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DVD of the Mobridge-Pollock vs. Groton Area Football Game is available for \$10.

CLOSED: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

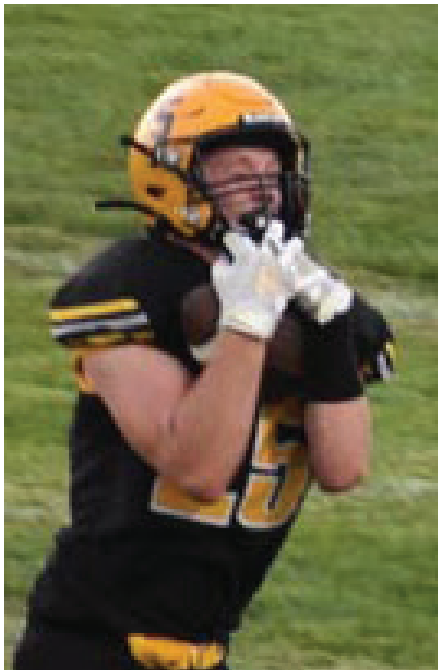
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Mobridge-Pollock hands Groton Area season opener loss

Mobridge-Pollock scored four touchdowns in the first 13 minutes of the game Friday night, but then Groton Area's defense contained the visiting Tigers. Despite the defensive effort, the offense was unable to score any points as Mobridge-Pollock scored a 26-0 win in the season opener in Groton.

The game was broadcast live on the GDILIVE.COM and simulcast locally on FM 89.3, sponsored by BaseKampLodge of downtown Groton.

Mobridge-Pollock scored on its first possession when Braden Goehring scored on a 57-yard pass from Cayden Eiseman. The two-point PAT conversion attempt failed and it was 6-0 with 10:15 left in the first quarter. Mobridge-Pollock would later score on an 82-yard pass play from Eiseman to Bryston Goehring on the second play from scrimmage. The PAT pass was no good and it was 12-0 with 3:07 left in the first quarter. Groton's next drive was thwarted by Bryston Goehring when he intercepted the ball, putting Mobridge-Pollock at Groton 14 yard line. On the next play, Braden Goehring would score on a 14 yard run. The PAT kick by Braden Goehring was good and it was 19-0 with 1:43 left in the first quarter.



Jordan Bjerke makes a catch and gets Groton Area a first down. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Jaimen Farrell tries to get around Mobridge-Pollock's Simon Fried. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Then on the kick-off, the Groton de-

fender lost sight of the ball and Mobridge-Pollock pounced on the ball and they were at the Groton 24 yard line. Mobridge-Pollock would score on the first play in the second quarter on an 11-yard run by Eiseman. The PAT kick by Braden Goehring was good and it was 26-0 with 11:56 left in the second quarter.

And that was the scoring for the game, but we have some other highlights.

In the third quarter, Jordan Bjerke would make a catch on fourth and five to make it first and goal from the nine yard line for Groton Area. Then penalties took charge and it ended up being fourth and 21. That drive was started by an interception by Favian Sanchez and the drive started at the Mobridge-Pollock 39 yard line.

In the fourth quarter, Jaimen Farrell would pick up a punt fumble and score for the Tigers, but here is what really happened according to Tom Woods: "That play was considered a muffed punt so when Farrell recovered that fumble, he could not advance that fumble because you cannot advanced a muffed punt. That is why they did not count it as a touchdown and brought the ball back to where the muff occurred."

Groton Area's defense held strong in the fourth quarter. Mobridge-

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Pollock had four opportunities to score from the five yard line was the Groton Area defense denied the visiting Tigers the touchdown.

Coach Shaun Wanner said he knew Groton would be challenged in this game. "We have a lot of inexperience out there. We did a lot of good things and we will improve as the season goes on. This is a good group of kids and they love playing football. We struggled defensively at first, but we made some adjustments and did really good. Offensively, we moved the ball well a times."

Mobridge-Pollock had most of its offence in passing as Cayden Eiseman completed 13 of 20 passes for 276 yards. Receivers were Braden Goehring with 5 catches for 116 yards, Bryston Goehring had one catch for 82 yards, Trace Cerney had three catches for 41 yards and Zane Reinert had two catches for 36 yards.

Groton Area's offense was pretty well split between the running game (77 yards) and the passing game (50 yards).

Groton Area had 30 carries for 77 yards. Kaden Kurtz had 19 carries for 30 yards, Jaimen Farrell had two for 21 yards, Pierce Kettering had two for nine yards, Favian Sanchez had three for three yards and Kolby Dunker had four for 14 yards.

In passing, Kurtz completed five of 15 passes for 45 yards and had two interceptions. Lane Tietz completed



Kaden Kurtz scrambles to find an open receiver. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Alex Morris (left) and Pierce Kettering double team on this Mobridge-Pollock runner. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

one of two for five yards. Receivers were Jordan Bjerke with 1 catch for 23 yards, Jaimen Farrell had four for 14 yards, Pierce Kettering had one for eight yards and Ethan Gengerke had one for five yards.

Mobridge-Pollock had 25 carries for 98 yards with Gavin Reinert having 13 carries for 51 yards and Cayden Eiseman had seven for 28 yards.

Mobridge-Pollock had more first downs, 13-7. Both teams had two fumbles with Mobridge-Pollock losing one. Groton Area had six penalties for 55 yards and Mobridge-Pollock had 10 for 70 yards.

Defensive leaders for Groton Area were Pierce

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Kettering with nine tackles, Alex Morris with eight tackles and a sack, Jaimen Farrell had eight tackles and a fumble recovery, Kaden Kurtz had six tackles, Kale Pharishad five tackles and one sack, Chandler Larson had five tackles, and Favian Sanchez had one interception.

Mobridge-Pollock was led by Gabe Jerome with six tackles and Cayden Eisemann had five.

Groton Area, now 0-1, will host Ellendale/Edgeley-Kulm on Friday at 7 p.m. Mobridge-Pollock, now 1-0, will host Miller/Highmore-Harrold.

- Paul Kosel



The Groton Area cheerleaders led the Tigers fans in cheers. The cheerleaders this year are Chloe Daly, Tiara DeHoet, Gabby Merkel, Tanae Lipp, Tessa Erdmann, Alexis Hanten, Maddie Bjerke, Trinity Sith and Cadence Feist. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Emma Schinkel and Trista Keith

(Photo by Tricia Keith)

Girls beat Belle Fourche in Soccer

Groton Area girls soccer team traveled to Belle Fourche on Friday and posted a 4-1 win. Scoring goals were Jerica Locke, Kenzie McInerney, Mia Crank and Kennedy Hansen.

Golfers take part in two meets

The Groton boys golf team opened its season Aug. 17th at the Sioux Valley Invitational held in Volga. Brevin Flihs placed 27th, shooting a 49 in the first nine holes and a 48 in the second round for a total score of 97.

Hunter Kassube placed 30th with scores of 56 and 45 and a total of 101.

Tristan Traphagen was 40th with scores of 60 and 52 and a total of 112.

Lucas Simon was 42nd with scores of 59 and 57 and a total of 116.

Aberdeen Roncalli won the team title with a score of 334 followed by Sisseton with 346, Sioux Valley 350, Milbank 379, Redfield 383, Flandreau 407 and Groton Area 426.

Then the team went to Milbank for the Milbank Area Poet Invitational on Aug. 20th. Groton did not field a complete team at that meet with three golfers taking part. Hunter Kassube shot a 54 and a 52 for a total of 106, Lucas Simon shot a 54 and a 53 for a total of 107 and Tristan Traphagen shot a 72 and a 55 for a total of 127.

Coming up on

GDILIVE.COM

Thursday, Aug. 27th: Volleyball at Britton sponsored by Ed and Connie Stauch

Friday, Aug. 28th: Football vs. EEK - Sponsor to be determined

Saturday, Aug. 29th: Girls Soccer vs. Vermillion (sponsors being secured)

#180 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

We've settled into sort of a pattern: between 40,000 and 50,000 new cases per day and between 1000 and 1500 deaths per day. Today extended that pattern with 48,200 new cases, a 0.9% increase, and 1170 deaths, a 0.7% increase. That puts us at 5,633,400 cases and 175,235 deaths. We were in kind of a holding pattern earlier in the spring too, but at that time, we were looking at case numbers more like 20,000 per day. We don't really want to stay where we are. At this rate, we're hitting six million cases before the end of the month and 200,000 deaths not long after Labor Day. Arkansas set a record for single-day deaths today, and this was their fourth highest day of new cases since the pandemic began.

I want to sound a note of caution for those who are in the areas suffering from wildfires: We know smoke exposure can increase your susceptibility to respiratory infections, and that would most likely include Covid-19. Please exercise additional precautions against infection if you live in an area touched by the smoke drifting from these fires; stay indoors as much as possible. Your cloth mask that you are using to protect from infection is not effective at all against smoke, so don't count on that to protect you from it. If you can get your hands on a medical mask (not an N95—we still need the limited supply of those for health care workers), that will afford you more protection than a cloth mask.

You may have read about a group of patients called "long-haulers," recovered Covid-19 patients who continue to experience symptoms, often debilitating ones, for weeks and even months after recovery. Because we do not at this time understand what's going on with these patients medically, physicians don't have much in the way of help for them; they're not even sure when, if ever, the symptoms will resolve. I read a paper today written by a scientist at the Indiana University School of Medicine who gathered information from a survey of long-haulers in a Facebook group that calls itself "Survivor Corps," in the hope of providing a source of information about the range and severity of those symptoms.

The summary of findings includes the statement that "Long Haulers' COVID-19 symptoms are far more numerous than what is currently listed on the CDC's website." It also suggests that, while the impact on lungs and vascular system have received attention, "the results of this survey suggest that brain, whole body, eye, and skin symptoms are also frequently-occurring health problems for people recovering from COVID-19."

Some of the symptoms reported are very painful: body aches, nerve pain, and joint pain. Comments "show this pain can be extreme and difficult to manage." The most frequent symptoms include fatigue, muscle or body aches, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, difficulty concentrating or focusing, inability to exercise or be active, headache, difficulty sleeping, anxiety, memory problems, and dizziness. There are another 40 listed as experienced by at least some patients that seem to reflect effects of the virus on the heart, gastrointestinal system, upper respiratory system, nervous system, and musculoskeletal system. Many, but not all, of those not listed by the CDC as issues are neurologic in nature, which is an additional concern.

We've talked on a number of occasions over the past few months about a potential therapy for Covid-19 called convalescent plasma. You may recall this is derived from the blood of a recovered patient; plasma is the liquid portion of blood in which float red and white blood cells—and, importantly, antibodies. The principle here is that a recovered patient's blood might be expected to contain antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 which will neutralize the virus, preventing it from being able to enter and attack host cells; so if we take that plasma and give it to someone who's been infected, those antibodies could then protect that recipient. Giving someone antibodies from another person is called passive immunization.

There are some things to be aware of. One is that your blood contains antibodies which can attack the red blood cells of a person with a different blood type, and that red blood cell damage can be very serious, even fatal. So it is important that the donor and recipient be matched for blood type to prevent this reaction. Another is that these donated antibodies are proteins, and they're foreign. If you were around in the early days when we talked about how your immune system works, then you are aware that foreign proteins will elicit an immune response against them; so when you're administered antibodies from some-

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one else, they have a limited life span before your immune system destroys them. This means passive immunity is never life-long, but rather relatively short in duration, a few weeks in most cases. And the last is that passive immunization can treat someone who's already sick, but also can be used to prevent infection in someone who's been exposed, but isn't sick yet. This is because, unlike your own antibodies, passive antibodies are available immediately; there's no time lag while you manufacture them because they've already been manufactured by the convalescent.

The thing we don't know yet is whether the antibodies we're seeing in the convalescent are, indeed, protective, that they neutralize the virus, preventing it from establishing an infection. There have been some studies which would seem to indicate they are protective; but the good news is a solid controlled clinical trial is about to get underway. Recruiting for 1000 participants is set to begin with enrollment expected to be complete by late October. Results should be ready in November. This trial should be able to tell us for sure whether convalescent plasma works.

There are only about 2000 fluent speakers of Cherokee left in the world, and there's one less since July 4 when Edna Raper died of the coronavirus at 67. She did not, however, die without leaving a legacy.

Raper was a long-time proponent of preserving Cherokee, and she devoted herself to seeing that her four children and 13 grandchildren learned the language. She started by singing lullabies to the grandchildren in Cherokee. She also worked with children at Kenwood Public School for more than 30 years, and then, after retiring, spent her life finding ways to help people. She took those who didn't have cars to the doctor or to the grocery store. She picked up and delivered children. She stepped in where she was needed. And now she's gone.

It's a rare person who casts a long enough shadow that we can perceive it after they've died, but Raper was one such. Her granddaughter, Madison Gardner has decided to pick up her cause and carry it forward by teaching Cherokee to the next generation. She starts by singing lullabies in Cherokee. Gardner says of her grandmother, "She's a really honest and wise woman, so she taught me a lot." One of those things, apparently, is to serve. I wish Ms. Raper a well-earned rest; her work here is done.

Take care. We'll talk again.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Aug. 12	Aug. 13	Aug. 14	Aug. 15	Aug. 16	Aug. 17	Aug. 18
Minnesota	61,839	62,303	62,993	63,723	64,413	65,152	65,716
Nebraska	29,030	29,244	29,660	29,988	30,241	30,372	30,563
Montana	5,104	5,268	5,407	5,541	5,659	5,750	5,792
Colorado	51,441	51,756	52,219	52,538	52,838	53,176	53,370
Wyoming	2,584	2,600	2,627	2,694	2,730	2,789	2,829
North Dakota	7885	7970	8171	8322	8444	8587	8647
South Dakota	9713	9815	9897	10,024	10,118	10,274	10,360
United States	5,141,879	5,197,749	5,248,172	5,314,116	5,357,396	5,403,218	5,444,115
US Deaths	164,545	166,038	167,092	168,458	169,432	170,052	170,559
Minnesota	+323	+464	+690	+730	+690	+739	+564
Nebraska	+334	+214	+416	+328	+253	+131	+191
Montana	+87	+164	+139	+134	+118	+91	+42
Colorado	+402	+315	+463	+319	+300	+338	+194
Wyoming	+19	+16	+27	+67	+36	+59	+40
North Dakota	+172	+85	+201	+151	+122	+143	+60
South Dakota	50	+102	+82	+127	+94	+156	+86
United States	+47,314	+55,870	+50,423	+65,944	+43,280	45,822	+40,897
US Deaths	+1,080	+1,493	+1,054	+1,366	+974	+620	+507
	Aug. 19	Aug. 20	Aug. 21	Aug. 22	Aug. 23		
Minnesota	66,061	66,618	67,308	68,133	68,867		
Nebraska	30,825	31,040	31,348	31,626			
Montana	5,846	5,956	6,072	6,216			
Colorado	53,631	53,901	54,230	54,586			
Wyoming	2,850	2,909	2,940	3009			
North Dakota	8782	8968	9242	9504	9736		
South Dakota	10,443	10,566	10,691	10,884	11,135		
United States	5,482,823	5,530,247	5,576,089	5,628,070			
US Deaths	171,833	173,193	174,290	175,467			
Minnesota	+345	+557	+690	+825	+734		
Nebraska	+262	+215	+308	+278			
Montana	+54	+110	+116	+144			
Colorado	+261	+270	+329	+356			
Wyoming	+21	+59	+31	+69			
North Dakota	+135	+186	+274	+262	+232		
South Dakota	+83	+123	+125	+193	+251		
United States	+38,708	+47,424	+45,842	+51,981			
US Deaths	+1,274	+1,360	+1,097	+1,177			

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August 21st COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Two females have died from COVID-19 in South Dakota. One was in her 60s and the other in the 80+ age group. One was in Clay County (first death in that county) and the other in Lake County (sixth one there).

The state hospitalization dropped by three more today to just 50 being currently hospitalized. Our positivity rate in South Dakota remains at 7.2 percent and in Brown County at 7.1 percent.

Day and Marshall county each had one recovery. Spink County had two positive cases and Edmunds had one.

Now if you are one that really follows the numbers and don't like to read bad news, I would suggest you turn the page now before I unleash the news!

We have a set a record in South Dakota with 193 positive cases. We have set a record in Brown County with 18 positive cases. Now - there are also more tests being administered and that's why the positivity rate is still at 7 percent. North Dakota had 232 positive cases and their positivity rate is 10.4 percent.

Elsewhere in the state, Minnehaha County had 64 cases, Pennington had 19, Lincoln and Brown each had 18 and Meade had 11, .

Brown County:

Total Positive: +18 (521) Positivity Rate: 7.1%

Recovered: +6 (447)

Active Cases: +12 (71)

Total Tests: +254 (6528)

Ever Hospitalized: +1 (23)

Deaths: 0 (3)

Percent Recovered: 85.8% (-1.8)

South Dakota:

Positive: +193 (10,884 total) Positivity Rates: 7.2%

Total Tests: 2692 (172,459 total)

Hospitalized: +8 (948 total). 50 currently hospitalized (Down 3 from yesterday)

Deaths: +2 (159 total)

Recovered: +84 (9,349 total)

Active Cases: +107 (1,376)

Percent Recovered: 85.8 -.9

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 2% Covid, 52% Non-Covid, 46% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 3% Covid, 67% Non-Covid, 30% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 5% Covid, 12% Non-Covid, 83% Available

Fully recovered from positive cases: Bennett 6-6, Jackosn 12-11-1, Jerauld 40-39-1, Jones 2-2, Hyde 3-3, Mellette 24-24, Miner 15-15, Perkins 4-4, 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 recovered (1 active case)

Beadle (9): +3 positive, +2 reovered (21 active

cases)

Bennett: Full Recovered

Bon Homme: +4 positive, 1 recovered (22 active cases)

Brookings (1): +3 positive, +1 recovered (25 active cases)

Brown (3): +18 positive, +6 recovered (71 active cases)

Brule: +1 recovered (3 active cases)

Buffalo (3): +1 recovered (5 active cases)

Butte (1): +2 positive, +1 recovered (7 active cases)

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Campbell: 1 active case
 Charles Mix: +2 positive, +1 recovered (18 active cases)
 Clark: 2 active cases
 Clay (1): +2 recovered (17 active cases)
 Codington (1): +4 positive, +2 recovered (60 active cases)
 Corson: +3 positive (22 active cases)
 Custer: +6 positive (28 active case)
 Davison (2): +1 recovered (6 active cases)
 Day: +1 recovered (6 active cases)
 Deuel: +1 positive, +1 recovered (10 active cases)
 Dewey: +1 positive (26 active cases)
 Douglas: 4 active cases
 Edmunds: 5 active cases
 Fall River: 3 active cases
 Faulk (1): +1 recovered (2 active cases)
 Grant: +4 positive, +1 recovered (9 active cases)
 Gregory: 1 active case
 Haakon: 1 active case
 Hamlin: +2 positive, +3 recovered (15 active cases)
 Hand: +1 recovered (2 active cases)
 Hanson: +1 recovered (3 active cases)
 Harding: 1 active case
 Hughes (3): +2 positive, +1 recovered (14 active cases)
 Hutchinson: 7 active cases
 Hyde: 1 active case
 Jackson (1): Fully Recovered
 Jerauld (1): Fully Recovered
 Jones: Fully Recovered
 Kingsbury: +1 positive (3 active cases)

Lake (6): -1 recovered, 1 death (4 active cases)
 Lawrence (1): +7 positive, +1 recovered (28 active cases)
 Lincoln (2): +18 positive, +8 recovered (105 active cases)
 Lyman (3): +1 positive (6 active cases)
 Marshall: +1 recovered (4 active cases)
 McCook (1): 7 active cases
 McPherson: +1 positive (2 active cases)
 Meade (1): +11 positive, +4 recovered (43 active cases)
 Mellette: Fully Recovered
 Miner: Fully Recovered
 Minnehaha (69): +62 positive, +22 recovered (469 active cases)
 Moody: 4 active cases
 Oglala Lakota (2): +1 positive (17 active cases)
 Pennington (33): +19 positive, +6 recovered (126 active cases)
 Perkins: 1 active cases
 Potter: 2 active cases
 Roberts (1): +1 positive (10 active cases)
 Sanborn: Fully Recovered
 Spink: +2 positive (5 active cases)
 Stanley: +1 positive, +1 recovered (4 active cases)
 Sully: +2 positive (3 active cases)
 Todd (5): +1 positive, +1 recovered (6 active cases)
 Tripp: Fully Recovered
 Turner: +1 positive, +4 recovered (13 active cases)
 Union (4): +1 positive, +3 recovered (22 active cases)
 Walworth: +3 positive (10 active cases)
 Yankton (3): +2 positive, +5 recovered (46 active cases)
 Ziebach: +3 positive (11 active cases)

North Dakota Dept. of Health Report
 COVID-19 Daily Report, August 21:

- 7,033 tests (2,225)
- 9,474 positives (+232)
- 7,841 recovered (+84)
- 132 deaths (+2)

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	389	0
10-19 years	983	0
20-29 years	2442	2
30-39 years	2119	6
40-49 years	1606	7
50-59 years	1587	18
60-69 years	967	29
70-79 years	423	25
80+ years	368	72

