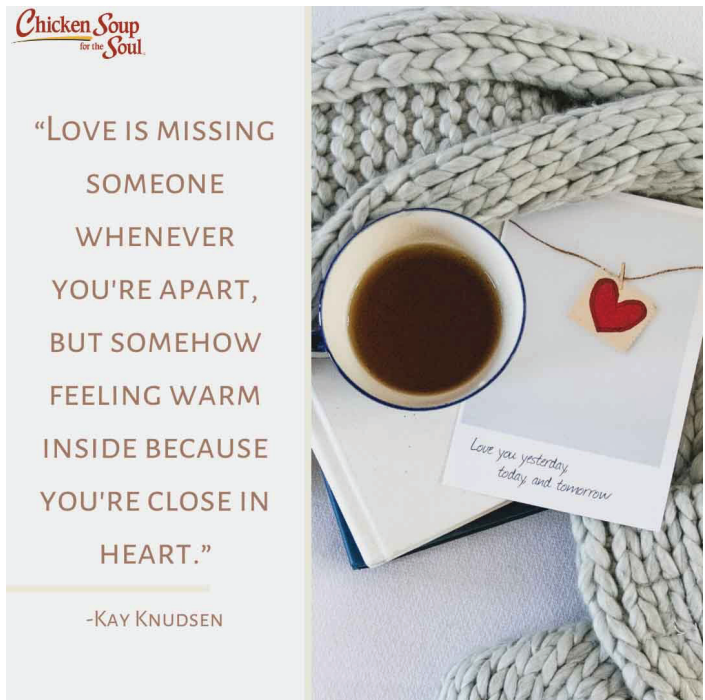


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Absentee Ballots being mailed out next month

The general election is still three months away, but the absentee ballots will be mailed out September 18th. That according to Cathy McNickle, Brown County Auditor. If you checked the box "For all elections" when you applied for an absentee ballot for the primary election in June, you will automatically receive the general election ballot in September. McNickle said just because you received your ballot so early doesn't mean you have to send it back right away. You can hang on to your ballot and mail it in about a week before the general election in case you change your mind on an issue or candidate.

Governor Noem's position on masks by Maggie Siedel from the Governor's Office

There seems to be some confusion about the Governor's position on masks (largely attributable to an in-artfully crafted campaign email).

I'd direct you back to the Governor's statements from Tuesday. If people want to wear masks, that's absolutely their prerogative - she has never discouraged wearing them. She has - and continues - to oppose mandatory masking. As it relates to children, what we've seen in European schools and elsewhere is promising - kids are in school, without distancing and without masks, and there continue to be very low transmission rates. And as the Governor pointed out (notably with Stephen) on Tuesday, some medical experts are quite concerned about whether it is practical to ask kids to wear these masks properly for long periods of time. She is encouraging schools to allow each family and child to make their own decisions about masking.

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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From the S.D. Dept. of Tourism

It's hard to believe the last day of July is already here. The summer is flying by.

We continued to see positive movement in regard to travel spending and visitation in South Dakota this past week, despite a downturn nationally in consumer sentiment when it comes to the safety of travel and a belief that things are going to get worse with the coronavirus. Here are some highlights from our latest COVID-19 Weekly Update:

South Dakota was one of 29 states that experienced increases in hotel search and bookings over the prior week.

The percent of American travelers who feel the pandemic will worsen over the next month increased to 61.5%.

45% of American travelers stated this past week that they would not travel until a vaccine is approved and is being administered.

18.2% of American travelers expect they may take their next road trip in August.

Road trips to and within South Dakota declined by 3% this week vs. the prior week.

The U.S. hotel occupancy rate reached an average of 48% last week, a decrease of -38% vs. prior year.

When asked about the timing of their next international trip, a significant share of respondents are now looking at the summer of 2021.

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.

Here are a few other items we want to bring to your attention as July comes to a close:

With the 80th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally just around the corner, we want to share information regarding the COVID-19 checkpoints occurring on some of the tribal lands in South Dakota.

These checkpoints have been put in place by these tribes to protect their residents from additional COVID-19 exposure. It's critical we work together to do our part to provide accurate information to visitors and residents alike about their trip through South Dakota. Please use this printable one-sheeter to share information and locations of current checkpoints. You can also visit SafeTravelUSA.com/sd/ to view travel disruptions and road construction information. Information is also available by calling 5-1-1.

We have placed some new resources from the Department of Health on our COVID-19 Health and Cleaning resource page on SDVisit.com:

COVID-19 GUIDANCE: FOOD CONCESSION STANDS FOR SCHOOLS AND TEMPORARY EVENTS

RISKS and BENEFITS: CONSIDERATIONS FOR SOCIAL ACTIVITIES DURING COVID-19

Governor Noem recently announced the launch of UpSkill, a program to support workers dislocated by COVID-19. UpSkill consists of 22 online certificate programs in high-demand fields, including business, healthcare, information technology, and manufacturing. The programs will begin this fall at the state's four technical colleges.

UpSkill participants will earn credentials at little or no cost. The Board of Technical Education and the Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) are partnering to support UpSkill participants. Participants must be eligible for re-employment assistance through DLR and be deemed a dislocated worker.

Dislocated workers in South Dakota are encouraged to apply for the UpSkill program immediately. After completing an UpSkill program, participants can enter a new career field, advance in their current field, or continue their education. More information can be found at SDUpSkill.com.

We wish you all a wonderful weekend. Let's continue to work hard to keep our visitors, our teams, and ourselves well as we enter Rally month. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance to you.

All our best,

Jim and Team

Jim Hagen, Secretary of Tourism

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Tickets On Sale Now for 2020 South Dakota State Fair

HURON, S.D. – Tickets are now on sale for the 2020 South Dakota State Fair. Tickets for the grandstand events and general gate admission passes can be purchased on the State Fair website at www.sdstatefair.com, over the phone at (866) 605-3247, or at the State Fair ticket office located at the Nordby Exhibit Hall, 1060 3rd Street Southwest in Huron, South Dakota. A list of grandstand acts for the 2020 State Fair can be found below.

Thursday, September 3 and Friday, September 4, 8:00 PM

Red Wilk Construction Tuff Hedeman Bull Bash

Tickets: \$20 Adults, \$12 Youth age 6-15 years old, Age 5 and under are free.

Four time World Champion bull rider and Pro Rodeo Hall of Famer Tuff Hedeman has been producing bull riding events that have been thrilling audiences with his two hour adrenaline rush entertainment style punctuated with the two things he knows fans want to see, great rides and high scores.

Saturday, September 5, 7:30 PM

Big Air ATV Tour

This event offers free admission.

The Big Air ATV Tour brings laughs, screams, and excitement to the grandstand with 14 action-packed scenes, each bigger than the previous. Big jumps, 450 cc motors, backflips, incredible balance, crowd games, good music, launching a 1,300lb Polaris RZR, and more will be found at the event. The audience will be floored by how high in the air these riders go.

Saturday, September 5 and Sunday, September 6, 10:00 AM

South Dakota Timed Event Championship Rodeo

This event offers free admission.

The area's elite youth rodeo contestants will compete in six timed events, including tie-down calf roping, barrel racing, team roping, goat tying, breakaway roping and steer wrestling. Any rodeo youth from across the country, ages 14-19, are eligible to compete for the title but entries are limited.

Sunday, September 6, 9:15 PM

Laser Light Show & Fireworks sponsored by C&B Operations

This event offers free admission.

The grandstand will be lit up with a spectacular laser light show from Laser Encore. Using high-powered laser lights and 3D aerial laser beam displays synced to music, this laser light show is bound to be unlike any light show you've ever seen. Fireworks will follow the laser light show.

Monday, September 7, 1:00 PM

"Thunder at the Fair" Outlaw Truck & Tractor Pull sponsored by Kibble Equipment

Tickets: \$15 Adults, \$8 Youth age 6-15 years old, Age 5 and under are free.

When it comes to man vs. machine, arguably Truck and Tractor Pulling reigns champion over the motorsports. These tractors are nothing like the equipment they're named after. These are monsters with tires taller than the average human and engines that literally shake the ground when they're cranked up during a pull. Feel the adrenaline rush of the pull in the grandstand as these trucks and tractors compete for the top spot.

The 2020 South Dakota State Fair will run from Thursday, September 3 through Monday, September 7. Channel Seeds Preview Night will be Wednesday, September 2. Find information about all of the happenings at the South Dakota State Fair at www.sdstatefair.com

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Online account registration required for HBO Max access. Data rates may apply for app download/usage. *\$19.95 ACTIVATION, EARLY TERMINATION FEE OF \$20/MO. FOR EACH MONTH REMAINING ON AGMT., EQUIPMENT NON-RETURN & ADD'L FEES APPLY. Price incl. SELECT Pkg., monthly service & equip. fees for 1 HD DVR & is after \$5/mo. autopay & paperless bill and \$10/mo. bundle discount for 12 mos. Pay \$64.99/mo. + taxes until discount starts w/in 3 bills. New approved residential customers only (equipment lease req'd). Credit card req'd (except MA & PA). Restr's apply.

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DPS Sobriety Checkpoint Schedule Announced For August

PIERRE, S.D. – Sixteen sobriety checkpoints in 12 different counties are planned for August by the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

The checkpoints are done each month in different counties as a way to discourage drivers from drinking and then driving.

August checkpoints are scheduled in the counties of: Charles Mix, Codington, Davison, Hamlin, Jackson, Lawrence, Lincoln, Meade, Minnehaha, Spink, Walworth and Yankton.

The checkpoints are funded by the South Dakota Office of Highway Safety and conducted by the South Dakota Highway Patrol with the help of local law enforcement. Both the Office of Highway Safety and the Highway Patrol are part of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

Purple Heart Recognition Day

PIERRE, S.D. – At the request of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Gov. Kristi Noem has proclaimed Friday, Aug. 7, 2020, as "Purple Heart Recognition Day," calling on all South Dakotans to honor those men and women who are recipients of the Purple Heart Medal.

The Purple Heart, our nation's oldest military medal, is awarded to those service men and women who have borne the battle, sacrificing life and limb.

"August 7th is a day to honor those brave men and women who have earned the Purple Heart," said Greg Whitlock, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. "It unites our country in recognizing the sacrifices of those who have risked everything in serving our great nation."

The Governor encourages all South Dakotans to set aside time on Aug. 7 to honor our heroes who have been honored with the Purple Heart. "It is important for all Americans to learn the history of this important military award and the sacrifices made by the recipients," said Gov. Noem.

"Our military remains as strong as it has ever been. America's veterans have been defined by the virtues of selfless service, sacrifice and devotion to duty," said Whitlock. "These men and women, who serve and have served, are the flesh and blood of American exceptionalism."

Child Support Commission allowed extra time for review

PIERRE – The Department of Social Services (DSS) will convene the Commission on Child Support in 2021 to review child support guidelines.

Federal law calls for the review to be completed every four years and was to be done in 2020, but due to challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement has granted a modification allowing a one-year extension.

"With delays brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, completing the important work of examining child support guidelines has been problematic, so we appreciate the flexibility to thoroughly analyze the data and come to solid conclusions," said DSS Cabinet Secretary Laurie Gill. "Economic conditions which feed directly into the review continue to evolve and it is in the best interest of South Dakota's children to ensure we are working with accurate information."

The review analyzes economic data on the cost of raising children and complex factors for custodial and noncustodial parents.

In response to the delay from the federal government, Governor Noem issued Executive Order 2020-29 extending the guideline review deadline from December 2020 to December 2021.

DSS will announce the convening dates once available. For more information, please visit dss.sd.gov.

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#159 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

I keep hoping things are leveling off. There are some indications we may be, but we're still looking at a lot of new cases, 65,800 of them today, a 1.5% increase and over 60,000 for a fifth consecutive day. This is our 10th worst day for new cases, and our worst-day streak is up to 32 days now. We have to drop below 47,900 to break the streak, and that seems to be a long way off yet. North Dakota set a single-day record today. Florida reports hospitalizations spiking for those under 18 years by more than 23% in the past week, even while test positivity rates are also rising in this age group. New York has slipped to fourth place for total cases among the states. More than 40% of the US's total cases, more than 1.9 million, were reported in July. This week, 24 states showed increases of more than 100 cases per 100,000 population, placing them in the White House Task Force's red zone, the point where additional restrictions are warranted according to the Task Force.

There have been 153,750 deaths Today showed a 0.9% increase, 1377 reported deaths. This is our fifth consecutive day over 1000. Mississippi, Nevada, and Montana had record numbers of deaths today. So did Florida—for the fourth consecutive day. Setting seven-day average records were Nevada, Texas, Mississippi, and Florida. There were 3000 more deaths in July than in June in the US.

I hate to harp on an old subject, but six months into this thing, we still have an enormous issue with testing in this country. Admiral Brett Giroir, the point-man on testing in the US, told Congress today that it "is not a possible benchmark we can achieve today" to get test results back within 48-72 hours. Reports on the ground are that wait times are not getting better, that shortages persist, that sometimes tests cannot be processed at all because the testing reagents are unavailable or because the labs cannot keep up with the case load. Florida's governor reports it is taking seven to ten days at times to get results. The delay in Alabama is running seven days right now; as a result officials are asking that testing be limited to those at highest risk and those with symptoms.

So what difference does that make? Well, it's very difficult to keep people home for a week or longer after testing while we wait to discover whether they're infected. And if you're not getting results for a week, your window for contact tracing is pretty much closed by the time you know you need to do it. Also, when you can't afford to test everyone you should be testing, then you're letting too many cases go undetected. Control efforts are fairly pointless without adequate testing and robust contact tracing.

Speaking of which, contact tracing isn't going so well either. In addition to the issue of delayed test results, the sheer number of new cases has made it fairly impossible to keep up with tracing for all of them. The New York Times reports "contact tracing has largely failed in the United States, as the virus's pervasiveness and major lags in testing have rendered the system almost pointless." This picture is complicated by the difficulty of tracing because many people simply refuse to participate or cannot be located. It is apparently becoming fashionable to not do even the bare minimum for your fellow Americans by giving public health officials an even chance to warn those you may have infected and try to prevent further spread. I am not sure how we reached this place, but it is not a great place to be.

We have further evidence that putting children together in groups may be a bad idea, at least if you do not take proper precautions. There has been a significant outbreak at a summer camp in Georgia where transmission has been fairly rapid and broad. There were 600 campers and counselors who'd spent just a few days together. Not all test results are back yet, but of those whose results were known, 260 of 344

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(over 75%) were infected. Median age was 12 years. Proof of a negative test was required before attending camp, but masks were not required. Given that we know testing is not perfect, the lack of a mask requirement was a significant omission.

The CDC report on this cluster said, "This investigation adds to the body of evidence demonstrating that children of all ages are susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infection and, contrary to early reports, might play an important role in transmission Physical distancing and consistent and correct use of cloth masks should be emphasized as important strategies for mitigating transmission in congregate settings." If you've been telling yourself comforting stories about how children don't transmit this virus, you may wish to try a different story on for size. This doesn't look good.

Thinking about a vaccine nearing the finish line, something to consider is what it will take to deliver that vaccine into the bodies of some 300 million Americans, not to mention the rest of the world. The federal government is investing heavily in production ramp-ups for the candidates in trials so that we'll actually have some stockpile ready to go for whichever ones are approved in the end. But that's really where the story gets complicated because it's not enough to produce vats of vaccine; we need to vaccinate. And it's looking a though we're going to have to do it twice: All the candidates in phase 3 so far are two-dose vaccines.

To do that, we need to fill vials with vaccine and ship them out to clinics. So far, the government has contracted for only 164 million of them. That's not going to be enough; it's not going to be close. And it doesn't look like we have the additional manufacturing capacity to meet the demand. Additionally, the packaging step must be done under the strictest of sterile conditions, and we don't have the capacity to fill the vials once we have them, so that's another challenge. Building new plants is a multi-year process, so it seems likely we're going to have to expand existing ones. I haven't seen signs this is happening.

Then we need syringes and needles to administer the vaccine, so we need around 650 million of those. Again, our industrial capacity isn't up to the task over and above their current production capacity which is already spoken for. There is work being done on a 12-month process to build additional capacity here, but that would create real bottlenecks in getting this vaccine out to the public.

And we need to figure out how to pay for vaccine. It's all very well to insist people should be responsible enough to pay for their own protection—except some can't, especially in the current state of the economy, and we as a society need people to be vaccinated. We're not trying to protect just the vaccinated person at the public expense; vaccinating him protects us all.

Finally, we must get the vaccine into the arms of people who need it—which is pretty much everyone for whom it is safe. There will need to be a coordinated federal effort to set up and staff local immunization events.

Now all of this is going to cost some money, but it seems necessary. A vaccine you can't give isn't going to help any of us.

Here's something quirky that's still in the earliest explorational steps: the use of hyperbaric oxygen chambers in treatment of serious Covid-19. Hyperbaric chambers are those things you've probably heard of using for divers suffering from the bends. They are also used to treat a handful of other medical problems; they deliver 100% oxygen inside a pressurized chamber. The thinking is that it would push oxygen into the patient more efficiently than a ventilator or supplemental oxygen. The device has a long history of quackery, used for all kinds of things from autism to cancer, as well as by celebrities with unusual theories

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about how these help them, none of which has any evidentiary support. That can make getting people onboard for trials a little tricky.

Despite that, a small case-control trial was run in New York using up to five 90-minute treatments in seriously ill patients. Almost all patients reported feeling relief from symptoms. Eighteen of 20 recovered and were discharged. Two died, but it was determined the deaths were not caused by the treatment. The control group who did not receive hyperbaric therapy had a significantly higher rate of intubations (being put on a ventilator), deaths, and long-term hospitalizations; so this is promising. It should be pointed out that it would be unwise to draw any strong conclusions from a small sample, but this does suggest a larger randomized controlled trial is warranted. It's pretty tough to find funding for a trial; most clinical trials are funded by people who hope to profit from the treatment if it is approved. As ABC News points out in reporting on this treatment, "Oxygen, however, is not something that can be patented, and doctors say there are not big profits to be made from using the pressurized pods."

There are also some risks—transporting the patient to and from the chamber while on oxygen, for starters. We also do not know how the pressurized chamber will affect abnormal blood clotting conditions that characterize Covid-19 in many patients and whether the oxygen could become toxic if used in too high a dose. There are trials getting underway in Sweden, Israel, France, and Italy; so we should hear something relatively soon.

A couple of nights ago, we talked about Dennis Ruhnke, a Kansas farmer who was awarded his college degree rather late in life. I ran across an Italian man with an unusual college story too. His name is Giuseppe Paterno, and he's had a tough life. He grew up in poverty, which limited his educational opportunities despite his love of learning. After service in the military, he married and then decided he wanted to graduate from high school, which he did at the age of 31. He was never able to go to college until 2017 when he finally took the plunge. He said he understood it was "a little late" to get a degree, but he decided "it was now or never."

Paterno studied hard, as an older student, relying more on old-fashioned printed books than online resources, and skipped the late-night parties his classmates attended. Studying history and philosophy, he wasn't entirely comfortable with the video calls that replaced live classes when Italy shut down in the pandemic, but he said he wasn't put off by the disease. He figured with what he'd been through, a virus wasn't so scary. So after all the hard work, he passed his oral exams last month and was prepared to graduate with his class this week, receiving his diploma and the traditional graduation laurel wreath to applause from his family, his professors, and his fellow students, 70+ years younger than his 96 years. And so Italy's oldest student graduated first in his class with top honors, collected his diploma, and walked away with his shiny new degree. He's survived war and plague and, now, college. Pretty good for an old guy.

He stayed healthy through this thing, and you should do that too. Take care, and we'll talk tomorrow.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	July 22	July 23	June 24	June 25	July 26	July 27	July 28
Minnesota	47,457	47,961	48,721	49,488	50,291	51,153	51,803
Nebraska	23,190	23,486	23,818	24,174	24,395	24,618	24,899
Montana	2,712	2,813	2,910	3,039	3,260	3,342	3,381
Colorado	41,059	41,698	42,314	42,980	43,789	44,336	44,565
Wyoming	1,830	1,864	1,923	1,972	2,008	2,029	2,072
North Dakota	5207	5367	5493	5614	5736	5876	5986
South Dakota	8019	8077	8143	8200	8305	8395	8444
United States	3,902,233	3,971,343	4,038,864	4,114,817	4,178,730	4,234,140	4,294,770
US Deaths	142,073	143,193	144,305	145,565	146,463	146,935	148,056

Minnesota	+350	+504	+760	+ 773	+805	+871	+650
Nebraska	+343	+296	+332	+356	+221	+223	+281
Montana	+91	+101	+97	+129	+221	+82	+39
Colorado	+493	+639	+616	+455	+457	+547	+229
Wyoming	+40	+34	+59	+49	+36	+21	+43
North Dakota	+81	+160	+126	+121	+122	+140	+110
South Dakota	+76	+58	+66	+57	+105	+90	+49
United States	+70,828	+69,110	+67,521	+75,953	+63,913	+55,410	+60,630
US Deaths	+1,164	+1,120	+1,112	+1,260	+898	+472	+1,121

	July 29	July 30	July 31	Aug. 01
Minnesota	52,281	52,947	53,692	54,463
Nebraska	25,157	25,422	25,766	26,211
Montana	3,475	3,676	3,814	3,965
Colorado	45,314	45,796	46,204	46,809
Wyoming	2,136	2,172	2,217	2,297
North Dakota	6141	6227	6301	6602+
South Dakota	8492	8641*	8685	8764
United States	4,352,304	4,427,493	4,495,224	4,566,275
US Deaths	149,260	150,716	152,075	153,391

Minnesota	+478	+666	+745	+771
Nebraska	+258	+265	+344	+445
Montana	+94	+201	+138	+151
Colorado	+749	+482	+408	+605
Wyoming	+64	+36	+45	+80
North Dakota	+155	+86	+74	+301
South Dakota	48	+149	+44	+80
United States	+57,534	+75,189	+67,731	+71,051
US Deaths	+1,204	+1,456	+1,359	+1,316

* The July 29, 2020, daily update includes cases reported to the South Dakota Department between Monday, July 27 at 1 p.m. and Tuesday, July 28 at 7 p.m. due to a delay in the daily data extraction.

+ North Dakota had a free testing site in Bismarck yesterday. That may have resulted in the high positive tests for the day.

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July 31st COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

A female from Pennington County is the latest casualty from COVID-19. She was in the 80+ age group. That makes 130 deaths in South Dakota.

Campbell County, Jackson County, Jones County and Edmunds County each fell out of the fully recovered list as Campbell County, Jones County and Jackson County each had one case and Edmunds County had three.

The number hospitalized in South Dakota is down 13 today, now at 31.

Brown County had three recovered and two positive cases.

Brown County:

Active Cases: -1 (31)

Recovered: +3 (363)

Total Positive: +2 (397)

Ever Hospitalized: 0 (20)

Deaths: 0 (3)

Negative Tests: +74 (4065)

Percent Recovered: 91.4% (+.3)

South Dakota:

Positive: +80 (8764 total)

Negative: +1211 (102,871 total)

Hospitalized: +9 (824 total). 31 currently hospitalized (down 13 from yesterday)

Deaths: +1 (130 total)

Recovered: +71 (7761 total)

Active Cases: +7 (873)

Percent Recovered: 88.6 +.1

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Harding +1 (50)

Fully recovered from positive cases (Lost Campbell, Jackson, Jones and Edmunds: Bennett 5-5, Bon Homme 13-13, Day 21-21, Fall River 14-14, Haakon 1-1, Hamlin 14-14, Hand 7-7, Hyde 3-3, Jerauld 38-39-1, Perkins 4-4, Stanley 14-14, Sully 1-1.

