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“ONCE WE BELIEVE IN OURSELVES,
WE CAN RISK CURIOSITY, WONDER,
SPONTANEOUS DELIGHT, OR ANY
EXPERIENCE THAT REVEALS THE
HUMAN SPIRIT.”

-E.E. CUMMINGS

Notice to our residents:

One of the employees at our Swimming Pool has tested positive for the Corona virus.

All close contact individuals have been notified and are complying with state health regulations. The person that tested positive was working Friday evening, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons of last week.

Workers are taking every precaution to stop the spread and will be cleaning the facility for the next few days.

The Groton City Swimming Pool will reopen Friday, August 7th at 1pm.

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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West Nile case reported in Brown County

As if the Corona Virus was not enough, there is also tracking of the West Nile disease spread by mosquitoes.

According to the South Dakota Department of Health, there have been two cases of West Nile in South Dakota as of August 4. One in McCook County and the other in Brown County.

As of July 28, there have been 17 cases in the United States in the states of Arizona, Arkansas, California, Iowa, Missouri, Mississippi, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Texas and South Dakota. There have been no deaths recorded.

38% of all mosquitos trapped in the last week have been *Culex tarsalis*. They are the mosquito that transmits the West Nile Disease.

The City of Groton did do an adult mosquito control last week.

Zebra Mussels Confirmed in Lake Cochrane

Pierre, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) has confirmed the presence of adult zebra mussels in Lake Cochrane in Deuel County.

"A suspected adult zebra mussel was found along a lake shore residence shoreline this weekend," said regional fisheries manager Mark Ermer. "After sending GFP staff to the location, the mussel was confirmed to be an adult zebra mussel. The crew took a hard look around the lake at about nine different locations searching for the presence of other mussels. They found one additional adult mussel on the opposite side of the lake from the original mussel. The presence of two sexually mature adult mussels is enough to now consider the lake infested. The size of both mussels indicate they have been in the lake since at least last summer.

Lake Cochrane is now considered infested with zebra mussels.

The (GFP) Commission can designate waters infested with zebra mussels as containment waters. Specific decontamination requirements exist for boats kept in these waters continuously for three or more days, or that cannot have all water drained from them.

"We are asking lake users to be extra vigilant and make sure their boats and associated equipment is cleaned, drained and dried after every use," Ermer said.

Clean watercraft and trailers of all aquatic plants and mud

Drain all water by removing all drains, plugs, bailers, or valves that retain water. Be sure to completely drain your lower unit of any water by lowering completely.

Dispose of unwanted bait in trash or fish cleaning stations when leaving the water

Completely draining a boat is the first step in making sure invasive species are not transferred to other waters.

For more information on zebra mussels, other aquatic invasive species, and how to properly decontaminate your watercraft, visit sdleastwanted.com.

#164 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Things look much the same today as they did yesterday. We added 53,200 new cases, a 1.1% increase, bringing us to 4,830,900 total cases in the US. Florida joined California over 500,000 cases, probably not a club they wanted to join, and reports from hospitals in that state indicate ICU capacity is pretty much filled. Two things to note here is that we are missing a lot of new cases from Florida because the hurricane has shut down many testing sites; and there have been reporting problems in California, so we're not sure how accurate their numbers are. I will also note that there have been reports of many students and teachers having to quarantine in Indiana, North Carolina, Georgia, and Mississippi after cases turned up in schools. In Mississippi alone, the number placed under quarantine is over 100. This does not bode well for school reopenings coming up later this month and next. The good news is that I am no longer providing a litany of records for new cases, hospitalizations, and such all over the country. I feel as though we may be leveling off for real. Now leveled-off is not a great place to be when you're leveled off at a gigantic number like an additional 50,000+ cases per day, but at least things don't appear at the moment to be worsening at the rate they were.

We have talked about student-athlete concerns in the SEC with infection risk in football. That was followed by a public letter from several Pac-12 players expressing those concerns. Now today, there's another letter from another group of players in another conference, this one the Big Ten. It purports to represent "the concerns of over 1000 Big Ten football players." The University of Connecticut has become the first FBS football school to cancel its football season entirely. Many conference and institutional officials have privately expressed doubts that the fall season can go forward anywhere as planned, but the public stance has remained that season will proceed. This seems like a very tenuous situation at the moment.

We're at 158,524 deaths. 1227 new deaths were reported today, a 0.8% increase. This is our second day back over 1000 new death reports after a couple of days under that number. I would like to see these numbers lower, but there were no big spikes, so that's something.

A population at risk that I don't believe we've talked much about is the homeless population. Their risk is higher on all counts: becoming infected, becoming seriously ill, and dying. This group tends to be older, more chronically ill, and more immunocompromised than the general population, and they tend not to have facilities for handwashing and to be limited in their ability to distance. More than half a million people are homeless at any given time, and as many as 40% of these people could become infected with as many as 10% requiring hospitalization. This means outbreaks among homeless run real risks of overwhelming the health care system in some locations. Additionally, the projections are that homelessness may increase by 40 to 45% this year which places even more people at risk. This is a problem with a lot of room for growth.

If you've been wondering whether it's finally time to go back to church, I'm here to tell you it's not looking good for all the reasons we've been talking about. The outbreaks centered on church services and other activities continue. Most recently, a man with Covid-19 went to church in the middle of June, and the effects are still rippling. Fifty-three people who were at the service got sick, and by now we're up to 91 people infected.

I spent a fair amount of time today immersed in a set of scientific papers, some in pre-print (so not peer-reviewed), about immune responses in cases of Covid-19, all seeking to sort out why some people get so sick and others don't. As with all things related to immune responses, there is a lot of moving parts here, but this is what I have.

It seems like, if you get really sick, one of two things is going on. Either your immune system doesn't respond strongly to the virus and so the virus keeps replicating and damaging tissue as its numbers grow; or your immune system doesn't know when to stand down and instead amplifies your response, and that response itself is what's making you sick.

We talked a while back about innate responses, those nonspecific, fast, first-line sorts of defenses which involve, among other things, an inflammatory response. These buy you time to mount a specific, targeted

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immune response which then uses antibodies and activated cells to destroy the invader. That early response depends heavily on cytokines, those chemicals which help with signaling between and among cells participating in that inflammatory response, and then that whole nonspecific response sits back, handing off to the specific, or acquired, response.

One thing that can go wrong is that you just never really fight the virus all that efficiently. This would lead to damage in tissues the virus is attacking. The other is that the cytokines don't stop calling in reinforcements, even when they're no longer needed, and the inflammatory response does as much damage as—or more than—the virus did. This is the road to a cytokine storm. We've talked about those at length, and it's pretty clear this is something none of us wants. It may be happening because your body was unable to take care of the virus, so there continues to be a fairly large supply of those cells continuing to gather, secreting their products and attacking virus-infected tissue. Or it might happen because your response was disordered from the start, perhaps as a result of the virus messing with the activity of interferon, an important one of the cytokine chemicals.

Another thing noted by one of the studies I read is that maybe the kind of response you're having is the wrong kind. You have basically three ways to respond to a pathogen depending on what sort of pathogen it is. Type 1 responses work best against pathogens that get inside your cells; these are viruses and some bacteria capable of gaining access to host cells. Type 2 responses work best against parasites, things like worms, or venoms. And Type 3 responses are intended to help with pathogens that do not gain access to the insides of cells, fungus and some bacteria. Each type of response involves different cells and different cytokines. Now since viruses invade cells, a Type 1 response is most appropriate for Covid-19, and yet some patients who are seriously ill are putting a lot of resources into Type 2 and Type 3 responses instead. This constitutes sort of a double-whammy, taking resources away from the most helpful kind of response and also contributing to responses that might target and damage tissue.

And another study noted that the cells involved in these responses seem to be having trouble communicating and coordinating with one another. You may recall from our earlier conversations that there are two broad kinds of lymphocytes (a kind of white blood cell) which play a big role in all of this, T cells and B cells. These work together in an acquired (specific) response, and they have to do a fair amount of coordination to accomplish that. We're still not sure just what's happening here or why, but if the virus is preventing normal cell communication, this could explain the disordered sort of responses we're seeing.

All of this means we might be well off to pay even more attention to some kinds of immunotherapy that can goose along a lagging response or target certain others for slow-down. There might be one answer if this imbalance is virally caused and another if the cytokines were disordered from the beginning. The trick will be sticking an oar in at just the right time and place to achieve the desired effect. There have been some trials of drugs that interfere fairly specifically with one or another cytokine and others that pretty much shut down the response entirely. There's a lot left to learn, but the pace of discovery is fairly strong.

When I was a kid, my dad used to bring home sample ballots to us. These brightly-colored replicas of the real thing were widely available at stores near election time, intended to give voters a chance to look over all of their choices in advance of election day. I can remember hiding behind the sofa to mark mine (the secret ballot was a thing with Dad, for sure) and carefully drop it in the box on the dining room table. Mom and Dad would count our ballots on election night in an atmosphere of great suspense as the returns played on the black-and-white TV. I do not remember whether I believed I was really helping to choose our elected officials or I realized this was a mock-up of the election; but I do remember feeling proud of myself when I'd finished doing my civic duty. It was quite a few years later when I discovered what things looked like at a real polling place: One thing I noticed over the years when voting is that there's no sofa to hide behind.

The role my parents played in our family elections, poll workers, those folks who greet you, check you off in the poll book, and hand you your ballot or direct you to a voting machine are largely older people, older than my parents were back then; according to the US Election Assistance Commission, almost 60% of them are over 60. It makes sense when you think about who might be free on a weekday to work in

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this very temporary and not highly remunerated job that there would be a lot of retirees. That, of course, is a significant problem in the days of Covid-19: Those over-60s are at greater risk from this infection, and many have opted out for this year. I don't blame them; I wouldn't do this job at the moment either. This has left many—most—precincts short of election workers this fall.

This shortage has been an issue for primary voting in many states and promises to be an even more acute problem for the general election in November when voter traffic runs far greater, even as when more and more voters are choosing absentee voting as an alternative to showing up in person to vote. The lack of workers can affect how many voting places can be open and, therefore, many people's access to their right to vote.

What to do?? Some jurisdictions are getting creative. How about looking in a somewhat less traditional direction for poll workers? One idea is to train workers who are not themselves old enough to vote. The age of eligibility to work the polls varies from state to state, and more and more of them are settling on 16 as the magic age, two years before you're eligible to exercise the franchise for yourself. In one county in Tennessee, 32% of poll workers are 16 to 17 years old. I think that is very cool. An interesting side effect is that these workers report the experience has motivated them to vote for themselves when they turn 18.

One former poll worker who, at 74, has decided she just cannot afford the risk of working this year is being replaced by her grandson. She says, "I am a person who has always given back, and I think [my grandson] knows that's how I live, so I'm proud that he gets it." That's not a bad outcome.

Be well, We'll talk again.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

| | 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 |
| | Aug. 5 | Aug. 6 | | | | | |
| Minnesota | 57,162 | 57,779 | | | | | |
| Nebraska | 27,178 | 27,489 | | | | | |
| Montana | 4,314 | 4,429 | | | | | |
| Colorado | 48,394 | 48,988 | | | | | |
| Wyoming | 2,392 | 2,424 | | | | | |
| North Dakota | 6933 | 7057 | | | | | |
| South Dakota | 9,079 | 9168 | | | | | |
| United States | 4,768,083 | 4,818,328 | | | | | |
| US Deaths | 156,753 | 157,930 | | | | | |
| Minnesota | +602 | +617 | | | | | |
| Nebraska | +222 | +311 | | | | | |
| Montana | +81 | +115 | | | | | |
| Colorado | +426 | +594 | | | | | |
| Wyoming | +28 | +32 | | | | | |
| North Dakota | +148 | +124 | | | | | |
| South Dakota | +59 | +89 | | | | | |
| United States | +49,834 | +50,235 | | | | | |
| US Deaths | +1,275 | +1,177 | | | | | |

* 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 5th COVID-19 UPDATE

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from State Health Lab Reports

Davison County recorded its first death with a male in the 70-79+ age group. North Dakota recorded one more death as well.

Hamlin County had two positive cases to be removed from the fully recovered list. Twenty-six counties in the state have recorded a positive case today.

I'm not sure if you are recognizing a trend in South Dakota. It was not that long ago when our active cases were just under 800. Now we are at 951. The positivity rate in South Dakota is 5.6 percent and in Brown County, it is 10.8 percent according to today's figures with seven positive cases in Brown County. The only good news I see is that our hospitalizations are still hovering in the low 40s.

Brown County:

Active Cases: +2 (38)
Recovered: +5 (378)
Total Positive: +7 (419) 10.8%
Ever Hospitalized: 0 (20)
Deaths: 0 (3)
Total Tests: 65 (5515)
Percent Recovered: 90.2% (-.3)

South Dakota:

Positive: +89 (9168 total) 5.6%
Total Tests: 1,575 (143,980 total)
Hospitalized: +10 (856 total). 43 currently hospitalized (up 1 from yesterday)
Deaths: +1 (137 total)
Recovered: +72 (8080 total)
Active Cases: +16 (951)
Percent Recovered: 88.1 -.1
Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 2% Covid, 46% Non-Covid, 52% Available
ICU Bed Capacity: 2% Covid, 59% Non-Covid, 39% Available
Ventilator Capacity: 5% Covid, 12% Non-Covid, 83% Available

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

Fully recovered from positive cases: (Lost Hamlin) Bon Homme 13-13, Day 21-21, Haakon 1-1, Hand 7-7, Hyde 3-3, 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: +1 positive (2 active case)
Beadle (9): +3 recovered (17 active cases)
Bennett: 1 active case
Bon Homme: Fully Recovered
Brookings (1): +1 positive (14 active cases)
Brown (3): +7 positive, +5 recovered (38 active

cases)

Brule: +5 positive, +1 recovered (6 active cases)
Buffalo (3): +1 positive, (10 active cases)
Butte: +1 positive (5 active cases)
Campbell: +1 positive (2 active cases)
Charles Mix: 8 active cases
Clark: 2 active cases
Clay: +2 recovered (14 active cases)
Codington (1): +3 positive, 1 recovered (19 active cases)
Corson: +1 positive, +2 recovered (6 active cases)
Custer: 9 active cases

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Davison (1): -1 recovered (12 active cases)
 Day: Fully Recovered
 Deuel: 1 active cases
 Dewey: +1 positive (31 active cases)
 Douglas: 2 active cases
 Edmunds: 3 active cases
 Fall River: +2 positive (5 active cases)
 Faulk (1): 3 active cases
 Grant: 5 active case
 Gregory: 1 active case
 Haakon: 1 active case
 Hamlin: +2 positive (2 active cases)
 Hand: Fully Recovered
 Hanson: 5 active cases
 Harding: No infections reported
 Hughes (3): +1 recovered (5 active cases)
 Hutchinson: 5 active cases
 Hyde: Fully Recovered
 Jackson (1): +1 positive, +1 recovered (3 active cases)
 Jerauld (1): 1 active case
 Jones: 1 active case
 Kingsbury: +1 recovered (3 active cases)
 Lake (2): +2 positive, +3 recovered (14 active cases)
 Lawrence: +3 positive, +1 recovered (9 active cases)
 Lincoln (2): +7 positive, +5 recovered (89 active cases)
 Lyman (2): 10 active cases
 Marshall: 1 active case
 McCook (1): +2 positive (3 active cases)
 McPherson: 1 active case
 Meade (1): +4 positive, +1 recovered (19 active cases)

Mellette: +2 recovered (2 active cases)
 Miner: 5 active cases
 Minnehaha (64): +27 positive, +28 recovered (331 active cases)
 Moody: 3 active cases
 Oglala Lakota +1 positive (27 active cases)
 Pennington (26): +10 positive, +13 recovered (123 active cases)
 Perkins: 1 active case
 Potter: 1 active case
 Roberts (1): 8 active cases
 Sanborn: Fully Recovered
 Spink: 5 active cases
 Stanley: Fully Recovered
 Sully: Fully Recovered
 Todd (4): +1 positive (5 active cases)
 Tripp: Fully Recovered
 Turner: +1 positive (10 active cases)
 Union (3): +3 positive, +2 recovered (35 active cases)
 Walworth: 1 active case
 Yankton (2): +1 positive (7 active cases)
 Ziebach: +1 positive, +1 recovered (6 active cases)

North Dakota Dept. of Health Report COVID-19 Daily Report, August 5:

- 5,725 tests (1,544)
- 7,057 positives (+124)
- 5,837 recovered (+122)
- 108 deaths (+1)
- 1,112 active cases (+1)

| Race/Ethnicity | # of Cases | % of Cases |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Asian, Non-Hispanic | 725 | 8% |
| Black, Non-Hispanic | 1032 | 11% |
| Hispanic | 1214 | 13% |
| Native American, Non-Hispanic | 1450 | 16% |
| Other | 865 | 9% |
| White, Non-Hispanic | 3882 | 42% |

| Age Range | # of Cases | # of Deaths |
|-------------|------------|-------------|
| 0-19 years | 1173 | 0 |
| 20-29 years | 1977 | 1 |
| 30-39 years | 1810 | 6 |
| 40-49 years | 1391 | 7 |
| 50-59 years | 1355 | 17 |
| 60-69 years | 813 | 25 |
| 70-79 years | 345 | 21 |
| 80+ years | 304 | 60 |

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| County ▲ | Positive Cases | Recovered Cases | Negative Persons | Deceased |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------|
| Aurora | 38 | 36 | 368 | 0 |
| Beadle | 587 | 561 | 1833 | 9 |
| Bennett | 6 | 5 | 529 | 0 |
| Bon Homme | 13 | 13 | 731 | 0 |
| Brookings | 122 | 107 | 2580 | 1 |
| Brown | 419 | 378 | 4255 | 3 |
| Brule | 45 | 39 | 716 | 0 |
| Buffalo | 109 | 96 | 621 | 3 |
| Butte | 12 | 7 | 758 | 1 |
| Campbell | 3 | 1 | 89 | 0 |
| Charles Mix | 100 | 92 | 1200 | 0 |
| Clark | 16 | 14 | 375 | 0 |
| Clay | 120 | 106 | 1275 | 0 |
| Codington | 123 | 103 | 2698 | 1 |
| Corson | 30 | 24 | 443 | 0 |
| Custer | 23 | 14 | 766 | 0 |
| Davison | 93 | 80 | 2252 | 1 |
| Day | 21 | 21 | 606 | 0 |
| Deuel | 9 | 8 | 386 | 0 |
| Dewey | 64 | 33 | 2015 | 0 |
| Douglas | 16 | 14 | 384 | 0 |
| Edmunds | 13 | 10 | 397 | 0 |
| Fall River | 20 | 15 | 939 | 0 |
| Faulk | 26 | 22 | 180 | 1 |
| Grant | 23 | 18 | 680 | 0 |
| Gregory | 7 | 6 | 375 | 0 |
| Haakon | 2 | 1 | 286 | 0 |
| Hamlin | 16 | 14 | 604 | 0 |
| Hand | 7 | 7 | 274 | 0 |
| Hanson | 21 | 16 | 188 | 0 |
| Harding | 0 | 0 | 50 | 0 |
| Hughes | 84 | 76 | 1666 | 2 |
| Hutchinson | 27 | 22 | 869 | 0 |

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

| Sex ▲ | # of Cases | # of Deaths |
|--------|------------|-------------|
| Female | 4514 | 68 |
| Male | 4654 | 69 |

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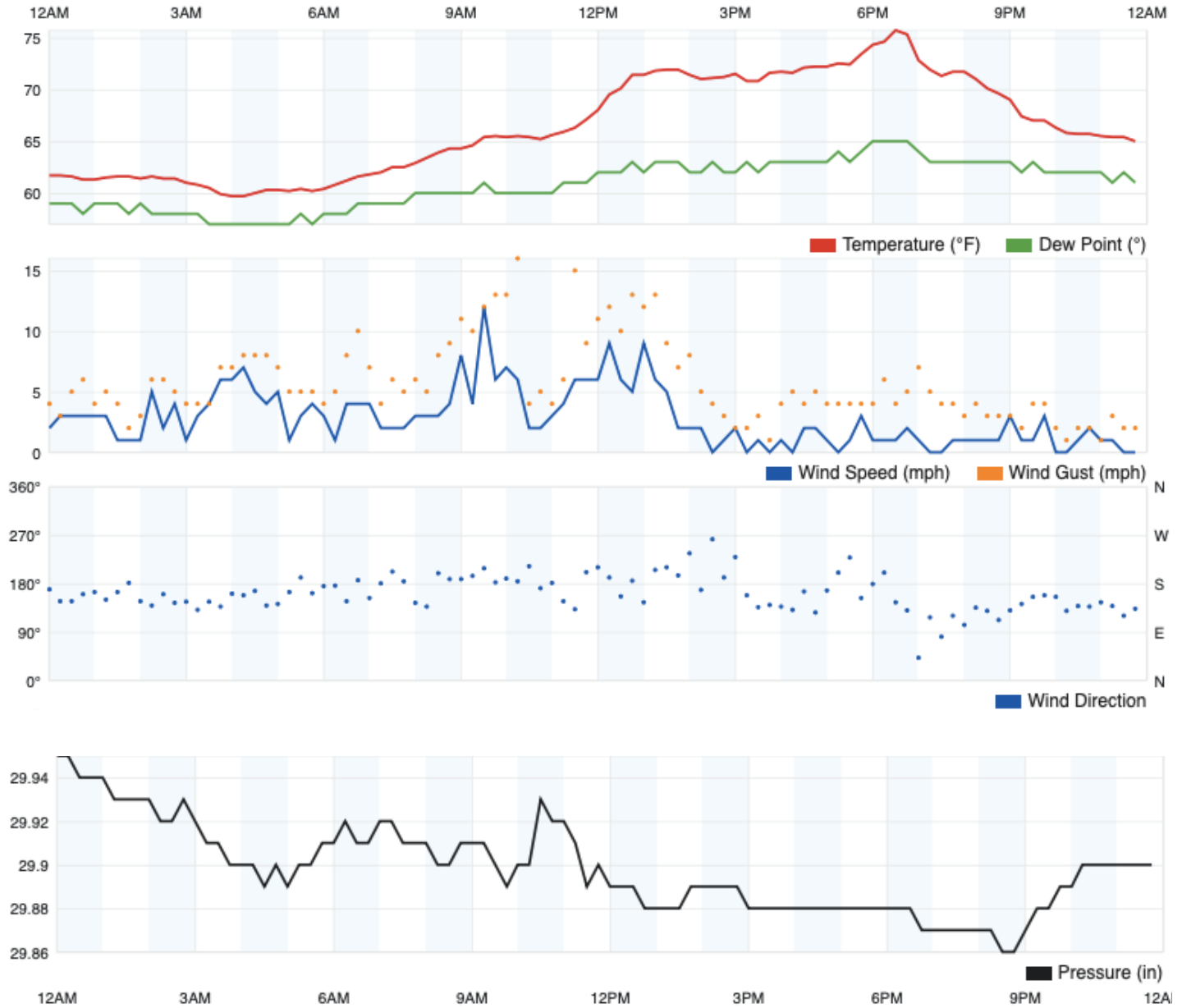
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| | | | | |
|---------------|------|------|-------|----|
| Hyde | 3 | 3 | 127 | 0 |
| Jackson | 11 | 7 | 423 | 1 |
| Jerauld | 40 | 38 | 264 | 1 |
| Jones | 2 | 1 | 56 | 0 |
| Kingsbury | 14 | 11 | 535 | 0 |
| Lake | 86 | 70 | 889 | 2 |
| Lawrence | 35 | 26 | 2028 | 0 |
| Lincoln | 588 | 498 | 6460 | 2 |
| Lyman | 88 | 77 | 916 | 2 |
| Marshall | 8 | 7 | 443 | 0 |
| McCook | 26 | 22 | 618 | 1 |
| McPherson | 7 | 6 | 206 | 0 |
| Meade | 82 | 62 | 1905 | 1 |
| Mellette | 24 | 22 | 373 | 0 |
| Miner | 15 | 10 | 247 | 0 |
| Minnehaha | 4285 | 3890 | 26319 | 64 |
| Moody | 30 | 27 | 605 | 0 |
| Oglala Lakota | 152 | 124 | 2873 | 1 |
| Pennington | 858 | 709 | 10514 | 29 |
| Perkins | 6 | 5 | 160 | 0 |
| Potter | 1 | 0 | 282 | 0 |
| Roberts | 71 | 62 | 1697 | 1 |
| Sanborn | 13 | 13 | 216 | 0 |
| Spink | 22 | 17 | 1118 | 0 |
| Stanley | 14 | 14 | 238 | 0 |
| Sully | 1 | 1 | 67 | 0 |
| Todd | 67 | 59 | 1971 | 4 |
| Tripp | 20 | 20 | 595 | 0 |
| Turner | 49 | 39 | 878 | 0 |
| Union | 204 | 166 | 1831 | 4 |
| Walworth | 18 | 17 | 679 | 0 |
| Yankton | 104 | 95 | 2962 | 2 |
| Ziebach | 9 | 3 | 285 | 0 |
| Unassigned | 0 | 0 | 7038 | 0 |

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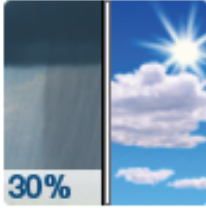


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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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| Today | Tonight | Friday | Friday Night | Saturday |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Areas Dense Fog then Sunny | Clear then Chance Showers | Chance Showers then Mostly Sunny | Chance T-storms | Mostly Sunny |
| High: 84 °F | Low: 68 °F | High: 89 °F | Low: 67 °F | High: 87 °F |



Today:
Partly cloudy. Chance for storms late tonight, Highs in the 80s

Friday:
Humid. Isolated to scattered storms expected. Highs near 90.