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	5409	81
Male	5475	78

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread
Aurora	40	39	401	0	Minimal
Beadle	605	575	1961	9	Moderate
Bennett	6	6	549	0	None
Bon Homme	36	15	867	0	Substantial
Brookings	169	143	2958	1	Moderate
Brown	521	447	4903	3	Substantial
Brule	48	45	784	0	Minimal
Buffalo	109	102	663	3	None
Butte	24	15	846	1	Minimal
Campbell	4	3	105	0	None
Charles Mix	116	98	1502	0	Substantial
Clark	17	15	412	0	Minimal
Clay	142	124	1488	1	Moderate
Codington	195	134	3075	1	Substantial
Corson	52	30	540	0	Substantial
Custer	64	36	843	0	Substantial
Davison	104	96	2519	2	Moderate
Day	30	24	681	0	Moderate
Deuel	27	17	437	0	Substantial
Dewey	62	36	2356	0	Substantial
Douglas	20	16	419	0	Minimal
Edmunds	22	17	435	0	Minimal
Fall River	23	20	1035	0	Minimal
Faulk	29	26	210	1	Minimal
Grant	38	29	764	0	Moderate
Gregory	8	7	413	0	Minimal
Haakon	3	2	301	0	None
Hamlin	36	21	699	0	Substantial
Hand	12	10	316	0	Moderate
Hanson	22	19	232	0	Minimal
Harding	2	1	58	0	Minimal
Hughes	103	87	1907	3	Moderate
Hutchinson	35	28	947	0	Minimal

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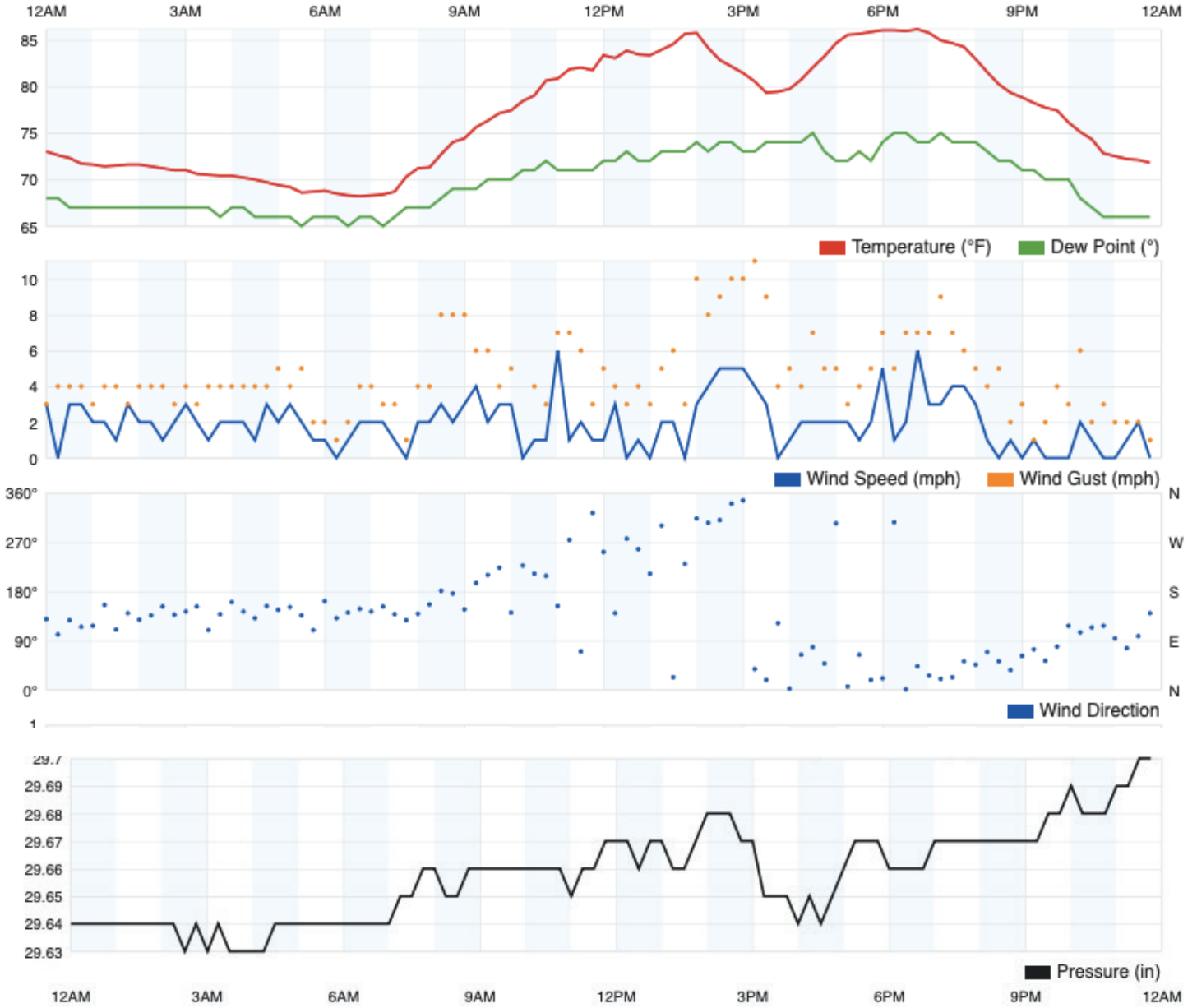
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Hyde	4	3	146	0	Minimal
Jackson	12	11	488	1	Minimal
Jerauld	39	38	278	1	None
Jones	2	2	62	0	None
Kingsbury	17	14	596	0	Minimal
Lake	105	95	999	6	Moderate
Lawrence	90	61	2244	1	Moderate
Lincoln	768	651	7467	2	Substantial
Lyman	92	83	1006	3	Minimal
Marshall	13	9	490	0	Minimal
McCook	37	29	682	1	Moderate
McPherson	9	7	231	0	None
Meade	138	94	2107	1	Moderate
Mellette	24	24	397	0	None
Miner	15	15	263	0	None
Minnehaha	4819	4280	29754	70	Substantial
Moody	34	30	682	0	Minimal
Oglala Lakota	160	141	2987	2	Minimal
Pennington	994	835	11613	33	Moderate
Perkins	6	5	198	0	None
Potter	3	1	309	0	Minimal
Roberts	88	77	1939	1	Moderate
Sanborn	13	13	241	0	None
Spink	29	24	1218	0	Minimal
Stanley	20	16	278	0	Minimal
Sully	6	3	91	0	Minimal
Todd	76	67	2336	5	Moderate
Tripp	20	20	628	0	None
Turner	65	52	993	0	Moderate
Union	231	205	2091	4	Moderate
Walworth	27	17	805	0	None
Yankton	166	117	3351	3	Substantial
Ziebach	38	27	335	0	None
Unassigned	0	0	9960	0	

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
Hot	Clear	Hot	Slight Chance T-storms	Hot	Mostly Clear	Hot
High: 92 °F	Low: 62 °F	High: 95 °F	Low: 66 °F	High: 92 °F	Low: 67 °F	High: 96 °F




TODAY



Hot and Dry. Hazy, especially west of the Missouri River.
Patchy to Areas of Fog through mid morning east of the Missouri River.

HIGHS: 89 to 96°

SUNDAY



Hot and Hazy. Increasing clouds in the afternoon over central SD.
Scattered showers and thunderstorms, mainly over central SD in the evening.
A few could become strong or severe.

HIGHS: 90s to near 100°

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
Aberdeen, SD weather.gov/abr

Hot, Dry, and Hazy weather will continue through the day Sunday. Expect increasing clouds over central South Dakota Sunday afternoon. Scattered showers and thunderstorms will be possible over mainly central South Dakota Sunday evening. A few of these storms could become strong or severe, with damaging winds to around 60 mph and large hail around the size of quarters.

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Today in Weather History

August 22, 1985: Intense thunderstorms moved from near Shadehill Reservoir in northwest South Dakota late in the evening of the 21st, to northern Brown County after sunrise on the 22nd. These thunderstorms produced high winds, large hail, rain, and lightning. Considerable crop and property damage were caused mainly by the strong winds and hail. Winds gusts ranged from 55 mph at Mobridge to 60 mph in and around Akaska. Winds of 70 mph were reported at Onaka and Faulkton. The strongest wind gust was reported in Hoven with a peak gust of 72 mph. Widespread damage was reported throughout the area. Many mobile homes, storage sheds, silos, and roofs were damaged or destroyed. Nine miles south and four miles west of Keldron, over two inches in diameter hail fell for 40 minutes, breaking windows and piling in ditches to a depth of four feet. These intense thunderstorms also produced brief heavy rainfall ranging from three-quarters of an inch to over four inches.

August 21, 2011: The Missouri River at Pierre, Fort Pierre, and Chamberlain/Oacoma fell throughout August as releases on the Oahe Dam were slowly decreased. The Missouri River at Chamberlain/Oacoma fell below flood stage on August 22nd. The extensive damage to homes and roads began to surface as the water receded. The river continued to fall into September.

1893: Four hurricanes are observed in the Atlantic Ocean at the same time. Over a century would pass, 1998 before four hurricanes would again rage together in the Atlantic.

1994: Hurricane John, about 345 miles south of Hilo, Hawaii had winds of 175 mph and pressure at 920 millibars or 27.17 inches of mercury, making it one of the strongest hurricanes ever in the Central Pacific. The 31-day existence made John the longest-lasting tropical cyclone recorded in both the Pacific Ocean and worldwide, surpassing both Hurricane Tina's previous record in the Pacific of 24 days in the 1992 season and the 1899 San Ciriaco hurricane's previous world record of 28 days in the 1899 Atlantic season. John was also the farthest-traveling tropical cyclone in both Pacific Ocean and worldwide, with distance traveled of 7,165 miles, out-distancing previous record holders Hurricane Fico in the Pacific of 4,700 miles in the 1978 season and Hurricane Faith worldwide of 6,850 miles in the 1966 Atlantic season.

2003: The Okanagan Mountain fire reaches its destructive peak, destroying 250 homes. Nearly 40,000 residents have been evacuated or are on evacuation alert. The Okanagan Mountain Park Fire is estimated to be 17,000 hectares and continues to grow.

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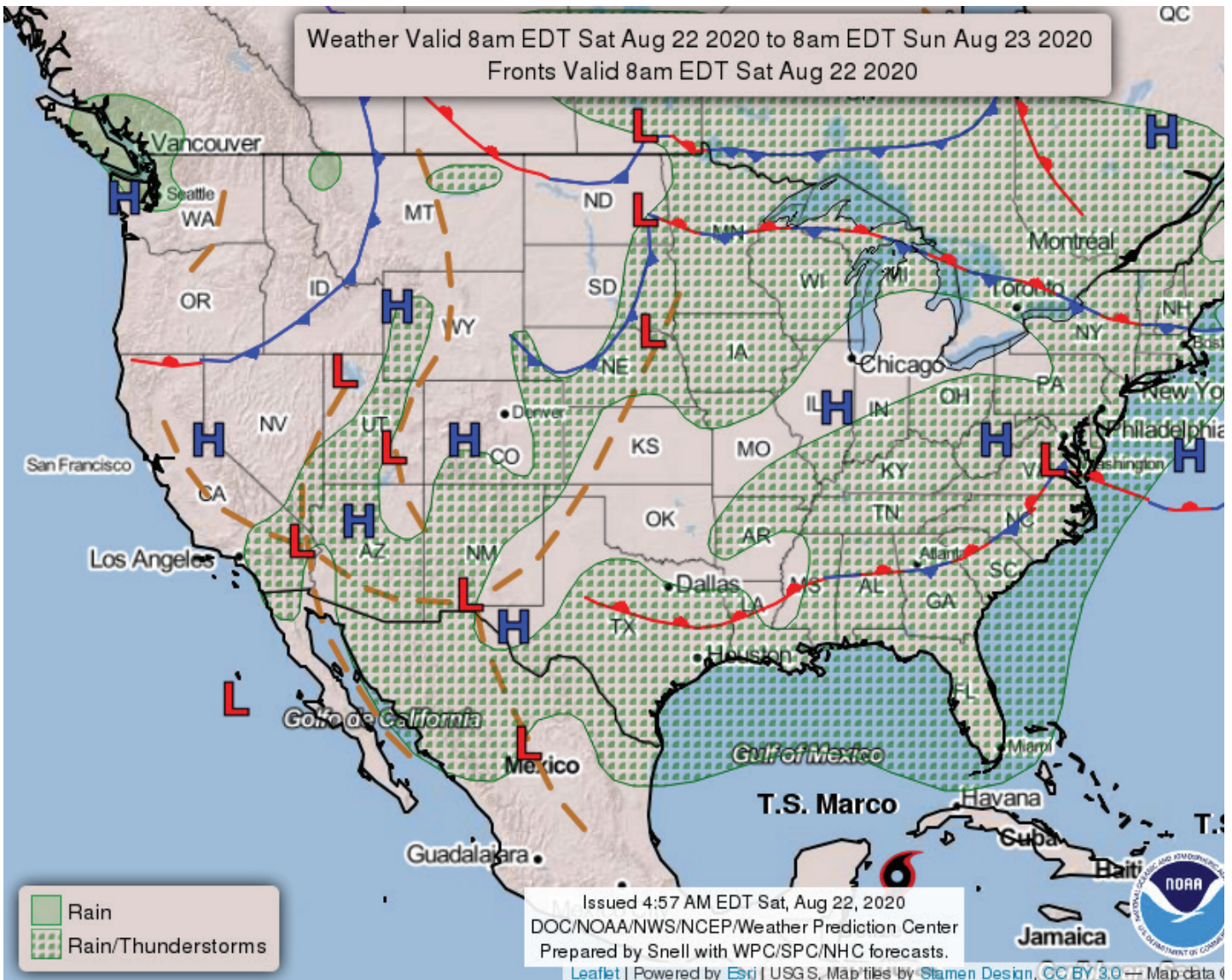
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 86 °F at 6:21 PM
Low Temp: 68 °F at 6:51 AM
Wind: 11 mph at 2:50 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 105° in 1971
Record Low: 36° in 1904
Average High: 81°F
Average Low: 55°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 1.64
Precip to date in Aug.: 1.24
Average Precip to date: 15.50
Precip Year to Date: 11.75
Sunset Tonight: 8:28 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:45 a.m.



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I WANT TO HELP OTHERS

He could feel the damp moisture in the late-night London fog each time a gust of wind blew against him. Blind and alone, he was feeling his way down a deserted street with a white cane in one hand and a lantern in the other.

Eventually, a stranger approached him, walking in the opposite direction. Amused, and in a sarcastic voice, he said, "Why are you, a blind man, carrying a lantern?"

"Oh, sir," replied the blind man, "I'm not carrying it for myself. It's for others. I want to help them so they won't stumble over me."

Often we think only of ourselves: our problems and our pains, our difficulties and our dilemmas, our hard times and horrible tasks. How unfortunate!

It is the duty of the Christian to think of everyone and everything that may cause problems for ourselves and others as well. We are responsible for holding up a light in the darkness of this world for those around us who are seeking their way through life.

And we are not only to light a pathway for them in times of life's darkest moments but to help them find the "Light of the World" - Jesus - who is "the Way, the Truth and the Life!"

God's Word is clear and unconditional when it states, "Each one of us will give an account of himself to God" for what we did and do not do. We must hold high the Light!

Prayer: Father, even though we are kind and gracious when we help others through times of darkness, it does not relieve us of our responsibility to present "the Light." In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. 1 John 1:5

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

News from the Associated Press

Black Hills college student tests positive for virus

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Black Hills State University student has tested positive for COVID-19. The Rapid City Journal reported the school sent an email alerting the campus community to the infection Friday evening.

The student visited two campus areas on Wednesday morning, the third floor of Woodburn Hall and the basement of Jonas Academic. The school said those areas have been thoroughly cleaned but anyone in those areas should self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and take their temperatures twice a day.

Anyone who develops symptoms should immediately isolate themselves and contact a health care provider, the email said. Infected staff must contact their supervisors and infected students should contact the dean of students.

Sioux Falls lost 700 students during online learning

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Hundreds of Sioux Falls students didn't participate in online learning last spring and all but vanished after the coronavirus pandemic drove the district to close classrooms.

Keloland.com reported 700 kids, or 3% of the district's student body, never connected with their teachers during the last quarter of the year.

Assistant Superintendent Teresa Boysen said the district tried to reach out to the students but never connected with them. She says phone numbers and emails changed and some students moved to different towns so they'd have someone to take care of them while parents kept working.

Boysen said some students have returned and have been catching up on their work in summer school. She said the district has been updating contact information in case schools have to close again this fall.

"Teachers will work with the students to take their devices home, practice getting connected and this is what we have to do in case we have to jump out," she said.

School begins on Thursday.

Community Vitality Team seeks to spark rural development

By RANDY DOCKENDORF Yankton Daily Press and Dakotan
FREEMAN, S.D. (AP) — Josh Hofer knows about marketing — after all, he founded a festival based on meat cubes that has drawn thousands of visitors.

The Freeman native helped launch the South Dakota Chislic Festival in his hometown. The one-day event featured chislic — skewered meat, usually lamb or mutton, cooked over a grill — introduced by the German-Russian settlers of this town of 1,300 residents.

Hofer and other organizers hoped for 1,000 visitors — but were greeted by an estimated 8,000. "We were overwhelmed by the number of people who showed up. We never expected that type of response," he said.

Now, he wants to repeat that type of community success — and the lessons learned in the process — across South Dakota, the Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan reported.

Hofer is the newest member of SDSU Extension's Community Vitality Team. The field specialists assist with business, leadership and community development needs across the state.

The pandemic has forced rapid work on some long-term projects, Hofer said. COVID has created much greater demand for reliable broadband to handle telemedicine and for both employees and students who are working from home.

"It's challenging," he said. "These things were going to happen whether we had the pandemic or not, but the coronavirus has advanced everything."

In his new position, Hofer brings experience in grant writing, city development, and business and orga-

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nization management to his new role.

Hofer earned an undergraduate degree in music and theatre from Goshen College in Indiana and earned an advanced degree in arts administration from Indiana University.

"I grew up with a passion for music and the arts, which was pretty much my focus until I was 19 or 20 years old," he said. "But I also found myself continuously being drawn to community development and education."

He returned to southeast South Dakota, working as a grants specialist for the Washington Pavilion in Sioux Falls. Most recently, he served as director of development and marketing for the city of Freeman.

Hofer brings many of those insights to the Community Vitality Team. The four-person team works with improving existing resources along with tackling issues ranging from expanded broadband opportunities to tourism and cultural activities attracting visitors.

As part of his work, he is exploring "placemaking" opportunities which improve the local quality of life. In turn, the changes help attract and keep young families and professionals in South Dakota. "The idea is to create a quality place where people want to live, work, play and learn," he said.

Hofer currently works as the only team member in eastern South Dakota, based out of the SDSU Extension regional office in Mitchell. The team works with three target areas: creating vibrant places, strengthening business and energizing leaders. Those areas can include small businesses, local agriculture and agri-tourism.

The Community Vitality Team is working on leadership development in rural areas, Hofer said. The effort includes introducing and encouraging young people to step forward in their communities. As part of the mission, the team is developing a statewide network.

The Community Vitality Team is launching an online initiative which should be finalized in about six months, he said. The project seeks to improve broadband and other technology.

"There are opportunities for remote work in our communities," he said. "More people get to choose where they want to work, whether it's as a contractor or as an employee. It means more quality-of-life issues for those individuals."

Communities need to show initiative, persistence and patience, Hofer said. He offered his own experiences as examples of some ideas working better or faster than others.

The South Dakota Chislic Festival was formed as a non-profit organization in Freeman. The first year brought an estimated economic impact of \$110,000 locally and drew national publicity, he said. The next year, with its revamped venue and upgraded food offerings and entertainment, the festival drew even more people.

Hofer has worked with other ventures that didn't meet with as much success, such as a farm-to-plate initiative and a business featuring chislic and other German food. He has learned valuable lessons from all of those ventures.

"Communities who make themselves readily available for opportunities and creating vibrant places are the ones who will compete," he said. "The tools are there, but there are also challenges in areas like housing and technical access."

Hofer sees a renewed interest in rural areas, which may be spurred by the pandemic.

"It makes this job fun for me. I'm very excited to have this opportunity," he said. "We're launching new things, and we'll see where it ends up."

Cafe brews up inclusion and acceptance in Sioux Falls

By MAKENZIE HUBER Sioux Falls Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The first coffee shop in the Sioux Falls area run by people with special needs opened recently, aiming to serve up a lesson in inclusion along with the lattes.

The Yakkity Yak Coffee Shack employs about 20 baristas with diagnoses such as blindness, autism and down syndrome.

The shop, which runs out of the new All American Gymnastics Academy building in southeastern Sioux

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Falls, not only serves coffee and food to its customers, but is meant to expose people to what inclusion is and to better employ people of all abilities.

"This helps to break the stereotype that people with different abilities can't do anything they want and that they can't support themselves," Yakkity Yak store manager Meredith Molseed told the Sioux Falls Argus Leader. "If you give people a chance to do what they want, anything is possible."

Molseed knows the feeling. Her aunt has lifelong learning delays, and while it was normal for her growing up to interact with people with special needs, other children her age were hesitant and grew into adults who didn't know how to approach someone who was simply different from them.

Yakkity Yak changes that.

"There's just a stigma that they can't do anything or can't do it without help," Molseed said. "But the amount of independence they have here is unreal. They're not seen as a person with different abilities. They're just seen as a person."