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

Aurora: 2 active cases

Beadle (9): +1 positive, +4 recovered (21 active cases)

Bennett: Fully Recovered

Bon Homme: Fully Recovered

Brookings: +1 positive, +2 recovered (6 active cases)

Brown (3): +2 positive, +3 recovered (31 active cases)

Brule: +1 positive (4 active cases)

Buffalo (3): +1 positive (7 active cases)

Butte: 3 active cases

Campbell: +1 positive (1 active case)

Charles Mix: 7 active cases

Clark: 2 active cases

Clay: +2 positive, +1 recovered (12 active cases)

Codington: +2 recovered (18 active cases)

Corson: +1 recovered (4 active cases)

Custer: +5 positive, +1 recovered (6 active cases)

Davison: +2 positive, +3 recovered (10 active cases)

Day: Fully Recovered

Deuel: 2 active cases

Dewey: +2 positive (29 active cases)

Douglas: 2 active cases

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Edmunds: +3 positive (3 active cases)
 Fall River: Fully Recovered
 Faulk (1): 4 active cases
 Grant: Fully Recovered
 Gregory: +1 recovered (1 active case)
 Haakon: Fully Recovered
 Hamlin: Fully Recovered
 Hand: Fully Recovered
 Hanson: 6 active cases
 Harding: No infections reported
 Hughes (3): +1 recovered (5 active cases)
 Hutchinson: +1 positive (4 active cases)
 Hyde: Fully Recovered
 Jackson (1): +1 positive (1 active case)
 Jerauld (1): +1 recovered (FULLY RECOVERD)
 Jones: +1 positive (1 active case)
 Kingsbury: +1 positive, +1 recovered (3 active cases)
 Lake (2): -1 positive, +1 recovered (22 active cases)
 Lawrence: +1 recovered (1 active case)
 Lincoln (2): +19 positive, +19 recovered, 1 death (90 active cases)
 Lyman (2): +2 positive (9 active cases)
 Marshall: 1 active case)
 McCook (1): 4 active cases
 McPherson: 1 active case
 Meade (1): +2 positive, +1 recovered (10 active cases)
 Mellette: 13 active cases
 Miner: +1 positive (4 active cases)
 Minnehaha (63): +17 positive, +18 recovered (316 active cases)
 Moody: 4 active cases
 Oglala Lakota +1 positive, +3 recovered (19 active

cases)
 Pennington (24): +7 positive, +5 recovered, 1 death (115 active cases)
 Perkins: 2 active cases
 Potter: 1 active case
 Roberts (1): +1 recovered (7 active cases)
 Sanborn: Fully Recovered
 Spink: 3 active cases
 Stanley: Fully Recovered
 Sully: Fully Recovered
 Todd (4): 4 active cases
 Tripp: 1 active case
 Turner: +2 positive, +1 recovered (10 active cases)
 Union (2): +4 positive, +1 recovered (33 active cases)
 Walworth: 1 active case
 Yankton (2): +1 recovered (11 active cases)
 Ziebach: 6 active cases

- North Dakota Dept. of Health Report
 COVID-19 Daily Report, July 31:
- 5,292 tests (2103)
 - 6,469 positives (+168)
 - 5,289 recovered (+108)
 - 103 deaths (0)
 - 1,077 active cases (+60)

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian, Non-Hispanic	724	8%
Black, Non-Hispanic	1024	12%
Hispanic	1203	14%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	1401	16%
Other	847	10%
White, Non-Hispanic	3565	41%

County of Residence	# of Deaths
Beadle	9
Brown	3
Buffalo	3
Butte	1
Faulk	1
Hughes	2
Jackson	1
Jerauld	1
Lake	2
Lincoln	2
Lyman	2
McCook	1
Meade	1
Minnehaha	63
Oglala Lakota	1
Pennington	27
Roberts	1
Todd	4
Union	3
Yankton	2

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons
Aurora	37	35	359
Beadle	586	556	1802
Bennett	5	5	494
Bon Homme	13	13	711
Brookings	113	107	2471
Brown	397	363	4065
Brule	40	36	698
Buffalo	106	96	609
Butte	10	7	728
Campbell	2	1	85
Charles Mix	99	92	1173
Clark	16	14	368
Clay	113	101	1243
Codington	117	99	2617
Corson	26	22	412
Custer	18	12	744
Davison	86	76	2169
Day	21	21	592
Deuel	9	7	371
Dewey	58	29	1974
Douglas	16	14	381
Edmunds	13	10	383
Fall River	14	14	901
Faulk	26	21	170
Grant	18	18	664
Gregory	7	6	356
Haakon	1	1	280
Hamlin	14	14	588
Hand	7	7	267
Hanson	20	13	180
Harding	0	0	50
Hughes	83	75	1616
Hutchinson	26	22	855

Hyde	3	3	120
Jackson	8	6	415
Jerauld	39	38	264
Jones	2	1	53
Kingsbury	12	9	516
Lake	78	54	870
Lawrence	26	25	1969
Lincoln	542	450	6176
Lyman	87	77	882
Marshall	8	7	423
McCook	24	19	604
McPherson	6	5	205
Meade	71	59	1828
Mellette	24	15	332
Miner	14	10	242
Minnehaha	4150	3771	25411
Moody	30	26	596
Oglala Lakota	141	123	2870
Pennington	811	672	10183
Perkins	6	4	145
Potter	1	0	273
Roberts	69	61	1586
Sanborn	13	13	212
Spink	19	16	1086
Stanley	14	14	228
Sully	1	1	65
Todd	66	59	1925
Tripp	20	19	583
Turner	44	34	844
Union	191	156	1772
Walworth	18	17	642
Yankton	101	88	2895
Ziebach	8	2	285
Unassigned****	0	0	5995

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

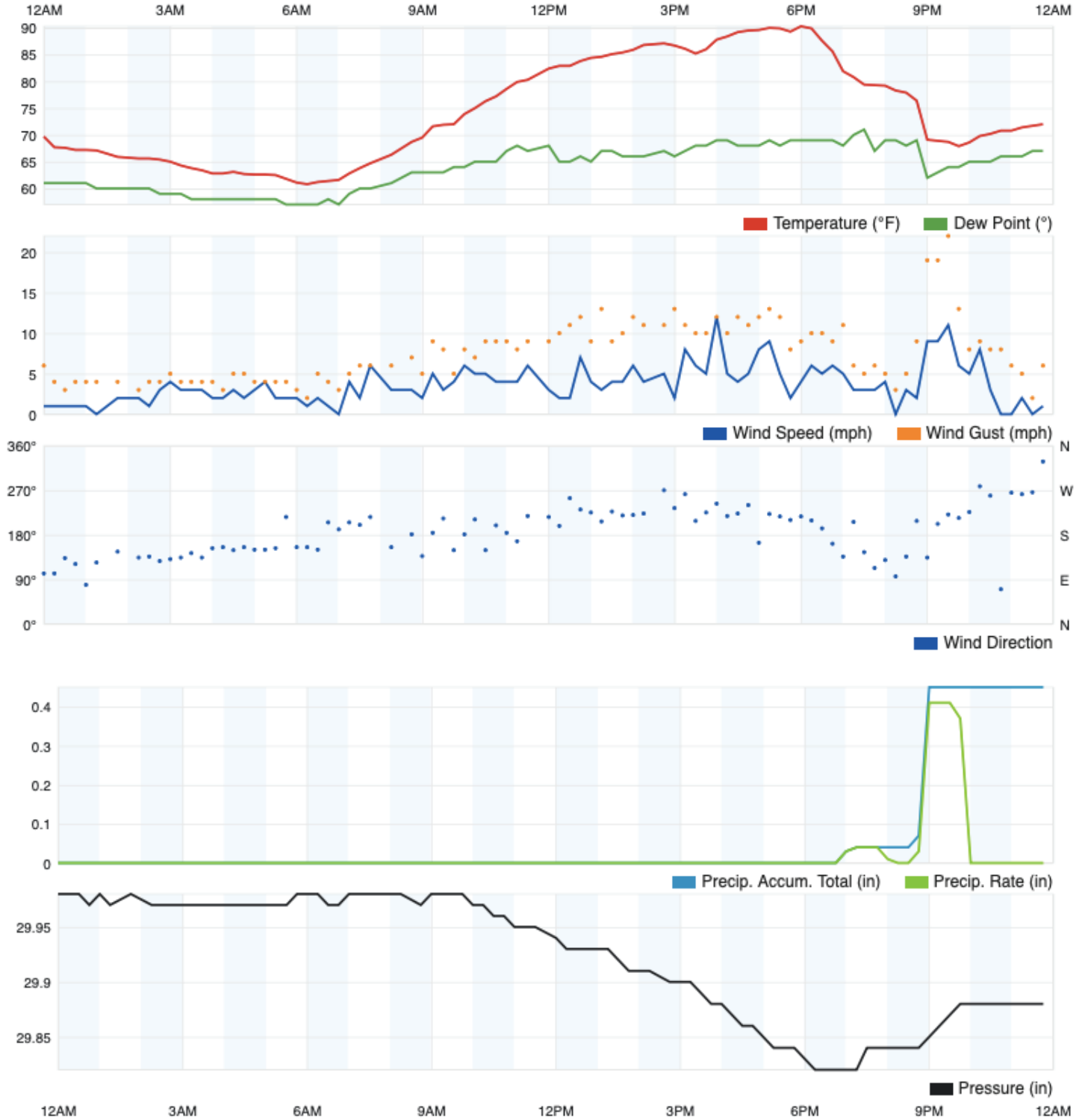
Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	4292	67
Male	4472	63

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	1094	0
20-29 years	1862	1
30-39 years	1750	6
40-49 years	1352	7
50-59 years	1314	17
60-69 years	781	25
70-79 years	323	18
80+ years	288	56

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today

Tonight

Sunday

Sunday
Night

Monday



Sunny and
Breezy

Mostly Clear

Sunny

Mostly Clear

Sunny

High: 79 °F

Low: 56 °F

High: 78 °F

Low: 51 °F

High: 75 °F

Today:
Mostly Sunny and Breezy. Highs 76-82°F

Tonight:
Mostly Clear and Cool. Lows 54-57°F

Sunday:
Sunny and Mild. Highs 74-80°F

NWSAberdeen weather.gov/abr

High pressure builds in over the region this weekend. Mostly sunny and mild conditions are forecast through Sunday. Breezy northerly winds are expected today as the cooler, drier air moves in. #sdwx #mnwx

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Today in Weather History

August 1, 1978: A severe thunderstorm developed in west-central Beadle County during the afternoon hours and moved southeast. High winds near 80 mph and hail up to golf ball size pelted several counties along the storm path. Hail piled up to six inches deep and up to three feet in ditches. Hail remained visible in some areas up to thirty-six hours after the storm passed. Approximately 480,000 acres of crops were severely damaged or destroyed. Damage to crops and personal property were estimated to be nearly four million dollars.

August 1, 2000: A severe thunderstorm produced large hail up to golf ball size and damaging winds estimated at 90 to 110 mph across northeastern Wyoming and western South Dakota during the evening hours. The northern foothills of the Black Hills and the communities of Spearfish and Sturgis received the brunt of the storm. Considerable F0 and F1 wind damage (90 to 110 mph) occurred in and around Spearfish. The strong winds blew down trees, business and road signs, and damaged tents for the 60th Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, destroying vendor merchandise and mobile homes.

1954 - Mount Rainier in Washington State was still covered with sixteen inches of snow at the 5500 foot level following a big snow season. (David Ludlum)

1983: During the early afternoon hours, a strong microburst swept across Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, D.C. Although the base anemometer was not calibrated at extreme wind speeds, the peak gust hit 149 mph. It was reported that Air Force One, with President Reagan on board, landed less than 10 minutes before the peak gust.

1985 - A nearly stationary thunderstorm deluged Cheyenne, WY, with rain and hail. Six inches of rain fell in six hours producing the most damaging flash flood of record for the state. Two to five feet of hail covered the ground following the storm, which claimed twelve lives, and caused 65 million dollars property damage. (Storm Data)

1986 - A powerful thunderstorm produced 100 mph winds and large hail in eastern Kansas and southwestern Missouri causing 71 million dollars damage, and injuring nineteen persons. It was one of the worst thunderstorms of record for Kansas. Crops were mowed to the ground in places and roofs blown off buildings along its path, 150 miles long and 30 miles wide, from near Abilene to southeast of Pittsburg. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Record heat gripped parts of the Midwest. A dozen cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Lincoln, NE, with a reading of 105 degrees, Moline, IL, with an afternoon high of 103 degrees, and Burlington, IA, with a reading of 102 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Two dozen cities in the Upper Midwest reported record high temperatures for the date, including La Crosse WI with a reading of 105 degrees. Highs of 103 degrees at Milwaukee, WI, and South Bend, IN, were records for the month of August. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Hurricane Chantal made landfall along the Upper Texas coast about sunrise. Chantal deluged parts of Galveston Island and southeastern Texas with 8 to 12 inches of rain. Unofficial totals ranged up to twenty inches. Winds gusted to 82 mph at Galveston, and reached 76 mph in the Houston area. Tides were 5 to 7 feet high. The hurricane claimed two lives, and caused 100 million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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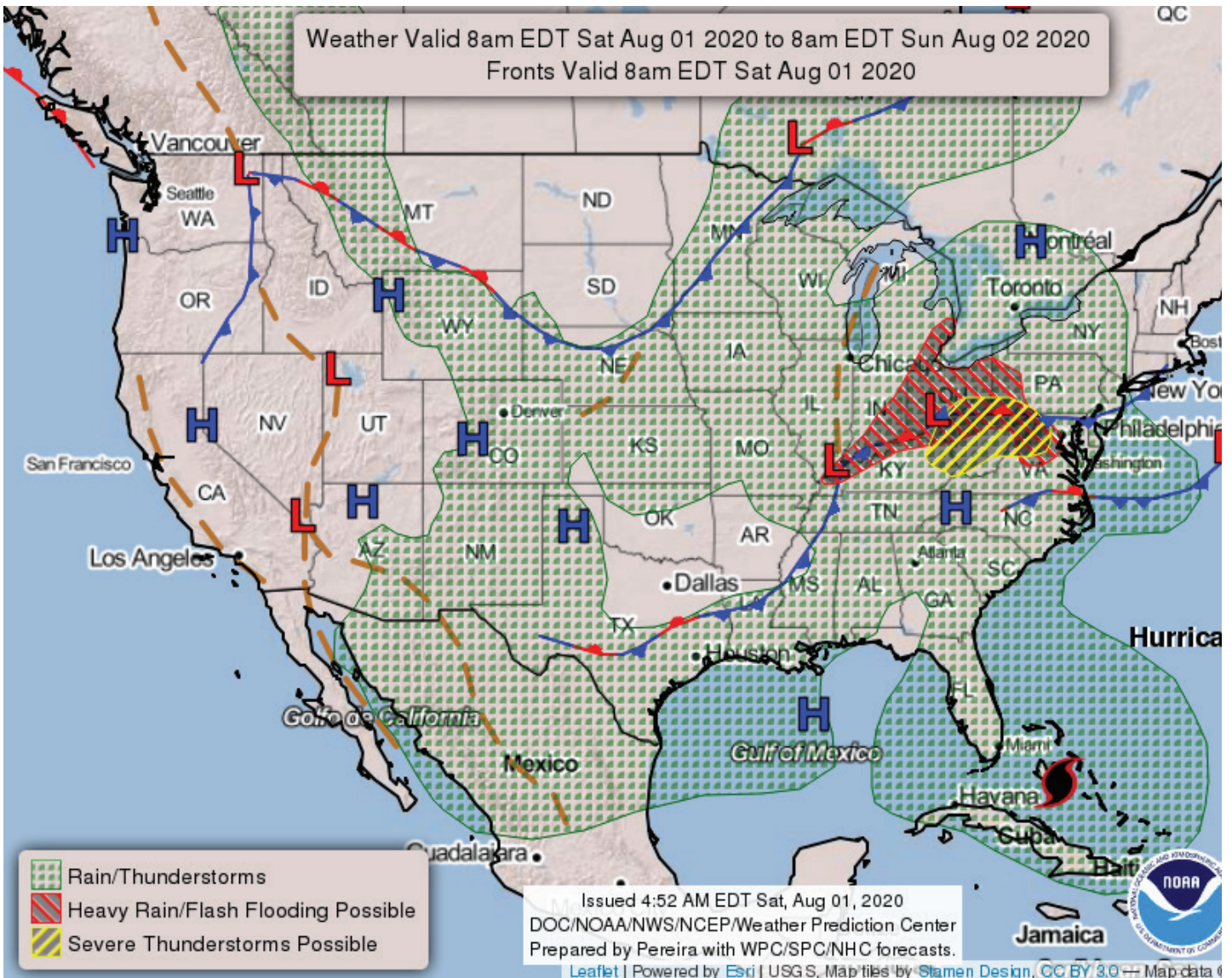
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 91 °F at 6:04 PM
Low Temp: 60 °F at 6:21 AM
Wind: 22 mph at 9:22 PM
Precip: 0.45

Today's Info

Record High: 111° in 1900
Record Low: 44° in 1948
Average High: 84°F
Average Low: 59°F
Average Precip in July.: 3.02
Precip to date in Aug.: 0.45
Average Precip to date: 13.86
Precip Year to Date: 10.96
Sunset Tonight: 9:01 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:20 a.m.



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DO OUR WORDS REALLY MATTER?

It was the mid-week prayer service. The crowd was small but the singing loud. The final hymn before the Bible study was "For You I Am Praying."

A visitor turned to a member of the church who was standing next to him and asked, "For whom are you praying?"

"No one, really," came the response. "I'm just singing."

Often the hymns we sing and the words we speak are completely disconnected from the lives we live. Sometimes our faith is so frail that we fail Him.

But if our relationship with God is what He expects it to be, we must give Him our love and our lives, our heads and our hearts, our desires and our dreams. And, we must ask Him to empower us, by His grace and goodness, to live lives that will be pleasing to Him.

God's first expectation of us is that we totally commit our lives to Him. Paul, writing to the Romans said, "I beg you, in view of all that God has done for you, to make a decisive decision to present all that you are or have to God as a living sacrifice - which is only reasonable."

If we do that - make that decisive decision to surrender our lives to Him - the songs we sing and the words we speak will be obvious in our lives and consistent with His expectations.

Prayer: Help us, Heavenly Father, to be certain that our walk matches our words and that we behave what we say we believe. Give us Your courage to be consistent. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I beg you, in view of all that God has done for you, to make a decisive decision to present all that you are or have to God as a living sacrifice - which is only reasonable. Romans 12:1

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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
- **CANCELLED** Andover Threshing Show
- 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
- 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
- 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/31/2020 Downtown Trick or Treat
- 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat
- 11/14/2020 Groton Legion Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 11/26/2020 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center
- 12/05/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/05/2020 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
- 01/--/2021 83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates

News from the Associated Press

Sunny's: Pizza place carved out its own slice of Sioux Falls

By ERIN BORMETT Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Jon Oppold started Sunny's Pizzeria with the intention of creating a locally owned staple in the neighborhood. Six months after opening, that focus on local is clear from the first step in the door.

The idea behind Sunny's unconventional location on a residential street was to give neighbors, especially the University of Sioux Falls students a few blocks over, a hangout to call their own.

"The neighborhood has been great," Oppold told the Argus Leader. "I'm a big believer in neighborhood community business. I remember growing up here in town and there used to be much more of that, and I think now is a good time to cultivate more of those things."

Unfortunately, the college crowd hasn't been around as much as Oppold envisioned. Sunny's opened in December just in time for students to leave for winter break. They returned in February for about a month before spring break and the coronavirus pandemic put a stop to all on-campus activity.

Oppold's instinct about the business opportunity wasn't wrong, however, because February was their busiest month to date.

The change in demographic didn't hurt business much either. In place of the young adults Sunny's was originally marketed for, a wide range of ages frequent the shop. Families with young children and seniors make up a significant portion of patrons. Oppold said the number of seniors surprised him the most, but he's glad to have them.

"Really, a lot of unexpected things have happened, but I know from experience that the things that happen and develop organically, sometimes you run with it and sometimes it becomes a hallmark of your business," he said.

Another unforeseen development in the character of Sunny's Pizzeria came from a customer request. Photos of Sunny, Oppold's french bulldog and the restaurant's namesake, already adorn the walls. After someone asked if they'd include his own pet, Oppold started encouraging people to bring photos to add to the collection. He said he now hopes to completely fill every wall with adorable dog faces.

"Everything I've done here, with all of the quirky touches, has really been to make it feel like a neighborhood place," he said.

Oppold doesn't only use locals to help with his decor. He prides the business on using locally sourced food products whenever possible. Stensland Family Farms supplies the cheese for the pizzas, Dakota Mushrooms and Microgreens provides mushroom toppings and a rotating selection of local brews are the only beers on tap. It's all part of the personal connection Oppold wants to make with his community.

And it's easy to see that personal touch, especially when he works behind the counter every single day.

"Once you start to recognize somebody, and you know their name and what they order, it's so much easier for them to come back again and again because it feels like home," he said.

He also tipped his hat to local businesses that have come before him. Watching downtown Sioux Falls expand through the years helped him realize there was a market for a place like Sunny's.

"It's cool to see locally owned businesses thriving downtown, and I think it's paved the way for those of us that are doing this kind of thing," he said.

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SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

12-35-46-48-69, Mega Ball: 23, Megaplier: 2

(twelve, thirty-five, forty-six, forty-eight, sixty-nine; Mega Ball: twenty-three; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$22 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$137 million

Noem's campaign email discourages masks in school

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — As South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem pushes schools to reopen, a fundraising email from her campaign says she is discouraging school districts from requiring masks and telling parents they should send their children to school without masks.

The Republican governor made the argument for schools reopening this week, saying that research

indicates the health risks are low for children. She has repeatedly cast doubt on the practicality and efficacy of wearing masks to prevent COVID-19 infections, even as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said, "There is increasing evidence that cloth face coverings help prevent people who have COVID-19 from spreading the virus to others."

The fundraising email from Noem's campaign said, "Governor Kristi Noem will not issue a state-wide mandate for distance learning, and is encouraging all families to send their children back to school — without masks."

South Dakota Public Broadcasting first reported on Noem's campaign email.

Noem's spokeswoman Maggie Seidel clarified the governor's position on masks on Friday, calling the email "in-artfully crafted."

Seidel said the governor is opposed to requirements for face coverings but does not discourage people from wearing them. She pointed out that some medical experts have raised concerns about whether it is practical to have children wear masks properly for long periods of time.

The governor's opposition to requiring masks in schools defies recommendations from the South Dakota State Medical Association. Even top health officials from her administration said this week they would have their children wearing masks in school this fall. State Epidemiologist Josh Clayton said his family decided to have their children wear masks to school.