Saturday:
Partly cloudy. Slight chance for storms. Highs near 90.

 National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD   Updated: 8/6/2020 4:18 AM Central

Mostly dry conditions expected today though we may see some storms late tonight and in the overnight hours. Friday becomes more humid and sees a better chance for storms with the potential for some severe.

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Today in Weather History

August 6, 1962: Wind damaged farm buildings and hail damaged crops over a large area. The area affected was northern Faulk, portions of Spink, Northern Clark, Codington, and Grant, along with Day County.

August 6, 1969: During the day and evening hours, two relatively large storms brought destructive weather to much of Minnesota. The northern storm area moved in from North Dakota between Fargo and Grand Forks. The southern storm rapidly developed north of Wadena. These two storms combined to cause twelve tornadoes, two vast areas of wind and hail damage, and one waterspout. The storms killed 15 people, injured 106, and caused 4.8 million dollars in property and public utility damage.

August 6, 1969: The first report of high winds was southeast of Piedmont with gusts of 65 to 70 mph estimated by a National Weather Service employee. Damage in that area included several downed trees and leveled gardens. As the storm moved east, large hail was reported. The first wind gust at Ellsworth AFB was 89 mph at 1918 MST on the northwest end of the runway. By 1925 MST, sustained winds were over 50 mph for nearly 10 minutes, and the peak gust was 114 mph. The sensor on the southeast end of the runway, 2.5 miles away, recorded a wind gust of 114 mph at 1929 MST. The damage on the base included several large trees blown over and snapped in half and roof damage to base housing units. A few tents set up on the taxiways for an air show were blown around, but not significantly damaged. A survey by base meteorologists indicated the main downburst winds hit over open prairie surrounding the runway, where there are no trees or structures. Also between 1920 and 1930 MST, a meteorology student estimated winds between 70 and 80 mph at Box Elder, where gardens were leveled, and wooden fences and roofs were damaged.

1890 - Thunderstorms left four inches of hail covering the ground in Adair County and Union County in Iowa. The hail drifted into six foot mounds, and in some places remained on the ground for twenty- six days. (The Weather Channel)

1918 - Unusually hot weather began to overspread the Atlantic Coast States, from the Carolinas to southern New England. The temperature soared to an all-time record high of 106 degrees at Washington D.C., and Cumberland and Keedysville hit 109 degrees to establish a state record for Maryland. Temperatures were above normal east of the Rockies that month, with readings much above normal in the Lower Missouri Valley. Omaha NE reached 110 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1959: Hurricane Dot crossed Kauai in the Hawaiian Islands producing sustained winds of 105 mph with gusts to 125 mph. Over 6 inches of rain fell with over 9 inches on the big island of Hawaii. The sugar cane crop on Kauai sustained \$2.7 million in damages.

1959 - A bucket survey showed that thunderstorms dropped 16.70 inches of rain on parts of Decatur County IA. The total was accepted as Iowa's 24 hour rainfall record. (The Weather Channel)

1986 - Evening thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 100 mph at Winner SD damaging two hundred homes. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1987 - Afternoon thunderstorms deluged Milwaukee, WI, with 6.84 inches of rain, including more than five inches in two hours, breaking all previous rainfall records for the city. Floodwaters were four feet deep at the Milwaukee County Stadium, and floodwaters filled the basement of the main terminal at the airport. Flooding caused 5.9 million dollars damage, and claimed the life of one person. Death Valley, CA, reported a morning low of 97 degrees. A midday thunderstorm deluged Birmingham AL with nearly six inches of rain in one hour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in Pennsylvania and New York State. A cold front crossing the northwestern U.S. produced wind gusts to 66 mph at Livingston MT. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather from northwestern Texas to the Southern Appalachians, and in the northeastern U.S. There were 136 reports of large hail or damaging winds during the day and evening. Thunderstorms in the Southern Plains Region produced tennis ball size hail northwest of Buffalo OK, and wind gusts to 100 mph at Pampa TX. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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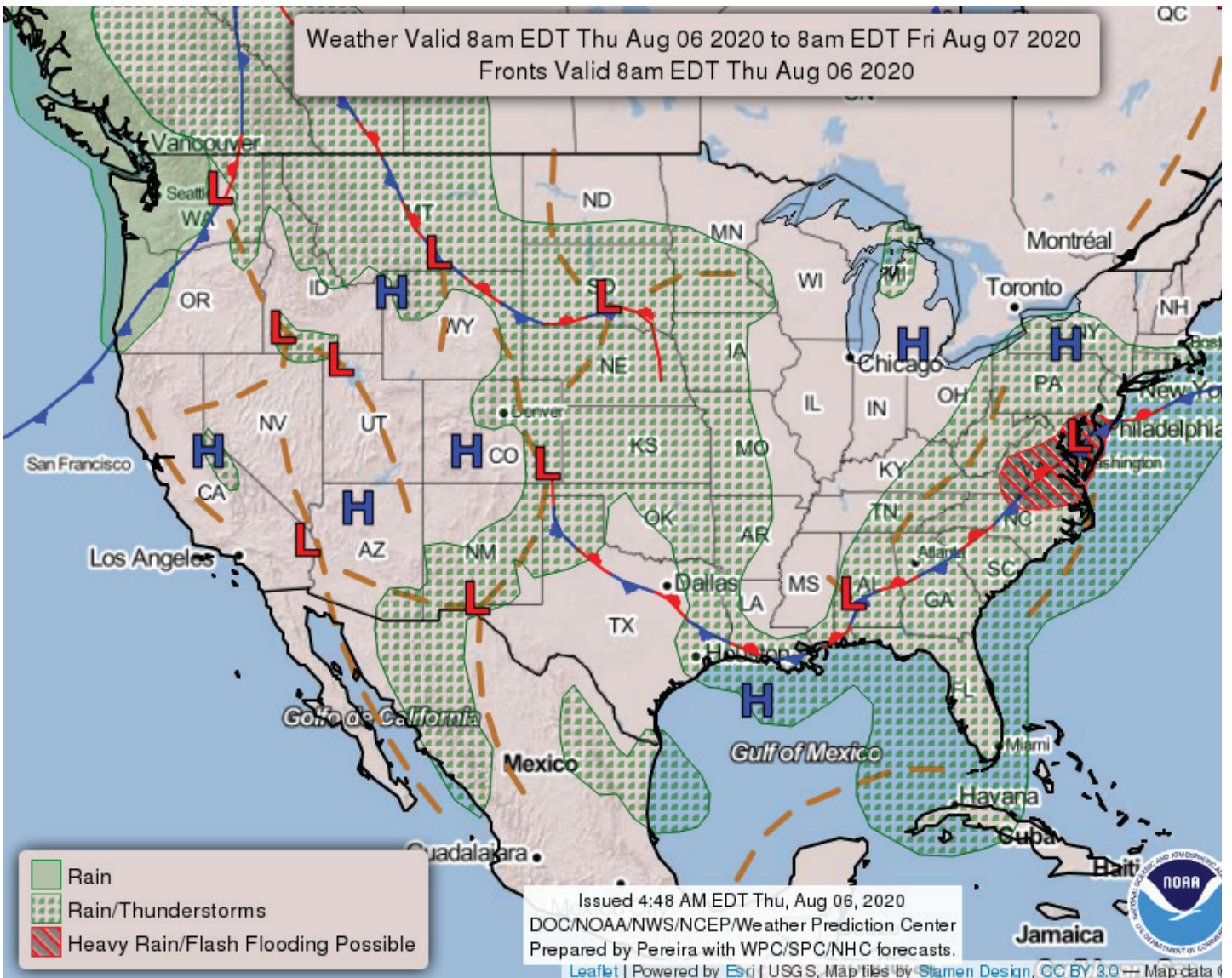
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 76 °F at 6:26 PM
Low Temp: 60 °F at 3:52 AM
Wind: 16 mph at 9:47 AM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 108° in 1941
Record Low: 44° in 1902
Average High: 84°F
Average Low: 58°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 0.39
Precip to date in Aug.: 0.45
Average Precip to date: 14.25
Precip Year to Date: 10.96
Sunset Tonight: 8:54 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:26 a.m.



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TAKE TIME TO PREACH

Saint Francis is remembered for his greatness and goodness in spreading the Gospel of Christ – His Lord. His writings still inspire people today.

One day he said to a fellow “brother” who lived with him in the monastery, “Let’s go to town and preach to the people.”

As they walked the dusty road, they stopped to talk to people and play games with the children. Tired and hungry, St. Francis turned to his young companion and said, “Let’s return to the monastery.”

“ But,” protested his young colleague, “when do we preach to the people?”

“ Every step we took,” said St. Francis, “and every word we spoke and every smile we shared with the people and everything we did was our sermon. We have been preaching all day!”

The only sermon some people will ever hear are the words that come from our lips, and the only preaching that many will “listen” to is what they see in our lives. For many, we are what we say, and our lives demonstrate we believe.

John wrote, “Those who say they live in God should live as Christ did.” To live as Jesus did, we must obey His teachings and follow His example and do as He did – show others God’s love.

Years ago, a hymn writer asked most effectively: “Can others see Jesus in you?”

Prayer: Father, may the disturbing words of that hymn trouble our minds and hearts and force us to examine our lives and then make changes that will please You. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Those who say they live in God should live as Christ did. 1 John 2:6

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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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

02-03-07-14-28

(two, three, seven, fourteen, twenty-eight)

Estimated jackpot: \$92,000

Lotto America

06-23-26-29-43, Star Ball: 3, ASB: 2

(six, twenty-three, twenty-six, twenty-nine, forty-three; Star Ball: three; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$3.77 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$22 million

Powerball

07-14-17-57-65, Powerball: 24, Power Play: 5

(seven, fourteen, seventeen, fifty-seven, sixty-five; Powerball: twenty-four; Power Play: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$147 million

The Latest: Japan region declares coronavirus emergency

By The Associated Press undefined

TOKYO — The governor of Japan's Aichi Prefecture has announced a regional "state of emergency" seeking to curb the coronavirus.

Gov. Hideaki Ohmura on Thursday asked businesses to close altogether or close early and urged people to stay home at night.

The measures continue through Aug. 24, a period that coincides with the Obon holidays, when schools and many companies close. Aichi includes Nagoya, which is home to Toyota Motor Corp.'s headquarters.

The governor says confirmed coronavirus cases have been rising in Aichi since mid-July at 100 or more a day. Before that, daily cases had been zero for extended periods.

Japan's national government in April called for social distancing and business closings, though those measures were gradually lifted. Japan has had nearly 42,700 confirmed coronavirus cases and about 1,000 deaths.

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

- High demand for virus tests in South Carolina, but long waits
- Spain's virus cases keep rising since easing lockdown
- Members, economy hurt as virus hits Choctaw Tribe in Mississippi
- Virginia has rolled out a smartphone app to automatically notify people if they might have been exposed to the coronavirus. It's the first U.S. state to use new pandemic technology created by Apple and Google.
- After more than a week of meetings, some clarity is coming to bipartisan Washington talks on a huge COVID-19 response bill.
- Chicago's mayor says the nation's third-largest school district will offer only remote instruction to start the school year.

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

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HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

BEIJING — New COVID-19 cases in China's northwestern city of Urumqi have shown a slight rise, with 27 reported Thursday, five more than the day before.

The uptick in the Xinjiang region shows authorities are still battling to end country's latest major outbreak that appeared around three weeks ago. Officials have responded with stiff control measures, including locking down some residential neighborhoods, limiting public transport and restricting travel outside the city.

Urumqi is the capital and biggest city in Xinjiang, which has reported more than 600 coronavirus cases but no deaths.

With no new deaths, China's total remains at 4,634, among 84,528 confirmed cases recorded since the coronavirus was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year.

MEXICO CITY — Mexico is nearing 50,000 confirmed deaths from COVID-19.

The federal Health Department reported 829 newly confirmed deaths Wednesday, giving the country a total of 49,698 such deaths. That is the third highest number of pandemic deaths in the world.

Officials said Mexico's number of confirmed infections rose by 6,139 to 449,961.

Authorities acknowledge Mexico's real number of deaths could be much higher, in part because it has done so little testing. Only about 1 million tests have been performed in the country of almost 130 million people since the pandemic began.

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb is defending school reopenings in the face of mounting reports of students and education staff testing positive for the coronavirus since returning to classes.

Box said Wednesday that she "continue(s) to believe that our schools can safely reopen." She says improved testing and hospital capacity are added safeguards for returning students for in-person learning.

The governor adds that her biggest recommendation to students and families is to know when to stay at home.

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — The Arkansas state government is requiring public schools to stay open five days a week when classes resume this month, complicating efforts by some districts to limit on-site instruction because of the coronavirus.

Education Secretary Johnny Key issued the guidance to schools Wednesday as the state reported 912 new confirmed virus cases and 18 more deaths.

The state's guidance says schools must be open all five weekdays to comply with the state constitution. Some districts had planned to limit on-site instruction and use remote learning on the days that schools weren't open.

Arkansas' public schools are set to reopen the week of Aug. 24.

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Washington Gov. Jay Inslee says schools in the much of the state should strongly consider online-only learning for students this fall due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Inslee also urged Wednesday that they cancel or postpone sports and all other in-person extracurricular activities.

Health experts say the virus is still spreading too extensively in the state, which saw the nation's first confirmed virus case in late January. Since then, Washington has recorded more than 59,000 confirmed coronavirus cases and more than 1,600 deaths.

MONTPELIER, Vt. — Vermont officials say nearly 150 Vermont inmates housed in a Mississippi prison have tested positive for the coronavirus.

Vermont houses 219 inmates at the Tallahatchie County Correctional Facility in Tutwiler, Mississippi, because of a lack of capacity in its own prisons.

Late in July, six inmates who were returned to Vermont from the private Mississippi prison tested positive when they arrived at the Rutland correctional facility. That prompted Vermont's Corrections Department

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to order that the remaining Vermont inmates in Mississippi be tested.

Interim Vermont Corrections Commissioner James Baker says there were 147 positive tests, 62 negative ones, two tests that are pending and eight inmates refused to be tested.

UNITED NATIONS — The United States and seven European countries are calling on Russia to withdraw its forces from the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions in Georgia and allow medical evacuations and aid deliveries during the coronavirus pandemic.

The eight countries said after a closed U.N. Security Council session Wednesday that Russia's presence further divides communities and puts at risk "the health and lives of the conflict-affected population" during the pandemic.

Deputy Russian Ambassador U.N. ambassador Dmitry Polyansky tweeted that the statement is "only a fiction."

Georgia made a botched attempt to regain control of its breakaway province of South Ossetia in 2008, setting off a short war with Russia. Moscow then recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and set up military bases there.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California officials say as many as 17,600 inmates may be released early due to the coronavirus pandemic.

That is 70% more than previously estimated and a total that victims and police say includes dangerous criminals who should stay locked up. However, prison officials say Corrections Secretary Ralph Diaz is likely to block the release of about 5,500, in part because many are serving life sentences.

Early releases also are causing consternation as probation officers and community groups scramble to provide housing, transportation and other services for inmates who may pose a public health risk because nearly 300 have been paroled while still contagious..

Officials have been under intense pressure from advocates, some state lawmakers and two federal judges to release more inmates.

ATLANTA — Georgia has become the fifth U.S. state to record 200,000 confirmed coronavirus cases.

The milestone reported Wednesday comes amid signs that the pace of new infections in the current upsurge has slowed, although hospitalizations and deaths remain high. Georgia is nearing 4,000 deaths from COVID-19.

Gov Brian Kemp's administration continues to express confidence in its efforts to contain the virus, pointing to opening more hospital beds as one achievement. Kemp has ignored pleas from some medical experts to take steps like mandating mask use and shutting down bars.

A spokesman on Wednesday repeated Kemp's belief that voluntary action is enough to tame the outbreak and that the state must divide its focus between protecting health and the economy.

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — A community group at the Oglala Sioux tribe in South Dakota is doing everything it can to help people stay at home, fearing the coronavirus could take a disproportionate toll on an elderly population that maintains the language and culture of the tribe.

Before the pandemic, the Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation worked to teach the Lakota language to children as part of efforts in recent years to revive Lakota language and culture.

The group says less than 3% of the community's members are fluent in the language. Many elderly Sioux on the Pine Ridge Reservation are still fluent but they are among the most vulnerable to COVID-19.

FARGO, N.D. — The mayor of the city that was once the hot spot for the coronavirus in North Dakota is supporting an annual outdoor music festival set to go on as planned this weekend.

The 25th Fargo Blues Festival is scheduled Friday and Saturday at Newman Outdoor Field, home to the Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks of the American Association baseball league. It usually draws up to 2,000

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music fans.

Fargo Mayor Tim Mahoney is a member of a task force that was assembled two months ago when North Dakota's largest city saw a spike in virus cases. He says the show should go on because the virus numbers in the city have dropped thanks to increased testing and contact tracing. He cites statistics showing that Cass County, which includes Fargo, has held steady with a daily positive rate of 2% for 60 days.

"I hope people wear masks and social distance," Mahoney said. "But we've been having some events that have more people and we have not seen the surge."

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice announced Wednesday that Wi-Fi hot spots will be set up around the state to give students the option to take virtual classes when schools are scheduled to reopen in September.

The Republican governor said counties will submit reentry plans this month for the state's planned school reopening on Sept. 8, adding that he wants to give students and parents "total optionality" whether to attend classes in person or online.

Justice said he has committed \$6 million to install more than 1,000 Wi-Fi hot spots at schools, libraries and state parks across the state so students can access online courses when schools restart.

Virus metrics have been on the rise in West Virginia, with hospitalizations, intensive care unit patients and ventilator use at some of the highest levels since the outbreak began. Around 7,100 people have tested positive and 124 people have died, according to state health records.

BOISE, Idaho — Idaho Gov. Brad Little says he'll call the part-time Legislature back into a special session in late August due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Republican governor in a statement on Wednesday says the special session will start during the week of Aug. 24 and possibly include how to conduct the November general election.

The special session could also include legislation creating a liability shield for protection against lawsuits during declared emergencies such as the pandemic.

A timeline calls for lawmakers to give the governor specific legislation by mid-August. Little would then issue a proclamation on Aug. 17 detailing the exact issues to be considered.

BOGOTA, Colombia — A spokesperson for the political party of former Colombian President Álvaro Uribe says the ex-leader has tested positive for the new coronavirus.

A representative of the Democratic Center party on Wednesday confirmed that Uribe, who is under house arrest, had tested positive in a WhatsApp message to The Associated Press. The representative communicated with the AP on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

A Colombian court on Tuesday ordered Uribe to be placed under house arrest while he is investigated in an alleged witness tampering case. A medical team visited Uribe for 20 minutes on Wednesday.

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — The first cruise in an already decimated southeast Alaska cruise season came to a devastating end Wednesday when a small ship carrying 36 passengers had to return to Juneau because one of the guests had tested positive for COVID-19.

Once the Wilderness Adventurer returns to Juneau, the city says all 36 guests will quarantine at a hotel and the 30 crew members will quarantine on the ship.

The loss of large cruise ships has been devastating to Alaska's tourism economy this summer.

Large cruise ship companies canceled their seasons, which was a big hit for a tourism industry that had anticipated 2.2 million visitors, many of them on cruises.

On Pine Ridge, preserving language means protecting elders

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — As the pandemic affects the Oglala Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, one local community organization is doing everything it can to help people stay at home, fearing that the pandemic could take a disproportionate toll on an elderly population that maintains the language and culture of the tribe.

Before the pandemic, the Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation worked to teach the Lakota language to children, as part of a resurgence of Lakota language and culture in recent years. Fewer than 3% of the community is fluent in the language, according to the organization. But as the coronavirus swept across the globe, local leaders feared that the elderly, many who are still fluent in the language, could be killed by COVID-19.

"They are the keepers of our language and our knowledge," said Kyle White, the director of advancement with Thunder Valley.

As the organization scrambled to respond to the pandemic, the leadership realized they were working with a population much more vulnerable to the coronavirus than in other places. They conducted a survey in April and found that more than half of residents had asthma or other breathing problems. 46% of people reported they had diabetes.

White said they also found that most homes had multiple generations living in them, with one home reporting there were 23 people living there.

The organization made a list of the elderly in each community and began delivering cleaning supplies and care packages to help them avoid having to go to the store.

Although the pandemic has been marked with isolation for many, Lynn Cuny, the deputy director at Thunder Valley, said the work of assembling and delivering the packages revealed that tribal members could still come together as it did in past generations during smallpox and flu epidemics.

"As Lakota people, we've been here," she said. "We've endured many pandemics."

Thunder Valley is also fundraising to continue its response with a goal of reaching \$100,000. Cuny said that as the tribe records more cases of COVID-19, the realities of the pandemic and the need for a wide-ranging response are being realized across the reservation.

"Now it's hitting home and it's getting to be more real for a lot of us," she said.

South Dakota reports 89 COVID-19 cases, one death

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota on Wednesday reported 89 new cases of COVID-19 and one death amid an uptick in the average number of daily new cases over the last two weeks.

Over the past two weeks, the rolling average number of daily new cases has increased by 20, an increase of 31%. The Department of Health also reported the highest number of active cases since June, with 951 people. But the number of people hospitalized from the coronavirus has remained low. 43 patients are currently in the hospital.

During the course of the pandemic, a total of 9,168 people have tested positive for COVID-19 statewide. 88% of those people have fully recovered, while 137 have died.

Minnehaha County, which is the state's most-populated area, saw the largest increase with a daily tally of 27 cases.

The latest death was a man in his 70s from Davison County, according to Department of Health data.

Driver, passenger arrested following fight that rolled SUV

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls driver and a passenger have been arrested following an argument that caused their vehicle to roll over with two others inside, including a 3-year-old.

Sioux Falls police say a 19-year-old woman riding in the car grabbed the steering wheel during the fight about 2 a.m. Tuesday. That caused the 26-year-old male driver to lose control and crash the SUV.

Police spokesman Sam Clemens said the two got out of the vehicle and the woman started hitting the

man who walked away from the crash. Clemens says none of the four were seriously injured, the Argus Leader reported.

Officials say the woman was arrested on a tentative charge of aggravated assault and several other counts. The driver, who was found several blocks away, was arrested on suspicion of driving drunk and hit-and-run.

Lebanon probes blast amid rising anger, calls for change

By BASSEM MROUE and SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Lebanese officials targeted in the investigation of the massive blast that tore through Beirut sought to shift blame for the presence of explosives at the city's port, and the visiting French president warned Thursday that without serious reforms the country would "continue to sink."