The coffee shop was a dream of Kathy Luke, executive director of Yaks Give Back, a nonprofit focused on increasing opportunities for connection and employment for people with special needs in the Sioux Falls community.

Luke, who used to be a co-owner of the All American Gymnastics before venturing off to start the nonprofit, saw the need in how her friends' children with special needs weren't given the same opportunities as her neurotypical children.

After children with special needs graduated from grade school, they lost their connections and friendships they formed over the years. Or when they were employed, they were assigned to jobs that were limiting instead of challenging, she said.

Yakkity Yak is part of the nonprofit's mission to strengthen those connections and supply those employment opportunities, as well as help fund the nonprofit.

Luke aims to bring a sensory playground and programs to All American Gymnastics with the nonprofit to encourage connection and interaction between children with special needs and neurotypical children. Eventually, she'd like to create scholarships for people with special needs in the Sioux Falls community to start their own projects.

"We made a point going forward that we'll build this building and provide something to show people that it's not a disability — these people have abilities, and they can find a way to flourish and a way to feel part of something even when society has taught them otherwise," Luke said.

Since the coffee shack is stationed inside the gymnastics facility, most of the regulars will likely be parents and children attending classes and events inside the building, Luke said. The shop allows those children to see inclusion in action and exposes them to what should be normal for everyone — treating people with special needs with the independence and respect that a neurotypical person would receive.

Employees at the shop are trusted with every responsibility a neurotypical barista has. The "Brew Crew" members prepare homemade food and whip up smoothies and coffee drinks, including frappuccinos flavors such as red velvet and cookies n' cream flavor. The shack serves Coffea Roasterie coffee, since the local business helped Luke set up Yakkity Yak and sourced accessible equipment for employees, she said.

"We hear about change and acceptance and inclusion," Luke said, "but we struggle to find out where that can happen. So we're going to be that change."

The shack planned to open earlier in the year, but was set back by the coronavirus pandemic.

The coffee shop is open from 7 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday. Molseed said the shack plans to extend hours as well as add events to the shop eventually — all of which will be announced through the business' Facebook page. Yakkity Yak also accepts donations for the Yaks Give Back nonprofit on its website.

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Friday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli 16, Miller/Highmore-Harrold 6
Alcester-Hudson 42, Avon 0
Arlington/Lake Preston 50, Parker 12
Baltic 34, Elkton-Lake Benton 6
Bennett County 26, Lead-Deadwood 14
Bridgewater-Emery 50, Wagner 6
Canistota 46, Chester 0
Colman-Egan 52, Centerville 2
DeSmet 44, Clark/Willow Lake 26
Elk Point-Jefferson 40, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 6
Faith 70, Newell 18
Faulkton 36, Hitchcock-Tulare 22
Florence/Henry 18, Dell Rapids St. Mary 6
Garretson 42, Webster 0
Gregory 45, Gayville-Volin 8
Hamlin 14, Dakota Hills 9
Hanson 32, Menno/Marion 6
Howard 53, Castlewood 0
Ipswich/Edmunds Central 40, Potter County 28
Kadoka Area 26, Rapid City Christian 13
Langford 44, Herreid/Selby Area 18
Lemmon/McIntosh 44, Mott-Regent, N.D. 14
Lyman 12, Burke 8
McCook Central/Montrose 36, Beresford 9
Milbank 18, Sisseton 6
Mobridge-Pollock 26, Groton Area 0
New Underwood 54, Edgemont 0
Platte-Geddes 42, Bon Homme 7
Scotland 22, Irene-Wakonda 0
Sioux Valley 50, Redfield 12
St. Thomas More 26, Hot Springs 0
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 36, Kimball/White Lake 28
Viborg-Hurley 58, Corsica/Stickney 6
Wall 27, Harding County 0
Warner 39, Sully Buttes 0
Winner 50, Stanley County 7
Wolsey-Wessington 34, Parkston 19
Woonsocket/Wessington Springs/Sanborn Central 14, Chamberlain 0

Some high school football scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

11-15-31-42-63, Mega Ball: 14, Megaplier: 2

(eleven, fifteen, thirty-one, forty-two, sixty-three; Mega Ball: fourteen; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$49 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$29 million

FBI investigating COVID-19 data breach in South Dakota

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The FBI is investigating a data breach that may have compromised the identity of people with the COVID-19 virus in South Dakota.

Paul Niedringhaus, who directs the South Dakota Fusion Center that handles emergency calls, sent a letter to people who may have been affected by the June 19 breach, the Rapid City Journal reported Friday.

The letter, dated Monday, says the state's fusion center used Netsential.com's services to build a secure online portal this spring to help first responders identify people who had tested positive for the coronavirus so they could take precautions while responding to emergency calls.

The South Dakota letter said police in the state weren't given names but could call a dispatcher to verify positive cases. Houston-based Netsential added labels to the files that might allow a third-party to identify patients, the letter said, and the breach could have compromised people's names, addresses and virus status.

"This information may continue to be available on various internet sites that link to files from the Netsential breach," the letter said.

Netsential hosted the websites of more than 200 U.S., law enforcement agencies, most of them fusion centers like the South Dakota one affected. The company confirmed in June that its server had been breached.

The server was the source for a trove of files, dubbed BlueLeaks, that were shared online by a transparency collective called DDoSecrets. The collective said it had obtained them from a hacker who said they were sympathetic to anti-racism protesters.

South Dakota Department of Public Safety spokesman Tony Mangan confirmed to The Associated Press in a short telephone interview that the FBI was investigating but had no further comment. A message left Friday at the FBI's Minneapolis office wasn't immediately returned.

The letter from the state agency said the files didn't include any financial information, Social Security numbers or passwords.

Public officials in at least two-thirds of states share addresses of people who have tested positive with first responders, including police, firefighters and EMTs. An Associated Press review in May found at least 10 states also share patients' names.

Some states erase the information after a certain period. Still, civil liberties groups have warned that sharing such information could lead to racial profiling of Blacks and Hispanics or help immigration officials track people down.

This story has been updated to correct Paul Niedringhaus' title. He is the director of the South Dakota Fusion Center, not the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

15 Minnesotans catch coronavirus at Sturgis Motorcycle Rally

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Fifteen Minnesota residents have contracted the coronavirus after being exposed during the 10-day Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota, Minnesota health officials said Friday, warning that they expect the number to grow.

One patient was hospitalized as of Friday, said Kris Ehresmann, infectious disease director at the Minnesota Department of Health. The first Sturgis-linked case was reported Thursday, she said, while the 14 others were added Friday.

"We're expecting that we're going to see many more cases associated with Sturgis," Ehresmann said during a briefing for reporters. "Thousands of people attended that event, and so it's very likely that we'll see more transmission. Obviously it takes a while for people to develop symptoms and get tested and for us to get those results."

The Sturgis rally, which ended Sunday, brought hundreds of thousands of people to western South Dakota. The Minnesota announcement followed a warning Thursday from South Dakota Department of Health officials that a number of people who attended the rally had come down with the COVID-19 virus, including some from out of state. They did not give an exact number of attendees who tested positive, but said it was less than 25.

Even before the rally kicked off, some locals and officials had expressed concern that the virus could spread rapidly in South Dakota, which has no special limits on indoor crowds and no mask mandates. They also cautioned that it would be hard to track down attendees who got infected before heading home.

One Minnesota patient was a temporary employee at a bar that hosted rally events while the others were there just to attend, Ehresmann said. But she had little other information on where or how they became exposed. The 15 stayed at multiple campgrounds and visited multiple bars in the area, she said.

"If you did go to Sturgis, it's best to self-quarantine for 14 days upon return," she advised. "Also, if you are feeling ill after returning from the event, please get tested and self-isolate while you wait for the test results."

AP FACT CHECK: Trump's distortion on Dems and the pledge

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is accusing the Democrats of taking God out of the Pledge of Allegiance at their national convention. He's distorting what happened.

TRUMP: "The Democrats took the word GOD out of the Pledge of Allegiance at the Democrat National Convention. At first I thought they made a mistake, but it wasn't. It was done on purpose. Remember Evangelical Christians, and ALL, this is where they are coming from—it's done. Vote Nov 3!" — tweet Saturday.

THE FACTS: That's a misleading accusation. The central programming of the convention featured the entire pledge, complete with "under God."

The first night of the Democratic National Convention, Joe Biden's grandchildren said the pledge, followed by the convention's chorus of "The Star Spangled Banner." On the second night, it's stated by a diverse group of Americans; same with the third night. On the fourth night, it's recited by Cedric Richmond Jr., the son of Rep. Cedric Richmond, R-La. "Under God" was in each rendering. The convention also devoted a segment to showcasing Biden's religious faith.

During two caucuses before the evening conventions started, the Muslim Delegates and AI lies Assembly and the LGBTQ Caucus meeting, both Tuesday, left out "under God," from the pledge. The party's series of caucus meetings was livestreamed but not part of the prime-time convention broadcast.

The pledge was written in 1892 and altered in the 1920s. "Under God" was added in 1954, when President Dwight Eisenhower encouraged Congress to do so. Those two words have prompted a debate at times over whether people who do not practice religion should be expected to pledge allegiance to a country under God.

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

Find AP Fact Checks at <http://apnews.com/APFactCheck>

Follow @APFactCheck on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/APFactCheck>

Belarus blocks over 50 news websites amid large protests

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

MINSK, Belarus (AP) — Authorities in Belarus have blocked more than 50 news media websites reporting on how the country has been shaken by two weeks of protests demanding that authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko resign after 26 years in power.

The Belarusian Association of Journalists reported the shutdowns Saturday, which including sites for the U.S.-funded Radio Liberty and Belsat, a Polish-funded satellite TV channel focusing on neighboring Belarus.

On Friday, the state publishing house stopped printing two top independent newspapers, the Narodnaya Volya and Komsomolskaya Pravda, citing an equipment malfunction.

Protests unprecedented in Belarus for their size and duration broke out after the Aug. 9 presidential election, which election officials say handed Lukashenko a sixth term in office in a landslide. Protesters allege the official results are fraudulent and are calling for Lukashenko to resign.

Police responded harshly in the first days of the protests, arresting some 7,000 people and harshly beating many of them. But the police crackdown only widened the scope of the protests, and anti-government strikes have been called at some of the country's main factories, former bases of support for Lukashenko. Some police have posted videos of themselves burning their uniforms and quitting.

In an enormous show of defiance, an estimated 200,000 protesters rallied Aug. 16 in the capital, Minsk. Lukashenko's main election challenger, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, has called for another massive show of opposition at a protest Sunday.

"We are closer than ever to our dream," she said in a video message from Lithuania, where she took refuge after the election. Some previous presidential challengers in Belarus have been jailed for years.

Public shows of support for Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus with an iron fist since 1994, have been comparatively modest. A pro-government rally in Minsk on Aug. 16 attracted about a quarter as many people as the protest march. On Saturday, only about 25 people showed up for a bicycle ride to show support for the president.

On Saturday, hundreds of women dressed in white formed a chain in Minsk as sign of protest and a larger demonstration was expected in the evening.

"Threats, intimidation, blocking no longer work. Hundreds of thousands of Belarusians are telling him 'go away' from all corners and squares," said Anna Skuratovich, one of the women in the chain.

Protesters say they are fed up with the country's declining living standards and have been angered at Lukashenko's dismissal of the coronavirus pandemic.

Lukashenko alleges that the protests are inspired by Western forces including the United States and that NATO is deploying forces near Belarus' western border. The alliance firmly denies that claim.

On Saturday, Lukashenko renewed the allegation during a visit to a military exercise in the Grodno region, near the borders of Poland and Lithuania.

"You see that they are already dragging an 'alternative president' here," he said, referring to Tsikhanouskaya. "Military support is evident — the movement of NATO troops to the borders."

Lukashenko later spoke to a rally of several thousand supporters in Grodno, where he threatened to close factories that are on strike as of Monday. Strikes have hit some of the country's major companies, including vehicle and fertilizer manufacturers, a potential blow to the largely state-controlled economy.

Authorities on Friday threatened demonstrators with criminal charges in a bid to stop the protests. Investigators also summoned several opposition activists for questioning as part of a criminal probe into a council they created with the goal of coordinating a transition of power for the former Soviet republic of 9.5 million.

Jim Heintz in Moscow contributed to this story.

How does coronavirus spread at a concert? Germans do a test

BERLIN (AP) — Germany held a pop concert Saturday to see how those attending would spread coronavirus.

German researchers studying COVID-19 packed part of a Leipzig arena with volunteers, collecting data in a “real life” simulation of a pop concert with strict health and safety controls.

About 1,500 people took part in the experiment run by the University Hospital in Halle, each taking a coronavirus test ahead of time, testing negative, and having to wear protective masks throughout the day’s testing.

Researchers equipped each volunteer with contact tracers to record their routes in the arena and track the path of the aerosols — the small particles that could carry the virus — they emitted as they mingled and talked. Fluorescent disinfectants were used to highlight which surfaces at the mock concert were touched most frequently.

German pop singer Tim Bendzko appeared on stage to create as realistic a reaction from the crowd as possible for three scenarios.

Afterward, he said he had expected the day to feel more sterile and like an experiment but that the crowd was into the concert.

“We really had a lot of fun,” he said. “We survived drive-in concerts this summer and in that respect, for us, this is a first step toward normalcy.”

Under the first scenario, which simulated the very beginning of a pandemic, the concert-goers were kept close together in the room with no social distancing. In the second, the researchers instituted hygiene measures and larger social distances between the volunteers. In the third, a distance of 1.5 meters (5 feet) between participants was strictly enforced.

Stefan Moritz, who led the study, said researchers had only about a third of the volunteers they had hoped for, partially because many Germans are still away on summer holidays and partially due to fears of participating even with the safety measures taken. But he said the experiment had gone well.

“We are satisfied with the numbers,” he told reporters. “We have good data quality.”

The results of the study are expected in four to six weeks, he said.

In general, Germany has been praised for its handling of the pandemic with its rapid response and robust testing. It has registered only 9,267 confirmed virus deaths so far, one-fourth of Britain’s virus death toll.

But the numbers have been rising recently, and Germany’s disease control center reported 2,034 new cases of COVID-19 on Saturday, the first time the daily national increase has topped 2,000 since the end of April.

The Robert Koch Institute said coronavirus outbreaks are being reported in nursing homes, hospitals, schools and “especially among travelers and in the context of religious or family events.”

“The trend is very concerning,” the agency said.

Germany’s 16 states are in the process of resuming in-class teaching at schools. The possible risks of virus clusters building up in educational institutions and then spreading to families and further into society has been a matter of great concern.

In Berlin, one of the first states to return, at least 41 schools this week reported that students or teachers have become infected, and hundreds of them have been put into quarantine.

This story corrects the spelling of Leipzig.

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

Spruced-up White House Rose Garden set for first lady speech

By JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House Rose Garden has been spruced up in time for its moment in the campaign spotlight.

First lady Melania Trump will deliver her Republican National Convention speech Tuesday night from the garden, famous for its close proximity to the Oval Office. The three weeks of work on the garden, which was done in the spirit of its original 1962 design, were showcased to reporters on Saturday.

White House officials said the renovations were paid for by private donations. They declined to reveal the cost of the work.

The location of the first lady's speech will be just one of the ways that the Republican National Convention will break with political norms. Federal rules prohibit the White House from being the setting for expressly political events, a regulation that many presidents have flirted with violating.

But the Trump family will be the first to use the executive mansion for a political convention. Beyond the first lady's address, President Donald Trump will deliver his speech Thursday night from the White House's South Lawn, where a stage was being constructed over the weekend.

The flowers in the garden are largely pastels, which are favored by the first lady, including taller white roses, which were in honor of the first papal visit to the White House by Pope John Paul II in 1979. A diamond-like shape of boxwoods was also added, while about a dozen crabapple trees were removed and will be replanted elsewhere on the grounds.

Moreover, a seating area on the east side of the garden — used at times by presidents for lunch and other meetings — has been removed and will be replaced by a yet-to-be-announced art installation.

The most visually striking change to the garden was the addition of a 3-foot (nearly 1-meter)-wide limestone walking path bordering the central lawn. Less noticeable changes include improved drainage and infrastructure and making the garden more accessible for people with disabilities. Audiovisual, broadcasting and other technical fixes are part of the plan, too.

"Protecting the historic integrity of the White House landscape is a considerable responsibility, and we will fulfill our duty as custodians of the public trust," Melania Trump wrote in a report released when the renovations were announced.

Presidents have long used the Rose Garden as a backdrop for major events, and Trump has been increasingly using it for outdoor events, which are considered safer for gatherings during the coronavirus pandemic. The president and first lady were set to attend a reception in the garden Saturday evening.

Stanford sports cuts could mean big loss for US Olympic team

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

If all the athletes from Stanford had been their own country, they would have tied with South Korea for 11th place in the medal standings at the 2016 Olympics.

It's an eye-opening statistic that has been made more jarring because of the recent decision by Stanford — a university renowned for fielding the most extensive college sports program in the country — to remove nine Olympic sports from its 36-team varsity program in an attempt to control a rapidly growing budget deficit in the athletic department.

Two former Stanford athletes who said they felt blindsided by the decision are spearheading a protest against a move that will affect not only the 240 athletes currently on the rosters when the teams are dissolved after this school year, but will have effects that stretch well beyond that, both at other colleges and in the Olympic world.

Nathalie Weiss, a coxswain on the men's rowing team who graduated from Stanford in 2016, said when she first heard of the cuts, "I just felt like this decision was giving up."

She fears it gives cover to other schools who are considering trimming sports as their budgets are similarly decimated by the consequences of the pandemic.

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"And then it's going to impact the talent pool for the Olympic pipeline eight years down the road when the games are in Los Angeles," Weiss said.

Without a centralized government sports ministry, the likes of which most countries employ to build their Olympic teams, the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee is deeply reliant on America's extensive college sports program to field its team.

Of the 558 athletes the U.S. sent to Rio four years ago, around 75% came from the college sports system. Of the 121 medals the U.S. won, nearly 85% came from college-trained athletes. Stanford placed 29 athletes on the U.S. team; 15 of them stood on the medals podium, more than any other school in the country. Another 10 Stanford athletes won medals for other countries.

USOPC figures show Division I schools spent \$5.6 billion last year on Olympic sports alone.

"By and large, college sports are a lifeline for our national teams," said Sarah Wilhelmi, the USOPC's director of collegiate partnerships.

But the numbers have been dwindling for years now. Men's gymnastics, which survived the cut at Stanford, has fewer than 20 Division I programs. Men's volleyball is at around two dozen.

In listing its criteria for cutting sports, Stanford acknowledged that of the 11 sports it was cutting (it also cut two that were not on the Olympic program), nine were sponsored by fewer than 9% of Division I institutions.

Virtually all of the Olympic-sports budgets at big schools are subsidized by football and basketball, the futures of which are both in peril themselves. As of mid-August, the Big Ten and the Pac-12, where Stanford is based, have canceled fall sports. Studies say if the Power Five conferences all scrub football, it could lead to \$4 billion in losses, or an average of \$62 million per school.

In an extensively detailed letter and list of frequently asked questions sent to the Stanford community, the school president and provost, along with athletic director Bernard Muir, detailed a financial picture that had been crumbling even before the crisis.

They said the athletic department's deficit was projected at more than \$12 million for fiscal year 2021. After impacts from COVID were factored in, the deficit would grow to \$25 million. It would, they said, grow even larger if sports schedules for the upcoming season were affected, as they were after the decision was made last month.

The leaders said they had been considering how to keep their athletics program stable for several years, and settled upon the cuts in July.

Weiss and Olympic silver- and bronze-medal fencer Alex Massialas, who graduated from Stanford in 2016, said that despite the long-running financial troubles, Muir told them the option of cutting sports wasn't considered until late May and the decision came less than six weeks after that.

"We see this as a demonstration of financial mismanagement, basically," Massialas said. "They've known of this deficit for a few years, and in their own budget announcements, they mention they're running a deficit, but it's nothing they'd address in an actual way."

Muir, who is on the USOPC advisory council that studies the relationship between the Olympics and college sports, didn't deliver any notice to the USOPC about the cuts before Stanford made them.

Asked about this specifically, Muir responded with a statement that lauded the school's Olympic tradition and said "Stanford Athletics will continue to provide equitable world-class opportunities" for athletes.

Stanford will offer all sports that are being cut an opportunity to exist at the club level. But Weiss and Massialas said they've heard from donors who targeted millions of dollars specifically to the Olympic sports and said the money wasn't targeted for club sports or to be blended with Stanford's general fund.

Muir's response: "Our development team will work with each donor to find a proper allocation of the gift."

In the meantime, the clock is ticking.

The Stanford athletes have one season left, assuming any of their sports actually take place this school year.

And the U.S. Olympic team needs to start reimagining its pipeline to ensure it fields a strong team for LA 2028 and beyond.

"If you look at where the pipelines are in the U.S., in most sports, at a certain age, it becomes the

NCAA," said Han Xiao, the chair of the USOPC athletes' group. "If you take that away, it's devastating. It's an existential crisis if your goal is to win."

'The whole world celebrates' on-camera birth of panda cub

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A brand new giant panda cub is sparking pandemic-fueled panda-mania, and officials at the National Zoo said traffic on their livestream spiked 1,200 percent over the past week.