Throughout the pandemic, Noem has repeatedly said she is letting "the science, facts, and data" drive her response to the pandemic. In a column released on Friday, she said that "the science seems to suggest that teachers are unlikely to be infected by students" and claimed that most of the teachers in the state are not at a high risk to COVID-19.

More than 1,000 people younger than 19 have been confirmed to have COVID-19 during the pandemic but none has died, according to the Department of Health.

The state recorded 80 new cases of COVID-19 on Friday and one new death. While 8,764 people have been confirmed to have COVID-19 over the course of the pandemic, over 88% have recovered. 130 have died.

Deadline extended for tribes to seek broadband licenses

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — The Federal Communications Commission is giving tribes another month to apply for a band of wireless spectrum that would help them establish or expand internet access on their land — far less time than what tribes had sought.

Tribes pushed to be first in line to apply for licenses for the mid-band spectrum that is largely unassigned across the western United States and can be used for fixed or mobile internet service. The licenses once were reserved for educational institutions.

The tribal priority window opened in February and was set to close Monday. It's now been extended to Sept. 2.

Tribes and tribal organizations had asked the FCC to push the deadline to February, or at least 90 days out as tribes struggle to respond to the coronavirus. Many tribal government offices remain closed with employees working remotely.

"I don't believe it's a huge ask," said Loris Taylor, president and chief executive of Native Public Media. "This is something the FCC has done before, they've granted extensions and have provided exceptions in other proceedings due to COVID-19."

The FCC said the 30-day extension "strikes an appropriate balance" in giving tribes more time to apply but not delaying licenses to those that already applied.

"In light of the simplified application process as well as the extensive outreach done by commission staff, a lengthy extension of the deadline is unnecessary, as evidenced by the large number of applications we've already received," said FCC Chairman Ajit Pai.

The FCC has estimated that about one-third of people living on tribal lands don't have access to high-

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speed internet, but others say the figure is twice as high.

"This is about Native children and distance learning. This is about Native communities and telemedicine," said Matthew Rantanen, director of technology for the Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association. "This is about the health and safety and life of tribal members."

Nearly 230 tribes or tribal entities have submitted applications for the 2.5 GHz spectrum. Some have been granted temporary authority, including the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, the Navajo Nation in the Four Corners region and Zuni Pueblo in New Mexico.

In its request, the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe said it was preparing for students to do more remote learning in the fall and planned to use the temporary license to connect about 40 homes to the tribe's network.

The National Congress of American Indians was among those asking the FCC to give tribes more time to apply because of the coronavirus pandemic, saying hundreds could miss out on the opportunity. The group urged the FCC on Friday to reconsider its decision.

"Significant additional time for tribal nations to file for licenses during this window is necessary and critical," the group said.

The spectrum remaining after the tribal window closes will be auctioned off for commercial use. Telecommunications company T-Mobile said it didn't object to an extension of the tribal priority window for up to 90 days but wanted assurance that a public auction would happen next year.

Man surrenders after pointing gun at two people, firing it

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A man was arrested Friday after being accused of pointing a gun at two people and firing it outside an apartment complex in Rapid City.

The 18-year-old man was taken into custody after surrendering to law enforcement officers many hours later.

Witnesses told police the man pointed a handgun at two people and fired it once in the air shortly after midnight. Officers evacuated the apartment complex, formed a perimeter around it, but couldn't locate the man.

They eventually discovered he was in an apartment and began negotiating with him about 6:30 a.m. Police say he surrendered about an hour later.

Police spokesman Brendyn Media says investigators are trying to learn what prompted the incident.

Smithfield, OSHA reach agreement on sharing information

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Smithfield Foods and federal workplace safety investigators have reached an agreement over sharing information on a coronavirus outbreak at Smithfield's pork processing plant in South Dakota.

As part of the Occupational Health and Safety Administration's investigation into an outbreak, which resulted in over 850 COVID-19 infections among workers at a Sioux Falls pork processing plant, the federal government in June had subpoenaed South Dakota's Department of Health for test results, photos of the plant and correspondence with Smithfield.

But the company asked a federal judge to quash the subpoena, arguing that it shared information with the state health officials under the agreement that it would be protected.

Smithfield argued the subpoena would "chill critical collaborations" between public health agencies and businesses that have been deemed essential.

According to court documents filed this week asking a federal judge in South Dakota to dismiss the matter, the federal government and Smithfield have now reached an agreement. It was not clear what the agreement entailed.

Smithfield and OSHA did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Smithfield closed the plant for several weeks in April after state officials requested a temporary closure.

60 years in prison for fatal bat beating in Rapid City

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A man who pleaded guilty to fatally beating a retired teacher with a baseball bat was sentenced in Pennington County Thursday to 60 years in prison.

Thirty-one-year-old Andrew Eastman earlier pleaded guilty to first-degree manslaughter in a deal with prosecutors.

Eastman was a work release prisoner when he walked away from his job at the Rapid City landfill, stole a truck, went to the home of 64-year-old Larry Mintzlaff and beat him to death with a baseball bat in June 2017, KOTA-TV reported.

Eastman said he had been drinking and went to Mintzlaff's house to get a ride and doesn't remember how the killing happened.

Eastman was originally charged with murder and could have been sentenced to death if convicted of that charge.

Investigators zeroed in on Eastman as a suspect after finding a letter he wrote to Mintzlaff in his home. They tracked him to New Mexico by tracing Mintzlaff's stolen cell phone and credit cards.

A fugitive task force arrested him after finding him driving Mintzlaff's stolen blue Ford Focus in Albuquerque. Police later found a baseball bat and clothing covered in blood in the car.

AP source: Cards-Brewers off; 4 more St. Louis positives

By JAKE SEINER AP Sports Writer

One more player and three staff members with the St. Louis Cardinals have tested positive for the coronavirus, leading to the postponement of their game Saturday at the Milwaukee Brewers, according to a person familiar with the situation.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the results and postponement had not been announced.

Two Cardinals players were flagged for positive tests on Friday, forcing the series opener in Milwaukee to be called off. The teams had hoped to resume play Saturday and make up Friday's game as part of a doubleheader Sunday.

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Joe Biden nears final decision on running mate

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As Joe Biden nears the announcement of his vice presidential choice, the top contenders and their advocates are making final appeals.

The campaign hasn't finalized a date for naming a running mate, but three people who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the plans said a public announcement likely wouldn't happen before the week of Aug. 10. That's one week before Democrats will hold their convention to officially nominate Biden as their presidential nominee.

Biden said in May that he hoped to name his pick around Aug. 1 and told reporters this week that he would "have a choice in the first week of August." He notably stopped short of saying when he would announce that choice.

Running mates are often announced on the eve of a convention. As Biden prepares to make his choice, a committee established to vet possible running mates has provided him with briefing materials. Biden will likely soon begin one-on-one conversations with those under consideration, which could be the most consequential part of the process for a presidential candidate who values personal connections.

The leading contenders include California Sen. Kamala Harris, California Rep. Karen Bass and Obama

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national security adviser Susan Rice. The deliberations remain fluid, however, and the campaign has reviewed nearly a dozen possible running mates.

"For Joe Biden, this is crunch time. After all the vetting, all the investigations into the prospective nominees, it's now up to Joe. It's personal," said former New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, who was vetted for vice president in 2008. "It's now about his gut feeling."

Representatives for Biden declined to comment for this story.

The selection amounts to the most significant choice Biden has confronted in his nearly five-decade political career. He has pledged to select a woman and is facing calls to choose the first Black woman to compete on a presidential ticket.

On Friday, more than 60 Black clergy leaders called on Biden in an open letter to pick a Black woman as his running mate, saying the U.S. is facing a "moment of racial reckoning" that cannot be ignored.

"Too much is at stake for our community and we believe having a Black woman vice presidential candidate is the clearest path to the victory in November that our country needs to move forward," said Rev. Matthew Watley, of Kingdom Fellowship AME Church in Silver Spring, Maryland, who signed the letter.

Given the historic significance of the moment, some are urging Biden not to let the announcement linger too long.

"My sense is that the VP himself, having been through this process, is aware of and mindful of not letting people hang out there too long," said Democratic strategist Karen Finney. "There certainly seems to be a bit of a media frenzy, and I think we have to be aware that at a point, it becomes unfair to the candidates being considered."

As a decision looms, the camps are jockeying for position.

Harris' allies mobilized this week after Politico reported that the co-chair of the vetting committee, former Connecticut Sen. Chris Dodd, was concerned about Harris' tough debate stage performance and that she hasn't expressed regret.

Several California elected officials and labor leaders initiated a call with the vetting team to emphasize that Harris has strong support among labor and political leaders in her home state. The call was organized by Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis and included the mayors of Oakland, Long Beach and Stockton and former Gov. Gray Davis.

"A group of us really felt we needed to organize and speak out and correct the record because she has tremendous support," Kounalakis said.

Beyond emphasizing their strong relationships with Harris, they also pushed back against the idea that Harris wouldn't be a loyal partner, a sentiment echoed by a number of prominent donors.

"It's frustrating to hear that a small group of party elders are attempting to negatively impact the selection of Senator Harris," said Michael Kempner, a major Democratic donor based in New York. "This handful of former leaders no longer speak for the vast majority of Democrats and often confuse their personal interests for what's best for the party and nation. By all objective standards, Kamala Harris should be the overwhelming favorite for the job."

Harris, while not directly addressing her vice presidential prospects, told a group of young Black women Friday that it's common for Black women to face resistance when they exercise their power.

"There will be a resistance to your ambition. There will be people who say to you: 'You are out of your lane,'" she said during the digital summit. "They are burdened by only having the capacity to see what has always been instead of what can be. ... I've had that experience my entire career."

Biden has sought feedback on his pick from former President Barack Obama, who has provided advice but has insisted the choice is his to make, according to a person who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private conversations.

Biden allies say his wife, Jill, and sister, Valerie Biden Owens, are likely to play a key role in the decision, as they have with many of Biden's biggest political decisions throughout his career. Jill has held online campaign events and fundraisers with virtually all the potential contenders in recent weeks, as has Biden himself, effectively offering the contenders a try-out opportunity with the presumptive Democratic nominee.

On Thursday night, Bass joined Biden for a virtual fundraiser that raked in \$2.2 million. She has also taken

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steps to build her national profile, including providing interviews to multiple outlets over the past week.

On Friday night, Biden held a virtual fundraiser with Elizabeth Warren, who has also been considered as a running mate. Biden said the event raised more than \$1.7 million from over 50,000 grassroots donors. That's about a quarter of the \$6 million the Massachusetts senator brought in during her first online fundraiser for the former vice president last month that appealed to higher-dollar donors.

"We've known each other a long time. Her fearless work for a just America has transformed lives and inspired millions, including me," Biden said. "She is something else. You all know her."

Warren said, "This is a time of unprecedented crisis."

"But I wake up every single day with a heart full of hope and here is why: Vice President Biden is meeting the moment," she added. The two talked for nearly an hour but did not mention the vice presidential selection process.

Some Biden donors have already begun to plan prospective fundraising events ahead of the formal announcement. Biden's team expects his running mate to contribute immediately to his fundraising operation. Of the finalists, Harris is thought to be the most formidable traditional fundraiser, while Warren's ability to attract small-dollar donations from the party's progressive base is also viewed as a major asset.

Associated Press writers Julie Pace and Will Weissert in Washington, Steve Peoples and Jonathan Lemire in New York, Bill Barrow in Atlanta and Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, Calif., contributed to this report.

Mexico No. 3 in virus deaths; storm could hinder US response

By JOHN LEICESTER, ROD MCGUIRK and ARNO PEDRAM Associated Press

Mexico now has the third most COVID-19 deaths in the world, behind Brazil and the United States, where a hurricane bearing down on the East Coast on Saturday is threatening to complicate efforts to contain the virus.

Hurricane Isaias' imminent arrival forced the closure of some outdoor testing sites even as Florida reached a new daily high in deaths, and other states in the path of the storm prepared emergency shelters that comply with social-distancing measures.

"We had to put safety first," Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez said Friday.

Meanwhile, Mexican health officials on Friday reported 688 new deaths, pushing the country's confirmed total to over 46,600. That put Mexico just ahead of the United Kingdom, which has more than 46,100, according to the tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Some countries are seeing hopeful signs: China reported a more than 50% drop in newly confirmed cases in a possible indication that its latest major outbreak in the northwestern region of Xinjiang may have run its course.

However, in Hong Kong and elsewhere, infections continue to surge. Hong Kong reported more than 100 new cases as of Saturday among the population of 7.5 million. Officials have reimposed dining restrictions and mask requirements.

Tokyo on Saturday saw its third day straight of record case numbers, the metropolitan government said. Nationwide, Japan's daily count of cases totaled a record 1,579 people Friday, the health ministry said. The growing numbers have alarmed Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, as well as other regional leaders.

And Vietnam, a former success story, is struggling to control an outbreak spreading in its most famous beach resort. A third person died there of coronavirus complications, officials said Saturday, a day after it recorded its first-ever death as it wrestles with a renewed outbreak after 99 days with no local cases.

All three died in a hospital in Da Nang, a hot spot with more than 100 cases in the past week. Thousands of visitors had been in the city for summer vacation and are now being tested in Hanoi and elsewhere.

Twelve additional cases were confirmed on Saturday, all linked to Da Nang Hospital. Officials tightened security and set up more checkpoints to prevent people from leaving or entering the city, which has been in lockdown since Tuesday.

A makeshift hospital was set up, and doctors have been mobilized from other cities to help.

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"I want to be tested, so I can stop worrying if I have the virus or not," said Pham Thuy Hoa, a banking official who returned to the capital from Da Nang.

In South Korea, prosecutors arrested the elderly leader of a secretive religious sect linked to more than 5,200 of the country's approximately 14,300 confirmed cases. He has denied charges of hiding members and underreporting gatherings to avoid broader quarantines.

The global pandemic has affected nearly every aspect of this year's Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, with as few as 1,000 pilgrims already residing in Saudi Arabia taking part, down from 2.5 million last year.

Poverty brought on by the pandemic is also making it harder for many to join in the four-day Eid al-Adha, or "Feast of Sacrifice," in which Muslims slaughter livestock and distribute the meat to the poor.

"I could hardly buy food for my family," Somali civil servant Abdishakur Dahir said. "We are just surviving for now. Life is getting tougher by the day."

The Saudi Health Ministry said there have been no cases of COVID-19 among this year's pilgrims. All were tested, their movements monitored with electronic wristbands and required to be quarantined before and after.

Meanwhile, India recorded its steepest spike of 57,118 new cases in the past 24 hours, taking its coronavirus caseload close to 1.7 million, with July alone accounting for nearly 1.1 million infections.

The country's Civil Aviation Ministry delayed resumption of international flights by another month until Aug. 31. But it will continue to allow several international carriers from the United States, Europe and the Middle East to operate special flights to evacuate stranded nationals.

In France, travelers entering from 16 countries where the virus is circulating widely now must undergo virus tests upon arrival at airports and ports. The country is not permitting general travel to and from the countries, which include the United States and Brazil. The testing requirement therefore only applies to people entering under limited circumstances, including French citizens who live in these countries. Those who test positive as of Saturday must quarantine for 14 days.

As autumn approaches, nations around the world are grappling with how to safely reopen schools.

A scientist advising the British government on the coronavirus pandemic says pubs in England may have to be closed to allow schools to reopen in September. Graham Medley, a member of the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, told the BBC that there may have to be a "trade off."

In Utah, the Salt Lake City School District Board of Education announced that its schools will start the year with all online-only classes in response to an increasing number of confirmed cases in the city. Just days after public schools around Indiana reopened their doors, at least one student and one school staff member in districts around Indianapolis have tested positive for the virus.

The debate over school openings came as Dr. Anthony Fauci dismissed a tweet by President Donald Trump claiming the U.S. global lead in coronavirus cases is because of increased testing.

Fauci said the scale of the U.S. outbreak is the result of multiple factors, including some states opening up too quickly and disregarding federal guidelines.

On Friday, the head of the World Health Organization predicted the effects of the pandemic will be felt for "decades to come."

"Most of the world's people remain susceptible to this virus, even in areas that have experienced severe outbreaks," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in London. "Although vaccine development is happening at record speed, we must learn to live with this virus."

Leicester reported from Le Pecq, France and McGuirk from Canberra, Australia. AP journalists around the world contributed to this report.

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

France starts testing travelers from 16 nations for virus

PARIS (AP) — Travelers entering France from 16 countries where the coronavirus is circulating widely now must undergo virus tests upon arrival at French airports and ports.

French Prime Minister Jean Castex announced last month that the tests would be required starting Aug. 1 for passengers France is allowing in from a list of approved countries unless they present proof of a negative test done within 72 hours of their departure.

Those who test positive in France as of Saturday must quarantine for 14 days.

France is not permitting general travel to and from the 16 countries, which include the United States and Brazil. The testing requirement therefore only applies to people entering under limited circumstances: French citizens who live in these countries or citizens of these countries with an established residence in France.

Daniel Court was tested at Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport after coming in from the French Riviera city of Nice. He acknowledged not loving the experience.

"It's very fast, but I have to say that it's not very pleasant," he said. "But we have to do it."

Another passenger who got tested after landing at Paris' main airport, Nadia Vusik of Belarus, said she thought the new policy made sense.

"It is definitely necessary, and I am happy that in France it is possible to do right here. It's very convenient," she said.

French health authorities say the number of daily confirmed COVID-19 cases has jumped on the French mainland in recent weeks. The government has already made mask-wearing mandatory in all indoor public spaces.

France has had over 225,000 confirmed infections and over 30,200 virus-related deaths, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, but experts say all numbers in the pandemic are too low for various reasons, including limited testing and missed cases.

The French government has so far ruled out imposing another nationwide lockdown after the one that brought the country to a standstill for nearly two months between March and May.

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

No new positives for Marlins, Phils; 2B Isan Diaz opts out

By STEVEN WINE AP Sports Writer

The Miami Marlins received no new positive results in their latest round of coronavirus testing, a person familiar with the situation said Saturday, but second baseman Isan Diaz opted out of the season.

The Philadelphia Phillies, meanwhile, said Saturday they had no new positives from tests a day before. Players were permitted to access Citizens Bank Park for staggered workouts beginning in the afternoon.

The person discussing the Marlins spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the tests had not been released publicly. At least 21 members of the Marlins' traveling party have been infected by an outbreak at the start of a season-opening trip.

The team hasn't played since Sunday in Philadelphia but hopes to resume games next week.

Diaz consistently tested negative while the season was on hold, but he decided to become the first Miami player to opt out. He played in two of the Marlins' three games before their season was halted.

Diaz batted .173 as a rookie last year, but the organization has big hopes regarding his potential.

The infected Marlins players and staff left Philadelphia in sleeper buses Friday for Miami, where they will stay together in quarantine. The rest of the team remained in isolation at a hotel in Philadelphia.

With six teams idled Friday by the pandemic, Commissioner Rob Manfred spoke to union leader Tony Clark about the importance of players following the sport's coronavirus protocols.

Manfred and Clark talked about what needs to be done to finish the season, a person familiar with the

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conversation said. The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the situation.

The conversation between Manfred and Clark, first reported by ESPN, comes amid growing evidence that the spread of infection threatens to overtake efforts to play ball.

"Some things aren't looking too good right now, but we have to play up to that point. Players are seeing what can happen," Houston manager Dusty Baker said.

The latest game postponed was Milwaukee's home opener against St. Louis, scrapped hours before the first pitch after two Cardinals players tested positive .

The Cardinals said in a statement they learned Thursday night about positive tests from samples collected Wednesday. Players and staff were instructed to isolate in their hotel rooms.

The Cardinals and Brewers still hoped to play Saturday night, and to make up Friday's game with a pair of seven-inning games Sunday under a newly approved MLB plan for doubleheaders.

The Phillies-Blue Jays series in Philadelphia was among two weekend series called off earlier. The Marlins were hit with a virus outbreak in Philadelphia, and both Miami and the Phillies are sidelined for at least a week.

The schedules of the New York Yankees and Baltimore Orioles have also been scrambled. Cleveland players and staff talked about postponing Friday night's game at Minnesota. The Cardinals had played at Target Field on Wednesday, a day before the Indians arrived.

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

Hurricane Isaias lashes Bahamas while Florida battens down

By DÁNICA COTO and CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Hurricane Isaias snapped trees and knocked out power as it blew through the Bahamas on Saturday and headed toward the Florida coast, where officials said they were closing beaches, parks and coronavirus testing sites.

Florida authorities said they have prepared shelters, but didn't expect to have to evacuate people.

"The most important thing we want people to do now is remain vigilant," said Gov. Ron DeSantis.

Authorities in North Carolina ordered the evacuation of Ocracoke Island, which was slammed by last year's Hurricane Dorian, starting Saturday evening. Meanwhile, officials in the Bahamas evacuated people on Abaco island who have been living in temporary structures since Dorian devastated the area, killing at least 70 people.

Isaias had maximum sustained winds of 85 mph (135 kph) Saturday morning and some strengthening was possible, the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami said. The storm was centered about 50 miles (85 kilometers) south of Nassau in the Bahamas and was moving northwest at 12 mph (19 kph). Forecasters said some decrease in its forward motion was expected.

Bahamian officials said they were concerned about a Category 1 storm hitting amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"The center of COVID-19 now is in Grand Bahama," the island's minister, Sen. Kwasi Thompson, told government-run ZNS Bahamas. "No one wanted to see a situation where we are now facing a hurricane."

Paula Miller, Mercy Corps director for the Bahamas, told The Associated Press that people on Grand Bahama were still standing in line for gas on Saturday ahead of the storm.

"People are doing the best they can to prepare, but a lot of businesses still have not fully repaired their roofs or their structures" since Dorian hit, she said. "Even a lower level storm could really set them back," she said.

A hurricane warning was in effect for Florida's east coast from Boca Raton, just north of Miami, about 150 miles (241 kilometers) north to the Volusia-Flagler county line. A hurricane watch was in effect from Hallendale Beach to south of Boca Raton.

DeSantis said the state was "fully prepared for this and any future storm during this hurricane season,"

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with stockpiles of personal protective equipment, generators, bottled water and meals ready to be distributed.

But he said state-run coronavirus testing sites would be closed in areas where the storm might hit.

"Our sites, because they're outdoors with tents, if it were to get 40-, 50-mile-per-hour winds, it would just collapse," he said. "Safety is paramount for that."

The pandemic forced officials to wrestle with social distancing rules at the same time as disaster response.

Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Giménez said each person in shelters needed to have 40 square feet (3.7 square meters) and no more cafeteria-style dining would be allowed. Any evacuees infected with the new coronavirus will be isolated in classrooms separate them from the general population, Giménez said.

A hurricane warning was in effect for northwest Bahamas.

"Continue to hunker down," said Trevor Basden, director of the Bahamas meteorology department.

Prime Minister Hubert Minnis relaxed a coronavirus lockdown as a result of the storm, but imposed a 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew. He said supermarkets, pharmacies, gas stations and hardware stores would be open as long as weather permitted.

The Bahamas has reported more than 570 confirmed COVID-19 cases and at least 14 deaths. It recently barred travelers from the U.S. following a surge in cases after it reopened to international tourism.

On Thursday, while still a tropical storm, Isaias toppled trees, knocked out power, destroyed crops and caused widespread flooding and small landslides in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. One man died in the Dominican Republic, where more than 5,000 people were evacuated, hundreds of homes were damaged or destroyed and more than 130 communities were cut off by floodwaters. In Puerto Rico, the National Guard rescued at least 35 people from floodwaters that swept away one woman who remained missing.

