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A butterfly is feeding on the flowers.

(Groton Daily Independent photo by Julianna Kosel)

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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Dates to know

August 7th – Schedules Posted on Parent Portal by 5pm

August 10th – All Dual Credit Students must stop at the school
to check all paperwork & Schedule. 9am-3pm

August 12th- Schedule Change Day (High School Main office) 9am-3pm

August 18th- Computer pick up for ONLY Dual Credit Students

August 19th – First day of School & Dual Credit Classes

August 21st – Final day for all schedule changes

Groton Area High School

605.397.8381



Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

August 4, 2020 – 7:00pm
Groton Community Center

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Ward 2 Council member Resignation
2. Ward 2 Council member Appointment
3. Darrell Hillstead – promoting Groton Airport
4. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
5. Minutes
6. Bills
7. 2nd Reading of Ordinance #735 Water Rates
8. Clark Engineering to produce a cost estimate for painting the water storage tank for the State Water Plan application
9. Pumpkin Fest – October 10, 2020 – No additional insurance cost for the City
10. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
11. Adjournment

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#162 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Tonight I'm reminding myself to slow down and not get too optimistic too fast even though we had another slow day. It's a Monday, so we need to keep things in perspective until we see tomorrow's numbers. That said, there were only 47,500 new cases reported today, a 1.0% increase to 4,723,400. This does extend our streak to 36 days, but it is only #34 on our list of worst days. We need to drop by another couple of thousand to break that; be nice to see it this week. Time will tell. I have us at only 17 states and territories reporting an increase in 14-day new case reports. Haven't been that low for a long while; I would like this trend to continue too.

That said, Dr. Deborah Birx has declared we've entered "a new phase" with this virus, Dr. Anthony Fauci supports that statement, and they're right (like I'm going to argue with the big guns). Even though overall numbers may be dropping—and I most sincerely hope they are—we now have broad community spread across the country. As the virus slows down in the more populous states and ramps up in the less populous ones, the overall new case numbers may be coming down, but spread appears to be broadening in those more sparsely populated ones. There was a time not long ago when the case numbers we were seeing in these places were in relatively isolated outbreaks centered on meat-packing plants or prisons or specific events; and now the cases being reported are more diffuse and widespread throughout communities. This pattern of transmission is going to be much more difficult to contain and poses real challenges for any sort of control, especially as the school year gets underway.

We see this when we look at states like Missouri, Montana, and Oklahoma, which are experiencing large percentages of growth in cases, even while new cases in Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama are showing per population growth ahead of other states. Some large cities are trending upward, and college towns are expected to show spikes this month as well. We're not out of the woods yet.

We have now seen 155,931 reported Covid-19 deaths in the US, 630 of them today, a 0.4% increase. This is our second consecutive day below 1000—this time around. Thirty states are showing increasing numbers of deaths. While the 14-day change in new case reports is a 7% decline, the change in deaths is a 59% increase. We know that deaths lag new cases, so even if new cases continue to trend downward, we can expect to see an increase in deaths for at least two or three weeks yet.

We have 30 states and territories with positivity rates above the recommended 5%; they are as follows: Puerto Rico (100%), Alabama (21.55%), Mississippi (21.12%), Florida (18.92%), Kansas (18.59%), Arizona (18.42%), Idaho (18.19%), Nevada (17.05%), South Carolina (14.22%), Missouri (13.13%), Texas (12.92%), Georgia (12.89%), Arkansas (12.19%), Utah (10.21%), Iowa (9.82%), Oklahoma (9.81%), Nebraska (9.16%), Tennessee (8.74%), Louisiana (8.33%), Indiana (8.10%), South Dakota (7.97%), North Dakota (7.48%), Kentucky (7.43%), Colorado (6.93%), Wisconsin (6.75%), Oregon (6.65%), Wyoming (6.55%), Virginia (6.45%), California (6.40%), North Carolina (6.25%), Maryland (6.14%), Washington (5.82%), and Pennsylvania (5.69%). Remembering that positivity rates are our early warning system, this is worrisome.

School reopenings have been challenging. Gwinnett County, Georgia, where teachers returned to classrooms for planning last week, has 260 school employees testing positive or in contact with someone who tested positive; this is before students have returned. Schools in Indiana and Mississippi had students testing positive in the first week after return to class. I am not clear whether the Mississippi student tested positive as part of a school-associated testing program or in the community. The Indiana student

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was tested apart from a school-associated protocol and came to school before the results were back, something that should not have happened. In any event, this is not a great start.

There is a bit of good news in California. Los Angeles County, seat of the densest concentration of cases in the state, has seen a drop in the number of hospitalizations every day over the past week. This could be a sign things are leveling off there. It's not time to throw a party (please!), but we're close to three weeks after their governor rolled back some reopening steps, and we may just be seeing the impacts from that. Modelers are now projecting a small continuing decline in cases over the next month or so. I hope so, but we should be cautious because the new cases are disproportionately among younger people—68% under 50 years—which may mean we're still going to get a surge among the older groups as these young people go out to mingle with non-household members and infect others.

I want to make sure you are aware more brands of hand sanitizers have been discovered to contain methanol, a toxic kind of alcohol which can be absorbed through the skin, making it dangerous to use. Most of these have been recalled, but as nearly as I can determine, some have not. I don't know why this is, but please check whatever you're using against the FDA's list, linked below. All brands on the list were made in Mexico with the exception of one made in Tennessee; there are import alerts for most of these products, but I recommend checking labels on anything you have on hand, as well as anything you purchase going forward. This list is searchable (a good thing because it is long): https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fda.gov%2Fdrugs%2Fdrug-safety-and-availability%2Ffda-updates-hand-sanitizers-consumers-should-not-use%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR3yYZh-JLmpg6IZ5t2CcPfGYHeSqFcy90-EiJx_216Roax1PEsAyFG-dMRI%23products&h=AT2gVzpmqmIuS_bZKkXX-JwMvyn8rcQhqLKPu8kX0_EZq9A-vQoN0Pu0WLxIBxGdqObQ157pNXzPT8wbHcRLdHq5B6r664yKWHi_HyrxOxjtfXhZBr_ftV0oB6yWrNYUQL-N14aA

There is promising news on a monoclonal antibody treatment. You will recall that monoclonal antibodies are laboratory-made preparations of highly-purified antibodies against the coronavirus which block the virus from entering host cells, thereby preventing infection of those cells. This one from Eli Lilly and Company is entering a late-stage trial in nursing homes, which means the early-stage trials showed some level of efficacy. Regeneron has also announced the beginning of late-stage trials for its entry into this market, but there is something unusual about the design of the Lilly study: Because nursing home residents, a major at-risk population, are not at this time able to travel to medical centers to participate in the trial, the company has mobile treatment vans which will travel from one facility to the next to deliver it to their doors, a very creative way to test the treatment in a population very much in need of it. The plan is to enroll 2400 residents and staff in the trial. We should be hearing about results in the next few months.

I want to talk to you tonight about something difficult. I get it that we've had a lot of difficult lately; but I think this is important and I haven't pulled my punches yet, so I'm not starting now. So let's discuss the hopes we're all placing on a vaccine. I think it's really easy to form a mental picture of the day when a vaccine is approved and it spreads its balm across the land and we're all at peace forever. And that's not how it's going to happen, not even in the best-case scenario.

Let's take the example of the polio vaccine as our case in point. Polio epidemics had been appearing in the US since the 1800s, occurring every summer since 1916, affecting primarily children, most of whom didn't get very sick at all, a few of whom developed central nervous system disease and became permanently paralyzed to some degree, some ending up unable to breathe unassisted and spending the rest of their lives in the contraption known as an iron lung. Some died—several thousand per year, actually. The 1940s and 1950s had particularly bad outbreaks.

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Work on vaccines had commenced in the 1930s; but it wasn't until 1955 that the Salk vaccine, field-tested in 1.8 million children in 1954, became the first one licensed. The vaccine was determined to be 70-94% effective against the various strains of poliovirus that were circulating in the community. Vaccine acceptance was high in those days and parents were desperate to protect their children; so vaccination rates were high. As a result, we went from 35,000 cases of polio in the US in 1953 to only 5600 cases in 1957, but not zero, not for a long time and after another couple of iterations of the vaccine. The outbreaks continued for several years after. The last case of polio in the US wasn't until 1979, some 40 to 50 years after work on the vaccine began.

Our situation is different in many ways from the 1950s: Our current pandemic affects more people across the life span and is far more dangerous in older people than children. Older people aren't likely to respond to any vaccine as well as children do. This one's infecting and killing orders of magnitude more people than poliovirus did, even at its height. This one isn't seasonal. People are a whole lot more skeptical of vaccines—and scientific expertise—than they were. Those are all challenges.

On the bright side, we have vaccines in clinical trials six months into this thing—not 50+ years. We know a lot more about viruses than we did then. And we are tossing, conservatively, bucketsful of money at vaccine development this time around.

But it is quite likely that, particularly given the speed of development, the first—and probably the second and the third—vaccine licensed will be only partially effective. And the first one licensed might not be the one currently in the lead in this horse race; that one could fail. The FDA has set 50% effectiveness as the benchmark any vaccine must meet to be licensed. There's a chance, as mentioned above, the first—or second or third—vaccine will not work for the folks most in need of it. Maybe it won't prevent infection in anyone; maybe it will only decrease the severity of the disease. It seems probable two doses will be required. Most likely, the immunity resulting from any of these vaccines won't last a super-long time as it did for polio.

And, it is a certainty that the vaccine will not be administered to everyone who wants it in the first week. Or month. We have talked about the logistical and supply chain issues around getting vaccine into millions of arms in the US or anywhere in the world—vaccine production capacity, vial and syringe manufacture capacity, distribution, administration. I expect it will be a year or two before a sufficient percentage of the US population will be vaccinated to even think about herd immunity—supposing we can persuade that percentage of the population to spring for the vaccine at all.

And that doesn't begin to address the rest of the world, something we are not, for the most part, considering anywhere near enough. There are certainly humanitarian considerations to hoarding all of the available vaccine for ourselves; but there are also serious public health concerns with that. As long as this disease circulates among the population of any country, no country is really safe; with the amount of travel we see nowadays, this is more true now than it ever was in the 1950s. It is not only the right thing to do; it is critical to our safety to see the world vaccinated.

All of which is to point out that, if you were mentally tooling up to go right back to "normal" the day a vaccine is licensed, you may wish to sit down and take a deep breath: It's not going to happen like that. And if you were thinking you can go ahead and do whatever you want now—swanning about to your mani-pedi appointments, cramming yourselves into bars and dances and sports venues and festivals, partying with the family at the big reunion—because we just have to hang on a couple of months until we have a vaccine and then everything will be fine, you need to readjust your expectations. The couple-of-months thing is a long-shot, best-case thing at best, and you should have noticed by now not much has gone in

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a best-case sort of way so far in this pandemic. And even if you manage to land one of those coveted early doses and it works great, it takes a few weeks for the immunity to be established; so cancel the day-after-vaccination celebratory bar crawl. It would be a shame to contract a fatal disease the day after you were vaccinated, wouldn't it?

Here's how it's more likely to go: A vaccine gets licensed—maybe in a couple of months (and hoping is still encouraged), more likely in January or so. Then a few hundred thousand people get vaccinated relatively quickly, probably health care workers, front-line essential workers, and others at high risk of exposure. Maybe the vaccine works great in us old folks, and if so, we're probably fairly early on the list to receive vaccine so we quit causing funerals. Perhaps this first one is only partially effective and later ones will work better, so some folks might end up being vaccinated repeatedly, even while we're trying to cover the rest of the population. And other folks will be feverishly trying to produce and distribute enough to cover the world—because, believe it or not, the US is not the center of the universe and there are billions of vulnerable people across the globe just as human and with just as many reasons to live as we Americans have. And likely we're five years or so down the road before we can consider we've beaten this virus, if even then. After that, little outbreaks or sporadic cases will continue to show up and some folks will continue to die. We may never—or at least not for years and years—be entirely free of this virus; that remains to be seen.

Now, I'm not trying to be a big old downer here, but this has implications for how we live our lives for quite some time to come. I think it is probable we're looking at months, at least, in which we're going to need to wear masks, do social distancing, and avoid large crowds. After that, it may become safe to start gathering in larger numbers, but likely with some continuing precautions and only after assessing our own tolerance for risk. There may be patterns of life which will be altered for the rest of my life, if not yours.

And if we have a big setback—a vaccine that fails, misunderstandings about risks and effectiveness, side effects (even minor ones)—accompanied by the rabid rantings of the anti-vaxxers (wish we had a vaccine for that, by the way, not that they'd accept it), then everything could take a lot longer. I am encouraging us to avoid pinning our hopes on the magic fairy-dust that is a vaccine to fix everything so that we stop taking care to protect ourselves and others until the day when we really can declare this virus defeated. We can discuss mortality rates all we'd like; fact is, in any one person, mortality is either 0% or 100%, and you have no idea which of those you're going to be. So don't abandon doing the right things while we wait for our miracle to ride in on its white horse to save us. Things may be looking up, but let's not go crazy here.

Dan Willkins believes in "putting something in the box," that is, doing something good now so that more good can happen later; it's his version of paying it forward. He spent his career as a mechanical engineer putting something in the box, and he still likes to create with his hands. So in his retirement, he took up woodworking, making gifts for people; he likes producing something useful. This is why in late March, as the pandemic got into full swing, he saw an opportunity to put something in the box again. He learned to use a sewing machine as he'd watched his late wife do for years and started making face masks. He has worked as many as 10 hours a day at the sewing machine, producing some 300 masks to date. He said, "I didn't want to sit around here doing nothing."

Willkins had originally planned to spend his 90th birthday this summer in Tennessee with his great-grandchildren; but he realized that wasn't a good idea and cancelled. "I sorely miss seeing those children," he said. Given his disappointment, his daughter tried to think of ways to make the day special, and so she contacted some friends to organize a drive-by parade for the event like the ones neighbors had held for their children. A friend posted on a local e-mail list, and before you know it, a lot of folks had signed on.

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So a week ago Saturday, all of his children were gathered at his place and gradually moved the group to the front lawn. One of them went to the community center where people were coming together to begin the parade. She saw eight police cars, lights flashing and sirens sounding, along with more than 30 other vehicles. Willkins sat on the front lawn surrounded by family as the parade went by, waving, with tears in his eyes. "It was unbelievable! All of a sudden here comes this parade out of the clear blue sky. Just amazing," he said. For a man who'd spent the better part of the months of this pandemic serving others, here was a thank-you.

His daughter believes that "if you give joy, you get joy." Willkins says, "It means that people care. In spite of all the animosity and the things going on . . . people still care about people."

I hope he's right.

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	Aug. 2	Aug. 3	Aug. 4
Minnesota	52,281	52,947	53,692	54,463	55,188	55,947	56,560
Nebraska	25,157	25,422	25,766	26,211	26,391	26,702	26,956
Montana	3,475	3,676	3,814	3,965	4,081	4,193	4,233
Colorado	45,314	45,796	46,204	46,809	47,267	47,727	47,968
Wyoming	2,136	2,172	2,217	2,259	2,297	2,333	2,364
North Dakota	6141	6227	6301	6468	6602	6660	6785
South Dakota	8492	8641*	8685	8764	8867	8955	9020
United States	4,352,304	4,427,493	4,495,224	4,566,275	4,620,502	4,667,957	4,718,249
US Deaths	149,260	150,716	152,075	153,391	154,449	154,860	155,478

Minnesota	+478	+666	+745	+771	+725	+759	+613
Nebraska	+258	+265	+344	+445	+458	+311	+254
Montana	+94	+201	+138	+151	+116	+112	+40
Colorado	+749	+482	+408	+605	+458	+460	+241
Wyoming	+64	+36	+45	+42	+38	+36	+31
North Dakota	+155	+86	+74	+167	+134	+58	+125
South Dakota	48	+149	+44	+80	+103	+88	+65
United States	+57,534	+75,189	+67,731	+71,051	+54,227	+47,455	+50,292
US Deaths	+1,204	+1,456	+1,359	+1,316	+1,058	+411	+618

* 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.

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August 3rd COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Numbers are relatively "quiet" for today with 65 positive cases and 30 recovered cases. Those hospitalized went up by four to 39. Brown County had one positive case for 38 active cases and Spink County added another case to make four active in that county. No deaths were recorded in the Dakotas.

Brown County:

Active Cases: +1 (38)
Recovered: +2 (369)
Total Positive: +3 (410) 4.9%
Ever Hospitalized: 0 (20)
Deaths: 0 (3)
Total Tests: (5465)
Percent Recovered: 90.0% (-0.2)

South Dakota:

Positive: +65 (9020 total) 8.6%
Total Tests: (142,922 total)
Hospitalized: +3 (838 total). 39 currently hospitalized (up 4 from yesterday)
Deaths: 0 (135 total)
Recovered: 30 (7939 total)
Active Cases: +35 (946)
Percent Recovered: 88.0 -.3
Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 2% Covid, 44% Non-Covid, 54% Available
ICU Bed Capacity: 3% Covid, 59% Non-Covid, 38% Available
Ventilator Capacity: 5% Covid, 11% Non-Covid, 84% Available

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

Fully recovered from positive cases: Bon Homme 13-13, Day 21-21, Deuel 8-8, Haakon 1-1, Hamlin 14-14, Hand 7-7, Hyde 3-3, McPherson 6-6, Perkins 4-4, Stanley 14-14, Sully 1-1, Tripp 20-20.

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): 22 active cases
Bennett: 1 active case
Bon Homme: Fully Recovered
Brookings (1): +1 positive (12 active cases)
Brown (3): +3 positive, +2 recovered (38 active cases)
Brule: 3 active cases
Buffalo (3): +1 positive (9 active cases)
Butte: 4 active cases
Campbell: 1 active case
Charles Mix: +1 positive (8 active cases)

Clark: 2 active cases
Clay: +1 positive (14 active cases)
Codington: +1 positive (19 active cases)
Corson: +1 positive (7 active cases)
Custer: 9 active cases
Davison: 8 active cases
Day: Fully Recovered
Deuel: Fully Recovered
Dewey: +2 positive (31 active cases)
Douglas: 2 active cases
Edmunds: 3 active cases
Fall River: 1 active case

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Faulk (1): 3 active cases
 Grant: 5 active case
 Gregory: 1 active case
 Haakon: 1 active case
 Hamlin: Fully Recovered
 Hand: Fully Recovered
 Hanson: +1 recovered (6 active cases)
 Harding: No infections reported
 Hughes (3): 6 active cases
 Hutchinson: +1 positive (5 active cases)
 Hyde: Fully Recovered
 Jackson (1): +1 positive (3 active case)
 Jerauld (1): 1 active case
 Jones: 1 active case
 Kingsbury: +2 positive (4 active cases)
 Lake (2): +3 positive (19 active cases)
 Lawrence: +2 positive (7 active cases)
 Lincoln (2): +8 positive, +8 recovered (94 active cases)
 Lyman (2): 10 active cases
 Marshall: 1 active case
 McCook (1): 1 active case
 McPherson: Fully Recovered
 Meade (1): +2 positive (15 active cases)
 Mellette: 4 active cases
 Miner: +1 positive (5 active cases)
 Minnehaha (64): +10 positive, +12 recovered (333 active cases)
 Moody: 4 active cases
 Oglala Lakota +1 positive (24 active cases)
 Pennington (26): +19 positive, +5 recovered, 1 death (129 active cases)
 Perkins: 1 active case
 Potter: 1 active case
 Roberts (1): +1 recovered (7 active cases)

Sanborn: Fully Recovered
 Spink: +1 positive (4 active cases)
 Stanley: Fully Recovered
 Sully: Fully Recovered
 Todd (4): 4 active cases
 Tripp: Fully Recovered
 Turner: 6 active cases
 Union (3): +3 positive (35 active cases)
 Walworth: 1 active case
 Yankton (2): +1 recovered (7 active cases)
 Ziebach: 6 active cases

North Dakota Dept. of Health Report
 COVID-19 Daily Report, August 3:
 • 4,723 tests (1,728)
 • 6,785 positives (+127)
 • 5,590 recovered (+113)
 • 105 deaths (+0)
 • 1,090 active cases (+12)

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian, Non-Hispanic	724	8%
Black, Non-Hispanic	1029	11%
Hispanic	1207	13%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	1430	16%
Other	868	10%
White, Non-Hispanic	3762	42%

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	1148	0
20-29 years	1935	1
30-39 years	1779	6
40-49 years	1377	7
50-59 years	1337	17
60-69 years	805	25
70-79 years	338	20
80+ years	301	59

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased
Aurora	38	36	363	0
Beadle	587	556	1814	9
Bennett	6	5	526	0
Bon Homme	13	13	728	0
Brookings	120	107	2529	1
Brown	410	369	4177	3
Brule	40	37	707	0
Buffalo	108	96	618	3
Butte	11	7	750	1
Campbell	2	1	86	0
Charles Mix	100	92	1191	0
Clark	16	14	371	0
Clay	118	104	1259	0
Codington	119	100	2660	0
Corson	29	22	440	0
Custer	23	14	760	0
Davison	88	80	2226	0
Day	21	21	599	0
Deuel	8	8	379	0
Dewey	61	30	1984	0
Douglas	16	14	383	0
Edmunds	13	10	390	0
Fall River	16	15	918	0
Faulk	26	22	177	1
Grant	23	18	674	0
Gregory	7	6	366	0
Haakon	2	1	281	0
Hamlin	14	14	598	0
Hand	7	7	269	0
Hanson	21	14	187	0
Harding	0	0	50	0
Hughes	84	75	1655	2
Hutchinson	27	22	868	0

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	4426	68
Male	4594	67

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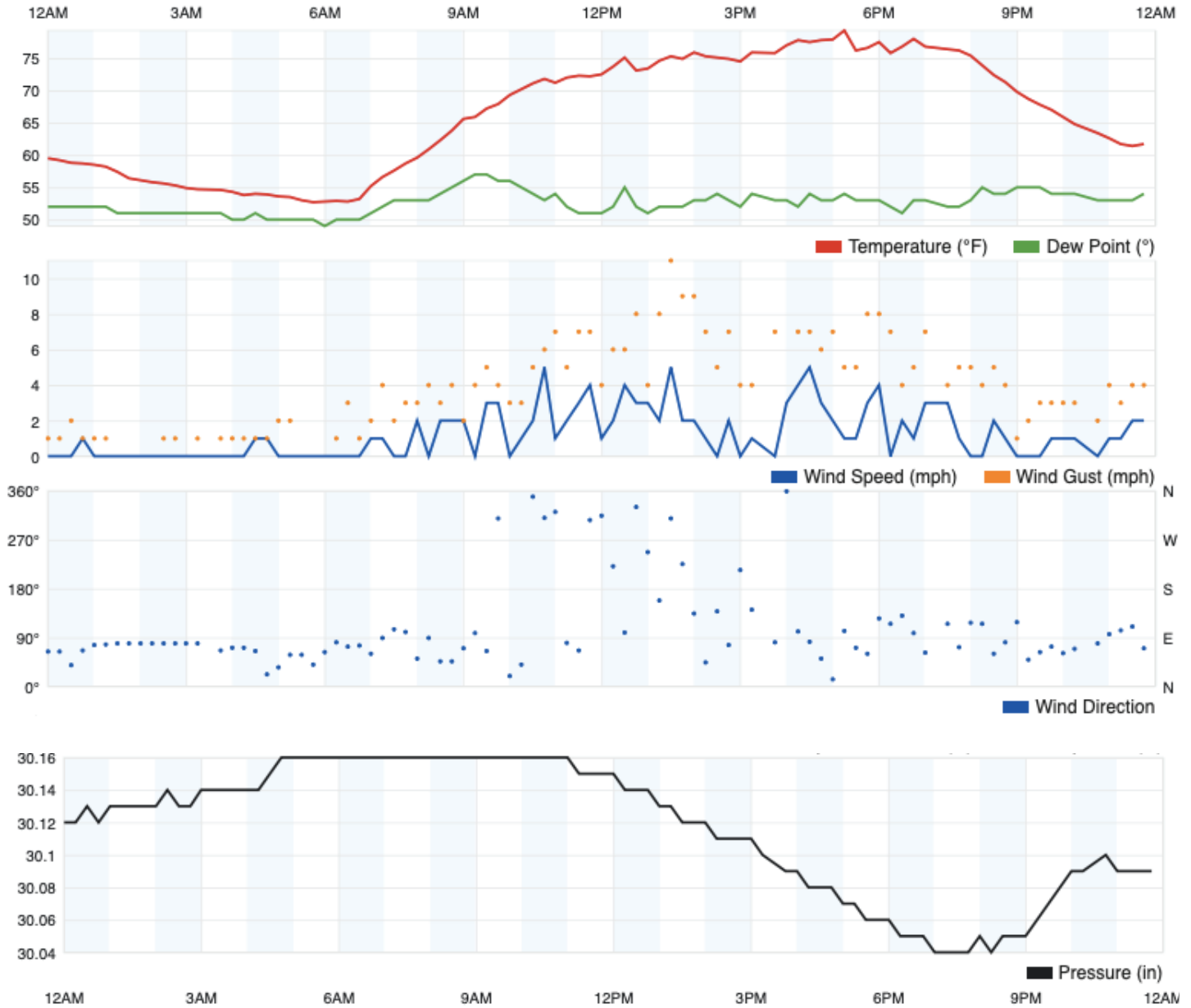
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Hyde	3	3	124	0
Jackson	10	6	424	1
Jerauld	40	38	264	1
Jones	2	1	55	0
Kingsbury	14	10	530	0
Lake	84	63	880	2
Lawrence	32	25	2010	0
Lincoln	579	483	6345	2
Lyman	88	77	903	2
Marshall	8	7	435	0
McCook	24	22	610	1
McPherson	7	6	205	0
Meade	76	60	1871	1
Mellette	24	20	367	0
Miner	15	10	244	0
Minnehaha	4233	3836	26009	64
Moody	30	26	601	0
Oglala Lakota	149	124	2869	1
Pennington	845	690	10401	29
Perkins	6	5	154	0
Potter	1	0	278	0
Roberts	70	62	1654	1
Sanborn	13	13	212	0
Spink	21	17	1103	0
Stanley	14	14	234	0
Sully	1	1	66	0
Todd	66	59	1941	4
Tripp	20	20	592	0
Turner	44	38	860	0
Union	199	161	1808	4
Walworth	18	17	662	0
Yankton	102	93	2934	2
Ziebach	8	2	282	0
Unassigned	0	0	6718	0

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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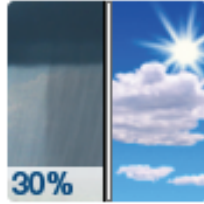
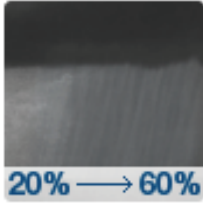
Today

Tonight

Wednesday

Wednesday
Night

Thursday



Increasing
Clouds

Slight Chance
Showers then
Showers
Likely

Chance
Showers then
Mostly Sunny

Partly Cloudy

Sunny

High: 79 °F

Low: 61 °F

High: 81 °F

Low: 59 °F

High: 86 °F

MARGINAL RISK of Severe T-Storms

ISSUED: 5:28 AM - Tuesday, August 04, 2020

WHEN

A few storms are already developing in central SD. The highest risk period will be this afternoon and evening.

WHAT

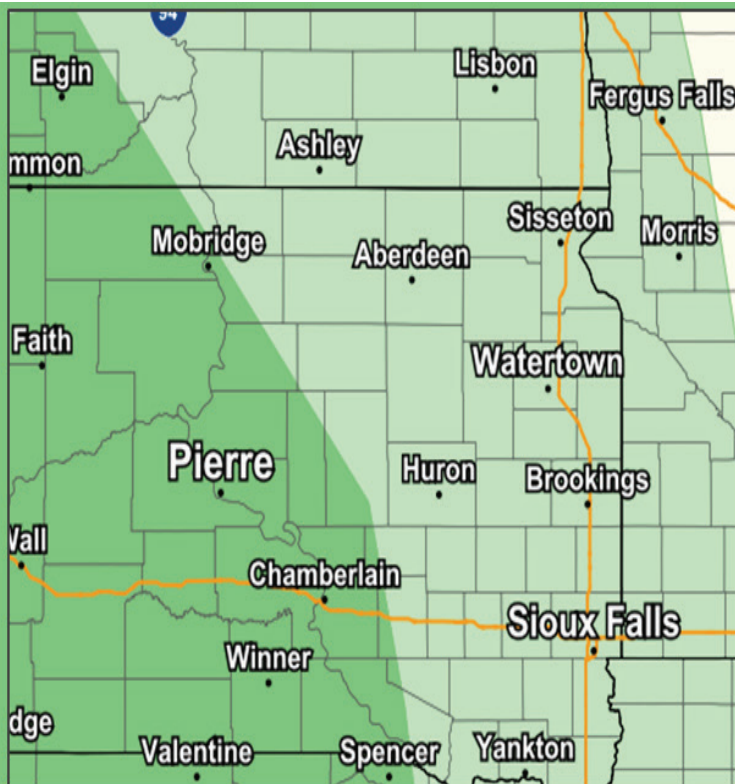
Isolated severe storms possible. These storms could produce large hail up to quarter size and wind gusts up to 60 mph.