"I'm pretty sure we broke the Internet last night," said National Zoo Director Steve Monfort. The zoo's ever-popular Panda Cam traffic has been crashing since venerable matriarch Mei Xiang's pregnancy was announced this week. When she actually gave birth Friday evening, zoo officials said they had a hard time getting into their own livestream, and they're now working to boost their capabilities.

"Everybody is getting bumped off," said Deputy Director Brandie Smith, a former curator of the zoo's giant pandas, who has overseen multiple births here. "When we have a giant panda baby, the whole world celebrates."

On camera, the actual moment of birth at around 6:35 p.m. is obscured, but the results become immediately obvious from the new cub's robust squealing. The massive mother immediately picks up and cradles the infant, which officials say is the size of a stick of butter.

"We can tell the cub is doing well from its vocalizations and the mother's behavior," Smith said. Zoo staff remain ready to intervene if something seems wrong, but Smith said Mei Xiang, who has reared three cubs to adulthood, "knows exactly what she is doing."

For now, zoo staff are letting the new pair share some private time. Mei Xiang will remain with her baby (gender still unknown) in a small indoor enclosure where she has built a modest nest. For about a week, the new mother will not leave the baby's side even to eat or drink. The cub, who will not be named for its first hundred days in accordance with tradition, will remain in the den for its first few months of life. For now it is pink and hairless; the distinctive black and white fur markings come later.

Meanwhile father Tian Tian seems blissfully oblivious, rolling around his outdoor enclosure Saturday morning. Giant pandas are almost entirely solitary, and in the wild it would be normal for Tian Tian to never meet his offspring.

"There's no real role for the male to play in the baby's care," Monfort said. "He's probably more interested in what's for breakfast this morning."

Mei Xiang, was artificially inseminated in the spring shortly after the entire zoo shut down on March 14 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Normally they would have used a combination of frozen sperm and fresh semen extracted from Tian Tian. But in order to minimize the number of close-quarters medical procedures, zoo officials used only frozen semen.

It was the first successful procedure of its kind in the U.S. using only frozen sperm and Mei Xiang, at 22, is the oldest giant panda to successfully give birth in the United States. The oldest in the world gave birth in China at age 23.

Mei Xiang has three surviving offspring, Tai Shan, Bao Bao and Bei Bei, that were transported to China at age 4 under an agreement with the Chinese government.

With the indoor section of the panda house closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, the panda cam is really the only way to view the newborn. The zoo reopened on a limited basis July 24 with visitors needing timed passes to keep the crowds down.

For now, zoo officials are directing panda-maniacs to the live cam, and are expecting unprecedented interest from a global population sheltering under pandemic restrictions and desperate for a bit of good news.

"Something like this is kind of a miracle for us," Monfort said. "It lifts the spirits and of my team and the whole world."

Smith said it's also a fresh chance to direct those passions toward fundraising efforts that can help support global conservation initiatives.

"Conservation only happens when people care, and people really care about giant pandas" she said.

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

Associated Press writer Carole Feldman contributed to this report.

Ohio Republicans try to regroup in crucial state for Trump

By DAN SEWELL and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

CINCINNATI (AP) — Complications pummeled Ohio Republicans this week as they sought to put up a united front headed into the GOP's national convention.

One of their best-known politicians threw his support behind Democrat Joe Biden, their Republican state attorney general challenged the Trump administration, and President Donald Trump himself took on an iconic Ohio company in an area of the state where loyalties to job security ran higher than loyalties to party four years ago.

With early voting set to begin in less than seven weeks, Democrats are enthused about their possibilities in a state crucial to Trump, one he carried by 8 points over Hillary Clinton in 2016. It's a striking turnaround for a party that just last year was wondering if the one-time swing state — with 18 electoral votes — had moved out of its reach.

Since Trump faced Clinton, Democrats have seen progress in the 2018 midterm and 2019 local elections, including in key suburban areas. Trump's call Wednesday to boycott the Akron-based Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company, while inaccurately claiming the company had announced a ban of Make America Great Again hats, gives the party new material as it tries to return struggling blue-collar workers to the fold.

Jane Timkin, the Republican Party chair who ousted an ally of former Gov. John Kasich from that job, was dismissive of Kasich's speech endorsing Biden at the Democratic National Convention and expects Trump's momentum to build.

"I feel pretty good," she told The Associated Press. "The president has a 95% approval rating among Republicans and, aside from folks like John Kasich, who was a never-Trumper, I think the rest of the party is very united and excited about re-electing President Trump."

A June 28 Quinnipiac University poll placed the figure at 92% among Ohio registered voters, with 93% of Democrats favoring Biden and independents divided 44% for Trump and 40% for Biden.

Kyle Kondik — an analyst at the University of Virginia Center for Politics who wrote "The Bellwether," a 2016 book about Ohio presidential politics — said it remains to be seen whether Kasich will sway fellow Republicans. Kasich carried Ohio over Trump in 2016's Republican presidential primary, but his campaign soon ran out of steam.

"I think Kasich represents a lot of his friends and neighbors (in suburban Columbus) who probably feel the same way he does," Kondik said. "They've just seen enough."

Kondik also said it's too soon to predict whether Trump's Wednesday assault on Goodyear, an integral part of Akron's "Rubber Capital" history, will cost him among the northeast Ohio auto industry voters who backed him in 2016. Four years ago, a single remark by Clinton — that the transition to clean energy meant "we're going to put a lot of coal miners and coal companies out of business" — damaged her performance in eastern Ohio's coal country, where she had been running well.

Even Akron's most famous native, LeBron James, jumped on Trump's Goodyear comments: "Unbelievable brand and unbelievable history," he said at the NBA's pandemic home in Lake Buena Vista, Florida.

U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan, a Democrat from Youngstown, helped lead a rally in Akron the next day, joined by local and union officials and a crowd of workers holding up such signs as "It will be a Goodyear without Trump." With working families struggling during the coronavirus pandemic-pounded economy, Ryan said: "We have enough challenges."

"I've never seen anything like this," said Bill Conner, a United Steelworkers union local official in Akron, saying Trump's boycott call could hurt "an American company, American workers."

Kondik commented, though, that such controversies seem to bounce off Trump like, well, rubber.

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"So many things happen on a day-to-day basis that you think might move voters, and they really don't," Kondik said.

Timkin brushed the Goodyear comments off, saying the president was "calling out a policy" over free speech concerns.

She also called "Democrat-manufactured" the uproar over Trump's attempts to block funding for the U.S. Postal Service ahead of the November election, which drew a letter from Republican Attorney General Dave Yost warning Trump that "radical changes" would "place the solvency of the Post Office above the legitimacy of the Government itself."

And she doesn't think the bribery scandal that led to federal charges this summer against then-Ohio Republican Speaker of the House Larry Householder will resonate with voters Nov. 3.

Kondik thinks Trump is still favored to win Ohio, but faces a "significantly closer" race than before. Democrats note that, even with the potential of not winning in the state, they are forcing Trump to use resources and time that could have gone to other battlegrounds to defend Ohio.

Carr Smyth reported from Columbus. Associated Press writer John Seewer in Toledo, Ohio, and AP Basketball Writer Brian Mahoney in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, contributed to this report.

Follow Dan Sewell at twitter.com/dansewell and Julie Carr Smyth at twitter.com/jcarrsmyth.

2 tropical storms a potential double threat to US Gulf Coast

By DÁNICA COTO and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Two tropical storms advanced across the Caribbean Saturday as potentially historic threats to the U.S. Gulf Coast, one dumping rain on Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands while the other was pushing through the gap between Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula and Cuba.

Tropical Storms Laura and Marco were both projected to approach the U.S. Gulf Coast at or close to hurricane force. The current, uncertain track would take them to Texas or Louisiana.

Two hurricanes have never appeared in the Gulf of Mexico at the same time, according to records going back to at least 1900, said Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach. The last time two tropical storms were in the Gulf together was in 1959, he said.

The last time two storms made landfall in the United States within 24 hours of each other was in 1933, Klotzbach said.

The projected track from the U.S. National Hurricane Center would put both storms together in the Gulf on Tuesday, with Marco hitting Texas and Laura making landfall a little less than a day later, though both tracks remain uncertain.

Laura was already flinging rain across Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands Saturday morning and was expected to drench the Dominican Republic, Haiti and parts of Cuba during the day on its westward course.

Puerto Rico Gov. Wanda Vázquez declared a state of emergency and warned that flooding could be worse than what Tropical Storm Isaias unleashed three weeks ago because the ground is now saturated.

"No one should be out on the streets," she said.

The storm was centered about 20 miles (30) kilometers south of San Juan, with maximum sustained winds of 40 mph (65 kph). It was moving west at 18 mph (65 kph). Officials said they were most concerned about the thousands of people who still have been living under blue tarps since 2017's Hurricane Maria and the hundreds of families living along Puerto Rico's southern coast in homes damaged by a string of strong earthquakes this year.

Marco, meanwhile, was strengthening while centered about 105 miles (170 kilometers) east of Cozumel island, headed to the north-northwest at 12 mph (19 kph). It had maximum sustained winds of 65 mph (100 kph). It was expected to become a hurricane later in the day.

The Hurricane Center said it expects the storms to stay far enough apart to prevent direct interaction as the region braces for the peak of the Atlantic hurricane season, which is forecast to be unusually active.

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Both storms were expected to bring 3 to 6 inches (8 to 15 centimeters) of rain to areas they were passing over or near, threatening widespread flooding across a vast region.

"A lot of people are going to be impacted by rainfall and storm surge in the Gulf of Mexico," said Joel Cline, the tropical program coordinator for the National Weather Service. "Since you simply don't know, you really need to make precautions."

It seems fitting for such an unusual twin threat to arrive in 2020, said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy.

"Of course, we have to have two simultaneously land-falling hurricanes," McNoldy said. "It's best not to ask what's next.")

Forecasters said that while atmospheric conditions are favorable for Laura to grow, its passage over Puerto Rico and the mountains of Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Cuba that could tear it apart or weaken it before it enters warm Gulf waters conducive to growth.

Officials in the Florida Keys, which Laura might pass over on its route into the Gulf, declared a local state of emergency Friday and issued a mandatory evacuation order for anyone living on boats, in mobile homes and in campers. Tourists staying in hotels should be aware of hazardous weather conditions and consider altering their plans starting on Sunday, Monroe County officials said in a news release.

Citing both storm systems, Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards declared a state of emergency Friday night. "It is too soon to know exactly where, when or how these dual storms will affect Louisiana, but now is the time for our people to prepare for these storms," Edwards said in a statement.

Laura had earlier forced the closure of schools and government offices in the eastern Caribbean islands of Anguilla and Antigua, according to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency.

Seth Borenstein reported from Kensington, Maryland. Associated Press reporter Freida Frisaro in Miami contributed to this report.

The Latest: World hits 800,000 confirmed coronavirus deaths

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK — The world hit a grim coronavirus milestone Saturday with 800,000 confirmed deaths and close to 23 million confirmed cases.

That's according to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University. Governments have been attempting to balance public health with economic health.

Officials believe the true numbers are far higher because of a lack of testing and reporting. In the U.S., the nation with the most infections, health officials believe there may be 10 times more cases than the confirmed 5.6 million. The U.S. also leads the world in deaths, with more than 175,000.

The news comes as South Korea, once considered a coronavirus success story, banned large gatherings, shut nightspots and churches and banned fans from professional sports to slow a viral resurgence. Germany, which also initially slowed the virus, reported a four-month high of more than 2,000 cases on Saturday. Schools there reopened two weeks ago, and at least 41 schools this week reported students or teachers were infected.

In the U.S., schools have begun to reopen, with coronavirus outbreaks triggering sudden closings, quarantines and anxiety among parents.

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

- Germany reports 2,000 new daily cases of coronavirus
- Quarantines, closures: Confusion reigns as schools reopen
- Their final breaths are tormented. Miami ICU nurse Rublas Ruiz has seen too many of them, the last gasps of 17 men and women who died of the coronavirus.
- South Korea is banning large gatherings, sports fans, shutting nightspots and churches as it battles

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the spread of the coronavirus.

— Fifteen Minnesota residents have contracted the coronavirus after being exposed during the 10-day Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota. Minnesota health officials expect the number to grow.

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

BERLIN — Germany's disease control reported 2,034 new cases of coronavirus on Saturday, the first time the daily national increase has topped 2,000 since the end of April.

The Robert Koch Institute calls the coronavirus outbreaks "very concerning." They are reported in various settings, including nursing homes and hospitals, schools, and "especially among travelers and in the context of religious or family events."

Germany's 16 states are resuming in-class schooling. There are concerns about the risks of virus clusters at schools spreading to families and others. In Berlin, at least 41 schools this week reported students or teachers had become infected.

The country was widely applauded for its quick and efficient effort to initially slow the spread of the pandemic, which peaked at more than 6,000 daily cases near the end of March and early April. But the figures have been increasing in recent weeks.

Overall, Germany has more than 232,000 confirmed cases and 9,200 deaths.

BREMERTON, Wash. — Washington state health officials say more than 30 coronavirus cases have been reported in an outbreak at a Bremerton hospital.

The Washington State Department of Health says the outbreak has affected multiple units at St. Michael Medical Center, which is part of the CHI Franciscan system. Officials say the outbreak involves hospital staff and employees.

The Kitsap Public Health District and state health officials say they are working with the hospital to contain the outbreak after the first case was reported late last week. Officials say patients discharged from the impacted units have been notified and new admissions and visitation at the hospital is currently limited.

NEW YORK — New York state will apply for a federal program for unemployment money now that the state won't have to add funds.

President Donald Trump had signed an executive order this month making money available from a FEMA fund after a new pandemic relief bill wasn't reached. The \$400-per-week benefit put the onus on the states to pay \$100 a week of that amount.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo called the idea "laughable" because state budgets are cash-strapped from the coronavirus. The U.S. Department of Labor issued guidance last week saying states would not have to contribute.

New York budget director Robert Mujica says, "the federal government has blinked and will no longer make states provide funding they do not have."

PRAGUE — The Czech Republic has recorded its biggest single-day increase in coronavirus cases.

The Health Ministry says there were 506 new cases in the latest 24-hour period. The previous high was 377 cases registered on March 27.

The announcement Saturday comes a day after neighboring Slovakia also reported a record daily increase of infected people.

The Czech Republic has 21,551 confirmed cases and 411 deaths.

NEW DELHI — India recorded nearly 70,000 new coronavirus infections as the disease spreads across the country's southern states after plateauing in the capital and the financial center of Mumbai.

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India's Health Ministry reported 69,878 new cases on Saturday, bringing the total to 2,975,701. Globally India has been reporting the biggest daily rise in cases for 18 consecutive days.

Some 2.2 million people have recovered from the disease in India since the first case was diagnosed in late January.

India has the third-highest caseload behind the United States and Brazil. Its 55,794 deaths is the fourth-highest death toll in the world.

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea is banning large gatherings, shutting nightspots and churches and removing fans from professional sports nationwide in an attempt to slow a resurgence of coronavirus infections.

Health Minister Park Neung-hoo announced the measures Saturday after officials reported 332 newly confirmed cases, marking the ninth straight day of triple-digit increases.

Most of the new cases were in the Seoul metropolitan area, which has been at the center of the viral surge of recent weeks. But infections were also reported in nearly every major city and in towns across the country.

The government had already imposed the tighter restrictions in the capital region this week, a move they resisted for months out of economic concerns. Park says it has become inevitable to expand the same measures nationwide with the virus spreading more broadly.

BEIJING — Health officials in China say in their report on the coronavirus that the country had no locally transmitted infections in the latest 24-hour period, though 22 cases were confirmed in Chinese arriving from abroad.

While the local spread of the virus appears to have been contained in mainland China, the semi-autonomous southern city of Hong Kong is struggling with its worst outbreak since the pandemic began.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam says free coronavirus tests will be offered to residents during the first two weeks of September, in hopes of restarting the heavily services-dependent local economy.

A new surge in infections that started in July has more than tripled the number of cases in Hong Kong to 4,632 and 75 deaths.

WASHINGTON — Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden says he would do whatever was needed to keep the country safe amid the coronavirus pandemic even if that meant shutting down the country.

Biden made the comment in an interview with ABC. The interview airs Sunday night, but clips were provided Friday.

Biden says, "I will be prepared to do whatever it takes to save lives because we cannot get the country moving until we control the virus." He adds that if scientists recommended shutting down the country, "I would shut it down."

President Donald Trump is encouraging schools to reopen and people to get back to work. The U.S. has had more than 5.5 million confirmed coronavirus cases, with more than 175,000 deaths.

SALEM, Ore. — Oregon public health experts say the number of new coronavirus cases in the state has dropped over the past month, but the decline hasn't been enough for schools to safely open.

The state is averaging about 250 new cases a day, and health officials say that needs to drop to about 60 for schools to reopen.

Gov. Kate Brown says residents will have to continue to follow and enforce current statewide pandemic mandates or else bars and restaurants may have to close and travel restrictions will be implemented.

Brown says at the current rate, schools won't be able to reopen until April.

HARTFORD, Conn. — Connecticut is doubling the amount of federal coronavirus money dedicated to rental assistance.

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But housing advocates contend it falls far short of what is needed to help as many as 130,000 households estimated to face possible eviction between now and Dec. 31 because of the pandemic. In comparison, there were about 20,000 eviction filings in all of 2019.

Gov. Ned Lamont announced Friday that \$10 million will be added to the original \$10 million for the rent program. His office says the amount that can go to the rent program is limited by Congress.

Lamont says he'll soon sign an executive order extending the moratorium on residential evictions until Oct. 1.

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Washington Gov. Jay Inslee is asking Canada for help with U.S. residents of a small peninsula who have been marooned by the pandemic-related closure of the U.S.-Canada border.

Point Roberts is part of Washington state, but it juts out from the Canadian mainland south of Vancouver and is not connected to the rest of Washington. About 1,300 people live there.

In a letter Friday to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Inslee suggests residents of Point Roberts be given special travel permits allowing them to drive directly to and from the Washington state mainland.

HARRISBURG, Pa. — The governing body for Pennsylvania interscholastic sports decided Friday to move forward with the fall season, rejecting the governor's recommendation that all youth sports be postponed until 2021 to help stop the spread of the coronavirus.

The board of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association had delayed the start of fall sports by two weeks after Gov. Tom Wolf on Aug. 6 urged that scholastic and recreational youth sports be put off until January, citing the pandemic.

The PIAA had said it was blindsided and "tremendously disappointed" by Wolf's recommendation — which was not binding — and insisted that fall sports could be held safely. For his part, Wolf has pointed out that major collegiate leagues have independently canceled fall sports.

The board voted 25-5 on Friday to allow high school football, soccer, tennis, field hockey and other fall sports to go on as planned, starting Monday. Among those voting no: board members representing professional associations of school boards, superintendents and principals.

As more colleges stay online, students demand tuition cuts

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

As more universities abandon plans to reopen and decide instead to keep classes online this fall, it's leading to conflict between students who say they deserve tuition discounts and college leaders who insist remote learning is worth the full cost.

Disputes are flaring both at colleges that announced weeks ago they would stick with virtual instruction and at those that only recently lost hope of reopening their campuses. Among the latest schools facing pressure to lower tuition are Michigan State University and Ithaca College, which scrapped plans to reopen after seeing other colleges struggle to contain coronavirus outbreaks.

The scourge has killed more than 175,000 people in the United States. Worldwide, the confirmed death toll hit 800,000 on Saturday, according to data from Johns Hopkins University, and cases were nearing 23 million.

In petitions started at dozens of universities, students arguing for reduced tuition say online classes fail to deliver the same experience they get on campus. Video lectures are stilted and awkward, they say, and there's little personal connection with professors or classmates.

Many schools, however, respond that they have improved online classes since the spring. Some have instituted decreases of 10% or more, but many are holding firm on price.

At Michigan State, senior Tyler Weisner said the online classes he took last spring were less effective than what he gets on campus. Weisner, who started a petition to reduce tuition, said he's also missing out on many of the benefits of college.

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"You're paying that price tag because colleges bring students from all over the country together, to experience different cultures," he said. "People don't just choose strictly off education or the professor. They want a nice place to live and a new experience."

Similar petitions have been started at schools from Rutgers University in New Jersey to the University of Southern California. Plans to continue virtual instruction this fall are further angering many students who were frustrated by the experience of studying online last spring, when colleges across the U.S. abruptly sent students home as the pandemic intensified. In the wake of that, students at more than 100 colleges filed lawsuits demanding partial refunds.

It also renews a wider debate about the cost and value of a college degree. After years of increases, many students said they could barely afford tuition before the pandemic. Now, as families around the country struggle, many say there's a new need to rein in costs.

Some colleges lowered tuition as they moved classes online, often acknowledging families' hardships and the differences in online classes. Several universities in Washington, D.C., lowered prices by 10%, including Georgetown University. Princeton University also cut tuition by 10%. In Massachusetts, Williams College announced a 15% discount after moving to a mix of online and in-person classes.

Others, however, have refused. Harvard University is charging full tuition, about \$50,000 per year, even though all undergraduate classes will be online this fall. The Ivy League school invited freshmen to live on campus while taking classes online, but about 20% have deferred enrollment, the university announced.

Many colleges had hoped to bring students back, with major modifications. But after outbreaks at many of the first campuses to reopen — often tied to off-campus parties — some are retreating from their plans.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill halted in-person instruction this past week after 130 students tested positive for the virus. The university is letting students cancel their housing contracts without penalty, and it's reimbursing students for their meal plans, officials said.