Isaias was expected to drop from 4 to 8 inches (10 to 20 centimeters) of rain in the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Associated Press writer Dánica Coto reported this story in San Juan and AP writer Curt Anderson reported from Miami.

Negotiators huddle in Capitol after \$600 benefit expires

By ANDREW TAYLOR and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With political pressure rising, talks on a huge coronavirus relief measure resumed on Saturday, focused on restoring a newly expired \$600-per-week supplemental unemployment benefit, a fresh \$1,200 direct payment to most Americans, and hundreds of billions of dollars in other aid to states, businesses and the poor.

President Donald Trump is eager for an agreement, but talks so far have not yielded progress. The administration is willing to extend the \$600 jobless benefit, at least in the short term, but is balking at other demands of Democratic negotiators like aid for state and local governments, food stamp increases, and assistance to renters and homeowners.

Unemployment insurance is a principal element as the COVID-19 relief bill is expected to grow considerably from a \$1 trillion-plus GOP draft released this week.

The \$600 per week jobless benefit officially lapsed on Friday and Democrats have made it clear that they will not extend it without securing other relief priorities. Whatever unemployment aid negotiators agree on will be made retroactive — but antiquated state unemployment systems are likely to take weeks to restore the benefits.

Principal negotiators — Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, White House chief of staff Mark Meadows, top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi — convened again Saturday in hopes of breaking a weeklong stalemate.

"I'm hoping we'll make progress and I think we will," Pelosi said as she entered the Capitol.

The two sides had taken their case to the media Friday morning, with Meadows speaking to reporters

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on short notice at the exact moment Pelosi appeared at her weekly news conference.

The White House on Thursday offered a one-week extension of the \$600 weekly unemployment benefit, top Democrats said. Pelosi rejected it, saying the issue needs to be addressed as part of a far more sweeping bill that would deliver aid to state and local governments, help for the poor and funding for schools and colleges to address the pandemic. Without action, the unemployment benefit ran out Friday — and both the House and Senate have left Washington.

“Clearly they did not understand the gravity of the situation,” Pelosi said. A short-term extension only makes sense if the two sides are close to a deal, she added.

“Why don’t we just get the job done?” she asked.

An aide familiar with the talks said Pelosi rejected an administration offer of a four-month extension of the benefit at \$400 per week, combined with additional provisions for particularly hard-hit businesses and a shield against lawsuits for businesses, schools and other entities that reopen as the pandemic continues to rage.

Republicans in the Senate had been fighting to trim back the \$600 jobless benefit in the next coronavirus package, but their resolve weakened as the expiration of the popular benefit neared. Trump undercut their position by signaling he wants to keep the full \$600 benefit for now.

On Friday, Trump took to Twitter to explicitly endorse extending the \$600 payment and to criticize top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer.

“Very disappointed in @SenSchumer for blocking the temporary extension of the \$600 unemployment benefits. The Do Nothing Democrats are more interested in playing politics than in helping our deserving people,” Trump tweeted.

Washington’s top power players agree that Congress must pass further relief in the coming days and weeks.

Democrats hold a strong negotiating hand — exploiting GOP divisions — and they are expected to deliver a necessary trove of votes.

Both sides say the talks have not produced much progress, but they could be nearing a critical phase over the weekend and into next week. The pending COVID-19 rescue bill, the fifth since the pandemic has struck, is likely the last one before the November election.

Republicans controlling the Senate have kept the relief measure on “pause” in a strategy aimed at reducing its price tag. But as the pandemic has worsened in past weeks — and as fractures inside the GOP have eroded the party’s negotiating position — Republicans displayed some greater flexibility.

Also at issue in the negotiations is an almost \$1 trillion Democratic demand for funding for state and local governments, a second \$1,200 direct payment to most American adults, more than \$100 billion to help schools reopen and a liability shield measure that is essential to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

Meadows played a role in killing an increase in food aid during talks on a \$2 trillion relief bill in March, but Democrats are pressing hard for a boost in food stamp benefits. Republicans added \$20 billion for agribusinesses but nothing for greater food stamp benefits.

“Traditionally we’ve had a partnership between farms and families, and they’ve consistently broken that,” said Sen. Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, the top Democrat on the Senate Agriculture Committee.

Thousands protest in Berlin against coronavirus restrictions

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Thousands protested Germany’s coronavirus restrictions Saturday in a Berlin demonstration that insisted “the end of the pandemic” has arrived — a declaration that comes just as authorities are voicing increasing concerns about an uptick in new infections.

With few masks in sight, a dense crowd marched through downtown Berlin from the Brandenburg Gate.

Protesters who came from across the country held up homemade signs with slogans like “Corona, false alarm,” “We are being forced to wear a muzzle,” “Natural defense instead of vaccination” and “We are

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the second wave.”

They chanted, “We’re here and we’re loud, because we are being robbed of our freedom!”

Police used bullhorns to chide participants to adhere to social distancing rules and to wear masks, apparently with little success. They tweeted that they drew up a criminal complaint against the rally’s organizer for failing to enforce hygiene rules, then said shortly afterward that the organizer had ended the march.

Police estimated that about 17,000 people turned out. The demonstrators were kept apart from counterprotesters, some chanting “Nazis out!”

Protests against anti-virus restrictions in Germany have long drawn a variety of attendees, including conspiracy theorists and right-wing populists.

Unlike the U.S., Brazil and Britain, Germany’s government has been praised worldwide for its management of the pandemic. The country’s death toll — just over 9,150 people out of more than 210,670 confirmed virus cases as of Saturday - is five times less than Britain’s, which has a smaller population.

The German government has been easing lockdown measures since late April but social distancing rules remain in place, as does a requirement to wear masks on public transit and in shops.

Officials have been warning against complacency as the number of new COVID-19 cases crept up recently. They pleaded with Germans this week to observe the distancing and mask rules and, amid concern about residents bringing home infections from summer trips abroad, introduced free tests for people entering the country.

Germany’s national disease control center registered 955 new cases Friday, a high figure by recent standards.

“Thousands of #covidots are celebrating themselves in Berlin as ‘the second wave,’ without distancing, without masks,” tweeted Saskia Esken, a co-leader of the Social Democrats, the junior party in Germany’s governing coalition.

“They are not just endangering our health, they are endangering our success against the pandemic and for the revival of the economy, education and society. Irresponsible!”

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

Foreign threats loom ahead of US presidential election

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — As the Nov. 3 presidential vote nears, there are fresh signs that the nation’s electoral system is again under attack from foreign adversaries.

Intelligence officials confirmed in recent days that foreign actors are actively seeking to compromise the private communications of “U.S. political campaigns, candidates and other political targets” while working to compromise the nation’s election infrastructure. Foreign entities are also aggressively spreading disinformation intended to sow voter confusion heading into the fall.

There is no evidence that America’s enemies have yet succeeded in penetrating campaigns or state election systems, but Democrat Joe Biden’s presidential campaign confirmed this week that it has faced multiple related threats.

The former vice president’s team was reluctant to reveal specifics for fear of giving adversaries useful intelligence.

Because of such secrecy, at least in part, foreign interference largely remains an afterthought in the 2020 contest, even as Republicans and Democrats alike concede it poses a serious threat that could fundamentally reshape the election at any moment. Biden’s campaign is increasingly concerned that pro-Russian sources have already shared disinformation about Biden’s family with President Donald Trump’s campaign and his Republican allies on Capitol Hill designed to hurt the Democratic candidate in the days leading up to the election.

When asked directly, the Trump campaign refused to say whether it had accepted materials related to

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Biden from any foreign nationals. Trump was impeached last year after being caught pressuring Ukrainian leaders to produce damaging information about work Biden's son did in the country, even though repeated allegations of corruption against the Bidens have been widely discredited.

Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson, a key Trump ally and chair of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, denied having accepted any damaging materials on Biden from foreign nationals after at least one Ukrainian national, Oleksandr Onyshchenko, told The Washington Post he had shared tapes and transcripts with Johnson's committee and Trump ally Rudy Giuliani. House Democrats announced Friday they have subpoenaed Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for documents he turned over to Johnson's panel.

"It does a disservice to our election security efforts when Democrats use the threat of Russian disinformation as a weapon to cast doubt on investigations they don't like," Johnson spokesperson Austin Altenburg said.

The 2020 campaigns and party committees have been receiving regular briefings from the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, whose director, Bill Evanina, released a rare public statement last week confirming Russia's continued work to meddle in the U.S. election.

Evanina said that Russia, as part of an effort to weaken the U.S. and its global standing, has been spreading disinformation to undermine confidence in American democracy and "to denigrate what it sees as an anti-Russia 'establishment' in America."

The threat is not limited to Russia. China, a target of escalating condemnation across the Trump administration in recent weeks, has been looking for ways to affect American policy, counter criticism of Beijing and pressure political figures it views as opposed to Chinese interests, Evanina said, while Iran has been involved in circulating disinformation and anti-American content online.

Trump's team reported no specific foreign threats against the president's campaign, but campaign general counsel Matthew Morgan highlighted the Republican Party's yearslong effort to install various voter ID requirements across the country — including photo verification, signature matching and witness requirements — as an important tool to block foreign interference.

"Contrary to their narrative, the Democrats' efforts to tear these safeguards apart — as they sue in 18 states across the nation — would open our election system up to foreign interference," Morgan said. "That's why we're fighting back — to protect the sanctity of our election system."

Despite Morgan's argument, there is no evidence of significant voter fraud in U.S. politics, whether by American voters or foreign nationals.

And there is no evidence, as Trump repeatedly charges, that an increased reliance on mail balloting this fall leaves the electoral system particularly vulnerable to outside meddling. The president pointed to those baseless claims this week to suggest delaying the election, something that can't be done without support in Congress, where Democrats and Republicans alike rejected the notion.

There is ample evidence, however, that foreign powers are trying to sow confusion by spreading misinformation in addition to seeking to hack into political campaigns, as Evanina said last week.

Former Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge, a Republican, described Trump's warnings about mail voting "absurd" and "ridiculous."

"He should be far more forceful and far more direct in condemning foreign interference," Ridge said in an interview. "The enemy is not within."

Foreign interference played a significant role in the 2016 election, of course.

U.S. intelligence agencies determined that Russian operatives seeking to boost Trump's campaign hacked into the Democratic National Committee's servers and later shared damaging messages with WikiLeaks while running a covert social media campaign aimed at sowing discord among American voters.

All told, the Justice Department charged 25 Russian nationals in a covert effort to spread disinformation on social media and in the hacking of Democratic emails. While Trump has downplayed the threat of Russian meddling, he authorized a 2018 cyberattack against the Russian troll farm known as the Internet Research Agency.

Lest there be any doubt about continued foreign interference in 2020, U.S. officials confirmed this week that Russian intelligence services have been using a trio of English-language websites to spread disfor-

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mation about the politically charged coronavirus pandemic.

Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said in an interview that foreign adversaries “never stopped trying to interfere with our election process.”

He noted that the foreign meddling includes some new tactics compared with 2016. He noted, for example, that the Internet Research Agency is operating under a different name.

Warner declined to be more specific about 2020 interference, which has been discussed in classified briefings. He said he has a “huge concern” that voters don’t appreciate the true nature of the threat.

“The idea that we could be headed into Labor Day without the American public being officially put on notice seems grossly inappropriate,” Warner said.

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker and Mary Clare Jalonick in Washington contributed to this report.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump’s election agitations and distortions

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Heads snapped and eyes rolled when President Donald Trump made a case for considering an election postponement in the pandemic. Republican and Democratic lawmakers, who agree on precious little, said forget about it.

Among them, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell agreed Nov. 3 is set in stone. But with Trump previewing his angry discontent if the election is not to his liking, will the foundational rock of the republic hold?

Such questions will shadow the remainder of the campaign now that Trump has explicitly challenged a process that has unfolded on schedule through world wars, the Civil War and every existential calamity in history.

A look at Trump’s statement on the subject, his latest distortions of Democratic rival Joe Biden’s record and more from the past week:

ELECTION AGITATION

TRUMP: “Must know Election results on the night of the Election, not days, months, or even years later!” — tweet Thursday.

TRUMP: “I want to have the result of the election. I don’t want to be waiting around for weeks and months.” — news conference Thursday.

THE FACTS: He’s demanding something no one can deliver. The president appeared unaware that American democracy can’t be shaped to produce a same-day result to sate his impatience.

There’s certainly no requirement for a winner to be declared election night, and the prospect of having to wait to know who won has not been used as justification to try to delay the vote itself.

State election officials in some battleground states recently warned it may take days to count an expected surge of ballots that people send by mail because they don’t feel safe showing up to the polls. In an election as close as 2016’s, a delayed tally in key states could keep the outcome from being quickly known.

Delayed results are common in a few states where elections are already conducted largely by mail. But a presidential election hasn’t been left in limbo since 2000, when ballot irregularities in Florida led to weeks of chaos and court fights.

TRUMP: “With Universal Mail-In Voting (not Absentee Voting, which is good), 2020 will be the most INACCURATE & FRAUDULENT Election in history. It will be a great embarrassment to the USA. Delay the Election until people can properly, securely and safely vote???” — tweet Thursday.

THE FACTS: Trump has persistently theorized about voter fraud and never supported those theories with facts. He appointed a commission to get to the bottom of voter fraud and it disbanded without making any findings.

Time and again, voter fraud has proved exceedingly rare, and voting without going to polling places

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has become more common.

Multiple checks, such as signature verification in many states, must happen before a ballot can be counted, and experts say any fraud can be detected.

Five states relied on mail-in ballots even before the coronavirus pandemic raised concerns about voting in person. Those states say they have the necessary safeguards in place to ensure that a hostile foreign actor doesn't co-opt the vote. More states intend to rely more heavily on mail-in voting for the same reason.

"Trump is simply wrong about mail-in balloting raising a 'tremendous' potential for fraud," Richard L. Hasen, an elections expert at the University of California, Irvine, School of Law, wrote recently. "While certain pockets of the country have seen their share of absentee-ballot scandals, problems are extremely rare in the five states that rely primarily on vote-by-mail, including the heavily Republican state of Utah."

Indeed, election experts widely say that all forms of voter fraud are rare. The Brennan Center for Justice in 2017 ranked the risk of ballot fraud at an infinitesimal 0.00004% to 0.0009%, based on studies of past elections.

Even so, Trump has sketched wild scenarios, recently imagining "thousands and thousands of people sitting in somebody's living room, signing ballots all over the place."

As for the extraordinary step of moving the Nov. 3 election, the chances are almost nil.

The date of the presidential election — the Tuesday after the first Monday in November in every fourth year — is enshrined in federal law and would require an act of Congress to change. Democrats, who control the House, will not support Trump on this. Republicans, who control the Senate, are unlikely to, either.

TRUMP: "Mail-In Voting is an easy way for foreign countries to enter the race." — tweet Thursday.

THE FACTS: No, it's one of the most difficult ways for a foreign adversary to meddle in a U.S. election.

Swaying a federal election using absentee ballots would mean paying thousands of U.S. citizens, carefully selected in key cities in battleground states, who are willing to conspire with a foreign government and risk detection and prosecution.

Far easier and cheaper would be a social media campaign seeking to discourage certain groups of people from voting, something the FBI has already warned about. Or launching a sophisticated cyberattack on voter registration data that would eliminate certain voters from the rolls, causing havoc at polling places or election offices as officials look to count ballots from people who are "missing" from their voter databases.

Last month Attorney General Bill Barr raised the possibility that a "foreign country could print up tens of thousands of counterfeit ballots." He argued they would be hard to detect, but that's been disputed by election experts.

Absentee ballots are printed on special paper and must be formatted correctly in order to be processed and counted. Ballots are specific to each precinct, often with a long list of local races, and would be easily identified as fraudulent if everything didn't match precisely.

"This is a complete red herring," said Wendy Weiser, director of the democracy program at the Brennan Center for Justice. "It's completely not plausible, and not something that security and election experts are actually worried about."

BIDEN'S PLATFORM

TRUMP: "Biden came out against fracking. Well, that means Texas is going to be one of the most unemployed states in our country. That means Oklahoma, North Dakota, New Mexico are going to be a disaster. Ohio, Pennsylvania — disaster. No fracking." — news conference Thursday.

THE FACTS: No, that's not Biden's position at all.

In a March 15 primary debate, Biden misstated his fracking policy to suggest he'd ban it and his campaign quickly corrected the record. Trump continually ignores the correction.

Biden has been otherwise consistent on his middle-of-the-road position, going so far as to tell an anti-fracking activist that he "ought to vote for somebody else" if he wanted an immediate fracking ban. He proposes to deny new fracking permits only on federal lands. Such a limited step cannot spell "disaster"

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for entire states. By far the most fracking happens on private land.

TRUMP: "Joe Biden said he would defund the police. Biden would defund them. He'd abolish them, I guess." — remarks Thursday to New Hampshire supporters.

THE FACTS: We've heard this falsehood many times. What's new is that Trump was informed face to face nearly two weeks ago that Biden does not propose defunding or abolishing police, yet he is still saying it.

Biden actually proposes more money for police departments and he has explicitly rejected the calls of some on the left to defund or abolish departments. He'd spend more to support improvements in police practices.

Two weeks ago, Fox News reporter Chris Wallace confronted Trump on the matter when the president tried to hang a defund-abolish label on Biden. Trump cited a policy document drafted by aides to Biden and ex-rival Bernie Sanders. It contains recommendations, not necessarily policies embraced by the candidate. But even that document would not defund or wipe out police departments.

It seeks, for example, "increased funding for officer health and well-being in police departments across the country, including for personal safety equipment and mental health services."

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

TRUMP: "We think we're going to cut prescription drug prices 50, 60, even 70%." — remarks Thursday to New Hampshire supporters.

TRUMP: "What I have done will lead to a 50% REDUCTION in prices, at least, & Big Pharma is not happy about it. No other President would be able to produce what I have." — tweet Tuesday.

THE FACTS: No massive, across-the-board cuts are in the offing for drug prices.

Efforts announced last month by the president — such as allowing importation of medicines from countries where prices are lower — take time to roll out. It remains to be seen how much they'll move the needle on prices.

Drug importation, for example, requires regulatory actions to be taken and supply chains to be established, a tall order when the election is just three months away.

Trump has taken actions to reduce patient costs for some drugs, such as insulin, but the steps have been less ambitious than those in a bill from Speaker Nancy Pelosi that the House passed last year. Her bill would authorize Medicare to negotiate prices for expensive medications and use savings from lower drug costs to establish Medicare coverage for dental care, hearing and vision.

She would cap Medicare recipients' out-of-pocket costs for medicines at \$2,000 a year. No limit exists on those annual costs now. The vast majority of Medicare recipients have low drug costs, but the Kaiser Family Foundation estimated that in 2017, about 1 million Medicare recipients paid much more, averaging \$3,200 in a year.

Pelosi has challenged Trump to order Republican senators to pass her bill.

White House actions, while not insignificant, don't amount to the massive changes Trump brags about. One major initiative would give people on Medicare the option of limiting their out-of-pocket costs for insulin to \$35 a month starting next year, by picking an "enhanced" prescription drug plan for a slightly higher premium.

RUSSIAN BOUNTIES

TRUMP, on a U.S. intelligence assessment that Russia was paying a bounty to militants in Afghanistan to kill Americans there. "If it reached my desk I would have done something about it." — interview Tuesday with "Axios on HBO."

THE FACTS: His claim that the matter didn't reach him is unconvincing.

The Associated Press reported in June that the assessment was included in at least one of Trump's written daily intelligence briefings last year. As well, then-national security adviser John Bolton told colleagues he briefed Trump on the intelligence assessment and the subject was the sole purpose of that meeting with the president.

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This was according to U.S. officials with direct knowledge of the intelligence who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the highly sensitive information publicly.

Trump said this past week he did not raise the matter in recent phone calls with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo would not tell senators in testimony whether he has brought it up with his Russian counterpart. He said he discusses with the Russians all threats that they pose to Americans and U.S. interests.

White House officials have argued that Trump wasn't briefed on the suspected bounties because the assessment is not conclusive. However presidents are commonly informed of the most consequential intelligence even if the findings are not complete, so they can make decisions about potential or emerging threats.

Associated Press writers Christina A. Cassidy in Atlanta, Ellen Knickmeyer in Oklahoma City and Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar and Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this report.

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

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Portland protest strives for peace as U.S. forces drawn down

By SARA CLINE and GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — More than a thousand people showed up in downtown Portland early Saturday to peacefully protest, about three days after the announcement that the presence of U.S. agents there would be reduced — a deal that Oregon officials hope will continue to ease tensions as the city tries to move on from months of chaotic nightly protests.

Friday's overnight protest mimicked that of Thursday, which was the first time in weeks that demonstrations ended without any major confrontations, violence or arrests. The change in tone outside a federal courthouse that's become ground zero in clashes between demonstrators and federal agents came after the U.S. government began drawing down its forces in the liberal city under a deal between Democratic Gov. Kate Brown and the Trump administration.

As of midnight on Saturday, no federal agents had emerged from the courthouse, which has been the center of protests for weeks, and there was no noticeable law enforcement presence surrounding the area.

The fence that has separated protesters and U.S. agents stationed at the courthouse was decorated with balloons and upside down American flags sewn together with "BLM" painted across, an apparent reference to the Black Lives Matter movement.

At one point in the night a small firework was shot over the fence. As it sizzled out on its own, protesters pleaded with others to remain peaceful. Later, a few small fires were occasionally started outside the courthouse, with at least one put out by other protesters.

Unlike previous weeks, protesters were not centered mainly outside the courthouse, but scattered throughout downtown.

A group identified as "Firefighters for Black Lives Matter" gathered in a small park a couple miles west of the courthouse. Another group, "Unemployed Workers for Black Lives" began to march towards the federal building around 8 p.m. People stood next to a makeshift memorial, with the pictures and names of Black people killed by police, at the Waterfront Park. A parade of cars with Black Lives Matter signs taped to their windows slowed traffic in the city.

Just after midnight, the crowd had grown to over 1,000 people who remained outside chanting "Black Lives Matter" and shouting the names of Black people killed by police. Groups were also standing together engaging in conversations about social injustice.

As agents from U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the U.S. Marshals Service and Immigration and

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Customs Enforcement pulled back, troopers with the Oregon State Police took over. Since then, there have been no visible signs of any federal law enforcement presence outside the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Courthouse.

In a tweet, President Donald Trump Friday night reiterated that the Department of Homeland Security "is not leaving Portland until local police complete cleanup of Anarchists and Agitators!"

"Last night, the world was watching Portland," Brown said in a tweet Friday. "Here's what they saw: Federal troops left downtown. Local officials protected free speech. And Oregonians spoke out for Black Lives Matter, racial justice, and police accountability."

Mayor Ted Wheeler also struck an optimistic tone but cautioned that there was much work to be done after more than 60 days of protests — and not just in cleaning up downtown Portland.

Leaders in Oregon are pushing for a raft of measures that would address systemic racism in everything from policing to housing. Those proposals could be fast-tracked for consideration in a special legislative session later this summer.

The governor also announced the creation of a Racial Justice Council to advise her on criminal justice reform and police accountability, health equity, economic opportunity, housing and homelessness, and environmental justice.