WHERE

The greater threat is in central and western SD.

ACTION

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



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



MARGINAL

Isolated Severe
Storms Possible

SLIGHT

Scattered Severe
Storms Possible

ENHANCED

Numerous Severe
Storms Possible

MODERATE

Widespread Severe
Storms Likely

A few storms have already developed in western SD this morning and more are expected as the day goes on. There is potential for isolated severe storms today, with the greater threat in western and central SD this afternoon and evening.

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Today in Weather History

August 4, 1960: At Draper in Jones County, three-inch hail caused substantial damage to roofs, building windows and automobiles. Losses estimated at 100,000 dollars. About 1,000 chickens and turkeys killed on nearby farms.

August 4, 2000: Tennis ball size hail along with high winds caused a lot of damage throughout Selby. Many east and north windows were broken along with many vehicle's windshields. Also, many cars were dented, house siding was damaged, gardens were destroyed, and many acres of crops around Selby were destroyed. Softball hail broke windows and caused extensive damage to a few vehicles and homes west of Faulkton. Baseball size hail and high winds had broken out about every window on all of the buildings at the Brentwood Colony in Edmunds County. The large hail and strong winds also damaged many of the buildings.

1882 - A vivid aurora was visible from Oregon to Maine, down the east coast as far as Mayport FL, and inland as far as Wellington KS. Observers at Louisville KY noted merry dancers across the sky, and observers at Saint Vincent, MN, noted it was probably the most brilliant ever seen at that location. (The Weather Channel)

1930 - The temperature at Moorefield, WV, soared to 112 degrees to establish a state record, having reached 110 degrees the previous day. Widespread drought after April of that year caused some towns to haul water for domestic use, and many manufacturing plants were barely operational. (The Weather Channel)

1961 - Spokane, WA, reached an all-time record high of 108 degrees. Kalispell, MT, set an all-time record with a reading of 105 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - A record forty-two consecutive days of 100 degree heat finally came to an end at the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. July 1980 proved to be the hottest month of record with a mean temperature of 92 degrees. There was just one day of rain in July, and there was no measurable rain in August. There were 18 more days of 100 degree heat in August, and four in September. Hot weather that summer contributed to the deaths of 1200 people nationally, and losses from the heat across the country were estimated at twenty billion dollars. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front brought relief from the heat to a large part of the Midwest, while hot weather continued in the south central and eastern U.S. Morning thunderstorms in Nebraska deluged the town of Dalton with 8.71 inches of rain, along with hail three inches in diameter, which accumulated up to four feet deep near the town of Dix. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Iowa to Lower Michigan during the afternoon and evening hours, producing golf ball size hail and spawning several tornadoes. A thunderstorm at Maquoketa, IA, produced wind gusts to 75 mph. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Nebraska and northeastern Kansas to the Great Lakes Region, with 150 reports of large hail or damaging winds during the afternoon, evening, and nighttime hours. Thunderstorms produced tennis ball size hail at Claremont, MN, and wind gusts to 75 mph at Milwaukee, WI. Thunderstorms representing what once was Hurricane Chantal produced five inches of rain at Grant, MI, and deluged Chicago, IL, with more than three inches of rain in three hours. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2008: Severe storms moved across northern Illinois and Indiana with tornadoes and stiff winds reported. With tornado sirens blaring, the game at Wrigley Field between Cubs and Astros was stopped as fans were told to evacuate to the lower concourse. Passengers at O'Hare International Airport were evacuated to lower levels of buildings as well. An estimated 350 flights were canceled.

2009: The strongest tornado to hit Quebec since the same date in 1994 ripped through Mont-Laurier. The F2 tornado tore through the small western Quebec town severely damaging about 40 homes. Two men were taken to the hospital with minor injuries.

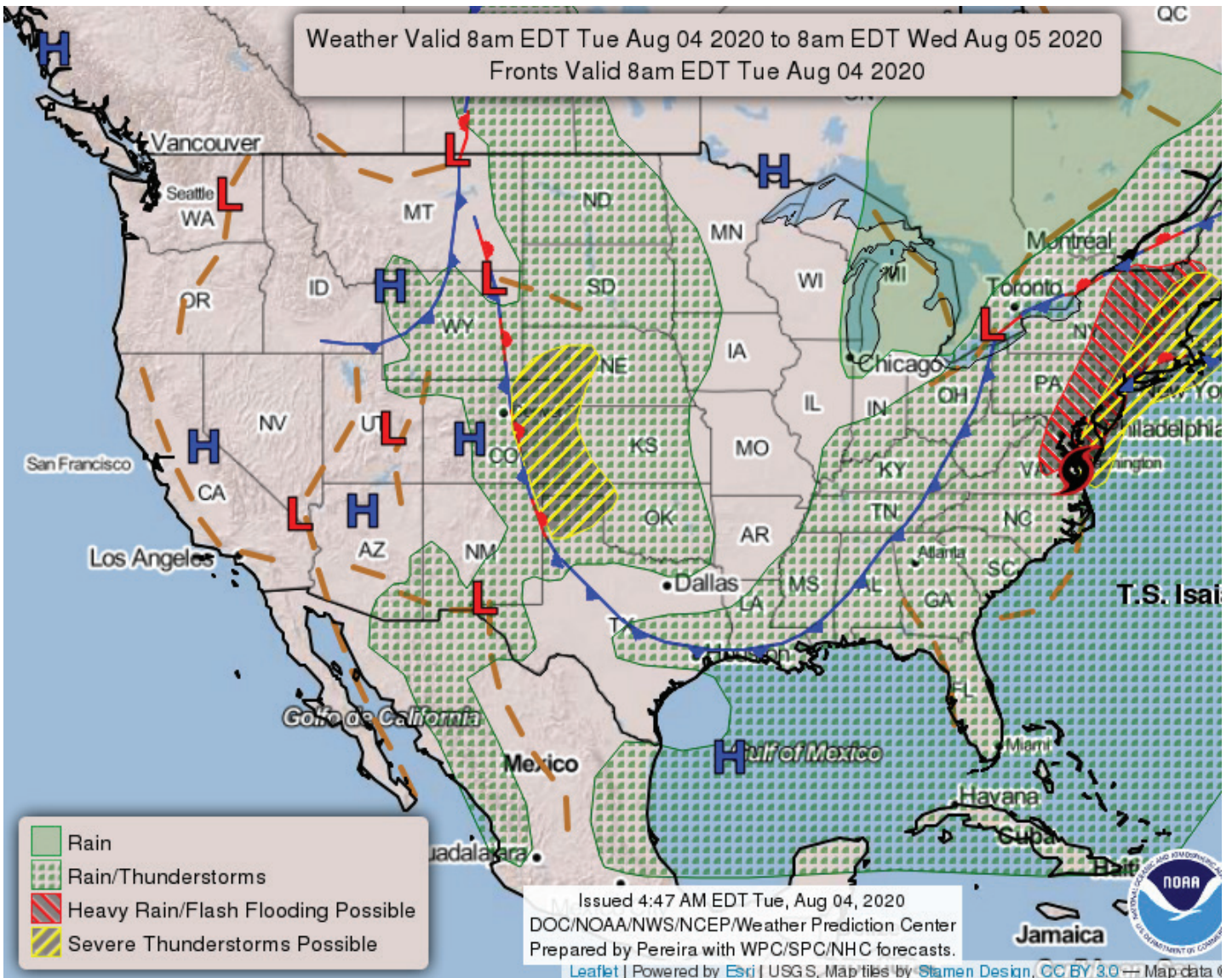
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 79 °F at 5:10 PM
Low Temp: 53 °F at 5:41 AM
Wind: 11 mph at 1:27 PM
Precip: .00

Record High: 107° in 1934
Record Low: 42° in 2017, 1978
Average High: 84°F
Average Low: 59°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 0.23
Precip to date in Aug.: 0.45
Average Precip to date: 14.09
Precip Year to Date: 10.96
Sunset Tonight: 8:57 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:23 a.m.



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WHAT'S NEXT?

Grandmother had just finished reading the story of Creation to her beloved four-year-old granddaughter, Beth. Sitting quietly in her lap, she noticed that Beth seemed to be in deep thought.

"Beth," she asked, "what do you think of that story?"

"I love it, Grandmother!" she replied.

"Love it? Why?" Grandmother wondered.

"Well," she replied carefully, "you just never know what God's going to do next!"

While life is unpredictable, God isn't. Even though we do not know what God is going to do next, He certainly does. And, one thing we who are Christians know for sure is this: whatever He brings into our lives is in our best interest to mold us and shape us into His likeness.

Whatever we face, we know that God will be with us and never abandon us. As life comes and goes, He does not pick and choose when He will be available to help us. He will not step back from the pain we may be enduring nor the problems we are forced to face and resolve. No, the Eternal One guides us, guards us, and guarantees His presence and power in our lives so that we can accept and overcome every obstacle and challenge.

Whether life is joyous or seemingly unjust, God will never give up on us, never fail us, or ever abandon us. When times are difficult and life seems horrible, we need to focus on Him.

Prayer: Lord, help us to trust in You and on You and know that You will never leave us or forsake us. May we always seek and sense Your will and way in our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. Proverbs 3:5-6

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

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

News from the Associated Press

The Latest: Mainland China, Hong Kong report fewer new cases

By The Associated Press undefined

BEIJING — Both mainland China and Hong Kong reported fewer new cases of COVID-19 on Tuesday as strict measures to contain new infections appear to be taking effect.

Mainland China announced 36 new cases across the country, down from 43 the previous day. Of those, 28 were in the northwestern region of Xinjiang and two in Liaoning province in the northeast.

Another six cases were brought by Chinese arriving from overseas. No new deaths were registered, leaving China's total at 4,634 among 84,634 cases reported since the virus was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year.

Hong Kong reported 78 new cases over the previous 24 hours, the first time in almost two weeks that new cases had fallen into double-digits.

Authorities in the semi-autonomous southern Chinese city ordered mask wearing in public places, restrictions on indoor dining and increased testing to contain the outbreak.

China's central government also sent a medical team to assist in efforts and an exhibition center has been converted into a temporary hospital in the event beds run short. Deaths from the disease in Hong Kong have risen to 38 among 3,589 total cases.

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

- Parents struggle as schools reopen amid coronavirus surge
- COVID relief bill remains up in air as negotiations resume
- Debate begins for who's first in line for COVID-19 vaccine
- Follow AP's pandemic coverage at <http://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

MELBOURNE, Australia— Australia's hard-hit Victoria state has banned people who should be self-isolating from exercising outside their homes and introduced tougher fines for people infected with COVID-19 who continue to go to work.

Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews said that military and health teams would repeatedly and randomly door-knock homes to ensure people who should be self-isolating were at home.

Teams had door-knocked more than 3,000 homes and could not find more than 800 people who should have been home because they were awaiting a test result or had tested positive to coronavirus.

Andrews said the government was removing the lawful excuse that someone who should be self-isolating had gone out to exercise.

"It's difficult to enforce this if people have a lawful excuse and if some people are going to use that to try and justify other decisions -- they were at no point getting exercise," Andrews said.

The government has also increased the fine for failing to self-isolate from 1,652 Australian dollars (\$1,169) to AU\$4,957 (\$3,507). The most serious cases could also be taken to court and fined up to AU\$20,000 (\$14,151), Andrews said.

Victoria reported 439 new cases over night and 11 new deaths.

LAS VEGAS -- Nevada will shift this week from broad restrictions in response to the coronavirus to an ongoing, county-by-county review where officials hope to target hot spots and specific businesses where the virus is spreading.

Gov. Steve Sisolak said Monday that the state would evaluate Nevada's 17 counties weekly on their rates of new cases, positive tests and tests per day.

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A new task force of state officials will review the data. If counties do not meet at least two of the criteria for two weeks in a row, the task force and county officials will come up with a response plan.

When asked if he would ever broadly shut down all the state's casinos again, as he did in March, the governor said all options are open but casinos have been responsible and are not a major source of virus spread right now.

He said biggest problem Nevada officials have found with trying to stop the spread are two areas that are hard to control: family gatherings or people going to work when they're sick or have tested positive.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Gov. Gavin Newsom said California appears to be getting a grip on a resurgence of the coronavirus, though he warned the state is a long way from reopening some of the businesses it shuttered for a second time last month because of rising infections and hospitalizations.

The average weekly number of positive tests is down by a fifth, to 7,764 from its peak of nearly 9,900 a week ago. The seven-day rate of tests coming back positive statewide had peaked at nearly 8% late last month but has fallen to 6.1%, he said Monday, though the rate remains much higher in some hard-hit counties.

"It's not where it needs to be, it is still too high, but again it is good to see this number trending down, not trending up," Newsom said.

Hospitalizations, which had recently ballooned by 50%, have also fallen over the last 14 days, he said in his most upbeat briefing since the resurgence. The number of people in intensive care units because of coronavirus has also declined slightly.

Newsom credited the new restrictions that have locked down most indoor commercial activities in 38 of California's 58 counties, as well as enforcement actions and increased compliance with his endlessly repeated cautions to maintain social distancing, wear face coverings and use proper hygiene.

OLYMPIA, Wash. - Gyms and fitness facilities in Washington state will need to nearly triple the minimum distance required for patrons exercising indoors, except for those practicing certain team sports.

New COVID-19 guidance issued late Monday by Gov. Jay Inslee increases the requirement of six feet of distance between patrons to 300 square feet — about 17 feet.

The number of people allowed in gyms, fitness facilities and fitness classes will be limited by the size of their space under this guidance, and occupancy in facilities and gyms that are larger than 12,000 square feet will be capped at 25 percent.

In addition, showers, hot tubs, saunas, and tanning beds at multi-use facilities will be closed, as will steam rooms, squash courts, and racquetball courts.

As of Monday, there have been more than 58,000 confirmed cases since the pandemic began. Nearly 1,600 people in Washington have died of complications from COVID-19.

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. — The Mall of America says the Nickelodeon Universe amusement park inside the mall will reopen Aug. 10 after being closed nearly five months due to COVID-19.

Officials of the Bloomington, Minnesota mall said the seven-acre (2.8-hectare) theme park will reopen with significant changes aimed at maintaining a safe, healthy and comfortable environment.

To meet state guidelines, Nickelodeon Universe will operate with a reduced capacity of 250 visitors at any time. Guests will be allowed through a single entry point. Only guests who have bought a ticket will have access to walk through the park. Tickets will be limited to two hours.

Guests 3 years and older will be required to wear face masks at all times, including for the duration of each attraction.

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — At least two Indiana schools shut back down this week after students and staff tested positive for COVID-19.

Other districts in the state also are reporting positive coronavirus tests among students and employees. Elwood Junior Senior High School, a district of roughly 1,500 students about 35 miles (56 kilometers)

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northeast of Indianapolis, is temporarily closing this week after "multiple staff" came back positive for the virus, Superintendent Joe Brown said.

The district saw "more positive cases from staff members than we anticipated," Brown said, but said no students were believed to have been in close contact.

In Southern Indiana, four students from Lanesville Junior-Senior High School have tested positive and an additional 50 have been quarantined since it opened Wednesday. The school district says it held a virtual learning day on Monday and classes will resume in-person Tuesday.

The school district already elected to temporarily move all classes in its largest high school online after a teacher tested positive for the coronavirus and exposed other school staff last month.

RAPID CITY, S.D. — The South Dakota Department of Health says the number of confirmed coronavirus cases at a Christian youth summer camp in the Black Hills has grown to 96.

Health officials said Monday that 93 South Dakota residents and three out-of-state residents have COVID-19 after attending Camp Judson near Keystone. The camp shut down several weeks ago.

State epidemiologist Joshua Clayton said 328 people had been at the camp. He said 44 of the 93 South Dakota cases have recovered, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Clayton said the average age among the church camp's cases is 15 years old, with some as young as 5 to 9 and as old as 70 to 74 becoming infected. Of the South Dakota cases, 59 were women and 34 were men. None have been hospitalized, he said.

WASHINGTON — White House coronavirus task force coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx says she's watching so-called "yellow states" where cases are increasing and expressed concern about Missouri and Tennessee.

Vice President Mike Pence, chair of the task force, said he and Birx have been counseling the heartland states and fully support measures they're taking to slow the spread.

Pence, Birx and other members of the task force commented during a private conference call Monday with governors. The Associated Press obtained a recording of the discussion.

Birx said she's seeing improvement in Sun Belt states and singled out Arizona for praise. Pence told everyone to "just keep up the good work."

Pence also encouraged governors to reopen schools. He said his visit last week to a North Carolina classroom almost brought a tear to his eye.

BATON ROUGE, La. — Louisiana has released coronavirus safety guidelines for movie and TV productions as filming is expected to start returning to the virus outbreak hot spot this month.

Louisiana's economic development department issued the rules Monday.

The regulations say movie and TV productions should have a coronavirus compliance officer, provide testing for workers and require everyone except performers to wear masks. The department calls for using temperature checks to enter production areas, distancing people at the locations and using digital scripts when possible.

Most filming in Louisiana has been on hold since March. But Louisiana's economic development department says some productions are readying to resume filming this month and in September.

Trey Burvant, president of the Louisiana Film and Entertainment Association, said 15 shows were filming in the state before the pandemic.

Louisiana has had one of the highest per capita infection rates in the United States, with more than 120,000 confirmed coronavirus cases since early March.

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — More than a dozen sites are opening across Alabama to test about 200,000 students before they head to college and university campuses statewide.

Officials said Monday the program will help stem the spread of the new coronavirus only if students abide by guidelines at school.

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Finis St. John, head of the board that oversees the three-campus University of Alabama System, said that while the mass testing program will screen all students before they arrive on campuses, the work "will have been for nothing" if they ignore rules about wearing masks and social distancing.

Dr. Michael Saag, an infectious diseases specialist at the University of Alabama at Birmingham who helped design the program, said that with 14 testing sites scattered across the state opening Tuesday, no one should have to travel farther than 60 miles (95 kilometers) to get to one. Test results should be available in a day.

Some students coming to an Alabama school from other states will receive an at-home test they can submit, and some will be able to submit test results from doctors' offices or commercial laboratories.

The program is funded by \$30 million in federal coronavirus assistance.

LEBANON, N.H. — Dr. Anthony Fauci, the United States' top infectious disease expert, warned against reopening schools in coronavirus hot spots.

Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, spoke via video conference Monday to physicians and medical students at New Hampshire's Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. He said while the nation's "default principle" should be that children return to school, "to say that every child has to go back to school is not really realizing the fact that we have such a diversity of viral activity."

He said there may be some areas where the level of virus is so high that it would not be prudent to bring children back to school.

Determined to reopen America's schools despite coronavirus worries, President Donald Trump recently threatened to hold back federal money if school districts don't bring their students back in the fall. He and top White House aides also have been ramping up attacks against Fauci, with Trump saying Fauci has "made a lot of mistakes."

WASHINGTON — The White House announced Monday that random coronavirus testing of its staff is becoming mandatory.

The White House said the measure was "part of our ongoing efforts to protect the health and safety" of the White House Complex.

It says such testing had previously been handled on a voluntary basis.

Last week, the White House disclosed that National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien had tested positive for the virus, making O'Brien the highest-ranking official to test positive so far.

President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence are tested regularly for the coronavirus, as are any guests who will be physically close to the president or vice president whether they are at the White House or on travel around the country.

SUWANEE, Ga. — Officials for Georgia's largest public school district say more than 250 employees have reported testing positive for the coronavirus or being exposed to it about a week before the school year is set to begin.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reports that Gwinnett County Public Schools teachers began in-person planning Wednesday at facilities.

Officials confirmed to news outlets that one day later, some 260 employees had called in to report a positive COVID-19 test or possible exposure and are now excluded from work.

The system's superintendent announced last month that all classes will be taught online for the 180,000-student district in suburban Atlanta when instruction begins Aug. 12.

The county, the state's second-most populous, had more than 17,780 confirmed coronavirus cases as of Sunday, and nearly 240 deaths.

BERLIN — Children have returned to school in the northeastern German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the first in the country to start the new school year following nationwide shutdowns at the

height of the coronavirus pandemic in March.

Federal Education Minister Anja Karliczek has advocated mask requirements inside school buildings. But the school system is largely a matter for the 16 state governments in Germany, and as students returned to class in cities like Rostock and Schwerin on Monday, regional officials had not yet implemented such a rule.

Since schools largely closed down in mid-March, parents, teachers and children have eyed the reopenings warily.

Many children voluntarily wore masks Monday as school began, and several schools implemented their own mask rules and handed them out to children who forgot them.

ROME -- The number of new confirmed cases of the coronavirus in Italy fell below 200 for the first time in a week, with 159 cases registered on Monday, according to Health Ministry figures.

That brings the total number of cases in Italy to 248,229 and deaths to 35,166.

Lazio, the central region that includes Rome, now has the highest number of patients hospitalized for COVID-19 in Italy's 20 regions. Health officials said nine of the region's new cases were brought by travelers from Romania, Ukraine, the Dominican Republic, Iran, India and Bangladesh.

Two clusters of infections have also been traced to popular seaside areas near Rome. Monday figures tend to be lower since they often don't include tallies from the weekend.

Police investigate man's death near Sioux Falls as homicide

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Authorities are investigating the death of a man near Sioux Falls as a homicide. Minnehaha County Sheriff's Capt. Josh Phillips said the body was found in a ditch Monday morning west of Sioux Falls with gunshot wounds.

Deputies were called after a landowner found the man. Phillips said the victim was "obviously deceased" when authorities arrived.

The Argus Leader reports gunshot wounds were found on the body, but no firearm was present.

Authorities believe the shooting happened around 11 p.m. Sunday when a person reported hearing gunshots,

An autopsy is planned Tuesday. The age and name of the victim are not being released until his family has been notified.

Cases of COVID at South Dakota youth camp grow to 96

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Department of Health says the number of confirmed coronavirus cases at a Christian youth summer camp in the Black Hills has grown to 96.

Health officials said Monday that 93 South Dakota residents and three out-of-state residents have COVID-19 after attending Camp Judson near Keystone. The camp shut down several weeks ago.

State epidemiologist Joshua Clayton said 328 people had been at the camp. He said 44 of the 93 South Dakota cases have recovered, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Clayton said the average age among the church camp's cases is 15 years old, with some as young as 5 to 9 and as old as 70 to 74 becoming infected. Of the South Dakota cases, 59 were women and 34 were men. None have been hospitalized, he said.

The Department of Health reported 65 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases in South Dakota on Monday.

As of Monday, there are 9,020 total confirmed COVID-19 cases in South Dakota since the pandemic began and 135 deaths.

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

Man fatally shot in Rapid City, no one in custody

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RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Police are looking for a suspect who fatally shot a man early Monday in Rapid City.

Someone called about 2:30 a.m. to report that a man was lying on a street bleeding.

Officers arrived and said they found the man with multiple gunshot wounds to the abdomen. Police say the man was taken to the hospital where he died.

Police are working with the Pennington County Sheriff's Office on the case. Authorities are asking anyone with surveillance cameras in the area to check their footage to see if there is any suspicious activity around that time.

South Dakota gets \$6.8 million for education during COVID-19

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The U.S. Department of Education has awarded South Dakota \$6.8 million to support the state's efforts in serving students during the coronavirus pandemic and its aftermath.

While 39 states applied for funding, only 11 states, including South Dakota, were awarded grants.

"During school closures in the spring, we saw that those schools providing competency-based instruction, or what's often called 'customized' or 'personalized' learning, were better able to keep more of their students engaged in distance learning," said Secretary of Education Ben Jones. "This three-year grant will help us build on those successes and further develop that kind of learning model across South Dakota."

The grant money will help a group of 30 schools pursue new course options in personalized, competency-based education and provide coursework for more than 1,600 South Dakota teachers and principals.

Police search for boy involved in Rapid City shooting

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Law enforcement officers are looking for a 14-year-old boy who they say was involved in a shooting in Rapid City.

Police spokesman Brendyn Medina said officers want to know whether the boy was the shooter or a witness to the incident last week.

The victim, another teenager, was taken to the hospital with serious injuries after being shot late Thursday night or early Friday morning.

A Special Response Team went to a Rapid City home Sunday after learning the boy may have been inside.

The team's commander, Tony Harrison, defended the decision to bring the unit to the home with its military-style vehicles and other equipment used in high-risk situations.

Harrison says because there was a firearm involved and someone was seriously hurt, they needed the right tools to deal with a person involved in the incident.

Harrison said officers eventually went into the home but the boy wasn't there.

Midwest Economy: July state-by-state glance

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Institute for Supply Management, formerly the Purchasing Management Association, began formally surveying its membership in 1931 to gauge business conditions.

The Creighton Economic Forecasting Group uses the same methodology as the national survey to consult supply managers and business leaders. Creighton University economics professor Ernie Goss oversees the report.

The overall index ranges between 0 and 100. Growth neutral is 50, and a figure greater than 50 indicates growth in that factor over the next three to six months. A figure below 50 indicates decline.

Here are the state-by-state results for July:

Arkansas: The overall index for Arkansas rose to 61 from June's 50.9. Components of the index were: new orders at 68.7, production or sales at 67.6, delivery lead time at 66, inventories at 46.7, and employment at 56.0. According to the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics, Arkansas has lost 63,000 jobs, or approximately 5% of its total employment since the coronavirus outbreak began and 16,000, or approximately 10%, of its manufacturing employment. "Our surveys point to only slight job gains in the

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months ahead," Goss said.

Iowa: Iowa's overall index climbed above growth neutral in July to register 50.9 from June's 47.1. Components of the overall index were: new orders at 66.4, production or sales at 57.9, delivery lead time at 64.4, employment at 29, and inventories at 37. According to the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics, Iowa has lost 108,000 jobs, or approximately 6.8% of its total employment since the virus outbreak began and 5,400, or approximately 2.4% of its manufacturing employment. "Our surveys point to continued job losses in the months ahead," Goss said.

Kansas: The state's overall index for July increased to 59.2 from June's 45.1. Components of the index were: new orders at 68, production or sales at 64.8, delivery lead time at 53.1, employment at 48.3, and inventories at 61.7. According to the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics, Kansas has lost 78,000 jobs, or approximately 5.5% of its total employment since the start of the coronavirus outbreak and 10,400, or approximately 6.2% of its manufacturing employment. "Our recent surveys point to only slight job losses in the months ahead," Goss said.

Minnesota: The overall index for Minnesota climbed to 54.7 in July from 45.0 in June. Components of the overall index were: new orders at 65.0, production or sales at 52.3, delivery lead time at 64.5, inventories at 42.3, and employment at 49.2. According to the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics, Minnesota has lost 249,000 jobs, or approximately 8.4% of its total employment, since the virus outbreak began and 21,600, or approximately 6.7% of its manufacturing employment. "Our surveys point to only slight job losses in the months ahead," Goss said.

Missouri: The overall index for Missouri sank to 44.7 in July from June's 50.5. Components of the overall index were: new orders at 66.6, production or sales at 58.9, delivery lead time at 25.4, inventories at 40.6, and employment at 31.8. According to the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics, Missouri has lost 189,000 jobs, or approximately 6.6% of its total employment, since the coronavirus outbreak started and 16,000, or approximately 5.9% of its manufacturing employment. "Our surveys point to continued job losses in the months ahead," Goss said.

Nebraska: The state's overall index for July rose to 68.6 from 52.6 in June. Components of the index were: new orders at 68.6, production or sales at 67.2, delivery lead time at 62.1, inventories at 70.1, and employment at 55. According to the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics, Nebraska has lost 56,000 jobs, or approximately 5.4% of its total employment, since the coronavirus outbreak began and 2,900, or approximately 2.9%, of its manufacturing employment. "Our surveys point to only slight job gains in the months ahead," Goss said.