The blast Tuesday, which appeared to have been caused by an accidental fire that ignited a warehouse full of ammonium nitrate at the city's port, rippled across the Lebanese capital, killing at least 135 people, injuring more than 5,000 and causing widespread destruction.

It also may have accelerated the country's coronavirus outbreak, as thousands flooded into hospitals in the wake of the blast. Tens of thousands have been forced to move in with relatives and friends after their homes were damaged, further raising the risks of exposure.

French President Emmanuel Macron visited Thursday amid widespread pledges of international aid. But Lebanon, which was already mired in a severe economic crisis, faces a daunting challenge in rebuilding. It's unclear how much support the international community will offer the notoriously corrupt and dysfunctional government.

Macron, who viewed the devastated port and was to meet with senior Lebanese officials, said the visit is "an opportunity to have a frank and challenging dialogue with the Lebanese political powers and institutions."

He said France will work to coordinate aid but warned that "if reforms are not made, Lebanon will continue to sink."

Later, as he toured one of the hardest-hit neighborhoods, an angry crowd vented its fury at Lebanon's political leaders, chanting "Revolution" and "The people want to bring down the regime," slogans used during mass protests last year.

Macron said he was not there to endorse the "regime" and vowed that French aid would not fall into the "hands of corruption."

Losses from the blast are estimated to be between \$10 billion to \$15 billion, Beirut Gov. Marwan Abboud told the Saudi-owned TV station Al-Hadath on Wednesday, adding that nearly 300,000 people are homeless.

The head of Lebanon's customs department meanwhile confirmed in an interview with LBC TV late Wednesday that officials had sent five or six letters over the years to the judiciary asking that the ammonium nitrate be removed because of the dangers it posed.

But Badri Daher said all he could do was alert authorities to the presence of dangerous materials, saying even that was "extra work" for him and his predecessor. He said the port authority was responsible for the material, while his job was to prevent smuggling and collect duties.

The judiciary and the port authority could not immediately be reached for comment. The government said Wednesday that an investigation was underway and that port officials have been placed under house arrest.

The investigation into the explosion is focused on how 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate, a highly explosive chemical used in fertilizers, came to be stored at the port facility for six years, and why nothing was done about it.

The cargo had been stored at the port since it was confiscated from a ship years earlier. Based on the timeline and the size of the cargo, that ship could be the MV Rhosus. The ship was initially seized in Beirut in 2013 when it entered the port due to technical problems, according to lawyers involved in the case. It came from the nation of Georgia, and had been bound for Mozambique.

The stockpile is believed to have detonated after a fire broke out nearby in what appeared to be a

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warehouse holding fireworks. Daher, the customs official, said he did not know if there were fireworks near the site.

Another theory is that the fire began when welders were trying to repair a broken gate and a hole in the wall of Hangar 12, where the explosive material was stored. Local news reports say the repair work was ordered by security forces who investigated the facility and were concerned about theft.

Security officials have declined to comment while the investigation is underway. Port officials have rejected the theory in interviews with local media, saying the welders completed their work long before the fire broke out.

Anger is mounting against the various political factions, including the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group, that have ruled the country since the 1975-1990 civil war. The country's long-serving politicians are widely seen as being hopelessly corrupt and incapable of providing even basic services like electricity and trash collection.

The tiny Mediterranean country was already on the brink of collapse, with soaring unemployment and a financial crisis that has wiped out people's life savings. Hospitals were already strained by the coronavirus pandemic, and one was so badly damaged by the blast it had to treat patients in a nearby field.

Dr. Firas Abiad, director general of Rafik Hariri University Hospital, the public hospital leading the coronavirus fight, said he expects an increase in cases in the next 10 to 15 days linked to crowding at hospitals and blood donation centers after the blast.

Authorities had largely contained the outbreak by imposing a sweeping lockdown in March and April, but case numbers have risen in recent weeks. A renewed lockdown was to go in effect this week but those plans were canceled after the explosion. The country has reported more than 5,400 coronavirus cases and 68 deaths since February.

"There is no doubt that our immunity in the country is less than before the explosion and this will affect us medium- to long-term," Abiad said. "We desperately need aid, not only us but all hospitals in Lebanon."

The explosion was the most powerful blast ever seen in the city, which has survived decades of war and conflict. Several city blocks were left littered with rubble, broken glass and damaged vehicles.

Authorities have cordoned off the port itself, where the blast left a crater 200 meters (yards) across and shredded a large grain silo, emptying its contents into the rubble. Estimates suggested about 85% of the import-reliant country's grain was stored there.

Associated Press writers Thomas Adamson in Paris and Joseph Krauss in Jerusalem contributed.

Many more likely sought jobless aid amid resurgence of virus

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the nation still gripped by an alarming resurgence of coronavirus cases, the U.S. government will provide its latest snapshot Thursday of the layoffs that have remained elevated at a weekly pace above 1 million since the pandemic erupted in March.

The rate of applications for unemployment benefits has stalled at roughly twice the record high that had existed before the virus sent the economy spiraling into a recession. With many states and localities having re-imposed lockdowns in response to the spreading virus, businesses face renewed struggles that have forced some to impose further job cuts or to shut down.

The latest string of layoffs follows the expiration of a \$600 weekly federal jobless payment that provided critical support for many of the unemployed. Members of Congress are locked in prolonged negotiations over a new rescue aid package that might extend that unemployment benefit, though likely at a lower level of payment.

The Latest: China sending medical team to Beirut after blast

BEIRUT (AP) — The Latest on the explosion in Beirut (all times local):

1:20 p.m.

China says it is sending a medical team and supplies to Lebanon in the aftermath of the port explosion that injured more than 5,000 people.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Thursday that Chinese leader Xi Jinping had conveyed a message of condolence to Lebanese President Michel Aoun following the blast, which killed at least 135 people.

"As a friendly country to Lebanon, China is willing to continue to provide assistance within its capacity for Lebanon to tide over the difficulties," Wang told reporters at a daily briefing.

China has long been a major customer for Middle Eastern oil and gas, and in recent years has sought to boost its influence in the area as an alternative to the U.S. and Europe. For many years, China has also contributed soldiers to the United Nations peacekeeping operation in southern Lebanon.

1 p.m.

Germany's foreign minister says an employee of the German Embassy in Beirut was killed in the huge blast that devastated the Lebanese capital earlier this week.

Heiko Maas says in a statement that the woman died as a result of "the consequences of the explosion in her apartment." He has offered his condolences to embassy staff.

The embassy building was damaged in the blast.

Tuesday's explosion appeared to have been caused by an accidental fire that ignited a stockpile of ammonium nitrate at Beirut's port. It killed at least 135 people, injured more than 5,000 and caused widespread destruction.

12:05 p.m.

Britain is sending a Royal Navy ship to Beirut to help the city recover from Tuesday's devastating port explosion.

Defense Secretary Ben Wallace says the survey vessel HMS Enterprise, currently in Cyprus, will assess damage and help Lebanese authorities prepare to rebuild the port.

Britain has pledged a 5 million pound (\$6.6 million) humanitarian support package for Lebanon and says it will send search and rescue teams and expert medical support.

11 a.m.

A French presidential official says French President Emmanuel Macron is arriving in Beirut following Tuesday's deadly port explosion and will be greeted by Lebanese President Michel Aoun. The official says Macron will go directly to the port and meet Lebanese and French teams in the disaster area.

The official spoke anonymously in accordance with the presidency's practices.

Later in the day, Macron will head to the presidential palace for meetings with top officials. He will also meet with members of different political factions and civil society.

The French official says Macron's trip is meant to show that Lebanon is not alone and to give the Lebanese people confidence. Macron has said his role is to show that he believes in the country.

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. **LEBANON TENDS TO ITS WOUNDS** Lebanese army bulldozers are plowing through wreckage to reopen roads around Beirut's port, which was demolished by a massive explosion as France's president arrives amid pledges of international aid.

2. **CONCERNS RAISED ABOUT TEAR GAS** Law enforcement officials say the gases deployed during ra-

cial injustice protests are effective tools for crowd control and are safe, but there are few studies on the health effects.

3. CHILDREN FLEEING DANGER EXPELLED Citing the coronavirus, more than 2,000 unaccompanied children have been expelled from the U.S. since March under an emergency declaration by the Trump administration.

4. NORTH KOREA ESCALATES VIRUS RESPONSE Pyongyang is quarantining thousands of people and shipping food and other aid to a southern city locked down over coronavirus worries, officials say.

5. KAREN BASS' CUBA BAGGAGE Past remarks eulogizing Fidel Castro could derail the California congresswoman's chances as a potential running mate for Joe Biden because of a crucial voting bloc in Florida.

Polish LGBT people leaving as post-vote mood grows hostile

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — When a right-wing populist party won the right to govern Poland five years ago, Piotr Grabarczyk feared "bad things" might happen to gay men like him and other LGBT people. He sometimes considered leaving the country, but waited.

Friends and a job bound Grabarczyk to Warsaw, the relatively liberal capital city. He trusted that Poland's membership in the European Union would protect his community. Yet his dwindling faith finally fell away as President Andrzej Duda campaigned for reelection on an anti-LGBT platform - and won.

Duda, who repeatedly described the LGBT rights movement as a dangerous "ideology," was sworn into his second term Thursday. Grabarczyk, 31, is now gone, along with other gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Poles who have emigrated to escape what they consider homophobia promoted by the highest levels of government.

"Like where's the line? Is there a line they are not going to cross? I don't know," Grabarczyk said after landing last week in Barcelona, Spain, where both same-sex marriages and adoptions are legal. "That was kind of scary."

He spoke to The Associated Press alongside his boyfriend, Kamil Pawlik, 34, who left Poland three days after Duda beat Warsaw's mayor in a runoff last month.

While gays and lesbians have never had the legal right to marry or to form civil unions in Poland, as they can in much of Europe, many felt confident until not long ago that Polish society was becoming more accepting and that those rights would one day come.

They have instead faced a furious backlash from the Catholic Church and the government. Duda proposed a constitutional amendment to prevent same-sex couples from adopting children. Last year, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Krakow warned of a "rainbow plague," and the ruling Law and Justice party has described LGBT rights as a threat to families and Poland's Catholic identity.

While Grabarczyk, an entertainment reporter and blogger with a large YouTube following, and freelance graphic designer Pawlik are not planning marriage or children right now, the proposed adoption ban was their exit sign. They felt that it showed a determination by the authorities to put discrimination into law, as President Vladimir Putin has done in Russia.

No statistics exist on how many LGBT people have left Poland. Activists say some departed after Law and Justice and Duda, who is backed by the party, came to power in 2015 and created an unfriendly climate for liberals and minorities.

As Duda faced a tough electoral challenge from Warsaw Mayor Rafał Trzaskowski, the rhetoric grew harsher. He called the LGBT movement an "ideology" worse than communism and declared that LGBT was "not people." He formally proposed the same-sex adoption ban.

After his victory, Duda apologized for language he acknowledged was sometimes too "harsh." A prominent LGBT activist, Bart Staszewski, nevertheless asked on Facebook if anyone was thinking of moving away from Poland. He received hundreds of replies, mostly from people saying they were contemplating it or had already left.

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Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and other European Union countries are where LGBT emigres are envisioning their futures. They follow generations of Poles who have fled political repression at home, including during the communist era.

The recent exodus represents "a second wave of immigration" after the significant number of Poles who moved abroad to work when Poland joined the EU in 2004, Staszewski said.

"This time, people are not looking for better paid jobs, but they are looking for dignity and respect," he said. "People want to feel that they are protected by the government and not treated as an enemy."

Others are vowing to stay and fight for LGBT rights, among them Staszewski. The 29-year-old said he is inspired by the example of his grandparents, who participated in the underground Polish resistance against the German occupation of Poland during World War II.

But escape is not a realistic option for everyone, particularly those from rural areas without money, foreign languages or other skills required to start over in a new culture.

Michał Niepielski, 57, a radio technician in Krakow who has taken a case to the European Court of Human Rights in hopes of winning the right to marry his partner of 16 years, says he knows some English and could move, but would not be able to work in his field abroad.

Speaking to the AP, Niepielski confessed that he and his partner are "very afraid" but are trying to be positive in their social media comments. The EU's recent decision to deny small amounts of funding to Polish towns declaring themselves to be "LGBT free" gave them enough hope to keep on going, he said.

"We have sympathy with the people who haven't come out of the closet yet and now will have to stay in the closet for a long time, perhaps until the end of their lives," Niepielski said. "That's a tragedy. That's one reason we are staying."

LGBT rights have continued to be a flash point since the election. The Justice Ministry awarded funding to a project designed to counteract crimes "committed under the influence of LGBT ideology."

Three activists protesting homophobia were detained this week and charged with the crimes of insulting monuments or offending religious feeling for hanging rainbow flags on statues in Warsaw, including one of Jesus. If convicted, they could face prison.

There is no law, however, making anti-LGBT hate speech a crime.

Grabarczyk, who recently published an ebook of coming-out stories titled "Mom, I'm Gay. Dad, I'm a Lesbian," said he feels guilty about leaving others behind while he and his boyfriend live in Barcelona. He recalls feeling as a teenager when Poland joined the European Union like he was in a new world, where borders didn't exist and he could easily meet people of different cultures, skin colors and sexual orientations.

"For us, it was a given to live in a world like that, and it's all crumbling down now," he said. "So it's only natural to seek a place where we can return to that."

No hoopla: Virus upends Trump and Biden convention plans

By BILL BARROW and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — At the last minute, President Donald Trump and his Democratic rival, Joe Biden, are searching for places to impressively yet safely accept their parties' presidential nominations as the spread of the coronavirus adds fresh uncertainty to the campaign for the White House.

Trump said Wednesday he's considering giving his Aug. 27 acceptance speech on the grounds of the White House, a move that could violate ethics law. Biden, meanwhile, scrapped plans to accept the Democratic nomination on Aug. 20 in Milwaukee, where the party has spent more than a year planning a massive convention.

Presidential conventions are a staple of American politics and have played out against national traumas as significant as the Civil War and World War II. But the pandemic's potency is proving to be a tougher obstacle, denying both candidates crucial opportunities to connect with supporters in the final stretch before the Nov. 3 election.

The campaigns are looking for alternative ways to deal with the virus and still reach millions of Ameri-

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cans through television and virtual events. Longtime convention attendees say they'll miss the traditional festivities even as they acknowledge public health priorities.

"I was looking forward to going to Milwaukee and having a lot of beer and other snacks," said Donna Brazile, who managed Al Gore's campaign in 2000 and served as Democratic National Committee chair in 2016. But "if you ask a majority of voters, they'd tell you they're more anxious about when the NFL season starts. ... What's best for the public should be best for the politicians at this point."

Matt Moore, a former South Carolina GOP chairman, has enjoyed several Republican conventions as unifying efforts following bruising primary battles in states like his. But the general election audience, he said, doesn't see it the same way.

"As long as they can watch it on Facebook, most voters don't care if the conventions are in Siberia or Sheboygan," he said.

Trump originally planned to accept the GOP nomination in Charlotte, North Carolina, the largest city in a critical battleground state. But he sparred with Gov. Roy Cooper, a Democrat, who wouldn't guarantee the state would lift restrictions on large crowds like the scenes inside a presidential convention arena.

Frustrated, Trump declared he'd abandon North Carolina for Republican-run Florida. But then coronavirus cases spiked there and across the Sun Belt, forcing him to retreat again.

In a phone interview with Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends" on Wednesday, Trump said the first night of GOP programming would originate from Charlotte but the rest would be shown from various locations, including potentially the White House.

"I'll probably do mine live from the White House," Trump said, but he also said it was not locked in.

He provided few other details on the convention whose programming, like its location, has been in flux. Trump said first lady Melania Trump would speak, as well as pro-Trump Reps. Jim Jordan of Ohio and Matt Gaetz of Florida.

Holding such an event at the White House would mark the latest test to both norms and laws prohibiting the use of government property and personnel in campaign activities.

Trump himself is exempted from the Hatch Act, which limits the political activities of federal employees. It also does not cover "rooms in the White House or in the residence of the vice president, which are part of the residence area or which are not regularly used solely in the discharge of official duties."

Still, the event in the White House complex would surely raise ethical and legal concerns, including for staff members who would be involved.

"If for some reason somebody had difficulty with it, I could go someplace else," Trump said. "The easiest, least expensive, and I think very beautiful would be live from the White House."

Trump continued to defend the idea to reporters during a news briefing late Wednesday, again citing costs.

"If I use the White House, we save tremendous amounts of money for the government in terms of security, traveling," he said.

Biden hasn't been so publicly reluctant to scale back his convention, expressing doubts about a full arena even before Democratic National Committee officials made the move toward a virtual event.

But those who know him say a lost convention still has to rank as a personal disappointment for a man who calls himself a "tactile politician" and who first sought the presidency in 1988. Biden has been on the convention stage twice as the vice presidential nominee for Barack Obama.

In late April, when Democrats first started acknowledging the likelihood of a drastically altered convention, Biden's team put together a slickly produced 45-minute show marking the one-year anniversary of his campaign launch. It featured top supporters, video from a year of campaigning, some biographical tidbits about the candidate and then Biden addressing supporters alongside his wife, Jill Biden.

Those kinds of effects and approaches could be repeated even without a traditional convention stage in an arena or stadium.

The major parties have always convened every four years, even in 1864 and 1944 during wrenching wars that affected the entire nation.

However, the political extravaganzas have been declining in practical importance and viewership in re-

cent decades. The modern primary process, developed over the 1960s and 1970s, ended the practice of conventions serving as the proverbial if not literal smoke-filled rooms where nominees were chosen, often taking multiple ballots cast into the wee hours of the morning.

Still, conventions have remained as opportunities for tens of thousands of delegates, elected officials, party bosses, rank-and-file activists and media to gather, even if the nomination vote was a formality.

Nominees have used the affairs to shape their messages and identities for the general electorate. George H.W. Bush came to New Orleans in 1988 to establish a brand separate from his two terms as Ronald Reagan's vice president. Four years later, Gov. Bill Clinton's campaign unveiled his famous biographical video as he dubbed himself a "boy from Hope," his Arkansas hometown.

Keynote speakers, chosen by the nominees, have used the convention stage as launchpads, too, most notably when Obama, then a state senator running for the U.S. Senate, took the stage in Boston in 2004. Four years later, he walked out to a full outdoor stadium — a remarkable scene in the annals of presidential conventions — in Denver.

Barrow reported from Atlanta.

N. Korea's escalating virus response raises fear of outbreak

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea is quarantining thousands of people and shipping food and other aid to a southern city locked down over coronavirus worries, officials said, as the country's response to a suspected case reinforces doubt about its longstanding claim to be virus-free.

But amid the outside skepticism and a stream of North Korean propaganda glorifying its virus efforts, an exchange between the country and the United Nations is providing new clarity — and actual numbers — about what might be happening in North Korea, which has closed its borders and cut travel — never a free-flowing stream — by outsider monitors and journalists.

In late July, North Korea said it had imposed its "maximum emergency system" to guard against the virus spreading after finding a person with COVID-19 symptoms in Kaesong city, near the border with rival South Korea.

State media reported that leader Kim Jong Un then ordered a total lockdown of Kaesong, and said the suspected case was a North Korean who had earlier fled to South Korea before slipping back into Kaesong last month.

North Korea's public admission of its first potential case and the emergency steps it took prompted immediate outside speculation that it may be worried about a big outbreak after months of steadfastly claiming it had no cases. Foreign experts are highly skeptical of North Korea's assertion of no cases, in large part because of its long, porous border with China, where the virus emerged, and its history of hiding past disease outbreaks.

In a report to the World Health Organization, North Korea said it has quarantined 64 first contacts of the suspected Kaesong case and 3,571 secondary contacts in state-run facilities for a period of 40 days, according to Dr. Edwin Salvador, WHO representative to North Korea.

Salvador said in an email to The Associated Press that North Korea also informed WHO of the suspected first case, saying the person was tested for COVID-19 but the results were inconclusive. Salvador said WHO has requested that North Korea share more information about the person.

Salvador said all of North Korea's borders remain closed, group gatherings are banned, masks are required in public, and all educational institutions, including preschools, are on an extended summer break. Since the end of December, North Korea has quarantined and released 25,905 people, 382 of them foreigners, Salvador said.

Many outside observers are all but certain the virus has already entered North Korea because it closed its border with China, its biggest trading partner, weeks after the world's first known virus cases were recorded in China in December. Monitoring groups in Seoul have steadfastly reported about North Korean

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virus cases and deaths.

A major coronavirus outbreak may cause a humanitarian disaster because of North Korea's broken public health care system and lack of medical supplies.

But it's unclear how serious North Korea's current situation is.

"Though a really extensive local outbreak might not have occurred yet, it's likely that a considerable number of people has been infected," said analyst Hong Min at Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification. "Even though North Korea locks itself down, there should be suspected cases there and authorities must aggressively diagnose them. But North Korea has never been transparent about whether it has such a capacity and the will to do so."

North Korea's state media have recently churned out articles thick with rallying propaganda that describe the latest anti-virus work as "an all-people's campaign" that demonstrates the Kim government's resolve to protect public safety "at any cost." The articles also say that any individual carelessness or breach of anti-virus guidelines may lead to "critical consequences."

State media said North Korea has deployed more health workers, sanitized personnel and goods, and used loudspeakers to raise public awareness of the virus. The Korean Central News Agency said Thursday that 550,000 aid items have been sent to Kaesong.

North Korea's claimed emergency steps suggest that an outbreak there may have worsened, said Kim Sin-gon, a professor at Korea University College of Medicine in Seoul. North Korea may also aim to win aid from South Korea or others, but wants to save face by saying its suspected Kaesong case is someone who had been in South Korea, he said.

Before returning to North Korea, the suspected first case, identified in South Korea as a 24-year-old man surnamed Kim, hadn't tested positive in South Korea and never had contact with any patient, South Korean health official Yoon Taeho said.

The motive for his return to North Korea isn't known. More than 33,000 North Koreans have escaped to South Korea over the past 22 years for political and economic reasons, but only a handful have returned to North Korea.

Police said the man was questioned in June on an allegation that he had sexually assaulted a female North Korean refugee. The man denied the accusation. Last month, the national forensic service told police it found DNA evidence of the assault, and police were continuing to investigate, according to the Gyeonggi Nambu Provincial Police Agency.

New lockdown ratchets up economic pain in Australian city

By ANDY BROWNBILL and ROD MCGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — A bright side for plant nurseries of Melbourne's first pandemic stay-at-home order was that many householders took the time to garden. But the latest lockdown in Australia's second-largest city is far tougher.

More than 250,000 people were thrown out of work on Thursday. Those whose jobs are deemed essential need government-issued permits to travel the near-empty streets of a virtual ghost town to get to their jobs.

The rolling restrictions have created confusion and uncertainty in a population navigating Australia's toughest-ever lockdown that makes masks compulsory and imposes an 8 p.m.-to-5 a.m. curfew.

Melbourne gardener Simon Collings said the nursery and hardware industries became the surprise winners of the city's original lockdown in March when home improvement became a popular pastime.

"The first time, everybody went: 'Oh my god!' and then everything turned out to be fine," Collings said.

"Gardening was one of the few things you could do at home, so nurseries did well for three or four months ... but it has a totally different feel this time," he added.

Customers can order deliveries or buy online and collect but cannot enter a range of businesses including nurseries.

John van der Horst, who also owns a Melbourne nursery, said the new shopping restrictions had "changed

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things dramatically." The real economic pain to nurseries is expected to come in September with the Southern Hemisphere spring.

"Right at the moment (business) is slow and might be confusing, but I think that will take a day or so to sort out and things will move on, but clearly the business is not going to be the same through this lockdown," van der Horst said.

Downtown bookshop owner Bill Mort also offers a service known as click-and-collect, in which customers buy at a website then collect from the store since he was forced to close on Thursday. But there is some uncertainty about whether a desire for a book is reason enough to justify leaving home under the latest pandemic rules.

"There's a gray area or a question as to whether buying a book is necessary or not and a number of booksellers are grappling with the click-and-collect ... aspect of this," Mort said.

"I think there's a fair amount of room for interpretation within these restriction guidelines," he added.