Portland's City Council also voted this week to refer a ballot measure to voters in November that would create a police review board independent from any elected official or city department.

The scene outside the federal courthouse stood in sharp contrast to the violent clashes between protesters and the agents that Trump sent to Oregon's largest city in early July. Protests have roiled Portland for more than two months following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

And while thousands have marched and rallied peacefully, Portland's federal courthouse became a target for some protesters. Smaller numbers of demonstrators tried to tear down a fence erected to protect it, lit fires at the courthouse entryway and hurled fireworks, flares and bricks at the agents holed up inside. Most nights, the agents responded by firing tear gas.

Under the deal announced by the governor, the agents will withdraw in phases.

The U.S. government had arrested 94 people as of Wednesday, the most recent accounting. Since the protests began, Portland Police Chief Chuck Lovell said local police made more than 400 arrests.

Cline contributed 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.

Early in pandemic, frantic doctors traded tips across oceans

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

Amid the chaos of the pandemic's early days, doctors who faced the first coronavirus onslaught reached across oceans and language barriers in an unprecedented effort to advise colleagues trying to save lives in the dark.

With no playbook to follow and no time to wait for research, YouTube videos describing autopsy findings and X-rays swapped on Twitter and WhatsApp spontaneously filled the gap.

When Stephen Donelson arrived at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in mid-March, Dr. Kristina Goff was among those who turned to what she called "the stories out of other places that were hit before."

Donelson's family hadn't left the house in two weeks after COVID-19 started spreading in Texas, hoping to shield the organ transplant recipient. Yet one night, his wife found him barely breathing, his skin turning blue, and called 911.

In New York or Italy, where hospitals were overflowing, Goff thinks Donelson wouldn't even have qualified

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for a then-precious ventilator. But in Dallas, "we pretty much threw everything we could at him," she said.

Like doctors everywhere, Goff was at the beginning of a huge and daunting learning curve.

"It's a tsunami. Something that if you don't experience it directly, you can't understand," Italian Dr. Pier Giorgio Villani said in a series of webinars on six straight Tuesday evenings to alert other intensive care units what to expect. They started just two weeks after Italy's first hospitalized patient arrived in his ICU, and 10 days before Donelson fell ill in Texas.

Villani, who works in the northern city of Lodi, described a battle to accommodate the constant flow of people needing breathing tubes. "We had 10, 12, 15 patients to intubate and an ICU with seven patients already intubated," he said.

The video sessions, organized by an Italian association of ICUs, GiViTI, and the non-profit Mario Negri Institute and later posted on YouTube, constitute an oral history of Italy's outbreak as it unfolded, narrated by the first doctors in Europe to fight the coronavirus.

Italian friends spread the word to doctors abroad and translations began for colleagues in Spain, France, Russia and the U.S., all bracing their own ICUs for a flood of patients.

They offered "a privileged window into the future," said Dr. Diego Casali of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, who is from northern Italy and was directed to the webinars when he sought advice from a front-line friend about how to prepare.

Dr. Jane Muret of the French Society of Anesthesia-Resuscitation also heard by word-of-mouth and, impressed by the breathing-tube lessons, posted a translation when France had only a handful of diagnosed COVID-19 cases.

"Now we can recognize our COVID patients" when they start showing up, she said.

Every tidbit about the newest baffling symptom, every trick to try, served as clues as the virus bore down on the next city, the next country. By the time Donelson arrived, Goff's hospital was adjusting ventilator care based on that early advice.

But while grateful for the global swirl of information, Goff also struggled to make sense of conflicting experiences.

"You have no idea how to interpret what went right or what went wrong," she said, "or was it just the native course of the disease?"

Even now, months into a pandemic first wave that's more like constantly shifting tides, Goff is humbled at how difficult it remains to predict who will live and who will die. She can't explain why Donelson, finally home after a 90-day ordeal, was ultimately one of the lucky ones.

Doctors in Italy were confused: Reports from China were suggesting a death rate of about 3% among those infected. But for the first 18 days, only the dead left the ICU at Bergamo's large Pope John XXIII Hospital.

While the toll eventually dropped, 30% of the hospital's initial 510 COVID-19 patients died.

After decades in practice, ICU chief Dr. Luca Lorini thought he knew how to treat the dangerous kind of respiratory failure -- called ARDS, or acute respiratory distress syndrome -- first thought to be the main threat.

"Every night, I would go home and I had the doubt that I had gotten something wrong," Lorini said. "Try to imagine: I am all alone and I can't compare it with France because the virus wasn't there, or Spain or the U.K. or America, or with anyone who is closer to me than China."

Only later would it become clear that for patients sick enough to need the ICU, death rates were indeed staggeringly high.

By February, China had filed only a limited number of medical journal reports on how patients were faring. Lorini's hospital tried to fill the data gap by dividing patients into small groups to receive different forms of supportive care and comparing them every three or four days -- not a scientific study, but some real-time information to share.

The first lessons: The coronavirus wasn't causing typical ARDS, and patients consequently needed

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gentler ventilation than normal. They also needed to stay on those ventilators far longer than usual.

"We made big errors," Villani said, weaning patients off machines too soon.

Then mid-March brought another startling surprise: In a training video for U.S. cardiologists, Chinese doctors warned that the virus causes dangerous blood clots, and not just in the lungs.

Dr. Bin Cao of the China-Japan Friendship Hospital in Beijing explained that as the virus sneaks past the lungs into the bloodstream, it damages the lining of blood vessels, forming clots in the heart, kidneys, "all over the body." He urged American doctors to use blood thinners protectively in the severely ill.

In Italy's epicenter, doctors were making the same discovery. Lorini described a scramble to get the word out via Skype and email. "This is a vascular sickness more than a pulmonary one and we didn't know that," he said.

In the U.S., the finding about blood thinners made biological sense to Dr. Tiffany Osborn, a critical care physician at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

"It means at least you're not shooting in the dark. You're trying something that from a physiologic standpoint makes sense," said Osborn, who was living in a camper in her driveway to avoid bringing the virus home to her family after her long ICU shifts.

By April, many doctors were bowing to pressure to try a malaria drug named hydroxychloroquine that obsessed President Donald Trump. Osborn never understood why such a drug would work and, sure enough, it eventually failed when put to a real test.

But what else might be effective?

"We're learning as we go," Osborn said. "You could talk to me in two weeks and I might be telling you something that's really different."

When Stephen Donelson arrived in the emergency room, "we had very little hope for him," Goff said.

The Midlothian man had undergone an organ transplant two years earlier, and the immune-suppressing drugs that prevent rejection of his new lungs and liver meant his body couldn't fight the coronavirus. Goff's first challenge: how to scale back those medicines just enough for Donelson to battle the virus without endangering his transplant.

Her second: He was fighting against the ventilator's artificial breaths. So Goff deeply sedated Donelson, paralyzing his muscles to let the machine do all the work.

Hospital after hospital struggled with balancing how to get enough air into oxygen-starved coronavirus patients without further damaging fragile lungs.

Ventilation is like "blowing air into a sponge and all the little holes are opening up. Walls between the holes can be very thin. If you're putting in a lot of air, it can damage the lining of those little holes," explained Osborn, the St. Louis critical care specialist.

A trick the doctors shared with each other: Flip patients over from their backs to their stomachs — a procedure called proning that takes pressure off the lungs, which lie closer to the back. It also helps lower fluid accumulation in the lungs.

It's not a one-time fix. Donelson stayed on his belly about 16 hours a day early on, as his doctors watched his oxygen levels improve. It's also hot and heavy work: Every turn took five or six health workers, in full safety garb, working in slow synchrony to avoid dislodging his breathing tube.

Italy's Alessandro Manzoni Hospital set a schedule: Start turning patients onto their bellies at 2 p.m. -- it took more than three hours to work through them all -- and then put them on their backs again at 8 a.m., when fresh nurses arrived.

Hospitals that specialize in treating ARDS knew how to prone before COVID-19 hit. For many others, it was a brand-new skill their workers had to learn. Fast.

"We've never had to prone anyone here before the pandemic, but now it's like second nature," Kevin Cole, a respiratory therapist at Fort Washington Medical Center in Maryland, said four months into the U.S. outbreak.

And some hospitals now are asking patients not yet on ventilators to simply roll over periodically, in hopes it might prevent them from needing more invasive care.

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"What have we got to lose? That's something that's not going to hurt anybody," Osborn said.

Even in normal times, critical-care specialists know they can't save all their patients. But they're used to more hand-holding. With this virus, even garbed in spacesuit-like protective gear, health workers must minimize time with infectious patients to avoid getting sick themselves. And family members are largely barred, too.

"My general way of doing things is, no one dies alone," said Osborn, who holds her phone in front of dying patients so loved ones can say goodbye.

She paused to compose herself, and added: "If this is going to happen, and you can provide some comfort that maybe they wouldn't have gotten if you weren't there, that's important."

The newest lesson: Recovery takes a lot longer than surviving.

Back in Dallas, Donelson spent 17 days on a ventilator. When it was removed, he was too weak to even sit without support and the breathing tube had taken away his ability to swallow.

"He would try to pick his head up off the pillow and it would lob to the side just like a newborn baby," said his wife, Terri Donelson, who for the first time since his hospital admission finally was allowed to connect with her husband through a videoconferencing app.

For days after waking up, Donelson had tremendous delirium, a dangerous state of mental confusion and agitation. He didn't know where he was or why, and would try to pull out his IV tubes. Then a bacterial infection hit his lungs.

Then one morning, worried that Donelson suddenly was too quiet, his doctor donned what she calls her "full-helmet, Darth Vader-style mask, which cannot possibly help anyone's delirium," and went in to check on him.

"I rubbed his arm," Goff recalled, asking him to wake up. "I said, 'Hey are you OK, are you with me?'" and Donelson started trying to talk, at first too raspy to understand.

Eventually, she made out that he was wishing her a happy Easter. She can only guess he heard the date on TV.

Doctor and patient cried together.

That was Donelson's turning point. He still wasn't deemed virus-free but physical therapists cautiously spent a little more time helping him gain strength and learn to swallow. His first bite: chocolate pudding.

Terri Donelson countered the long periods of isolation by keeping the video app running non-stop, talking to her husband and giving him quizzes to stimulate his memory.

"Little by little, with each day, he gains something new, something else reawakens," she said.

Finally, on June 19, 90 days after the frantic ambulance ride, Donelson — still weak but recovering — went home. His doctor is humbled by his survival, and anxiously awaiting better science to help guide care as the pandemic continues.

"If you have one patient who leaves a really strong impression on you, you may interpret that patient's experience to be hallmark. Until we have large, population-based studies of actual outcomes, it's really hard to know what's real and what's not real," Goff said.

Neergaard reported from Alexandria, Va., and Winfield from Rome. AP video journalist Nathan Ellgren contributed to this report.

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Florida teen arrested as mastermind of Twitter hack

By DAVID FISCHER and FRANK BAJAK Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A Florida teen was identified Friday as the mastermind of a scheme earlier this month that commandeered Twitter accounts of prominent politicians, celebrities and technology moguls and scammed people around the globe out of more than \$100,000 in Bitcoin. Two other men were also charged in the case.

Graham Ivan Clark, 17, was arrested Friday in Tampa, where the Hillsborough State Attorney's Office will prosecute him as an adult. He faces 30 felony charges, according to a news release.

Two men accused of benefiting from the hack — Mason Sheppard, 19, of Bognor Regis, U.K., and Nima Fazeli, 22, of Orlando — were charged separately in California federal court.

In one of the most high-profile security breaches in recent years, bogus tweets were sent out on July 15 from the accounts of Barack Obama, Joe Biden, Mike Bloomberg and a number of tech billionaires including Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and Tesla CEO Elon Musk. Celebrities Kanye West and his wife, Kim Kardashian West, were also hacked.

The tweets offered to send \$2,000 for every \$1,000 sent to an anonymous Bitcoin address. The hack alarmed security experts because of the grave potential of such an intrusion for creating geopolitical mayhem with disinformation.

Court papers in the California cases say Fazeli and Sheppard brokered the sale of Twitter accounts stolen by a hacker who identified himself as "Kirk" and said he could "reset, swap and control any Twitter account at will" in exchange for cybercurrency payments, claiming to be a Twitter employee.

The documents do not specify Kirk's real identity but say he is a teen being prosecuted in the Tampa area.

Twitter has said the hacker gained access to a company dashboard that manages accounts by using social engineering and spear-phishing smartphones to obtain credentials from "a small number" of Twitter employees "to gain access to our internal systems." Spear-phishing uses email or other messaging to deceive people into sharing access credentials.

"There is a false belief within the criminal hacker community that attacks like the Twitter hack can be perpetrated anonymously and without consequence," U.S. Attorney David L. Anderson for the Northern District of California said in a news release.

The evidence suggests, however, that those responsible did a poor job indeed of covering their tracks. The court documents released Friday show how federal agents tracked down the hackers through Bitcoin transactions and by obtaining records of their online chats.

Although the case was investigated by the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice, Hillsborough State Attorney Andrew Warren said his office is prosecuting Clark in state court because Florida law allows minors to be charged as adults in financial fraud cases when appropriate. He called Clark the leader of the hacking scam.

"This defendant lives here in Tampa, he committed the crime here, and he'll be prosecuted here," Warren said.

Security experts were not surprised that the alleged mastermind is a 17-year-old, given the relatively amateurish nature of both the operation and how participants discussed it with New York Times reporters afterward.

"This is a great case study showing how technology democratizes the ability to commit serious criminal acts," said Jake Williams, founder of the cybersecurity firm Rendition Infosec. "There wasn't a ton of development that went into this attack."

Williams said the hackers were "extremely sloppy" in how they moved the Bitcoin around. It did not appear they used any services that make cryptocurrency difficult to trace by "tumbling" transactions of multiple users, a technique akin to money laundering, he said.

He also said he was conflicted about whether Clark should be charged as an adult.

"He definitely deserves to pay (for jumping on the opportunity) but potentially serving decades in prison

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doesn't seem like justice in this case," Williams said.

The hack targeted 130 accounts with tweets being sent from 45 accounts, obtained access to the direct message inboxes of 36, and downloaded Twitter data from seven. Dutch anti-Islam lawmaker Geert Wilders has said his inbox was among those accessed.

Court papers suggest Fazeli and Sheppard got involved in the scheme after Clark dangled the possibility of obtaining so-called OG Twitter handles, short account names that due to their brevity are highly prized and considered status symbols in a certain milieu. They said Sheppard purchased @anxious and Faceli wanted @foreign.

Internal Revenue Service investigators in Washington, D.C., identified two of the defendants by analyzing Bitcoin transactions on the blockchain — the universal ledger that records Bitcoin transactions — that they had sought to make anonymous, federal prosecutors said.

Marcus Hutchins, the 26-year-old British cybersecurity expert credited with helping stop the WannaCry computer virus in 2017, said the skillset involved in the actual hack was nothing special.

"I think people underestimate the level of experience needed to pull off these kinds of hacks. They may sound extremely sophisticated, but the techniques can be replicated by teens," added Hutchins, who pleaded guilty last year to creating malware designed to steal banking information and just completed a year's supervised release.

British cybersecurity analyst Graham Cluley said his guess was that the targeted Twitter employees got a message to call what they thought was an authorized help desk and were persuaded by the hacker to provide their credentials. It's also possible the hackers got a call from the company's legitimate help line by spoofing the number, he said.

Fazeli's father said Friday he hasn't been able to talk to his son since Thursday.

"I'm 100% sure my son is innocent," Mohamad Fazeli said. "He's a very good person, very honest, very smart and loyal."

"We are as shocked as everybody else," he said by phone. "I'm sure this is a mix up."

Attempts to reach relatives of the other two weren't immediately successful. Hillsborough County court records didn't list an attorney for Clark, and federal court records didn't list attorneys for Sheppard or Fazeli.

This story has been corrected to show that participants in the operation, not the hacker identified as 'Kirk,' discussed it with The New York Times.

Bajak reported from Boston. Associated Press Writers Kelvin Chan in London, Matt O'Brien in Providence, Rhode Island, contributed to this report.

Trump says he'll act to ban TikTok in US as soon as Saturday

By TALI ARBEL AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump said he will take action as soon as Saturday to ban TikTok, a popular Chinese-owned video app that has been a source of national security and censorship concerns.

Trump's comments came after published reports that the administration is planning to order China's ByteDance to sell TikTok. There were also reports Friday that software giant Microsoft is in talks to buy the app.

"As far as TikTok is concerned, we're banning them from the United States," Trump told reporters Friday on Air Force One as he returned from Florida.

Trump said he could use emergency economic powers or an executive order to enforce the action, insisting, "I have that authority." He added, "It's going to be signed tomorrow."

Reports by Bloomberg News and the Wall Street Journal citing anonymous sources said the administration could soon announce a decision ordering ByteDance to divest its ownership in TikTok.

There have been reports of U.S. tech giants and financial firms being interested in buying or investing in TikTok as the Trump administration sets its sights on the app. The New York Times and Fox Business, citing an unidentified source, reported Friday that Microsoft is in talks to buy TikTok. Microsoft declined to comment.

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TikTok issued a statement Friday saying that, "While we do not comment on rumors or speculation, we are confident in the long-term success of TikTok."

ByteDance launched TikTok in 2017, then bought Musical.ly, a video service popular with teens in the U.S. and Europe, and combined the two. A twin service, Douyin, is available for Chinese users.

TikTok's fun, goofy videos and ease of use has made it immensely popular, and U.S. tech giants like Facebook and Snapchat see it as a competitive threat. It has said it has tens of millions of U.S. users and hundreds of millions globally.

But its Chinese ownership has raised concerns about the censorship of videos, including those critical of the Chinese government, and the potential for sharing user data with Chinese officials.

TikTok maintains it doesn't censor videos based on topics sensitive to China and it would not give the Chinese government access to U.S. user data even if asked. The company has hired a U.S. CEO, a former top Disney executive, in an attempt to distance itself from its Chinese ownership.

U.S. national-security officials have been reviewing the Musical.ly acquisition in recent months, while U.S. armed forces have banned their employees from installing TikTok on government-issued phones. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said earlier this month that the U.S. was considering banning TikTok.

These national-security worries parallel a broader U.S. security crackdown on Chinese companies, including telecom providers Huawei and ZTE. The Trump administration has ordered that the U.S. stop funding equipment from those providers in U.S. networks. It has also tried to steer allies away from Huawei because of worries about the Chinese government's access to data, which the company has denied it has.

The Trump administration has stepped in before to block or dissolve deals on national-security concerns, including stopping Singapore's Broadcom from its \$117 billion bid for U.S. chipmaker Qualcomm in 2018 in an effort to help retain U.S. leadership in the telecom space. It also told China's Beijing Kunlun Tech Co. to sell off its 2016 purchase of gay dating app Grindr.

Other countries are also taking action against TikTok. India this month banned dozens of Chinese apps, including TikTok, citing privacy concerns, amid tensions between the countries.

Associated Press writers Kevin Freking aboard Air Force One and Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this report.

Joe Biden's search for a running mate enters final stretch

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As Joe Biden nears the announcement of his vice presidential choice, the top contenders and their advocates are making final appeals.

The campaign hasn't finalized a date for naming a running mate, but three people who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the plans said a public announcement likely wouldn't happen before the week of Aug. 10. That's one week before Democrats will hold their convention to officially nominate Biden as their presidential nominee.

Biden said in May that he hoped to name his pick around Aug. 1 and told reporters this week that he would "have a choice in the first week of August." He notably stopped short of saying when he would announce that choice.

Running mates are often announced on the eve of a convention. As he prepares to make his choice, a committee established to vet possible running mates has provided Biden with briefing materials. Biden will likely soon begin one-on-one conversations with those under consideration, which could be the most consequential part of the process for a presidential candidate who values personal connections.

The leading contenders include California Sen. Kamala Harris, California Rep. Karen Bass and Obama national security adviser Susan Rice. The deliberations remain fluid, however, and the campaign has reviewed nearly a dozen possible running mates.

"For Joe Biden, this is crunch time. After all the vetting, all the investigations into the prospective nominees, it's now up to Joe. It's personal," said former New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, who was vetted for vice president in 2008. "It's now about his gut feeling."

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Representatives for Biden declined to comment for this story.

The selection amounts to the most significant choice Biden has confronted in his nearly five-decade political career. He has pledged to select a woman and is facing calls to choose the first Black woman to compete on a presidential ticket.

Given the historic significance of the moment, some are urging Biden not to let the announcement linger too long.

"My sense is that the VP himself, having been through this process, is aware of and mindful of not letting people hang out there too long," said Democratic strategist Karen Finney. "There certainly seems to be a bit of a media frenzy, and I think we have to be aware that at a point, it becomes unfair to the candidates being considered."

As a decision looms, the camps are jockeying for position.

Harris' allies mobilized this week after Politico reported that the co-chair of the vetting committee, former Connecticut Sen. Chris Dodd, was concerned about Harris' tough debate stage performance and that she hasn't expressed regret.

Several California elected officials and labor leaders initiated a call with the vetting team to emphasize that Harris has strong support among labor and political leaders in her home state. The call was organized by Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis and included the mayors of Oakland, Long Beach and Stockton and former Gov. Gray Davis.

"A group of us really felt we needed to organize and speak out and correct the record because she has tremendous support," Kounalakis said.

Beyond emphasizing their strong relationships with Harris, they also pushed back against the idea that Harris wouldn't be a loyal partner.

Harris, while not directly addressing her vice presidential prospects, told a group of young Black women Friday that it's common for Black women to face resistance when they exercise their power.

"There will be a resistance to your ambition. There will be people who say to you: 'You are out of your lane,'" she said during the digital summit. "They are burdened by only having the capacity to see what has always been instead of what can be. ... I've had that experience my entire career."

Biden has sought feedback on his pick from former President Barack Obama, who has provided advice but has insisted the choice is his to make, according to a person who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private conversations.

Biden allies say his wife, Jill, and sister, Valerie Biden Owens, are likely to play a key role in the decision, as they have with many of Biden's biggest political decisions throughout his career. Jill has held online campaign events and fundraisers with virtually all the potential contenders in recent weeks, as has Biden himself, effectively offering the contenders a try-out opportunity with the presumptive Democratic nominee.

On Thursday night, Bass joined Biden for a virtual fundraiser that raked in \$2.2 million. She has also taken steps to build her national profile, including providing interviews to multiple outlets over the past week.

On Friday night, Biden held a virtual fundraiser with Elizabeth Warren, who has also been considered as a running mate. Biden said the event raised more than \$1.7 million from over 50,000 grassroots donors. That's about a quarter of the \$6 million the Massachusetts senator brought in during her first online fundraiser for the former vice president last month that appealed to higher-dollar donors.

"We've known each other a long time. Her fearless work for a just America has transformed lives and inspired millions, including me," Biden said. "She is something else. You all know her."

Warren said, "This is a time of unprecedented crisis."

"But I wake up every single day with a heart full of hope and here is why: Vice President Biden is meeting the moment," she added. The two talked for nearly an hour but did not mention the vice presidential selection process.

Some Biden donors have already begun to plan prospective fundraising events ahead of the formal announcement. Biden's team expects his running mate to contribute immediately to his fundraising operation. Of the finalists, Harris is thought to be the most formidable traditional fundraiser, while Warren's

ability to attract small-dollar donations from the party's progressive base is also viewed as a major asset.