North Dakota: The overall index for North Dakota declined to 45.5 in July from 51.6 in June. Components of the overall index were: new orders at 66.7, production or sales at 59.3, delivery lead time at 27, employment at 32.8, and inventories at 41.8. According to the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics, North Dakota has lost 37,000 jobs, or approximately 8.5% of its total employment since the virus outbreak started and 1,300, or approximately 5% of its manufacturing employment. "Our surveys point to continued job losses in the months ahead," Goss said.

Oklahoma: The state's overall index improved to 69 in July from June's 53.1. Components of the overall July index were: new orders at 69, production or sales at 69.2, delivery lead time at 73.6, inventories at 77.2, and employment at 60.6. According to the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics, Oklahoma has lost 83,000 jobs, or approximately 4.9% of its total employment since the coronavirus outbreak began and 9,200, or approximately 6.7% of its manufacturing employment. "Our recent surveys point to slight job gains in the months ahead," Goss said.

South Dakota: The overall index for South Dakota increased to 61 in July from June's 52.4. Components of the overall index were: new orders at 68.2, production or sales at 65.6, delivery lead time at 56.5, inventories at 64.2, and employment at 50.3. According to the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics, South Dakota has lost 24,500 jobs, or approximately 5.6% of its total employment since the virus outbreak started and 1,300 or approximately 3% of its manufacturing employment. "Our recent surveys point to only slight job gains in the months ahead," Goss said.

Business leaders say economy still improving after reopening

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The economy continues to recover in nine Midwest and Plains states, but businesses are still cutting jobs amid the ongoing impact of the coronavirus outbreak, according to a monthly survey of business leaders released Monday.

The overall index for the region improved to 57.4 in July from June's 50.3. Survey organizers say any score above 50 suggests growth. A score below 50 suggests decline.

"While the June and July's readings were much higher than I expected, they provide no grounds for celebration," Creighton University economist Ernie Goss said.

The region's overall index will have to remain above 50 for many months before the economy reaches the point it was at before states began imposing restrictions because of the coronavirus, Goss said.

The monthly survey covers Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Dakota.

Job losses have slowed in the region, but they continue to be reported. The employment index improved to 48.5 in July from June's 38.9, but it remained in negative territory.

But business leaders are optimistic about the next six months. The survey's confidence index increased to a strong 68.3 in July from June's 65.3.

Thousands pack race track, despite rising COVID-19 cases

BRANDON, S.D. (AP) — Thousands of fans packed the stands a race track in southeastern South Dakota despite a rising number of coronavirus cases in the state.

The fans came to Huset's Speedway in Brandon Sunday night for the reopening of the track that has been closed for several years. The 9,000-seat speedway was at near capacity, with face masks nearly obsolete, the Argus Leader reported.

The popular All Star Circuit is owned by NASCAR legend Tony Stewart.

Minnesota businessman Tod Quiring purchased the track from Chuck Brennan, who closed the facility after just one race in 2017. Brennan said he spent north of \$10 million in upgrades to the facility and opened it as Badlands Motor Speedway in 2016.

"We finally have this premiere facility back open that's been sitting dormant for so long," said Tea resident and 2002 track champion Justin Henderson, who finished 15th Sunday night. "It's really bringing that racing fever back into Sioux Falls."

South Dakota health officials reported 88 newly confirmed cases of the coronavirus and one new death on Sunday.

The death toll from COVID-19 in South Dakota rose to 135 with the newly reported death. The number of confirmed coronavirus infections has risen to 8,955 in the state.

No masks, no distance: Pandemic wedding horrors for vendors

By LEANNE ITALIE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Wedding planners, photographers and other bridal vendors who make the magic happen have a heap of new worries in the middle of the pandemic: no-mask weddings, rising guest counts and venues not following the rules.

Now that weddings have slowly cranked up under a patchwork of ever-shifting state and local restrictions, horror stories from vendors are rolling in. Many are desperate to work after the coronavirus put an abrupt end to their incomes and feel compelled to put on their masks, grab their cameras and hope for the best.

No-mask weddings, no social distancing and dance floors prohibited in many states have been the talk of online groups for vendors around the country.

"People have worked in venues outright looking the other way on masks and size," said photographer Susan Stripling in New York.

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Reports of COVID-19 outbreaks traced to weddings remain rare. One wedding was shut down by local officials at a San Francisco church; the nearly 100 guests had been instructed by the bridal couple to avoid the public entrance and go in through an underground parking garage instead.

Photographer Cherie Schrader in Chicago said she felt deceived when she showed up for a July wedding with 165 unmasked people indoors after being assured all safety precautions would be taken.

There was no social distancing. The crowd mingled at a happy hour and the dance floor was lively.

"I was told by the bride that it was an indoor-outdoor venue, but it was 95 degrees and they never opened the doors," she said. "The tables were, at the most, 3 feet apart," she said, noting masks should have been required at all times under those conditions.

"It looked like a normal wedding pre-COVID," Schrader said.

The rule for indoor gatherings in her state was half a venue's capacity or up to 50 people, whichever was lower, she said. Schrader, wearing two masks, said she forced the bridal party outside for formal pictures in the heat and humidity.

"They complained because they were all sweating, but I was spending the least amount of time as possible inside," she said.

Schrader entered the venue, which she would not name out of fear of professional retribution, for short stints to shoot special moments, such as the cake cutting. An associate photographer voluntarily remained inside to work.

"I truly love my brides and grooms, and then to be pressured to risk my life is extremely disappointing," she said. "I have an 80-year-old mom."

Alexis Alvarez, a wedding planner in Chicago, said she and other vendors often have no practical recourse to recoup deposits or full payments if they pull out.

She has a long-scheduled wedding with a guest list of about 100 planned for October in Wisconsin, where state health officials recently advised residents to avoid gatherings of more than 10 through late August. The couple had postponed once and might do it again, as some couples have done three times or more.

That, vendors said, has helped drive a desire among brides and grooms to just get it done, with many choosing small, micro-weddings instead of the larger affairs they had dreamed of.

Whether the weddings are large or small, indoor or outdoor, masks have become a sticking point for photos and video. Some couples argue that masks spoil their visuals and are banning them altogether. Others are making them optional. Still more are going the opposite route, wearing bedazzled satin and lace masks to match their gowns.

"I get that this is not how they want their weddings to look," Alvarez said. "The big question everyone needs to be answering right now is what's the moral responsibility, and also what's their liability in hosting an event that potentially could lead to an outbreak?"

She said that breaking her contract for the indoor wedding, where masks would be optional, would cost her \$4,000. It's her first job this year. In a normal year, she would be juggling 28 weddings from March to September.

While the couple trimmed their guest list from 175 to help with social distancing, "masks are not a concession that they're willing to make," Alvarez said. "The reality is guests that don't feel safe attending events aren't going to."

Alvarez plans other safety measures, such as spreading out tables and offering wider-spaced seating grouped by households, when possible. She also suggested a tactic used by other couples, offering color-coded wristbands for guests to declare their comfort levels with contact.

To avoid crowd issues, some couples are holding their ceremonies and receptions with different groups of guests invited at staggered times.

"There's just so much emotional baggage that has come with weddings this year that the idea of masks at their weddings is the last straw," Alvarez said. "But of course there's danger in that."

Wedding planner Lynne Goldberg has a December wedding scheduled for 200 guests at the home of the bride's parents in upstate New York.

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"They have emphatically shared that this pandemic is not going to get in the way of their wedding plans and that there will be no masks handed out and no signs promoting social distancing at their wedding," she said. "The bride has said that when she shows her children her wedding video, she doesn't want it to be a documentary of the 2020 pandemic."

Most of Goldberg's couples have rescheduled or downsized, but "there's always someone who doesn't want to follow the recommended path."

Planning a wedding for 200 guests while social distancing is challenging but doable, Goldberg said, but: "Asking 200 guests to not wear masks is crazy."

Fred Cashman, 55, is a cancer survivor who remains immune-suppressed. His 25-year-old stepson is getting married Aug. 8 in upstate New York, but he won't attend due to his health.

The couple decided not to postpone when the pandemic struck, but trimmed their guest list from 100 to about 50, he said. They had wanted to make masks optional, until Cashman's wife, Kat Cashman, stepped in after attendees at a wedding in a nearby town fell ill with COVID-19.

"I just put my foot down and said it's got to be mandatory or no mom," she said. "It's a big thing. I take it very personally."

Follow Leanne Italie on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/litalie>

Family tells AP: Iran abducted California man while in Dubai

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A California-based member of an Iranian militant opposition group in exile was abducted by Iran while staying in Dubai, his family said Tuesday.

The suspected cross-border abduction of Jamshid Sharmahd appears corroborated by mobile phone location data, shared by his family with The Associated Press, that suggests he was taken to neighboring Oman before heading to Iran.

Iran hasn't said how it detained Sharmahd, though the announcement came against the backdrop of covert actions conducted by Iran amid heightened tensions with the U.S. over Tehran's collapsing nuclear deal with world powers.

Iran accuses Sharmahd, 65, of Glendora, California of planning a 2008 attack on a mosque that killed 14 people and wounded over 200 others, as well as plotting other assaults through the little-known Kingdom Assembly of Iran and its Tondar militant wing. It aired an interview of him on state television — footage that resembled many other suspected coerced confessions broadcast by the Iranian government in the last decade.

His family, however, insists Sharmahd only served as a spokesman for the group and had nothing to do with any attacks in Iran. Sharmahd, who supports restoring Iran's monarchy that was overthrown in the 1979 Islamic Revolution, already had been targeted in an apparent Iranian assassination plot on U.S. soil in 2009.

"We're seeking support from any democratic country, any free country," his son Shayan Sharmahd told the AP. "It is a violation of human rights. You can't just pick someone up in a third country and drag them into your country."

Iran's Intelligence Ministry has not elaborated on how it detained the elder Sharmahd, other than to deny he was arrested in Tajikistan. The ministry and Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Sharmahd had been in Dubai, trying to travel to India for a business deal involving his software company, his son said. He was hoping to get a connecting flight despite the ongoing coronavirus pandemic disrupting global travel.

Sharmahd's family received the last message from him on July 28. After that, he no longer responded to their calls and messages, his son said. Telephone location data showed his mobile phone that day at the Premier Inn Dubai International Airport Hotel, where he had been staying.

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It's unclear how the abduction happened. A hotel operator said Sharmahd had checked out July 29. Tracking data showed Sharmahd's mobile phone traveled south from Dubai to the city of Al Ain on July 29, crossing the border into Oman and staying overnight near an Islamic school in the border city of al-Buraimi.

On July 30, tracking data showed the mobile phone traveled to the Omani port city of Sohar, where the signal stopped.

Two days later, on Saturday, Iran announced it had captured Sharmahd in a "complex operation." The Intelligence Ministry published a photograph of him blindfolded.

His son said he believed that in the state TV footage, Sharmahd hurriedly read whatever Iran wanted him to say.

"Imagine your own father being tied up one day on television and you see that," Shayan Sharmahd said.

Western officials believe Iran runs intelligence operations in Dubai and keeps tabs on the hundreds of thousands of Iranians living in the city-state. Iran is suspected of kidnapping and later killing British-Iranian national Abbas Yazdi in Dubai in 2013, though Tehran has denied involvement.

It isn't just Iran that maintains a presence in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, home to some 5,000 U.S. troops and the U.S. Navy's busiest port of call outside of America. The U.S. State Department runs its Iran Regional Presence Office in Dubai, where diplomats monitor Iranian media reports and talk to Iranians.

Dubai's hotels long have been targeted by intelligence operatives, such as in the suspected 2010 assassination by the Israeli Mossad of Hamas operative Mahmoud al-Mabhouh. Dubai and the rest of the UAE have since invested even more in an elaborate surveillance network.

Dubai police and officials, as well as federal officials in Abu Dhabi and the Omani Embassy in Washington, did not respond to requests for comment.

The UAE has long been trying to de-escalate tensions with Iran after President Donald Trump's maximum pressure campaign saw him pull out of the nuclear deal. On Sunday, Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan held a videoconference with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

However, over the last year, a series of escalating incidents have shaken the wider Mideast, leading to a U.S. drone strike in January that killed a top Iranian general in Baghdad and an Iranian ballistic missile attack that injured dozens of American soldiers in Iraq. Also, there have been explosions on oil tankers off the Emirati coast that the U.S. Navy has blamed on Iranian limpet mines.

Last month, an oil tanker seized by the UAE after being suspected of smuggling Iranian crude oil was hijacked, likely by Iran. In June, Iran sentenced to death another opposition journalist living in Paris it detained under unclear circumstances.

For now, Sharmahd's family said they contacted the government in Germany, where he holds citizenship, and the U.S. government as he's lived for years in America and was on track for citizenship after the 2009 assassination plot.

The German Embassy in Tehran has asked Iranian authorities for consular access, according to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin, hoping to understand how Sharmahd was arrested. However, Iran doesn't allow consular access for its dual nationals, considering them exclusively Iranian citizens.

The State Department, which mistakenly referred to Sharmahd in an earlier report as an American citizen, acknowledged his arrest and said Iran "has a long history of detaining Iranians and foreign nationals on spurious charges."

While Iran has yet to say what charges Sharmahd faces, others detained over the 2008 bombing have been convicted and executed. Sharmahd's son said his father suffers from Parkinson's disease, as well as diabetes and heart trouble that require medication and careful monitoring.

"He's very much at risk," his son said. "All of us are extremely concerned." _____

Associated Press writer Geir Moulson in Berlin contributed to this report.

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP.

Parents unhappy with school options assemble learning 'pods'

By CAROLYN THOMPSON and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — On the 4-acre farm at the edge of the Everglades where Timea Hunter runs a horse academy, she has hosted plenty of parties, picnics and workshops. So with her children's school building closed, she figured why not use it also a classroom?

While her son and daughter will participate in distance learning at their school, she plans to hire a teacher together with the families of four to six other children who could provide supplemental, in-person instruction on the farm shaded by royal poinciana trees.

"We have a very nice picnic area, a mini playground and big tables where the kids can seat under the shade and they can study there," Hunter said. "We are not educated to do this, so everybody is freaking out and saying, 'What are we gonna do, how we are going to do it?'"

As the coronavirus pandemic has clouded hopes of reopening schools nationwide, parents who want more than remote instruction have been scrambling to hire tutors and private teachers for small groups of children. The race to set up "learning pods" threatens to vastly deepen inequities in access to education.

In some cases, parents are paying thousands of dollars each to include their children in pods, promising teachers \$40 to \$100 an hour or more. A Facebook group on learning pods attracted more than 30,000 members within three weeks of being formed and launched numerous offshoots in states and cities. New sites like pod-up.com and partnerpods.org have emerged offering to connect families and instructors.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican, has called learning pods "luxuries" that are not an option for low-income parents.

"We hear these different things about some parents are going to create their own learning pods and all this other stuff, and just to understand that is really going to be dependent on financial wherewithal and what income bracket they are in," DeSantis said at a recent education discussion. "When you have working-class parents, they really do need to have an option."

Hunter said distance learning was extremely hard on her 9-year-old son. She said the teacher met with the class once a week and then left the rest up to the parents. Now she also worries about a younger daughter who is entering kindergarten.

"They just gave us all the projects, all the stuff we needed to do was overwhelming. I had to sit with my son and explain everything," she said.

Among those considering work as pod instructors are teachers like Jeanette Matas who are leery of going back to their jobs. Matas, a 42-year-old reading teacher in Miami, knows from seeing her 6th-grade and 7th-grade students take care of younger siblings while also juggling virtual classes that students from lower-income families get "the short end of the stick."

But her grandmother died of COVID-19 after her caretaker infected her, and her own third-grade daughter has suffered from respiratory infections that kept her away from school for weeks. So she is also considering taking a year of leave and getting hired to teach her own pod, bringing along her children.

"It has hit too close to home," she said. "I don't want to go to the classroom."

Some view the pods as a necessary and even creative solution to the crisis facing the education system.

"It is civil society in action," said Lindsey Burke, director of the Center for Education Policy at the conservative Heritage Foundation, which advocates for school choice policies that allow public funding to follow students to private or alternative schools.

Tina Cheuk, an education researcher at California Polytechnic State University, said she is troubled by the trend toward learning pods and the related push to finance them with public funding that normally would go to the schools.

"That decision has implications for public education," she said. Not only would it defund public education but it threatens to de-professionalize teachers, who are often "replaced" in pods by college students or retirees, she said.

"You choosing to be in a pod may seem very innocent — 'well, of course, it makes sense. I'm looking out for my family,'" Cheuk said. "It's these unintended consequences for public education, which we either

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ignore or we choose to ignore because our private interests trump the others that we don't know."

A group of Oakland, California, elementary school principals spelled out their concerns in open letter, reminding parents that health professionals recommend limiting in-person interactions and pointing out the potential to "cause feelings of exclusion, especially for kids who may see or hear of their peers congregating and learning together while they remain isolated."

Although some parents are forming learning pods with neighbors they already know, others are reaching out to social media groups to cast a wider net, raising questions about safety and quality assurance.

In Miami, Melissa Cedenó, 37, who has two boys in elementary school, advertised on Facebook her search for other children and a tutor to assist students following virtual programs through their local schools. In the announcement, Cedenó, who works in digital marketing, announced she would grant parents online access to her indoor camera and conduct background checks on the teaching candidates.

"In another house, I would not know if there is an uncle, a brother, or someone who would come in. It is so completely transparent in my house with the camera, where there is no question where your kid was," she said in an interview. "I have overseen children ministry programs and it is so normal for me to be on top of this."

Atlanta, Georgia, parent Nikolai Pizarro de Jesus has homeschooled her 12-year-old son since he was in kindergarten and has been busy in recent weeks helping families organize more socio-economically accessible pods by matching them with homeschooling families who wouldn't necessarily need to hire a teacher.

She is hopeful that the discussions about pods will raise awareness among people who, when they send their children off to high-performing district schools, normally don't think about the inequalities that have long existed in public education.

"Whereas now, they're creating very consciously this pod. They're recognizing their privilege," she said. "Now they're aware of the lack of equity in schools and the lack of choices that people have."

Smile more? Some critics see sexism in debate over Biden VP

By SARA BURNETT and ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — She's too ambitious. She's not apologetic enough. She should smile more.

The debate over Joe Biden's running mate has recently ticked through a familiar list of stereotypes about women in politics as the Democratic presidential candidate and his allies stumble through a search they had hoped would stand out for its inclusion and diversity.

Instead, the vice presidential vetting has resurfaced internal party divisions between the old-guard establishment and a younger generation that's more attuned to gender and racial biases and willing to speak out. Some contend it's just more evidence of why Biden needs a woman on his ticket.

"The fact is that although we've come really far in the last 100 years, we haven't come far enough for women candidates to be treated with the same level of decency as the male candidates are," said Donna Brazile, a former Democratic National Committee chair.

Biden, the presumptive nominee, has said he will pick a woman as his number two and he would probably reach a decision this week, though a formal announcement could come later.

The scrutiny of his choices has intensified in recent weeks, while allies have weighed in, sometimes in ways that feed the tensions.

On Monday, Ed Rendell, a former Democratic Party chair and a Biden ally, was quoted in The Washington Post noting that there has been recent buzz about former national security adviser Susan Rice. He observed that Rice was smiling during a TV appearance, "something that she doesn't do all that readily," and that she was "actually somewhat charming."

Rendell, 76, has commented on another candidate's demeanor, too, telling CNN last week that California Sen. Kamala Harris can "rub people the wrong way."

Some see that sort of commentary — docking women for being aggressive and rewarding them for intangibles such as likability — as the sort of bias they say has dogged women in politics for decades.

Rendell said in a phone interview Monday that any suggestions his comment about Rice was sexist were

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"ludicrous." He said it was a compliment, a description of a good candidate, no different from when people commented on Richard Nixon smiling more on the comeback trail.

"This country is so nuts," he said of criticism of his choice of words, blaming it partly on the media. "We're going crazy."

Politico recently reported that former Connecticut Sen. Chris Dodd, the co-chair of Biden's vetting committee, was concerned that Harris, a former presidential candidate, was not sufficiently regretful about attacking Biden during a primary debate. Others have criticized Harris, who is considered a top prospect, as too ambitious.

Stacey Abrams, the former minority leader of the Georgia House of Representatives and 2018 governor candidate, was similarly criticized for touting her credentials for the VP job. She pushed back, saying it would be a disservice to women of color and "women of ambition" to not be forthright.

She said Sunday on MSNBC, "When you do something different, when you meet the standards that are normative for men with a behavior that they don't expect from you, either as a woman or person of color, then you're going to get critiqued."

Rice is Black. Harris' parents are both immigrants, her father from Jamaica, her mother from India.

That some comments and criticism are coming from older, white men with longtime relationships with the 77-year-old, white Biden has been noted.

Glynda Carr, president of Higher Heights for America, a group that aims to help increase Black women's political power, said she believes it's a reaction — conscious or subconscious — from male leaders who "may feel their type of leadership will be hard to maintain" with today's electorate.

Carr compared them, without naming names, to "dinosaurs in extinction." She urged the Biden campaign to wrap the process up soon.

"I do think the longer we go there are diminishing returns because everybody feels they need to chime in," she said.

Comments focusing on gender — as well as the media's focus on them — are a sore spot for Democrats who fear a repeat of 2016, when they believe presidential nominee Hillary Clinton was defeated in part because of sexist attitudes.

They note that Biden himself is a former vice president — with enough ambition to fuel his third run for the presidency — and say no one would criticize Republican Vice President Mike Pence for eyeing the top job. And they say the conversation about the candidates has been focused on motives, demeanor or personality traits at a level far greater than it would be, or has been, when men are being considered.

Antjuan Seawright, a veteran South Carolina Democratic strategist, says the media are intent on ginning up conflict and finding dirt on rising leaders.

"I hope that this process doesn't devolve into what some are trying to make it out to be — and that's pitting two African American women that are pivotal to this party and this country against each other," he said.

However, lifelong experience with sexism and racism will only help potential running mates make better leaders for a country dealing with a global pandemic, racial injustice and other crises, said the Rev. Barbara Williams-Skinner, one of more than 100 Black clergy who have urged Biden to choose a Black woman as a running mate.

"It is always harder for women. When you're at that level of power, you have to be ready for that fight, and you have to expect it," she said, adding that the scrutiny men face is "much fairer."

"We'd all like to see a day when women are treated more fairly," she said. "We're not in that day."

Jaffe reported from Washington.

Irksome in Iceland, brusque in Britain? US envoys draw ire

By EGILL BJARNSON and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

REYKJAVIK, Iceland (AP) — In Iceland, a nation so safe its president runs errands on a bicycle, U.S. Ambassador Jeffery Ross Gunter has left locals aghast with his request to hire armed bodyguards.

Gunter has also enraged lawmakers by casually and groundlessly hitching Iceland to President Donald Trump's controversial "China virus" label for the coronavirus.

Not particularly diplomatic? Well, Gunter is hardly a diplomat by training. He's a dermatologist. But he's also a contributor to Trump's campaign, and that landed him the post in Reykjavik.

Gunter's actions, and those of other politically connected U.S. ambassadors, highlight the risks that come with the peculiarly American institution of handing coveted diplomatic postings to campaign donors and presidential friends who have few other qualifications. The practice has increased under Trump.

"America is an extreme outlier in sending inexperienced and unqualified ambassadors," said Barbara Stephenson, a former career foreign service officer, ambassador to Panama and ex-president of the American Foreign Service Association, the union that represents U.S. diplomats.

Presidential political supporters can make fine diplomats, and many have. A personal relationship with the president and understanding of his agenda can be an advantage. And those clearly unfit are expected to be weeded out through the Senate confirmation process. But still, some arrive in their embassies lacking the ability to sidestep controversy.

In Britain, Ambassador Robert "Woody" Johnson faces accusations he tried to steer golf's British Open toward a Trump resort in Scotland and made racist and sexist comments.

In the Netherlands last week, Ambassador Peter Hoekstra, a former congressman, posted a photograph of himself visiting a cemetery for German soldiers killed during the two World Wars, including Nazi troops who occupied the country. Other ambassadors are running roughshod over their more experienced but less senior diplomatic staff.

Gunter, the ambassador in Iceland, has run through at least seven deputies since taking over, although the State Department says four of them had been assigned to Reykjavik for only 30-day tours.

But what really raised eyebrows in Iceland was the embassy's ad looking for armed bodyguards. That was striking in a country that for 13 consecutive years has been deemed the most peaceful country in the world, according to the Global Peace Index, published by the Institute for Economics & Peace.

Iceland's National Commissioner Sigrídur Guðjónsdóttir told The Associated Press last week that police haven't decided whether to allow the armed bodyguards.

"We are still weighing the request and assessing the level of potential threat for foreign embassies in Iceland," she said. The State Department declined to comment.

Days after the bodyguard ad appeared, Gunter caused another stir, and condemnation from members of Parliament, for a post on Twitter: "We are United to defeat the Invisible China Virus!" The message included a symbol of the Icelandic flag, which critics found implicated the country in calling the disease "the China virus" — a term used by Trump to deflect blame for the coronavirus on China as his handling of the pandemic has been criticized.

Gunter has downplayed the friction. "Our focus at U.S. Embassy Reykjavík remains where it has always been — on strengthening the U.S.-Icelandic bilateral relationship which brings so much benefit to both our great nations," he said. "I am honored to be leading our team during this successful period of U.S.-Icelandic appreciation and respect."

The foibles of ambassadors lacking diplomatic experience have surfaced in administrations of both political parties and have long confounded efforts at reform. Yet they are attracting greater attention in the Trump era as the percentage of politically connected ambassadors, which normally hovers around 30%, has soared to 42%, the highest level since the mid-1970s.

"All nominees for the position of ambassador should be qualified for the job and the number of political appointments should not exceed historical norms," said Eric Rubin, the current president of the foreign service association.

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The Republican administration has defended its ambassadorial choices and pointed to a backlog in Senate confirmations as a reason for the high percentage of non-career envoys. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has criticized Democrats for delays in confirming nominees, including career diplomats.

Some political appointees have been accused of more than being undiplomatic. In Britain, Johnson's actions regarding the golf tournament have raised questions of whether he violated federal ethics rules. There have also been allegations he made racist and sexist comments to which embassy staffers took offense.

Johnson, owner of the NFL's New York Jets, has denied any misconduct. He has told associates he is "mystified" by the complaints of inappropriate behavior, which included the summary dismissal of his highly regarded No. 2 for making favorable references to former President Barack Obama in speeches, according to current and former officials.

In the Netherlands, Hoekstra previously irritated his hosts by claiming falsely that there were no-go zones in the country because of Muslim extremists.

Searing mistrust of the State Department and its career diplomats by Trump appointees has been a cause of many internal embassy clashes. Trump and his top aides have rejected the long-standing, bipartisan foreign policy of his predecessors, and they criticize foreign service staff as being part of the entrenched "deep state."

The result is the dismissal of veteran career diplomats — the officials normally seen as valuable resources for first-time ambassadors who have had only cursory diplomatic training.

The ambassador to France, wealthy Trump donor Jamie McCourt, has gone through at least two deputy chiefs of mission, complaining about their lack of loyalty, while the ambassador to the United Nations, Kelly Craft, removed at least one and clashed with her career staff while she was Trump's envoy to Canada.

Similar shakeups have occurred in embassies in Germany and South Africa, current and former officials say.

The top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Bob Menendez of New Jersey, last week released a report criticizing the administration's "decimation" of the career diplomatic corps.

All too often the administration has "smeared them as radical bureaucrats and deep state" agents and shown a "complete and utter disdain for their expertise," said Menendez, a vocal critic of Trump. "These unwarranted attacks are corrosive to our diplomacy and damaging to our democracy."

Lee reported from Washington.

Ex-teacher hopes to free Belarus from president's iron fist

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

BREST, Belarus (AP) — A 37-year-old former English teacher without political experience seems an unlikely challenger to the authoritarian president of Belarus who has been the ex-Soviet nation's only leader for more than a quarter-century.

And yet, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya has united various opposition factions behind her candidacy and drawn tens of thousands of supporters to her campaign rallies ahead of the presidential election on Sunday.

Tsikhanouskaya says the crowds - the biggest demonstrations Belarus has seen since becoming independent in 1991 - reflect a desperate longing for transformation after President Alexander Lukashenko's 26-year rule.

