a giant thundercloud blocked the view on Grandfather Mountain as the comet appeared, thwarting the attempts to photograph it.

But on Saturday, both photographers were successful -- Broome atop the mountain again this time, and Horne at a lower elevation.

According to NASA, the nucleus of the comet is three miles (4.8 kilometers) across. It emits a tail of dust and possibly two tails of gas as it moves through space at around 144,000 mph (232,000 kph). Now making its way back toward the outer solar system, the comet has come as close as 64 million miles (103 million kilometers) to Earth.

The comet should remain visible through the end of July and possibly into August across the Northern Hemisphere. It is visible to the naked eye and can be spotted below the Big Dipper, but a good pair of binoculars or a telescope will enhance your view. A clear night with limited light pollution is important for success.

It's named for the NASA spacecraft, Neowise, that first spotted it.

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Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, July 25, the 207th day of 2020. There are 159 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 25, 1866, Ulysses S. Grant was named General of the Army of the United States, the first officer to hold the rank.

On this date:

In 1814, the Battle of Lundy's Lane, one of the bloodiest battles of the War of 1812, took place in present-day Niagara Falls, Ontario, with no clear victor.

In 1898, the United States invaded Puerto Rico during the Spanish-American War.

In 1943, Benito Mussolini was dismissed as premier of Italy by King Victor Emmanuel III, and placed under arrest. (However, Mussolini was later rescued by the Nazis, and re-asserted his authority.)

In 1946, the United States detonated an atomic bomb near Bikini Atoll in the Pacific in the first underwater test of the device.

In 1952, Puerto Rico became a self-governing commonwealth of the United States.

In 1956, the Italian liner SS Andrea Doria collided with the Swedish passenger ship Stockholm off the New England coast late at night and began sinking; 51 people — 46 from the Andrea Doria, five from the Stockholm — were killed. (The Andrea Doria capsized and sank the following morning.)

In 1960, a Woolworth's store in Greensboro, North Carolina, that had been the scene of a sit-in protest against its whites-only lunch counter dropped its segregation policy.

In 1972, the notorious Tuskegee syphilis experiment came to light as The Associated Press reported that for the previous four decades, the U.S. Public Health Service, in conjunction with the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, had been allowing poor, rural Black male patients with syphilis to go without treatment, even allowing them to die, as a way of studying the disease.

In 1985, a spokeswoman for Rock Hudson confirmed that the actor, hospitalized in Paris, was suffering from AIDS. (Hudson died in October 1985.)

In 1994, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (YIT'-sahk rah-BEEN') and Jordan's King Hussein (hoo-SAYN') signed a declaration at the White House ending their countries' 46-year-old formal state of war.

In 2000, a New York-bound Air France Concorde crashed outside Paris shortly after takeoff, killing all 109 people on board and four people on the ground; it was the first-ever crash of the supersonic jet.

In 2002, Zacarias Moussaoui (zak-uh-REE'-uhs moo-SOW'-ee) declared he was guilty of conspiracy in the September 11 attacks, then dramatically withdrew his plea at his arraignment in Alexandria, Va.

Ten years ago: The online whistleblower Wikileaks posted some 90,000 leaked U.S. military records that amounted to a blow-by-blow account of the Afghanistan war, including unreported incidents of Afghan civilian killings as well as covert operations against Taliban figures. Alberto Contador won the Tour de France for the third time in four years. Erich Steidtmann, a former Nazi SS officer suspected of involvement in World War II massacres but never convicted, died in Hannover, Germany, at age 95.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama, visiting Kenya, mixed blunt messages on gay rights, corruption and counterterrorism with warm reflections on his family ties during a news conference with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta in Nairobi. First lady Michelle Obama opened the Special Olympics at a star-studded ceremony in Los Angeles. Cole Hamels became the first pitcher to throw a no-hitter against the Chicago Cubs in 50 years while leading the Philadelphia Phillies to a 5-0 win.

One year ago: President Donald Trump had a second phone call with the new Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, during which he solicited Zelenskyy's help in gathering potentially damaging information about former Vice President Joe Biden; that night, a staff member at the White House Office of Management and Budget signed a document that officially put military aid for Ukraine on hold. The Justice Department announced that it would resume executing death row prisoners for the first time in nearly two decades. Four major automakers and the state of California announced a deal to toughen standards for

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gas mileage and greenhouse gas emissions; the agreement bypassed the Trump administration's push to relax mileage standards. A Swedish prosecutor charged rapper A\$AP Rocky with assault over a fight in Stockholm; President Donald Trump responded by demanding that Sweden "Treat Americans fairly!" (The rapper and his bodyguards were convicted but received conditional sentences sparing them prison time unless they committed similar offenses in the future.)

Today's Birthdays: Folk-pop singer-musician Bruce Woodley (The Seekers) is 78. Rock musician Jim McCarty (The Yardbirds) is 77. Rock musician Verdine White (Earth, Wind & Fire) is 69. Singer-musician Jem Finer (The Pogues) is 65. Model-actress Iman is 65. Cartoonist Ray Billingsley ("Curtis") is 63. Rock musician Thurston Moore (Sonic Youth) is 62. Celebrity chef/TV personality Geoffrey Zakarian is 61. Actress-singer Bobbie Eakes is 59. Actress Katherine Kelly Lang is 59. Actress Illeana Douglas is 55. Country singer Marty Brown is 55. Actor Matt LeBlanc is 53. Actress Wendy Raquel Robinson is 53. Rock musician Paavo Lotjonen (PAH'-woh LAHT'-joh-nehn) (Apocalyptica) is 52. Actor D.B. Woodside is 51. Actress Miriam Shor is 49. Actor David Denman is 47. Actor Jay R. Ferguson is 46. Actor James Lafferty is 35. Actress Shantel VanSanten is 35. Actor Michael Welch is 33. Actress Linsey (cq) Godfrey is 32. Classical singer Faryl Smith is 25. Actor Mason Cook is 20. Actress Meg Donnelly (TV: "American Housewife") is 19. Actor Pierce Gagnon is 15.