Associated Press writers Julie Pace and Will Weissert in Washington, Steve Peoples and Jonathan Lemire in New York, Bill Barrow in Atlanta and Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, Calif., contributed to this report.

Marine vehicle deep under sea, complicating rescue search

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A military seafaring assault vehicle that sank off the coast of Southern California is under hundreds of feet of water, putting it beyond the reach of divers and complicating rescue efforts for eight missing troops, officials said Friday.

Still the Marine Corps commandant, Gen. David Berger, said the search was continuing while he was suspending waterborne operations of all of its more than 800 amphibious assault vehicles across the branch until the cause of the accident is determined. He said the move was out of "an abundance of caution."

Berger said the focus now should be on the troops and their families. One of the eight Marines who were rescued died at a San Diego hospital. Two Marines remained hospitalized with injuries but were stable and out of the intensive care unit.

A total of 16 troops — 15 Marines and one Navy corpsman — were on board when the amphibious assault vehicle started taking in water Thursday evening as it was about a half mile (more than 1,000 meters) from the shores of San Clemente Island.

They had just completed a routine training exercise and were heading back to the Navy ship with a dozen other amphibious assault vehicles, said Lt. Gen. Joseph Osterman, the commanding general of the Marine Expeditionary Force.

Troops on board two other amphibious assault vehicles responded quickly but could not stop the 26-ton vehicle from sinking, Osterman said.

"It's a very tragic situation," Osterman said, adding that his thoughts and prayers are with the troops and their families.

Military ships, small boats and helicopters continued searching the choppy seas for the missing Friday amid moderate to strong winds. The Navy-owned island is about 70 miles (112 kilometers) offshore from San Diego.

The Navy and Coast Guard were discussing ways to reach the sunken vehicle to get a view inside it, Osterman said.

All of the Marines on the vehicle, which resembles a seafaring tank, were attached to the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit. They ranged in age from 19 to early 30s and all were wearing combat gear, including body armor, Osterman said. Each troop also had flotation devices.

The vehicle is designed to hold up to 24 people with 280 pounds of equipment each, Osterman said. He said there were three water-tight hatches and two large troop hatches and that it is designed to be naturally buoyant.

Thursday's accident marks the third time in recent years that Camp Pendleton Marines have been injured or died in amphibious assault vehicles during training exercises. The vehicles have been used since 1972, and continually refurbished. Marine Corps officials said Friday they did not know the age or other details of the one that sank.

In 2017, 14 Marines and one Navy sailor were hospitalized after their vehicle hit a natural gas line, igniting a fire that engulfed the landing craft during a training exercise at Camp Pendleton, the sprawling coastal Marine Corps base north of San Diego.

And in 2011, a Marine died when an amphibious assault vehicle in a training exercise sank off the shores of Camp Pendleton.

The Marines use the vehicles to transport troops and their equipment from Navy ships to land. They are nicknamed "amtracs" because the original name for the vehicle was "amphibious tractor."

The armored vehicles outfitted with machine guns and grenade launchers look like tanks as they roll

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ashore for beach attacks, with Marines pouring out of them to take up positions.

The Marine Expeditionary Force is the Marine Corps' main war-fighting organization. There are three such groups which are made up of ground, air and logistics forces.

This story has been corrected to say the craft was one of 13 involved in an exercise, not one of more than a dozen.

AP Analysis: Why Trump's election delay tweet matters

By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's pattern is now familiar: He makes a stunning assertion, on Twitter or impromptu. The head scratching begins.

Was he serious? Was he trying to distract from other negative news?

Allies are left to shrug their shoulders and brush off his remarks. Some regularly claim to have not read or heard them.

A public numbness sets in, to the point that even Trump's most ardent political opponents have difficulty summoning outrage.

But this week the president offered a statement that stood out, even among many that have put Trump's branding iron on the office.

His standing with the public flagging amid myriad crises, Trump floated on Twitter the prospect of delaying the Nov. 3 election — a suggestion more in line with autocrats who try to quash the public's ability to vote than with the head of the world's leading democracy.

It was a tweet that mattered, and couldn't be ignored, even by many Republicans who have long given Trump a pass.

It mattered because it amounted to a stunning attack on the underpinnings of American democracy — on the notion that a nation that has held free and fair elections in the midst of wars, pandemics and the Great Depression might not be capable of doing so when it's Trump's political career that is on the line.

"Most presidents have leaned very hard in the other direction, even when times were tougher than now," said William Galston, a senior fellow in governance studies at the Brookings Institution.

Indeed, Abraham Lincoln pressed for an election in 1864 when the Civil War was raging and his prospects for victory looked bleak, though he ultimately benefited in part by making it easier for soldiers in the field to vote. An election was also held on time in 1944, with incumbent Franklin D. Roosevelt claiming victory in the midst of World War II.

But Trump does not appear to have the same attachment to the tenets of American democracy as his predecessors. He has repeatedly put stress on the nation's institutions, prompting an obstruction of justice investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller and impeachment by the House of Representatives for seeking a foreign government's help in digging up dirt on Joe Biden, now his Democratic opponent in the November election.

In 2020, Trump has aggressively turned his attention to the electoral process that will determine his political fate. He's repeatedly raised unfounded accusations of fraud, particularly related to the uptick in mail-in voting that is expected because of safety fears during the COVID-19 pandemic. He's also refused to say whether he would accept the outcome of the election, saying it's too soon to give an ironclad guarantee.

Trump made similar statements as a candidate in 2016, and has also flirted with election fraud conspiracy theories as a private citizen. The fear among Democrats and many elections experts in 2020, however, has been that Trump would wield the power of his office to affect the outcome of the election or Americans' ability to vote — particularly if he thought he might be headed for defeat.

The president appeared to validate those fears this week. He tweeted that "Universal Mail-In Voting" — something that has not been proposed — would lead to "the most INACCURATE & FRAUDULENT Election in history."

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"Delay the Election until people can properly, securely and safely vote???" he wrote.

Trump expanded his election attacks later in the day, saying he didn't want to move forward with the vote unless the results are known the same day. Because of the expected increase of mail-in votes, which take longer to count, it's likely that the results may not be known for days, particularly if the contest between Trump and Biden is close.

With the election less than 100 days away, both national and battleground state polls show Trump trailing Biden and losing support from Americans on his handling of the pandemic and other major issues.

In reality, Trump doesn't have the ability to delay the election on his own. Changing the date would require approval from Congress — something Republican lawmakers made clear they would not support.

"Never in the history of the country, through wars and depressions and the Civil War, have we ever not had a federally scheduled election on time, and we'll find a way to do that again this November 3," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a stalwart Trump ally.

The best-case scenario, according to some observers, is that Trump's broadsides against the electoral process are simply a way for him to explain away a possible loss.

"The hopeful scenario is that Trump is just laying the groundwork for a 'sore loser' campaign afterward where he won't use legal mechanisms to challenge the election, but he will tell himself and his supporters that he was robbed and become a kind of a permanent irritant in the political system," Galston said.

Still, many Democrats cast Trump's tweet as a warning shot and a signal of what the president may be willing to do if it appears likely he will lose in November.

"This has got to be a wake-up call," said Biden, whose campaign has assembled a team of 600 lawyers and observers who are assigned to safeguard the integrity of the election in every state.

Events on the other side of the world offered a cautionary tale.

The day after Trump floated a delay in the U.S. election, Hong Kong's government announced that it would postpone September legislative elections for a year. The government blamed the coronavirus pandemic, but the move was seen as a way to sideline pro-democracy politicians seeking to push back on heavy-handedness by Beijing.

The White House condemned the move.

Associated Press writer Will Weissert in Washington contributed to this report.

Editor's Note: Julie Pace has covered the White House and politics for AP since 2007. Follow her at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>

Court overturns Boston Marathon bomber's death sentence

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

A federal appeals court Friday threw out Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's death sentence in the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, saying the judge who oversaw the case did not adequately screen jurors for potential biases.

A three-judge panel of the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ordered a new penalty-phase trial on whether the 27-year-old Tsarnaev should be executed for the attack that killed three people and wounded more than 260 others.

"But make no mistake: Dzhokhar will spend his remaining days locked up in prison, with the only matter remaining being whether he will die by execution," Judge O. Rogeriee Thompson wrote in the ruling, more than six months after arguments were heard in the case.

An attorney for Tsarnaev said they are grateful for the court's "straightforward and fair decision: if the government wishes to put someone to death, it must make its case to a fairly selected jury that is provided all relevant information."

"It is now up to the government to determine whether to put the victims and Boston through a second trial, or to allow closure to this terrible tragedy by permitting a sentence of life without the possibility of release," David Patton said in an email.

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A spokesperson for the U.S. Attorney's office in Boston said they were reviewing the opinion and had no immediate comment. Prosecutors could ask the full appeals court to hear the case or go straight to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The mother of Krystle Campbell, the 29-year-old killed in the attack, expressed outrage at the court's decision.

"I just don't understand it," Patricia Campbell told *The Boston Globe*. "It's just terrible that he's allowed to live his life. It's unfair. He didn't wake up one morning and decide to do what he did. He planned it out. He did a vicious, ugly thing."

Former Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority officer Dic Donohue, who was severely injured in a gunfight with the brothers, said the ruling was not surprising to him.

"And in any case, he won't be getting out and hasn't been able to harm anyone since he was captured," he tweeted.

Tsarnaev's lawyers acknowledged at the beginning of his trial that he and his older brother, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, set off the two bombs at the marathon finish line. But they argued that Dzhokar Tsarnaev is less culpable than his brother, who they said was the mastermind behind the attack.

Tamerlan Tsarnaev died in a gunbattle with police a few days after the April 15, 2013, bombing. Dzhokar Tsarnaev is now behind bars at a high-security supermax prison in Florence, Colorado.

Tsarnaev was convicted on 30 charges, including conspiracy and use of a weapon of mass destruction. The 1st Circuit upheld all but a few of the convictions.

Prosecutors told jurors that the men carried out the attack to punish the United States for its wars in Muslim countries. In the boat where Tsarnaev was found hiding, he had scrawled a confession that referred to the wars and wrote, among other things, "Stop killing our innocent people and we will stop."

Tsarnaev's attorneys identified a slew of issues with his trial, but said in a brief filed with the court that the "first fundamental error" was the judge's refusal to move the case out of Boston. They also pointed to social media posts from two jurors suggesting they harbored strong opinions even before the 2015 trial started.

One juror had said in Twitter posts that that she was "locked down" with her family during the manhunt and retweeted another post calling Tsarnaev a "piece of garbage," but later told the court she had not commented on the case or been asked to shelter in place, the defense said. On the day of Tsarnaev's sentencing, the juror changed her Facebook profile picture to an image that said "BOSTON STRONG," a rallying cry used in the wake of the bombing, the attorneys said.

Tsarnaev's lawyers pushed several times to move the trial out of the city where the bombs exploded, arguing the intense media scrutiny and number of people touched by the attack in Boston would taint the jury pool. But U.S. District Judge George O'Toole refused, saying he believed a fair and impartial jury could be found in the city.

The 1st Circuit said the "pervasive" media coverage featuring "bone-chilling still shots and videos" of the bombing and dayslong manhunt required the judge to run a jury selection process "sufficient to identify prejudice." But O'Toole fell short, the judges found.

The judges said O'Toole deemed jurors who had already formed the opinion that Tsarnaev was guilty qualified "because they answered 'yes' to the question whether they could decide this high-profile case based on the evidence." Yet he didn't sufficiently dig into what jurors had read or heard about the case, it said.

"By not having the jurors identify what it was they already thought they knew about the case, the judge made it too difficult for himself and the parties to determine both the nature of any taint (e.g., whether the juror knew something prejudicial not to be conceded at trial) and the possible remedies for the taint," Thompson wrote.

All three judges agreed that the death sentence should be tossed. In a concurring opinion, Judge Juan Torruella wrote that the case should never have been tried in Boston.

"If this case did not present a sufficient basis for a change of venue, there are no set of circumstances

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that will meet this standard, at least not in the First Circuit," he wrote.

President Donald Trump weighed in on the ruling during an address to supporters on the tarmac of Tampa International Airport.

"I see in Boston, where you have the animal that killed so many people during the Boston Marathon," Trump said. "They just sent this conviction for the death penalty back to the lower courts so they'll argue about that for a long time. It's ridiculous."

Durkin Richer reported from West Harwich, Massachusetts.

Students return to campus amid virus growth in some states

By BRYAN ANDERSON and JOHN RABY Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The first wave of college students returning to their dorms aren't finding the typical mobs of students and parents. What they found Friday were strict safety protocols and some heightened anxiety amid a global pandemic where virus infections are growing in dozens of states.

North Carolina State University staggered the return of its students over 10 days and welcomed the first 900 students to campus, where they were greeted Friday by socially distant volunteers donning masks and face shields.

The rite of passage was a well-organized, but low-key affair, as boxes were unloaded, luggage was wheeled and beds were hauled.

"It's just odd not seeing anybody. You expect it to be hustle and bustle and all that around, but there was nothing. It was pretty empty," said Dominick DePaola, an incoming freshman from Charlotte, North Carolina.

Across the country, students are jumping through additional hoops by getting tests, navigating travel quarantines, and abiding by strict rules.

Elon University in North Carolina, mailed testing kits to all 7,000 students ahead of their arrival in a few weeks. Maine's Colby College will be testing students before they arrive and then three times a week for the first two weeks on campus. They'll be tested twice a week after that, until the semester ends.

The University of Rhode Island is scaling back campus housing to abide by distancing requirements, causing a scramble for some students.

At N.C. State, the university usually houses 10,000 students but will have 6,700 on its Raleigh campus this fall, said Chancellor Randy Woodson. And those students were arriving over an extended period instead of all at once over a single weekend as they normally would.

"Just like the rest of the world, we have to figure out how to carry on," said Betsy Flanagan, who was sending her freshman son, Arch, off to college. "This virus isn't going away and it's going to be with us for quite a while, so we all have to figure out how to safely exist and that includes continuing to educate our future."

In West Virginia, one university put out the welcome mat Friday for students and their families, only to temporarily pull it away.

Over an eight-day stretch, students at West Virginia State University, a small historically black college, were given staggered, two-hour time slots to unload belongings into their residence halls, then were sent home until the start of the fall semester on Aug. 10.

"I don't have anything to worry about," said Jihad Shockley, a sophomore resident assistant from Columbus, Ohio, and a member of the Yellow Jackets' men's basketball team. "It's like, if you get it, quarantine for two weeks (and) hope for the best. I guess I'm not really too scared about it."

Nationwide, it appears that the second surge of confirmed virus cases appears to be leveling off. But scientists warn that trend is driven by four big, hard-hit places — Arizona, California, Florida and Texas — and that cases are rising in more than two dozen other states.

Students appeared to be ready to accept the risk, and move on.

Freshman Nicholas Cecil, of Hilliard, Ohio, missed his senior season of baseball and his high school

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prom, called off due to the virus. He's ready to put that behind him at West Virginia State University, where he's on the baseball team.

"Honestly, it's a new chapter in my life," Cecil said. "It's meeting new people, getting out, and playing baseball at a high level. It's kind of the first step to being an adult. You're living more so on your own."

In North Carolina, students were happy to be on campus, even if it was a bit subdued, compared to the normal, frenetic move-in process.

"Because of corona, I didn't really have too many expectations," said Ann Grace Jacocks, an incoming freshman from Fayetteville, North Carolina.

"A lot of classes are going to be online, so that's not fun, but other than that, I'm ready to go," said Arch Flanagan, an incoming freshman.

—
Raby reported from Institute, West Virginia. Associated Press writer David Sharp contributed from Portland, Maine.

US astronauts pack up for rare splashdown in SpaceX capsule

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Two U.S. astronauts about to make the first splashdown return in 45 years said Friday they'll have seasick bags ready to use if needed.

SpaceX and NASA plan to bring Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken back Sunday afternoon in the company's Dragon capsule, aiming for the Gulf of Mexico just off the Florida Panhandle. Flight controllers are keeping close watch on Hurricane Isaias, expected to stick to Florida's east coast.

Hurley said if he and Behnken get sick while bobbing in the waves awaiting recovery, it won't be the first time for a crew. Astronauts returning in the early 1970s from Skylab, NASA's first space station, did not feel well following splashdown, Hurley noted.

Feeling sick "is the way it is with a water landing," he said during the crew's final news conference from the International Space Station.

This will be SpaceX's first splashdown with astronauts on board, ending a two-month test flight that began May 30 at NASA's Kennedy Space Center — the first launch of a crew from the U.S. in nearly a decade. The capsule has been docked at the space station since May 31, allowing Hurley and Behnken to chip in with spacewalks and experiments.

Hurley said the emergency and other equipment has checked out well aboard Dragon, dubbed Endeavour. Launch and rendezvous went flawlessly, "so we expect nothing different for the splashdown," he said.

Their departure leaves three on board, one American and two Russians.

After splashdown, it will take an hour or so before the capsule is hauled by crane onto a SpaceX recovery ship, where the hatch will be opened and the astronauts will get out. Flight surgeons will be among the dozens of the recovery team members.

The plan is for the Dragon to undock from the space station on Saturday, a day before splashdown. The prime target is off the coast of Panama City, halfway between Tallahassee and Pensacola.

"We won't leave the space station without some good landing opportunities in front of us, good splashdown weather," Behnken told reporters. "We could stay up here longer. There's more chow and I know the space station program's got more work that we can do."

Like launch, the ride back will be essentially automated, with the crew and flight controllers intervening only if necessary.

Behnken has an extra reason to bring this Dragon back in good shape. Following refurbishment, the capsule will fly again next spring with a crew of four — including his wife, NASA astronaut Megan McArthur. SpaceX's next astronaut flight is targeted for the end of September.

Behnken said even before his launch, they had an inkling she would be assigned to a SpaceX flight. NASA announced the news this week.

"And of course, I'll have a lot of tips for her," he said.

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Hurley is married to recently retired NASA astronaut Karen Nyberg.

NASA turned to SpaceX and Boeing for U.S.-based crew transport after the space shuttles retired in 2011. Russian rockets were the only way for astronauts to get to the space station until SpaceX became the first private company to launch humans into orbit two months ago. Boeing's first crew flight isn't expected until next year.

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Supreme Court won't halt challenged border wall projects

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court declined by a 5-4 vote Friday to halt the Trump administration's construction of portions of the border wall with Mexico following a recent lower court ruling that the administration improperly diverted money to the project.

The court's four liberal justices dissented, saying they would have prohibited construction while a court challenge continues, after a federal appeals court ruled in June that the administration had illegally side-stepped Congress in transferring the Defense Department funds.

"The Court's decision to let construction continue nevertheless I fear, may operate, in effect, as a final judgment," Justice Stephen Breyer wrote in a brief dissent for the four liberals.

Friday's order means the court is not likely even to consider the substance of the issue until after the November election, while work on the wall continues.

Last summer, at an earlier stage in the case, the justices also split 5-4 along ideological lines to allow the administration to begin construction using \$2.5 billion in Defense Department funds.

That allowed President Donald Trump to make progress on a major 2016 campaign promise heading into his race for a second term. The administration wanted to use the money to replace a total of 129 miles (208 kilometers) of rundown or outdated fencing in New Mexico, Arizona and California. As of mid-July, 92 miles (148 kilometers) have been completed according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Following the latest appeals court ruling, the wall's challengers returned to the high court to ask that construction be halted.

The Trump administration opposed the request and said it would file paperwork in August asking the Supreme Court to hear arguments in the case.

The case has its origins in the 35-day partial government shutdown that started in December of 2018. Trump ended the shutdown after Congress gave him approximately \$1.4 billion in border wall funding, but that was far less than the \$5.7 billion he was seeking. Trump then declared a national emergency to take cash from other government accounts to use to construct sections of wall.

At the time, the money Trump identified included \$2.5 billion in Defense Department money, \$3.6 billion from military construction funds and \$600 million from the Treasury Department's asset forfeiture fund.

The case before the Supreme Court involved just the \$2.5 billion in Defense Department funds. The American Civil Liberties Union, which sued the Trump administration on behalf of Sierra Club and Southern Border Communities Coalition, has said it will seek to tear down sections of the wall that were built with the money.

"Every lower court to consider the question has ruled President Trump's border wall illegal, and the Supreme Court's temporary order does not decide the case. We'll be back before the Supreme Court soon to put a stop to Trump's xenophobic border wall once and for all," Dror Ladin, staff attorney with the ACLU's National Security Project, said in a statement following the court's order Friday.

The Supreme Court is on break for the summer but does act on certain pressing items. It will begin hearing cases again in October.

DC releases police footage from 2018 deaths of 3 Black men

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Under pressure from the D.C. Council, Washington's Metropolitan Police Department on Friday released long-sought body camera and security footage from the 2018 deaths of three young Black men in 2018. The release was compelled by an emergency police reform bill that Mayor Muriel Bowser criticized as rushed.

"The council has determined that this is the statute, that's the law of the land and we're going to abide by it," said MPD Chief Peter Newsham.

The videos relate to the deaths of three men that have become enduring causes for local activists: Marquese Alston, 22, who was shot by police during a foot chase on June 12, 2018; D'Quan Young, 24, who was shot by an off-duty officer in civilian clothes on May 9, 2018; and Jeffrey Price, 22, who died on May 4, 2018, after his motorbike collided with an MPD cruiser.

The Young and Alston shootings were reviewed by the U.S. attorney's office for the District of Columbia, which declined to prosecute either case. Both were classified as justified by the MPD's Use of Force Review Board. Price's death was ruled an accident.

The Price family is suing the MPD for wrongful death. Newsham, citing the lawsuit, declined to discuss the case in detail, but he called it "preventable" and "a tragic accident where a young man lost his life."

Bowser has found herself caught between the MPD and a reformist City Council, with a resurgent street activist movement pressuring all sides. For weeks, an activist collective including Black Lives Matter has regularly staged noisy protests outside the homes of Bowser, the council members and Newsham. Earlier this month, Bowser tried but failed to fend off council-mandated cuts to police funding in the new budget.

The council unanimously passed the emergency reform bill on June 9 after a wave of nationwide protests over police brutality. With public opinion shifting toward police reform, the new bill bans the use of chokeholds and prohibits the use of tear gas or rubber bullets to disperse crowds. It also compels the speedy release of the names and body camera footage for officers involved in a serious use of force against civilians.

Bowser criticized the process as haphazard with little public input. On Friday, she acknowledged that the council had addressed some of her objections, including clarifying that family members of the victims could block certain footage from being released.

But she said she remains concerned about the council "rushing to make changes to the law without adequate public input."

The local Black Lives Matter chapter fought back against Bowser's claim of insufficient input, calling it "a blatant lie." The chapter's Twitter feed said Friday there have been "tons of hearings" over the years on the issue of releasing police body camera footage.

All three videos are available on the MPD's YouTube page. Some contain graphic footage of the injuries and aftermath. Both shooting-related videos begin with an MPD statement that the department "recognizes the sanctity of human life, and that any loss of life is a tragic outcome for a family and a community."

The videos also contain detailed explanations of the department's evidence in its favor, using a freeze frame and graphics to highlight a handgun in Alston's hand just before the shooting began. Price was being pursued by police when a cruiser ran a stop sign to block his path. The released video emphasizes that he was speeding in a stolen motorbike in the opposite lane. The Young video presents the department's stance that the off-duty officer was on his way to a cookout when Young crossed the street to confront him and "brandished a handgun."