The Melbourne lockdown is not only hitting the local economy. Melbourne usually accounts for a quarter of Australia's economic activity.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Thursday that the lockdown, which extends across Victoria state but is less restrictive beyond Melbourne, was expected to cost the national economy up to 9 billion Australian dollars (\$6.5 billion) in the September quarter.

The government forecast the lockdown would push up Australia's underlying unemployment — that's what the unemployment rate would be if the government wasn't paying employers to retain staff — from just over 11% to almost 14%.

"This is a heavy blow. A heavy blow," Morrison said.

The lockdown and the worsening situation in Victoria compared to the rest of the country — largely free of COVID-19 community spread — is taking a toll on residents' welfare.

The contrast between Melbourne and the rest of Australia could hardly be starker. Victoria set a new daily record of 725 new cases on Wednesday. Elsewhere in Australia, only 14 new infections were found.

After enduring a second lockdown of four weeks, tougher restrictions have been imposed on Melbourne residents for another six weeks.

Beyond Blue, an independent mental health support organization, reported a 20% increase in Victorians contacting its coronavirus support service in the past two months. Around two-thirds of contacts from around Australia now come from Victoria, with isolation and loneliness the main problems.

Community anxiety became apparent on Wednesday when social media spread panicked resignation rumors about Victoria's Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton, whose calm demeanor during television interviews on the pandemic have endeared him to many and earned him a type of celebrity status.

Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews was called on Thursday to deny that Sutton had offered his resignation.

"He's having three days off. Nothing more, nothing less," Andrews told reporters.

The premier also urged against panic-buying as he announced reductions in meat production across Victoria from late Friday.

Beef, lamb and pork production will be reduced by a third because of the virus transmission risks in abattoirs and meat processing plants. Poultry production will be reduced by 20%.

"You may not necessarily be able to get exactly the cut of meat that you want, but you will get what you need," Andrews said.

Butcher Peter Bouchier, who has three retail meat outlets in Melbourne, said he noticed panic-buying start at the weekend following media reports of greater pandemic restrictions looming.

"The only supply issue is when people panic-buy and stock up. If everyone buys what they need, everything will be fine," Bouchier said.

"We don't know until it happens and they lose a third of their production what effect it will have, but if everyone takes it easy — it's only Victoria, it's not New South Wales or South Australia, and a lot of meat comes in from there," he added.

For many businesses, including Mort's bookshop, the economic pain is not expected to end in six weeks when the restrictions are relaxed.

His business has relied for five decades on foot traffic on once-busy streets. Many of his customers now work from home, if they still have jobs.

"We don't know yet when officer workers and people who work in the C.B.D. will return," Mort said, referring to the central business district.

"It'll certainly not be before this lockdown ceases and it may not be for many, many months," he added.

McGuirk reported from Canberra, Australia.

Virus lockdown for world's smallest and rarest wild pigs

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL AP Science Writer

NEW DELHI (AP) — Pygmy hogs — the world's smallest and rarest wild pig — are under a virus lockdown.

Not because of the coronavirus, but because of the first outbreak of African swine fever in India. There is neither a vaccine nor cure for the highly contagious viral disease that has already killed over 16,000 domestic pigs, said Pradip Gogoi, an official at Assam state's animal husbandry wing.

The shy, 10-inch tall pygmy hogs suffered severe habitat loss and were thought to be extinct in the 1960s. Then in recent decades, a captive breeding program and other conservation efforts have brought the species back.

Now there are nearly 300 animals living in pockets of the northeastern state of Assam, but scientists fear the virus could decimate the still-endangered population.

After authorities confirmed the swine fever outbreak reached India on May 18, scientists virtually locked down the breeding centers and adopted strict precautions, said Parag Deka, who heads the Pygmy Hog Conservation Program run jointly by Indian authorities, U.K.-based Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and local nonprofit Aaranyak.

"It is very scary," Deka said. "It can wipe out the whole population."

The virus spreads mainly by direct contact between pigs, through infected meat or contaminated material — and a vaccine is realistically two or three years away, said Linda Dixon, who has been researching the virus at The Pirbright Institute in the U.K.

The virus kills almost all infected pigs, Dixon said. "It can decimate populations of wild pig or domestic pig. It could be very bad."

At the breeding centers at Nameri and the state capital Guwahati, where there are 82 pigs and piglets, scientists have erected two parallel security fences. No visitors are allowed, and cars can't park at the facilities.

Some staff members who live off-site need to leave their shoes at the entrance. Then they must shower, wash their hands and feet, dip their feet in anti-viral solution and don fresh shoes to go inside.

"This is the new normal," Deka said.

The virus threat also means a change of diet for the pigs. While fruit and grains are still on the menu, vegetables that grow underground such as tapioca and sweet potatoes have been off limits because the virus survives longer in soil.

Pygmy hogs are among the few mammals — and the only pig — that build elaborate nests out of dried grass to live in families of four and five year-round. After the swine fever outbreak, conservationists scoured markets until they found one vendor who had collected his thatch — dried grass used to cover roofs — before December 2019. "We bought all of it," said Deka, adding it was enough to last the pigs a year.

Keeping the pygmy hogs and the breeding centers secure is especially important now, Deka said, because officials say the virus has already begun spreading in wild boars in the region, making the contagion more difficult to contain.

Even though Deka says he is preoccupied with swine fever, the coronavirus pandemic has dried up funding desperately needed for the new bio-security measures and staff training. Some charities said they could no longer afford to give aid, while revenue from the zoo run by Durrell Conservation Trust has also dipped.

"I believe that when you make a change, it will be hard in the beginning, messy in the middle and good

at the end," he said. "Right now, we are between the hard and messy stage," he said.

On Twitter follow Aniruddha Ghosal: aniruddhg1

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

Is it safe to reopen schools during the pandemic?

By The Associated Press undefined

Is it safe for schools to reopen during the pandemic?

It depends on how widespread COVID-19 infections are in the community and the safety measures the school takes. In areas where the virus is poorly controlled, public health experts say in-person education would be too risky.

In areas where the virus appears to be under control, experts say schools still need to make adjustments to minimize risk when reopening. A sustained decline in cases and a positive case rate of less than 2% are among the signs the virus is under control, some experts say.

But given the many lingering unknowns about the virus, school districts are approaching the school year in a variety of ways.

Evidence suggests young children don't spread the disease very easily, while kids aged 10 and up may transmit as easily as adults. But experts say more conclusive proof is needed.

And even though children appear less likely to get infected than adults, and less likely to become seriously ill when they do, severe cases and deaths have occurred.

Children and teens often have only mild illness or no symptoms when infected. That means they could unknowingly pose a risk to other students — who may pass the virus on to their parents and grandparents — or to teachers and other adults who might be vulnerable to severe illness if infected.

To reduce risk, experts say schools should make adjustments when resuming in-person classes.

Recommended safety measures include wearing face coverings in schools and limiting movement so kids stay in the same classroom all day. Placing desks several feet apart is also advised. Canceling assemblies, cafeteria meals and other gatherings also helps, says the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Some Scandinavian countries with far fewer cases than in the United States reopened schools with adjustments, and have had no outbreaks tied to schools. But in Israel, schools that reopened when virus activity was low ended up shutting down a few weeks later when cases spiked in the community, including among students and teachers.

In the U.S., some school districts are planning a mix of in-person classes and online learning to help maintain social distancing. Other districts, such as those in Atlanta, Houston and Los Angeles, are starting classes online only.

The AP is answering your questions about the coronavirus in this series. Submit them at: FactCheck@AP.org.

More Viral Questions:

Can a pregnant woman spread the coronavirus to her fetus?

Does wearing a mask pose any health risks?

Can I get COVID-19 through my my eyes or ears?

Survivors mark 75th anniversary of world's 1st atomic attack

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

HIROSHIMA, Japan (AP) — Survivors of the world's first atomic bombing gathered in diminished numbers near an iconic, blasted dome Thursday to mark the attack's 75th anniversary, many of them urging the

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world, and their own government, to do more to ban nuclear weapons.

An upsurge of coronavirus cases in Japan meant a much smaller than normal turnout, but the bombing survivors' message was more urgent than ever. As their numbers dwindle — their average age is about 83 — many nations have bolstered or maintained their nuclear arsenals, and their own government refuses to sign a nuclear weapons ban treaty.

Amid cries of Japanese government hypocrisy, survivors, their relatives and officials marked the 8:15 a.m. blast anniversary with a minute of silence.

The United States dropped the world's first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, destroying the city and killing 140,000 people. The United States dropped a second bomb three days later on Nagasaki, killing another 70,000. Japan surrendered Aug. 15, ending World War II and its nearly half-century of aggression in Asia.

But the decades since have seen the weapons stockpiling of the Cold War and a nuclear standoff among nations that continues to this day.

Amid the solemn remembrances at Hiroshima's peace park, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was confronted Thursday by six members of survivors' groups over the treaty.

"Could you please respond to our request to sign the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty?" Tomoyuki Mimaki, a member of a major survivors' group, Hidankyo, implored Abe. "The milestone 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing is a chance" to change course.

Abe insisted on Japan's policy not to sign the treaty, vaguely citing a "different approach," though he added that the government shares the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.

"Abe's actions don't seem to match his words," said Manabu Iwasa, 47, who came to the park to pray for his father, a bombing survivor who died at age 87 in March. "Japan apparently sides with the United States, but it should make more efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons. It's frustrating, but there is not much we individuals can do."

Even though Tokyo renounces its own possession, production or hosting of nuclear weapons, Japan is a top U.S. ally, hosts 50,000 American troops and is protected by the U.S. nuclear umbrella. This complicates the push to get Tokyo to sign the treaty adopted in 2017, especially as it steps up its military role amid North Korea's continuing pursuit of a stronger nuclear program.

Abe, in his speech at the ceremony, said a nuclear-free world cannot be achieved overnight and it has to start with dialogue.

"Japan's position is to serve as a bridge between different sides and patiently promote their dialogue and actions to achieve a world without nuclear weapons," Abe said.

Earlier, Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui urged world leaders to more seriously commit to nuclear disarmament, pointing out Japan's failures.

"I ask the Japanese government to heed the appeal of the (bombing survivors) to sign, ratify and become a party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons," Matsui said in his peace declaration. "As the only nation to suffer a nuclear attack, Japan must persuade the global public to unite with the spirit of Hiroshima."

Thursday's peace ceremony at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park was scaled down because of the coronavirus pandemic. The fewer than 1,000 attendees was one-tenth of those attending in past years.

Some survivors and their relatives prayed at the park's cenotaph before the ceremony. The registry of the atomic bombing victims is stored at the cenotaph, whose inscription reads, "Let all the souls here rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the mistake."

"The only way to totally eliminate nuclear risk is to totally eliminate nuclear weapons," U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres said in a video message from New York for the occasion. Guterres' expected visit to Hiroshima had to be cancelled because of the coronavirus.

"Seventy-five years is far too long not to have learned that the possession of nuclear weapons diminishes, rather than reinforces, security," he said. "Today, a world without nuclear weapons seems to be slipping further from our grasp."

An aging group of survivors, known as hibakusha, feel a growing urgency to tell their stories, in hopes

of reaching a younger generation.

Many peace events, including their talks, leading up to the anniversary were cancelled because of the coronavirus, but some survivors have teamed with students or pacifist groups to speak at online events, sometimes connecting with international audiences.

The bombing's survivors lamented the slow progress of nuclear disarmament and expressed anger over what they said was the Japanese government's reluctance to help and listen to those who suffered. They want world leaders, especially those from nuclear-weapons states, to visit Hiroshima and see the reality of the atomic bombing.

Keiko Ogura, 84, who survived the atomic bombing at age 8, wants non-nuclear states to pressure Japan into signing the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty.

"Many survivors are offended by the prime minister of this country because he does not sign the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty," said Ogura.

Follow Mari Yamaguchi on Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/mariyamaguchi>

In a horrific instant, a burst of power that ravaged Beirut

By SARAH EL DEEB and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — As black smoke billowed into the sky, Shiva Karout stepped out of his gym with his colleagues and customers to watch. His gym, Barbell House, sits just across the coastal highway from Beirut's port where a fire raged. They were curious.

Then a first boom shook them, and curiosity turned to fear realizing how close they were. "We got a bit scared, and we all went back in," Karout recounted. Tense moments passed, waiting inside, and one of his customers panicked and ran out. Karout went after him.

That was when hell erupted. A gigantic explosion threw up a towering mushroom cloud and sucked out the air, and a wave of destructive energy shot across Lebanon's capital.

The force threw Karout to the ground. He was cut and bruised, his full arm and leg tattoos of the Hindu god Shiva, after whom he is named, were punctured with lacerations and clotted blood.

But his gym — and everyone still in it — took the brunt of the blast. It smashed out the windows, knocked holes in the walls. Blood now stains the welcome counter. One of his clients took a major head injury and lies in a coma in a hospital and nearly a dozen others sustained medium to serious injuries.

That flashing instant, when a heavy fire on the horizon turned into an unimaginable burst of megatonnage, united Beirutis in a shared trauma and on Wednesday, the day after, they were still reeling with it and its aftermath.

In multiple videos posted on social media, whether shot from high-rise balconies or nearby streets, that instant hits with the same blunt force: Rising black smoke, then a sudden freight train of dust and pink smoke that barrels across the city at the camera and sends it — and whoever holds it — tumbling amid wreckage and confusion.

As the initial pall of smoke rose Tuesday afternoon, a team of 10 firefighters raced to the Port of Beirut to put out the fire raging in Warehouse 12, one a row of warehouses by the water's edge next to the port's large grain silo.

"They went down, thinking it was caused by fireworks," one firefighter named Freddy said of his colleagues who first responded. He asked to be identified only by his first name to speak freely to the Associated Press about the events still under investigation. Pops and flashes lit up the smoke, and it was reported the initial fire set off a stash of fireworks stored there.

The team was at the epicenter when, at around 6:05 p.m., the giant explosion blasted a crater into the port and turned every building around to twisted metal. It is under investigation whether the fire touched off the cargo of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate — a highly explosive component of fertilizers — that had been stored there since 2013.

Freddy and the second team of firefighters arrived about 20 minutes later. They each took a section of

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the port. For the next 24 hours, they pulled out bodies — Freddy said he found 10 — but only one was of their fellow firefighters, Sahar.

"We were looking for our friends but there were also lots of people dead," he said, standing at the main road, covered in soot and his face darkened with dust, smoke and sorrow. "It is total destruction inside. Nothing is where it should be."

His eyes welled with tears at the thought of losing his colleagues and his city. Lebanon is used to destruction, but not like this. "Not a house on the coast has not been damaged," he said.

At least 130 people were killed and more than 5,000 wounded, and elegant stone buildings, fashionable shopping districts and long stretches of the famed seaside promenade were reduced to rubble in the blast.

On Wednesday, Beirutis searched for missing relatives and bandaged their wounds. They surveyed damaged homes, assessing if they could stay in them, retrieving what possessions they could and searching out places to stay.

"We don't deserve this," said Riwa Baltagi, a 23-year-old who was helping friends retrieve valuables from their demolished homes.

The sound of ambulance sirens and the crunching of broken glass could be heard everywhere. Furniture and cushions were strewn along streets covered with wreckage. Elevators were dislocated from their shafts. Cars were crushed under the weight of debris.

Some of the worst damage was in the leafy neighborhoods of Mar Mikhael and Gemayzeh in east Beirut, where the blast damaged some of the few historic buildings that survived the 1975-1990 civil war. Balconies had dropped to street level, where bars and restaurants were buried and chairs and tables turned upside down.

The stench of alcohol from broken bottles filled some narrow alleys, as if the neighborhood's late night parties had turned bad. Nuns toured the churches along the streets, offering prayers and help. Supermarket owners filled plastic bags with the few remaining products in good shape— one saying he will take what is left home to use before it rots in the summer heat.

"I have nowhere to go," a woman said as she wept in what remained of her home in Gemayzeh. "What am I supposed to do?" she screamed into her mobile phone.

Throughout the night, radio presenters read the names of missing or wounded people. An Instagram page called "Locating Victims Beirut" sprung up with photos of missing people. Another account helped to connect the newly displaced with hotels and homeowners who were willing to host them.

Hospitals, already struggling with the financial crisis and coronavirus pandemic, were overwhelmed by the wave of injured. Many patients had to be treated in hallways and parking lots once the wards filled up.

Karout, the gym owner, said a "complete mess" followed the initial shock of explosion. Three hospitals in the area were in the orbit of the blast and were put out of service, unable to offer treatment. Others were unable to help. "They are not equipped for such things," he said. "We are not equipped."

Now he mourns the fate of Barbell. The blast has destroyed what he said was the fruit of years of "really hard work."

"Who will pay for this?" he said. "This is not fixable."

"Beirut is already gone."

Associated Press writer Aya Batrawy contributed to this report from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

'We don't seem to learn': Beirut explosion echoes US tragedy

By PAUL J. WEBER and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The staggering videos from the Lebanese capital are grimly familiar to Tommy Muska thousands of miles away in Texas: a towering blast, a thundering explosion and shock waves demolishing buildings with horrifying speed.

It is what the mayor of West, Texas, lived seven years ago when one of the deadliest fertilizer plant explosions in U.S. history partly leveled his rural town. On Wednesday, Muska also couldn't shake a familiar

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feeling — that yet again, no lessons will be learned.

"I don't know what people were thinking about storing that stuff," Muska told The Associated Press. He was a volunteer firefighter at the time of the West explosion.

The 2013 disaster at the West Fertilizer Co. was a fraction of the size of Tuesday's explosion at Beirut's port that authorities say killed least 135 people and wounded about 5,000. Both blasts involved massive stockpiles of ammonium nitrate, a common but highly explosive chemical, and swift allegations that negligence and weak government oversight were to blame.

Few significant crackdowns on chemical storage came in the wake of the West explosion, which killed 15 people. President Donald Trump scaled back industrial safety and disaster regulations enacted in direct response to the tragedy in Texas.

With a government mired in factional fighting and corruption, Lebanon offers an extreme example of what was once a bustling business economy operating now under little dependable regulation and enforcement.

The investigation is focusing on how a reported 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate came to be stored at the facility for six years and why nothing was done about it. The chemical had been stored at the port since it was confiscated from a ship in 2013. On Tuesday it is believed to have detonated when a fire started nearby.

In Texas, authorities suspected arson but no arrests have been made. The West explosion had the force of a small earthquake. It flattened homes in a five-block radius and destroyed a nursing home where residents, some in wheelchairs, were trapped in rubble. Ten of those killed in the blast were firefighters or first responders.

"We don't seem to learn that chemical is deadly," Muska said. "I feel for those people in Beirut, I surely do. It brought back a lot of memories."

Last year, the Trump administration scaled back chemical safety measures that included ending a requirement that plants provide members of the public information about chemical risks upon request. Chemical manufacturers had pushed for the changes.

The Obama-era Chemical Disaster Rule is one of several rules or proposals meant to lessen the risks of major, possibly high-casualty industrial disasters that have been weakened under Trump. Others include stripping a Nuclear Regulatory Commission proposed rule that would have required nuclear plants to greatly harden their facilities against the kind of natural disasters that struck the plant in Fukushima, Japan.

Other steps cut proposed safety requirements for offshore rigs after the Deepwater Horizon explosion, and allowed shipment of liquefied natural gas by rail despite criticism from several states, firefighters and the National Transportation Safety Board.

The Environmental Protection Agency, which has trimmed scores of environmental and public health protections that the Trump administration sees as unfriendly to business, did not immediately respond to a request for comment Wednesday about the rollback.

At the time, EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said the weakening of the proposed Chemical Disaster Rule would save \$88 million a year in compliance costs. Wheeler said the administration's move "addresses emergency responders' longstanding concerns and maintains important public safety measures" while saving money.

Elena Craft, a Texas-based senior director with the Environmental Defense Fund environmental group, cited the Chemical Disaster Rule among a series of other proposals weakening protections for the communities — often lower-income, and disproportionately Black or Hispanic — living around dangerous industrial sites.

Even the West, Texas, disaster, with its toll on first responders, failed to change the regulatory picture much after the headlines faded away, Craft said. "It's always been sort of the constant story ... it gets to be accepted business in Texas."

In 1989, Juan Flores was in sixth grade when an explosion at a Phillips 66 plastics plant near his Galena Park, Texas, community outside Houston killed 23. The blast shook Flores' school and blew out windows.

That area bordering Houston's Shipping Channel is the nation's hub for oil and gas and petrochemicals.

Yet Houston's lack of zoning means residents' yards in poorer and minority neighborhoods butt up against looming chemical and petroleum storage tanks or booming industrial sites working with hazardous materials.

Six major chemical explosions have rocked the Houston area since March 2019 alone. One, an explosion at a chemical tank, prompted widespread shelter-in-place orders for residents and sent a mile-high plume of smoke over the city for days. A more recent chemical blast, in January, killed three people and damaged more than 450 surrounding buildings.

"To see that happen" in Beirut, it was the worst-case scenario for already worried people in his community, said Flores, a community activist and former Galena Park mayor. "There's one or two plants here, if they ever go, there's a chance we could wind up in that situation."

In West, street images on Google Maps still show crumbled buildings that were taken shortly after the blast that shook the town of only 3,000 people. "They've never come back with their little car," Muska said of Google.

Ammonium nitrate isn't stored in the town any longer. "It's got it's useful places in the farming community," Muska said. "But it's also, like we just saw yesterday, it can just be devastating."

Knickmeyer reported from Oklahoma City.

Seeking refuge in US, children fleeing danger are expelled

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — When officers led them out of a detention facility near the U.S.-Mexico border and onto a bus last month, the 12-year-old from Honduras and his 9-year-old sister believed they were going to a shelter so they could be reunited with their mother in the Midwest.

They had been told to sign a paper they thought would tell the shelter they didn't have the coronavirus, the boy said. The form was in English, a language he and his sister don't speak. The only thing he recognized was the letters "COVID."

Instead, the bus drove five hours to an airport where the children were told to board a plane.

"They lied to us," he said. "They didn't tell us we were going back to Honduras."

More than 2,000 unaccompanied children have been expelled since March under an emergency declaration enacted by the Trump administration, which has cited the coronavirus in refusing to provide them protections under federal anti-trafficking and asylum laws. Lawyers and advocates have sharply criticized the administration for using the global pandemic as a pretext to deport children to places of danger.

No U.S. agents looked at the video the boy had saved on his cellphone showing a hooded man holding a rifle, saying his name, and threatening to kill him and his sister, weeks after the uncle caring for them was shot dead in June. And even though they were expelled under an emergency declaration citing the virus, they were never tested for COVID-19, the boy said.

Three weeks after their uncle was killed, the children fled Honduras, crossing the U.S.-Mexico border alone. Under the normal process set out by U.S. law, they would have been referred to a government facility for youth and eventually placed with their mother. Instead, they were expelled on July 24 after three days in U.S. detention and now live in Honduras with another uncle who is looking to leave the country himself.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection declined multiple requests for comment on the boy's story, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement also declined, saying the children had been in Border Patrol custody until they boarded a deportation flight operated by ICE.

Spokesmen for both agencies have refused to answer most questions about how they treat roughly 70,000 adults and children expelled under the emergency declaration issued in March. They have refused to say how they decide whether to expel children or where to detain them before expulsion, including in hotels where at least 150 unaccompanied children as young as 1 year old have been held.

Much of what's known about expulsions has come from the accounts of children like the 12-year-old boy, who recounted his experience to The Associated Press last week with a recall of details that makes him seem older.

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The AP is not identifying the boy, his sister, their mother or where their mother lives in the U.S. because of fears the children are still targeted by the people who killed their uncle.

Dr. Amy Cohen, executive director of the advocacy group Every Last One, interviewed the boy several times and said she found him credible based on her conversations with hundreds of other immigrant children.

"When he has an opportunity to exaggerate or embroider his story, he absolutely does not," Cohen said. "And he is consistent with everyone he has talked to. There's no sense that the story is rehearsed."

Six children have died since 2018 after being detained by the Border Patrol, several in conditions that raised questions about how the agency treats children. The agency says it has instituted new medical checks and takes anyone determined to need additional care to a hospital.