But students will still be on the hook for hundreds of dollars in fees that aren't likely to benefit them, including \$279 for athletics, \$400 for student health, more than \$200 for campus transit and \$160 for student union center operations.

"I think it's ridiculous," said Mackenzie Holland, a freshman who left UNC on Tuesday. "All of those funds go to things that are specifically on campus, and I can't utilize any of those things."

At Michigan State, officials said they have no plans to lower tuition. They said other schools are cutting costs by leaning on part-time faculty or student assistants. Instead, Michigan State said it has invested in technology and faculty training to improve remote instruction.

"Regardless of the format of instruction, MSU is delivering what students pay for: courses taught by high qualified and world-class faculty, tutoring services, office hours, academic advising and access to our libraries," spokeswoman Emily Guerrant said.

Michigan State said the decision to keep classes online will cost the school millions in lost housing revenue. Ithaca College, which is not cutting tuition, said it's also taking a financial hit by telling students to stay home this fall.

"Room and board is a significant piece of our revenue for the year, but this decision was really driven by putting the health and safety of our students first," said Laurie Koehler, vice president for marketing and enrollment strategy at Ithaca.

In some petitions, students acknowledge colleges' financial struggles, but they say schools can draw on endowments to weather the crisis. At some schools, however, that may not be the case. Industry experts warn that many colleges were on shaky financial ground before the pandemic, and some predict that dozens of colleges could be forced to shut within a year.

At Ithaca, junior Meghan Marzella said she understands that the pandemic has been hard on schools and families alike. But she said there's no reason students should pay fees for the fitness center and library if they won't be on campus.

"Tuition covers so much more than just classes," said Marzella, who started a petition to reduce prices. "The reality of the situation is, we're still paying for things that we can't access."

At the University of New Mexico, students face a tuition increase even though the school is offering a

mix of online and remote classes. Senior Ava Yelton, who helped lead a protest against the increase, said it's unethical to charge more when students are getting less.

"The question is why are we paying the same amount — if not more — for way, way less?" she asked. "I know this is what's best for public safety, but there's no doubt the level of learning is lower online."

Associated Press writers Katie Foody in Chicago and Bryan Anderson in Raleigh, North Carolina, contributed to this report.

Tough choices for GOP over a Postal Service Trump belittles

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congressional Republicans in tight reelections are in a precarious position over the embattled Postal Service as its bosses impose cost-cutting measures on one of the government's few beloved agencies.

And as often happens, President Donald Trump has made the political fallout for Republicans ever more ticklish.

Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, a major Trump donor, insists he's trying to economize at an agency that's long bled billions annually. Meanwhile, Trump has railed almost daily about the Postal Service, which he considers wasteful, and has threatened to oppose extra money to help it handle expected record levels of mail-in ballots this fall, driven by the coronavirus pandemic.

Fed by Trump's unfounded insistence that mail-in voting is riddled with fraud, Democrats and other critics say he's trying to undermine this fall's presidential and congressional elections by preventing the Postal Service from delivering ballots in time to be counted.

DeJoy on Friday told a Senate committee that the Postal Service is committed to delivering election mail "securely and on-time," but he said he has no plans to restore mailboxes or reverse other agency cuts made since he took over in June.

Republicans say Democrats are exaggerating long-running Postal Service problems to rev up their own voters. Illustrating the political advantage they perceive, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said in a fundraising letter Friday that she's "disgusted right alongside you watching President Trump and his Republicans undermine and sabotage our Post Office."

The issue has left GOP lawmakers in an uncomfortable spot.

Embracing Trump's hard line makes them critics of an agency that won an overwhelming 91% approval in a nonpartisan Pew Research Center poll this year. But with mail delays already widespread, many face public pressure to back a House bill providing \$25 billion for the agency in an unusual Saturday vote.

Several Republicans said the Postal Service issue will prove minor for most voters. Others have grumbled, mostly in private, that they're better off highlighting efforts to restore the economy, reopen schools and address the virus than enduring daily Trump barrages against mail-in voting and the struggling agency.

"The president is not totally wrong" because mail-in voting is less secure than in-person voting, said Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., a member of the Senate GOP leadership who doesn't face reelection this year. "But to talk about it is also not totally helpful."

Democrats are playing offense.

Democrat Gina Ortiz Jones, seeking an open GOP House seat in west Texas, talks about delayed mail delivery of prescription drugs to veterans. Former Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper, the Democrat challenging GOP Sen. Cory Gardner for his seat, says Gardner has chosen "cowardly silence" rather than confronting Trump over the Postal Service.

Many Republicans have resorted to broad assurances that everything will be fine. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said Thursday that the Postal Service "is not in trouble" and that lawmakers would ensure "they are able to deliver our ballots on time."

One of the few Republicans to openly break with Trump has been Rep. John Katko of a Democratic-tilting district in central New York. He's said he supports reversing DeJoy's changes, adding, "I disagree with

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the president. We must not allow the Postal Service to falter at our community's time of greatest need."

Democrats are also positioning themselves as defenders of an agency that's especially coveted in rural areas mostly represented by Republicans.

In one digital spot, the Senate Majority PAC, aligned with Senate Democratic leaders, hits Maine GOP Sen. Susan Collins for helping write a 2006 law it says pushed the Postal Service "to the brink" by requiring it to finance billions in future retirement benefits in advance. The measure passed with overwhelming support from Democrats and Republicans alike.

The law has weakened the Postal Service during a pandemic, says the announcer, who asks, "Susan Collins, how could you let this happen?" Collins faces a tight reelection race.

Last month, she and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., introduced legislation providing up to \$25 billion and telling the agency to produce a plan for fixing its long-term finances.

House GOP leaders are lobbying Republicans to oppose the bill being voted on Saturday, which would provide \$25 billion to the Postal Service. It would also require DeJoy to restore sorting machines, overtime and other changes to practices that existed on Jan. 1 and require the agency to prioritize delivery of official election mailings.

In materials sent to rank-and-file GOP lawmakers, No. 2 House Republican leader Steve Scalise of Louisiana called the bill the "USPS Conspiracy Theory Act." He wrote that the Postal Service has all the resources it needs and accused Democrats of "pushing an attempt to fabricate a postal crisis for political purposes."

One Republican saying he's still considering his vote is Rep. Rodney Davis, who held his rural Illinois district by less than 1 percentage point in 2018 and is targeted again by Democrats this year.

Davis said Democrats have exaggerated the Postal Service's problems but added in an interview, "There's a lot of us who think the Postal Service deserves some funds right now."

Former Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., accused Democrats of stoking fear to energize voters. But the former head of the House Republican political organization said GOP lawmakers should back extra funding if it fits their districts' needs.

"In a pandemic, of course you want to make it easier to vote, you don't want to be seen as suppressing voters," he said. "No politician wants to be seen as that."

AP reporters Hannah Fingerhut in Washington and Bruce Schreiner in Frankfort, Kentucky, contributed to this report.

Democrats see racism in GOP mispronunciations of 'Kamala'

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Bantering during the final night of the Democratic National Convention, actor Julia Louis-Dreyfus and former presidential candidate Andrew Yang repeatedly got the name of "our current vice president" wrong. Was it "Mika Pints?" or "Paints?" Or maybe "Ponce," Yang suggested.

"Oh, some kind of weird foreign name?" Louis-Dreyfus asked.

"Yeah, not very American sounding," Yang replied.

It was a quick bit of satire with a pointed message from Democrats: When top Republicans — including President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence — mispronounce Democratic vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris' first name, it's not just disrespectful, it's racist.

Harris' first name is pronounced "KAH'-mah-lah" — or, as she explains in her biography, "comma-la,' like the punctuation mark." But mispronunciations have been rampant in the days since the California senator became the first Black woman and the first Asian American woman named to a major party's ticket. Pence referred to her as "kah-MAH'-lah," putting his emphasis on the second syllable, at events last week. Republican National Committee Chair Ronna McDaniel did the same on Wednesday, as did Trump at a rally in Pennsylvania on Thursday, the day after Harris delivered a prime-time speech accepting the Democratic nomination — a speech he indicated he watched.

Harris' supporters say the pattern amounts to a deliberate effort by Trump and his allies to portray

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Harris — the daughter of immigrants — as someone who does not belong at the top ranks of politics. The mispronunciations follow a string of attacks that include racist and sexist memes and questioning whether Harris, who was born in California, is eligible to serve as vice president because her mother was Indian and her father Jamaican. (Constitutional scholars and other legal experts say there is no question that she is eligible.)

"It is an effort to diminish her," said Fatima Goss Graves, president of the National Women's Law Center Action Fund. "It's designed to signal difference."

Trump campaign officials did not immediately respond to questions about the errors.

To be sure, Harris isn't the only politician who has watched other politicians and voters trip over her name. Former President Barack Obama, whose father was from Kenya, used to crack jokes about being a "skinny kid with a funny name." Former presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg, whose father was from Malta, went mostly by "Pete" — though his campaign made posters, chants and T-shirts with the pronunciation "Boot-Edge-Edge."

Even Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden slipped up and mispronounced the first "a" in Kamala during his speech introducing her as his running mate, but he quickly repeated her name with the correct pronunciation.

Harris supporters say there is a difference between someone who makes an honest mistake and wants to correct it and people who knowingly mispronounce her name, or who don't care enough to get it right.

In the introduction to her biography, Harris says her name means "lotus flower." It's a symbol of significance in Indian culture, she wrote, noting "a lotus grows underwater, its flower rising above the surface while its roots are planted firmly in the river bottom."

When she first ran for the U.S. Senate, her campaign produced a video with small children demonstrating the proper way to say her first name.

But her defenders say Harris is well past the point of introduction — especially with Republican opponents. Harris served as California's attorney general for seven years before being elected to the Senate in 2016. Since then, she's made headlines for tough questioning of Trump appointees and raised her profile even more with her bid for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination.

And even before she was elected to the Senate, Trump knew who she was — he donated to her 2014 campaign for attorney general.

Yet Trump has continued to get her name wrong, as have his allies.

Trump's personal attorney Rudy Giuliani called Harris "Pamela" during an appearance on Fox News. Pence mispronounced her name multiple times during a stop last week in Iowa, where he warned a cheering crowd that the November election isn't about a choice between Republicans and Democrats or conservatives and liberals.

"I think the choice in this election is whether America remains America," he said, going on to mispronounce her name moments later.

Pence pronounced Harris' name correctly during an appearance on Fox News on Friday, hours after the exchange between Louis-Dreyfus and Yang.

Fox News host Tucker Carlson grew agitated when a guest corrected him last week after he also pronounced Kamala incorrectly. "So what?" he said, before mispronouncing her name again and complaining about liberals being too sensitive.

McDaniel also got the pronunciation wrong earlier this week during an appearance on Fox News, even though the host questioning McDaniel was saying it correctly.

Many people, particularly people of color, relate to Harris having her name mispronounced because they face the same situation in workplaces and elsewhere, said Goss Graves. She's grappled herself with people mispronouncing her first name — it's fah-TEE'-mah — and whether, or when, to correct them.

But it's a very different thing, she said, to be a candidate for one of the highest offices in the world and have your colleagues and members of the media repeatedly mispronounce your name — or not care enough to get it right.

"When people are running for the highest levels of government, there's an expectation they will be af-

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forded with dignity and respect," she said.

AP FACT CHECK: What the Dems didn't say, and what Trump did

By CALVIN WOODWARD, HOPE YEN and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden and fellow Democrats spun an assortment of facts to their benefit in their national convention, omitting inconvenient truths such as Barack Obama's record of aggressive deportations and swift action by a Republican president to save the auto industry more than a decade ago.

Meantime President Donald Trump flooded the zone with falsehoods, some so apparent that anyone with access to the internet could see the folly of them at a glance. Witness his reference to New Zealand's "massive breakout" of COVID-19, which does not exist.

The virtual, socially distanced Democratic National Convention was unique in history but conventional in this sense: The nominee and his supporters at times exaggerated the good, played down the bad and glossed over important context.

But overall the discipline was discernible, as it usually was for the biggest speeches of Republican and Democratic leaders alike before the rise of Trump. Even Biden, a gaffe machine in the old days, displayed that control. The off notes came largely from what Democrats didn't say.

A sampling from the past week's rhetoric as the Republican National Convention prepares to affirm Trump as the 2020 nominee in coming days:

IMMIGRATION

BARACK OBAMA: "We are born of immigrants. That is who we are. Immigration is our origin story." — convention video Wednesday celebrating immigration, showing historical scenes and one that appeared to be of Trump's border wall.

BARACK OBAMA: "I understand why a new immigrant might look around this country and wonder whether there's still a place for him here." — convention speech Wednesday.

THE FACTS: The facts here are not in dispute. But an omission stands out: Obama aggressively enforced border controls and deported nearly 3 million people.

He changed his approach, acting without Congress in 2012 to let people who came to the U.S. illegally as children stay and work legally in the country.

Still, that year was Obama's high mark for deportations, more than 400,000, far outpacing Trump's deportations in each of his first three years.

"This whole immigration video was like putting salt on the wound," tweeted Erika Andiola, an advocate from RAICES, an immigration legal services group in Texas. "Narrated by Obama? Come on."

She said: "I am angry because it was his administration who almost deported my mother and then Trump came to try to deport her again."

Immigration activist Julissa Natzely Arce Raya, author of "My (Underground) American Dream," saw hypocrisy at work, after the video of Estela Juarez, the 11-year-old girl whose mother was deported to Mexico.

"Obama did a lot of things right, but not immigration, he didn't get that right," she tweeted. "I promise you, tonight there is a Estela whose mom was deported by Obama."

MICHELLE OBAMA, on Americans: "They watch in horror as children are torn from their families and thrown into cages." — Democratic convention Monday.

THE FACTS: The reference to cages is misleading and a matter that Democrats have persistently distorted.

Trump used facilities that were built during the Obama-Biden administration to house children at the border. They are chain-link enclosures inside border facilities where migrants were temporarily housed, separated by sex and age.

At the height of the controversy over Trump's zero-tolerance policy at the border, photos that circulated online of children in the enclosures generated great anger. But those photos, by The Associated Press, were taken in 2014 and depicted some of the thousands of unaccompanied children held by Obama.

When that fact came to light, some Democrats and activists who had tweeted the photos deleted their

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tweets. But prominent Democrats have continued to cite cages for children as a distinctive cruelty of Trump. The former first lady was correct, however, in addressing the removal of children from parents at the border.

The Obama administration separated migrant children from families under certain limited circumstances, like when the child's safety appeared at risk or when the parent had a serious criminal history. Family separations as a matter of routine came about because of Trump's "zero tolerance" enforcement policy, which he eventually suspended because of the uproar. Obama had no such policy.

TRUMP: "Joe Biden has pledged to abolish immigration enforcement." — rally Tuesday in Yuma, Arizona.

THE FACTS: No he hasn't.

Biden has been notably outspoken in arguing that crossing the U.S. border illegally is a crime and should remain punished as such in federal court. He did not endorse immigration plans supported by Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and other former presidential candidates that sought to decriminalize illegal border crossings and make doing so only a civil offense.

In addition to misrepresenting Biden's agenda, Trump ignored the fact that the Obama-Biden administration vigorously deported people, drawing fierce criticism from some advocates for immigrants.

TRUMP: "They want to take the wall down, they don't want to have borders." — Arizona rally.

THE FACTS: No, Biden is not pushing to take down the wall or erase borders.

Biden's immigration plan does not include money for new border fencing, and he isn't calling for any new walls. But he hasn't proposed taking down what's there.

PANDEMIC

TRUMP on New Zealand and the coronavirus: "They had a massive breakout yesterday." — remarks Thursday in Old Forge, Pennsylvania.

TRUMP: False. New Zealand has had nothing resembling a massive outbreak or, as he also put it during the week, even a "big surge" or a "big outbreak."

New Zealand reported five to 13 new cases each day in the past week, as of Friday. The U.S. reported an average of some 46,000 per day during the week.

Trump is unhappy that New Zealand's success in controlling the virus, through its tight and early rules on distancing and closures, has been used for unfavorable comparisons with his pandemic response. New Zealand went for several months without any new, confirmed cases of locally spread COVID-19 before infection started showing up again in small numbers.

The infection has killed 22 people in New Zealand and 174,000 in the U.S.

That's a rate of 4.5 deaths per million in New Zealand and 532 per million in the U.S.

ECONOMY

BIDEN: "Nearly one in six small businesses have closed this year." — acceptance speech Thursday.

THE FACTS: That appears to be in the ballpark but is misleading. What he didn't say is that most of those businesses planned to reopen or already have.

In a MetLife and U.S. Chamber of Commerce survey at the end of July, 86% of small businesses reported that they were fully or partially open. Among those that remained shut, most planned to reopen when they could. Overall, small businesses expressed guarded optimism while worrying what would happen if another wave of the coronavirus comes.

GRETCHEN WHITMER, Michigan governor: "In 2009, the Obama-Biden administration inherited the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. The auto industry — on the brink of collapse. A million jobs at stake. But President Obama and Vice President Biden didn't waste time blaming anybody. ... They brought together union members, companies and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, and they saved the auto

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industry.” — Democratic National Convention on Monday.

THE FACTS: She’s assigning too much credit to the Obama administration for saving the auto industry. What Obama did was an expansion of the initial, pivotal steps taken by Obama’s predecessor, George W. Bush.

In December 2008, General Motors and Chrysler were on the brink of financial collapse. The U.S. was in a deep recession and U.S. auto sales were falling sharply, in part because the 2008-2009 financial crisis made it harder for would-be auto buyers to get a car loan. GM, Chrysler and Ford requested government aid, but Congress voted it down.

With barely a month left in office, Bush authorized \$25 billion in loans to GM and Chrysler from the \$700 billion bailout fund that was initially intended to save the largest U.S. banks. Ford decided against taking any money. After Obama was inaugurated, he appointed a task force to oversee GM and Chrysler, both of which eventually declared bankruptcy, took an additional roughly \$55 billion in loans, and were forced to close many factories and overhaul their operations.

All three companies recovered and eventually started adding jobs again.

IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

TRUMP: “This deal funneled tens of billions of dollars to Iran — \$150 billion, to be exact — plus \$1.8 billion in cash. ... He (Obama) gave \$1.8 billion in cash.” — news briefing Wednesday.

THE FACTS: This is a familiar and hyper-distorted tale. There was no \$150 billion payout from the U.S. treasury or other countries.

When Iran signed the multinational deal to restrain its nuclear development in return for being freed from sanctions, it regained access to its own assets, which had been frozen abroad. Iran was allowed to get its own money back. The deal was signed in 2015; Trump has taken the U.S. out of it.

The \$1.8 billion is a separate matter. A payout of roughly that amount did come from the U.S. treasury. It was to cover an old IOU.

In the 1970s, Iran paid the U.S. \$400 million for military equipment that was never delivered because the government was overthrown and diplomatic relations ruptured. After the nuclear deal, the U.S. and Iran announced they had settled the matter, with the U.S. agreeing to pay the \$400 million principal along with about \$1.3 billion in interest.

TRUMP: “And we got nothing, except a short-term, little deal. A short-term, expiring.” — news briefing Wednesday.

THE FACTS: Trump’s wrong to suggest the deal had no impact before he withdrew the U.S. from the agreement in 2018.

Iran was thought to be only months away from a bomb when the deal came into effect. But during the 15-year life of most provisions of the accord, Iran’s capabilities are limited to a level where it cannot produce a bomb. The deal also includes a pledge by Iran never to seek a nuclear weapon.

The International Atomic Energy Agency and his administration itself had confirmed Iran was complying with the terms before Trump pulled out of the deal.

The pact does gradually lift some restrictions, including limits on centrifuges that were due to expire in 2025.

After the 15 years are up, Iran could have an array of advanced centrifuges ready to work, the limits on its stockpile would be gone and, in theory, it could then throw itself fully into producing highly enriched uranium. But nothing in the deal prevented the West from trying to rein Iran in again with sanctions.

JOHN KERRY, former secretary of state: “We eliminated the threat of an Iran with a nuclear weapon.” — Democratic convention on Tuesday.

THE FACTS: That’s taking it too far. The threat was deferred, not eliminated. That reality was baked into the deal negotiated when Kerry was Obama’s secretary of state. The accord limited Iran’s capabilities to a level where it could not produce a bomb, but most provisions were to expire after 15 years.

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POSTAL SERVICE

TRUMP: "One of the things the Post Office loses so much money on is the delivering packages for Amazon and these others. Every time they deliver a package, they probably lose three or four dollars. That's not good." — remarks Monday to reporters.

THE FACTS: That's not true.

While the U.S. Postal Service has lost money for 13 years, package delivery is not the reason.

Boosted by e-commerce, the Postal Service has enjoyed double-digit increases in revenue from delivering packages, but that hasn't been enough to offset pension and health care costs as well as declines in first-class letters and marketing mail. Together, letters and marketing mail in recent years have comprised up to two-thirds of postal revenue.

In arguing that the Postal Service is losing money on delivering packages for Amazon, Trump appears to be citing some Wall Street analyses that argue the Postal Service's formula for calculating its costs is outdated. A 2017 analysis by Citigroup did conclude that the service was charging below market rates as a whole on parcels. Still, federal regulators have reviewed the Amazon contract with the Postal Service each year and found it profitable.

To become financially stable, the Postal Service has urged Congress for years to give it relief from the mandate to prefund retiree health benefits. Legislation in 2006 required the Postal Service to fund 75 years' worth of retiree health benefits, at an estimated cost of \$5 billion per year, something that the government and private companies don't have to do.