Black Lives Matter D.C. later issued a statement calling the videos "hand picked, heavily narrated clips" that don't reveal much.

April Goggans, a core organizer with the local chapter, said, "It is clear that more footage exists and that all of DC should be in the streets demanding to know why MPD has hand picked these short, edited clips. It feels like more of the same purposefully evasive game Mayor Bowser and Chief Newsham have been playing around transparency and accountability."

The officer who killed Young was in civilian clothes and not wearing a body camera, so the city provided footage from a security camera at a nearby public recreation center and body camera footage from the first officers to respond to the scene.

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Kevin Donahue, the deputy mayor for public safety, called it "our attempt to show this is what we have," and added, "We did the best we could, trying to take the spirit of the law and apply it to that."

Bowser and Donahue both described the videos as frequently inconclusive.

"I think people think it will be like watching a TV show, where it's all clear footage coming from different angles. In fact, what it is is a camera that's on an officer's chest, that sometimes doesn't show anything," Bowser said. "But at the end, somebody died, and that is hard and painful to watch, but it also shows the very difficult positions that our officers face."

Follow Khalil on Twitter at: <https://twitter.com/ashrafkhalil>

Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg released from hospital

WASHINGTON (AP) — Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has been discharged from a hospital in New York City and has returned home, the Supreme Court said Friday.

The court said Ginsburg, 87, is doing well, two days after undergoing a minimally invasive procedure on Wednesday to "revise a bile duct stent" at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. The stent had originally been placed last August, when Ginsburg was treated for a cancerous tumor on her pancreas.

The procedure is common and was done to minimize the risk of future infection, according to her doctors, the court said in a statement.

The procedure follows another one earlier this month at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore to clean out the stent. Ginsburg had gone to the hospital after experiencing fever and chills and was treated for a possible infection.

Ginsburg, the oldest justice on the nine-member court, announced on July 17 that she is receiving chemotherapy for a recurrence of cancer. The liberal justice, who has had four earlier bouts with cancer, said her treatment so far has succeeded in reducing lesions on her liver.

Tech giants lead gains as S&P 500 closes 4th winning month

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Big Tech continues to steamroll through the pandemic, and strong gains for some of the market's most influential companies on Friday helped Wall Street close out its fourth straight winning month.

The S&P 500 rose 24.90 points, or 0.8%, to 3,271.12 following blowout profit reports from Apple and several other tech titans. The gains didn't come easily, though, and the stock market flipped up and down through the day amid worries about the economy and whether Congress can find agreement on more aid for it.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down as many as 300 points before finishing the day up 114.67, or 0.4%, at 26,428.32. The Nasdaq composite jumped 157.64, or 1.5%, to 10,745.27 on the strength for tech stocks, which also accelerated in the last hour of trading.

Despite the gains, caution was clearly present across markets as the coronavirus pandemic continues to cloud the economy's prospects. The 10-year Treasury yield touched its lowest level since it dropped to a record low in March. Gold also continued its record-setting run as investors searched for safety, while the majority of stocks in the S&P 500 sank.

Among the laggards were companies that most need the economy to get back to "normal" and the pandemic to subside, including many in the travel industry.

Expedia Group slumped 4.6% after it reported weaker results for the latest quarter than Wall Street expected. The company's CEO, Peter Kern, called it "likely the worst quarter the travel industry has seen in modern history."

Energy companies were also weak as the pandemic sucked away demand for oil. Chevron dropped 2.7% after it reported a worse loss for its latest quarter than Wall Street expected.

The economy cratered to its worst quarterly performance on record during the spring, and worries are

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high that continuing waves of coronavirus infections may halt what had been a budding recovery. An extra \$600 in weekly unemployment benefits from the U.S. government is expiring with July's end, and Congress continues to argue about how to provide more support for the economy.

Whether Washington can agree on more aid for out-of-work Americans — and quickly — is the biggest risk for the market in the near term, said Yung-Yu Ma, chief investment strategist at BMO Wealth Management.

"If it doesn't happen in short order, there's going to be a lot of disappointment and unease," he said. "I think lawmakers are perhaps underestimating how quickly things could spiral downward without an extension in place. It would take only a few weeks before millions of people are cash strapped."

The S&P 500 made its final leg back into positive territory for the day as top Democrats announced a meeting with White House representatives for Saturday morning to continue talks.

Also helping to prop up the S&P 500 was the power of big tech-oriented stocks. Amazon, Apple and Facebook each reported stronger profit for the latest quarter than Wall Street expected late Thursday, and each rose at least 3.7% in their first trading following the reports. They're three of the biggest companies in the world, making up nearly 13% of the S&P 500 themselves, so their movements hold great sway over indexes.

Apple was particularly influential, rocketing up 10.5% following what Wedbush analyst Daniel Ives called a "Picasso-like performance" for its latest quarter.

Google's parent company, another behemoth in the market, also reported stronger profit than analysts had forecast, but its stock stumbled.

Not only are Big Tech companies growing faster than the rest of the market, some investors have even begun seeing them as safer bets than other stocks because the pandemic is pushing more people online and directly into their wheelhouses. It's a far cry from 20 years ago when tech stocks were seen as the riskiest investments.

The strength for tech is one of the reasons the S&P 500 rose 5.5% in July, its best month since April. Continued, massive amounts of aid from the Federal Reserve has been another linchpin. The index has climbed back within 3.4% of its record set in February after earlier being down nearly 34%.

The gains came even though companies have broadly been reporting sharp declines in their profits, as investors hope that a vaccine can be developed in the next year to corral the pandemic and get the economy closer to normal.

"The market knows earnings are going to be terrible now, with a few select exceptions, for the majority of companies," Ma said. "What's really holding up the equity markets is this idea that 'Yes, it's a terrible situation now, but the outlook for 2021 and beyond is markedly better.'"

Other markets have not shown as much exuberance, though. The yield on the 10-year Treasury ticked down to 0.53% from 0.54% late Thursday. It touched its lowest level since March 9, the day it dropped to its record intraday low just below 0.34%. The yield tends to move with investors' expectations for the economy and inflation.

Gold for delivery in December, the most actively traded contract, rose \$19.10 to settle at \$1,985.91 per ounce after earlier climbing as high as \$2,005.40.

Benchmark U.S. crude oil rose 35 cents to settle at \$40.27 a barrel Friday. Brent crude rose 37 cents to \$43.31 a barrel.

European and Asian markets closed broadly lower.

AP Business Writer Yuri Kageyama contributed.

Review: Beyoncé's 'Black Is King' is supreme Black art

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

King Beyoncé's new film takes you on a journey of Black art, music, history and fashion as the superstar transports you to Africa to tell the story of a young man in search of his crown, matched to epic songs she created while inspired by "The Lion King."

The voyage feels even more special during the current state of the world, as the Black experience has been looked at closely in the wake of the many deaths of Black people, and the Black Lives Matter movement that continues to protest racism and inequality. And for those of us who have been stuck in place for months because of the coronavirus pandemic, the voyage and escapism are welcomed.

In "Black Is King," which debuted Friday on Disney+, Beyoncé continues to dig deep into her roots and share her discovery with the world, like she did on the sweet masterpiece "Lemonade." Black pride is the center of the film, with African artists strongly represented, as Beyoncé shares her stage with Tiwa Savage, Wizkid, Mr Eazi, Busiswa, Salatiel, Yemi Alade, Moonchild Sanelly and more.

They add a great deal of energy and beauty to the film — through lyrical delivery, eye-popping and sharp choreography, and bright and elegant costumes — bringing the songs from "The Lion King: The Gift" to life.

That album was inspired by the time Beyoncé spent voicing the character of Nala in the latest version of "The Lion King." Audio from the animated film are included, but it's the newer passages that truly resonate.

"When it's all said and done, I don't even know my own native tongue. And if I can't speak myself, I can't think myself. And if I can't think myself, I can't be myself. And if I can't be myself, I will never know me," a man says. "So Uncle Sam, tell me this, if I will never know me, how can you?"

Powerful.

Later in the film, Beyoncé says: "We have always been wonderful. I see us reflected in the world's most heavenly things. Black is king. We were beauty before they knew what beauty was."

That leads into "Brown Skin Girl," as Naomi Campbell, Lupita Nyong'o and Kelly Rowland — queens that Beyoncé name-drops on the song — make appearances alongside other black and brown women and girls in a deep celebration of melanin, diversity and sisterhood. Beyoncé singing "because you're beautiful," face-to-face with Rowland, could induce tears.

"Black Is King" also highlights music's royal family: The Carters. Jay-Z makes a stunning appearance on "Mood 4 Eva," while 8-year-old Blue Ivy steals the spotlight every time she appears on screen. Tina Knowles as well as Sir and Rumi Carter — who the film is dedicated to — are also present.

It's a family affair, with musical cousins — both familiar and on the verge — part of the safari ride.

"Black Parade" plays as the credits scroll at the end of "Black Is King," and the song title could be the best way to describe the film: a procession into Beyoncé's black liberation.

OK, now let's get in formation.

"Black Is King," a Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures release, is rated TV-14 by the Motion Picture Association of America. Running time: 85 minutes. Four stars out of four.

Road trip? Quarantines mess with Americans' travel plans

By DAVID SHARP Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Families trying to squeeze in a summer vacation before school starts better do some homework on COVID-19 restrictions before loading up the minivan.

The web of state and local quarantines is growing more tangled by the day: New York, New Jersey and Connecticut have ordered visitors from a whopping 34 states to quarantine for 14 days. Chicago and Washington, D.C., have each singled out travelers from about two dozen states. Other states have their own lists. Some have an option for visitors to get tested instead.

"Complicated doesn't begin to describe it. I feel sorry for people. They just want to go to Cape Cod. They want to go to Vermont. I don't know what to tell them. People are pretty much left on their own to figure out," said Kathy Kutrubes, owner of a travel agency in Boston.

The restrictions — and maybe the confusion, too — are contributing to a sharp drop in travel, dealing

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a blow to a key industry.

Before the outbreak, Americans were expected to take 2.3 billion domestic trips this year, according to the U.S. Travel Association. But that's expected to drop about 30% to 1.6 billion, the lowest level since 1991. Normally nearly a third of domestic travel happens in the summer.

Abroad, a drop-off in tourism from U.S. visitors and restrictions on crossing borders have also led many travel-related businesses to wonder if they will survive.

In other pandemic news:

— Britain put on hold the easing of some more of its virus-related restrictions with just a few hours' notice because case numbers are on the rise for the first time since May.

— U.S. consumer spending increased in June a solid 5.6%, helping to regain some of the ground lost when the virus-related economic slowdown began in March. But the virus's resurgence in much of the country could hamper further gains.

— The U.S. government's top infectious-disease expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, told Congress that he is confident a coronavirus vaccine will be ready by early 2021 and will be widely available within the year.

— Hurricane Isaias' approach forced the closing of some outdoor testing sites in Florida even as the state reported a record-high number of deaths for the fourth day in the row, with 257.

The coronavirus is blamed for more than 150,000 deaths in the U.S. and more than a half-million elsewhere around the world.

When it comes to travel restrictions in the U.S., the situation varies widely. Many states have no restrictions whatsoever for domestic travel. But the number of states with quarantines is growing as governors move to protect residents amid flareups in places such as Florida, Texas and Arizona.

The results are confusing, to say the least.

For example, Maine requires Massachusetts visitors to either quarantine or take a test, but Mainers may travel freely in Massachusetts. Chicago's quarantine order includes neighboring Wisconsin. But people who cross the state line for work are exempted.

In Connecticut, Paula Simchock and her husband are planning to hit the beaches in Delaware with their daughter en route to dropping her off at college in South Carolina. But because both of those states are on Connecticut's quarantine list, they expect to have to isolate upon returning home.

"We're definitely stir crazy. So we're really looking forward to getting down to Delaware and enjoying our favorite restaurants and surf shop. We're really excited about it," Simchock said. "To see that it's on the Connecticut hot spot list is disappointing."

The U.S. Travel Association believes that with proper precautions — masks, hand-washing, and proper sanitation — people can travel safely.

More than a third of jobs lost during the pandemic are in the travel and tourism industry, said Tori Emerson Barnes, spokeswoman for the association.

"Really and truly, the only way that we can have a sustained economic rebound is to have people moving again," she said.

Mike Stumpf and his wife, who live outside Philadelphia, were supposed to take a cruise in Alaska in June. Then a trip to Colorado was canceled this week. A fall cruise to Europe was delayed this fall, and they bagged their annual trip to Florida.

Between different state regulations and health concerns, there's just too much uncertainty, he said. "We won't because it's not the worth the risk and every state has different regulations," he said.

Others don't want to risk it, either.

In New York, Lyndie Callan had to cancel her 60th birthday celebration in Spain this summer because of the country's restrictions on U.S. visitors. But even without the restriction, she wouldn't have felt comfortable traveling.

"There's only one way to get this virus under control and that's to behave responsibly. It starts with me," Callan said. "I don't see that my vacation plans are all that important. I'll go on vacation next year."

—

Associated Press journalists around the world contributed to this report.

Hall-of-Fame country DJ Bill Mack dies of COVID-19 at age 88

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Longtime country music disc jockey Bill Mack, whose “Blue” became a hit for LeAnn Rimes and won a 1996 Grammy Award for Country Music Song of the Year, died Friday at age 88, his son said.

In a Facebook message, Mack’s son Billy Mack Smith said his father died Friday of COVID-19 but had underlying health conditions.

Mack’s “Midnight Cowboy Trucking Show” overnight program on clear channel WBAP-AM in Fort Worth kept truckers entertained for decades and earned him a place in the Country Music DJ Hall of Fame.

Mack later hosted programs on satellite radio and the syndicated “Country Crossroads. He also wrote “Drinking Champagne,” a song covered by George Strait, Dean Martin and Willie Nelson.

Portland, Oregon, protests relatively calm after US drawdown

By GILLIAN FLACCUS and ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Leaders in Portland, Oregon, caught their breath and moved forward with cautious optimism Friday after the first nightly protest in weeks ended without any major confrontations, violence or arrests.

The dramatic change in tone outside a federal courthouse that’s become ground zero in clashes between demonstrators and federal agents came after the U.S. government began drawing down its forces in the liberal city under a deal between Democratic Gov. Kate Brown and the Trump administration.

As agents from U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the U.S. Marshals Service and Immigration and Customs Enforcement pulled back, troopers with the Oregon State Police took over. There were no visible signs of any law enforcement presence outside the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Courthouse, where a protest lasted into early Friday.

“Last night, the world was watching Portland. Here’s what they saw: Federal troops left downtown. Local officials protected free speech. And Oregonians spoke out for Black Lives Matter, racial justice, and police accountability through peaceful, non-violent protest,” Brown said in a tweet Friday.

Mayor Ted Wheeler also struck an optimistic tone but cautioned that there was much work to be done after more than 60 days of protests — and not just in cleaning up downtown Portland.

Leaders in Oregon are pushing for a raft of measures that would address systemic racism in everything from policing to housing. Those proposals could be fast-tracked for consideration in a special legislative session later this summer.

The governor also announced the creation of a Racial Justice Council to advise her on criminal justice reform and police accountability, health equity, economic opportunity, housing and homelessness, and environmental justice.

“The council will examine and begin to dismantle the racist policies that have created grave disparities in virtually every part of our society,” Brown’s office said in a statement.

A majority of the group’s members will be people of color and include state lawmakers to help get policies passed next year.

Portland’s City Council also voted this week to refer a ballot measure to voters in November that would create a police review board independent from any elected official or city department.

“We need the time to heal. We need the time to allow people to come back downtown and experience the great downtown that people remember from just a few months ago,” said Wheeler, a Democrat. “The mass demonstrations that we’ve seen over many, many weeks, those demands have been heard. The demands have been understood.”

The scene outside the federal courthouse stood in sharp contrast to the violent clashes between protesters and the agents that President Donald Trump sent to Oregon’s largest city in early July. Protests

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have roiled Portland for more than two months following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. And while thousands have marched and rallied peacefully, Portland's federal courthouse became a target for some protesters. Smaller numbers of demonstrators tried to tear down a fence erected to protect it, lit fires at the courthouse entryway and hurled fireworks, flares and bricks at the agents holed up inside. Most nights, the agents responded by firing tear gas.

But at the protest that began Thursday night, there was little violence and few signs of confrontation as several thousand people gathered near the courthouse .

A handful of protesters pointed lights and lasers at the building, but state troopers remained inside and did not respond. Soon afterward, hundreds of demonstrators gathered about a block from the courthouse to listen to speeches, with little sign of a law enforcement presence. The mood remained calm into early Friday as the crowd dwindled to about 500 demonstrators.

In preparation for the handover from federal authorities to state troopers, the local sheriff and Portland police met and agreed not to use tear gas except in situations with a threat of serious injury or death, the mayor said.

Wheeler, who was gassed when he joined protesters outside the courthouse last week, added that tear gas "as a tactic really isn't all that effective" because protesters have donned gas masks and often return to the action after recovering for a few minutes. He apologized to peaceful demonstrators exposed to tear gas used by Portland police before federal officials arrived.

Under the deal announced by the governor, the agents will withdraw in phases. But federal officials insisted that the agents will not leave the city completely and will be kept on standby.

Portland Police Chief Chuck Lovell said he believes the new collaboration between local law enforcement agencies will be seen "as a victory in many ways."

"A lot of people came out to express their displeasure of folks from the federal government here and engaging in crowd control with members of our community," Lovell said. "So I'm hoping that on many levels that people are happy in this development."

The U.S. government had arrested 94 people as of Wednesday, the most recent accounting. Since the protests began, Lovell said local police made more than 400 arrests.

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

Fauci confident virus vaccine will get to Americans in 2021

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and MATTHEW PERRONE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dr. Anthony Fauci said Friday that he remains confident that a coronavirus vaccine will be ready by early next year, telling lawmakers that a quarter-million Americans already have volunteered to take part in clinical trials.

But if the future looks encouraging, public health alarms are still going off in the present. Officials testifying with Fauci at a contentious House hearing acknowledged that the U.S. remains unable to deliver all COVID-19 test results within two or three days, and they jointly pleaded with Americans to comply with basic precautions such as wearing masks, avoiding crowds, and washing their hands frequently.

Those simple steps can deliver "the same bang for the buck as if we just shut the entire economy down," said a frustrated Dr. Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, adding that he has studies to back that up.

Looking ahead, Fauci said he's "cautiously optimistic that we will have a vaccine by the end of this year and as we go into 2021. I don't think it's dreaming ... I believe it's a reality (and) will be shown to be reality." As the government's top infectious disease expert, Fauci heads the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Under White House orders, federal health agencies and the Defense Department are carrying out a

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plan dubbed Operation Warp Speed to deliver 300 million vaccine doses on a compressed timeline. That will happen only after the Food and Drug Administration determines that one or more vaccines are safe and effective. Several candidates are being tested.

Don't look for a mass nationwide vaccination right away, Fauci told lawmakers. There will be a priority list based on recommendations from scientific advisers. Topping the list could be critical workers, such as as medical personnel, or vulnerable groups of people such as older adults with other underlying health problems.

"But ultimately, within a reasonable period of time, the plans now allow for any American who needs a vaccine to get it within the year 2021," Fauci said.

Fauci, Redfield, and Department of Health and Human Services "testing czar" Admiral Brett Giroir testified at a moment when early progress against the coronavirus seems to have been frittered away. High numbers of new cases cloud the nation's path. The three officials appeared before a special House panel investigating the government's pandemic response, itself sharply divided along party lines.

Nearly 4.5 million Americans have been infected with COVID-19, and more than 150,000 have died. In recent weeks the virus has rebounded in the South and West, and now upticks are being seen in the Midwest. Testing bottlenecks remain a major issue.

Asked if it's possible to deliver coronavirus test results to patients within 48 to 72 hours, Giroir acknowledged "it is not a possible benchmark we can achieve today given the demand and supply."

But rapid, widespread testing is critical to containing the pandemic. It makes it easier for public health workers to trace the contacts of an infected person. Delayed test results only allow more people to get infected.

Giroir said a two- to three-day turnaround "is absolutely a benchmark we can achieve moving forward."

While hospitals can generally deliver in-house test results within 24 hours, large commercial labs that do about half the testing for the country take longer, particularly if there's a surge in new cases.

The latest government data shows about 75% of test results are coming back within 5 days, but the remainder are taking longer, Giroir told lawmakers.

The bitter politics surrounding the U.S. response to the coronavirus was evident at the hearing by the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis.

As the health officials were testifying, President Donald Trump in a tweet repeated a false claim that high numbers of U.S. cases are due to extensive testing. Committee Chairman James Clyburn, D-S.C., tried to enlist Fauci to rebut the president.

And Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio tried to press Fauci into saying that demonstrations against police violence toward Black Americans spread the virus and should be curbed. Fauci didn't bite.

"You make all kinds of recommendations," Jordan said, taking aim at Fauci. "You made comments on dating, baseball, and everything you can imagine ... I'm just asking should we try to limit the protesting?"

Fauci said it's not his role to opine on curbing political protests. But Jordan shot back, noting that church services have been shut down due to virus precautions, and implying that Fauci has a double standard on two First Amendment rights, religious liberty and freedom of expression.

"I'm not favoring anybody over anybody," Fauci answered. "And I don't judge one crowd versus another crowd. When you're in a crowd, particularly if you're not wearing a mask, that induces the spread."

Some Trump supporters have urged the president to sack Fauci, and the president's tweet raised the stakes.

During the hearing Clyburn had displayed a chart showing rising cases in the U.S. juxtaposed with lower levels across Europe. That caught the president's eye.

Trump tweeted: "Somebody please tell Congressman Clyburn, who doesn't have a clue, that the chart he put up indicating more CASES for the U.S. than Europe, is because we do MUCH MORE testing than any other country in the World."

Clyburn turned to Fauci for a real-time fact check.

"Now Dr. Fauci," the chairman intoned, "do you agree with the president's statement, or do you stand

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by your previous answer that the difference is caused by multiple factors including the fact that some states did not do a good job of reopening?"

Fauci answered directly.

"I stand by my previous statement that the increase in cases was due to a number of factors," he said. One was "that in the attempt to reopen, that in some situations, states did not abide strictly by the guidelines that the task force and the White House had put out."

Alan Parker, director of "Midnight Express," dies at 76

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Alan Parker, a successful and sometimes surprising filmmaker whose diverse output includes "Bugsy Malone," "Midnight Express," and "Evita," has died at 76, his family said.

A Briton who became a Hollywood heavyweight, Parker also directed "Fame," "The Commitments and "Mississippi Burning." Together his movies won 10 Academy Awards and 19 British Academy Film Awards. The director's family said he died Friday in London after a long illness.

Parker was born in London on Feb. 14, 1944, and, like many other aspiring British directors of his generation, including Ridley Scott and Adrian Lyne, began his career in advertising as a copywriter and director of commercials.

He moved into television with critically acclaimed 1974 drama "The Evacuees," which won an international Emmy Award.

The next year he wrote and directed his first feature, "Bugsy Malone," an unusual, exuberant musical pastiche of gangster films with a cast of children, including a young Jodie Foster.