In court, meanwhile, the Trump administration has argued children it is seeking to expel are not entitled to protections under the Flores settlement, a 2-decade-old court agreement that sets standards for the detention of immigrant children.

The children's uncle took them in three years ago after their mother fled with their older sister due to gang threats, according to the family.

It's not clear who killed the uncle. But the boy said he remembers family members deciding not to have his uncle taken to the hospital because they feared they wouldn't be able to afford to get his body out of the morgue.

The killing frightened the family. According to the boy, he was left alone in his uncle's home with his sister to fend for themselves. The boy said he cooked meals for them with the beans and eggs left in the house.

Then, one day, he said, a man approached him outside the house, asked to see his phone and gave it back with a video saved on it. In the video, a masked man said the siblings' names and warned: "You either join us and start working with us," or end up like your uncle. The same day, someone left a note outside their home threatening them, he said.

"It reminded me of my uncle's death," he said. "I felt a lot of fear."

They joined a large group of migrants leaving Honduras in hopes of reaching the U.S, he said. After the group split up in Guatemala, a man took him and his sister through Mexico and to the border.

Parts of the story are impossible to verify. Experts say MS-13 and other gangs often deliver death threats verbally, and migrant groups and routes through Mexico and Central America are known to be controlled by human smugglers who charge thousands of dollars per person. The boy's mother says she doesn't believe her son or any other relative paid a smuggler.

The siblings crossed the border around July 21 and were apprehended by Border Patrol agents, the boy said. Based on his description, it appears he and his sister were detained at the Border Patrol's central processing center in McAllen, Texas, where children and adults are separated into large cages of chain-link fencing. Opened during the administration of former President Barack Obama, the same processing center was used two years ago to detain hundreds of parents and children separated by the Trump administration's zero-tolerance policy.

The boy said he was held in a cage with about 20 other boys his age and older. He was separated from his sister but could see her from a distance in another enclosure.

Once a day, someone took their temperatures, but the boy says he was never given a medical exam or a test to see if he had the virus. He said he wore a mask he brought with him from Honduras.

He was able to call his mother from custody once before he and his sister were expelled. The phone call she received was from a number in McAllen, Texas.

The next call the mother received was from an official in Honduras, a few days later, asking her to send a relative to pick her kids up from a shelter for deported children. That was how she learned they had been expelled, she said.

She sat recently in the trailer where she lives with family, including her elder daughter, now 16.

"I wanted something to be done and to be able to be calm, to know that my children are safe with me," she said, crying. "No part of Honduras is safe."

Facebook, citing virus misinformation, deletes Trump post

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

Facebook has deleted a post by President Donald Trump for violating its policy against spreading misinformation about the coronavirus.

The post in question featured a link to a Fox News video in which Trump says children are “virtually immune” to the virus.

Facebook said Wednesday that the “video includes false claims that a group of people is immune from COVID-19 which is a violation of our policies around harmful COVID misinformation.”

A few hours later, Twitter temporarily blocked the Trump campaign from tweeting from its account, until it removed a post with the same video. Trump’s account retweeted the video. The company said in a statement late Wednesday that the tweet violated its rules against COVID misinformation. When a tweet breaks its rules, Twitter asks users to remove the tweet in questions and bans them from posting anything else until they do.

Twitter has generally been quicker than Facebook in recent months to label posts from the president that violate its policies against misinformation and abuse.

This is not the first time that Facebook has removed a post from Trump, Facebook said, but it’s the first time it has done so because it was spreading misinformation about the coronavirus. The company has also labeled his posts.

Several studies suggest, but don’t prove, that children are less likely to become infected than adults and more likely to have only mild symptoms. But this is not the same as being “virtually immune” to the virus.

A CDC study involving 2,500 children published in April found that about 1 in 5 infected children were hospitalized versus 1 in 3 adults; three children died. The study lacks complete data on all the cases, but it also suggests that many infected children have no symptoms, which could allow them to spread the virus to others.

Associated Press Writer Amanda Seitz contributed to this story.

Capitol negotiators still stuck, still trying on virus aid

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After more than a week’s worth of meetings, at least some clarity is emerging in the bipartisan Washington talks on a huge COVID-19 response bill. Negotiators are still stuck, but still trying.

A combative meeting Wednesday involving top Capitol Hill Democrats and the postmaster general and a souring tone from both sides indicate that a long slog remains, and White House chief of staff Mark Meadows threatened afterward that President Donald Trump is exploring options to use executive authority to extend a partial eviction ban and address unemployment benefits.

After some movement Tuesday in House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s direction on aid to states and local governments and unemployment insurance benefits, Wednesday’s session offered no breakthroughs or major progress, participants said afterward.

“If we can reach a compromise on these big issues, I think everything else will fall into place. If we can’t reach an agreement on these big issues then I don’t see us coming to an overall deal,” Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said after the two-hour meeting. “And then we’ll have to look at the president taking actions under his executive authority.”

Multiple issues remain, but some areas of likely agreement are coming into focus.

Here’s a look where things stand based on public and private statements by key players and their staff:
JOBLESS BENEFITS

Pelosi is staking out a hard line on extending a \$600-per-week supplemental pandemic federal jobless benefit, which lapsed last week. Republicans offered to extend the benefit into December and cut it to \$400, according to aides confirming leaks reported in Politico. The aides were unauthorized to discuss the private talks and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. The unemployment insurance

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issue is perhaps the most important to resolve, but some Senate Republicans up for reelection this fall appear comfortable with yielding on the question.

AID TO STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Similarly, the White House has offered Democrats \$150 billion in new appropriations to help state and local governments alleviate revenue losses from the damage the coronavirus has wrought on the economy. That matches the amount appropriated after a huge behind-the-scenes battle during negotiations on the bipartisan \$2 trillion coronavirus bill that passed in March. Much of that original money is left over, and all sides want greater flexibility in using it, but Pelosi is demanding far more — almost \$1 trillion — and key Republicans like Susan Collins of Maine, Cory Gardner of Colorado and Mitt Romney of Utah are pressing for more money as well.

CASH/ECONOMIC STIMULUS

Pelosi and President Donald Trump agree on another \$1,200 direct payment to most Americans, making the idea all but certain to be included in the final agreement, at a cost in the \$300 billion range. Pelosi is also pressing the case for a 15% increase in food stamp benefits that are especially important to key progressive constituencies, and Democrats won't allow \$20 billion in aid to farmers without a big trade-off on food aid.

Democrats are also pressing for help for renters and homeowners having difficulty making housing payments and help for front-line essential workers, but both sides support more funding for child care grants, community health centers and energy subsidies for the poor.

EDUCATION

A cornerstone to any agreement, and one of the areas in which both sides are eager to display generosity, involves over \$100 billion for help to school systems. The White House and its GOP allies are pressing for more money for schools that return students to the classroom and want to help private schools as well. Very tricky talks remain, and Republicans are carping that Pelosi is being too greedy. Meanwhile, schools are beginning to reopen across the country.

LIABILITY SHIELD

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., continues to insist that the legislation include some sort of liability shield against lawsuits brought against businesses, schools and universities, and charities that operate during the pandemic. Pelosi is opposed for now, but Democrats — who see it's a key to any final agreement — aren't ruling the idea out. But talks have yet to begin on the thorny topic, and there seems to be suspicion among Republicans that the White House negotiating team isn't as solidly behind the idea as McConnell is.

POSTAL SERVICE

The Postal Service is being run by Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, a Trump ally under attack for management changes that have coincided with delays in mail delivery.

Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said DeJoy had some answers but he and Pelosi were still dissatisfied.

"We are demanding that the regulations they put in place, which cut employment and cut overtime, be rescinded, particularly because of COVID, and because of the elections," Schumer said afterward.

A recent Democratic offer called for \$10 billion for overtime and other costs, down from a bloated \$25 billion plan in the House-passed coronavirus bill. Key Republicans whose rural constituents are especially reliant on the post office support the idea.

PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM

More than \$100 billion in leftover loan funding from the Paycheck Protection Program — relief money for small businesses — is up for grabs. Top advocates like Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., are backing plans to ease some loan forgiveness rules and permit a second round of PPP payments to especially hard-hit businesses.

NON-CORONAVIRUS ITEMS

The competing bills from House Democrats and Senate Republicans include a fair amount of money for non-coronavirus-related items. The Senate proposal contains an almost \$2 billion new FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C., and \$30 billion for the Pentagon, including direct help for powerful defense contrac-

tors. That's likely to get dumped, as will a more generous federal tax deduction for state and local taxes that Democrats included in their bill.

This story has been corrected to delete an incorrect reference to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy being a Trump appointee. He was chosen by the Postal Board of Governors.

Joe Arpaio clings to relevancy in what's likely his last run

By JACQUES BILLEAUD Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Arizona has grown more politically moderate in the past five years, but Republican primary voters haven't entirely abandoned Joe Arpaio, the six-term sheriff of metro Phoenix who lost the job in 2016 amid voter frustration over his legal troubles and headline-grabbing tactics.

The 88-year-old Republican lawman — known for launching immigration crackdowns — was locked in a tight primary race for sheriff as he tries to remain politically relevant in the state that now has a majority-Democratic congressional delegation, its first Democratic U.S. senator since the mid-1990s and a growing Latino population.

In what Arpaio acknowledges could be his last political race, he was trailing Jerry Sheridan, his former second-in-command, by 541 votes as the count continued Wednesday.

Mike O'Neil, a longtime Arizona pollster who has followed Arpaio's career, said the lawman remains in contention because he has strong name recognition and is still popular in some Republican circles — even though he was trounced in 2016 and finished third in the 2018 U.S. Senate primary.

"It's no longer the large swell of people it once was, but there are folks who still get worked up over immigration," O'Neil said.

Arpaio based much of his campaign around his support of President Donald Trump, who spared Arpaio a possible jail sentence when he pardoned his contempt of court conviction. Arpaio disobeyed a court order to stop traffic patrols that targeted immigrants.

During his campaign, Arpaio vowed to bring back practices that the courts have either deemed illegal or his successor has ended, including Arpaio's trademark immigration crackdowns and use of jail tents in the Arizona heat.

Arpaio said he hasn't been garnering media attention like he used to, and many voters didn't know he was trying to get his old job back until they saw his name on their ballots. He insists he is good health, even though his critics have made his age an issue in the race. If he were to win and serve a full four-year term, Arpaio would be approaching his 93rd birthday.

Arpaio acknowledged that he's facing a different type of voter than he did four years ago.

"There is a lot of consternation going on in our nation," Arpaio said Wednesday. "You know it. I know it. It's a different ball game in this country and this county. But I still think I will be able to pull this out."

Sheridan, who served as Arpaio's top aide during his last six years as sheriff, didn't expect the primary to be so close. He said his campaign lost some of its momentum when the pandemic forced the end of in-person campaign events. He also pointed out that Arpaio has spent about \$1 million in the race, compared to Sheridan's \$90,000.

"It's so much more, and I'm beating him," Sheridan said of Arpaio's fundraising advantage. "And he's the one with the 100% name recognition, not me."

Arpaio's political liabilities have been piling up for years and include \$147 million in taxpayer-funded legal costs, a failure to investigate more than 400 sex-crime complaints made to the sheriff's office and launching criminal investigations against judges, politicians and others who were at odds with him.

The winner of the GOP primary will go on to face Paul Penzone, who crushed Arpaio in 2016 and ran unopposed in this year's Democratic primary.

O'Neil believes Arpaio and Sheridan would both get "whooped" by the more low-profile Penzone in the November general election.

It's unclear whether Arpaio's steadfast support of Trump is a political advantage or liability for the former sheriff, whose political career tanked as Trump's was taking off.

"Will that hurt? I don't care," said Arpaio, who called Trump his hero. "It wouldn't change my campaign. If he was at 3% in the polls, I would still support him."

Negligence probed in deadly Beirut blast amid public anger

By BASSEM MROUE, ZEINA KARAM and SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Investigators probing the deadly blast that ripped across Beirut focused Wednesday on possible negligence in the storage of tons of a highly explosive fertilizer in a waterfront warehouse, while the government ordered the house arrest of several port officials.

International aid flights began to arrive as Lebanon's leaders struggled to deal with the widespread damage and shocking aftermath of Tuesday's blast, which the Health Ministry said killed 135 people and injured about 5,000 others.

Public anger mounted against the ruling elite that is being blamed for the chronic mismanagement and carelessness that led to the disaster. The Port of Beirut and customs office is notorious for being one of the most corrupt and lucrative institutions in Lebanon where various factions and politicians, including Hezbollah, hold sway.

The investigation is focusing on how 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate, a highly explosive chemical used in fertilizers, came to be stored at the facility for six years, and why nothing was done about it.

Losses from the blast are estimated to be between \$10 billion to \$15 billion, Beirut Gov. Marwan Abboud told Saudi-owned TV station Al-Hadath, adding that nearly 300,000 people are homeless.

"Beirut as we know it is gone and people won't be able to rebuild their lives," said Amy, a woman who swept glass from a small alley beside by a tall building that served as a showroom for a famous Lebanese designer and was a neighborhood landmark.

"This is hell. How are they (people) going to survive. What are they going to do?" she said, blaming officials for lack of responsibility and "stupidity."

Hospitals were overwhelmed by the injured. One that was damaged in the blast had to evacuate all its patients to a nearby field for treatment.

It was the worst single explosion to strike Lebanon, a country whose history is filled with destruction — from a 1975-1990 civil war, conflicts with Israel and periodic terrorist attacks.

Lebanon already was on the brink of collapse amid a severe economic crisis and the coronavirus pandemic. Many have lost their jobs and seen their savings evaporate because of a currency crisis. Food security is a worry, since the country imports nearly all its vital goods and its main port is now devastated. The government is strapped for cash.

A senior U.S. Defense Department official and member of the U.S. intelligence community said there were no indications the explosion was the result of an attack by either a nation state or proxy forces. Both spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss intelligence briefings publicly. They told AP that at the moment, the explosion seems to have been caused by improper storage of explosives.

Fueling speculation that negligence was to blame for the accident, an official letter circulating online showed the head of the customs department had warned repeatedly over the years that the huge stockpile of ammonium nitrate stored in the port was a danger and had asked judicial officials for a ruling on a way to remove it.

Ammonium nitrate is a component of fertilizer that is potentially explosive. The 2,750-ton cargo had been stored at the port since it was confiscated from a ship in 2013, and on Tuesday it is believed to have detonated after a fire broke out nearby.

The 2017 letter from the customs chief to a judge could not be immediately confirmed, but state prosecutor Ghassan Oueidat ordered security agencies to start an immediate investigation into all letters related to the materials stored at the port, as well as lists of those in charge of maintenance, storage and protection of the hangar.

In the letter, the customs chief warned of the "dangers if the materials remain where they are, affecting

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the safety of (port) employees" and asked the judge for guidance. He said five similar letters were sent in 2014, 2015 and 2016. The letter proposes the material be exported or sold to a Lebanese explosives company. It is not known if there was a response.

Badri Daher, the head of the customs department, confirmed to the local LBC TV channel that there were five or six such letters to the judiciary. He said his predecessor also pleaded with the judiciary to issue orders to export the explosive materials "because of how dangerous they are" to the port and staff there.

Daher said it was his duty to "alert" authorities of the dangers but that is the most he could do. "I am not a technical expert."

President Michael Aoun vowed before a Cabinet meeting that the investigation would be transparent and that those responsible will be punished.

"There are no words to describe the catastrophe that hit Beirut last night," he said.

After the meeting, the Cabinet ordered an unspecified number of Beirut port officials put under house arrest pending the investigation.

The government also said public schools and some hotels will be opened for the homeless and promised unspecified compensation for the victims.

With the Port of Beirut destroyed, the government said imports and exports will be secured elsewhere, mostly in the northern city of Tripoli and the southern port of Tyre.

There were signs that public anger went beyond port officials to Lebanon's long-entrenched ruling class. Political factions have divided control of public institutions, including the port, using them to benefit their supporters, with little actual development. That has translated into crumbling infrastructure, power outages and poor services.

"May the Virgin Mary destroy them and their families," Joseph Qiyameh, a 79-year-old grocery store owner, said of the leadership. The blast damaged his store, his wife was hospitalized with injuries she suffered at home next door, and his arm was hurt. He doesn't have the money to fix his business, with his savings locked up in banks by controls imposed during the financial crisis.

The Hospital of the Sisters of Rosaries was knocked out of service by the blast, with one of the nuns killed and three others badly injured.

"In a moment, there was no longer a hospital. It is all gone," said one of the nuns, who suffered a leg injury.

Residents confronted a scene of utter devastation Wednesday, with smoke still rising from the port. The blast tore out a crater 200 meters (yards) across that filled with seawater, as if the Mediterranean had taken a bite out of the port and swallowed buildings with it. Much of downtown was littered with damaged cars and debris.

Drone footage shot by the AP showed the blast tore open a silo structure, dumping its contents into the debris. Estimates suggested about 85% of the country's grain was stored there.

Economy and Trade Minister Raoul Nehme said all the wheat was contaminated and unusable. But he insisted Lebanon had enough for its immediate needs and would import more, according to the state news agency.

Two planeloads of French rescue workers and aid headed to Beirut and French President Emmanuel Macron was to arrive Thursday to offer support for the former protectorate. The countries retain close political and economic ties.

Several planes of medical equipment and supplies from Greece, Kuwait, Qatar and elsewhere arrived at Beirut's international airport. Turkey sent search-and-rescue teams, humanitarian aid, medical equipment and a field hospital, its Foreign Ministry said. The EU planned to send firefighters with vehicles, dogs and equipment designed to find people trapped in debris.

Associated Press writers Sarah El Deeb and Hassan Ammar in Beirut, Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and Joseph Krauss in Jerusalem contributed.

State Dept.: Russia pushes disinformation in online network

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — The State Department says Russia is using a well-developed online operation that includes a loose collection of proxy websites to stir up confusion around the coronavirus by amplifying conspiracy theories and misinformation.

The disclosure on Wednesday was rare for the Trump administration, which has been cautious about blaming the Kremlin for disinformation campaigns, especially around the U.S. election. Despite evidence that Russia launched a divisive disinformation operation on social media during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, the State Department's report did not examine how — if at all — Russia is waging another online influence campaign in this year's election.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo did, however, announce Wednesday that the U.S. would offer a reward of up to \$10 million for information that identifies people working with foreign governments to interfere in the U.S. election through illegal cyber activity.

The department detailed a Russian-backed misinformation cycle that spreads false information online through state officials and state-funded media reports, by infiltrating U.S. social media conversation, and leveraging a deceptive internet framework of websites. The Kremlin's efforts have most recently focused on conspiracy theories around the pandemic, the report found.

"Russia is playing a significant role in creating and spreading misinformation and propaganda around many topics," said Lea Gabrielle, head of the State Department's Global Engagement Center.

The department named more than a half-dozen websites that, serving as "proxies" for Russia, have peddled a series of conspiracy theories about the pandemic that have been widely spreading and hotly debated across social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The online news outlets appear independent from the Russian government, but in reality serve as a "connective tissue" between the Kremlin and state-funded media that often promote the same misinformation from their own channels, Gabrielle said.

"That's what makes them effective," Gabrielle said. "It's difficult for the average person online to look at these sites and know the Russian affiliation."

Russia has regularly denied claims from the U.S. that it is behind online disinformation campaigns, last week calling similar assertions "persistent phobia."

The websites the State Department identified Wednesday have promoted unsupported conspiracy theories that allege COVID-19 was created in a lab as a bioweapon, billionaire Bill Gates is plotting to use the pandemic as an excuse to microchip people, and that plans for a coronavirus vaccine are simply a ploy for pharmaceutical companies to make money. There is no evidence behind those claims.

The origin of the novel coronavirus remains unknown, but the emerging scientific consensus is that humans were first infected in China, at a Wuhan animal market. Around the globe, leaders are investing in a vaccine as the best bet to beat the virus. And Gates has repeatedly rejected that he wants to start tracking people.

"Russia has a long history of spreading disinformation around health and science issues," Gabrielle said. "The Russian disinformation ecosystem exploits fear and confusion."

While building up a following on Facebook and Twitter, some of the websites have downplayed their ties to Russian intelligence or concealed funding from the Kremlin, the State Department's report found.

One of the sites, Canadian-based Global Research, has amassed an audience of nearly 300,000 followers on Facebook. The website regularly publishes articles from fictitious personas created by Russia's military intelligence service, the GRU. The headline of a recent Global Research article suggested the coronavirus originated in the U.S., and it was shared by a Chinese spokesman on Twitter before the website took the unsubstantiated claim down.

Chinese, Iran and Russian government leaders have regularly echoed one another on social media and in state media reports.

Another website, NewsFront, pitches itself as an "alternative" news source to Western audiences, despite

its reported Kremlin funding and being registered with the Russian government, according to the State Department's report. Facebook removed dozens of accounts and pages associated with NewsFront for inauthentic, coordinated behavior in April.

Most of the other websites are far more fringe, with only small social media followings and articles pushing coronavirus conspiracy theories that have only been shared by the dozens.

Last week, U.S. officials told The Associated Press that Russian intelligence are using another trio of English-language websites to push disinformation about the pandemic.

'We are no less American': Deaths pile up on Texas border

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

RIO GRANDE CITY, Texas (AP) — When labor pains signaled that Clarissa Muñoz was at last going to be a mom, she jumped in a car and headed two hours down the Texas border into one of the nation's most dire coronavirus hot spots.

She went first to a hospital so desperate for help that nurses recently made 49 phone calls to find a bed 700 miles away to airlift a dying man with the virus. From there, she was taken to a bigger hospital by ambulance. Along the way, she passed a funeral home that typically handles 10 services a month but is up to nine a week. And when she finally arrived to give birth, she was blindsided by another complication: A test revealed that she too was infected.

Hours later, Muñoz was granted just a few seconds to lay eyes, but no hands, on her first born, who was quickly whisked away.

On America's southern doorstep, the Rio Grande Valley, the U.S. failure to contain the pandemic has been laid bare. For nearly a month, this borderland of 2 million people in South Texas pleaded for a field hospital, but not until Tuesday was one ready and accepting patients. In July alone, Hidalgo County reported more than 600 deaths — more than the Houston area, which is five times larger.

At DHR Health, one of the largest hospitals on the border, nearly 200 of the 500 beds belong to coronavirus patients isolated in two units. A third unit is in the works. That doesn't even include the COVID-19 maternity ward, where mothers and newborns are separated immediately.

Doctors and nurses rushed Muñoz's baby out of the delivery room and down a hallway sealed by a zippered tarp to restrict contaminated air. Seven hours later, she still did not know his weight. Across the street, alarms blared constantly in a coronavirus intensive-care unit, summoning nurses to roll patients onto their stomachs to force more air into their lungs.

"It's a really, really ugly feeling," Muñoz said of watching her son being taken away.

Texas reopened quicker than most of the U.S., only to backtrack in the face of massive outbreaks. Health officials say the worst of a summer resurgence appears to be behind the state as a whole, but the border is a bleak exception. Doctors fear another punishing wave is around the corner.

This predominantly Hispanic region is cruelly vulnerable to COVID-19. The prevalence of diabetes here is roughly three times the national average, and households have among the lowest incomes in America, adding to the difficulty of thwarting the virus.

Even the weather has added to the burden. The first hurricane of the season barreled over the border two weeks ago. At first, local officials hoped that the storm named Hanna would wash out family gatherings and bar crawls, slowing the spread. In reality, the system knocked out power to thousands of homes for days, driving families into closer contact with relatives whose lights remained on.

Now, said Maritza Padilla, DHR Health's assistant chief nursing officer, there's "no chance" of flattening the region's infection curve.

At the hospital, a television monitor displays the struggle in real time: Teal rectangles represent occupied hospital beds, and green rectangles are open beds. The grid is nearly all teal. On a whiteboard, "body bags" is scrawled on a list of needed items.

A Christian relief charity that opened a coronavirus field hospital in New York's Central Park visited the border in mid-July with an eye toward building another facility. That never panned out, and neither did

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another idea to send patients to hotels. Last week, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott announced that a Hidalgo County convention center would become a hospital.

Local authorities remain frustrated.

"We need the help. Our house is on fire," Rio Grande City Mayor Joel Villarreal said. "We are no less American than other people in other parts of the country."