In an interview with The Associated Press, she described herself as a "symbol of change."

"People see me not as a consummate politician striving for power, but just an average person like themselves - and they like it," Tsikhanouskaya said. "They understand that I don't want anything for myself."

Her rally a few days ago in Brest on the border with Poland drew over 20,000 people, a massive showing for a city that has never seen big political protests. A few days before that, Tsikhanouskaya's rally in the capital, Minsk, attracted more than 60,000. It was the largest opposition gathering in Belarus since the rallies in the months before the 1991 Soviet collapse.

"I'm tired of being patient and silent, I'm tired of being afraid," Tsikhanouskaya told the enthusiastic crowd in Brest.

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Lukashenko, 65, was a Soviet state farm director before he became the first Belarusian president in 1994. Since then he has cracked down on dissent and independent media in the nation of 9.5 million, earning the nickname of "Europe's last dictator."

But this time, Lukashenko appears to have lost his bravado and looks increasingly nervous in the face of the opposition rallies. More than 1,000 people have been detained for taking part in the protests since the campaign began.

Painful economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic and the government's botched response to the outbreak has eroded Lukashenko's standing.

He had refused to introduce lockdown measures and dismissed the coronavirus as "psychosis" until he acknowledged last month that he had been infected but recovered quickly.

Tsikhanouskaya said Lukashenko's advice that Belarusians protect themselves against the virus with a daily shot of vodka was like "a spit in the face."

She told the AP that the arrest this year of her husband, a popular opposition blogger who aspired to run for president himself, left her no choice but to enter politics.

"It was brewing inside for more than 20 years. We were afraid all that time and no one dared to say a word," she said. "But if I could overcome my fear, everyone can."

Her husband, Syarhei Tsikhanousky, has remained in jail since his arrest in May on charges of assailing a police officer. He has dismissed the charges as a provocation.

Last week, Belarusian authorities opened a new probe against Tsikhanouskaya's husband on charges of planning to stage "mass riots" with 33 Russian private security contractors arrested on Wednesday. Russia has rejected the charges, saying the men were en route to another country.

Tsikhanouskaya dismissed the accusations against her husband as a sham. "He has no relation to that, and people realize it," she said.

If she wins, Tsikhanouskaya said, she will free all political prisoners, order a constitutional referendum that would limit the number of presidential terms and introduce other democratic changes. She vowed to step down after six months to hold a new, free presidential vote.

She also said she will move to do away with a union treaty envisaging close economic, political and military ties with Russia. Many in the Belarusian opposition see the union as a threat to the country's independence.

Lukashenko has relied on Russian subsidies and loans to keep Belarus' Soviet-era economy afloat. He denounced a hike in Russian energy prices this year as part of the Kremlin's pressure on Belarus to abandon its independence and pointed at the arrest of the 33 Russian security contractors as a sign of Moscow's subversive plans.

Western observers have described previous presidential elections in Belarus as rigged to keep Lukashenko in office.

Tsikhanouskaya has emerged as the rallying figure for the opposition after election officials refused to register for the ballot two other potential candidates who were seen as Lukashenko's strongest potential challengers.

One, Viktor Babariko, the head of a major Russia-controlled bank, was jailed in May on money-laundering and tax-evasion charges that he rejected as politically driven. Another, Valery Tsepkalo, fled to Russia with his children last month after receiving a tip that his arrest was imminent and the authorities were prepared to strip him of parental rights.

Tsikhanouskaya has teamed up with Tsepkalo's wife, who stayed in Belarus, and Babariko's campaign manager to run an energetic campaign. Three other contenders on the ballot are widely seen as token candidates.

Tsikhanouskaya said she had to send her 10-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter to a European country she wouldn't name after receiving threats.

"I got a phone call: 'We will put you behind bars and place your children in an orphanage,'" she said. "I was hesitating and on the verge of stepping down."

She said it was a tormenting decision. "But I made that choice" to keep running, she said. "There must be a symbol of freedom."

5 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. **ISAIAS MAKES LANDFALL OVER NORTH CAROLINA** The Category 1 storm sets off flooding and sparks multiple home fires in Ocean Isle Beach before being downgraded to a tropical storm.
2. **'NOBODY CARES HERE'** Housing advocates fear that they could see a wave of evictions in the coming months, as states end moratoriums put in place during the coronavirus pandemic.
3. **US ENVOYS DRAW IRE** From Iceland to Britain and many places in between, U.S. ambassadors are pushing the limits, infuriating career diplomats who work under them and irritating host governments.
4. **HIROSHIMA SURVIVORS FINALLY SPEAKING OUT** As the 75th anniversary of the twin atomic bombings on Japan nears, survivors hope their stories reach a younger generation that they feel is losing sight of the horror.
5. **SENDING OUT AN SOS** Three men have been rescued from a tiny Pacific island after writing the distress signal in the sand that was spotted from above.

Record heat, politics inflame Iraq's electricity shortages

By SAMYA KULLAB and NABIL AL-JURANI Associated Press

BASRA, Iraq (AP) — In Iraq's oil-rich south, the scorching summer months pose painful new choices in the age of the coronavirus: stay at home in the sweltering heat with electricity cut off for hours, or go out and risk the virus.

This is Zain al-Abidin's predicament. A resident of al-Hartha district, in Basra province, al-Abidin lost his job due to pandemic-related restrictions. During the day he listens helplessly to his four-month old daughter cry in the unbearable heat, too poor to afford private generators to offset up to eight-hour power cuts.

"I have no tricks to deal with this but to pray to God for relief," he said.

As temperatures soar to record levels this summer — reaching 52 degrees Celsius (125 Fahrenheit) in Baghdad last week — Iraq's power supply has fallen short of demand yet again, creating a spark for renewed anti-government protests. Iraq has imposed a strict lockdown and 24-hour curfew. So families have to pump fuel and money into generators or, if they can't, suffer in stifling homes without air conditioning.

State coffers were slashed because of an economic crisis spurred by falling oil prices and the pandemic, leaving little for investment to maintain Iraq's aging electricity infrastructure. Importing additional power is tied up in politics. On one side, Iranians demand overdue payments on energy they already provided Iraq. On the other, the U.S. is pushing Baghdad to move away from Iran and strike energy deals with Gulf allies, according to three senior Iraqi government officials. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

Power cuts, coinciding with stay-at-home restrictions and scorching temperatures have extended into Lebanon and Syria, two countries also teetering on the brink of economic collapse.

In Lebanon, residents suffer from power cuts lasting up to 20 hours a day in Beirut even as humidity climbs to above 80%, adding to public outrage over the country's severe financial crisis. Neighborhood generators have had to switch off to give their engines a break and to ration fuel, causing a run on candles and battery-operated lamps.

Like Iraq, blackouts in Lebanon have been a fixture of life, largely because of profiteering, corruption and mismanagement, ever since the 1975-1990 civil war.

In Syria, nearly a decade of war has left infrastructure in shambles and electricity cuts are frequent. Last week, power was off for hours even as temperatures in Damascus reached a record-breaking 48 degrees Celsius (118 Fahrenheit).

In Baghdad, the roar of generators punctuates daily outages like clockwork. Iraqis find short-lived respite by using public showers set up on the street. The heat was blamed for an explosion at a federal police weapons depot.

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"We bring our children downstairs and spray them with a hose to cool them down," said Ahmed Mohamed, in Baghdad.

Reforms in the electricity sector have been stymied by protests and the vested interests of private generator companies, some with connections to political figures. Public reluctance to pay the state for electricity has long flummoxed Iraqi officials.

In the summer of 2018, poor service delivery prompted destabilizing protests in Basra. The following year, mass anti-government protests paralyzed Baghdad and Iraq's south, as tens of thousands decried the rampant corruption that has plagued delivery of services, including electricity.

Two protesters were killed by security forces in Baghdad last week while demonstrating against power cuts.

Crumbling power lines mean there is 1,000 megawatts less power this summer. Supply now falls 10,000 megawatts short of demand, a senior official in the Electricity Ministry said.

"You have to work very hard just to stand still," said Ali al-Saffar, the head of the Middle East a division of the Paris-based International Energy Agency.

To survive the summer months, al-Saffar recommends an immediate audit of generators used in public offices to see what can be put toward the national grid, as fewer people come to work under lockdown measures.

The government has already implemented emergency measures to divert power used in operations in oil fields to add to the grid, officials in oil and electricity ministries said.

Iraq relies heavily on Iran for power especially during the summer. But budgetary shortfalls have thrown Baghdad into arrears. Two government officials said urgent allocations were being made to avoid a repeat of 2018, when Iran halted imports in the summer because of outstanding payments.

Dependence on Iranian energy has also complicated U.S.-Iraq relations.

To qualify for successive sanctions waivers enabling imports to continue, Iraq must prove to the Trump administration that it is taking concrete steps to wean itself off reliance on Iran.

The U.S. has pushed for deals with Gulf allies to diversify Iraq's power supply, three officials said.

Two projects appear to be in advanced stages of negotiations. The first would provide an initial 500 megawatts of supply to southern Iraq by connecting the grid to a supergrid encompassing six Gulf countries. A framework agreement was signed last year with the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority, but lack of financing to pay for 300 kilometers (187 miles) of transmission lines has slowed progress.

The Gulf has pledged to put up the money, but "they are worried about the political situation," said one senior government official. "They had a video-conference with the (Electricity) Ministry in early July — representatives from the U.S. were on the call to push them."

The second is the development of a much-anticipated gas hub in southern Iraq to feed domestic power demands.

Talks are ongoing to develop Iraq's Ratawi oil field and capture gas flared in nearby fields to generate electricity. Under the deal, Riyadh-based ACWA Power and U.S. firm Honeywell would construct the gas hub, financed by proceeds from the field, operated by Saudi Aramco.

But the agreement has not been officially inked.

Meanwhile, Iraqis continue taking to the streets in protest.

Activist Mohammed Ibrahim, who stages small sit-ins with his fellow activists in Basra said demonstrations would continue even if their calls for change fell on deaf ears in the halls of power.

"The protests are the only way to show this injustice," he said.

Kullab reported from Baghdad.

Progress slow on virus relief bill as negotiations continue

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Negotiators on a huge coronavirus relief bill reported slight progress after talks resumed in the Capitol, with issues like food for the poor and aid to schools struggling to reopen safely assuming a higher profile in the talks.

Multiple obstacles remain, including an impasse on extending a \$600-per-week pandemic jobless benefit, funding for the U.S. Postal Service and aid to renters facing eviction. Democratic negotiators spoke of progress Monday at almost the very moment that top Senate Republican Mitch McConnell was slamming them for taking a hard line in the talks.

"We are really getting an understanding of each side's position. And we're making some progress on certain issues moving closer together," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. "There are a lot of issues that are still outstanding. But I think there is a desire to get something done as soon as we can."

After the meeting, Pelosi told her Democratic colleagues on a call that she's hopeful a deal could be reached this week, but doesn't know if it's possible, according to a Democratic aide who was granted anonymity to describe the private discussion.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, a lead negotiator for President Donald Trump, said afterward that "we continue to make a little bit of progress" and that the administration is not insistent on a small-bore approach centered on extending the supplemental unemployment benefit and leaving other items for later. A GOP move to advance a slimmed-down relief package has been a recent point of conflict, with Democrats insisting there must be a comprehensive deal.

"We're open to a bigger package if we can reach an agreement," Mnuchin said.

On the Senate floor, McConnell, R-Ky., re-upped his complaint that Democrats are taking too tough a line. McConnell is not a direct participant in the talks but is likely to be an important force in closing out any potential agreement.

"The speaker of the House and the Democratic Leader are continuing to say 'our way or the highway' with a massive wish list for left-wing lobbyists that was slapped together a few weeks ago called a coronavirus bill," McConnell said.

Speaking to reporters after the two-hour session, Democratic negotiators pressed the case for additional food aid, funding for the Postal Service and the \$600-per-week jobless benefit that lapsed last week. The benefit has helped prop up the economy and family budgets as the coronavirus has wrought havoc.

The White House is seeking opportunities to boost Trump, like providing another round of \$1,200 stimulus payments and extending the supplemental jobless benefit and partial eviction ban. Pelosi appears intent on an agreement as well, but she's made it clear she needs big money for state and local governments, unemployment benefits and food aid.

"It was productive, we're moving down the track. We still have our differences, we are trying to have a clearer understanding of what the needs are, and the needs are that millions of children in our country are food insecure," Pelosi said. "Millions of people in our country are concerned about being evicted. Tens of millions of people are on unemployment insurance."

Most members of the Democratic-controlled House have left Washington and won't return until there is an agreement to vote on, but the GOP-held Senate is trapped in the capital.

"I can't see how we can go home and tell people we've failed, so I think that's going to be a lot of pressure on everybody to come up with something," said Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas. "It really is a matter of will. It's not a matter of substance at this point. This is just a painful period between people finally deciding OK, we want a deal, and then what that deal will ultimately look like."

Areas of agreement already include the \$1,200 direct payment and changes to the Paycheck Protection Program to permit especially hard-hit businesses to obtain another loan under generous forgiveness terms.

But the terms and structure of the unemployment benefit have remained a sticking point, along with the money for state and local governments. Democrats want almost \$1 trillion for localities grappling with pandemic-related revenue losses.

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Speaking to reporters Monday evening, Trump made clear the two sides were still far apart on that issue. "They want to bail out cities and states that have been in trouble for years of bad management," Trump said. "In all cases Democrat-run cities, and we don't think that's fair."

McConnell is insistent on a liability shield against lawsuits by workers, students, and others against institutions seeking to remain open during the pandemic, including businesses, universities and charities.

On Monday, unions representing professional athletes — including NFL players and Major League Baseball players — weighed in against McConnell's proposal, saying in a letter to lawmakers, "It makes little sense during these uncertain times to both ask employees to return to work and, at the same time, accept all the risk for doing so."

On unemployment, Pelosi said she'd consider reducing the \$600 benefit for people in states with lower unemployment rates. Republicans want to cut the benefit to encourage beneficiaries to return to work and say it is bad policy since it pays many jobless people more money than they made at their previous jobs.

Another sticking point is that Republicans want to give more school aid to systems that are restarting with in-school learning, even as Dr. Deborah Birx, Trump's top coronavirus adviser, cautioned that schools in areas with spikes in cases should delay reopening.

Pelosi said Monday's talks featured extensive discussion on reopening schools. Schumer said the discussion got into the details on the dollar figures involving school aid and food aid.

The House passed a \$3.5 trillion measure in May, but Republicans controlling the Senate have demanded a slower approach, saying it was necessary to take a "pause" before passing additional legislation. Since they announced that strategy, however, coronavirus caseloads have spiked and the economy has absorbed an enormous blow.

Associated Press writer Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

3 men rescued from Pacific island after writing SOS in sand

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Three men have been rescued from a tiny Pacific island after writing a giant SOS sign in the sand that was spotted from above, authorities say.

The men had been missing in the Micronesia archipelago for nearly three days when their distress signal was spotted Sunday on uninhabited Pikelot Island by searchers on Australian and U.S. aircraft, the Australian defense department said Monday.

The men had apparently set out from Pulawat atoll in a 7-meter (23-foot) boat on July 30 and had intended to travel about 43 kilometers (27 miles) to Pulap atoll when they sailed off course and ran out of fuel, the department said.

Searchers in Guam asked for Australian help. The military ship, Canberra, which was returning to Australia from exercises in Hawaii, diverted to the area and joined forces with U.S. searchers from Guam.

The men were found about 190 kilometers (118 miles) from where they had set out.

"I am proud of the response and professionalism of all on board as we fulfill our obligation to contribute to the safety of life at sea wherever we are in the world," said the Canberra's commanding officer, Capt. Terry Morrison, in a statement.

The men were found in good condition, and an Australian military helicopter was able to land on the beach and give them food and water. A Micronesian patrol vessel was due to pick them up.

SOS is an internationally recognized distress signal that originates from Morse code.

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Isaias downgraded to tropical storm over eastern N. Carolina

By SARAH BLAKE MORGAN Associated Press

NORTH MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. (AP) — Hurricane Isaias has been downgraded down to a tropical storm after making landfall near Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina, according to an official with the National Hurricane Center.

The hurricane had touched down just after 11 p.m. on Monday with maximum sustained winds of 85 mph (136 km/h). The storm now has maximum sustained winds of 70 miles per hour (117 km/h).

"Now that the center has moved further inland into east North Carolina, the winds are now coming back down, so it has been downgraded back to a tropical storm," Robbie Berg, a hurricane specialist with the National Hurricane Center, told The Associated Press.

The weather service also said in its 4 a.m. advisory that threats of tornadoes were beginning to spread into southeastern Virginia.

The storm set off flooding and sparked five home fires in Ocean Isle Beach, Debbie Smith, the town's Mayor, told WECT-TV. Firefighters from the town's fire department were battling the blaze with assistance from Horry County firefighters in South Carolina, Tony Casey, a spokesperson for Horry County Fire Rescue, told The Associated Press.

About 80 miles (128 kilometers) north of Ocean Isle Beach, about 30 people were displaced due to a fire at a condominium complex in Surf City, news outlets reported. It is not clear if the fires were connected to the storm. No injuries have been reported.

The storm could continue to bring down trees and cause power outages as it moves north along the mid-Atlantic and New England coastline, Berg said.

"We don't think there is going to be a whole lot of weakening, we still think there's going to be very strong and gusty winds that will affect much of the mid-atlantic and the Northeast over the next day or two," Berg said. Rainfall will continue to be a big issue, he added.

Duke Energy reported hundreds of thousands of power outages as heavy rains and winds battered areas including Wrightsville, Kure, and Carolina beaches in Wilmington, North Carolina.

Coastal shops and restaurants closed early, power began to flicker at oceanfront hotels and even the most adventurous of beachgoers abandoned the sand Monday night as newly restrengthened Hurricane Isaias sped toward the Carolinas.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center warned oceanside home dwellers to brace for storm surge up to 5 feet (1.5 meters) and up to 8 inches (20 centimeters) of rain in spots, as Isaias moved up the coast. The Carolinas weren't the only states at risk.

"All those rains could produce flash flooding across portions of the eastern Carolinas and mid-Atlantic, and even in the northeast U.S.," said Daniel Brown, senior hurricane specialist at the U.S. National Hurricane Center. A tropical storm warning extended all the way up to Maine, where flash flooding was possible in some areas on Wednesday.

The center also warned of possible tornadoes in North Carolina early Tuesday, and from eastern Virginia to southern New England later Tuesday.

Isaias (pronounced ees-ah-EE-ahs) was upgraded again from a tropical storm to a Category 1 hurricane Monday evening. Early Tuesday the storm, downgraded again, was centered about 25 miles (40 kilometers) northwest of Greenville, North Carolina. It was moving quickly north northeast over eastern North Carolina at 26 mph (41 kph) and this general motion accompanied by an increase in forward speed is expected through Tuesday.

The center will move into southeastern Virginia around daybreak, near or along the coast of mid-Atlantic states and continue across the northeastern United States later into the evening. Strong winds and heavy rainfall were expected to spread northward along the mid-Atlantic coast Tuesday morning.

The storm's maximum sustained winds dropped from when it hit land to 75 mph with higher gusts but only a gradual weakening is anticipated.

Hurricane-force winds extended outward up to 25 miles (40 km) from the center, and tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 125 miles (201 km). A wind gust to 64 mph (102 km/h) was recently

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reported near Bogue, North Carolina.

Isaias killed two people in the Caribbean and roughed up the Bahamas but remained at sea as it brushed past Florida over the weekend, providing some welcome relief to emergency managers who had to accommodate mask-wearing evacuees in storm shelters.

Authorities in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, ordered swimmers out of the water to avoid rough surf and strong rip currents. By nightfall, power began to flicker at beachfront hotels as Isaias crossed the last bit of warm water on its path toward the U.S. mainland.

Still, on this part of the South Carolina and North Carolina coasts that has been affected to varying degrees by seven tropical storms or hurricanes since 2014, residents weren't panicking.

"It's just going to be a lot of wind and high tide," said Mike Fuller, who has lived along the coast for more than a decade.

As the storm neared the shore, a gauge on a pier in Myrtle Beach recorded its third highest water level since it was set up in 1976. Only Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and Hurricane Matthew in 2016 pushed more salt water inland.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper warned residents on Monday that the storm could be dangerous regardless of its strength. He urged those evacuating to turn to shelters as a last resort, citing coronavirus risks and the need to operate shelters at reduced capacity to allow for social distancing.

"Whether it's labeled a tropical storm or a hurricane, you should take this storm seriously, and make sure your family is ready," Cooper said.

Ferry operators wrapped up evacuations from Ocracoke Island in North Carolina's Outer Banks on Monday, moving more than 3,500 people and 1,700 vehicles off the island over four days. Island officials were taking no chances after taking a beating less than a year ago from Hurricane Dorian. Evacuation orders also have been issued for Hatteras Island north of Ocracoke.

Since forming last week, Isaias has been buffeted by competing forces both trying to kill and strengthen it, said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy.

"Of all the places it could be, it found the warmest water it could," which fuels storm development, McNoldy said. "And yet it is struggling."

That's because dry air kept working its way into the storm at low and mid-levels, which chokes storms.

Isaias' passage near Florida over the weekend was particularly unwelcome to authorities already dealing with surging coronavirus caseloads. The storm brought heavy rain and flooding to the state, forcing authorities to close outdoor virus testing sights, as well as beaches and parks. Officials lashed signs to palm trees so they wouldn't blow away.

About 150 people had to keep masks on while sheltering in Palm Beach County, which had a voluntary evacuation order for people living in homes that can't withstand dangerous winds, said emergency management spokeswoman Lisa De La Rionda.

Associated Press reporters Russ Bynum in Savannah, Georgia; Jeffrey Collins and Michelle Liu in Columbia, South Carolina; Sophia Tulp in Atlanta; and AP Science Writer Seth Borenstein in Kensington, Maryland, contributed to this report.

Urgency to bear witness grows for last Hiroshima victims

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

HIROSHIMA, Japan (AP) — For nearly 70 years, until he turned 85, Lee Jong-keun hid his past as an atomic bomb survivor, fearful of the widespread discrimination against blast victims that has long persisted in Japan.

But Lee, 92, is now part of a fast-dwindling group of survivors, known as hibakusha, that feels a growing urgency — desperation even — to tell their stories. These last witnesses to what happened 75 years ago this Thursday want to reach a younger generation that they feel is losing sight of the horror.

The knowledge of their dwindling time — the average age of the survivors is more than 83 and many

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suffer from the long-lasting effects of radiation — is coupled with deep frustration over stalled progress in global efforts to ban nuclear weapons. According to a recent Asahi newspaper survey of 768 survivors, nearly two-thirds said their wish for a nuclear-free world is not widely shared by the rest of humanity, and more than 70% called on a reluctant Japanese government to ratify a nuclear weapons ban treaty.

"We must work harder to get our voices heard, not just mine but those of many other survivors," Lee said in an interview Tuesday at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. "A nuclear weapons ban is the starting point for peace."

"All lives are equal," he added. "As someone who has faced harsh discrimination, that's the other lesson I want to pass on to younger people."

The first U.S. atomic bombing killed 140,000 people in the city of Hiroshima. A second atomic attack on Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945, killed another 70,000. Japan surrendered on Aug. 15, bringing an end to a conflict that began with its attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 during its attempt to conquer Asia.

Some 20,000 ethnic Korean residents of Hiroshima are believed to have died in the nuclear attack. The city, a wartime military hub, had a large number of Korean workers, including those forced to work without pay at mines and factories under Japan's colonization of the Korean Peninsula from 1910 to 1945.

On the morning of Aug. 6, 1945, 16-year-old Lee, a second-generation Korean born in Japan, was on his way to work at Japan's national railway authority in Hiroshima when the uranium bomb nicknamed Little Boy exploded. The whole sky turned yellowish orange, knocking him face first to the ground, Lee said. He suffered severe burns on his neck that took four months to heal.

Back at work, co-workers wouldn't go near him, saying he had "A-bomb disease." Little was known about the effects of the bomb, and some believed radiation was similar to an infectious disease. Prospective marriage partners also worried about genetic damage that could be passed to children.

Lee had been bullied at school because of his Korean background, his classmates ridiculing the smell of kimchi in his lunchbox. Revealing that he was also an A-bomb victim would have meant more trouble. So Lee lived under a Japanese name, Masaichi Egawa, until eight years ago, when he first publicly revealed his identity during a cruise where atomic bomb survivors shared their stories. Until then, he hasn't even told his wife he is hibakusha.

"No ethnic Koreans want to reveal their past as hibakusha," Lee said.

Japanese bomb survivors had no government support until 1957, when their yearslong efforts won official medical support. But a strict screening system has left out many who are still seeking compensation. Assistance for survivors outside Japan was delayed until the 1980s.

The atomic bombings set off a nuclear arms race in the Cold War. The United States justified the bombings as a way to save untold lives by preventing a bloody invasion of mainland Japan to end the war, a view long accepted by many Americans. But Gar Alperovitz, author of "Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam and The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," said at a recent online event that documentary records show wartime American leaders knew of Japan's imminent surrender and the bombings were not necessary militarily.

"I can't live for another 50 years," said Koko Kondo, 75, who was an 8-month-old baby in her mother's arms when their house collapsed from the blast about a kilometer (half a mile) away. "I want each child to live a full life, and that means we have to abolish nuclear weapons right now."

Even after so many years, too many nuclear weapons remain, Kondo said, adding, "We are not screaming loud enough for the whole world to hear."

Kondo, who survived the blast as a baby, is the daughter of the Rev. Kiyoshi Tanimoto, one of six atomic bomb survivors featured in John Hersey's book "Hiroshima." She struggled for decades until she reached middle age to overcome the pain she experienced in her teens and the rejection by her fiancé.

She was almost 40 when she decided to follow her father's path and become a peace activist. She was inspired by his last sermon, in which he spoke about devoting his life to Hiroshima's recovery.

This year, the frustration of survivors is greater because peace events leading up to the Aug. 6 memorial have been largely canceled or scaled back amid the coronavirus pandemic.

For the first time in over a decade, Keiko Ogura won't provide English guided tours of Hiroshima's Peace

Park.

Ogura was 8 when she saw the searing bright flash outside her house, about 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) from ground zero. Smashed to the ground, she was woken by her little brother's wails. The rubble of their house was burning.

Crowds of people with severe burns, their hair charred into curls, headed to a shrine near her home, grunting and asking for water. Two people dropped dead after receiving water from her, a scene that haunted her for years. She blamed herself for surviving when so many others died.

Ogura's relatives and friends told her to hide her status as a hibakusha or nobody would marry her. She kept her past to herself for decades, until her husband, a peace activist, died and she decided to continue his efforts. She set up a group of interpreters for peace.

Her relatives don't want her to mention them in her speeches. "Why? Because people are still suffering," Ogura, 83, said in a recent online briefing. "The impact of radiation, the fear of it and the suffering were not just felt during the moment of the blast — we still live with it today."

Survivors are frustrated by their inability to see a nuclear-free world in their lifetime, and by Japan's refusal to sign or ratify a nuclear weapons ban treaty enacted in 2017.

"But no matter how small, we must pursue our efforts," said Ogura. "I will keep talking as long as I live."

More than 300,000 hibakusha have died since the attacks, including 9,254 in the past fiscal year, according to the health ministry.

"For me, the war is not over yet," said Michiko Kodama, 82, who survived the bombing but has lost most of her relatives to cancer. Years after the atomic bombing, a receptionist at a clinic noted Kodama's "hibakusha" medical certificate in a loud voice, and a patient sitting next to her moved away.

The fear of death, prejudice and discrimination continues, and nuclear weapons still exist.

"We don't have much time left. ... I want to tell our story to the younger generations when I still can," Kodama said. "If someone wants to hear my story, I will go anywhere and talk."

India's residency law in Kashmir amplifies demographic fears

By SHEIKH SAALIQ and AIJAZ HUSSAIN Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — For almost a century, no outsider was allowed to buy land and property in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

That changed Aug. 5 last year when India's Hindu nationalist government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi stripped the Himalayan state's semi-autonomous powers and downgraded it to a federally governed territory. It also annulled the long-held hereditary special rights its natives had over the disputed region's land ownership and jobs.

Since then, India has brought in a slew of changes through new laws. They are often drafted by bureaucrats without any democratic bearings and much to the resentment and anger of the region's people, many of whom want independence from India or unification with Pakistan.

A year later, things are swiftly changing on the ground.