In the most recent quarter, for instance, package delivery rose 53% at the Postal Service as homebound people during the pandemic shifted online for their shopping. But the gain in deliveries was offset by the continued declines in first-class mail as well as costs for personal protective equipment and to replace workers who got sick during the pandemic.

The biggest factor was the prepayment of retiree health benefits, which Congress imposed and only Congress can take away.

As a quasi-government agency, the Postal Service also is required under law to provide mail delivery to millions of U.S. residences at affordable and uniform rates. It does not use taxpayer money for its operations and supports operations with the sales of stamps and other mail products.

TRUMP: "We want to make sure that the Post Office runs properly and it hasn't run properly for many years, for probably 50 years. It's run very badly. So we want to make sure that the Post Office runs properly and doesn't lose billions of dollars." — remarks Monday to reporters.

THE FACTS: Trump offered no evidence of broad mismanagement at the Postal Service that dates back 50 years.

The Postal Service started losing "billions," as Trump put it, after the 2006 law mandating health prefunding took effect. Those billion-dollar payments, which coincided with the 2007-2008 Great Recession and a wider shift toward online bill payments, pushed the Postal Service into the red. Excluding those health payments, it has finished each year with revenue surpluses for most of the past decade.

WAGES

HILDA SOLIS, former labor secretary, on Biden: "He and President Obama made it easier for home-care workers to organize. They extended overtime pay to more than 4 million workers." — Democratic convention Wednesday.

THE FACTS: No, Obama and Biden tried to extend overtime pay to an estimated 4 million workers, but it never happened.

The Obama administration completed such a rule in May 2016, but it was ultimately blocked by a federal judge after 21 states sued the Labor Department.

In 2019, the Trump administration extended overtime for an estimated 1.3 million workers in home health care, retail, fast food and certain other low-wage jobs.

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BERNIE SANDERS, Vermont senator: "Joe supports raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. This will give 40 million workers a pay raise and push the wage scale up for everyone else." — Democratic convention Monday.

THE FACTS: Not likely. He's taking an optimistic projection as a certainty.

He's referring to a 2019 study by the Economic Policy Institute, a left-leaning think tank that estimated \$15 an hour by 2025 would directly raise wages for 28 million and indirectly for 11 million. Even that study doesn't say wage scales would go up for "everyone."

A July 2019 report from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found a much less significant impact, and some likely costs, from a \$15 federal minimum.

The office said 1.3 million workers could be priced out of the market and lose their job if a \$15 minimum wage were federally mandated. It also projected far fewer workers — roughly 27 million total — would see a pay increase as a result.

FLOYD PROTESTS

TRUMP, on unrest in Minnesota after George Floyd died in the custody of Minneapolis police: "When I sent in the National Guard, that's when it all stopped." — speech Monday in Mankato, Minnesota.

THE FACTS: False. Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat, deployed the Minnesota National Guard, not Trump. The president didn't send forces to the streets in Minnesota. He repeatedly claims that he did.

In the speech, Trump went on to say he urged Minnesota officials to deploy the Guard and "they should have done it a lot sooner," thereby acknowledging, if indirectly, that the order wasn't his. But Walz said he mobilized the Guard at the request of city officials, not because Trump wanted him to.

TRADE

TRUMP, on China's adherence to the trade deal his administration negotiated with Beijing: "They are living – they're more than living ... up to it. ... Because they know I'm very angry at them." — "Fox & Friends" interview Monday.

THE FACTS: That's not true. China is falling well short of its commitments under the trade deal.

The Peterson Institute for International Economics, which has been tracking China's purchases, found this month that U.S. exports of goods to China should have totaled \$71.3 billion from January through June to be on track to reach this year's target under the Phase 1 deal. Instead, they topped out at \$33.1 billion, only 46% of what they should be.

The shortfall in promised Chinese purchases of U.S. farm products is even bigger. Those purchases totaled \$6.5 billion, only 39% of purchases that should have reached \$16.7 billion through June.

The gap is perhaps not surprising, given that world trade has been badly disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic. But Trump did not negotiate provisions giving China leeway in any downturn. It's conceivable, if unlikely, that Chinese purchases will pick up in the second half of the year enough to make up for the shortfall.

But in no sense is China more than living up to the deal now.

Associated Press writers Paul Wiseman and Matthew Daly in Washington and Amanda Seitz in Chicago contributed to this report.

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

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Mississippi flag designs: Would they make good tattoos?

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — After mothballing its old Confederate-themed state flag, Mississippi could choose a new one with a magnolia, a shield with wavy lines representing water, or an “edgy” representation of the Mississippi River snaking along the state’s western border.

The Associated Press consulted three experts about five final designs to possibly replace the flag that was retired July 1. One of the connoisseurs even submitted a guide titled “Good Flag Bad Flag” to the state commission reviewing public submissions.

Steve Knowlton of Princeton, New Jersey, said the winning design should be simple and distinctive enough to be replicated on tattoos and pizza boxes.

“You know it’s a good design if people are getting tattoos,” said Knowlton, first vice president of the North American Vexillological Association. The group calls itself the world’s largest organization of flag enthusiasts and scholars, but it doesn’t take sides in political debates about flags. All three experts consulted by the AP focused solely on visual presentation.

Mississippi had the last state flag that included the Confederate battle emblem, a big blue X with white stars on a red background that is widely condemned as a symbol of racism and white supremacy. Lawmakers decided in June to replace it amid nationwide protests against racial inequality. The change came years after other states had begun removing Confederate symbols from public spaces after the slaying of black worshippers in a church in Charleston, South Carolina.

Commission members — appointed by the governor, lieutenant governor and House speaker — have selected five final designs from nearly 3,000 submitted by the public. The five are being manufactured and will be hoisted Tuesday in Jackson.

In early September, commissioners will choose one design to put on the November ballot. If a majority of voters say yes, that will become the new flag. If they say no, the design process begins again.

The panel has tweaked each design to include a star made of diamond shapes to reflect Choctaw heritage. By law, the new flag also must display the words “In God We Trust,” a provision that persuaded some conservative legislators to retire the Confederate symbol.

“Good Flag, Bad Flag” recommends that a flag should convey an image without using words. Unless the banner is made with double thickness, which is more expensive, words appear backward on the reverse side. More than half of the state flags in the U.S. have words.

“I think the committee faces a huge challenge balancing design and political considerations,” said Ted Kaye of Portland, Oregon, the guide’s author and secretary of the North American Vexillological Association.

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History has posted the five finalists online, in this order:

DESIGN 1: The “Great River Flag” has a red and white shield on a dark blue background, with a single star above the shield and “In God We Trust” in a simple typeface. The designer says the inspiration came from the 1798 seal for the Mississippi territory.

Talamioka Brice, a graphic design professional who lives in Jackson, Mississippi, said the design is attractive. “There was a lot of thought put into that,” she said.

Knowlton and Kaye were less enthusiastic.

“To a person who hasn’t had the design explained to them, it looks very much like a generic design associated with the United States,” Knowlton said.

Kaye said the design is “only attractive because of the wavy line in the shield.”

DESIGN 2: This flag shows the western border of the state, dominated by the Mississippi River. It also has a large magnolia and smaller stars.

“That design was thought out, but it’s not as strong as the others,” Brice said.

Kaye said the realistic map of the river is “an edgy idea” but “infeasible to sew.”

Social media posts have said the Mississippi border flag looks like the profile of Bart Simpson. Also, seen from the back — as it will be on a flagpole — the river shape makes less sense.

“It becomes Mississippi as seen from the center of the Earth,” Kaye said.

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Knowlton said of this flag's wide blue field: "It makes you think Mississippi is making territorial claims on Alabama."

The Mississippi Territory from 1798 to 1819 included most of present-day Alabama, but not the coastal areas of either current state.

DESIGNS 3 and 4: These are nearly identical, with different color patterns. Each has a large magnolia in the center. One has the white flower on a white field with a blue stripe on one end and a red one on the other. The other has the magnolia on a dark blue field with red stripes on each end.

A flag design principle called the "rule of tinctures" says shapes made of light colors — white and yellow — should not go onto light backgrounds, just as shapes made of dark colors should not go onto dark backgrounds.

Knowlton and Kaye said the magnolia is lost on the white background.

Brice said the magnolia stands out on the blue, but she thinks the flower is "hugely overused." Brice, who is African American, said some Black people might see the magnolia as too closely associated with the Old South.

"That's a very loaded image," Brice said. "It reminds me ... if you think about our history and lynching and Billie Holiday's 'Strange Fruit.'"

But Brice said even though she's not a fan of the magnolia, it's not a deal-breaker. "Anything that was linked to the Confederacy would be a deal breaker," she said.

DESIGN 5: This has a stylized magnolia tree on a blue background.

Kaye said it's the best design overall, "but it looks too much like other state flags." He said many have a blue background with a state seal or some other symbol in the center.

Knowlton said the magnolia tree design resembles the Gondor flag from "The Lord of the Rings." But, he said it's distinctive: "You could get it tattooed on your upper arm and have some confidence that the guy wouldn't wreck it."

Brice said the tree flag is "a really solid design." Like four of the other finalists, it has a circle of stars that she finds too reminiscent of the first national flag of the Confederacy. But, she said: "It's a flag and there are much bigger things in the world to worry about."

Follow Emily Wagster Pettus on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/EWagsterPettus>.

Comatose Russian dissident stable upon arrival in Germany

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Russian dissident Alexei Navalny, in a coma after a suspected poisoning, was flown from Siberia on Saturday to Berlin for treatment by specialists at the German capital's main hospital.

After touching down shortly before 9 a.m. at a special area of the capital's Tegel airport used for government and military flights, Navalny was taken by ambulance to the downtown campus of Berlin's Charité hospital.

"He survived the flight and he's stable," Jaka Bizilj, of the German organization Cinema For Peace, which organized the flight, told The Associated Press.

The hospital later issued a statement saying extensive tests were being carried out on Navalny, and doctors would not comment on his illness or treatment until those were completed.

Navalny, a politician and corruption investigator who is one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's fiercest critics, was admitted to an intensive care unit in the Siberian city of Omsk on Thursday. His supporters believe that tea he drank was laced with poison — and that the Kremlin is behind both his illness and the delay in transferring him to Germany.

The Omsk regional health ministry on Saturday issued a statement saying that, so far, tests done on Navalny while he was there had found no poisons.

"Tests were immediately taken for the presence of toxic substances in the body," the ministry said. "Already today we can say that oxybutyrates, barbiturates, strychnine, convulsive or synthetic poisons have

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not been found. Alcohol and caffeine were found in the urine.”

Bizilj, a film producer, said he was not qualified to say how Navalny fell ill, but that “it’s obvious that something terrible happened.”

“He’s a healthy strong man with a good constitution — the night before the attack he was swimming in a river,” Bizilj said.

“Obviously this was an attack on his life... a healthy man suddenly was in life danger and maybe could have died and maybe he can still die.”

When German specialists arrived aboard a plane equipped with advanced medical equipment Friday morning at his family’s behest, Navalny’s physicians in Omsk initially said he was too unstable to move.

Navalny’s supporters denounced that as a ploy by authorities to stall until any poison in his system would no longer be traceable. The Omsk medical team relented only after a charity that had organized the medevac plane revealed that the German doctors examined the politician and said he was fit to be transported.

Deputy chief doctor of the Omsk hospital Anatoly Kalinichenko then told reporters that Navalny’s condition had stabilized and that physicians “didn’t mind” transferring the politician, given that his relatives were willing “to take on the risks.”

The Kremlin denied that resistance to the transfer was political, with spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying that it was purely a medical decision. However, the reversal came as international pressure on Russia’s leadership mounted.

It would not be the first time a prominent, outspoken Russian was targeted in such a way — or the first time the Kremlin was accused of being behind it.

On Thursday, leaders of France and Germany said the two countries were ready to offer Navalny and his family any and all assistance and insisted on an investigation into what happened.

The most prominent member of Russia’s opposition, Navalny campaigned to challenge Putin in the 2018 presidential election but was barred from running. Since then, he has been promoting opposition candidates in regional elections, challenging members of the ruling party, United Russia.

His Foundation for Fighting Corruption has been exposing graft among government officials, including some at the highest level. But he had to shut the foundation last month after a financially devastating lawsuit from a businessman with close ties to the Kremlin.

Navalny fell ill on a flight back to Moscow from Siberia on Thursday and was taken to the hospital after the plane made an emergency landing. His team made arrangements to transfer him to Charité, a clinic in Berlin that has a history of treating famous foreign leaders and dissidents.

While his supporters and family members continue to insist that Navalny was poisoned, doctors in Omsk denied that and put forward another theory.

The hospital’s chief doctor, Alexander Murakhovsky, said in a video published by Omsk news outlet NGS55 that a metabolic disorder was the most likely diagnosis and that a drop in blood sugar may have caused Navalny to lose consciousness.

Another doctor with ties to the politician, Dr. Anastasia Vasilyeva, said that diagnosing Navalny with a metabolic disorder says nothing about what may have caused it — it could still have been the result of a poisoning.

Dr. Yaroslav Ashikhmin, who has been Navalny’s doctor since 2013, said the politician has always been in good health, regularly went for medical checkups and didn’t have any underlying illnesses that could have triggered his condition.

Western toxicology experts expressed doubts that a poisoning could have been ruled out so quickly.

“It takes a while to rule things out. And particularly if something is highly toxic — it will be there in very low concentrations, and many screening tests would just not pick that substance up,” said Alastair Hay, an emeritus professor and toxicology expert from the school of medicine at the University of Leeds.

Like many other opposition politicians in Russia, Navalny has been frequently detained by law enforcement and harassed by pro-Kremlin groups. In 2017, he was attacked by several men who threw antiseptic in his face, damaging an eye.

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Last year, Navalny was rushed to a hospital from jail where he was serving a sentence on charges of violating protest regulations. His team also suspected poisoning then. Doctors said he had a severe allergic reaction and sent him back to detention the following day.

Daria Litvinova and Jim Heintz in Moscow contributed to this report.

Asia Today: S. Korea imposes strict measures to stem spread

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea is banning large gatherings, closing beaches, shutting nightspots and churches and removing fans from professional sports in strict new measures announced Saturday as it battles the spread of the coronavirus.

Health Minister Park Neung-hoo announced the steps shortly after the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 332 new cases — the ninth straight day of triple-digit increases. The national caseload is now at 17,002, including 309 deaths.

While most of the new cases came from the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area, which has been at the center of the viral surge in recent weeks, infections were also reported in practically every major city and town, raising concerns that transmissions are slipping out of control.

The government had already imposed elevated social distancing measures in Seoul this week after resisting them for months out of economic concerns.

“We are now in a very dangerous situation that could trigger a massive nationwide spread of COVID-19,” Park said.

Churches had been a major source of new cases in the Seoul area before authorities shut them this week. Nightclubs, karaoke bars, buffet restaurants and computer gaming cafes in the greater capital region have also closed and spectators are banned again from baseball and soccer games, just weeks after teams had been allowed to sell portions of their seats.

The same measures will apply nationwide from Sunday, although Park said local governments will be permitted to exercise some level of flexibility, such as advising business shutdowns rather than enforcing them, if infections are low.

KCDC Director Jeong Eun-kyeong has endorsed even stronger restrictions. If there’s no sign that the virus spread is slowing after the weekend, she said the country should consider elevating social distancing measures to “Level 3,” which includes prohibiting gatherings of more than 10 people, shutting schools, halting professional sports and advising private companies to have employees work from home.

Yoon Taeho, a senior Health Ministry official, said the government will review the effect of the restrictions before deciding whether to strengthen them further.

As of Saturday afternoon, nearly 800 infections have been linked to a Seoul church led by a vocal critic of the country’s president. Sarang Jeil Church pastor Jun Kwang-hun was hospitalized with COVID-19 on Monday after participating in an anti-government protest last week where he shared a microphone on stage with other activists. More than 100 infections have been tied to protesters.

Police raided the church late Friday while trying to secure a more comprehensive list of its members who remain out of contact. Health workers have used cellphone location data to identify some 50,000 people who spent more than 30 minutes on the street during the protest last Saturday and have been alerting them to get tested. Around 18,000 of them have been tested, said Kwon Jun-wook, director of South Korea’s National Health Institute.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— India has recorded another 24-hour jump in coronavirus infections as the disease spreads across the country’s southern states after plateauing in the capital and the financial center of Mumbai. The Health Ministry reported 69,878 new cases on Saturday, bringing the total to 2,975,701. Globally India has been reporting the biggest daily rise in cases for 18 consecutive days. Some 2.2 million people have recovered from the disease in India since the first case was diagnosed in late January. India has the third-highest caseload after the United States and Brazil, and its 55,794 deaths give it the fourth-highest death toll in

the world. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the World Health Organization, said Friday that the goal was to end the pandemic within two years of its first emergence in Wuhan, China, late last year.

— New cases of COVID-19 in Australia's Victoria state continued to decline Saturday with 182 new infections, along with 13 deaths. It was the second day in a row in which the number of new infections has fallen below 200. Only 24 of the latest cases are without a known source, a contrast to the start of August when hundreds could not be traced. Australia's second largest city, Melbourne, and parts of rural Victoria were placed in full lockdown in early August. It's due to continue until Sept. 13. "Whilst tomorrow's numbers will be for tomorrow, we are all pleased to see a 'one' in front of these additional case numbers, and to a certain extent, it is perhaps at that level a little quicker than I thought it might be," Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews said. Meanwhile, an outbreak linked to a youth detention center in Queensland state has caused the state's premier to reintroduce restrictions on public gatherings. The cluster connected to the Brisbane Youth Detention Center now stands at seven, including six confirmed on Saturday. The 127 inmates, some as young as 13, have been locked in their rooms since a 77-year-old female supervisor tested positive on Wednesday. The worker, who is now in a hospital, worked five shifts at the center while infectious. Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk told a news conference Saturday the cases are of concern because "people have been out and about in the community."

— China on Saturday reported another 22 new cases brought by travelers from abroad, with no additional local infections. The National Health Commission said 454 people remain in treatment and 3,667 are in isolation. While local spread of the virus appears to have been contained in mainland China, the semi-autonomous southern city of Hong Kong continues to struggle with its worst outbreak since the pandemic began. The territory's leader Carrie Lam said Friday Hong Kong will offer free coronavirus tests to its residents over a period of two weeks starting Sept. 1., in hopes of restarting the services-dependent local economy. The city's economy contracted 9% in the second quarter of this year. A new surge in infections has more than tripled the number of cases in the city to 4,632, with 75 deaths.

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

Miami ICU nurse: I have never in my life seen so many deaths

By KELLI KENNEDY Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Their final breaths are tormented. Rublas Ruiz has seen too many of them -- the last gasps of 17 men and women who died of the coronavirus.

A 41-year-old ICU nurse in Miami's Kendall Regional Medical Center, Ruiz has witnessed the desperate, pleading, wide-eyed, barely there gasps.

"The fear in their eyes when they can't get enough air. They are so scared," he says, quietly. "Their eyes are big, desperate to get the oxygen and that makes me so sad."

He sits on their bed, grasps their hand, strokes their cheek and prays. Anything to soothe them.

"I know you cannot talk, but I'm going to talk to you," he tell them. "You have to be positive, you have to have faith that God is going to get you out of this."

Often, he ducks away to sob in the bathroom. It is a rare moment alone, when he can cast off the brave countenance.

Then he splashes water on his face and returns to the floor that has been his work home since March. While other nurses rotate in and out of the COVID-19 ICU unit to limit their exposure to the deadly virus, he's asked to stay permanently.

It's his calling.

"I'm here for them. This is what I was meant to do," says Ruiz.

"Many nurses have left. They don't want to deal with it, they're afraid, they're scared, they see other people getting infected."

Miami-Dade County has been the epicenter of the state's outbreak with about 2,000 deaths since March

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-- more than 20 percent of the state's total. As Florida cases skyrocketed this summer, Miami hospitals were especially overloaded in the second half of July.

For Ruiz, his routine is the same every day. He prays in the car on the way to the hospital: "Dear God, this is your day, put me in your hands and help me do what you want me to do. This is your creation and let me help you out."

Then, he says, "I take a deep breath when I get out of the car and go to battle."

As many as 10 patients have died in his ward in a single week.

At one point, he started counting, "and then I stopped doing that because there were so many."

Right now, he can't stop thinking about the 45-year-old father who has been intubated for more than two weeks, "seeing this young guy almost my age, just four years older than me ..."

His voice trails off. "We know he's not going to make it."

The hardest part is watching them die alone.

Playing the role of family has become almost more important than his nursing responsibilities. He tried to distract an elderly patient from searching for virus treatments on the Internet by asking him questions about his work as an inspector for the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Ruiz could sense the retired man's fear: "He was looking really, really sad and then that also made me cry that day." His condition deteriorated in less than a week, and he died.

He tries to connect patients with loved ones as much as possible through video chats. But ultimately, he's the one bearing witness to their final breaths.

"I have never seen in my life so many deaths, in a week or a month," he says. "The room gets empty and another patient comes in."

On the way home, he can't stop thinking about the patients he left behind. Will he see them tomorrow?

He steps into a makeshift changing room in the garage, removes his hospital scrubs and heads straight to the shower, praying he doesn't infect his wife and 10-year-old daughter. He tries not to think about that. It's too much to bear.