He followed that with 1978 feature "Midnight Express," the reality-based story of an American's harrowing incarceration in a Turkish prison for alleged drug offenses. It won two Oscars — including one for Oliver Stone's script — and gained Parker the first of two best-director nominations.

Parker ranged widely across subjects and genres. While "Shoot the Moon" (1982) and "Angela's Ashes" (1999) were family dramas, "Birdy" (1984) was a tale of war and friendship, "Angel Heart" (1987) an occult thriller and "Mississippi Burning" (1988) a powerful civil rights drama that was nominated for seven Academy Awards, including best director.

Parker was also a notable director of musicals, a genre he both embraced and expanded. "Fame" (1980) was a gritty but celebratory story of life at a performing arts high school; "Pink Floyd — the Wall" (1982) was a surreal rock opera; "The Commitments" (1991) charted the ups and downs of a ramshackle Dublin soul band; and "Evita" (1996) cast Madonna as Argentine first lady Eva Peron in a big-screen version of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical. His final film was death-row drama "The Life of David Gale" in 2003.

Parker also championed Britain's film industry, serving as chairman of the British Film Institute and the U.K. Film Council. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2002, and in 2013 received the British film academy's highest honor, the BAFTA Fellowship.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences tweeted: "From Fame to Midnight Express, two-time Oscar nominee Alan Parker was a chameleon. His work entertained us, connected us, and gave us such a strong sense of time and place. An extraordinary talent, he will be greatly missed."

"Rocketman" director Dexter Fletcher said Parker "inadvertently changed my life at the age of 9" by casting Fletcher as Babyface in "Bugsy Malone." He said he still gets recognized from the film, 45 years later.

Fletcher said Parker "was one of the great, diverse, eclectic and original British filmmakers of his generation and my personal directing hero."

Fellow British filmmaker David Puttnam said Parker "was my oldest and closest friend — I was always in awe of his talent. My life, and those of many others who loved and respected him, will never be the same again."

Barbara Broccoli, producer of the James Bond films, said Parker's films "exhibited the elements of his personality that we so cherished; integrity, humanity, humor and irreverence and rebellion, and most certainly entertainment."

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Parker, she said, "never made the same film twice."

Parker is survived by his wife Lisa Moran-Parker, children Lucy, Alexander, Jake, Nathan and Henry, and seven grandchildren.

Sleepy lions, empty bars, lost jobs: A world without tourism

By JOHN LEICESTER, ROD McGUIRK and ARNO PEDRAM Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — With no American visitors to show around the D-Day beaches or the Loire Valley's chateaux, and no work on the immediate horizon, Paris tour guide Linda Zenou frets about how she'll pay off a loan and continue to care for her ailing mother in the achingly lean months ahead.

"My situation is going to become completely inextricable," she said. "We have nothing to live on."

For growing numbers of businesses and individuals who depend on the global tourism industry, the question is not so much when the coronavirus pandemic will end but how and if they'll survive until business picks up. In trying to fend off the virus, countries that put up entry barriers to tourists have done so at a mounting cost to themselves and others.

"It's now survival of the fittest," said Johann Krige, CEO of the Kanonkop wine estate in South Africa, where the drying up of wine-tasting tourists threatens dozens of wine farms around the historic town of Stellenbosch, near Cape Town.

"A lot of them are going to go under because they just don't have sufficient cash flow," Krige said.

Around the world, travel amid the pandemic is becoming a story of tentative steps forward in some places, but punishing steps back elsewhere, of "yes" to letting back visitors from places faring somewhat better against COVID-19 but not from others where outbreaks are flaring.

The result is an ever-evolving global mishmash of restrictions and quarantines, all of which are providing zero long-term visibility for businesses trying to make payrolls and for everyone in the industry from trinket sellers to luxury hotels.

In Australia, the government of Queensland, home to the Great Barrier Reef, barred visitors from Sydney starting Saturday because of a growing outbreak in the country's largest city. Queensland tourism official Brett Kapernick predicted that could cost some businesses a 40% plunge in revenue.

"With this pandemic, the situation becomes fluid and therefore evolves weekly," Kapernick said. "A week ago, we didn't think we'd be facing a border closed to Sydney."

While the Indonesian resort island of Bali tentatively opened up to domestic visitors on Friday, the beaches of Da Nang in Vietnam were deserted. The city locked down Tuesday to contain a cluster of nearly 100 cases.

Shorn of tourism's lifeblood, some businesses already look doomed. Many of the luxury hotels in Rome's historic center didn't reopen in the late spring when Italy started allowing arrivals from elsewhere in the European Union and other select nations. Early in the pandemic, Italians who for years worked as dining room staff, cooks or maids at hotels instead sought farm work, picking fruit and vegetables.

On Portugal's Algarve coast, individual catastrophes also loom for the staffs of empty hotels, bars and restaurants which are losing hope that tourists will return quickly enough to keep them afloat. In a region almost entirely reliant on tourism, the unemployment rate has already jumped 230%.

And in Oxford, England, tour operator Frederick Laurie is clinging to British "stay-cationers," optimistically describing them as "green shoots" in an otherwise bleak year. He concedes that their numbers will never make up for the ruinous plunge in foreign visitors who once thronged the university town before the coronavirus chased them away.

"It's an extremely difficult time for us," he says. His decade-old company, Footprints Tours, has seen revenues collapse by 70%.

Losses globally are counted in the billions. Percentage drops in visitor numbers are often double-digits. Tourism income in South Africa was down 98% in May compared with the same month last year, the Tourism Business Council says, and over half a million jobs in its sector are at risk.

Governments in countries heavily reliant on tourism are trying to use bailouts to keep businesses afloat.

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Thailand's Cabinet this week approved projects worth more than \$700 million for the tourism industry. Bulgaria is offering tax breaks and job subsidies to shore up its tourism sector bracing for huge cuts in its workforce of 290,000. Hotel owners lament that they have more employees than patrons at Bulgaria's biggest sea resort, Sunny Beach.

The Caribbean's dozens of islands depend on tourism for between 20% to 80% of their GDP but hotel occupancy across the region is now less than 10%, officials say. To make up for lost tourism, Barbados is offering a year-long visa for people who want to move to the island temporarily and work from home close to the beach.

The bright spots of the global pandemic are few and far between. Among them: locals who are unable or reluctant to travel are rediscovering attractions where foreign tourists used to jostle for elbow space.

Animals have South Africa's world-famous wildlife parks largely to themselves because of lockdown rules that barred international tourists and made it illegal for South Africans to travel between provinces for vacations. At the Kruger National Park, lions sleep undisturbed on the roads and roam around empty lodges, while elephants meander as they please.

At the Louvre Museum in Paris, it's now possible to calmly contemplate the works. That's a rare treat for Parisians but a nightmare for tour guides, who gathered in protest again this week, dressed in black and wearing masks, to demand more financial help. Among them was Janice Baneux, who was decidedly pessimistic for their future.

"Some people had to sell their homes, returning to their parents and waiting until next year when tourism will probably be back again," she said. "But this year there is no hope."

Leicester contributed from Le Pecq, France; McGuirk contributed from Canberra, Australia. Other contributors were Pan Pylas in London, Gerald Imray in Cape Town, South Africa, and Barry Hatton in Lisbon, Portugal. AP journalists around the world also contributed.

Moscow demands that Belarus free 33 detained Russians

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — The Kremlin demanded Friday that Belarus quickly release 33 Russian private security contractors it detained on terrorism charges, dismissing accusations of plots during the Belarus presidential campaign as bogus.

The allegations represent an unprecedented escalation of tensions between Russia and neighboring Belarus, traditionally close allies, as Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko seeks a sixth term in the Aug. 9 election.

Belarusian officials said the employees of private Russian military contractor Wagner, who were detained Wednesday, are facing a criminal probe on charges of plotting terror attacks in Belarus amid the country's presidential election campaign.

The Ukrainian authorities, meanwhile, said Friday they will ask Belarus to hand over 28 of the detainees on charges of fighting alongside Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

The Wagner company is linked to Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian businessman who was indicted in the United States for meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The firm has allegedly deployed hundreds of military contractors to eastern Ukraine, Syria and Libya.

Independent observers and opposition supporters in Belarus see the detention of the Russians as part of the authoritarian Lukashenko's efforts to shore up sagging public support.

The Kremlin, which first reacted cautiously to Belarus' move, toughened its stance Friday. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia expects Belarus to quickly free the detainees.

"The unwarranted detention of the 33 Russian citizens doesn't fit into the framework of the allied relations," Peskov said during a conference call with reporters. "We expect our Belarusian allies to clear up this incident immediately and release our citizens."

Peskov said members of a Russian security firm were en route to an unspecified country and were

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detained after missing a connecting flight to Istanbul at the Belarusian capital of Minsk's airport.

"They have done nothing wrong and carried no illegal items," he added.

The Russian Embassy in Minsk said Friday that Belarusian authorities met its demand for consular access to the detainees.

Experts say Belarus long has provided a transit corridor for sensitive Russian operations abroad. Lukashenko now appears to be trying to use a routine Russian deployment for his own political gain.

Throughout his 26 years as president, Lukashenko, a former collective farm director, has relied on Russian subsidies to keep the nation's Soviet-style economy running but resisted Moscow's push for closer integration of the neighboring nations. He frequently accused the Kremlin of harboring plans to incorporate Belarus with Russia and vowed to resist them.

The 65-year-old Belarusian leader is campaigning to retain his post amid a wave of opposition protests driven by weariness and anger over his iron-fisted rule and the bruising economic damage from the coronavirus pandemic.

Belarus election officials have blocked his two main challengers from being registered to run against him. One of them has been jailed on what supporters call fake charges. The other fled to Russia with his children after alleged reports from security officials that he would be arrested and his children would be taken away.

The opposition has united behind another candidate, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, the wife of a jailed opposition blogger.

On Thursday, Belarus' Investigative Committee linked the detained Russians to her husband as part of a criminal investigation into alleged preparations for staging "mass riots."

Speaking Thursday at a rally in Minsk that drew tens of thousands in the biggest demonstration since the start of the presidential campaign, Tikhanovskaya dismissed the charges against her husband as a crude fabrication.

Yuras Karmanau in Minsk contributed to this report.

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Yuras Karmanau in Minsk contributed to this report.

US consumer spending up 5.6%, but virus could stall gains

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — American consumers increased their spending in June by a solid 5.6%, helping regain some of record plunge that occurred after the coronavirus struck hard in March and paralyzed the economy. But the virus' resurgence in much of the country could impede further gains.

Last month's rise in consumer spending followed a seasonally adjusted 8.5% surge in May after spending had plunged the previous two months when the pandemic shuttered businesses, caused tens of millions of layoffs and sent the economy into a recession.

Now, with confirmed viral infections rising in a majority of states, many businesses have had to pause their re-openings or close a second time and cut jobs, thereby putting consumers under renewed pressure. The number of laid-off Americans who have applied for unemployment benefits has topped 1 million for 19 straight weeks. All told, roughly 30 million people are out of work, the government says.

Friday's Commerce Department report showed that the June increase in consumer spending coincided with a 1.1% drop in personal incomes, which followed an even bigger 4.4% fall in incomes in May. Those sharp declines followed a 12.1% surge in incomes in April as a flood of government aid began to be distributed, notably \$1,200 checks for many individuals and a \$600 a week in federal unemployment benefits.

The \$1,200 checks have been largely spent, though, and the \$600 in unemployment benefits is expiring. A standoff in Congress has prevented lawmakers from agreeing on an extension of the benefits, thereby threatening to squeeze millions of the unemployed. Doing so would weaken spending by consumers, the primary driver of the economy.

What's more, recent patterns suggest that consumers have reduced their spending in the past couple

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of weeks. JPMorgan Chase, which tracks total spending by its 30 million debit and credit card holders, notes that as of July 20, their spending had dropped to a five-week low. Spending levels remain about 12% below pre-pandemic levels, though up from a 40% plunge in early April.

"While consumers felt more at ease spending in June, real-time data point to plateauing demand since early July," Gregory Daco, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, wrote in a research note. "With the health situation deteriorating, fiscal aid running dry, employment cooling and confidence ebbing, the risks are skewed to the downside."

The income and spending report came against the backdrop of a devastating economic collapse in the spring. The government estimated Thursday that the economy shrank at a dizzying 32.9% annual rate in the April-June quarter — by far the worst quarterly plunge on records going back to 1947 — as the viral outbreak shut down businesses, threw tens of millions out of work and sent unemployment surging to 14.7%.

The economic contraction was driven by a deep pullback in consumer spending, which fell at a record pace as travel froze up and shutdown orders forced many restaurants, bars, entertainment venues and other retailers to close.

So steep was the fall last quarter that most analysts expect a sharp economic rebound for the current July-September period. But the pain will likely continue and potentially worsen in the months ahead as the damage from the virus deepens. Over the past week, the average number of COVID-19 deaths per day in the United States has climbed more than 25%. And the number of confirmed infections has topped 4.4 million, which could be even higher because of limits on testing and because some people are infected without feeling sick.

A result is that any tentative economic recovery could stall out as state and county governments roll back their reopening efforts and anxious consumers decide to stay at home rather than pursue normal economic activities like shopping, traveling and eating out.

On Wednesday, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell warned that the viral epidemic was endangering any modest rebound — a key reason why the Fed plans to keep interest rates pinned near zero well into the future. Powell noted that as new confirmed cases have soared, measures of spending and hiring have slipped or plateaued at low levels.

Unemployed Americans have been receiving both state unemployment aid and \$600 a week in additional benefits from the federal government. The federal aid has pumped nearly \$20 billion a week into the economy and enabled many of the unemployed to stay afloat. But the \$600 a week is expiring, and Senate Republicans have favored extending that benefit only at a much-reduced level.

Now, though, the White House and some of its Republican allies in the Senate are signaling they want to extend, at least temporarily, the \$600-a-week unemployment benefit. Still, any final agreement with the Democratic-led House, which has passed a much more far-reaching rescue package, may be far off.

AP Economics Writer Christopher Rugaber contributed to this report.

Despite virus threat, Black voters wary of voting by mail

By COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Despite fears that the coronavirus pandemic will worsen, Victor Gibson said he's not planning to take advantage of Michigan's expanded vote-by-mail system when he casts his ballot in November.

The retired teacher from Detroit just isn't sure he can trust it. Many Black Americans share similar concerns and are planning to vote in person on Election Day, even as mail-in voting expands to more states as a safety precaution during the pandemic.

For many, historical skepticism of a system that tried to keep Black people from the polls and worries that a mailed ballot won't get counted outweigh the prospect of long lines and health dangers from a virus that's disproportionately affected communities of color. Ironically, suspicion of mail-in voting aligns with the views of President Donald Trump, whom many Black voters want out of office.

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Trump took it a step further Tuesday, suggesting a “delay” to the Nov. 3 presidential election — which would take an act of Congress — as he made unsubstantiated allegations in a tweet that increased mail-in voting will result in fraud.

“I would never change my mind” about voting in person in November, said Gibson, who is Black and hopes Trump loses. “I always feel better sliding my ballot in. We’ve heard so many controversies about missing absentee ballots.”

Decades of disenfranchisement are at the heart of the uneasy choice facing Black voters, one of the Democratic Party’s most important voting groups. Widespread problems with mail-in ballots during this year’s primary elections have added to the skepticism at a time when making Black voices heard has taken on new urgency during a national reckoning over racial injustice.

Patricia Harris of McDonough, Georgia, south of Atlanta, voted in person in the primary and said she will do the same in November.

“I simply do not trust mail-in or absentee ballots,” said Harris, 73, a retired event coordinator at Albany State University. “After the primary and the results were in, there were thousands of absentee ballots not counted.”

In Georgia, roughly 12,500 mail-in ballots were rejected in the state’s June primary, while California tossed more than 100,000 absentee ballots during its March primary.

Reasons vary, from ballots being received after the deadline to voters’ signatures not matching the one on file with the county clerk. Multiple studies show mail-in ballots from Black voters, like those from Latino and young voters, are rejected at a higher rate than those of white voters.

In Wisconsin’s April primary, thousands of voters in Milwaukee said they didn’t receive absentee ballots in time and had to vote in person. Lines stretched several blocks, and people waited two hours or more.

In Kentucky’s June primary, more than 8,000 absentee ballots were rejected in Jefferson County, which includes Louisville.

Many people in Louisville’s historically Black West End neighborhood voted in person because they didn’t receive an absentee ballot or simply wanted to vote in a way that was familiar to them, said Arie Lynton-Smith, an organizer with Black Lives Matter Louisville.

“That’s particularly why we knew we had to have the poll rides as an option,” she said, referring to groups offering voters free transportation to polling places. “It’s not as easy to do an absentee ballot and the things that come along with it than it is to just go in person.”

Mistrust by Black voters runs deep and is tightly bound within the nation’s dark past of slavery and institutional racism.

Black people endured poll taxes, tossed ballots, even lynchings by whites intent on keeping them from voting. Over the decades, that led to a deep suspicion of simply handing off a ballot to the post office. Black people were the demographic least likely to cast votes by mail in 2018, with only 11% using that method, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. By comparison, 24% of whites and 27% of Latinos reported voting by mail that year.

“For Black folks, voting is almost like a social pride because of the way they were denied in the past,” said Ben Barber, a researcher and writer for the Institute for Southern Studies in Durham, North Carolina.

Among the places where Black voters say they have had to overcome institutional obstacles is Shelby County, Tennessee, which includes Memphis. In the past, voters have received ballots for the wrong district, and groups have sued to challenge the security of electronic voting machines, invalidation of voter registration forms and failure to open polling places near predominantly Black neighborhoods.

The Rev. Earle Fisher, senior pastor at Abyssinian Missionary Baptist Church in Memphis and a prominent Black civil rights activist, is one of the plaintiffs in a state lawsuit calling for mail-voting access for everyone. He said he’s not pushing his community to vote by mail but wants to ensure it’s an option given the health dangers.

To ease doubts, he wants voters to be able to drop off their ballot at a polling place so they won’t have to worry about the post office delivering it on time.

“I would like to see every righteous and creative method and measure taken, but we are up against a

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voter suppression apparatus that oftentimes is orchestrated by, or at least sustained by, people who are elected or appointed to office," Fisher said.

Trump has made clear he believes widespread mail-in voting would benefit Democrats. He has alleged — without citing evidence — that it will lead to massive fraud, and the Republican National Committee has budgeted \$20 million to fight Democratic lawsuits in at least 18 states aimed at expanding voting by mail.

The extent to which Black voters adopt it in November is likely to be dictated by the coronavirus. As infections surge, there are signs more Black voters may be willing to consider the option. In Detroit, for example, about 90,000 requests for mail-in ballots have been made so far — the most ever, City Clerk Janice Winfrey said.

How well the option is promoted also is important. In 2018, Democrat Stacey Abrams' campaign mailed 1.6 million absentee ballot requests to Georgia voters during her unsuccessful bid for governor, emphasizing that it was a safe, easy way to vote.

Record numbers of Black voters voted by mail in that election. That shows they will embrace the process if they hear from friends and family that it works, said Lauren Groh-Wargo, Abrams' campaign manager.

NAACP President Derrick Johnson praised how Abrams was able to bridge that gap but said this year is different. The model can't be replicated nationwide before Nov. 3, he said.

"Stacey did a good job in the four years leading up to 2018 to build out a program to get it done," Johnson said. "The runway between now and November isn't long enough to get it done."

Associated Press writers Piper Hudspeth Blackburn in Frankfort, Kentucky; Nicholas Riccardi in Denver; and Adrian Sainz in Memphis contributed to this story.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Aug. 1, the 214th day of 2020. There are 152 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 1, 1957, the United States and Canada announced they had agreed to create the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD).

On this date:

In 1714, Britain's Queen Anne died at age 49; she was succeeded by George I.

In 1907, the U.S. Army Signal Corps established an aeronautical division, the forerunner of the U.S. Air Force.

In 1912, the U.S. Marine Corps' first pilot, 1st Lt. Alfred A. Cunningham, went on his first solo flight as he took off in a Burgess/Curtis Hydroplane from Marblehead Harbor in Massachusetts.

In 1914, Germany declared war on Russia at the onset of World War I.

In 1936, the Olympics opened in Berlin with a ceremony presided over by Adolf Hitler.

In 1944, an uprising broke out in Warsaw, Poland, against Nazi occupation; the revolt lasted two months before collapsing.

In 1966, Charles Joseph Whitman, 25, went on an armed rampage at the University of Texas in Austin that killed 14 people, most of whom were shot by Whitman while he was perched in the clock tower of the main campus building. (Whitman, who had also slain his wife and mother hours earlier, was finally gunned down by police.)

In 1981, the rock music video channel MTV made its debut.

In 2001, Pro Bowl tackle Korey Stringer, 27, died of heat stroke, a day after collapsing at the Minnesota Vikings' training camp on the hottest day of the year.

In 2007, the eight-lane Interstate 35W bridge, a major Minneapolis artery, collapsed into the Mississippi River during evening rush hour, killing 13 people.

In 2013, defying the United States, Russia granted Edward Snowden temporary asylum, allowing the

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National Security Agency leaker to slip out of the Moscow airport where he had been holed up for weeks.

In 2014, a medical examiner ruled that a New York City police officer's chokehold caused the death of Eric Garner, whose videotaped arrest and final pleas of "I can't breathe!" had sparked outrage.

Ten years ago: The United States announced that it would provide Pakistan with \$10 million in humanitarian assistance in the wake of deadly flooding. Lolita Lebron, a Puerto Rico independence activist who'd spent 25 years in prison for participating in a gun attack on the U.S. Congress in 1954, died in San Juan at age 90.

Five years ago: Japan's Imperial Household Agency released a digital version of Emperor Hirohito's radio address on Aug. 15, 1945, announcing his country's surrender in World War II; the digital recording offered clearer audio, although Hirohito spoke in an arcane form of Japanese that many of his countrymen would have found difficult to comprehend. British singer and TV host Cilla Black, 72, died in Estepona (eh-steh-POH'-nah) in southern Spain.

One year ago: President Donald Trump intensified pressure on China to reach a trade deal by warning he would impose 10% tariffs on Sept. 1 on the remaining \$300 billion in Chinese imports that he hadn't already taxed.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Ramblin' Jack Elliott is 89. Former Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, R-N.Y., is 83. Actor Giancarlo Giannini is 78. Basketball Hall of Fame coach Roy Williams is 70. Blues singer-musician Robert Cray is 67. Singer Michael Penn is 62. Rock singer Joe Elliott (Def Leppard) is 61. Rock singer-musician Suzi Gardner (L7) is 60. Rapper Chuck D (Public Enemy) is 60. Actor Jesse Borrego is 58. Actor Demian Bichir is 57. Rapper Coolio is 57. Actor John Carroll Lynch is 57. Rock singer Adam Duritz (Counting Crows) is 56. Movie director Sam Mendes is 55. Country singer George Ducas is 54. Country musician Charlie Kelley is 52. Actress Jennifer Gareis is 50. Actor Charles Malik Whitfield is 48. Actress Tempestt Bledsoe is 47. Actor Jason Momoa is 41. Actress Honeysuckle Weeks is 41. Singer Ashley Parker Angel is 39. Actress Taylor Fry is 39. Actor Elijah Kelley is 34. Actor James Francis Kelly is 31. Actress Ella Wahlestedt is 22.