Martha Torres, a nurse at Starr County Memorial Hospital, knows about searching in vain for help. She has spent entire shifts calling other ICUs in Texas to accept helicopter transfers out of her 29-bed unit. Some patients are sent as far away as Oklahoma City, and few survive after the long flight — leaving families with the burden of getting the bodies back home.

One entrance to the hospital's COVID-19 ward resembles an off-the-shelf patio door, the kind sold at big-box hardware stores. Last week, Alex Garcia, 26, visited his father by peering through the outside window of his room. Both men are pipeline workers.

That same night, Emily Lopez was preparing for her mother's funeral only weeks after her aunt died of the virus. The two had been playing bingo together before becoming ill, and two other family members were also hospitalized. "In this area, it's not a joke. It's life or death," she said.

The COVID-19 maternity ward at DHR Health is a place of relative calm but with its own problems. Among them is the challenge of squaring best practices with the realities of South Texas, including guidelines that recommend the mother stay isolated at home and the baby be placed in the hands of another caregiver.

"This is great in Hartford, Connecticut, because everybody has a 4,000-square-foot home, the average income is \$180,000 and all that. Down here, it's very different," said Dr. Efraim Vela, the hospital's chief executive physician of women's health. "We're having problems with that."

Nearly 15,000 pregnant women in the U.S. have tested positive for the coronavirus, and at least 35 have died, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Although it is possible for a pregnant woman to spread the coronavirus to her fetus, it seems to be relatively rare.

Muñoz, 25, didn't know she had the virus when she left her home in the border town of Falcon last week for her son's birth. While she went into labor alone, her husband sat all night in the parking lot, barred from coming inside.

First thing in the morning, he plunked down \$100 for a rapid COVID test at a clinic that told him he needed an appointment. "I told them it was an emergency. They weren't going to let me get my son out of the hospital unless I was negative," said her husband, Nicolas Garcia.

After the birth, her son was a phone app away: The hospital lets COVID-positive mothers call the nursery over a video chat. Nurse Ashley Vaughan makes a point to position the camera so mothers can see hands and toes on the call. "This mom will stay on the video chat until the mom falls asleep," Vaughan said, pointing to another bassinet.

She went back to the other baby. "He's doing good, right?" Muñoz asked through the video. Vaughan assured the new mother that he was fine, and the conversation shifted to when the family might go home.

"Are you done? Or do you want to stay on?" Vaughan asked.

Muñoz said she would go for now. She took a last look before hanging up.

"I love you," she said. "Bye."

Associated Press video journalist John L. Mone contributed to this report.

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

Not easy eating green: Herbivores most at extinction risk

BY SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Although scientists often worry most about the loss of the world's predators, a comprehensive new study finds that plant-eating herbivores are the animals most at risk of extinction.

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About one in four species of herbivores, 25.5%, are considered threatened, endangered or vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the world's scientific authority on extinction risk, according to a study in Wednesday's journal Science Advances.

By comparison, 17.4% of the predators and 15.8% of omnivores were at risk, said study lead author Trisha Atwood, an ecologist at Utah State University.

Researchers analyzed data for 22,166 species of animals with backbones, including the type of animal (reptile, bird or mammal), geographic location, habitat and size. And in just about every way examined, they found plant-eaters were the most at risk, especially in forest ecosystems.

"The implications for this are huge," Atwood said. "We need to think about herbivores as being kind of the poster child of extinction."

So instead of polar bears and tigers, think of plant-eaters like rhinos and green sea turtles, Atwood said. The last male northern white rhinoceros in the wild died in 2018, but scientists are scrambling to save the species with donor embryos.

The study focused on proportionality, not raw numbers of species at risk. There are many more predator species, so there are more vulnerable predators in total, but a larger share of herbivores are in trouble.

Scientists even examined the presumed diets of more than 2,000 species no longer alive and found that herbivores again had the highest extinction proportion.

Atwood went into the study thinking that the predators were most at risk. However, she said the data — which included land and water species, but not fish because of inadequate information — pointed clearly at herbivores.

Predators, she added, also are in trouble, but not as much as herbivores they often eat.

Extinction causes — invasive species, climate change and habitat loss — hit herbivores harder than animals with other diets, Atwood said.

Size may be part of the reason herbivores are more at risk, the ecologist said. Often, herbivores are bigger and need to eat more and require more land and their habitats are becoming smaller, she said. Predators and omnivores have wider ranges and that helps them survive.

Duke University conservation scientist Stuart Pimm, who wasn't part of the study, said his problem with Atwood's research is that it doesn't take into account the immense importance of geographic range, which is key for predators.

But University of Miami biologist Mauro Galetti, who also wasn't part of the research, said Atwood's study is important, makes sense and "changes our biased idea that conservation projects should focus mostly on top predators."

Large herbivores are crucial, especially in places like forests, Galetti said in an email. "A world without herbivores would be a disaster for any natural ecosystem."

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears .

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

Facebook launches its new TikTok clone, Instagram Reels

By MAE ANDERSON, TALI ARBEL and BARBARA ORTUTAY Associated Press

Facebook's Instagram is officially launching its answer to the hit short video app TikTok — Instagram Reels.

The new Instagram feature will let users record and edit 15-second videos with audio, and will let users add visual effects. Users will be able to share Reels with followers in Instagram in a dedicated section called Reels in Explore, or in the Story feature where posts disappear after 24 hours.

The Reels option will be available in the Instagram app. The company has been testing Reels in Brazil since November and in France, Germany and India since earlier this summer.

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Facebook has a long tradition of cloning competitive services. The Instagram "Story" feature, which lets people share photos and videos that expire in 24 hours, is similar to Snapchat. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg faced tough questioning about the company's habit of copying rivals before a congressional hearing on July 29.

Facebook earlier launched a TikTok knockoff called Lasso in 2018, but closed that down in July. It also tried services similar to Snapchat called Slingshot and Poke before Instagram Stories caught on. But those were separate apps — it might have more success with a feature built into Instagram.

In fact, copying Snapchat's features was successful for Instagram in part because Snapchat was difficult to figure out for new users. They were already comfortable with Instagram. But TikTok is very easy to use -- easier than Instagram -- and part of its appeal is that you're able to sit back and scroll endlessly with just swipes, without the need to follow anyone or post anything.

Even with the success of Stories, Snapchat remains popular with younger people, though the Instagram feature has likely limited its growth. Snapchat has more daily users than Twitter.

For Reels to succeed, Facebook will have to lure video creators away from TikTok. This might be easier to do with Reels since many creators are already on Instagram. In response to published reports that Instagram is paying TikTok influencers to join Reels, Instagram said in a statement that the company "have a long history of reaching out to emerging creators and working to break new stars on Instagram."

"As with previous products, we remain committed to investing in both our creators and their overall experience, and in certain cases, we may help cover production costs for their creative ideas," the company said.

TikTok, in turn, launched a \$200 million "creator fund" in July that it says will grow to over \$1 billion in the U.S. in the next three years and more than double that globally, to pay video creators for their material.

TikTok, however, is under fire, possibly opening an opportunity for Facebook.

Microsoft is in talks to buy part of TikTok in what would be a forced sale, following threats from President Donald Trump to ban the Chinese-owned video app, which claims 100 million U.S. users and hundreds of millions globally.

Experts think Facebook has an opportunity to lure in young users with Reels, but its success is not guaranteed.

"Social media users, especially younger users, tend to use social platforms for different things," said eMarketer analyst Debra Aho Williamson. This means Snapchat to message friends privately, Facebook to keep up with school groups or check up on parents and grandparents, Instagram to follow their passions and TikTok for entertainment.

"Instagram has put a lot of effort into developing Reels and making it attractive to TikTok users and the creators who work on the app, but I'm not sure it can replace TikTok," Williamson added. "Even if TikTok were to be banned in the U.S. (which I think is unlikely to happen), users would find a way to keep using it. They are incredibly loyal and protective of TikTok."

Since early July, some TikTok users have been posting videos urging viewers to follow them to other platforms like Instagram, reflecting the threat of a TikTok ban. Mary Keane-Dawson, Group CEO at the influencer marketing agency Takumi, said the creators she works with have been sad, angry and upset about the threat of a ban. Still, they're "pragmatic," she said, and the smart ones were already active on TikTok, Instagram and YouTube.

Reels is debuting in over 50 countries, including the U.S., the U.K., Japan, Australia and others, as well as officially launching in the test countries — Brazil, France, Germany and India.

Instagram has more than a billion users worldwide.

Biden won't go to Milwaukee to accept Democratic nomination

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

Joe Biden will not travel to Milwaukee to accept the Democratic presidential nomination because of concerns over the coronavirus, party officials said Wednesday, signaling a move to a convention that essentially has become entirely virtual.

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It is the latest example of the pandemic's sweeping effects on the 2020 presidential election and the latest blow to traditional party nominating conventions that historically have marked the start of fall general election campaigns.

"From the very beginning of this pandemic, we put the health and safety of the American people first," said Democratic National Committee Chair Tom Perez. "We followed the science, listened to doctors and public health experts, and we continued making adjustments to our plans in order to protect lives. That's the kind of steady and responsible leadership America deserves. And that's the leadership Joe Biden will bring to the White House."

Neither the Biden campaign nor DNC officials offered details about how Biden might accept the nomination, which even in the pandemic could be a made-for-screen event that reaches tens of millions of voters via television and online.

A DNC official said all speakers and presenters for the Aug. 17-24 convention are now expected to speak from remote locations.

Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers, a Democrat, said Biden made the right decision.

"A lot has changed since we set out on this journey more than a year ago now, but the one thing that hasn't is Democrats' commitment to putting health and safety first," Evers said in a statement. "It has never been more important for elected officials to lead by example — that's the kind of leader Joe is, and that's the kind of president we need. I know he will continue to have a presence in Wisconsin, virtually or otherwise, and I look forward to doing everything we can to win Wisconsin."

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett told reporters he learned of the decision early Wednesday in a phone call with the leadership team of the Democratic National Convention.

"I would be lying if I didn't tell you that I'm very, very disappointed in this, professionally and personally, because I think we all have had so much pride in having Milwaukee chosen to host the 2020 Democratic National Convention," Barrett said.

But Barrett, a Democrat, added that the higher priorities are public health, economic recovery and nation's reckoning on systemic racism. "I think all of us have to keep this in perspective," he said.

President Donald Trump has abandoned his own plans to accept the Republican nomination in person. On Wednesday, he mused about potentially making his acceptance speech from the White House.

Biden and Democrats for months have moved toward a virtual convention, first by delaying the convention from its original mid-July date to the week before Republicans' scheduled convention in Charlotte, North Carolina.

DNC officials later authorized organizers to plan for virtual proceedings, then added an explicit call for delegates not to travel to Milwaukee. More than 4,000 delegates already were casting mail ballots for Biden's nomination and a platform that had been written and approved in meetings conducted online. But until Wednesday, it was expected that Biden and his running mate would speak from Milwaukee.

Biden is in the final days of deciding on a vice president, who he has said will be a woman.

Trump was far more reluctant than Biden to alter his convention plans, as he sought to downplay the pandemic's significance and push the country to return to normal operations. Trump jostled with North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper, a Democrat, because Cooper wouldn't guarantee the president that he'd lift restrictions on large public gatherings so that Trump could pack Charlotte's NBA arena.

Trump then said he'd travel to Jacksonville, Florida, to make his address, a decision welcomed at the time by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis. Florida has since seen its COVID-19 cases spike, part of a national trend that led Trump to yield to public health experts and cancel the event.

Virus testing in the US is dropping, even as deaths mount

By MATTHEW PERRONE, NICKY FORSTER and MICHELLE LIU Associated Press

U.S. testing for the coronavirus is dropping even as infections remain high and the death toll rises by more than 1,000 a day, a worrisome trend that officials attribute largely to Americans getting discouraged over having to wait hours to get a test and days or weeks to learn the results.

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An Associated Press analysis found that the number of tests per day slid 3.6% over the past two weeks to 750,000, with the count falling in 22 states. That includes places like Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri and Iowa where the percentage of positive tests is high and continuing to climb, an indicator that the virus is still spreading uncontrolled.

Amid the crisis, some health experts are calling for the introduction of a different type of test that would yield results in a matter of minutes and would be cheap and simple enough for millions of Americans to test themselves — but would also be less accurate.

“There’s a sense of desperation that we need to do something else,” said Dr. Ashish Jha, director of Harvard’s Global Health Institute.

Widespread testing is considered essential to managing the outbreak as the U.S. approaches a mammoth 5 million confirmed infections and more than 157,000 deaths out of over 700,000 worldwide.

Testing demand is expected to surge again this fall, when schools reopen and flu season hits, most likely outstripping supplies and leading to new delays and bottlenecks.

Some of the decline in testing over the past few weeks was expected after backlogged commercial labs urged doctors to concentrate on their highest-risk patients. But some health and government officials are seeing growing public frustration and waning demand.

In Iowa, state officials are reporting less interest in testing, despite ample supplies. The state’s daily testing rate peaked in mid-July but has declined 20% in the last two weeks.

“We have the capacity. Iowans just need to test,” Gov. Kim Reynolds said last week.

Jessica Moore of rural Newberry, South Carolina, said that after a private lab lost her COVID-19 test results in mid-July, she had to get re-tested at a pop-up site organized by the state.

Moore and her husband arrived early on a Saturday morning at the site, a community center, where they waited for two hours for her test. Moore watched in the rear-view mirror as people drove up, saw the long line of cars, and then turned around and left.

“If people have something to do on a Saturday and they want to get tested, they’re not going to wait for two hours in the South Carolina heat for a test, especially if they’re not symptomatic,” Moore said.

Before traveling from Florida to Delaware last month, Laura DuBose Schumacher signed up to go to a drive-up testing site in Orlando with her husband. They were given a one-hour window in which to arrive.

They got there at the start of the window, but after 50 minutes it looked as if the wait would be another hour. Others who had gone through the line told them that they wouldn’t get their results until five days later, a Monday, at the earliest. They were planning to travel the next day, so they gave up.

“Monday would have been pointless, so we left the line,” Schumacher said.

The number of confirmed infections in the U.S. has topped 4.7 million, with new cases running at nearly 60,000 a day on average, down from more than 70,000 in the second half of July.

U.S. testing is built primarily on highly sensitive molecular tests that detect the genetic code of the coronavirus. Although the test is considered the gold standard for accuracy, experts increasingly say the country’s overburdened lab system is incapable of keeping pace with the outbreak and producing results within two or three days, the time frame crucial to isolating patients and containing the virus.

“They’re doing as good a job as they possibly can do, but the current system will not allow them to keep up with the demand,” said Mara Aspinall of Arizona State University’s College of Health Solutions.

Testing delays have led researchers at Harvard and elsewhere to propose a new approach using so-called antigen tests — rapid technology already used to screen for flu, strep throat and other common infections. Instead of detecting the virus itself, such tests look for viral proteins, or antigens, which are generally considered a less accurate measure of infection.

A number of companies are studying COVID-19 antigen tests in which you spit on a specially coated strip of paper, and if you are infected, it changes color. Experts say the speed and widespread availability of such tests would more than make up for their lower precision.

While no such tests for the coronavirus are on the U.S. market, experts say the technology is simple and the hurdles are more regulatory than technical. The Harvard researchers say production could quickly be scaled into the millions.

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A proposal from the Harvard researchers calls for the federal government to distribute \$1 saliva-based antigen tests to all Americans so that they can test themselves regularly, perhaps even daily.

Even with accuracy as low as 50%, researchers estimate the paper strip tests would uncover five times more COVID-19 cases than the current laboratory-based approach, which federal officials estimate catches just 1 in 10 infections.

But the approach faces resistance in Washington, where federal regulators have required at least 80% accuracy for new COVID-19 tests.

To date, the Food and Drug Administration has allowed only two COVID-19 antigen tests to enter the market. Those tests require a nasal swab supervised by a health professional and can only be run on specialized machines found at hospitals, doctor's offices, nursing homes and clinics.

Also, because of the risk of false negatives, doctors may need to confirm a negative result with a genetic test when patients have possible symptoms of COVID-19.

On Tuesday, the governors of Maryland, Virginia, Louisiana and three other states announced an agreement with the Rockefeller Foundation to purchase more than 3 million of the FDA-cleared antigen tests, underscoring the growing interest in the technology.

When asked about introducing cheaper, paper-based tests, the government's "testing czar," Adm. Brett Giroir, warned that their accuracy could fall as low as 20% to 30%.

"I don't think that would do a service to the American public of having something that is wrong seven out of 10 times," Giroir said last week. "I think that could be catastrophic."

This story has been corrected to show that Iowa's daily testing rate has declined 20%, not 40%.

Associated Press writers Brian Witte in Annapolis, Md., David Pitt in Des Moines, Iowa, and Mike Schneider in Orlando, Fla., contributed to this story. Liu reported from Columbia, S.C., and Forster from New York.

Progressives say primary wins latest sign of momentum shift

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Progressive Democrats celebrated two primary victories Wednesday, claiming the protests over George Floyd's death and a renewed focus on racial and economic justice have given their candidates new momentum after some rough patches this year.

Michigan Rep. Rashida Tlaib, a member of the "squad" of four first-term congresswomen of color who have drawn attention for their liberal views and distaste for President Donald Trump, scored a convincing victory over Detroit City Council President Brenda Jones. Jones had criticized Tlaib as being too divisive. There also was a stunning win Tuesday by Black Lives Matter activist Cori Bush over longtime Rep. William Lacy Clay in a heavily Democratic St. Louis-area district.

Both Tlaib and Bush, who says she was beaten while protesting the death of Black 18-year-old Michael Brown by a white officer in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, had support from multiple national progressive organizations. They have rejected corporate political action committee money and called for greater action on climate change, "Medicare for All" and more police accountability. They framed their victories as wins for working people and those who have taken to the streets in recent weeks to demand more than incremental change.

"We are at a turning point in this country as we face down unprecedented crises," Bush said in a victory speech. "Y'all, we about to change the world."

Beyond signaling momentum, the victories are giving progressives confidence about two upcoming tests. Next week, squad member Rep. Ilhan Omar of Minnesota will face a challenge from a well-funded opponent, Antone Melton-Meaux. On Sept. 1, progressive Alex Morse, the 31-year-old mayor of Holyoke, Massachusetts, will try to knock off Rep. Richard Neal, one of the most powerful House Democrats.

The year did not start out on such a positive note.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, a democratic socialist whose 2016 presidential bid mobilized progressives, dropped

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out of the Democratic presidential primary in April after a series of losses to former Vice President Joe Biden, an establishment candidate who said policies like Sanders' Medicare for All went too far. In March, a party-backed favorite easily defeated a progressive hopeful in Texas' Democratic Senate primary. Rep. Henry Cuellar, one of Congress' most conservative Democrats and a top target of progressive groups such as Justice Democrats, also won his primary.

But there were other notable triumphs, especially in the weeks after Floyd's killing in Minneapolis in May sparked global protests.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, another "squad" member whose 2018 win over a longtime incumbent made her a progressive icon, easily won her New York primary. Middle school principal Jamaal Bowman unseated veteran Rep. Eliot Engel for a Bronx-based seat.

In March, Marie Newman knocked off Illinois Rep. Dan Lipinski, an abortion opponent who compared progressive Democrats to a "tea party of the left."

While progressives "are going to win some and lose some," former Sanders campaign manager Faiz Shakir said progressive candidates and their ideals are becoming more popular, and forcing change within the party.

"Progressives are in the ascendancy within the Democratic party, there's no doubt about it," said Shakir, who is now an adviser to Sanders and to the political action committee Fight Corporate Monopolies, which ran ads blasting Clay for being too cozy with corporate America.

Waleed Shahid, spokesman for Justice Democrats, said Bush — who lost to Clay by 20 percentage points in 2018 — was aided this time by a much bigger coalition of progressive supporters and the increased popularity of the Black Lives Matter movement.

"The future of the Democrat party looks a lot more like the squad, and the squad is here to stay," Shahid said.

In Detroit, Andrew Bryant said he voted for Tlaib because she has been outspoken on behalf of the city's working class and poor, and especially against water service shut-offs for people unable to pay their bills. The 71-year-old said he's among the many Black voters who have seen the Black Lives Matter movement against police brutality grow, and believe the time is now to show their power to enact change.

"We need to get out and vote our opinion," he said while voting at a church on Detroit's west side Tuesday morning. "It's important for us as Black people because it seems we've been dealt the short stick ... for the longest time, and it's our turn to speak up and be represented."

At an event Wednesday in St. Louis, Bush said that "we have to have people who are supporting and advocating for the everyday people," and warned that members of Congress who are "just holding a seat but not affecting their communities" need to be targeted.

"Those are the ones that people will hopefully rise up and run against," she said.

Associated Press writer Corey Williams in Detroit and Jim Salter in St. Louis contributed to this report.

Gone for good? Evidence signals many jobs aren't coming back

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Stark evidence of the damage the resurgent viral outbreak has caused the U.S. economy could come Friday when the government is expected to report that the pace of hiring has slowed significantly after a brief rebound in the spring.

As the coronavirus continues to transform a vast swath of the economy, it's becoming evident that millions of Americans face the prospect of a permanent job loss that will force some to seek work with new industries or in new occupations. If so, that would lead to a slower recovery in the job market than if restaurants, hotels, bars and retail shops were able to fully reopen and recall all their laid-off employees. Few expect that to happen.

On Friday, economists expect the government to report that employers added 1.6 million jobs in July, according to data provider FactSet, and that the unemployment rate declined from 11.1% to a still-high 10.5%.

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At any other time, a million or more jobs would constitute an unheard-of increase. But July's expected gain would fall way short of June's 4.8 million increase and would signal that hiring has sharply slowed. It would also mean that the economy has regained barely 40% of the jobs that fell to the coronavirus.

The pandemic has lasted far longer than most Americans expected, with likely profound consequences for the economy. Traditional retail stores will probably never regain their pre-pandemic levels of sales or employment as consumers increasingly turn to internet purchases. Online health care will likely eliminate some doctors' office jobs. And online videoconferencing will replace some portion of business travel. Those changes alone could destroy millions of jobs.

Michelle Holder, a labor economist at John Jay College, said it's unlikely that many retail workers and others whose jobs are gone for good will find work this year, given that the viral outbreak will hold back hiring until a vaccine is widely available.

"It's definitely going to be a drag on the economy," she said.

Steven Davis, an economist at the University of Chicago, estimates that even after the virus has been brought under control, the proportion of people working from home will triple compared with pre-pandemic levels. That could result in the shuttering of many restaurants, coffee shops and other downtown businesses.

The real estate data firm Zillow said last week that most of its 5,400 employees will now be allowed to work from home indefinitely.

"This recession is unusual in the extent of permanent (job) reallocation that will ultimately result," Davis said.

He and two co-authors have estimated that up to 40% of layoffs in March through May were permanent. That figure will likely rise, he said, the longer the pandemic squeezes the economy.

"We're kind of past the stage where we're quickly recalling workers to their old jobs," Davis said, "and getting to the stage that people will need to get new jobs at new companies or in new industries."

It is a trend that points to a grinding, sluggish recovery.

Allegra Troiano initially thought her layoff in May from a company that provides English language instruction would last only through the summer and that she'd be recalled as the school year began. But as the months have gone by and with few school systems fully reopening, the company — ELS Language Centers — has made clear that's not the case. Just 10 of the 30 centers it operated before the pandemic have reopened, not including the one in Milwaukee, which Troiano managed.

Troiano has tried to look for other jobs. But at 64 and with an autoimmune disease, she is reluctant to take work that would require public interaction. She also fears that her age makes a job hunt more difficult.

"I am feeling that this is the end of my career," she said. "The fortunate thing is I go on Medicare this January."

Many other companies are giving up and closing their doors. Dunkin' Donuts said last week that it will close 800 stores this year, about 8% of its total. Lord & Taylor, America's oldest retailer, and the parent company of Men's Wearhouse and Jos. A. Bank both said Monday that they would file for bankruptcy protection. Last month, Brooks Brothers, another men's chain deeply hurt by the decline in formal business clothes, sought bankruptcy protection.