The tween is dejected, isolated from friends, missing school and deeply disappointed over the cancellation of an Ariana Grande concert that would have been the highlight of her year.

Ruiz tries hard to separate his grim work when he's home, but it seeps in. He relies heavily on the positive energy of his wife of six years, Yaneth.

"He has been quite depressed," she says. "We have good communication. I try to listen to him. I know he's stressed."

His wife lost her job as a hairdresser so Rublas takes extra shifts to make up for their lost income. The family has taken up fishing as a hobby, casting their reels off a bridge, catching snapper and enjoying the peace of being outside and together.

Back in April, Yaneth prepared a special birthday dinner for him at home. But when he sat at the table, the thought of losing so many patients overwhelmed him. And he broke down in tears.

Associated Press reporter Adriana Licon-Gomez contributed from Miami.

Pakistan sanctions Taliban to avoid global finance blacklist

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan issued sweeping financial sanctions against Afghanistan's Taliban, just as the militant group is in the midst of U.S.-led peace process in the neighboring country.

The orders, which were made public late on Friday, identified dozens of individuals, including the Taliban's chief peace negotiator Abdul Ghani Baradar and several members of the Haqqani family, including Sirajuddin, the current head of the Haqqani network and deputy head of the Taliban.

The list of sanctioned groups included others besides the Taliban and were in keeping with a five-year-

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old United Nations resolution sanctioning the Afghan group and freezing their assets.

The orders were issued as part of Pakistan's efforts to avoid being blacklisted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which monitors money laundering and tracks terrorist groups' activities, according to security officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Last year the Paris-based group put Islamabad on a grey list. Until now only Iran and North Korea are blacklisted, which severely restricts a country's international borrowing capabilities. Pakistan is trying to get off the grey list, said the officials.

There was no immediate response from the Taliban, but many of the group's leaders are known to own businesses and property in Pakistan.

Many of Taliban leaders, including those heading the much-feared Haqqani network, have lived in Pakistan since the 1980s, when they were part of the Afghan mujahedeen and allies of the United States to end the 10-year invasion of Afghanistan by the former Soviet Union. It ended in February, 1989.

Pakistan has denied giving sanctuary to the Taliban following their ouster in 2001 by the U.S.-led coalition but both Washington and Kabul routinely accused Islamabad of giving them a safe haven.

Still it was Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban that Washington eventually sought to exploit to move its peace negotiations with the insurgent movement forward. America signed a peace deal with the Taliban on Feb. 29. The deal is intended to end Washington's nearly 20 years of military engagement in Afghanistan, and has been touted as Afghanistan's best hope for a peace after more than four decades of war.

But even as Washington has already begun withdrawing its soldiers, efforts to get talks started between Kabul's political leadership and the Taliban have been stymied by delays in a prisoner release program.

The two sides are to release prisoners ___ 5,000 by the government and 1,000 by the Taliban ___ as a good will gesture ahead of talks. Both sides blame the other for the delays.

The timing of Pakistan's decision to issue the orders implementing the restrictive sanctions could also be seen as a move to pressure the Taliban into a quick start to the intra-Afghan negotiations.

Kabul has defied a traditional jirga or council's order to release the last Taliban it is holding, saying it wants 22 Afghan commandos being held by the Taliban freed first.

As well as the Taliban, the orders also target al-Qaida and the Islamic State affiliate which has carried out deadly attacks in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

They also take aim at outlawed Pakistani groups like Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), thousands of whom are believed by the U.N. to be hiding in remote regions of Afghanistan. The TTP has declared war on Pakistan, carrying out one of the worst terrorist attacks in the country in 2014 killing 145 children and their teachers at an army public school in northwest Pakistan.

The orders also take aim at outlawed anti-Indian groups considered allied with the country's security services.

Associated Press Writer Asim Tanvir from Multan, Pakistan, contributed to this report.

Trump struggles to use power of presidency to counter Biden

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump spent the week of the Democratic National Convention forsaking what has historically been an incumbent's greatest advantage: He's in the job his challenger wants.

Traditionally, an incumbent would devote the week of his rival's convention to bolstering his own credentials as a leader. But rather than focusing on his command of the job or using its power, Trump hit the campaign trail, where he flouted his own administration's pandemic safety guidance and expressed gratitude for support from adherents to an extremist conspiracy theory, QAnon.

It was a consequence of Trump's unwillingness to share the limelight, but also a necessary attempt to shift the November campaign from a referendum on his job performance to a choice between himself and Joe Biden. Ten weeks out from Election Day, as the coronavirus pandemic has ravaged Trump's reelection chances, aides have recognized that a vote on his presidency is not one he is likely to win.

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Acting “presidential” — holding briefings and leading negotiations — won’t suit him, in the view of many aides, if his presidency is what is holding him back.

Trump is not hoping to win over converts. Instead his reelection strategy hinges on his ability to animate his most loyal supporters with fears of a Democratic administration, motivating them to show up at the polls and attempting to turn away moderates who might be leaning toward voting for Joe Biden.

“Where is it written that you have to stay home and let your opponent attack you for a week?” said Trump campaign communications director Tim Murtaugh. “The president is a fighter and one who fights back, and that’s what he was doing.”

The dynamic will be on display next week as Trump prepares for his own convention. While he is set to rely on the trappings of the office — including the unprecedented use of the South Lawn as the backdrop for his acceptance speech — the crux of his message is expected to be sounding the alarm over the consequences of a Biden victory.

“No one will be safe in our country, and no one will be spared,” he said Friday.

Sensing vulnerability, Democrats spent their convention hammering Trump’s fitness for the job he currently occupies, with former President Barack Obama declaring that Trump has “no interest in treating the presidency as anything but one more reality show that he can use to get the attention he craves.”

“Donald Trump hasn’t grown into the job because he can’t,” Obama said bluntly.

In appearances this week, Trump at times seemed to be trying to prove their point.

“I heard that these are people that love our country,” Trump said Wednesday of supporters of QAnon, the baseless theory that centers on an alleged anonymous, high-ranking government official known as “Q” who shares information about an anti-Trump “deep state” often tied to satanism and child sex trafficking.

Trump, who has retweeted QAnon-promoting accounts, insisted he hadn’t heard much about the movement — the subject of an FBI extremist warning — “other than I understand they like me very much” and “it is gaining in popularity.”

“This is the definition of walking into a punch,” said Democratic strategist and former Biden aide Scott Mulhauser. “Trump has the job already, and rather than rising above the fray to embrace a Rose Garden strategy touting his leadership, he’s campaigning and flailing away at every convention punch Democrats throw.”

But to Trump aides and allies, the aggressive approach was tried and true, an attempt at repeating his scorched earth campaign from 2016, just at a new target.

As Biden laid out an appeal for national unity and cast himself as an “ally of the light, not the darkness,” Trump delivered his sharpest broadsides yet at Biden, casting him as a “radical” and “socialist” whose victory would bring about “left-wing fascism.”

Focusing on his rival’s economic and immigration agenda, Trump repeatedly exaggerated Biden’s positions for greatest effect.

“Every election is a binary choice, and this one is no different,” Murtaugh said.

Terry Sullivan, the campaign manager for the 2016 presidential campaign of Sen. Marco Rubio, who found himself on the receiving end of similar attacks, said Trump “only knows one way to campaign.”

“He floods the zone with his message via events and Twitter attacking his opponents,” he said. “It’s worked for him in the past so, in his mind, there is no reason it won’t work again.”

Trump has torn up other norms in politics, so abandoning the traditional calendar is hardly a surprise — and could help him as he tries to overcome his deficit with voters.

“The Trump team wisely chose to take an aggressive approach to the Dems’ big week and dominated local news by traveling to secondary markets in key battleground states,” said Scott Reed, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s political strategist. “Now that we are within 100 days, every day is a battle to win the day, the small sliver of undecided voters. Time is the one thing you cannot buy in national politics.”

¹Reinforcements arriving to help in deadly California fires

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ and JANIE HAR Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Firefighters and aircraft from 10 states began arriving in California Friday to help weary crews battling some of the largest blazes in state history as weekend weather threatened to renew the advance of flames that have killed six people and incinerated hundreds of homes.

Some 560 wildfires were burning throughout the state but many were small and remote. The bulk of damage was from three clusters of blazes that were ravaging forest and rural areas in the wine country and San Francisco Bay Area.

Those complexes, consisting of dozens of fires, exploded in size Friday. Together, they had scorched 991 square miles (2,566 square kilometers) and destroyed more than 500 homes and other buildings, fire officials said.

At least 100,000 people were under evacuation orders.

Two Bay Area clusters, the LNU Lightning Complex and the SCU Lightning Complex, became respectively the second- and third-largest wildfires in recent state history by size, according to Cal Fire records.

The third blaze, the CZU Lightning Complex, is in San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties.

The fires were sparked by lightning from unsettled weather earlier in the week. Cooler, more humid weather overnight helped firefighters make ground against the fires but the National Weather Service issued a fire weather watch from Sunday morning into Tuesday for the entire Bay Area and central coast.

Forecasters said there was a chance of thunderstorms bringing more lightning and erratic gusts.

More than 12,000 personnel were fighting fires around the state, aided by fleets of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. By Friday, the state's fire agency, Cal Fire, had called out 96% of its available fire engines. But reinforcements began to arrive.

The number of personnel assigned to the LNU complex, in the heart of wine country north of San Francisco, more than doubled from 580 to over 1,400 Friday and nearly 200 fire engines were on the scene, fire officials said.

"I'm happy to see the jumps that we've had today," said Sean Kavanaugh, Cal Fire incident commander.

That could help crews make further progress against the sprawling fire, which was just 15% contained. Most evacuations for the town of Vacaville were lifted Friday. The fire threat there was reduced after reaching the edges of town.

"I feel like we're up on our feet, standing straight and actually moving a little bit forward," Kavanaugh said Friday night.

However, the number of large fires was "staggering" and had put "tremendous strain" on firefighting resources throughout the Western states, he said.

Nevada and Arizona, for example, have battled sizable blazes this week as a heat wave swept the West.

Gov. Gavin Newsom said 10 states were sending personnel and equipment. The governor also said he was reaching out to Canada and Australia for help.

"We have more people but it's not enough," Newsom said.

In the Santa Cruz mountains south of San Francisco, about 1,000 firefighters were battling a fire 10 times the size they typically would cover, said Dan Olsen, a Cal Fire spokesman.

With firefighting resources tight, homes in remote, hard-to-get-to places burned unattended. Cal Fire Chief Mark Brunton pleaded with residents to quit battling fires on their own, saying that just causes more problems for the professionals.

"We had last night three separate rescues that pulled our vital, very few resources away," he said.

But Peter Koleckai credits a neighbor, not firefighters, with saving his home in a rural area where dozens of homes were reduced to smoldering ruins.

"We were here at about 3 o'clock in the morning and the fire department just left. They just left," he said.

Koleckai said he ran to a firefighter and told him a brush fire was erupting next to a house.

"They never went up there and it engulfed the whole house, took the house out," he said.

A neighbor with a high pressure hose, firefighting equipment and a generator saved his home, Koleckai

said.

Cal Fire Battalion Chief Mike Smith said typically a wildfire of the size burning through the region would have 10 or even 20 times as many firefighters.

"We are doing absolutely everything we can," he said.

The death toll from California fires has reached at least six. Three bodies were found Thursday in a burned home in Napa County, said Henry Wofford, a Sheriff's Office spokesman.

A man also died in neighboring Solano County, and a Pacific Gas & Electric utility worker was found dead Wednesday in a vehicle in the Vacaville area.

Also Wednesday, a helicopter pilot died in a crash while dropping water on a blaze in Fresno County.

Smoke and ash billowing from the fires has fouled the air throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and along California's scenic central coast.

Associated Press writers Martha Mendoza in Santa Cruz, Camille Fassett in Redwood City and John Antczak in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Democratic plan in rural, swing state counties: Lose by less

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

MONTFORT, Wis. (AP) — Jerry Volenec felt betrayed.

Sold on Donald Trump's pledge to help struggling Wisconsin dairy farmers, Volenec voted for the Republican. But within two years, Trump's trade pact with Canada had blocked the export of a good bit of Volenec's milk.

"It was a line in the sand. It said to me I was expendable," Volenec said, as his shiny-coated Holsteins feasted on heaps of corn silage at his southwest Wisconsin farm. "As much as he says he loves the farmers, he loves us in so much as what we can do for him."

Democrats are hoping to find just enough voters like Volenec to shave Trump's margins in rural areas while they rack up larger numbers in cities and suburbs. They have put in money in the millions and staff in the dozens to try to make it happen.

Their unorthodox strategy: win by losing by less.

"The general theory of the case goes like this: We're trying not to lose as bad," veteran Democratic strategist James Carville said of the rural and small-town counties Trump swung to his side in 2016. "Because when you don't lose as bad at one thing, you can win everything."

Carville has helped raise millions of dollars for Democratic super PAC American Bridge 21st Century's \$30 million advertising effort aimed at picking off voters in rural and working-class counties across Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Trump carried all three states by about 77,000 votes out of 13.5 million cast. But in doing so, he peeled off 37 counties carried in 2012 by Barack Obama.

Trump likely must again win all three of the states, which the Democratic nominee had carried in six consecutive elections before 2016, if he is to get a second term.

Trump made a quick campaign stop Monday in Oshkosh, a hub in swing-voting east central Wisconsin, while Democrats were holding parts of their national convention in Milwaukee.

But American Bridge's effort is focusing more on the economically challenged Mississippi River Valley, 150 miles west.

Trump won Grant County, a fertile expanse of pastureland where Volenec works his fifth-generation farm and which went for Barack Obama in 2012.

It's part of a swath of western Wisconsin, similar to central Michigan and parts of rural and working-class Pennsylvania, where Democrats see Joe Biden simply losing by fewer votes than Hillary Clinton did in 2016 as a way to increase pressure on Trump in the swing regions and suburbs.

"The swing from 2012 to 2016, more than half of it, came from communities that cast 1,000 votes or fewer," Wisconsin Democratic Party Chair Ben Wikler said. That meant a shift of roughly 91,000 votes from

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Democrat to Republican in Wisconsin and about 123,000 in Michigan.

In all, American Bridge's map has grown over the summer to include 84 counties, more than half of the three states' total territory.

They include Bay County, Michigan, on Lake Huron, where Pat Steger backed Trump but has turned away because of what she calls his uneven support for his government's chief medical experts during the coronavirus pandemic.

Bay County, like neighboring Saginaw and Shiawassee, once contributed thousands of workers to a General Motors plant in Bay City. But like the Bay City plant itself, the union-based Democratic voting bloc has dwindled.

"I've come to realize I don't think he has the ability to step back, listen and absorb, as a leader during crisis should," said Steger, a 77-year-old retired administrative worker for a Bay City electric company.

Pecking away at these less populous regions is only one part of the fight for these three states that delivered the presidency for Trump. Trump's team is working to raise concerns about protests over racial injustice in GOP-leaning suburbs, while Biden is counting on a more energized urban outpouring than four years ago as he also chips into Trump's support in typically GOP-leaning suburbs.

That rests heavily on an outpouring from Democratic-heavy Milwaukee, Detroit, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, where participation was down in 2016. Likewise, Democrats, who have made gains in suburbs, including Republican-leaning suburbs around Milwaukee, must continue making inroads with the younger and more racially and ethnically diverse families that have begun incrementally changing the profile of once vastly white suburbs and exurbs, especially around Milwaukee.

But Trump is also banking on squeezing as many votes as he did from northwest Wisconsin, northern Michigan and vast tracts of rural and small town Pennsylvania. For Democrats, winning back even a fraction of Trump's margin here along these rural roads and in shrunken manufacturing towns could be significant.

In 2018, Democrat Gretchen Whitmer took the Michigan governorship in part by picking up nine counties carried by Trump in 2016, including Bay County. In Wisconsin, Democratic Sen. Tammy Baldwin won reelection carrying 17 that Trump carried.

The successes are worrisome to Republicans, especially considering the tightening presidential race in swing-state Ohio, where Trump won by 8 percentage points but is seen as losing support in key suburbs while fighting to maintain near-historic margins in rural areas.

If Ohio is becoming more competitive, Trump faces an even greater task of holding his rural margins in Wisconsin where the outcome was much closer in 2016, said Mark Graul, a Wisconsin Republican strategist who ran George W. Bush's winning reelection campaign there in 2004.

"What worries me is for every one rural vote we pick up, we're losing two suburban votes," Graul said. "And that math does not work well."

California wildfires some of largest in state history

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ and JANIE HAR Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Lightning-sparked wildfires in Northern California exploded in size Friday to become some of the largest in state history, forcing thousands to flee and destroying hundreds of homes and other structures as reinforcements began arriving to help weary firefighters.

More than 12,000 firefighters aided by helicopters and air tankers are battling wildfires throughout California. Three groups of fires, called complexes, burning north, east and south of San Francisco have together scorched 991 square miles (2,566 square kilometers), destroyed more than 500 structures and killed five people.

At least 100,000 people are under evacuation orders.

The number of personnel assigned to the sprawling LNU Complex — a cluster of blazes burning in the heart of wine country north of San Francisco — doubled to more than 1,000 firefighters Friday, Cal Fire Division Chief Ben Nicholls said.

"I'm happy to say there are resources all around the fire today. We have engines on all four sides of it working hand-in-hand with the bulldozers to start containing this fire, putting it to bed," Nicholls aid.

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Fire crews with help from "copious amounts of fixed-wing aircraft" were working Friday to stop a large blaze from reaching communities in the West Dry Creek Valley of Sonoma County, he said.

The blazes, coming during a heat wave that has seen temperatures top 100 degrees, are taxing the state's firefighting capacity but assistance from throughout the country was beginning to arrive, with 10 states sending fire crews, engines and aircraft to help, Gov. Gavin Newsom said.

"We have more people but it's not enough. We have more air support but it's still not enough and that's why we need support from our federal partners," Newsom said.

Newsom thanked President Donald Trump's administration for its help a day after pushing back on Trump's criticism of the state's wildfire prevention work, saying that he has a "strong personal relationship with the president."

"While he may make statements publicly, the working relationship privately has been a very effective one," Newsom said.

There are 560 fires burning in the state, many small and remote but there are about two dozen major fires, mainly in Northern California. Many blazes were sparked by thousands of lightning strikes earlier in the week.

Tens of thousands of homes were threatened by flames that drove through dense and bone-dry trees and brush. Some fires doubled in size within 24 hours, fire officials said.

With firefighting resources tight, homes in remote, hard-to-get-to places burned unattended. CalFire Chief Mark Brunton pleaded with residents to quit battling fires on their own, saying that just causes more problems for the professionals.

"We had last night three separate rescues that pulled our vital, very few resources away," he said.

An anxious Rachel Stratman, 35, and her husband, Quentin Lareau, 40, waited for word Friday about their home in the Forest Springs community of Boulder Creek, in Santa Cruz County, after evacuating earlier this week. She knew one house burned but received conflicting information about the rest of the neighborhood.

"It's so hard to wait and not know," she said. "I'm still torn if I want people to be going back to the area and videotaping. I know they cause the firefighters distraction, but that's the only way we know."

The couple were in a San Jose hotel with medication she needs after undergoing a transplant surgery last month. She collected her mother's ashes and some clothes while her husband closed windows and readied the home before they evacuated Tuesday.

"I kept looking at things and kept thinking I should grab this or that, but I just told myself I needed to leave. I didn't bring any official documents and I didn't bring my house deed or car title. No passport," she said.

The ferocity of the fires was astonishing so early in the fire season, which historically has seen the largest and deadliest blazes when dry gusts blow in the fall.

But the death toll already had reached at least six since the majority of blazes started less than a week ago. Five deaths involved fires burning in wine country north of San Francisco. The other death was a helicopter pilot who crashed while dropping water on a blaze in Fresno County.

Henry Wofford, spokesman for the Napa County Sheriff's Office, said three of the bodies were found Thursday in a burned home. The area was under an evacuation order due to "very, very heavy" fire that he said burned multiple homes. He said authorities are trying to determine the identities.

In neighboring Solano County, Sheriff Thomas A. Ferrara reported the death of a male resident. The other victim was a Pacific Gas & Electric utility worker who was found dead Wednesday in a vehicle in the Vacaville area.

At least 14,000 people in Solano County remained under mandatory evacuation Friday, Solano County Undersheriff Brad DeWall said. He said 119 homes have been destroyed in his county.

At least two other people were missing and more than 30 civilians and firefighters have been injured, authorities said.

Smoke and ash billowing from the fires has fouled the air throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and

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along California's scenic central coast.

The SCU Lightning Complex fire burning east of San Francisco started Tuesday and the slightly smaller LNU Lightning Complex burning in wine country that was sparked a day earlier already have become among the 10 largest wildfires in state history. Firefighters had only contained a small portion of the wildfires by Friday afternoon.

In Napa County, Crosswalk Community Church has transformed its sanctuary and gymnasium into an evacuation shelter, filling the floor with cots spaced at least 6 feet (1.8 meters) apart. Pastor Peter Shaw said the church has seen a steady stream of people stopping for resources. Some were just looking for information, while others needed gift cards for food and basic needs.

"COVID-19 complicates everything," Shaw wrote in an email to The Associated Press. "Socially distanced cots drastically decreases our capacity."

A few people have stayed the night, Shaw said, adding several people parked their RVs in the church parking lot.

"The longer the evacuations stay in place, I suspect the more people we will see," he said.