Under a new law, authorities have begun issuing "domicile certificates" to Indians and non-residents, entitling them to residency rights and government jobs. Many Kashmiris view the move as the beginning of settler colonialism aimed at engineering a demographic change in India's only Muslim-majority region.

Amid growing fears, experts are likening the new arrangement to the West Bank or Tibet, with settlers — armed or civilian — living in guarded compounds among disenfranchised locals. They say the changes will reduce the region to a colony.

"Given the history of Indian state intervention in Kashmir, there are efforts to destroy the local, distinctive cultural identity of Kashmiris and forcibly assimilate Kashmiri Muslims into a Hindu, Indian polity," said Saiba Varma, an assistant professor of cultural and medical anthropology at the University of California, San Diego.

Residency rights were introduced in 1927 by Kashmir's Hindu king, Hari Singh, to stop the influx of outsiders in the former princely state. Historians say the maharaja brought land ownership rights on the insistence of powerful Kashmiri Hindus. They continued under Indian rule after 1947, as part of Kashmir's

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special status.

The new law, introduced in May amid the coronavirus lockdown, makes it possible for any Indian national who has lived in the region for at least 15 years or has studied for seven years and taken certain exams to become a permanent resident in Jammu-Kashmir. The Indian government is ensuring the process is fast-tracked and has introduced a fine of 50,000 rupees (\$670) to be deducted from the salary of any official in the territory who delays the process.

Those receiving domicile certificates include Hindu refugees from Pakistan following the 1947 bloody partition of the subcontinent, Gurkha soldiers from Nepal who had served in the Indian army, outside bureaucrats working in the region and some marginalized Hindu communities. Even the natives must apply for residency, otherwise they risk losing government jobs and welfare benefits.

About 400,000 people have been given domicile certificates in over a month, Pawan Kotwal, a top Indian official was quoted on Saturday by The Tribune, a north Indian English-daily. Officials have not said how many of them are locals and have generally been tight-lipped about the process.

Navin Kumar Choudhary, a senior bureaucrat from eastern Bihar state, was the first high-profile outsider to get residency on June 26. While Kashmiris were aghast as Choudhary's picture displaying the certificate went viral on social media, many in Hindu-majority southern Jammu rejoiced.

Gharu Bhatti, an activist working for the welfare of lower caste Hindus in Jammu, said the law ended their "slavery."

Bhatti's parents were among some 270 sanitation workers brought by the government to Jammu from neighboring Punjab state in 1957. Since then, their numbers have grown to nearly 7,000, said Bhatti, who is among the first few dozen from his community to get the region's residency.

"Now our kids have a future. They can be whatever they want to be. We will have choices to make now," he said.

But even some Hindu groups in Jammu have resented the law, expressing fears of job and business losses to outsiders.

Authorities have called the new residency rights an overdue measure to foster greater economic development by opening up the region for outside investments. Girish Chander Murmu, the region's top administrative official, in late June told reporters that the law was aimed at bringing economic prosperity and dismissed any fears of demographic change as "propaganda."

Many natives in Kashmir are skeptical of such clarifications and liken them to assurances Indian authorities made prior to the Aug. 5 decision when they said no constitutional changes were planned.

Human rights activists, pro-freedom leaders and Kashmiri residents have long feared that giving outsiders the right to buy land and property could further plunge the region into chaos and set in motion a plan to crush the identity of its people.

"We have always been fed lies and deceived by gimmicks of development and democracy by the Indian state," said Shafat Ahmed Mir, a university student. "As a people, it is the most critical time in our history and we have never faced such an existential threat before."

Kashmir's fury at Indian rule has been long seething.

The stunning mountain region has known little but conflict since 1947, when British rule of the subcontinent divided the territory between the newly created India and Pakistan.

After a series of political blunders, broken promises and a crackdown on dissent, Kashmiri separatists launched a full-blown armed revolt in 1989, seeking unification with Pakistan or complete independence. India dubbed the armed rebellion terrorism abetted by Pakistan, a charge Islamabad denies.

Tens of thousands of civilians, rebels and government forces have been killed in the conflict in the last three decades.

Since the early 1950s, Hindu nationalists, including Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, have been advocating a solution in India's favor by neutralizing Kashmir's Muslim majority inhabitants through settlement of Hindus from other parts of the country.

"The Indian Hindu right-wing wants a demographic solution to Kashmir, but their policies are sowing

seeds for a new conflict, possibly one that will lead to unending bloodshed and lead to destabilization of the entire region," said Mohamad Junaid, a Kashmiri political anthropologist.

The militarization of the region has increased under Modi, and in July the government eased rules for Indian soldiers to acquire land in Kashmir and construct "strategic areas" seen as settlements by the natives.

Kashmir's oldest and main pro-India political party, the National Conference, slammed the move as a mission for a "major land grab" that could "turn the entire region into a military establishment."

With India allowing outsiders to become residents, many worry such a move could alter the results of a plebiscite if it were to ever take place, even though it was promised under the 1948 United Nations resolutions that gave Kashmir the choice of joining either Pakistan or India.

Kashmiri lawyer Mirza Saaib Beg said the newly drafted residents will acquire rights over the years that can complicate the resolution.

"Historical precedent shows that Kashmiri fears are well founded," said Varma, the anthropologist. The legal changes, she said, are "about a project to annihilate people."

Trump nursing home plan limits supply of free COVID-19 tests

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration's plan to provide every nursing home with a fast COVID-19 testing machine comes with an asterisk: The government won't supply enough test kits to check staff and residents beyond an initial couple of rounds.

A program that sounded like a game changer when it was announced last month at the White House is now prompting concerns that it could turn into another unfulfilled promise for nursing homes, whose residents and staff represent a tiny share of the U.S. population but account for as many as 4 in 10 coronavirus deaths, according to some estimates.

"I think the biggest fear is that the instruments may be delivered but it won't do any good, if you don't have the test kits," said George Linial, president of LeadingAge of Texas, a branch of a national group representing nonprofit nursing homes and other providers of elder care.

The weekly cost of testing employees could range from more than \$19,000 to nearly \$38,000, according to estimates by the national organization. LeadingAge is urging the administration to set up a nationwide testing program to take over from the current patchwork of state and local arrangements.

The Trump administration responds that nursing homes could cover the cost of ongoing testing from a \$5 billion pot provided by Congress, and allocated to the facilities by the White House.

Adm. Brett Giroir, the Health and Human Services department's "testing czar," recently told reporters that the government would only supply enough kits to test residents once and staff twice. But Giroir said officials have made arrangements with the manufacturers so nursing homes can order their own tests, for much less than they are currently spending.

Giroir acknowledged that the administration's effort to provide at least one fast-testing machine to each of the nation's 15,400 nursing homes is a work in progress, but said it's a top priority nonetheless.

"This is not wrapped up with a bow on it," Giroir told reporters on a recent call. "We (are) doing this as aggressively as possible."

The program is on track to deliver 2,400 fast-test machines and hundreds of thousands of test kits by mid-August, Giroir said, with the devices and supplies first going to nursing homes in virus hot spots.

However, informational materials from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, or CMS, say getting a machine to every nursing home could take 14 weeks. That would mean deliveries may not be completed until early November. In Texas alone there are more than 1,200 nursing homes, Linial said, and only a few dozen have gotten them.

"Part of the problem is resources and a lack of clarity about who pays for this in the future," said Tamara Konezka, a research professor at the University of Chicago, who specializes in long-term care issues. "Doing one round of testing doesn't really solve the problem in a pandemic that could last months or years."

Back in the spring, the first White House plan to test all nursing home residents for the coronavirus fell

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flat. It amounted to a call for states to carry out the testing, and some ignored it.

The stakes are higher now because the virus has rebounded in many communities and threatens to spread uncontrolled. Nursing home residents are particularly vulnerable. They're older and many have underlying medical problems associated with more severe cases of COVID-19, even death. They live in close quarters, ideal conditions for the virus to spread.

Experts say the coronavirus probably gets into nursing homes via staffers, who unwittingly bring it from the surrounding community. Regular testing is seen as essential to protect people living and working in facilities, and the CMS agency is working on regulations to require weekly testing of staff in areas where the prevalence of the virus is 5% or greater.

The devastating toll among nursing home residents has become a politically sensitive issue for President Donald Trump, who is trying to hold onto support from older voters in November's elections.

The machines the administration is sending to nursing homes perform antigen tests, which check for fragments of the virus protein in samples collected from a person's nose. The tests take about 20 minutes to run, from start to finish.

The gold standard coronavirus test is different. Known as a PCR test, it identifies the genetic material of the virus.

Nursing homes have other concerns about the program, beyond costs.

For example, antigen tests can sometimes return a negative result when a person actually has the virus. A government guidance document for nursing homes says the tests "do not rule out" COVID-19.

Giroir said the antigen tests are being used for ongoing surveillance and monitoring, not to make a definitive diagnosis.

"We are not routinely repeating negative tests," he said. "That kind of defeats the purpose." The administration is working to clarify the guidance.

Nursing homes that have begun getting the machines may also be in the dark about how to operate them correctly.

"It's not exactly as advertised," said Steve Fleming, president of the Well-Spring Group, a retirement community in North Carolina that provides comprehensive retirement services. "It's a complicated process to complete the test."

The administration says the manufacturers of the machines are supposed to provide training and technical support.

Associated Press writer Kelli Kennedy in Miami contributed to this report.

Wave of evictions expected as moratoriums end in many states

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — Kelyn Yanez used to clean homes during the day and wait tables at night in the Houston area before the coronavirus. But the mother of three lost both jobs in March because of the pandemic and now is facing eviction.

The Honduran immigrant got help from a local church to pay part of July's rent but was still hundreds of dollars short and is now awaiting a three-day notice to vacate the apartment where she lives with her children. She has no idea how she will meet her August rent.

"Right now, I have nothing," said Yanez, who briefly got her bar job back when the establishment re-opened, but lost it again when she and her 4-year-old daughter contracted the virus in June and had to quarantine. The apartment owners "don't care if you're sick, if you're not well. Nobody cares here. They told me that I had to have the money."

Yanez, who lives in the U.S. illegally, is among some 23 million people nationwide at risk of being evicted, according to The Aspen Institute, as moratoriums enacted because of the coronavirus expire and courts reopen. Around 30 state moratoriums have expired since May, according to The Eviction Lab at Princeton University. On top of that, some tenants were already encountering illegal evictions even with the mora-

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toriums.

Now, tenants are crowding courtrooms — or appearing virtually — to detail how the pandemic has upended their lives. Some are low-income families who have endured evictions before, but there are also plenty of wealthier families facing homelessness for the first time — and now being forced to navigate overcrowded and sometimes dangerous shelter systems amid the pandemic.

Experts predict the problem will only get worse in the coming weeks, with 30 million unemployed and uncertainty whether Congress will extend the extra \$600 in weekly unemployment benefits that expired Friday. The federal eviction moratorium that protects more than 12 million renters living in federally subsidized apartments or units with federally backed mortgages expired July 25. If it's not extended, landlords can initiate eviction proceedings in 30 days.

"It's going to be a mess," said Bill Faith, executive director of Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, referring to the Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, which found last week that more than 23% of Ohioans questioned said they weren't able to make last month's rent or mortgage payment or had little or no confidence they could pay next month's.

Nationally, the figure was 26.5% among adults 18 years or older, with numbers in Louisiana, Oklahoma, Nevada, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, New York, Tennessee and Texas reaching 30% or higher. The margins of error in the survey vary by state.

"I've never seen this many people poised to lose their housing in a such a short period of time," Faith said. "This is a huge disaster that is beginning to unfold."

Housing advocates fear parts of the country could soon look like Milwaukee, which saw a 21% spike in eviction filings in June, to nearly 1,500 after the moratorium was lifted in May. It's more than 24% across the state.

"We are sort of a harbinger of what is to come in other places," said Colleen Foley, the executive director of the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee.

"We are getting calls to us from zip codes that we don't typically serve, the part of the community that aren't used to coming to us," she added. "It's a reflection of the massive job loss and a lot of people facing eviction who aren't used to not paying their rent."

In New Orleans, a legal aid organization saw its eviction-related caseload almost triple in the month since Louisiana's moratorium ended in mid-June. Among those seeking help is Natasha Blunt, who could be evicted from her two-bedroom apartment where she lives with her two grandchildren.

Blunt, a 50-year-old African American, owes thousands of dollars in back rent after she lost her banquet porter job. She has yet to receive her stimulus check and has not been approved for unemployment benefits. Her family is getting by with food stamps and the charity of neighbors.

"I can't believe this happened to me because I work hard," said Blunt, whose eviction is at the mercy of the federal moratorium. "I don't have any money coming in. I don't have nothing. I don't know what to do. ... My heart is so heavy."

Along with exacerbating a housing crisis in many cities that have long been plagued by a shortage of affordable options, widespread discrimination and a lack of resources for families in need, the spike in filings is raising concerns that housing courts could spread the coronavirus.

Many cities are still running hearings virtually. But others, like New Orleans, have opened their housing courts. Masks and temperature checks are required, but maintaining social distance has been a challenge.

"The first couple of weeks, we were in at least two courts where we felt really quite unsafe," said Hannah Adams, a staff attorney with Southeast Louisiana Legal Services.

In Columbus, Ohio, Amanda Wood was among some 60 people on the docket Friday for eviction hearings at a convention center converted into a courtroom.

Wood, 23, lost her job at a claims management company in early April. The following day, the mother of a 6-month-old found out she was pregnant again. Now, she is two months behind rent and can't figure out a way to make ends meet.

Wood managed to find a part-time job at FedEx, loading vans at night. But her pregnancy and inability

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to find stable childcare has left her with inconsistent paychecks.

"The whole process has been really difficult and scary," said Wood, who is hoping to set up a payment scheduled after meeting with a lawyer Friday. "Not knowing if you're going to have somewhere to live, when you're pregnant and have a baby, is hard."

Though the numbers of eviction filings in Ohio and elsewhere are rising and, in some places reaching several hundred a week, they are still below those in past years for July. Higher numbers are expected in August and September.

Experts credit the slower pace to the federal eviction moratorium as well as states and municipalities that used tens of millions of dollars in federal stimulus funding for rental assistance. It also helped that several states, including Massachusetts and Arizona, have extended their eviction moratorium into the fall.

Still, experts argue more needs to be done at the state and federal level for tenants and landlords.

Negotiations between Congress and the White House over further assistance are ongoing. A \$3 trillion coronavirus relief bill passed in May by Democrats in the House would provide about \$175 billion to pay rents and mortgages, but the \$1 trillion counter from Senate Republicans only has several billion in rental assistance. Advocacy groups are looking for over \$100 billion.

"An eviction moratorium without rental assistance is still a recipe for disaster," said Graham Bowman, staff attorney with the Ohio Poverty Law Center. "We need the basic economics of the housing market to continue to work. The way you do that is you need broad-based rental assistance available to families who have lost employment during this crisis."

"The scale of this problem is enormous so it needs a federal response."

Casey reported from Boston. Associated Press Writer Farnoush Amiri in Columbus, Ohio, contributed.

Asian shares track worldwide rally as S&P 500 nears record

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

Shares advanced across Asia on Tuesday after Wall Street closed broadly higher on encouraging economic reports, starting off August by closing within 3% of the record high it set in February.

Investors appear to be shrugging off surging coronavirus caseloads in dozens of countries.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 gained 1.4% to 22,505.83 and the Hang Seng in Hong Kong added 0.7% to 24,637.24. Sydney's S&P ASX 200 jumped 1.6% to 6,022.50 and the Kospi in Seoul picked up 1.1% to 2,275.84. The Shanghai Composite index edged 0.1% higher to 3,372.76.

Overnight, the S&P 500 added another 0.7% onto its four-month winning streak, closing within 3% of the record high it set in February, at 3,294.61.

Big Tech led the way higher again, and Microsoft and Apple alone accounted for most of the S&P 500's gain.

The rally followed reports showing that manufacturing has improved across much of the world, including in China, Europe and the United States. With the total caseload rising by less than 50,000 for two straight days, investors bet that U.S. outbreaks might be moderating, said Jeffrey Halley of Oanda.

"Hopes rose that the U.S. might avoid a deeper recession, which was all financial markets needed to send equity markets higher, and for the U.S. dollar to continue recovering some of its recent losses," Halley said in a commentary.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.9% to 26,664.40, while gains for tech stocks, particularly Microsoft and Apple, pushed the Nasdaq composite 1.5% higher, to 10,902.80, another record.

Microsoft jumped 5.6% Monday after it confirmed that it's in talks to buy the U.S. arm of TikTok, a Chinese-owned video app that is very popular but has also drawn the White House's scrutiny. Microsoft said its CEO, Satya Nadella, has discussed the issue with President Donald Trump, and the tech giant expects the talks with TikTok to end no later than Sept. 15, either with a deal or without.

Apple added 2.5%, piling more gains onto its 10.5% rise Friday following a blowout report showing that its profits during the spring easily topped Wall Street's expectations.

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In Washington, slow, grinding negotiations on another huge relief effort for the U.S. economy continue, with both the Trump administration negotiating team and top Capitol Hill Democrats reporting progress over the weekend.

The discussions have added urgency now that \$600 in weekly benefits from the federal government for laid-off workers have expired, just as the number of layoffs ticks up amid a resurgence of coronavirus counts and business restrictions.

The continued spread of the coronavirus is raising worries that the economy could backslide again and snuff out the budding improvements it's shown.

Through the pandemic, though, Big Tech has remained almost immune to such concerns on expectations that it can continue to grow.

Apart from the "wall of money" buttressing markets thanks to massive monetary stimulus and government spending, it seems that "investors are already inoculated from the virus while camping under the tech umbrella," Stephen Innes of AxiCorp. said in a commentary.

Meanwhile, across the market corporate profits have exceeded analysts' expectations. Roughly two-thirds of the way into earnings season, 84% of S&P 500 companies have reported stronger results than expected, according to FactSet.

In other trading, the yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 0.56% from 0.55% late Monday.

Benchmark U.S. crude lost 28 cents to \$40.73 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It rose 1.8% to settle at \$41.01 per barrel on Monday. Brent crude, the international standard, slipped 31 cents to \$43.84. It climbed 1.4% to \$44.15 per barrel on Monday.

The U.S. dollar bought 106.12 Japanese yen, up from 105.96 yen late Monday. The euro rose to \$1.1767 from \$1.1765.

AP Business Writer Stan Choe contributed.

Shops closed, beaches deserted as Isaias nears the Carolinas

By SARAH BLAKE MORGAN Associated Press

NORTH MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. (AP) — Coastal shops and restaurants closed early, power began to flicker at oceanfront hotels and even the most adventurous of beachgoers abandoned the sand Monday night as newly restrengthened Hurricane Isaias sped toward the Carolinas.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center warned oceanside home dwellers to brace for storm surge up to 5 feet (1.5 meters) and up to 8 inches (20 centimeters) of rain in spots, as Isaias moved up the coast. The Carolinas weren't the only states at risk.

"All those rains could produce flash flooding across portions of the eastern Carolinas and mid-Atlantic, and even in the northeast U.S.," said Daniel Brown, senior hurricane specialist at the U.S. National Hurricane Center. A tropical storm warning extended all the way up to Maine, where flash flooding was possible in some areas on Wednesday.

The center also warned of possible tornadoes in North Carolina on Monday night and early Tuesday, and from eastern Virginia to southern New England later Tuesday.

Isaias (pronounced ees-ah-EE-ahs) was upgraded again from a tropical storm to a Category 1 hurricane at 11 p.m. EDT. The storm had maximum sustained winds of 85 miles (137 kph) and was centered about 40 miles (64 kilometers) east northeast of Myrtle Beach. It was moving north northeast at 22 mph (35 kph). The Hurricane Center said it expected the storm to make landfall early Tuesday near southern North Carolina.

Isaias killed two people in the Caribbean and roughed up the Bahamas but remained at sea as it brushed past Florida over the weekend, providing some welcome relief to emergency managers who had to accommodate mask-wearing evacuees in storm shelters. The center of Isaias remained well offshore as it passed Georgia's coast on Monday.

President Donald Trump on Monday described Isaias as "very serious."

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"Storm surge and inland flooding are possible and everyone needs to remain vigilant until it passes," Trump said.

Authorities in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, ordered swimmers out of the water to avoid rough surf and strong rip currents. By nightfall, power began to flicker at beachfront hotels as Isaias crossed the last bit of warm water on its path toward the U.S. mainland.

Still, on this part of the South Carolina and North Carolina coasts that has been affected to varying degrees by seven tropical storms or hurricanes since 2014, residents weren't panicking.

"It's just going to be a lot of wind and high tide," said Mike Fuller, who has lived along the coast for more than a decade.

As the storm neared the shore, a gauge on a pier in Myrtle Beach recorded its third highest water level since it was set up in 1976. Only Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and Hurricane Matthew in 2016 pushed more salt water inland.

Oceanfront streets throughout the area flooded as the sea ended up nearly 10 feet (3 meters) above low tide.

Up the coast in southern North Carolina, high winds from Isaias' inner core knocked down trees and power lines, blocking roads. No major damage was initially reported.

Shops and restaurants appeared quieter than usual for a summertime Monday in North Myrtle Beach, but locals blamed COVID-19 more than Isaias. No businesses were boarding up their windows, although some moved outside furniture inside.

Wayne Stanley and his family came to the city over the weekend from Julian, North Carolina. He's never experienced a hurricane, but said he never considered canceling his family's weeklong vacation either.

"I was pretty scared to start off with," Stanley said Monday. "Then we thought maybe it's not going to be that bad."

Officials in frequently flooded Charleston, South Carolina, handed out sandbags and opened parking garages so residents on the low-lying peninsula could stow their cars above ground. Forecasters had warned earlier of possible major flooding, but the storm passed faster than expected and only about a dozen streets were flooded.

Farther up the coast into North Carolina, the hurricane center predicted storm surges of 3 to 5 feet (0.9 to 1.5 meters) when Isaias moves onshore.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper warned residents on Monday that the storm could be dangerous regardless of its strength. He urged those evacuating to turn to shelters as a last resort, citing coronavirus risks and the need to operate shelters at reduced capacity to allow for social distancing.

"Whether it's labeled a tropical storm or a hurricane, you should take this storm seriously, and make sure your family is ready," Cooper said.

Ferry operators wrapped up evacuations from Ocracoke Island in North Carolina's Outer Banks on Monday, moving more than 3,500 people and 1,700 vehicles off the island over four days. Island officials were taking no chances after taking a beating less than a year ago from Hurricane Dorian. Evacuation orders also have been issued for Hatteras Island north of Ocracoke.

Morgan Stewart said many evacuating residents had come into the store where she works in the inland community of Kinston to buy tarps, batteries, flashlights and other supplies.

"You can tell they're worried," said Stewart, who saw cars parked on higher ground over the weekend as she secured her boat at a marina.

Since forming last week, Isaias has been buffeted by competing forces both trying to kill and strengthen it, said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy.

"Of all the places it could be, it found the warmest water it could," which fuels storm development, McNoldy said. "And yet it is struggling."

That's because dry air kept working its way into the storm at low and mid-levels, which chokes storms.

Isaias' passage near Florida over the weekend was particularly unwelcome to authorities already dealing with surging coronavirus caseloads. The storm brought heavy rain and flooding to the state, forcing

authorities to close outdoor virus testing sights, as well as beaches and parks. Officials lashed signs to palm trees so they wouldn't blow away.

About 150 people had to keep masks on while sheltering in Palm Beach County, which had a voluntary evacuation order for people living in homes that can't withstand dangerous winds, said emergency management spokeswoman Lisa De La Rionda.

— This story has been edited to correct the spelling of Isaias in the third paragraph from the bottom.

— Associated Press reporters Russ Bynum in Savannah, Georgia; Jeffrey Collins and Michelle Liu in Columbia, South Carolina; Sophia Tulp in Atlanta; and AP Science Writer Seth Borenstein in Kensington, Maryland, contributed to this report.

St Louis series at Detroit off after positive Cards tests

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Seven St. Louis Cardinals players and six staff members have tested positive for COVID-19, causing Major League Baseball to postpone the team's four-game series at Detroit.

The series was to have been played at Comerica Park from Tuesday through Thursday.

"You think about how quickly something like this can spread," Cardinals general manager John Mozeliak said. "Until it touches you, you sometimes might not believe it, but needless to say we know this is very real and we know it moves quickly and it moves silently, but it can infect a lot of people fast."

Mozeliak said that five of those who tested positive did not show symptoms. He said the others did — headaches, cough, sniffles, low-grade fever.

"And of those eight, it's a variety of symptoms but nothing at this point requiring anything like hospitalization," Mozeliak said.

The Cardinals have been in quarantine since Thursday in Milwaukee, where their series with the Brewers was also postponed due to positive tests. The league has postponed 21 games because of virus concerns 12 days into the season.

The Cardinals' situation comes after the Miami Marlins had an outbreak in their traveling party that sidelined half their players, raising concerns about the viability of this pandemic-shortened season.

"To this point, unfortunately, we've handled this the same way our country's handled this," Brewers manager Craig Counsell said. "We put together guidelines that were well-intentioned and protocols, and then we handed them off to 30 individual operators, i.e. states, and asked them to do their best. Adherence to a set of protocols and suggestions and trying to get it right has just not gone well. It just hasn't gone well."

"It's because this virus is an incredible, difficult opponent. It's put us behind the 8-ball. I desperately want to play and finish the season it's so important for so many people and so many places. But it's not going well right now. It's not."

Brewers outfielder Lorenzo Cain announced Saturday he wouldn't play the rest of the season and cited "all of the uncertainty and unknowns surrounding our game at this time." Teammate Shelby Miller also opted out.

Counsell said Monday that "it's safe to say the news of the Cardinals was jarring and it may have been the final straw" for Cain.

While all the members of the Cardinals' traveling party who tested positive have been returned home, the rest of them remain isolated in their Milwaukee hotel rooms.

The team is being tested daily.

"The hope would be to travel back to St. Louis Wednesday morning, work out Wednesday afternoon and allow players to get their feet moving again, their bodies moving again," Mozeliak said. "And then on Thursday have a more robust workout and then play Friday."

St. Louis last played July 29 at Minnesota and is tentatively set to resume its schedule this Friday at home against the Chicago Cubs.

Mozeliak said he wasn't sure how the team might reschedule some of these games that have been wiped

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out with two series getting postponed.

"I haven't really even thought about our schedule much other than hopefully playing Friday," Mozeliak said. "It's hard to think about the future when you're literally trying to just get through the day."

The Cardinals are the second team sidelined by the novel coronavirus since the season started July 23..

The Marlins are set to resume play Tuesday in Baltimore following an outbreak in their traveling party that sidelined half the players. Miami has not played since July 26.

Because the outbreak occurred in the visiting clubhouse at Citizens Bank Park, the Phillies were sidelined for a week while they were tested daily.

"I think everyone would be lying if they said they weren't frustrated," Philadelphia slugger Rhys Hoskins said. "We knew the volatility of the virus coming into the season. We knew these things were a possibility. Not ideal, but here we are where we get to play again."

In another virus development, the Field of Dreams game in Iowa was postponed until 2021. The game at a new ballpark on the cornfield adjacent to the site of the 1989 movie had been planned for Aug. 13 in Dyersville.

The Chicago White Sox originally were to host the New York Yankees, who were replaced by St. Louis because of MLB's new schedule. The White Sox will be one of the teams next year. The opponent has not been determined.

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

Smile more? Some critics see sexism in debate over Biden VP

By SARA BURNETT and ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — She's too ambitious. She's not apologetic enough. She should smile more.

The debate over Joe Biden's running mate has recently ticked through a familiar list of stereotypes about women in politics as the Democratic presidential candidate and his allies stumble through a search they had hoped would stand out for its inclusion and diversity.

Instead, the vice presidential vetting has resurfaced internal party divisions between the old-guard establishment and a younger generation that's more attuned to gender and racial biases and willing to speak out. Some contend it's just more evidence of why Biden needs a woman on his ticket.

"The fact is that although we've come really far in the last 100 years, we haven't come far enough for women candidates to be treated with the same level of decency as the male candidates are," said Donna Brazile, a former Democratic National Committee chair.

Biden, the presumptive nominee and a former vice president himself, has said he will pick a woman as his number two and he would probably reach a decision this week, though a formal announcement could come later.

The scrutiny of his choices has intensified in recent weeks, while allies have weighed in, sometimes in ways that feed the tensions.