One-third of bars and lounges have permanently closed nationwide, up from about one-quarter in late June, according to the small business data analysis firm Womply. So have one-fifth of restaurants and 12% of retailers.

The Partnership for New York City, a business group, projects that one-third of the city's small businesses will close for good. In California, mass layoff notices filed with the state now show that about half the job cuts are permanent, up from 17% in May.

And a survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research in July found that nearly half of those who have lost jobs during the pandemic say those jobs are gone for good. By contrast, in April, 78% had thought their layoffs would prove only temporary.

Business shutdowns have fallen disproportionately on Black-owned businesses, which are more than twice as likely to close as white-owned small companies, according to a report from the New York Federal Reserve. Black-owned businesses are more often located in coronavirus hot spots and are in service industries like restaurants and retail that have been hit hardest by the outbreak, the New York Fed said.

Looking toward Friday's report, researchers at the St. Louis Federal Reserve have analyzed data from Homebase, a provider of scheduling software to small businesses, and concluded that job growth weakened in July compared with June. Hiring has slowed much more in states with heavy viral outbreaks, including Arizona, Florida, and Texas, they said.

Jane Oates, a former Labor Department official who is president of the nonprofit WorkingNation, said that widespread school closings this fall could also depress job gains in future months because some parents will have to quit jobs to watch their children.

"I worry about what that means for women, who are most often in that role," Oates said. "That's going to be disruptive."

WNBA players urge people to vote against team owner, senator

Associated Press undefined

BRADENTON, Fla. (AP) — WNBA players urged people to vote against Atlanta Dream co-owner Kelly Loeffler, a Republican U.S. senator running to keep her seat in Georgia.

Loeffler, who spoke out publicly against the league's social justice plans and sent a letter to WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert objecting to the initiatives to honor the Black Lives Matter movement once the season began last month, is facing opposition from Raphael Warnock. He is a Black pastor in Atlanta.

Players from the Atlanta team, as well as players from the Seattle Storm, Chicago Sky and Phoenix Mercury, wore "Vote Warnock" on T-shirts before their games on Tuesday.

Storm point guard Sue Bird, a four-time Olympic gold medalist, came up with the idea, and players had conference calls with Warnock before the show of support.

Dream forward Elizabeth Williams used social media to explain the decision on Tuesday. She expanded on it during a zoom call Wednesday.

"It was something we talked through and wanted to be strategic, intentional about our words and language," the Dream's captain said. "We wanted to make sure whatever action was taken that we felt like in doing so all the ideas we had been focused on weren't lost."

Williams, who is registered to vote in Georgia, said that wearing the shirts was optional and that she thought the teams playing Wednesday night would also wear them.

One of the initiatives that the players came into the season was to get people to vote. The shirts were taking it a step further by supporting a specific candidate.

Loeffler blasted the league in a statement Tuesday night, decrying what she calls "cancel culture."

"This is just more proof that the out of control cancel culture wants to shut out anyone who disagrees with them. It's clear that the league is more concerned with playing politics than basketball," she said.

Warnock has been endorsed by a slate of state and national Democratic leaders. He also issued a statement in response to the support.

"Senator Loeffler and those like her who seek to silence and dismiss others when they speak up for justice have planted themselves on the wrong side of history," Warnock said. "We are in a moment of generational, transformative change, and there is no place in that movement for bigotry. We celebrate the courage and resolve of these players standing for justice, and I am proud to stand with them."

Loeffler is a wealthy businesswoman who took office earlier this year after being appointed to the Senate by Republican Gov. Brian Kemp. Warnock is pastor of the Atlanta church where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. once preached.

They are two of the top candidates in a crowded field running in a Nov. 3 special election for Loeffler's seat. All candidates will face off against each other in one big jumble in November. If no candidate tops 50% of the vote, the top two finishers will advance to a runoff in January.

Other top candidates in the race include Republican U.S. Rep. Doug Collins and Democrat Matt Lieberman, the son of former senator and vice presidential candidate Joe Lieberman.

Loeffler was chosen by Kemp in part to appeal toward suburban women, who have drifted away from the Republican party since President Donald Trump's election. But after Collins, a Trump loyalist popular

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with the conservative base in Georgia, joined the race in January, Loeffler has increasingly staked out staunchly conservative positions to guard against attacks from the right.

Associated Press Writer Ben Nadler in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Pete Hamill, legendary New York columnist and novelist, dies

By THALIA BEATY undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Pete Hamill, the self-taught, street-wise newspaper columnist whose love affair with New York inspired a colorful and uniquely influential journalistic career and produced several books of fiction and nonfiction, died Wednesday morning. He was 85.

Hamill died at a Brooklyn hospital from heart and kidney failure, his brother Denis confirmed in an email. "Pete was truly one of the good guys," Denis Hamill said.

Pete Hamill was one of the city's last great crusading columnists and links to journalism's days of chattering typewriters and smoked-filled banter, an Irish-American both tough and sentimental who related to the underdog and mingled with the elite. Well-read, well-rounded and very well connected, Hamill was at ease quoting poetry and Ernest Hemingway, dating Jacqueline Onassis or enjoying a drink and a cigarette at the old Lion's Head tavern in Greenwich Village.

His topics ranged from baseball, politics, murders, boxing and riots to wars in Vietnam, Nicaragua, Lebanon and Ireland. But he would always look back to the New York he grew up in, a pre-digital age best remembered through the dreamscape of black and white photography — a New York of egg creams and five-cent subway rides, stickball games and wide-brimmed hats, when the Dodgers were still in Brooklyn and there were more daily papers than you could count on one hand.

"I have the native son's irrational love of the place," Hamill wrote in his 2004 book, "Downtown: My Manhattan." "New York is a city of daily irritations, occasional horrors, hourly tests of will and even courage, and huge dollops of pure beauty."

A Brooklyn-born high school dropout, Hamill was a columnist for the New York Daily News, the New York Post, Newsday, the Village Voice, New York magazine and Esquire. He wrote screenplays, several novels and a bestselling memoir, "A Drinking Life."

"Pete Hamill was an inspiration to generations of reporters who reveled in his unique style of storytelling and his gifts as a writer and reporter who spoke truth to power," the New York Press Club said in a statement.

His 2003 novel, "Forever," told the story of Cormac O'Connor, an Irish Jew who arrives in New York in 1740 and is granted eternal life as long as he stays on the island of Manhattan. His novels "Snow in August" and "The North River" also served up nostalgic and critically acclaimed tales of Old New York.

His memoir covers his childhood in Brooklyn to the night he gave up drinking at a New Year's Eve party in 1972.

"Pete was a giant of journalism, a quintessential New Yorker and a personal friend to my father and myself," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in a statement. "I learned much from him and he inspired me. Pete's death is going to leave a hole in the heart of New Yorkers."

Hamill had a brief and disheartening turn editing the New York Post. When financier Steven Hoffenberg gained control of the tabloid in bankruptcy proceedings, he hired Hamill as editor in chief in 1993. Hamill quickly hired four Black reporters and promoted a number of women and minorities, recalled fellow columnist Jack Newfield in his memoir, "Somebody's Gotta Tell It."

But when Hoffenberg was unable to buy the paper, ownership fell to Abe Hirschfeld, who fired Hamill. The paper's staff revolted, publishing a mutiny edition that kept Hamill's name on the masthead as he supervised from a nearby diner. Hirschfeld rehired Hamill, giving him a kiss that the hardened newsman called "the single most ignominious moment of my life."

Rupert Murdoch eventually purchased the paper, leading to Hamill's dismissal. A few years later, Hamill spent a short stint as editor-in-chief of the Post's archival, the New York Daily News. He also worked for

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a few months in 1987 as editor of The Mexico City News.

Hamill worried that journalism had become too focused on celebrities, but he was well acquainted with some of the most famous people of his time. He met the Beatles before they played in the U.S., interviewed John Lennon when the ex-Beatle was living in Manhattan, hung out with Frank Sinatra and with the Rolling Stones, and won a Grammy for his liner notes to Bob Dylan's "Blood On the Tracks."

Hamill lived with Shirley MacLaine, dated Onassis and was linked to Linda Ronstadt, Susan Sontag and Barbra Streisand among others.

As a young man, Hamill was a passionate liberal. His open letter to Robert Kennedy helped persuade the senator to run for president, and Hamill was one of a handful of people who wrestled the gun away from Kennedy assassin Sirhan Sirhan in 1968 at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles.

Hamill found his way onto President Richard Nixon's "enemies list." In a column, Hamill said the president shared the blame for the 1970 shootings at Kent State University by calling campus dissenters "bums." Vice President Spiro Agnew called the column "irrational ravings," and Hamill borrowed the phrase for the title of a 1971 collection of his columns.

In a 1969 column for New York magazine, "The Revolt of the White Lower Middle Class," he seemed to anticipate the rise of Donald Trump as he warned of men "standing around saloons talking darkly about their grievances, and even more darkly about possible remedies. Their grievances are real and deep; their remedies could blow this city apart."

In a 1991 Esquire column, he criticized Black people for blaming everything on whites. "You have re-treated defensively into the clichés of glib racialism," he wrote in "Letter to a Black Friend," a column that ran in Esquire in 1991.

Hamill's first marriage, to Ramona Negron, ended in divorce. He retained primary custody of his two daughters, Adrienne and Deirdre.

In 1986, Hamill married the Japanese journalist Fukiko Aoki, whom he met while touring Japan to promote his collection of short stories, "Tokyo Sketches."

In 2019, Hamill and one of his greatest contemporaries, Jimmy Breslin, were featured in the HBO documentary "Deadline Artists."

Born William Peter Hamill on June 24, 1935, he was the oldest of seven children of immigrants from Northern Ireland. His brother Denis Hamill is a novelist and columnist for the Daily News.

At 16, Pete Hamill became bored with high school, dropped out and went to work as a sheet metal worker in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, while honing his skills as a comic book artist on the side. At the yard, he developed dormant tuberculosis.

While in the Navy, Hamill finished high school and, afterward, attended Mexico City College in 1956.

Returning to New York, Hamill opened a graphic design store in Hell's Kitchen. After reading a 1960 memoir by Post editor Jimmy Wechsler, the young Hamill wrote Wechsler, saying that newspapers had no room for people like himself — working class, no Ivy League degrees. The editor suggested a meeting.

"He took me into his inner office and I sat beside a desk littered with newspapers clippings, magazines, letters from readers, copies of his book," Hamill later wrote. "While we talked, he smoked cigarettes and sipped coffee. Near the end of our chat, he leaned back in his chair and put his hands behind his head. 'Have you ever thought about becoming a newspaperman?'"

Former AP reporter Derek Rose contributed to this report.

Tribe, economy, even cemeteries hurt as virus hits Choctaws

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press/ Report for America

PHILADELPHIA, Miss. (AP) — When Sharon Taylor died of coronavirus, her family — standing apart, wearing masks — sang her favorite hymns at her graveside, next to a tiny headstone for her stillborn daughter, buried 26 years ago. Fresh flowers marked row after row of new graves. Holy Rosary is one of the only cemeteries in this Choctaw Indian family's community, and it's running out of space — a sign of

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the virus's massive toll on the Choctaw people.

As confirmed coronavirus cases skyrocket in Mississippi, the state's only federally recognized American Indian tribe has been devastated. COVID-19 has ripped through Choctaw families, many of whom live together in multigenerational homes. Almost 10% of the tribe's roughly 11,000 members have tested positive for the virus. More than 75 have died. The once-flourishing Choctaw economy is stagnant, as the tribal government put in place tighter restrictions than those imposed by the state.

July brought a glimmer of hope, with some numbers dropping among Choctaws, but health officials worry that with cases rising elsewhere in the state, the reprieve is only temporary. On Friday, Mississippi recorded its highest single-day coronavirus-related fatality count, 52.

As a community health technician, Taylor, 53, took the virus seriously from the start. She answered calls from tribe members with symptoms and delivered medicine. In June, she fell ill herself.

Kristina Taylor, 18, one of Sharon's five children, learned just before her mother was admitted to the hospital that she'd been named valedictorian of the tribal high school. Sharon had predicted the accomplishment for years — in some of their last moments together, Kristina showed her mom the speech she'd prepared for graduation and the Choctaw beadwork her sister used to decorate her cap.

"We were just in tears. Usually, if I started crying, she started crying too," she said. "She always had that faith in me, that I could do it, even when I doubted myself. She knew I could do it before I did."

That day, Sharon Taylor took her daughter to the family plot at Holy Rosary. It was always special: a place to mark important events, to be together, to visit the grave of baby Kerri. Other relatives are buried there, too, and it's where Sharon wanted her final resting place.

But the Rev. Bob Goodyear says there's not much more room to expand, in part because of another pandemic. The Spanish flu of 1918 took lives so quickly residents didn't even have time to put up markers, and 400 victims are buried in an open field on cemetery grounds.

"I pray it doesn't come to that this time," said Goodyear, whose Catholic church has always buried Choctaws, regardless of faith. The tribe recently voted to establish a community cemetery nearby, which will ease the burden, said Goodyear, who isn't a Choctaw but has ministered in the reservation community for decades.

Dr. Thomas Dobbs, the state health officer, said that like other Native American communities, coronavirus deaths among the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians have been driven by underlying conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure, present in more than 80% of deadly Mississippi cases. The reservation hospital, where Taylor worked, can't handle severe coronavirus cases. They're sent to facilities elsewhere in the state - Taylor died 80 miles (129 kilometers) from home, in Jackson.

In Neshoba County, named for the Choctaw word for wolf, more than 25% of residents live under the poverty line. It's a rural area, characterized by dusty red clay and rolling pine-filled hills. The Golden Moon Casino on Highway 16, with a glittering moon on its roof, serves as a welcome to Choctaw land. From there, the reservation spreads out over 35,000 acres (14,164 hectares).

Choctaw Indians used to live across millions of acres in southeastern Mississippi but were forced off the land. Under an 1830 treaty, the Choctaws were to move to Oklahoma. Those who remained in Mississippi endured segregation, racism and poverty.

In the 1990s, the Choctaws started building what became a strong tribal economy. They own a family-style resort with a water park and two casinos; the tribe is a leading employer in eastern Mississippi.

But the tribal government has been more conservative in reopening efforts during the pandemic than Republican Gov. Tate Reeves and other Mississippi officials. The tribe passed a mask requirement July 1, but Reeves refused to implement one statewide, until Tuesday. Choctaw casinos remain closed, more than two months after the state allowed casinos to reopen. About 2,000 employees are furloughed, the tribal chief said. The annual Choctaw Indian Fair, which draws thousands, was canceled.

The tribe has long been a target of hate, members say, and the virus has only made things worse. On social media, people blame Choctaws for high case numbers. Choctaw employees have been harassed at their jobs; others are called names in stores.

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"We've heard so many bad things about ourselves and our people — the first thing people turn to is blame and hate," said Marsha Berry, a tribe member who helped form a group that delivers food and other necessities to people self-isolating.

Anita Johnson lives near the funeral home that has handled arrangements for all the Choctaws lost to the virus. Each time a funeral procession passes her house, her family stops what they're doing to pray.

"It seemed like in Choctaw families, that's all that was in front of us: You're going to get sick, you're going to get the fever, you're going to end up going to the hospital, and you're going to die," she said.

When Sharon Taylor died, her family couldn't grieve as Choctaws normally would. Because of the chief's ban, there was no bonfire for the occasion, no wake with people dropping by for days to pay respects and drop off meals.

Instead, at her graveside, her family shared stories of the woman who valued their tight-knit family and community above all else, who never missed a gathering and always had a grandchild on her lap. They sang the hymns she loved, the ones she'd sung to her kids, and then her grandkids.

Her 25-year-old daughter, Kristi, is pregnant, and she'd like to name her baby girl for Sharon.

"She was always looking out for other people," Kristina Taylor said. "Now, she's watching over us."

Leah Willingham is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

Inside Big Tech: Pulling back the curtain with 'hot' email

By MARCY GORDON AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Judiciary chairman was closing in on his Perry Mason moment with Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg. Fortified with "hot" internal company documents, Rep. Jerrold Nadler was building his case at a hearing that seemed almost like a trial for Facebook and three other tech giants over alleged anti-competitive tactics.

"Thank you, Mr. Zuckerberg, you're making my point," Nadler declared. Then to the "jury:"

"By Mr. Zuckerberg's own admission and by the documents we have from the time, Facebook saw Instagram as a threat that could potentially siphon business away from Facebook and so rather than compete with it, Facebook bought it."

And then the closing argument: "This is exactly the type of anti-competitive acquisition that the antitrust laws were designed to prevent. This should never have happened in the first place."

The hearing empowered the Judiciary subcommittee on antitrust, led by Rep. David Cicilline, to publicly air information from more than one million internal documents provided by Facebook, Amazon, Google and Apple during the panel's yearlong investigation of Big Tech's market dominance.

In doing so, lawmakers provided a rare glimpse inside the likely lines of inquiry being pursued by the Justice Department, the Federal Trade Commission and state attorneys general as they conduct their own antitrust investigations into the tech companies. All are likely to have access to the same document trove.

Lawmakers played back words from the documents during last week's hearing, which marked the first time that Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos of Amazon, Google's Sundar Pichai and Apple's Tim Cook testified (via video) as a group to Congress.

Sprinkled with colorful language from company executives like "digital land grab," "big video brains" and "kicking butt," the emails and chat logs, all marked "highly confidential," grabbed attention. Looking ahead, the "hot documents" don't by themselves guarantee successful legal action by regulators, legal experts say. But they can be very useful.

"It sounds inflammatory but if you really think about it, it's kind of what you want competitors to be thinking," says Chad Elder, an antitrust litigation partner in the Bradley law firm's Nashville office.

Still, he said, such documents can help competitors that are suing a dominant company, and "can make the difference sometimes in whether you get to a jury."

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Hot documents can often be spun either way in antitrust cases. They can be held up by prosecutors or regulators as “smoking gun” evidence of mobster-style tactics to illegally squash competition. But company attorneys may contend they show the sort of vigorous competitive spirit that’s prized in top executives. The companies may accuse prosecutors of pulling a few swaggering emails out of context.

It’s not illegal in itself for a company to be a monopoly. But it can be a violation of antitrust law for a company at the top of the heap to use its power to kick competitors off the hill.

For example, there’s the matter of “predatory pricing.” For a company to set prices below its costs doesn’t violate antitrust law unless it’s part of a strategy to eliminate competitors and then possibly raise its prices over the long term. Below-cost pricing is permissible if it’s done only to maintain or gain market share.

Bezos was questioned at the hearing about Amazon executives’ exchanges regarding competitor Diapers.com, which Amazon bought in November 2010 for \$545 million. A June 2010 email from a high-level executive to Bezos and others said: “We have already initiated a more aggressive ‘plan to win’ against Diapers.com.”

“We need to match pricing on these guys no matter what the cost,” the executive wrote in 2009.

Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon, D-Pa., asked Bezos whether he personally signed off on a plan to raise prices once Amazon had acquired the competitor.

“What I remember is that we matched competitor prices. And I believe we followed Diapers.com,” he said. “What I can tell you is that the idea of using diapers and products like that to attract new customers ... is a very traditional idea.”

The Supreme Court, in rulings in recent years, has to some extent limited the influence of internal hot documents in antitrust cases, pointing instead toward tests of anti-competitive conduct such as prices charged by a company and its competitors.

Internal documents can be useful to investigators for insight into the likely effect of an acquisition or other company action, said George Hay, a law professor and antitrust expert at Cornell University. “They can help in deciding whether there’s a fire there, not just smoke,” said Hay, a former chief antitrust economist at the Justice Department.

That’s of interest because federal regulators are delving into the four huge companies’ acquisitions of hundreds of smaller firms, dating back to 2010. The head of the Federal Trade Commission has said that as a result of the review, the government may require tech giants to unwind earlier takeovers and divest assets if the agency finds violations of antitrust law.

Facebook bought the popular photo-sharing service Instagram for \$1 billion in April 2012. Earlier that month, Zuckerberg said in an email: “Instagram can hurt us meaningfully without becoming a huge business.”

In questioning, Nadler tried to pin him down, without getting yes or no answers. Did he mean the threat was that users might switch from Facebook to Instagram?

Zuckerberg eventually acknowledged that Instagram was a competitor in mobile photo-sharing and camera apps. “There were a lot of others at the time,” he added.

Zuckerberg told Facebook’s chief financial officer in a February 2012 message that with possible acquisitions of Instagram, Path or Foursquare, “What we’re really buying is time.”

In a message sent a short while later, he followed up with a clarification: “I didn’t mean to imply that we’d be buying them to prevent them from competing with us in any way.”

Follow Gordon on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/mgordonap>

Poop scoop: Satellite images reveal Antarctic penguin haunts

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — British scientists say there are more emperor penguin colonies in Antarctica than previously thought based on evidence of bird droppings spotted from space.

A study published Wednesday by scientists at the British Antarctic Survey counted 61 emperor penguin

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colonies dotted around the southernmost continent, 11 more than the number previously confirmed.

Scientists used images from Europe's Sentinel-2 satellite mission to look for smudges on the ice that indicated large amounts of guano, or penguin poop.

The majestic emperor penguin breeds in remote areas where temperatures can drop as low as minus 50 degrees Celsius (minus 58 degrees Fahrenheit). Researchers have long relied on aerial photographs and satellites to spot colonies of the flightless marine birds.

Peter Fretwell, a British Antarctic Survey geographer and the study's lead author, called the latest count "good news" but noted that the newly spotted colonies were small.

"(They) only take the overall population count up by 5-10% to just over half a million penguins or around 265,500 – 278,500 breeding pairs," he said.

Emperor penguins are vulnerable to the loss of sea ice predicted to occur because of man-made global warming. Some researchers suggest the number of colonies could drop by more than 30% by the end of the century.

Some of the newly discovered colonies are located far offshore, on sea ice that has formed around grounded icebergs and which is particularly at risk of disappearing.

Yan Ropert-Coudert, an ecologist who wasn't involved in the latest study, said that while satellite images are a powerful tool for tracking penguin colonies, large-scale explorations and counts on the ground are also needed whenever possible.

Reliable assessment of local and global populations are necessary for conservation bodies to decide what actions are needed to protect the species, said Ropert-Coudert, who heads the biological sciences section of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research.

Hiroshima survivors worry that world will forget

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

HIROSHIMA, Japan (AP) — The atomic bomb that exploded over Hiroshima 75 years ago didn't just kill and maim.

The survivors have also lived for decades with lingering shame, anger and fear. Many in Japan believed radiation sickness is infectious or hereditary.

Some hid their status as survivors. Some harbored thoughts of revenge in their hearts. Some watched as loved ones died, one by one, because of radiation from the bombing, and wondered — Am I next?

As they grow old — their average age now exceeds 83 — many now feel an extreme urgency. They are desperate to rid the world of nuclear bombs and share with the young the first-hand horror they witnessed on Aug. 6, 1945.

Here are some of the stories of survivors interviewed by The Associated Press.

KOKO KONDO, 75

Koko Kondo had a secret mission as a girl: Revenge.

She was determined to find the person who dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, the person that caused the suffering and the terrible burns she saw on the faces of girls at her father's church — and then square off and give them a punch.

She got her chance in 1955.

Ten-year-old Kondo appeared on an American TV show called "This is Your Life" that was featuring her father, Rev. Kiyoshi Tanimoto, one of six survivors profiled in John Hersey's book "Hiroshima."

Kondo stared in hatred at another guest: Capt. Robert Lewis, co-pilot of the B-29 bomber Enola Gay that dropped the bomb.

While Kondo, who survived the bombing as an infant, was wondering if she would act on her fantasy and punch him, the host asked Lewis how he felt after dropping the bomb.

"Looking down from thousands of feet over Hiroshima, all I could think of was, 'God, what have we done?'" he said.

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Kondo saw tears well in Lewis' eyes, and her hatred melted away.

"He was not a monster; he was just another human being. ... I knew that I should hate the war, not him," Kondo told The Associated Press. She said she was grateful she met Lewis because it helped the hate go away.

Still, she suffered years of humiliation and prejudice that she had to overcome as she grew up. One day as an adolescent she was told to undress except for her underwear at a medical conference in an auditorium. Her fiance rejected her because she was an atomic bomb survivor.