On Monday, Ed Rendell, a former Democratic Party chairman and a Biden ally, was quoted in The Washington Post noting that there has been recent buzz about former National Security Adviser Susan Rice. He observed that Rice was smiling during a TV appearance, "something that she doesn't do all that readily," and that she was "actually somewhat charming."

Rendell, 76, has commented on another candidate's demeanor, too, telling CNN last week that California Sen. Kamala Harris can "rub people the wrong way."

Some see that sort of commentary — docking women for being aggressive and rewarding them for intangibles such as likability — as the sort of bias they say has dogged women in politics for decades.

Rendell said in a phone interview Monday that any suggestions his comment about Rice was sexist were "ludicrous." He said it was a compliment, a description of a good candidate, no different from when people commented on Richard Nixon smiling more on the comeback trail.

"This country is so nuts," he said of criticism of his choice of words, blaming it partly on the media.

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"We're going crazy."

Politico recently reported that former Connecticut Sen. Chris Dodd, the co-chair of Biden's vetting committee, was concerned that Harris, a former presidential candidate, was not sufficiently regretful about attacking Biden during a primary debate. Others have criticized Harris, who is considered a top prospect, as too ambitious.

Stacey Abrams, the former minority leader of the Georgia House of Representatives and 2018 governor candidate, was similarly criticized for touting her credentials for the V.P. job. She pushed back, saying it would be a disservice to women of color and "women of ambition" to not be forthright.

She said Sunday on MSNBC, "When you do something different, when you meet the standards that are normative for men with a behavior that they don't expect from you, either as a woman or person of color, then you're going to get critiqued."

Rice is African American. Harris's parents are both immigrants, her father from Jamaica, her mother from India.

That some comments and criticism are coming from older, white men with longtime relationships with the 77-year-old, white Biden has been noted.

Glynda Carr, president of Higher Heights for America, a group that aims to help increase Black women's political power, said she believes it's a reaction — conscious or subconscious — from male leaders who "may feel their type of leadership will be hard to maintain" with today's electorate.

Carr compared them, without naming names, to "dinosaurs in extinction." She urged the Biden campaign to wrap the process up soon.

"I do think the longer we go there are diminishing returns because everybody feels they need to chime in," she said.

Comments focusing on gender — as well as the the media's focus on them — are a sore spot for Democrats who fear a repeat of 2016, when they believe presidential nominee Hillary Clinton was defeated in part because of sexist attitudes.

They note that Biden himself is a former vice president — with enough ambition to fuel his third run for the presidency — and say no one would criticize Republican Vice President Mike Pence for eyeing the top job. And they say the conversation about the candidates has been focused on motives, demeanor or personality traits at a level far greater than it would be, or has been, when men are being considered.

Antjuan Seawright, a veteran South Carolina Democratic strategist, says the media are intent on ginning up conflict and finding dirt on rising leaders.

"I hope that this process doesn't devolve into what some are trying to make it out to be — and that's pitting two African American women that are pivotal to this party and this country against each other," he said.

However, lifelong experience with sexism and racism will only help potential running mates make better leaders for a country dealing with a global pandemic, racial injustice and other crises, said the Rev. Barbara Williams-Skinner, one of more than 100 Black clergy who have urged Biden to choose a Black woman as running mate

"It is always harder for women. When you're at that level of power, you have to ready for that fight, and you have to expect it," she said, adding that the scrutiny men face is "much fairer."

"We'd all like to see a day when women are treated more fairly," she said. "We're not in that day."

Jaffe reported from Washington, D.C.

Parents struggle as schools reopen amid coronavirus surge

By JEFF AMY and DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

DALLAS, Ga. (AP) — Putting your child on the bus for the first day of school is always a leap of faith for a parent. Now, on top of the usual worries about youngsters adjusting to new teachers and classmates, there's COVID-19.

Rachel Adamus was feeling those emotions Monday morning as she got 7-year-old Paul ready for his first day of second grade and prepared 5-year-old Neva for the start of kindergarten.

With a new school year beginning this week in some states, Adamus struggled to balance her fears with her belief that her children need the socialization and instruction that school provides, even as the U.S. death toll from the coronavirus has hit about 155,000 and cases are rising in numerous places.

As the bus pulled away from the curb in Adamus' Dallas, Georgia, neighborhood, the tears finally began to fall.

"We have kept them protected for so long," said Adamus, who said her aunt died from COVID-19 in Alabama and her husband's great-uncle succumbed to the virus in a New Jersey nursing home. "They haven't been to restaurants. We only go to parks if no one else is there. We don't take them to the grocery store. And now they're going to be in the classroom with however many kids for an entire day with a teacher."

The Adamus children are among tens of thousands of students across the nation who resumed in-person school Monday for the first time since March. Parents in Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee are also among those navigating the new academic year this week.

Many schools that are recommencing in-person instruction are also giving parents a stay-at-home virtual option; Adamus, like many other parents, decided against that. Other schools are planning a hybrid approach, with youngsters alternating between in-person classes and online learning.

But an uptick in COVID-19 cases in many states has prompted districts to scrap in-person classes at least for the start of the school year, including Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Washington.

President Donald Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos have urged schools to reopen. However, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious-disease expert, warned Monday: "There may be some areas where the level of virus is so high that it would not be prudent to bring the children back to school."

"So you can't make one statement about bringing children back to school in this country. It depends on where you are," he said.

In Indiana, where schools reopened last week, a student at Greenfield-Central Junior High tested positive on the first day back to class and was isolated in the school clinic.

"This really does not change our plans," School Superintendent Harold Olin said. "We knew that we would have a positive case at some point in the fall. We simply did not think it would happen on Day One."

Elsewhere in Indiana, Elwood Junior Senior High suspended in-person classes two days into the school year after at least one staffer tested positive.

In Newton County, Mississippi, fourth grader Avery Mangum returned to school for the first time in months to find many things changed: She had to wear a mask, sit in an assigned seat and eat in her classroom instead of in the cafeteria. When kids in her class moved around the school, they followed their teacher in a straight line with one arm sticking out in front of them to make sure they stayed at least an arm's length away from other kids.

The playground at Avery's school was split in two: Some kids could play on half of the equipment, and others on the other half, with only a certain number allowed in total.

"It was really hard to socially distance while we were at recess," she said. "Everyone wants to play with their friends and do all these things but we can't."

Emily Thompson's son started the sixth grade at Newton County Middle/High School in Decatur. Thompson, a pharmacist, said she felt relief watching him get in line to have his temperature taken before entering the building.

She and her husband, who also works in health care, found it was a "nightmare" trying to keep the boy and their two other elementary school-age children on track with their studies. She said she is not overly worried about her children getting sick at school.

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"It would be more detrimental not to send them, in my opinion, than for them to hang out and do the virtual learning," she said. "I think they're going to get more interaction at school. They are going to learn more at school. They just need to be in that setting."

In Georgia's Paulding County, both of Adamus' children wore masks, though that is not mandatory for the 30,000 students in the county, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) northwest of Atlanta.

Adamus lives near North Paulding High School, where the principal sent a letter over the weekend announcing a football player tested positive for the virus after attending practice. The Georgia High School Association, in a memo last week, said it has received reports of 655 positive tests since workouts for football and other sports started on June 8.

One student who wasn't starting at North Paulding on Monday was Aliyah Williams. Her mother, Erica Williams, said she is keeping the 14-year-old freshman home because two of her younger sons have cystic fibrosis and she can't risk their being exposed. Williams said she thinks her daughter will be OK academically with online classes, which up to 30% of the district's students have enrolled in. But she is worried about Aliyah's inability to see her friends.

"She's a social butterfly. That's a big part of her personality," Williams said.

Aliyah has been participating in color guard with the school band, but Williams said she is now "conflicted" about that too, considering the football player's positive test.

Other Paulding County parents were eager for in-person classes. Jenna Thames drove 8-year-old Brantley to his first day of third grade and 6-year-old Rhett to his first day of first grade.

Thames said that no one at her house is high-risk and that as a former teacher, she thinks her children will learn more from teachers than they did from her in the spring.

"They're going to actually listen to their teacher, as opposed to me. When it's time to do sight words, it was a fight every day," Thames said. "I absolutely trust our administration and our teachers to do what it takes to keep them safe and keep themselves safe."

Many teachers are uneasy, dismayed that the Paulding district refused to mandate masks or push back the start date for in-person classes, as other Atlanta-area districts have done. But with Georgia's weak unions, there has been little organized opposition.

"I desperately want to return to face-to-face teaching, but not until it is safe," Steven Hanft, a North Paulding High teacher, told the county school board last month.

Other parents have to balance their job with schooling decisions. Shannon Dunn has to report to her job this week as a cafeteria manager at an elementary school in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, but she has no idea what she will do when her daughter starts kindergarten with online-only instruction.

"My family works. I have no one I can take her to and say, 'OK, at 12 o'clock you are going to have to start working online with her for school,'" Dunn said.

School officials have said they hope to begin in-person classes after Labor Day. But Dunn said that will not ease her mind completely.

"If I hear of the spread of COVID at the school, then I'd have to rethink it all over again," she said.

Lavoie reported from Richmond, Virginia. AP journalists from around the world contributed to this report.

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

Progress slow on virus relief bill as negotiations continue

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Negotiators on a huge coronavirus relief bill reported slight progress after talks resumed Monday afternoon in the Capitol, with issues like food for the poor and aid to schools struggling to reopen safely assuming a higher profile in the talks.

Multiple obstacles remain, including an impasse so far on extending a \$600-per-week pandemic jobless benefit, funding for the Postal Service, and aid to renters facing eviction. Democratic negotiators spoke

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of progress at almost the very moment that top Senate Republican Mitch McConnell was slamming them for taking a hard line in the talks.

"We are really getting an understanding of each side's position. And we're making some progress on certain issues moving closer together," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. "There are a lot of issues that are still outstanding. But I think there is a desire to get something done as soon as we can."

After the meeting, Pelosi told her Democratic colleagues on a call that she's hopeful a deal could be reached this week, but doesn't know if it's possible, according to a Democratic aide who was granted anonymity to describe the private discussion.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, a lead negotiator for President Donald Trump, said afterward that "we continue to make a little bit of progress" and that the administration is not insistent on a small-bore approach centered on extending the supplemental unemployment benefit and leaving other items for later. A GOP move to advance a slimmed-down relief package has been a recent point of conflict, with Democrats insisting there must be a comprehensive deal.

"We're open to a bigger package if we can reach an agreement," Mnuchin said.

On the Senate floor, McConnell, R-Ky., re-upped his complaint that Democrats are taking too tough a line. McConnell is not a direct participant in the talks but is likely to be an important force in closing out any potential agreement.

"The Speaker of the House and the Democratic Leader are continuing to say 'our way or the highway' with a massive wish list for left-wing lobbyists that was slapped together a few weeks ago called a coronavirus bill," McConnell said.

Speaking to reporters after the two-hour session, Democratic negotiators pressed the case for additional food aid, funding for the Postal Service, and the \$600-per-week jobless benefit that lapsed last week. The benefit has helped prop up the economy and family budgets as the coronavirus has wrought havoc.

The White House is seeking opportunities to boost Trump, like providing another round of \$1,200 stimulus payments and extending the supplemental jobless benefit and partial eviction ban. Pelosi appears intent on an agreement as well, but she's made it clear she needs big money for state and local governments, unemployment benefits and food aid.

"It was productive, we're moving down the track. We still have our differences, we are trying to have a clearer understanding of what the needs are, and the needs are that millions of children in our country are food insecure," Pelosi said. "Millions of people in our country are concerned about being evicted. Tens of millions of people are on unemployment insurance."

Most members of the Democratic-controlled House have left Washington and won't return until there is an agreement to vote on, but the GOP-held Senate is trapped in the capital.

"I can't see how we can go home and tell people we've failed, so I think that's going to be a lot of pressure on everybody to come up with something," said Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas. "It really is a matter of will. It's not a matter of substance at this point. This is just a painful period between people finally deciding OK, we want a deal, and then what that deal will ultimately look like."

Areas of agreement already include the \$1,200 direct payment and changes to the Paycheck Protection Program to permit especially hard-hit businesses to obtain another loan under generous forgiveness terms.

But the terms and structure of the unemployment benefit have remained a sticking point, along with the money for state and local governments. Democrats want almost \$1 trillion for localities grappling with pandemic-related revenue losses.

Speaking to reporters Monday evening, Trump made clear the two sides were still far apart on that issue.

"They want to bail out cities and states that have been in trouble for years of bad management," Trump said. "In all cases Democrat-run cities, and we don't think that's fair."

McConnell is insistent on a liability shield against lawsuits by workers, students, and others against institutions seeking to remain open during the pandemic, including businesses, universities and charities.

On Monday, unions representing professional athletes — including NFL players and Major League Baseball players — weighed in against McConnell's proposal, saying in a letter to lawmakers, "It makes little

sense during these uncertain times to both ask employees to return to work and, at the same time, accept all the risk for doing so.”

On unemployment, Pelosi said she’d consider reducing the \$600 benefit for people in states with lower unemployment rates. Republicans want to cut the benefit to encourage beneficiaries to return to work and say it is bad policy since it pays many jobless people more money than they made at their previous jobs.

Another sticking point is that Republicans want to give more school aid to systems that are restarting with in-school learning, even as Dr. Deborah Birx, Trump’s top coronavirus adviser, cautioned that schools in areas with spikes in cases should delay reopening.

Pelosi said Monday’s talks featured extensive discussion on reopening schools. Schumer said the discussion got into the details on the dollar figures involving school aid and food aid.

The House passed a \$3.5 trillion measure in May, but Republicans controlling the Senate have demanded a slower approach, saying it was necessary to take a “pause” before passing additional legislation. Since they announced that strategy, however, coronavirus caseloads have spiked and the economy has absorbed an enormous blow.

Associated Press writer Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

Kids getting caught in crossfire as US gun violence surges

By DON BABWIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — July in Chicago ended as it began: Mourning the death of a child whose only mistake was venturing outside to play when someone armed with a gun came to the neighborhood hunting for an enemy.

On Monday, two days after his department released statistics that revealed the month had been one of the deadliest in the history of the city, Police Superintendent David Brown repeated what has become a grim ritual of recounting the death of a child.

This time, the story was about Janari Ricks. “Nine years old, (he) was shot and killed while doing what every child in our city should be able to do without a second thought ... playing with friends on a warm summer evening just outside his front door,” said Brown. “Now, instead of planning for his future, Janari’s parents are arranging for their child’s funeral.”

His death underscores a surge in gun violence in the the United States that has been building all year.

In New York City, there have been 237 homicides in 2020 compared to 181 for the same period last year.

In Atlanta, the totals are lower but the surge is apparent: 76 homicides so far this year compared to 56 for the first seven months of 2019. Of this year’s total number of homicides, 23, or nearly a third, were recorded in July alone.

It has been a similar story in Boston. After recording 25 homicides in the first seven months of 2019, Boston had 35 during the same period this year. And 15 of those were during July.

Just how many of the year’s victims are children is difficult to say. But every day headlines around the country tell story after story of children dying while doing nothing more than being children.

In Ohio, in little more than a week: A 14-year-old boy in Columbus died on July 25 when he was shot while riding a scooter; An infant was killed and his twin brother wounded when someone fired shots into their home on July 22. And on Sunday, a 1-year-old was killed in Akron and two adults wounded when someone opened fire on a home.

It was not immediately clear exactly how many children were homicide victims this year in Ohio, but in Columbus alone, the total stands at 13.

In Philadelphia, a 7-year-old shot in the head over the weekend during a shootout between three men in front of his home later died of his injuries. Police spokesman Inspector Sekou Kinebrew said Zamar Jones died Monday. The boy was sitting on his porch Saturday when he was shot.

One of the men involved in the shooting, Christopher Linder, 27, was arrested and charged with attempted murder and aggravated assault, and now faces murder charges, the district attorney’s office said. The

others involved in the shooting aren't in custody.

According to Philadelphia police, the city has seen a 36% increase in gun violence this year over last year. The number of people murdered through Sunday was 255, a 34% increase over last year, and more than the annual total for 2014, when 248 people were slain.

In the minutes after July became August, the Chicago Police Department reported there had been 105 homicides during the month compared to 44 in July 2019, making it the deadliest month in the city since September 1992.

Chicago had suffered 440 homicides by the end of July, compared to 290 for the same period last year. And more and more of the victims are children.

Brown said Janari was the 38th juvenile to be fatally shot in the city this year. In all, 19 children under the age of 10 have been shot in 2020, five of them fatally.

According to a report published Monday in the Chicago Tribune, those five homicides are more than double the tally for children under 10 shot and killed than in any other year in the last eight years.

The reasons, according to those who watch the violence, try to prevent it and have been touched by it, begin with the open gang warfare in Chicago that seems to have increased in recent years. Brown has said there are more than 100,000 gang members who belong to the city's 55 known gangs that are themselves divided into some 2,500 subsets of gangs.

But recent shootings, including one outside the funeral of a gang member, underlines a terrorizing fact about the gangs: they seem more willing than ever to simply open fire in the direction of a rival without regard to anyone else.

That is what happened on the evening of July 4 when, according to prosecutors, three men in a car spotted a man they believed killed a member of their gang days before. They climbed out of the vehicle and opened fire.

One of bullets struck the intended target in the ankle, but a nother hit 7-year-old Natalia Wallace in the forehead and killed her as she played in front of her grandmother's house.

"We shouldn't have to worry about somebody pulling up to shoot (but) it just seems like it's becoming the new normal. A child shot dead playing in the street, just being a kid," said her father, Nathan Wallace. "She was just enjoying the 4th."

The Rev. Michael Pflieger, a Roman Catholic priest and prominent activist on the city's South Side for more than 40 years, said this "new normal" involves a willingness to shoot whoever is near an intended target.

"The shootings used to be targeted, but now it is spraying at porches, parks, down the street," he said. "I don't think they're trying to kill kids but I think their attitude is, 'I may not get you but I know those are your friends and family out there and I will get somebody you know.'"

Associated Press writers Kate Brumback in Atlanta; Andrew Welsh-Huggins in Columbus, Ohio; and Alanna Durkin Richer in Boston contributed to this report.

Prosecutor seeking Trump's taxes cites probe of his business

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A New York City prosecutor fighting to get President Donald Trump's tax returns told a judge Monday he was justified in demanding them because of public reports of "extensive and protracted criminal conduct at the Trump Organization."

Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr. is seeking eight years of the Republican president's personal and corporate tax records, but has disclosed little about what prompted him to request the records, other than part of the investigation related to payoffs to two women to keep them quiet about alleged affairs with Trump.

In a court filing Monday, attorneys for Vance, a Democrat, said the president wasn't entitled to know the exact nature of the grand jury probe, which they called a "complex financial investigation."

They noted, though, that at the time the subpoena for the tax filings was issued to Trump's accountants,

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"there were public allegations of possible criminal activity" at the president's company "dating back over a decade."

They cited several newspaper articles, including one in which the Washington Post examined allegations that Trump had a practice of sending financial statements to potential business partners and banks that inflated the worth of his projects by claiming they were bigger or more potentially lucrative than they actually were.

Another article described congressional testimony by Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, who said the president would overstate the value of his business interests to impress people or lenders, but then deflate the value of assets when trying to reduce his taxes.

The attorneys also cited reports of past non-criminal investigations by New York regulators into whether the conduct described by Cohen amounted to bank or insurance fraud.

"These reports describe transactions involving individual and corporate actors based in New York County, but whose conduct at times extended beyond New York's borders. This possible criminal activity occurred within the applicable statutes of limitations, particularly if the transactions involved a continuing pattern of conduct," the lawyers said.

Trump's legal team has argued that the subpoena for his tax filings was issued in bad faith and amounted to harassment of the president.

Speaking to reporters later Monday, Trump called the district attorney's investigation another attempt by Democrats to damage him.

"This is just a continuation of the witch hunt. It's Democrat stuff. They failed with Mueller. They failed with everything. They failed with Congress. They failed at every stage of the game. This has been going on for three and a half, four years," Trump said, referring to special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation of alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election.

The Supreme Court last month rejected claims by Trump's lawyers that the president could not be criminally investigated while he was in office.

Vance's lawyers urged U.S. District Judge Victor Marrero to swiftly reject Trump's further arguments that the subpoenas were improper, saying the baseless claims were threatening the investigation.

"Every day that goes by is another day Plaintiff effectively achieves the 'temporary absolute immunity' that was rejected by this Court, the Court of Appeals, and the Supreme Court," Vance's lawyers said.

Marrero has scheduled arguments to be fully submitted by mid-August.

Vance sought the tax records in part for a probe of how Cohen arranged during the 2016 presidential race to keep the porn actress Stormy Daniels and model Karen McDougal from airing claims of extramarital affairs with Trump. Trump has denied the affairs.

Cohen is serving the last two years of a three-year prison sentence in home confinement after pleading guilty to campaign finance violations, lying to Congress and tax crimes. He said he plans to publish a book critical of the president before the November election.

If the court orders Trump's accounting firm to give his tax returns to the grand jury, they could be used in any criminal inquiry, but would not be released publicly. Grand jury documents are secret in New York.

Associated Press Writer Zeke Miller in Washington D.C. contributed to this report.

Nevada to mail all voters ballots; Trump promises lawsuit

By SAM METZ AP/Report for America

CARSON CITY, Nev. (AP) — Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak signed legislation Monday to mail all of the state's active voters ballots ahead of the November election, a move being criticized by President Donald Trump, who promised a lawsuit to block the action.

"This bill will enable election officials to continue to support the safest, most accessible election possible under these unprecedented circumstances," Sisolak, a Democrat, said in a statement.

Nevada joins seven states that plan to automatically send voters mail ballots amid the coronavirus pan-

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demic, including California and Vermont, which moved earlier this summer to adopt automatic mail ballot policies.

The plan drew criticism from Trump after making its way through the Legislature over the weekend. The president has long claimed that mail ballots would compromise the integrity of the election, but the consensus among experts is that all forms of voter fraud are rare.

At a Monday press conference, Trump said that he planned to file a lawsuit against Nevada as early as Tuesday. He called universal mail ballots a disgrace and said they would be a great embarrassment to the United States.

He took aim at a provision that expands who can collect and return ballots, which he said enabled individuals to "take thousands of ballots, put them together and just dump them down on somebody's desk after a certain period of time."

He also targeted the provision that allows ballots postmarked by Election Day to be counted up to a week later could create a circumstance where the race couldn't be called in a timely manner.

"You'll never know who won that state," he said.

Former Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid applauded the lawmakers' decision and called Trump's opposition desperate.

"He's lying about our state leaders and threatening a bogus lawsuit simply because Democrats made it easier for people to vote," Reid said in a statement.

Nevada Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske told lawmakers Friday that she wasn't aware of any fraud in the June primary, when the state mailed all active voters absentee ballots and only opened a limited number of polling places to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Limited polling places in Reno and Las Vegas resulted in lines of up to eight hours.

In the June primary, all counties had one polling place except for Clark County, which had three in the Las Vegas area. The bill requires at least 140 polling places throughout the state in November, including 100 in Clark County, which had 179 in the November 2018 election.

Christine Saunders of the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada said the long waits in the June primary demonstrated why the state needs both mail and in-person voting opportunities.

"No one should have to choose between their health and voting," she said.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued election guidance to provide a variety of voting options and limit crowds at polling places.

In states such as Colorado and Oregon, which have mailed all voters ballots for years, the procedure is cheaper than holding an in-person election, officials said.

But Cegavske said the equipment, education, printing and postage would cost the state an additional \$3 million, not including costs to counties, which distribute and tabulate ballots.

Nevada spent more than \$4 million in federal relief money in the June primary, most of it funneled to counties. More than \$1 million went toward leasing counting and sorting machines to accommodate a greater number of absentee ballots.

Cegavske, the state's top election official and only Republican to hold statewide office, opposed the revised procedures. She blasted the Democratic-controlled Legislature for excluding her from discussions and said she saw a draft of the bill only a day before the vote in the state Assembly.

"We were not involved in this bill's writing at all," she said Friday.

The bill gives the governor the power to command the secretary of state to adjust election procedures during a declared state of emergency. It passed on a party-line vote through both the state Senate and Assembly, with Democrats in favor and Republicans opposed.

Republicans were particularly distressed with provisions that expand who is allowed to collect and hand in ballots. They and Trump say it enables a practice detractors call "ballot harvesting," in which volunteers working for political groups collect and turn in large quantities of ballots to tip the scales in elections.

Democrats argued allowing people other than family members to return ballots would help groups like members of Nevada's 32 Native American tribes, who have historically faced difficulty voting and live far from polling places, and seniors who may need assistance with voting and fear venturing to the polls.

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For the June primary, all voters were mailed ballots and 1.6% voted in-person on election day, a tiny share compared to the 34.2% in the state who voted in-person in the November 2018 election.

____ Sam Metz 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 newsrooms to report on under-covered issues.

____ AP writer Zeke Miller contributed reporting from Washington.

Trump fires TVA chair, cites hiring of foreign workers

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Monday that he had fired the chair of the Tennessee Valley Authority, criticizing the federally owned corporation for hiring foreign workers.

Trump told reporters at the White House that he was formally removing chair Skip Thompson and another member of the board, and he threatened to remove other board members if they continued to hire foreign labor. Thompson was appointed to the post by Trump.

The TVA was created in 1933 to provide flood control, electricity generation, fertilizer manufacturing and economic development to the Tennessee Valley, a region that was hard hit by the Great Depression. The region covers most of Tennessee and parts of Alabama, Mississippi and Kentucky as well as small sections of Georgia, North Carolina and Virginia.

Trump also removed board member Richard Howorth, another presidential appointee.

Trump also urged the TVA board to immediately hire a new chief executive officer who "puts the interests of Americans first." According to the president, the current CEO, Jeff Lyash, earned \$8 million a year.

"The new CEO must be paid no more than \$500,000 a year," said Trump, who lacks the authority to remove the CEO. "We want the TVA to take action on this immediately. ... Let this serve as a warning to any federally appointed board: If you betray American workers, you will hear two words: 'You're fired.'"

Trump said the authority was replacing many of its in-house technology workers with contractors who rely heavily on foreign workers under the H1-B visa program for highly skilled workers.

"All TVA employees are U.S. based citizens," said authority public information officer Jim Hopson. "All jobs related to TVA's Information Technology department must be performed in the U.S. by individuals who may legally work in this country."

"As a federal corporation, TVA's Board members serve at the pleasure of the President," Hopson added.

As Trump was meeting with workers who would shortly be laid off by the authority, he was passed a note from chief of staff Mark Meadows that said Lyash had called the White House and was promising to address the labor concerns. Some of the attendees, who are set to see their last paycheck at the end of the month, teared up as Trump read the message.

Trump acknowledged that he was made aware of the issue after seeing a television ad that aired in prime time on Fox News and was produced by U.S. Tech Workers, a nonprofit that wants to limit visas given to foreign technology workers.

The group, led by Kevin Lynn, criticized the TVA for furloughing its own workers and replacing them with contractors using foreign workers with H-1B visas. The ad, Lynn said, had an "audience of one," aiming to persuade Trump to stop the TVA from outsourcing much of its information technology division.

Trump made the announcement as he signed an executive order to require all federal agencies to complete an internal audit to prove they are not replacing qualified American workers with people from other countries. The White House said the order will help prevent federal agencies from unfairly replacing American workers with lower cost foreign labor.

The order followed the TVA's announcement that it would outsource 20% of its technology jobs to companies based in foreign countries. TVA's action could cause more than 200 highly skilled American tech workers in Tennessee to lose their jobs to foreign workers hired on temporary work visas, according to the White House.

Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., said the TVA doesn't get any taxpayer money and defended the CEO's salary, saying it is in the bottom fourth of what his counterparts earn at other big utilities.

"TVA may have shown poor judgment hiring foreign companies during a pandemic, but, on most counts, it does a very good job of producing large amounts of low-cost, reliable electricity. Residential electric rates are among the 25 percent lowest in the country, and industrial rates are among the lowest 10 percent," Alexander said in a statement. "TVA's debt is the lowest in 30 years, its pension fund is stronger and TVA leads the country in new nuclear power plants."

House panel calls new postal chief to explain mail delays

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Oversight Committee has invited the new postmaster general to appear at a September hearing to examine operational changes at the U.S. Postal Service that are causing delays in mail deliveries across the country.

The plan imposed by Louis DeJoy, a Republican fundraiser who took over the top job at the Postal Service in June, eliminates overtime for hundreds of thousands of postal workers and orders that mail be kept until the next day if postal distribution centers are running late.