On the eve of Thursday's memorial at the cenotaph of Hiroshima Peace Park, Kondo held a moment of silence and prayed for the victims, and for Lewis. That meeting changed her way of thinking and helped her overcome the difficulties later in her life, she said.

Now, Kondo is following in her father's footsteps, busy telling her stories to younger people.

Hiroshima has become a beautiful place, but atomic bombs still exist, she says, and another nuclear attack would destroy the world.

"It's time we human beings get together and abolish nuclear weapons," she said. "We have hope."

LEE JONG-KEUN, 92

Lee kept his secret as an atomic bombing survivor for nearly 70 years, not even telling his wife, always fearing people might notice the burn marks on the face.

But today Lee, a second-generation Korean born in Japan, is training young people to tell survivors' stories. He also wants them to learn about the difficulty that Koreans have faced in Japan.

"Survivors won't be here 20 years from now, but our stories must be," said Lee, who will meet Prime Minister Shinzo Abe after Thursday's memorial to demand Japan do more to ban nuclear weapons.

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

At a memorial Wednesday for Korean victims, Lee laid flowers and prayed for those who perished. "I ask younger people to never forget us and to understand the tragedy, absurdity and cruelty of the war so that nuclear weapons will be eliminated from the world as soon as possible."

On the morning of Aug. 6, 1945, 16-year-old Lee watched the blue summer sky turned yellowish orange. He suffered burns on his face and neck that took four months to heal.

When he returned to work, co-workers stayed away, saying he had "A-bomb disease." He decided not to tell anyone about the atomic bombing. That would only "double" his suffering when he was trying hard to hide his Korean identity.

His parents talked in Korean and wanted him to learn the language, but he didn't like going outside with them, fearing people would notice their Korean accent.

So Lee lived under a Japanese name, Masaichi Egawa, until eight years ago when he began speaking out.

"To tell my story, I had to explain why Koreans are in Japan," he said. "Now I have nothing to hide."

KEIKO OGURA, 84

Remembering the atomic bombing and how she survived is painful, but Keiko Ogura is determined to keep telling her stories as she organizes English guided tours for foreign visitors at Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park.

Ogura established Hiroshima Interpreters for Peace in 1984 to translate survivors' stories, including her own.

"In the beginning, it was really painful to remember those days," she said at a recent online briefing. "But I wanted young Americans to know what their country had done. I have no intention to blame them, but just want them to know the facts, and think."

It was 40 years after the war before she felt comfortable telling her stories.

"What we suffered the most was a sense of guilt as we kept wondering why we could not save the many people who died before our eyes."

But now she has also found solace by telling her story.

Visitors are scarce this year because of the coronavirus pandemic. Still, she will organize a live virtual tour of the peace memorial on the anniversary of the bombing Thursday.

MICHIKO KODAMA, 82

The external scars from the atomic bombing have faded, but Michiko Kodama says her heart hasn't healed. (asterisk)For me the war isn't over," Kodama said in an interview. "Even 75 years later, we continue to suffer because of radiation. ... And nuclear weapons still exist."

On Aug. 6, 75 years ago, the 7-year-old Kodama saw a flash in the sky from her elementary school classroom. Shards of broken glasses rained down on her. On the way home, her left shoulder bleeding as her father carried her on his back, she saw a girl, badly injured, looking up at her. Even today she is pained by the girl's face.

She lost her favorite cousins within weeks of the bombing, then her parents, brothers and even her daughter. All died of cancer or from the radiation exposure. Kodama has lived in fear that she would be next.

There were also years of discrimination and humiliation.

One day, when she went to a clinic and showed her medical certificate, a receptionist noted her status as a bombing survivor out loud, and another patient sitting next to Kodama moved away. "I still feel hurt from the discrimination; that is what sits the heaviest in my heart" she said.

Follow Mari Yamaguchi on Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/mariyamaguchi>

Chasm grows between Trump and government coronavirus experts

By AAMER MADHANI, RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — In the early days of the coronavirus crisis, President Donald Trump was flanked in the White House briefing room by a team of public health experts in a seeming portrait of unity to confront the disease that was ravaging the globe.

But as the crisis has spread to all reaches of the country, with escalating deaths and little sense of end-game, a chasm has widened between the Republican president and the experts. The result: daily delivery of a mixed message to the public at a moment when coherence is most needed.

Trump and his political advisers insist that the United States has no rival in its response to the pandemic. They point to the fact that the U.S. has administered more virus tests than any other nation and that the percentage of deaths among those infected is among the lowest.

"Right now, I think it's under control," Trump said during an interview with Axios. He added, "We have done a great job."

But the surge in infections, hospitalizations and deaths tells a different story. And it suggests that the president is increasingly out of step with the federal government's own medical and public health experts.

The U.S. death toll, which stands at more than 156,000, is expected to accelerate. The latest composite forecast from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention projects an average of nearly 1,000 deaths per day through Aug. 22.

Dr. Deborah Birx, White House coronavirus task force coordinator, warned this week that the virus has become "extraordinarily widespread."

Trump didn't like that. He dismissed her comment as "pathetic" and charged she was capitulating to criticism from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who had earlier criticized Birx.

Adm. Brett Giroir, the assistant secretary of Health and Human Services, who has avoided contradicting the president throughout the crisis, said on Sunday it was time to "move on" from the debate over hydroxychloroquine, a drug Trump continues to promote as a COVID-19 treatment even though there is no clear evidence it is effective.

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Dr. Robert Redfield, head of the CDC, last week acknowledged during an ABC News interview that the initial federal government response to the virus was too slow.

"It's not a separation from the president, it's a cavernous gap," said Lawrence Gostin, a public health expert at Georgetown University. "What we're seeing is that scientists will no longer be cowed by the White House."

Until recently, the medical experts on the White House coronavirus task force have walked a tightrope. They have been pressing to deliver the best science to the public while trying to avoid appearing to directly contradict Trump — in hopes of maintaining influence in the decision-making process.

The effort has played out, at moments, as an awkward dance.

For months now, the West Wing has controlled the media schedule of Dr. Anthony Fauci, who drew the ire of the president and his advisers in the early days of the pandemic because of the outsized media attention he received and his perceived willingness to contradict the president, according to three White House officials and Republicans close to the West Wing not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations.

Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, has struck a far more cautious tone than Trump or any other member of the task force about the nation's move to "reopen," provoking the frustration of a president who sees a resurgent economy as key to winning another four years in office.

Birx, until recently, had largely stayed on the president's good side, though her rosy depictions of the pandemic fight drew recent skepticism from Democrats and other public health officials. But Trump also shredded Birx privately as well as in his public comments this week for not striking a more optimistic tone about states that are doing well and for saying she had "tremendous respect" for Trump's rival Pelosi, the officials said.

Throughout the pandemic, some government public health officials have privately expressed worry to West Wing staffers that they are fearful of contradicting the president even as they try to focus on the data and the science behind the administration's response to the virus, officials said. But publicly, there has been a concerted effort to appear that the team and the Oval Office are speaking with one voice.

Redfield disputed on Monday that the health officials were looking to distance themselves from the president.

"I don't think that's an accurate characterization," Redfield said in an interview. He added, "I think we communicate freely and directly as we see the outbreak as members of the task force."

On Monday, Trump seemed to walk back from his criticism that Birx was "taking the bait" from Pelosi and said that he had great respect for the doctor.

He suggested his frustration was spurred by his administration not receiving proper credit for testing so many people or for pushing to replenish the stockpile of ventilators early in the crisis. On Tuesday, he boasted that the U.S. has increased testing capacity by 32,000% since March 12 and has "far and away the most testing capacity in the world." Trump in early March declared "anybody that needs a test gets a test." Yet, in many parts of the country, it can still take a week or longer for patients to receive test results.

His positive self-evaluation gives short shrift to the fact that the U.S. has the world's fourth highest per capita virus death rate, according to Johns Hopkins University's coronavirus resource center.

In the Axios interview, Trump insisted that the appropriate statistic to judge the virus response is the ratio of deaths to cases. By that metric, the U.S. ranks 14th among the 20 countries most affected by COVID-19. Chile, India, Argentina, Russia, South Africa and Bangladesh all have lower rates of deaths to infections, according to the Johns Hopkins-compiled data.

"It's not a bragging right that over 3% in your country that's infected is dying," Georgetown University's Gostin said.

Trump's undercutting of his health advisers makes it all but impossible for the federal government to speak with a single, authoritative voice at a time of national crisis, critics say.

"It's a very dangerous place for the country to be," said Kathleen Sebelius, health and human services secretary under President Barack Obama. "The reason I say it is very dangerous, is that we continue to have a White House that has made a public health crisis in this country into a debate about whether people

like Donald Trump or not. We have never seen a situation like this before, and we are paying the price."

Associated Press writer Mike Stobbe in New York contributed to this report.

Fireworks, ammonium nitrate likely fueled Beirut explosion

By JON GAMBRELL and JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

Fireworks and ammonium nitrate appear to have been the fuel that ignited a massive explosion that rocked the Lebanese capital of Beirut, experts and videos of the blast suggest.

The scale of the damage — from the epicenter of the explosion at the port of Beirut to the windows blown out kilometers (miles) away — resembles other blasts involving the chemical compound commonly used as an agricultural fertilizer.

But the compound itself typically doesn't detonate on its own and requires another ignition source. That likely came from a fire that engulfed what initially appeared to be fireworks that were stored at the port.

Online videos of the disaster's initial moments show sparks and lights inside the smoke rising from the blaze, just prior to the massive blast. That likely indicates that fireworks were involved, said Boaz Hayoun, owner of the Tamar Group, an Israeli firm that works closely with the Israeli government on safety and certification issues involving explosives.

"Before the big explosion, you can see in the center of the fire, you can see sparks, you can hear sounds like popcorn and you can hear whistles," Hayoun told The Associated Press. "This is very specific behavior of fireworks, the visuals, the sounds and the transformation from a slow burn to a massive explosion."

Jeffrey Lewis, a missile expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey, California, offered a similar assessment.

"It looks like an accident," Lewis told the AP. "First, there was a fire preceding the explosion, which is not an attack. And some of the videos show munitions what I could call popcorning, exploding like 'pop, pop, pop, pop, pop.'"

He added that "it's very common to see fires detonate explosives."

"If you have a fire raging next to something explosive, and you don't put it out, it blows up," he said.

The white cloud that accompanied the massive blast appeared to be a condensation cloud, often common in massive explosions in humid conditions that can follow the shock waves of an explosion, Lewis said.

Orange clouds also followed the blast, likely from toxic nitrogen dioxide gas that's released after an explosion involving nitrates.

Experts typically determine the power of the blast by measuring the crater left behind, which appeared massive in aerial footage shot on Wednesday morning by the AP.

The Beirut blast, based on the crater and glass windows being blown out a distance away, exploded with the force equivalent to detonating at least 2.2 kilotons of TNT, said Sim Tack, an analyst and weapons expert at the Texas-based private intelligence firm Stratfor.

But Hayoun, the Israeli expert, said he estimated the force of the blast to be about 1 kiloton of TNT. He based his figure on the amount of ammonium nitrate that were reported, but said "we need to be careful with specific statements" due to still incomplete information available.

What initially started the fire at the port remains unclear. Beirut was sunny before Tuesday's explosion, with a daily high of 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit).

Lebanese Interior Minister Mohammed Fahmi, in comments to a local TV station, made no mention of ignited fireworks but said it appeared the blast was caused by the detonation of more than 2,700 tons of ammonium nitrate that had been stored in a warehouse at the dock ever since it was confiscated from a cargo ship in 2014. That amount could cause the explosive force seen in the blast Tuesday, Tack said.

Based on the timeline and the size of the cargo, that ship could be the MV Rhosus. The ship was initially seized in Beirut in 2013 when it entered the port due to technical problems, according to lawyers involved in the case. It came from the nation of Georgia, and had been bound for Mozambique.

"Owing to the risks associated with retaining the ammonium nitrate on board the vessel, the port authori-

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ties discharged the cargo onto the port's warehouses," the lawyers wrote in a 2015 article published by shiparrested.com. "The vessel and cargo remain to date in port awaiting auctioning and/or proper disposal."

It remains unclear what conditions the ammonium nitrate had been stored in — or why tons of an explosive chemical compound had been left there for years. Lebanon already was on the brink of collapse amid a severe economic crisis that has ignited mass protests in recent months.

The devastation surrounding the port resembled other ammonium nitrate explosions, such as the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and a 1947 ship explosion that struck Texas City, Texas.

It also is unclear what conditions a possible shipment of fireworks at the port had been stored in. Fireworks are very common in Lebanon, used to celebrate religious occasions and weddings.

While military explosives are generally safe to transport, common "cheap pyrotechnics" made in China are often of very low quality and can ignite very easily, especially in hot weather, said Hayoun, the Israeli explosives expert.

The "end result," he added is that "hundreds of tons of energetic materials" were detonated to create an explosion of this magnitude.

"It started definitely with fireworks," he said.

Follow Jon Gambrell and Josef Federman on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP and www.twitter.com/joseffederman.

Protest leader Bush ousts 20-year US Rep. Clay in Missouri

By SUMMER BALLENTINE Associated Press

Cori Bush, a onetime homeless woman who led protests following a white police officer's fatal shooting of a Black 18-year-old in Ferguson, ousted longtime Rep. William Lacy Clay Tuesday in Missouri's Democratic primary, ending a political dynasty that has spanned more than a half-century.

Bush's victory came in a rematch of 2018, when she failed to capitalize on a national Democratic wave that favored political newcomers such as Bush's friend, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

But this time around, Bush's supporters said protests over the death of George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis and outrage over racial injustice finally pushed her over the edge.

An emotional Bush, speaking to supporters while wearing a mask, said few people expected her to win. "They counted us out," she said. "They called me — I'm just the protester, I'm just the activist with no name, no title and no real money. That's all they said that I was. But St. Louis showed up today."

Bush's campaign spokeswoman, Keenan Korth, said voters in the district were "galvanized."

"They're ready to turn the page on decades of failed leadership," Korth said.

Bush, 44, also had backing from political action committee Justice Democrats and Fight Corporate Monopolies this election. She campaigned for Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders during his presidential bid.

Bush's primary win essentially guarantees her a seat in Congress representing the heavily Democratic St. Louis area. Missouri's 1st Congressional District, which encompasses Ferguson, has been represented by Clay or his father for a half-century. Bill Clay served 32 years before retiring in 2000. William Lacy Clay, 64, was elected that year.

Clay didn't face a serious challenger until Bush. This year, he ran on his decades-long record in Congress. "This election is a simple choice," Clay said in a Monday statement. "Cori Bush's Empty Rhetoric, or my record of real results and real reforms for the people."

Both Clay and Bush are Black, and Black residents slightly outnumber whites in the district that includes St. Louis and north St. Louis County.

Bush became ill while pregnant with her second child in 2001 and had to quit her job at a preschool. When she and her then-husband were evicted from a rental home, the couple, their newborn and 14-month-old son lived out of a Ford Explorer for several months.

Eventually, the couple divorced. Bush earned a nursing degree. She also became a pastor.

Michael Brown's death in 2014 in Ferguson vaulted her into another role: activist. She became a leader

of some of the many protests that followed the fatal police shooting of the Black, unarmed 18-year-old. She was back on the streets in 2017 after a white St. Louis officer was acquitted in the shooting death of a Black suspect.

She continues to lead protests.

"She's being buoyed by this movement, and the movement's origin is in Ferguson," Justice Democrats spokesman Waleed Shahid said.

Associated Press writer Sara Burnett contributed to this report from Chicago. Reporter Jim Salter contributed from O'Fallon, Mo.

Districts go round and round on school bus reopening plans

By MARK SCOLFARO Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — School districts nationwide puzzling over how to safely educate children during a pandemic have a more immediate challenge — getting 26 million bus-riding students there in the first place.

Few challenges are proving to be more daunting than figuring out how to maintain social distance on school buses. A wide array of strategies have emerged to reduce the health risks but nobody has found a silver bullet.

Should students with COVID-19 symptoms be isolated at the front of the school bus? Should bus seats be assigned? Should buses be loaded from the back? Should buses only carry a few students at a time?

"The transportation professionals are left with the issue of, OK, you've got little Billy at the bus stop. Mom's not there and he's got a temperature. That's a dilemma," said Steve Simmons, a bus safety expert who used to head pupil transportation for Columbus, Ohio, public schools. "We can't answer those kinds of questions. I don't think anybody can."

Simmons, president of the National Association for Pupil Transportation, was part of team of industry and school officials who produced a 70-page report on ways to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Many schools have been surveying parents to determine how many students will take the bus and how many will be privately driven to school. Others are making decisions about bus capacity that involve a trade-off between safety and affordability.

The task force report warned that a 6-foot (2-meter) social distancing regulation "is not financially nor operationally feasible," and that "current thinking" is that a 72-student capacity bus can accommodate 24 students, or more if family members sit together.

Some large districts will nonetheless "jam 'em in" the school bus, Simmons said, while other districts plan to stagger school start times or teach half the students in the morning and the rest in the afternoon, with two sets of bus runs.

School transportation plans are "just one of the many ways we're seeing inequities playing out in this pandemic," said Deborah Gordon Klehr, executive director of the Education Law Center in Philadelphia.

"Some districts are saying that they will cut back on the number of students offered transportation, or expect more parents to drive their students to school," she said. "Students and families with fewer resources are going to be the ones hurt by this."

Kim Blodgett quit her job as a fourth-grade teacher this year in order to drive her 5-year-old son to the Oklahoma School for the Deaf, concerned the twice-daily, 45-minute bus ride from their home in Norman was too risky.

"So many parents feel like they have no control over any of this that's happened," Blodgett said. "They have to work, they have to send their kids to school. They have to put their kids on that bus. It's a horrible situation all the way around."

Simmons said most bus drivers are old enough to put them at heightened risk for severe illness if they catch the virus. They will have to decide whether to continue driving — a job that typically does not pay much — or to stay home and prioritize their own safety, which could worsen a yearslong national school

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bus driver shortage.

Schools will have to decide what cleaning standards they want to set and whether to add sneeze guards or similar barriers among students and between students and bus drivers.

In Pennsylvania, the Transportation Department shot down a proposal to install plastic barriers around bus drivers, telling a school bus contractor there is not evidence it would make students or drivers safer. In New York, hand sanitizer isn't even allowed on buses "due to its combustible composition and potential liability to the carrier or district," according to guidance from the state's school reopening task force.

The task force report said a survey of bus contractors found they were unanimously opposed to taking students' temperatures, as some districts have considered. The contractors said drivers and bus monitors do not want to have to interpret health data, among other objections.

Getting on and off the bus is considered a time of heightened risk. Pennsylvania districts are considering assigned bus seating, making students fill empty buses from the back and emptying them from the front.

A suburban Philadelphia school district's reopening plan states that students with symptoms should be placed in the front seat of the bus and brought to the school nurse. Another mandates that no students with symptoms will be sent on a bus or brought to school. Districts are designating rooms where sick or potentially sick children can be isolated until their parents can retrieve them.

Pottstown, Pennsylvania, schools have proposed keeping windows on its few buses open, a plan that will be difficult to carry out in winter. New York's statewide recommendation is for windows to remain cracked if the outside temperature is at least 45 degrees Fahrenheit.

Public schools in Providence, Rhode Island, had considered making all students attend the schools that are located closest to their homes as a way to limit ridership, but officials withdrew that proposal after parents objected.

The Kentucky Education Department suggests schools institute "walking school buses," a system used in at least two other states in which adults chaperone groups of students walking to and from school together, with designated bus stops and pickup times. Kentucky Education Department spokesperson Toni Konz Tatman said there has been no word yet of any districts giving the walking school buses a try.

Bus plans are expected to be tweaked over the first weeks and months of school, but if a major outbreak is linked to bus transportation, parents will have to decide whether to vote with their feet and go another route.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Aug. 6, the 219th day of 2020. There are 147 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On August 6, 1945, during World War II, the U.S. B-29 Superfortress Enola Gay dropped an atomic bomb code-named "Little Boy" on Hiroshima, Japan, resulting in an estimated 140,000 deaths. (Three days later, the United States exploded a nuclear device over Nagasaki; five days after that, Imperial Japan surrendered.)

On this date:

In 1809, one of the leading literary figures of the Victorian era, poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson, was born in Somersby, Lincolnshire, England.

In 1911, actor-comedian Lucille Ball was born in Jamestown, New York.

In 1926, Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to swim the English Channel, arriving in Kingsdown, England, from France in 14 1/2 hours.

In 1930, New York State Supreme Court Justice Joseph Force Crater went missing after leaving a Manhattan restaurant; his disappearance remains a mystery.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act.

In 1973, entertainer Stevie Wonder was seriously injured in a car accident in North Carolina.

In 1978, Pope Paul VI died at Castel Gandolfo at age 80.

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In 1986, William J. Schroeder (SHRAY'-dur) died at Humana Hospital-Audubon in Louisville, Kentucky, after living 620 days with the Jarvik 7 artificial heart.

In 1991, the World Wide Web made its public debut as a means of accessing webpages over the Internet. TV newsman Harry Reasoner died in Norwalk, Connecticut, at age 68.

In 1993, Louis Freeh won Senate confirmation to be FBI director.

In 2009, Sonia Sotomayor was confirmed as the first Hispanic Supreme Court justice by a Senate vote of 68-31. John Hughes, 59, Hollywood's youth movie director of the 1980s and '90s, died in New York City.

In 2013, U.S. Army Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan went on trial at Fort Hood, Texas, charged with killing 13 people and wounding 32 others in a 2009 attack. (Hasan, who admitted carrying out the attack, was convicted and sentenced to death.)

Ten years ago: In a stunning announcement, Hewlett-Packard Co. said it had ousted CEO Mark Hurd after an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint found that he had falsified expense reports and other documents to conceal a relationship with a contractor.

Five years ago: The first Republican presidential debate aired on Fox News Channel; when the 10 candidates were asked whether any of them would not pledge to support the eventual GOP nominee, only Donald Trump raised his hand, saying, "I will not make the pledge at this time," angering Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, who accused Trump of "hedging his bets." Jon Stewart bade an emotional goodbye after 16 years as host of Comedy Central's "The Daily Show." "Hamilton," the hip-hop flavored biography about Alexander Hamilton, the nation's first treasury secretary, opened on Broadway.

One year ago: Ohio Republican Gov. Mike DeWine, prompted to act by the weekend shooting in Dayton, proposed measures to address mass shootings, including required background checks for nearly all gun sales in Ohio and allowing courts to restrict firearms access for people perceived as threats. In a strong rebuke to President Donald Trump, the four living former leaders of the Federal Reserve said that the head of the nation's central bank should be able to make decisions on interest rates without political pressure or the threat of being removed.

Today's Birthdays: Children's performer Ella Jenkins is 96. Actor-director Peter Bonerz is 82. Actor Louise Sorel is 80. Actor Michael Anderson Jr. is 77. Actor Ray Buktenica is 77. Actor Dorian Harewood is 70. Actor Catherine Hicks is 69. Rock singer Pat MacDonald (Timbuk 3) is 68. Country musician Mark DuFresne is 67. Actor Stephanie Kramer is 64. Actor Faith Prince is 63. Rhythm-and-blues singer Randy DeBarge is 62. Actor Leland Orser is 60. Actor Michelle Yeoh (yoh) is 58. Country singers Patsy and Peggy Lynn are 56. Basketball Hall of Famer David Robinson is 55. Actor Jeremy Ratchford is 55. Actor Benito Martinez is 52. Country singer Lisa Stewart is 52. Movie writer-director M. Night Shyamalan (SHAH'-mah-lahn) is 50. Actor Merrin Dungey is 49. Singer Geri Halliwell Horner is 48. Actor Jason O'Mara is 48. Singer-actor David Campbell is 47. Actor Vera Farmiga is 47. Actor Ever (cq) Carradine is 46. Actor Soleil (soh-LAY') Moon Frye is 44. Actor Melissa George is 44. Rock singer Travis McCoy is 39. Actor Leslie Odom Jr. is 39. Actor Romola Garai is 38. Rock musician Eric Roberts is 36.