Rep. Carolyn Maloney, a New York Democrat who chairs the Oversight panel, said the Sept. 17 hearing will focus on "the need for on-time mail delivery during the ongoing pandemic and upcoming election," which is expected to include a major expansion of mail-in ballots.

President Donald Trump has warned that allowing more people to vote by mail will result in a "CORRUPT ELECTION" that will "LEAD TO THE END OF OUR GREAT REPUBLICAN PARTY," even though there's no evidence that will happen. Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and other top administration officials frequently vote absentee themselves.

Last week, Trump even floated on Twitter the prospect of delaying the Nov. 3 election — an idea lawmakers from both parties quickly shot down.

Trump said Monday that the cash-strapped Postal Service is ill-equipped to add the expected influx of mail-in ballots to its responsibility to deliver mail and packages from the boom in internet shopping.

"I don't think the post office is prepared for a thing like this," Trump said at the White House.

Trump also has called the Postal Service "a joke" and said package shipping rates should be at least four times higher for heavy users like Amazon. But shipping and packages are actually a top revenue generator for the Postal Service, and critics say Trump is merely looking to punish Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos in retaliation for unflattering coverage in The Washington Post, which Bezos owns.

The Oversight committee intended to have the hearing with DeJoy this week, Maloney said, but was told DeJoy could not attend because of a meeting of the Postal Service's Board of Governors. DeJoy has confirmed his availability for the September session, she said.

The hearing comes as the Postal Service is reeling from mail delays and financial problems, even as record numbers of mail ballots are expected in the presidential election because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Postal Service officials, bracing for steep losses from the nationwide shutdown caused by the virus, have warned they will run out of money by the end of September without help from Congress. The service reported a \$4.5 billion loss for the quarter ending in March, before the full effects of the shutdown sank in, and expects losses totaling more than \$22 billion over the next 18 months.

"The Postal Service is in a financially unsustainable position, stemming from substantial declines in mail volume and a broken business model," DeJoy said in a statement last week. "We are currently unable to balance our costs with available funding sources to fulfill both our universal service mission and other legal obligations. Because of this, the Postal Service has experienced over a decade of financial losses, with no end in sight, and we face an impending liquidity crisis."

Bills approved by the Democratic-controlled House would set aside \$25 billion to keep the mail flowing, but they remain stalled in the Republican-controlled Senate. Congress has approved a \$10 billion line of credit for the Postal Service, but it remains unused amid restrictions imposed by the Trump administration.

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The Postal Service and Treasury Department announced an agreement in principle on loan terms last week, with a formal agreement expected in the next few weeks. Even with the loan, the Postal Service “remains on an unsustainable path and we will continue to focus on improving operational efficiency,” DeJoy said.

Besides cutting overtime, the new plan halts late trips that are sometimes needed to ensure on-time delivery. If postal distribution centers are running late, “they will keep the mail for the next day,” Postal Service leaders say in a document obtained by The Associated Press. “One aspect of these changes that may be difficult for employees is that — temporarily — we may see mail left behind or mail on the work-room floor or docks,” another document says.

Democratic lawmakers have demanded answers from DeJoy following complaints from constituents about mail service delays and other problems.

“It is essential that the Postal Service not slow down mail or in any way compromise service for veterans, small businesses, rural communities, seniors and millions of Americans who rely on the mail — including significant numbers who will be relying on the Postal Service to exercise their right to vote,” a group of Democratic senators wrote in a letter to DeJoy last week.

The senators, including Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York and Michigan Sen. Gary Peters, the top Democrat on a panel that oversees the Postal Service, said any changes to Postal Service operations “must be carefully considered to ensure they do not limit service for Americans who rely on the mail for essentials, especially during a pandemic.”

In a separate letter, Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., asked DeJoy to clarify whether the Postal Service plans to close some post offices and reduce hours at others in his rural state. Signs at some locations announced proposed closures as soon as Aug. 22 or 24, Manchin said, calling any such action a violation of both federal law and Postal Service rules that require 120 days’ notice before any closures.

“In many areas where reliable broadband is not an option, the Postal Service is their only link to medicine, Social Security checks and family members,” Manchin said. “Under new social distancing mandates, the Postal Service has become even more essential in keeping rural communities connected and economically viable.”

Afghan forces retake prison after deadly attack by IS group

By RAHMAT GUL and RAHIM FAIEZ Associated Press

JALALABAD, Afghanistan (AP) — Militants affiliated with the Islamic State group stormed a prison in eastern Afghanistan in a daylong siege that left at least 39 people dead, including the assailants, and freed nearly 400 of their fighters before security forces restored order, a government official said Monday.

The attack underscored that the Islamic State affiliate in Afghanistan is still a formidable presence, and it highlighted the challenges ahead as U.S. and NATO forces begin to withdraw following Washington’s peace deal with the Taliban.

The peace accord aims to recruit the Taliban to battle the militants from IS, which U.S. officials have told The Associated Press is the Americans’ biggest foe in Afghanistan. Both the Taliban and the IS affiliate are staunch rivals.

At least 10 of the dead were IS militants involved in the assault to free their comrades from the prison in Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province, said Ajmal Omar, a provincial council member. The rest of the dead were believed to be prisoners, civilians and Afghan forces, although no official breakdown was given.

Another 50 people were wounded in the attack that began Sunday when a suicide bomber detonated his explosives-packed vehicle at the entrance to the prison complex some 115 kilometers (70 miles) east of Kabul, Omar said.

Other militants simultaneously stormed the prison and took up positions in nearby residential buildings. They fired on Afghan troops for several hours, even after the security forces retook the prison and began recapturing some of the inmates.

Of the five prisoners killed by the militants, at least three were members of the Taliban, showing the tensions between the two factions.

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An AP photographer who went inside the prison, which houses about 1,500 inmates, said he saw the bodies of five of the attackers and at least four prisoners.

Omar said about 430 prisoners stayed in their cells or hid during the siege. It was unclear Monday how many prisoners remained at large.

One inmate, who gave his name as Azizullah, said he heard the powerful explosion, followed by the militants storming into the main prison block, shouting for their fighters and telling them to flee.

"The aim of this attack was to rescue all Daesh members inside the prison, and unfortunately that included five or six senior Daesh people," Omar said, using an Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group, which is also known as ISIS. Among the prisoners who escaped was the group's shadow governor for neighboring Kunar Province, he said.

The Islamic State affiliate in Afghanistan, known as IS in Khorasan Province, claimed responsibility for the attack. The militants have established a base in Nangarhar Province.

Afghanistan has seen a recent surge in violence, with most attacks claimed by IS militants. U.S. and Afghan forces — along with the Taliban — have pounded IS positions.

While the group's strength might have been reduced, analysts say it is still able to stage such high-profile attacks such as the jailbreak.

"Rumors of the demise of ISIS in Afghanistan are greatly exaggerated. It retains the capacity to carry out attacks, and it continues to gain new recruits ranging from disaffected former Taliban fighters to newly radicalized young Afghans," said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the Washington-based Wilson Center.

"The attack on the jail took place in terrain where ISIS has long had a deep presence, and it used tactics that the group has frequently deployed in Afghanistan," he said. "It amplifies, for Kabul and Washington and other NATO partners, just how serious the ISIS challenge remains."

On Saturday, authorities said Afghan special forces killed a senior Islamic State commander near Jalalabad.

The Taliban's political spokesman, Suhail Shaheen, told the AP that his group was not involved in the prison attack.

"We have a cease-fire and are not involved in any of these attacks anywhere in the country," he said.

The Taliban had declared a three-day cease-fire starting Friday for the major Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha. The cease-fire expired at midnight Sunday, although it wasn't immediately clear if it would be extended.

The U.S. reached the peace deal with the Taliban in February, but a second, crucial round of negotiations between the Taliban and the political leadership in Kabul has yet to begin.

Washington has been pushing for an early start to intra-Afghan negotiations that have repeatedly been delayed since the Taliban accord was reached.

In a tweet late Monday, Shaheen said U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo held a video call with the Taliban's chief negotiator, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. His Pashto language tweet said Pompeo welcomed the cease-fire.

Shaheen repeated the Taliban's demand that the Afghan government free all 5,000 Taliban prisoners it holds in line with the deal. President Ashraf Ghani has refused to release the last 400, calling a grand council of elders for Thursday to decide the issue.

While the Islamic State group has seen its so-called caliphate stretching across Iraq and Syria eliminated after years of fighting, the group has continued its attacks in Afghanistan. The extremists also have battled the Taliban, which was overthrown by the U.S. in a 2001 American-led invasion following the Sept. 11 attacks.

A United Nations report released last month estimated the membership of IS in Afghanistan at 2,200. While its leadership has been depleted, IS still counts among its leaders a Syrian national Abu Said Mohammad al-Khorasani.

The report also said the monitoring team had received information that two senior Islamic State commanders, Abu Qutaibah and Abu Hajar al-Iraqi, had recently arrived in Afghanistan from the Middle East.

—Faiez reported from Kabul, Afghanistan. Associated Press writer Kathy Gannon in Islamabad contributed.

Spain's former king leaving country amid financial scandal

By BARRY HATTON and ALICIA LEÓN Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Spain's former monarch, Juan Carlos I, is leaving Spain to live in another, unspecified, country amid a financial scandal, according to a letter published on the royal family's website Monday.

The letter from Juan Carlos to his son, King Felipe VI, said: "I am informing you of my considered decision to move, during this period, out of Spain."

Juan Carlos, in the letter, said he made the decision against the backdrop of "public repercussions of certain episodes of my past private life."

He said he wanted to ensure he doesn't make his son's role difficult, adding that "my legacy, and my own dignity, demand that it should be so." Juan Carlos' current whereabouts were not known.

Spain's prime minister recently said he found the developments about Juan Carlos -- including investigations in Spain and Switzerland -- "disturbing."

Since Spain's Supreme Court opened its probe earlier this year, Spanish media outlets have published damaging testimony from a separate Swiss investigation into millions of euros (dollars) that were allegedly given to Juan Carlos by Saudi Arabia's late King Abdullah.

Juan Carlos allegedly then transferred a large amount to a former companion in what investigators are considering as a possible attempt to hide the money from authorities. The companion, Corinna Larsen, is a Danish-German businesswoman long linked by Spanish media to the former king. Spanish prosecutors have asked her to provide testimony in the case in September in Madrid.

The 82-year-old former king is credited with helping Spain peacefully restore democracy after the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975.

But marred by scandals in the later years of his reign, Juan Carlos in 2014 abdicated in favor of his son Felipe VI, losing the immunity from prosecution Spain's Constitution grants to the head of state.

After media reports claimed Felipe was a beneficiary of an offshore account holding an alleged 65 million-euro gift (\$76 million) from Saudi Arabia to Juan Carlos, Felipe renounced any future personal inheritance he might receive from the former king. Felipe also stripped his father of his annual stipend of 194,232 euros (\$228,000.)

The royal house has denied that Felipe had any knowledge of his father's alleged financial irregularities.

The royal website said in a statement that Felipe respected his father's decision.

Felipe acknowledged the historic importance of his father's reign, the statement said, but also "reaffirmed the principles and values on which it stood, in the framework of our Constitution and the rest of our legal system."

A statement from Spain's general prosecutor's office in June said it was investigating whether Juan Carlos received millions of dollars in kickbacks from Saudi Arabia during the construction of a high-speed railway there by a Spanish consortium.

It called the probe one of "undeniable technical complexity."

The Supreme Court investigation centers on developments after mid-2014. That covers the second phase of the 2011 contract for the bullet train between the Saudi cities of Medina and Mecca — the so-called "AVE of the desert" in reference to the acronym for high-speed trains in Spain.

The date marks the moment when Juan Carlos, struggling amid several scandals, passed on the throne to his son after holding it for nearly four decades.

Though Juan Carlos' finances have been questioned in Spanish media for years, there have so far been no legal implications for him. Spanish lawmakers have rejected at least two proposals since the first allegations emerged to open parliamentary investigations.

The decision to leave Spain means Juan Carlos will vacate the 17th-century Zarzuela palace in Madrid, his home for more than 50 years. He moved there after marrying the former queen, Sofia, in 1963.

"I think he didn't have any other choice than to leave," said Carmen Torras, a 66-year-old Barcelona resident. "I hope justice can follow its course."

In Madrid, Nadia Rodriguez, 33, welcomed the former king's decision.

"It's better that he just goes," said Rodriguez, a sports teacher. "The truth is that he hasn't been giving

a very good image of Spain.”

Hatton reported from Lisbon. Associated Press journalist Renata Brito in Barcelona contributed to this report.

Q&A: TikTok saga continues with Microsoft talks. Now what?

By TALI ARBEL AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The latest twist in the TikTok saga is an especially strange turn in a tale filled with strange turns. Suddenly, Microsoft — known primarily for work software like Windows and Office — is in talks to buy the popular Chinese-owned video app, which has raised national-security concerns for U.S. officials.

The U.S. government is effectively forcing ByteDance, TikTok’s owner, to sell so it can salvage the app in the U.S., a huge and valuable market. President Donald Trump has threatened a “ban” on TikTok and other administration officials and U.S. lawmakers of both parties have said the app’s Chinese ownership is a concern.

It’s unclear what shape such a ban would take or whether the sale will go through. TikTok’s users are posting videos saying they are upset and angry. Here’s what’s at stake.

Q. What is TikTok again?

A. The app is a home for fun, goofy videos that are easy to make and to watch. That’s made it immensely popular, particularly with young people, and U.S. tech giants like Facebook and Snapchat see it as a competitive threat. TikTok says it has 100 million U.S. users and hundreds of millions globally. It has its own influencer culture, allowing people to make a living from posting videos on the service, and hosts ads from major U.S. companies.

ByteDance Ltd., a Chinese company, 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.

Q. What concerns U.S. officials about the app?

A. TikTok, like most other social networks, collects data about its users and moderates what’s posted. It grabs people’s locations and messages they send one another, for example, and tracks what people watch in order to know what kinds of videos they like and how best to target ads to them.

Similar behavior has raised concerns about American social networks, but Chinese ownership adds an additional wrinkle, because the Chinese government can demand that companies help it gather intelligence. In the case of TikTok, this remains a hypothetical threat, said Samm Sacks, a researcher at Yale Law School’s Paul Tsai China Center — but it could be happening.

TikTok has vowed that U.S. user data is not stored in China and that it would not hand over user data to the government. But experts have said that if the Chinese government wants information, it will get it. The U.S. government has also cracked down on Chinese telecom companies Huawei and ZTE because of this worry. The companies deny that they facilitate spying.

There are also concerns about TikTok censoring videos critical of China, which TikTok denies, or pushing propaganda. Advocates in the U.S. also say the company is violating children’s privacy laws.

Q. Is the threat from TikTok unique?

A. No. China’s economic espionage is a well-known threat, and similar user data concerns were raised about Huawei, the telecom equipment maker. The Chinese military or groups with ties to it are accused of massive hacks of sensitive information from credit bureau Equifax and the federal Office of Personnel Management.

But several experts say that the U.S. government is lashing out at Chinese tech companies without taking significant steps to protect Americans’ privacy with federal legislation and while working to undermine encryption, which allows secure communications that can’t be easily read by outsiders.

“We’re trying to solve the issue of how you manage all the security risk that comes from massive data

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collection in an unregulated space, and we're trying to solve it by playing whack-a-mole with different Chinese companies that we see as threats," Sacks said. "We get into dangerous territory where the U.S. government is controlling what Americans can and can't do.... This is technonationalism."

Trump may also have reason to personally dislike TikTok, which has started to join the U.S. political conversation. In June, young people carried out a campaign on TikTok and other apps to troll the president by artificially boosting expected turnout for a Trump rally in Oklahoma. Sarah Cooper, a comedian who lip-syncs Trump's statements in videos that make him look ridiculous, is a TikTok star.

Q. Would a purchase by Microsoft address the administration's concerns?

A. "I think the security concern frankly has come down to the parent company is Chinese and that's what U.S. lawmakers have a problem with," Sacks said. If that's the issue, a Microsoft deal would solve the problem.

In remarks to reporters Monday, Trump said he supported such an arrangement. He said "we'll close down (TikTok) on September 15 unless Microsoft or somebody else is able to buy it." He said such a deal would require that the U.S. government "gets a lot of money" because it's enabling the deal to happen. But not everyone in the White House may be in agreement; presidential trade adviser Peter Navarro said on Fox News Monday that the deal was a problem because of Microsoft's operations in China.

Q. So, Microsoft might buy TikTok? Really?

A. Really. Other potential Big Tech buyers, especially Facebook and Google, would likely face antitrust concerns if they tried to buy TikTok.

Microsoft does already own the professional and job-hunting site LinkedIn, and it is the No. 4 digital ad company in the U.S., after Google, Facebook and Amazon. But TikTok would be a sharp change in direction away from workplace services for Microsoft.

Q. What happens next?

A. Microsoft is in talks with ByteDance and plans to complete those by Sept. 15. Any deal may involve other American investors as well.

Microsoft's plan would be to own and operate TikTok in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. That might complicate things if the service has different owners in different parts of the world.

Q. How would a ban of TikTok work, anyway?

A. That's also not clear. TikTok could have been put on a Commerce Department list, like Huawei is, that cuts it off from business with U.S. companies. That could mean it wouldn't work on the Apple and Google app stores. But it's an unprecedented situation for a consumer app.

"Never in our history since we've had app stores on smartphones have I been able to find an example where an app was actually banned by the U.S. government," said Theresa Payton, the former White House Chief Information Officer and CEO of a cybersecurity consultancy.

Q. What are the political consequences for a ban on TikTok?

A. Tensions between China and the U.S. have been increasing over trade policy, diplomatic relations and cybersecurity concerns. The U.S. has pressed allies to crack down on Huawei and imposed sanctions. Trump has also misleadingly blamed China for the coronavirus pandemic, calling it the "China virus."

AP Reporter Zeke Miller contributed to this report from Washington, D.C.

'If not now, when?': Black women seize political spotlight

By CLAIRE GALOFARO and KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

MARIETTA, Ga. (AP) — The little girl ran up to her, wide-eyed and giddy.

"Are you Charisse Davis?" the fourth grader asked.

Davis was stunned. A former kindergarten teacher and librarian, she was more accustomed to shuttling her two sons to basketball practice than being seen as a local celebrity. But now she had been elected the only Black woman on the Cobb County School Board, gaining office in a once conservative suburban community where people who look like her rarely held positions of power.

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Something had changed in this place, and something had changed in her.

"I love your hair — your hair looks like my hair," the girl squealed, calling friends over.

It was a moment both innocent and revealing: Not just a child seeing herself in an elected leader, but also a reflection of the rapidly building power of Black women. It's a momentous change that could make history on a national ticket and determine the outcome of the presidential race.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Americans are preparing to choose a leader and a path through a time of extraordinary division and turmoil. Associated Press journalists tell their stories in the series "America Disrupted."

Black women have long been the heart of the Democratic Party — among the party's most reliable and loyal voters — but for decades that allegiance didn't translate to their own political rise. There have been zero Black female governors, just two senators, several dozen congresswomen.

And the people representing them instead have not met their needs: Disparities in education and opportunity resulted in Black women making on average 64 cents for every dollar a white man makes. Long-standing health inequities have caused Black people to die disproportionately from COVID-19.

And countless cases of police brutality have left many Black women terrified every time their children pulled out of the driveway, fearing that they might not make it home alive.

Now Black women are mobilized and demanding an overdue return on their investment. Over the last several years and across America, Black women ran and won elections in historic numbers, from Congress to county school boards.

This transformation is taking place in once unlikely places, suburban counties in the South. Places like Cobb, a rambling expanse of strip malls and subdivisions just north of Atlanta that doubled in population midway through the last century as white people fled the city. Then, slowly, families of color followed, also seeking bigger yards and better schools.

The year Charisse Davis was born, 1980, Cobb County was 4.5% African American. Now it's more than 27% Black and 13% Hispanic. Its politics caught up with its demographics: In 2016 Hillary Clinton was the first Democratic presidential candidate to eke out a win in Cobb County since Jimmy Carter, a Georgian, in 1976.

President Donald Trump's presidency, which has fueled racial divisions and appealed to white grievance, unleashed for some here an overwhelming urgency. They added their names to down-ticket ballots; they canvassed; they knocked on doors.

When Stacey Abrams, a Black progressive Democrat, ran for governor in 2018, she focused her campaign on women of color. In that election, more than 51,000 Black women in Cobb County cast ballots — 20,000 more than voted in midterm elections four years earlier.

Although Abrams lost narrowly statewide, she won Cobb County handily. Meanwhile, Lucy McBath, a Black mother whose 17-year-old son was killed by a white man who thought his music was too loud, won a congressional seat that includes part of the county, a district once held by conservative firebrand Newt Gingrich.

Charisse Davis looked at the school board members and saw no Black women, so she ran and won. Another Black woman became the chair of the county's young Republicans. Two joined the Superior Court bench. A teenager ran for class president, and she won, too.

"We've been watching from the sidelines and allowing other people to take their turns, and take these positions of power," Davis said. "Now here we are to essentially fix it."

The first county Democratic Party meeting after Trump's election was standing room only.

"It was almost like a support group. We had to be together, we had to grieve and yell," Davis said. "What happened?"

Across the county, there was soul searching over how Clinton lost white, working-class voters, but much less on why Democrats also lost some of the support of this core constituency.

Historically Black women vote in extraordinary numbers, and they don't vote alone: They usher their

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families, their churches, their neighbors to the polls.

But in 2016, African Americans did not turn out in the numbers the party had come to expect. For the first time in 20 years, their turnout declined in a presidential election. About 70% of eligible Black women voted in 2012 when President Barack Obama, the first Black president, secured a second term. But in 2016 that number slipped to 64%, its pre-Obama level.

While there were multiple reasons for Clinton's loss, including a large defection of white voters, some saw the drop-off as a sign that Black voters had been taken for granted. Organizations sprang up across the country to motivate Black women to organize, run and win.

"We have never been at this moment," said Aimee Allison, who in 2018 founded the network She the People, which is working to turn out a million women of color across seven battleground states. "For us as a group to recognize our own political power means that we also are demanding to govern."

The power of Black voters was demonstrated when they overwhelmingly backed Joe Biden in the South Carolina primary, giving him a staggering victory that rescued his campaign and set him on a path to the nomination. Black women made up about one-third of the Democratic voters in the state and roughly two-thirds voted for Biden, according to the AP VoteCast survey.

Biden has pledged to pick a woman as his running mate, and at least six of the contenders are Black — including California Rep. Karen Bass, who said, "I think what we're looking for is representation, acknowledgment, inclusion."

Those who advocate for Black women in politics say the stakes have never been higher.

They emphasize that Trump's administration has failed to contain the coronavirus that has killed more than 154,000 Americans, a disproportionate share of them African Americans. He has responded to mass demonstrations over police violence by calling protesters thugs and encouraging law enforcement to beat them back with force.

"Given how directly Black women have been impacted by the incompetence and the malfeasance of the Trump administration, Black women are going to be at the forefront, not only giving rise to voter turnout, but also shaping the conversations that we will be having in this election season," said Abrams, whose name has also been widely circulated as a possible Biden running mate. "It has been a sea change in how vital our voices have been."

Black women can meet this moment in a way no one else can, they say: The world watched the video of George Floyd begging for his mother as he was dying under a police officer's knee.

Charisse Davis' sons, 10 and 14 years old, asked her: Why won't the officer just let him get up?

When she looks at her own sons, she sees her babies. But the older boy is now taller than she is. He likes hoodies. She worries a stranger might see him as a menace, not a boy whose mother still has to remind him to floss his teeth.

"That is the reality of being a Black mother in this country," she said.

She gets messages after school board meetings: "People like you are the problem," one said. "She's a racist," a man wrote. Another described her as "defiant," and said he had his son watch school board meetings "to see how he shouldn't behave."

She hears: You don't belong there.

"You are dismantling the machine, rocking the boat, and all of those things are the way that they are by design," she said, and added that one of the high schools in the district she represents is named after a Confederate officer.

"That is what the country is built on, that is racism, that is systemic racism, that is white supremacy. It's all these things we don't talk about. But if not now, when?"

When Chinita Allen's 20-year-old son was home from college earlier this year, he and a friend went to work out at their old high school in the affluent, predominantly white part of the county where they live. He had been a football star there. But someone saw two Black men and called the police to report suspicion.

She posted her son's story on Facebook, and it rocketed around this community.

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In the not-so-distant past, she might not have spoken up. A soccer mom and educator, she had long avoided talking about race, rocking the boat — until Trump won. Now she's the president of Cobb Democratic Women and leading the charge to try to turn the county totally blue.

"It's all about knowing your worth," she said. "We've always been here, like the Underground Railroad. But it's surfaced now. In a big way. It's a rail train."

Black women powered the civil rights movement, but rarely became its stars. Women like Fannie Lou Hamer, Diane Nash, Myrlie Evers, Ella Baker and Dorothy Height never held political office, but they played a critical role, said Nadia Brown, a Purdue University political science professor.

Only occasionally did their work lead to elective office, as it did when Shirley Chisholm became the first Black woman elected to Congress, in 1968, and a candidate for president in 1972.

But the landscape changed dramatically over the last several cycles. Just two years ago, five Black women were elected to Congress, four of them in majority-white districts, according to the Higher Heights Black Women in American Politics 2019 survey. Congress now has more Black women than ever before: 22 congresswomen and one senator, Kamala Harris, who is just the second to serve in that chamber and a prominent contender to be Biden's running mate.

The change has extended to state and local offices. Two black women are running for governor in Virginia, and if either of them win, she would become the nation's first Black female governor.

In Cobb County, Kellie Hill made history in June as one of two Black women elected to the Superior Court bench. When she first moved to Georgia 30 years ago, fellow lawyers assumed she was her secretary's assistant.

"I said for years, 'Maybe one day they'll be ready for me,'" Hill said. "And as exciting as it is to be the first, it's a little unbelievable that we're having a conversation about being the first in the year 2020."

Although they make up about 7.5% of the electorate, less than 2% of statewide elected executive offices were held by Black women as of November 2019. They account for less than 5% of officeholders elected to statewide executive offices, Congress and state legislatures, according to the Higher Heights survey.

"Black women have done everything that America told us was going to make us successful and we're still at the bottom in terms of our return," said LaTosha Brown, co-founder of Black Voters Matter.

Black women are posting faster educational gains than any other demographic group in the U.S. — seeing a 76% jump in the number of college degrees earned over the past 20 years, but they aren't reaping the promised economic benefits. On average, Black women made 64 cents for every dollar a white man makes. But that drops to 55 cents for Black women with a professional degree compared to white men with the same level of educational attainment.

"People told us that education is key to being successful," Brown said. "What did Black women do? Black women, out of any constituency group in this country, we enter college more than any other group in this country. Then why does the wealth not reflect that?"

As a result, said Bev Jackson, chair of the Democratic Party's Cobb County African American caucus, Black women have a special resiliency: They have no safety net, so Black women just learn to walk the tightrope better.

Jackson thought about how much she wished her parents had lived to see a Black woman come so close to the Governor's Mansion. Her family's roots in Cobb County go back more than 100 years. Her parents went to segregated schools and sipped out of separate water fountains.

Once, when Jackson was a little girl, she sat down at a lunch counter because she wanted a cherry Coke. The waitress just passed her by, refusing to serve her.

Now Black women around her are daring to run, to win and to demand their leaders fix the broken system that maintains disparities in policing, health care, education, economics.

"You have taken our votes for granted for years. But guess what?" she said. "It's payback time: What are you going to do for us?"

Republicans aren't immune to this awakening.

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DeAnna Harris was recently elected chair of the Cobb County Young Republicans, the first Black person in the post. To highlight local Black Republicans — the district attorney, deputy sheriff, a former state representative — she held her inaugural event at the historic African American church she attends. The crowd was diverse, she said, and she was proud of that.

She tries to make a conservative pitch to other Black voters by touting the ideals she believes in: small government, gun rights, religious freedom, anti-abortion. The response is generally something along the lines of, "but I don't like Trump."

"He's never served the role of politician, who gets up there and smiles and says all the right things and winks at the camera, and then when you turn around they stab you in the back," Harris said. Though she doesn't like his tone or his tweets, she supports Trump because of his conservative policies.

But she also believes it's imperative that Republicans broaden their base. The party should look like America, she thinks, and right now it doesn't.

The Democratic Party of Georgia is confident that enthusiasm is on its side. Fair Fight Action, the organization Abrams founded, calculated that Georgia has more than 750,000 new voters who were not registered in 2018, 49% of them voters of color. And despite a pandemic and hourslong lines in some polling places, more Democrats voted in June's presidential primary than in 2008, when Obama was on the ticket.

That Democratic energy can be particularly seen in these northern Atlanta suburbs. McBath, the incumbent in the 6th Congressional District, ran unopposed and got 26,000 more primary votes than the five Republicans candidates combined. In Cobb County, almost 33,000 African Americans voted in the 2016 primary. In the 2020 primary: more than 52,000. Both of the state's Republican senators are up for election, putting Georgia on the front lines of the fight for control of the Senate.

"The 2020 election cycle is going to be key to changing the course of history in this country," said Nikema Williams, chair of the Democratic Party of Georgia, who was selected to replace Rep. John Lewis, the civil rights leader who died in July, on the November ballot. "We're a battleground in Georgia now, and Black women are leading the way."

In Cobb County, even some who can't vote themselves are determined to thwart Trump's chances of reelection. Gabby Bashizi was one of thousands of teenagers who plotted on the social media site TikTok to reserve tickets to Trump's rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in June, then not show up.

Trump said he expected a million fans to attend. There were about 6,000, and lots of empty seats.

"I think he's really dangerous," said Bashizi, 17. Her father is an immigrant from Congo, so it feels personal every time Trump calls immigrants criminals or Black Lives Matter protesters "thugs." "We all feel it. We all go home scared. Is it going to be me next?"

When she was younger she struggled to find self-worth. No Disney princesses looked like her. People touched her hair, like it was a strange curiosity. In the sixth grade, she buzzed it to the width of a bottle cap, and cried and cried.

Then she started seeing Black women ascend.

"Seeing them fight their fight on the national stage has led me to be able to fight my fight on a personal level," she said. She grew her hair out again.

Charisse Davis said that it is these young women who give her hope for a better day: They are idealistic, coming of age in a time when Black women are rising, and they can look around, see people like themselves and believe anything is possible.

She knows an 18-year-old named Audrey McNeal. McNeal ran to be the class president at her mostly white high school, and lost. She thought of a poem she once wrote about a princess envious of her brother because one day he would be king; she wanted to be powerful. She ran again, and won.

"It's about time we represent ourselves," McNeal said. Now she's a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. She's heading to Barnard College to study politics.

She thinks she'll be secretary of state one day. And then, maybe, president.

___Associated Press writers Angeliki Kastanis, Josh Boak, Emily Swanson and Hannah Fingerhut contributed to this report.

Report: Retired Pope Benedict XVI ill after visit to Germany

BERLIN (AP) — Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI has fallen ill after his return from a trip to his native Bavaria to visit his brother, who died a month ago, a German newspaper reported Monday.

The daily Passauer Neue Presse quoted Peter Seewald, a biographer of the retired pontiff, as saying that the 93-year-old has been suffering from a facial infection since his return to Rome.

Seewald, who has published several book-length interviews with Benedict, handed over a copy of the biography to the former pontiff on Saturday, the newspaper reported. He described Benedict as being optimistic and talking about possibly writing himself if his strength picks up, though he said that Benedict is physically very frail.

The Vatican press office downplayed the severity of Benedict's condition, citing his longtime secretary, Monsignor Georg Gaenswein, in a statement released to the media.

According to Gaenswein, "the emeritus pope's health condition doesn't create particular concern, except that for a 93-year-old man who is getting over the most acute phase of a painful, but not serious illness."

In June, Benedict made a four-day visit to the Bavarian city of Regensburg to see his ailing brother. It was his first trip out of Italy since he resigned as pope in 2013.

His brother, the Rev. Georg Ratzinger, died on July 1 at age 96.

Benedict has lived at a monastery in the Vatican City since shortly after his retirement. Elected to the papacy in 2005 to succeed St. John Paul II, the former Joseph Ratzinger was the first pontiff in 600 years to resign the post.

He was succeeded by Pope Francis.

Outbreak hits Norway cruise ship, could spread along coast

By JAN M. OLSEN Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — A Norwegian cruise ship line halted all trips and apologized Monday for procedural errors after a coronavirus outbreak on one ship infected at least 5 passengers and 36 crew. Health authorities fear the ship also could have spread the virus to dozens of towns and villages along Norway's western coast.

The confirmed virus cases from the MS Roald Amundsen raise new questions about safety on all cruise ships during a pandemic even as the devastated cruise ship industry is pressing to resume sailings after chaotically shutting down in March. In response to the outbreak, Norway on Monday closed its ports to cruise ships for two weeks.

The Hurtigruten cruise line was one of the first companies to resume sailing during the pandemic, starting cruises to Norway out of northern Germany in June with a single ship, then adding cruises in July to the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard.

The 41 people on the MS Roald Amundsen who tested positive have been admitted to the University Hospital of North Norway in Tromsø, north of the Arctic Circle, where the ship currently is docked. The cruise line said it suspended the ship and two others — the MS Fridtjof Nansen and the MS Spitsbergen — from operating for an indefinite period.

"A preliminary evaluation shows that there has been a failure in several of our internal procedures," Hurtigruten CEO Daniel Skjeldam said in a statement. He added the company that sails along Norway's picturesque coast between Bergen in the south and Kirkenes in the north is "now in the process of a full review of all procedures."

It has contacted passengers who had been on the MS Roald Amundsen for its July 17-24 and July 25-31 trips from Bergen to Svalbard, which is known for its polar bears. The ship had 209 guests on the first voyage and 178 on the second. All other crew members tested negative.

But since the cruise line often acts like a local ferry, traveling from port to port along Norway's western coast, the virus may not have been contained onboard. Some passengers disembarked along the route and may have spread the virus to their local communities.

A total of 69 municipalities in Norway could have been affected, Norwegian news agency NTB reported.

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Officials in the northern city of Tromsø are urging anyone who traveled on the ship or had any contact with it to get in touch with health authorities.

Police in Norway are opening an investigation to find out whether any laws had been broken.

It's not yet clear how the MS Roald Amundsen outbreak began. NTB reported that 33 of the infected crew members came from the Philippines and the others were from Norway, France and Germany. The passengers were from all over the world.

Skjeldam said cruise ship officials did not know they should have notified passengers after the first infection was reported Friday, adding that they followed the advice of the ship's doctors.

But Line Vold of the Norwegian Institute of Public Health said its advice was to inform passengers and crew as soon as possible so they could monitor their health and go into quarantine or isolation, if needed.

"We have made mistakes. On behalf of all of us in Hurtigruten, I am sorry for what has happened. We take full responsibility," Skjeldam said.

The Norwegian government announced Monday it was tightening the rules for cruise ships by banning ships with more than 100 passengers from docking in Norwegian harbors and disembarking passengers and crew for two weeks. The ban does not apply to ferries.

Health Minister Bent Høie said the situation on the Hurtigruten ship prompted the decision.

In Italy, the Costa Crociere cruise ship line said three crew members from two ships in Civitavecchia, near Rome, have tested positive for the coronavirus. The cruise company said two assigned to the Costa Deliziosa were hospitalized and a third, assigned to the Costa Favolosa, was in isolation on the ship.

The Italian cruise company, which is part of Carnival Corp. said the crews of both ships were being screened "in view of the possible relaunch of our cruises, as soon as the government gives the authorization." The Cabinet was to meet on the matter Sunday.

Costa Crociere said that all crew members were tested for the virus before leaving their countries, then undergo a second test once they arrive in Italy, after which they are put under a two-week monitoring period.

In the South Pacific, some 340 passengers and crew were confined on a cruise ship in Tahiti on Monday after one traveler tested positive for the virus. The commissariat for French Polynesia said all those aboard the Paul Gauguin cruise ship are being tested and will be kept in their cabins pending the results.

The South Pacific archipelago started reopening to tourists last month, with a requirement that all visitors get tested before arriving and re-tested four days later.

Cruise lines stopped sailing in mid-March after several high-profile coronavirus outbreaks at sea. More than 710 people fell ill aboard Carnival's Diamond Princess cruise ship while it was quarantined off Japan and 13 people died.

The Cruise Lines International Association, which represents more than 50 companies and 95% of global cruise capacity, said the resumption of cruises has been extremely limited so far. The voyages taking place must have approval from and follow the requirements of national governments, it said.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control is not allowing cruise ships in U.S. waters at least through September.

The industry association said it is still developing COVID-19-control procedures based on advice from governments and medical experts and once they are finalized, member companies will be required to adopt them.

A German cruise ship last week set sail from Hamburg, testing procedures for how cruise ships can operate safely during the pandemic. The ship sailed with less than 50% capacity and only went on a four-day trip at sea with no stops at other ports.

Colleen Barry in Milan, Angela Charlton in Paris and Dee-Ann Durbin in Detroit contributed to this report.

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

John Hume, who worked to end N. Ireland violence, dies at 83

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — John Hume, the visionary politician who won a Nobel Peace Prize for fashioning the agreement that ended violence in his native Northern Ireland, has died at 83, his family said Monday.

The Catholic leader of the moderate Social Democratic and Labour Party, Hume was seen as the principal architect of Northern Ireland's 1998 peace agreement. He shared the prize later that year with the Protestant leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, David Trimble, for their efforts to end the sectarian violence that plagued the region for three decades and left more than 3,500 people dead.

"I want to see Ireland as an example to men and women everywhere of what can be achieved by living for ideals, rather than fighting for them, and by viewing each and every person as worthy of respect and honor," he said in 1998. "I want to see an Ireland of partnership, where we wage war on want and poverty, where we reach out to the marginalized and dispossessed, where we build together a future that can be as great as our dreams allow."

Hume died Monday morning after suffering from ill health for several years, his family said.

Born on Jan. 18, 1937, in Northern Ireland's second city — Londonderry to British Unionists, Derry to Irish nationalists — Hume trained for the priesthood before becoming a fixture on Northern Ireland's political landscape. An advocate of nonviolence, he fought for equal rights in what was then a Protestant-ruled state, but he condemned the Irish Republican Army because of his certainty that no injustice was worth a human life.

Although he advocated for a united Ireland, Hume believed change could not come to Northern Ireland without the consent of its Protestant majority. He also realized that better relations needed to be forged between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and between London and Dublin.

He championed the notion of extending self-government to Northern Ireland with power divided among the groups forming it.

"Ireland is not a romantic dream; it is not a flag; it is 4.5 million people divided into two powerful traditions," he said. "The solution will be found not on the basis of victory for either, but on the basis of agreement and a partnership between both. The real division of Ireland is not a line drawn on the map, but in the minds and hearts of its people."

While both Hume and Trimble credited the people of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic for approving a referendum that led to power sharing, it was Hume's diplomacy that offered the impetus to the peace process that led to the 1998 Good Friday accord.

Hume won the breakthrough in Belfast's political landscape in 1993 by courting Gerry Adams, the head of Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army, in hopes of securing an IRA cease-fire. That dialogue burnished Adams' international credibility and led to two IRA cease-fires in 1994 and 1997.

Like most Protestant politicians at the time, Trimble had opposed efforts to share power with Catholics as something that would jeopardize Northern Ireland's union with Britain. He at first refused to speak directly with Adams, insisting that IRA commanders needed to prove they were willing to abandon violence.

He ultimately relented and became pivotal in peacemaking efforts.

Hume had envisioned a broad agenda for the discussions, arguing they must be driven by close cooperation between the British and Irish governments. The process was overseen by neutral figures like U.S. mediator George Mitchell, with the decisions overwhelmingly ratified by public referendums in both parts of Ireland.

"Without John Hume, there would not have been a peace process," Mitchell said at the time the prize was announced. "Without David Trimble, there would not have been a peace agreement."

Hume and Trimble were said to have had a frosty relationship. But Trimble on Monday described a thawing after the Nobel ceremony in Oslo, recalling that the hotel at which they were staying had suggested the two men chose to relax away from each other.

"We didn't do that. We relaxed and in some sense celebrated the occasion jointly, and that for me spelt out the principle for how we were going to proceed in the years after that," he told the BBC.

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Tributes poured in after Hume's death was announced, including praise from Adams, who called him a "giant in Irish politics." Former Prime Minister Tony Blair, who was in office at the time the accord was signed, lauded Hume's "epic" contribution to the peace process.

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton issued a statement describing their sadness.

"Through his faith in principled compromise, and his ability to see his adversaries as human beings, John helped forge the peace that has held to this day," they said.

U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the Northern Ireland of today is Hume's legacy.

"He stood proudly in the tradition that was totally opposed to violence and committed to pursuing his objectives by exclusively peaceful and democratic means," Johnson said on Twitter. "His vision paved the way for the stability, positivity and dynamism of the Northern Ireland of today and his passing is a powerful reminder of how far Northern Ireland has come."

Hume's family said his funeral would be in keeping with strict guidelines on attendees because of the COVID-19 pandemic. A memorial will be arranged later.

"We are grateful for your condolences and support, and we appreciate that you will respect the family's right to privacy at this time of great loss," the family said in a statement. "It seems particularly apt for these strange and fearful days to remember the phrase that gave hope to John and so many of us through dark times: 'We shall overcome.'"

2 teen lacrosse players score goal in fight against hunger

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

Owen Estee and Zach Appel found a way to both teach the sport that they love and help feed people in need when their lacrosse season was canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The two teenage lacrosse players in the San Francisco Bay Area launched "Lacrosse Against Hunger," an initiative where they coach kids and other teens in exchange for donations to a local food organization. So far, the 15-year-olds have raised more than \$2,000 to provide over 2,000 meals for agencies that serve the homeless, as well as foster youth, low-income seniors, children and their families.

"This is a really big, problematic time, where people are in need. Everything's just a little harder these days," Appel said. "Helping people out by doing the little things, just like donating a few thousand bucks that can raise actually quite a few meals, really is helpful."

The Acalanes High School students teach young lacrosse players the basics of the sport for \$25 a lesson while observing Contra Costa County health guidelines. They practice social distancing, limit how many train at a time and wear masks when entering and exiting the field.

"It's such an amazing feeling," Estee said. "I've had parents tell me that their kids call it the highlight of their summer. ... It's something they look forward to every week."

Through a GoFund me page, they then donate all the money to the White Pony Express, which delivers surplus food from grocers to local community groups that serve the hungry.

"Our aspiration is that we serve without thought of reward. And that's exactly what Zach and Owen did," said Eve Birge, executive director at White Pony Express.

"Our deliveries are now three times as big as they were before COVID, so Zach and Owen are helping us keep our doors open."

During the pandemic, a wave of hunger has swamped food programs nationwide. At White Pony Express, most of the volunteers during the crisis have been teenagers, Birge said. "Young people are really stepping up to answer the call. And Zach and Owen are terrific example of that."

While nonstop news about the effects of the coronavirus has become commonplace, so, too, have tales of kindness. "One Good Thing" is a series of AP stories focusing on glimmers of joy and benevolence in a dark time. Read the series here: <https://apnews.com/OneGoodThing>

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As US milk sales rise amid pandemic, "Got milk?" ads return

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

The dairy industry has a familiar question for you: "Got milk?"

Six years after the popular tagline was retired, "Got milk?" ads are back. A dairy industry-funded group is reviving the campaign, hoping to prolong the boost milk has gotten during the pandemic.

U.S. milk sales have been in freefall for decades as choices grew and consumers turned to soda, juices and plant-based alternatives like soy milk. Dean Foods, the nation's biggest milk producer, filed for bankruptcy protection in November. Borden Dairy, another major producer, followed with its own bankruptcy in January.

But then came the coronavirus pandemic, and milk sales saw a sharp rise. Kids who were no longer having meals at school were drinking milk at home. Adults — no longer commuting — had time for a leisurely bowl of cereal. Many people were buying milk to bake and cook at home.

Unlike the original "Got milk?" campaign, which debuted in 1994 and was known for its glossy photos of celebrities sporting milk mustaches, the new campaign reflects the age of social media.

Television ads feature videos culled from the Internet of people doing funny things with milk, like opening a gallon with their toes or jumping into a kiddie pool filled with milk and cereal. In one TikTok spot, Olympic gold medalist Katie Ledecky swims the length of a pool with a glass of chocolate milk balanced on her head.

There will also be tie-ins with other brands like Hershey, which will offer in-grocery coupons when shoppers buy milk with chocolate syrup.

From January through July 18, U.S. milk retail sales were up 8.3% to \$6.4 billion, according to Nielsen. During the same period last year, milk sales were down 2.3%.

Milk sales saw their biggest year-over-year jump of 21% in March, when buyers were stocking up their pantries. But they remained elevated even after panic buying subsided. In June U.S. milk sales were up 2%.

Sales of milk alternatives have also risen. U.S. sales of oat milk were up 270% to \$132 million in the 29-week period, Nielsen said. Almond milk, coconut milk and rice milk also saw gains.

Yin Woon Rani, CEO of MilkPEP — short for the Milk Processor Education Program, which is funding the campaign — said cow's milk ticks the boxes of what consumers are looking for during a pandemic: comfort, nutrition, stability and versatility. Social media research showed a 40% increase in positive mentions about milk this year, she said.

"It's been a really exceptional year," she said. "We're very focused on, 'How do we sustain that demand?'"

Other brands have also noted that consumers are looking for comfort foods. McDonald's said last week that it will focus on familiar menu items — not newer innovations — when it ramps up marketing in the second half of this year.

"Consumers are still looking for the trusted favorites," McDonald's President and CEO Chris Kempczinski said.

The "Got milk?" campaign will likely run through the end of this year. Rani wouldn't say how much MilkPEP is spending.

Rani said the organization debated a lot of taglines for the campaign but found "Got milk?" resonated the most. Even teens too young to have seen the original ads knew the line, she said.

"Sometimes the answer you're looking for is right under your nose," she said.

Retail rout gains pace, Lord & Taylor seeks bankruptcy

NEW YORK (AP) — Lord & Taylor, America's oldest retailer, is seeking bankruptcy protection, as is the owner of Men's Wearhouse and Jos. A. Bank, lengthening the list of major retail chains that have faltered in the pandemic.

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Household names, many longtime anchors in malls nationwide, were already struggling to keep up with a radical reformation in what people buy, and where they buy it. Much of that activity has moved online. Thousands of store closures forced by the arrival of COVID-19 has proved too much.

Lord & Taylor, which began as a Manhattan dry goods store in 1824, was sold to the French rental clothing company Le Tote Inc. last year. Both filed for bankruptcy protection, separately, in the Eastern Court of Virginia on Sunday.

Lord & Taylor says it's looking for a buyer.

The company last year, before the emergence of coronavirus, sold its 11-story flagship building on New York's Fifth Avenue which it's owned for more than a century.

Tailored Brands, which owns Men's Wearhouse and Jos. A. Bank stores, was struggling even before shelter-in-place orders smothered any demand for suits or ties. It wasn't alone.

Last month, Brooks Brothers, the 200-year-old company that dressed nearly every U.S. president, filed for bankruptcy protection. Its rival, Barneys New York, is being dismantled after filing for bankruptcy last year.

Tailored Brands filed for Chapter 11 protection Sunday in the Southern District of Texas.

Men's Wearhouse and Jos. A. Bank stores, along with K&G Fashion Superstore and Moores Clothing for Men, all owned by Tailored, with continue to operate during restructuring. The company expects to reduce its funded debt by at least \$630 million.

Dozens of retailers, big and small, have filed for Chapter 11 protection this year. The pace through the first half of 2020 far exceeds the number of retail bankruptcies for all of last year. About two dozen stores have sought bankruptcy protection since the pandemic started.

Others include J. Crew, J.C. Penney, Neiman Marcus, Stage Stores, and Ascena Retail Group, which owns Lane Bryant in addition to Ann Taylor.

Spain's new wave of infections hits the young, middle-aged

By RENATA BRITO and JOSEPH WILSON undefined

SANT SADURNÍ D'ANOIA, Spain (AP) — Like most Spaniards, Emma Gaya thought the worst of the pandemic was behind her.

Spain's government had ended a three-month lockdown after an COVID-19 onslaught that claimed at least 28,400 lives in the European Union nation. To kickstart its stalled economy, Spaniards were encouraged to cautiously resume their lives under a "new normality" based on wearing face masks, washing hands and social distancing.

The respite didn't last long.

Outbreaks among farm workers and young people desperate to resume socializing after being cooped up have spread across northern Spain, spawning what some health officials fear could be the start of a dreaded "second wave" of infections.

"It pains me to think that we could be right back where we were," Gaya said after getting tested for coronavirus at her local health clinic in Sant Sadurni D'Anoia, a village near Barcelona. She came in because she had a fever, one of the typical symptoms of COVID-19, along with a dry cough and the loss of a sense of smell.

"I think we had done things well. Now I don't know if we are doing it well at all. I'm not sure at what point we are safe," Gaya said.

On June 22, the day after Spain ended a national state of emergency and restored free movement around the country, the health ministry registered 125 new cases in 24 hours. Six weeks later, the daily count has jumped, hitting 1,525 on Friday.

Spain is leading Western Europe's major countries with an average of 60 coronavirus cases per 100,000 inhabitants. While the country's south and the Canary and Balearic Islands remain in good shape, the regions of Navarra, Aragón, and Catalonia have registered more than 120 cases per 100,000 inhabitants over a 14-day period, making Spain's northeast the biggest European hot spot along with parts of Romania, according to the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control.

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In contrast to the darkest weeks of March and April, when the virus ripped through Spain's elderly in nursing homes and pushed the country's hospitals to the breaking point, the pressure is now on Spain's neighborhood health clinics. They are trying to screen and isolate the new infections, which are taking place mostly among the young, who in Spain and countries across the world are ignoring social distancing, and the middle-aged.

The average age of a virus patient in Spain has fallen from 63 in the spring to 45 now and "the pressure on the health system is low," said Spanish Health Minister Salvador Illa. Since the virus takes a heavier toll on the elderly, younger coronavirus patients means more who have milder symptoms.

Spain's improved testing capacity makes a comparison to the start of the pandemic difficult. In February, March and April, a shortage of tests meant that only the very sick who were admitted to hospitals were tested and that a significant number of coronavirus cases went undetected.

Now, local clinics are discovering many more infections among those who don't show symptoms.

"We are in a different situation (than the spring) because right now we have tests available," said Dr. Miriam Ceña, director of the health clinics in Sant Sadurni D'Anoia, which is seeing a jump in cases like the area around Barcelona, Catalonia's largest city.

"We are in a situation of risk and alert. We don't want to alarm the population, but we want the population to be responsible," Ceña said. "In March, there was the lockdown so the situation was under more control. Right now, there is free movement and socializing and those are a risk of contagion."

The surge in new infections is sure to add to the drastic contraction of Spain's economy by slamming hopes of reactivating the country's critical tourism sector. The economy has already dropped 18% in the second quarter — its biggest dip since Spain's 1936-39 Civil War.

Britain has placed a 14-day quarantine on travelers returning from Spain, while France, Germany, and Belgium have all issued travel warnings or discouraged trips to northeast Spain.

Authorities have for several weeks warned about the danger of new outbreaks, but experts predicted they would likely occur in the colder months. Instead, the surge has come in mid-summer, when Spaniards are eager to reconnect with family and friends, and hotels, restaurants and shops are counting on both domestic and foreign tourists to cushion the pandemic's blow to their balance sheets.

Spain must now pull off the delicate balancing act of managing the health crisis while reactivating its economy. Officials desperately hope they can avoid another full lockdown that would be catastrophic to businesses and jobs despite the expected injection of massive aid from the European Union.

Catalonia and many other regions have reintroduced restrictions, making masks obligatory at all times outside the home and reclosing nightclubs due to their links to outbreaks.

"We must be obsessive about complying with the protection measures," said Catalonia's public health director, Josep Argimon.

Catalonia, however, is only now deploying 600 workers to its clinics to help nurses and doctors handle the demands of contact tracing, which has been insufficient so far. That lack of urgency has drawn strong criticism from health workers and mayors.

Spain's government is rolling out a phone app to help contact tracers find and stamp out new infections, while making a renewed appeal for individuals to act responsibly.

"There are many citizens who feel anguish upon seeing the outbreaks that are happening in different parts of our country," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said Friday. "Because we have all had to make an enormous effort to be disciplined, show resistance and muster the will to defeat the virus."

Wilson reported from Barcelona.

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

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Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Aug. 4, the 217th day of 2020. There are 149 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 4, 1944, 15-year-old diarist Anne Frank was arrested with her sister, parents and four others by the Gestapo after hiding for two years inside a building in Amsterdam. (Anne and her sister, Margot, died at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.)

On this date:

In 1792, English romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley was born at Field Place near Horsham, England.

In 1914, Britain declared war on Germany for invading Belgium; the United States proclaimed its neutrality in the mushrooming world conflict.

In 1916, the United States reached agreement with Denmark to purchase the Danish Virgin Islands for \$25 million.

In 1936, Jesse Owens of the United States won the second of his four gold medals at the Berlin Olympics as he prevailed in the long jump over German Luz Long, who was the first to congratulate him.

In 1964, the bodies of missing civil rights workers Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James Chaney were found buried in an earthen dam in Mississippi.

In 1972, Arthur Bremer was convicted and sentenced in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, to 63 years in prison for his attempt on the life of Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace (the sentence was later reduced to 53 years; Bremer was released from prison in 2007).

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter signed a measure establishing the Department of Energy.

In 1987, the Federal Communications Commission voted 4-0 to abolish the Fairness Doctrine, which required radio and television stations to present balanced coverage of controversial issues.

In 1993, a federal judge sentenced Los Angeles police officers Stacey Koon and Laurence Powell to 2 1/2 years in prison for violating Rodney King's civil rights.

In 1996, on the final day of the Atlanta Olympics, Josiah Thugwane became the first Black South African to win a gold medal as he finished first in the marathon.

In 2001, thousands of admirers turned out in London for what would prove to be the last birthday celebration for Britain's Queen Mother Elizabeth, who had turned 101. (The Queen Mother died in March 2002.)

In 2009, North Korean leader Kim Jong Il pardoned American journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee for entering the country illegally and ordered their release during a surprise visit by former U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Ten years ago: BP PLC reported the broken well head at the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico was plugged up with mud; President Barack Obama said the battle to contain one of the world's worst oil spills was "finally close to coming to an end." Eight days after turning 35, Alex Rodriguez hit his 600th home run, becoming the youngest player to attain the milestone. (A-Rod's two-run, first-inning drive off Toronto's Shaun Marcum put New York ahead, and the Yankees coasted to a 5-1 victory over the Blue Jays.)

Five years ago: President Barack Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made dueling appeals to the American Jewish community as they sought to rally support for their opposing positions on the Iranian nuclear deal; Netanyahu made his case against the agreement in a live webcast with more than 10,000 participants, according to the U.S. Jewish groups that organized the event, while Obama held a private meeting at the White House with Jewish leaders.

One year ago: A masked gunman fired on revelers enjoying summer nightlife in a popular entertainment district of Dayton, Ohio, leaving nine people dead and 27 wounded; police said officers shot and killed the shooter within 30 seconds of the start of his rampage. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell suffered a fractured shoulder in a fall outside his Louisville, Kentucky home.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-singer Tina Cole is 77. Actor-comedian Richard Belzer is 76. Football Hall of Famer John Riggins is 71. Former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales is 65. Actor-screenwriter Billy Bob Thornton

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is 65. Actor Kym Karath (Film: "The Sound of Music") is 62. Hall of Fame track star Mary Decker Slaney is 62. Actor Lauren Tom is 61. Former President Barack Obama is 59. Producer Michael Gelman (TV: "Live with Kelly & Ryan") is 59. Retired MLB All-Star pitcher Roger Clemens is 58. Actor Crystal Chappell is 55. Author Dennis Lehane is 55. Rock musician Rob Cieka (Boo Radleys) is 52. Actor Daniel Dae Kim is 52. Actor Michael DeLuise is 51. Former race car driver Jeff Gordon is 49. Rapper-actor Yo-Yo is 49. Country singer Jon Nicholson is 47. Rhythm-and-blues singer-actor Marques (MAR'-kus) Houston is 39. Britain's Duchess of Sussex, the former actor Meghan Markle, is 39. Actor Abigail Spencer is 39. Actor/director Greta Gerwig is 37. Country singer Crystal Bowersox (TV: "American Idol") is 35. Rock singer Tom Parker (The Wanted) is 32. Actors Dylan and Cole Sprouse are 28. Singer Jessica Sanchez (TV: "American Idol") is 25.