Eric Swensen packed early and got ready to evacuate after seeing ash, burned leaves and charred bark fall around his family's home in Boulder Creek earlier this week. He, his 11-year-old son, girlfriend Gundy Sartor, and neighbor Lesley Wludyga packed a pet lizard and important documents and headed north to Redwood City.

But as of Friday, he still hadn't heard if his home had survived. He read on social media that firefighters had to retreat from the area.

"Obviously, the current resources dedicated to the fire are nowhere near enough, but we also understand that California is burning, and they are doing what they can," Swensen said.

This story has been corrected to reflect the number of people under evacuation orders is at least 100,000.

Associated Press writers Martha Mendoza in Santa Cruz, Camille Fassett in Redwood City and John Antczak in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Biden, once an orator, reaches for rhetorical flourish again

By BILL BARROW and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The early months of Joe Biden's third White House bid were marked with uneven debate performances and winding town halls in Iowa and New Hampshire. That contrast to the loquacious, eloquent young senator who first sought the presidency 33 years ago, struck even some friendly Democrats and fed the Republican narrative that the 77-year-old was no longer fit to lead.

Biden did much to dispel that caricature Thursday night during his 24-minute address accepting the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. His performance validates at least some of the frustrations the former vice president and his aides have expressed privately through months of viral videos of "Biden gaffes" and the "Sleepy Joe" invective peddled by President Donald Trump, himself a septuagenarian who mangles syntax and regularly speaks or tweets meandering, nonsensical thoughts.

"It was a beautiful, powerful speech that hit so many notes," said Karen Finney, a Democratic strategist who worked for nominee Hillary Clinton's campaign in 2016.

Political observers from both parties broadly agreed that Biden exceeded the expectations Trump had set for his Democratic rival with months of attacks. But some Republicans and Democrats said Trump may also have helped Biden by reducing expectations for anyone seeking the presidency.

"For 24 minutes, every American who watched it escaped our current reality and was imagining a world without Donald Trump. And that alone made it a good speech," said Rick Tyler, a Republican strategist and outspoken critic of the president.

Trump's quips about Biden's age and mental acuity "may have lowered the bar" for Biden, Finney added, "but Trump has also lowered the bar on the presidency" with constant, personal attacks on political rivals,

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media critics and even many Republicans. "So part of what Biden did is remind people that it's OK to raise that bar again," Finney said.

Both men have more tests upcoming. Republicans convene their convention Monday, and Trump's acceptance speech is set for Thursday from the White House lawn. Biden has a sit-down interview alongside his running mate, Kamala Harris, that will air Sunday on ABC.

Trump, 74, has stumbled through some of his own interviews recently, bragging to Fox News that he had passed a physician's cognition test meant to flag signs of dementia in older patients. Days later, Trump repeatedly misrepresented the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the spread of the virus in an interview with Axios. Nonetheless, the president boasted to Fox News anchor Chris Wallace that Biden couldn't endure the pressures of such interviews.

"Let Biden sit through an interview like this. He'll be on the ground crying for Mommy," said Trump, who like Biden speaks in notably different clips than he did when he was younger.

Biden has done many interviews with local network affiliates in battleground states since clinching the Democratic nomination, but national interviews and press conferences have been rare.

For now, the former vice president is relishing a speech that evoked an earlier period of his career.

A Washington Post analysis in 1986, as Biden hopscotched the country to state Democratic Party dinners ahead of his first presidential bid, described "his capacity for stirring sparks in the burned-out and broken-hearted" with "pyrotechnic burst of quotations from the Kennedys and Martin Luther King Jr."

He launched his first presidential bid a year later as a 43-year-old senator calling for generational change. "We must rekindle the fire of idealism in our society, for nothing suffocates the promise of America more than unbounded cynicism and indifference," he said, evoking John F. Kennedy in a speech at the Amtrak station near his residence in Wilmington, Delaware.

Joe Trippi, who worked for Biden rivals Gary Hart and Dick Gephardt that cycle, compared him to candidate Barack Obama in 2008.

"He was the new, young senator, up-and-coming. Strong orator and not of Washington yet," said Trippi, a veteran Democratic strategist.

Still, Biden's weaknesses were visible. The same Washington Post writer who lavished praise noted his penchant for asking "such wordy, windy, discursive questions" that he'd exhaust most his time in Senate committee hearings. Freed from such limits on the campaign trail now, Biden sometimes cuts off his own answers: "I know I've gone on too long."

Biden also has never hidden that he's a stutterer, for decades telling of how he'd memorize works of his favorite Irish poets and recite them in the mirror as a boy. Seamus Heaney earned a spot in Biden's acceptance speech Thursday as he called for America to "make hope and history rhyme."

But his private challenge has figured more prominently in 2020 than before. Biden's most in-depth interview as a 2020 candidate came for a magazine profile on him as a stutterer. And on the night he accepted the Democratic nomination, he was hailed by 13-year-old Brayden Harrington for helping the boy overcome his own stutter.

Biden has long been famous for verbal missteps beyond any stutter, a point the Trump campaign has zeroed in on in viral videos and memes. This campaign cycle, he's referred to Vermont when he's in New Hampshire and said that any Black American voting for Trump "ain't Black." The catch-all explanation from Biden allies is that he's "authentic."

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, a University of Pennsylvania professor who has written extensively on political communication, said video compilations of such mistakes are irrelevant, noting that similar ones could be put together for anyone who speaks publicly. She added that such clips on older candidates also risk stirring voters' unconscious age biases.

She said prepared speeches and even debates, during which candidates lean heavily on practiced talking points, don't necessarily offer voters the right window to a candidate's mind, either.

The professor argued that the more important test for Biden and Trump would be extended "extemporaneous" interactions with voters or journalists asking tough follow-up questions. She noted Trump already has shown that he "wanders all over the place" in interviews even on focused topics. Biden, she

said, owes it to voters to do more interviews.

"We're trying to figure out whether these people have a capacity to govern," she said. "Can they absorb evidence and provide a coherent answer? The question is: Who are we going to get as president?"

Barrow reported from Atlanta.

Plane carrying dissident in coma leaves Russia for Germany

By DANIEL KOZIN and DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

OMSK, Russia (AP) — A plane carrying a Russian dissident who is in a coma after a suspected poisoning left for a German hospital Saturday following much wrangling over Alexei Navalny's condition and treatment.

The plane could be seen taking off from an airport in the Siberian city of Omsk just after 8 a.m. local time. Navalny's spokesperson, Kira Yarmysh, confirmed the departure on Twitter. The flight to Berlin was expected to take about five hours.

Navalny, a 44-year-old politician and corruption investigator who is one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's fiercest critics, was admitted to an intensive care unit in Omsk on Thursday. His supporters believe that tea he drank was laced with poison — and that the Kremlin is behind both his illness and the delay in transferring him to a top German hospital.

When German specialists first arrived on a plane equipped with advanced medical equipment Friday morning at his family's behest, Navalny's physicians in Omsk said he was too unstable to move.

Navalny's supporters denounced that as a ploy by authorities to stall until any poison in his system would no longer be traceable. The Omsk medical team relented only after a charity that had organized the medevac plane revealed that the German doctors examined the politician and said he was fit to be transported.

Deputy chief doctor of the Omsk hospital Anatoly Kalinichenko then told reporters that Navalny's condition had stabilized and that physicians "didn't mind" transferring the politician, given that his relatives were willing "to take on the risks."

The Kremlin denied resistance to the transfer was political, with spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying that it was purely a medical decision. However, the reversal came as international pressure on Russia's leadership mounted.

It would not be the first time a prominent, outspoken Russian was targeted in such a way — or the first time the Kremlin was accused of being behind it.

On Thursday, leaders of France and Germany said the two countries were ready to offer Navalny and his family any and all assistance and insisted on an investigation into what happened. On Friday, European Union spokeswoman Nabila Massrali added that the bloc was urging Russian authorities to allow him to be taken abroad.

The most prominent member of Russia's opposition, Navalny campaigned to challenge Putin in the 2018 presidential election but was barred from running. Since then, he has been promoting opposition candidates in regional elections, challenging members of the ruling party, United Russia.

His Foundation for Fighting Corruption has been exposing graft among government officials, including some at the highest level. But he had to shut the foundation last month after a financially devastating lawsuit from a businessman with close ties to the Kremlin.

Navalny fell ill on a flight back to Moscow from Siberia on Thursday and was taken to the hospital after the plane made an emergency landing. His team made arrangements to transfer him to Charité, a clinic in Berlin that has a history of treating famous foreign leaders and dissidents.

Dr. Yaroslav Ashikhmin, Navalny's physician in Moscow, told The Associated Press that being on a plane with specialized equipment, including a ventilator and a machine that can do the work of the heart and lungs, "can be even safer than staying in a hospital in Omsk."

Yarmysh posted pictures of what she said was a bathroom inside the hospital that showed squalid conditions, including walls with paint peeling off, rusting pipes, and a dirty floor and walls.

While his supporters and family members continue to insist that Navalny was poisoned, doctors in Omsk

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denied that and put forth another theory.

The hospital's chief doctor, Alexander Murakhovsky, said in a video published by Omsk news outlet NGS55 that a metabolic disorder was the most likely diagnosis and that a drop in blood sugar may have caused Navalny to lose consciousness.

Another doctor with ties to the politician, Dr. Anastasia Vasilyeva, said that diagnosing Navalny with a "metabolic disorder" says nothing about what may have caused it — and it could have been the result of a poisoning.

Ashikhmin, who's been Navalny's doctor since 2013, said the politician has always been in good health, regularly went for medical checkups and didn't have any underlying illnesses that could have triggered his condition.

Western toxicology experts expressed doubts that a poisoning could have been ruled out so quickly.

"It takes a while to rule things out. And particularly if something is highly toxic — it will be there in very low concentrations, and many screening tests would just not pick that substance up," said Alastair Hay, an emeritus professor and toxicology expert from the school of medicine at the University of Leeds.

Like many other opposition politicians in Russia, Navalny has been frequently detained by law enforcement and harassed by pro-Kremlin groups. In 2017, he was attacked by several men who threw antiseptic in his face, damaging an eye.

Last year, Navalny was rushed to a hospital from jail — where he was serving a sentence on charges of violating protest regulations. His team also suspected poisoning then. Doctors said he had a severe allergic attack and sent him back to detention the following day.

The widow of Alexander Litvinenko, the former Russian agent who died in London in 2006 after drinking tea laced with radioactive polonium-210, said she understood why Navalny's family wanted him transferred abroad.

Marina Litvinenko told the AP via a video call from Italy that "every day, every hour, sometimes every second" is important.

She expressed her support for Navalny's family, saying: "Particularly for his wife, Yulia, be strong," she said. "And never give up. Believe he will survive."

Litvinova reported from Moscow. Associated Press writers Kirsten Grieshaber and David Rising in Berlin, and Pan Pylas and Danica Kirka in London, contributed to this report.

Birth of panda cub provides 'much-needed moment of pure joy'

By CAROLE FELDMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Delivering a "much-needed moment of pure joy," the National Zoo's giant panda Mei Xiang gave birth to a wiggling cub Friday at a time of global pandemic and social unrest.

An experienced mom, "Mei Xiang picked the cub up immediately and began cradling and caring for it," the zoo said in a statement. "The panda team heard the cub vocalize."

Panda lovers around the world were able to see the birth on the zoo's Panda Cam. Zookeepers also were using the camera to keep an eye on mom and baby.

"Giant pandas are an international symbol of endangered wildlife and hope, and with the birth of this precious cub we are thrilled to offer the world a much-needed moment of pure joy," said Steve Monfort, John and Adrienne Mars Director of the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute.

Monfort said Mei Xiang's age — 22 — made her chances of giving birth to a cub slim. "However, we wanted to give her one more opportunity to contribute to her species' survival," he said.

She is the oldest giant panda to successfully give birth in the United States. The oldest in the world gave birth in China at age 23.

Mei Xiang has three surviving offspring, Tai Shan, Bao Bao and Bei Bei, that were transported to China at age 4 under an agreement with the Chinese government.

The zoo has reopened to visitors on a limited basis, but the Panda House is closed.

Mei Xiang gave birth in a small den, where she created a nest out of branches. Although the place looks tiny for a big panda, the zoo said giant pandas in wild give birth in small dens. "They stay in these dens for about the cub's first 100 days," the zoo said on Instagram.

The zoo had given notice earlier in the day that Mei Xiang appeared to be in labor, noting her restlessness and body-licking.

Earlier this week, the zoo, part of the Smithsonian Institution, posted an image from Mei Xiang's ultrasound that confirmed the pregnancy. "Keep your paws crossed!" the zoo posted, reporting that the fetus was "kicking and swimming in the amniotic fluid."

"We need this! We totally need this joy," zoo spokeswoman Pamela Baker-Masson said when the pregnancy was confirmed. "We are all in desperate need of these feel-goods."

Giant pandas at birth are about the size of a stick of butter. They're pink and hairless; the distinctive black and white fur markings of giant pandas come later.

The zoo said Mei was impregnated via artificial insemination, a process which was heavily affected by precautions over the COVID-19 pandemic. The procedure was conducted shortly after the entire zoo shut down on March 14.

The father is giant panda Tian Tian.

Rather than using a combination of stored frozen sperm and fresh semen, the zoo inseminated Mei Xiang only with thawed-out semen to minimize the number of close-quarters medical procedures. It was the first successful procedure of its kind in the U.S. using only frozen sperm.

—
Associated Press writer Ashraf Khalil contributed to this report.

Apology at sentencing deepens mystery of Golden State Killer

By DON THOMPSON Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Just before receiving multiple consecutive life sentences, Joseph James DeAngelo, the former California police officer who lived a double life as the murderous sociopath dubbed the Golden State Killer, broke his silence to tell a hushed courtroom filled with victims and their family members that he was "truly sorry" for the crimes.

It was such an unexpected moment that it brought gasps from those in the gallery, many of whom sat through an extraordinary four-day sentencing hearing filled with graphic and heart-wrenching testimony from dozens of victims. It also reinforced that nobody ever seemed to know what DeAngelo would do and who he was, which helps explain how he eluded detection for four decades while committing at least 13 killings and dozens of rapes.

The 74-year-old DeAngelo spoke for only a few seconds after rising from a wheelchair that newly released jail video shows he doesn't need.

"I listened to all your statements, each one of them, and I'm truly sorry for everyone I've hurt," he said, putting aside the weak, quavering voice he used to plead guilty and also admit to multiple other sexual assaults for which the statute of limitations had expired.

Prosecutors and victims said it was more evidence of a manipulative and vicious criminal who fooled investigators and his own family until he finally admitted victimizing at least 87 people at 53 separate crime scenes spanning 11 California counties. He was finally unmasked in 2018 with a pioneering use of DNA tracing.

"I think that he is truly diabolical and he is constantly masked, whether it's a physical mask, a disguise in the voice, the role of a decent guy in the community and having people around him who love him," said Debbi Domingo McMullan, the daughter of murder victim Cheri Domingo.

"One hundred percent 'Jekyll & Hyde,'" added Jane Carson-Sandler, one of DeAngelo's first rape victims. "It's like he was living two completely different lives. ... He probably, somehow in his mind, didn't feel that he was committing these crimes — it was someone else, almost compartmentalized."

DeAngelo's family members broke their silence in the case, writing in letters read to the judge that the

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"monster," "devil," "beast" and "madman" described by prosecutors is the polar opposite of the man that one niece saw as a loving father figure and another as her "hero" who took her camping and fishing.

Sacramento County Superior Court Judge Michael Bowman was unmoved. He said DeAngelo should die in prison with "no mercy" from his jailers after pleading guilty in June to 13 murders and 13 rape-related charges that spanned much of California between 1975 and 1986. The plea deal spared him the death penalty.

"When a person commits monstrous acts, they need to be locked away so they can never harm an innocent person," the judge said to applause from DeAngelo's victims.

Investigators in the case pioneered a new method of DNA tracing that involves building a family tree from publicly accessible genealogy websites to narrow the list of suspects.

They linked nearly 40-year-old DNA from crime scenes to a distant relative of DeAngelo and eventually to a discarded tissue they surreptitiously lifted from DeAngelo's garbage can in suburban Sacramento.

The same technique has since been used to solve 93 murders and rapes across the nation, said Ron Harrington, whose family has been obsessed with solving the 1980 slayings of youngest brother Keith Harrington and his new wife, Patrice Harrington.

It led oldest brother Bruce Harrington to champion a ballot measure passed by California voters in 2004 that expanded the collection of DNA samples from prisoners and those arrested for felonies and has since led to more than 81,000 identifications.

Bowman told DeAngelo he was moved by the courage and strength of the victims and their family members — "all qualities you clearly lack" — who told how they endured sadistic, hours-long assaults.

DeAngelo's rapes and eventual murders followed the same pattern of binding couples he surprised while they slept and assaulting the woman as the man lay helpless. He would place dishes on the man's back, warning that he would kill them both if the dishes rattled.

DeAngelo's relatives said that conflicted with their image of the man they loved.

"I personally feel that someone else is inside him who I do not know," a niece said in a letter read by defense attorneys.

DeAngelo's sister and a close friend each wrote that he was abused as a boy by an emotionally distant, disciplinarian father.

Prosecutors said they had found no evidence of abuse, but Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert said they learned he was a teenager "who was blowing up animals, who was breaking into homes."

His ex-wife, Sacramento attorney Sharon Huddle, said in her own court filing that she was fooled by his excuses of working nights, leaving for pheasant hunts and visiting his parents, though many victims have wondered aloud how she could not have known of her husband's double life.

"No compassion, no empathy, no remorse," Schubert said. "He has and always will be a sociopath in action."

Former fiancée Bonnie Colwell Ueltzen said, "I didn't see a criminal in him, but I know now he was a burglar and a Peeping Tom before I ever knew him."

She broke off their teenage engagement when DeAngelo became abusive. Investigators have said one rape victim's recollection that her assailant shouted "I hate you, Bonnie" helped lead them to DeAngelo.

"Maybe I'm part of his cover. Maybe his family's part of his cover," Ueltzen said after DeAngelo was sentenced. "We're all props in his big story, where he's always been a criminal underneath."

Mexico's famous floating gardens reopen after virus shutdown

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The famous "floating gardens" of Xochimilco reopened to visitors Friday after a five-month lockdown for the coronavirus pandemic.

The canals that run through man-made islands created by the Aztecs on what is now the south side of Mexico City provide a popular day trip for tourists, with flat-bottom boats plying the water and mariachis playing music.

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Seeking to reassure people, the borough government cleaned and disinfected the flower-decked boats and docks, and enforced special hygiene rules, but there were few tourists or revelers for the reopening. That contrasts with the crowds in a good year, like 2015, when about 2 million people visited the floating gardens.

The tourism industry in Mexico accounts for 8.7% of the country's gross domestic product, and has been left gasping by the pandemic as both domestic and foreign tourists stay home. Mexico City, which has nearly 90,000 confirmed coronavirus cases and about 10,000 deaths, is still on the second-highest form of alert.

Tourism has long been particularly important for Xochimilco, where borough officials have long struggled to defend the islands, known as "chinampas," from encroaching development. People build houses on the unstable islands, which were created by the Aztecs by laying down woven reed mats, covering them with dirt and planting trees or other plants to root the floating islands to the bottom of the shallow lake.

As he poled his boat, known as a "trajinera," through the waterways with a long barge pole, one boatman noted ruefully that even once people feel reassured about Xochimilco health precautions, many Mexico City residents may no longer have the money to do visit because of the pandemic's economic blow.

The borough government sent squads of workers in protective suits through the boats, docks and surrounding markets early Friday to spray disinfectant.

Boat personnel are required to wear face masks and face shields, and to limit crowd size there is a ban on the traditional practice of tying up two boats so passengers can party in larger groups. The boats can usually hold about 20 passengers in a pinch, but are now limited to 12 passengers. The tradition is to order food from vendors in passing boats, eat, drink and listen to mariachi music.

The boats will be allowed to operate only between 9 a.m and 5 p.m. In the market, only every other artisan stall can be open on a given day.

However, there may be a bright side to Xochimilco's dilemma: With all bars and nightclubs in Mexico City closed due to the pandemic, the boats, floating gardens and nearby market may be one of the few places in the city of almost 9 million inhabitants where revelers can still drink, other than at home.

With so many people locked up at home for months, there are hopes that many city residents will want to go to Xochimilco and soak up the atmosphere — and a "michelada," a local drink of beer, salt, sauce and lime.

Appeals court won't step in for now on Trump tax records

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal appeals court said Friday it wouldn't step in right away to delay New York prosecutors' effort to get President Donald Trump's tax records, potentially leaving the Supreme Court as his most promising option to block prosecutors' subpoena.

The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals denied Trump's request to immediately put Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance Jr.'s subpoena on hold while Trump appeals to try to get it invalidated.

The appeals court said it would hold a hearing on the request for a delay, but not until Sept. 1. After winning a lower court ruling, Vance's office had agreed not to enforce the subpoena before Aug. 28.

The DA's office declined to comment on what the appeals court ruling might mean for that time frame. Messages were sent to Trump's lawyers.

The case has already been to the Supreme Court and back, and Trump has said he expects it to end up there again.

Even if the tax records ultimately are subpoenaed, they would be part of a confidential grand jury investigation and not automatically made public.

The Supreme Court ruled last month that the presidency in itself doesn't shield Trump from Vance's investigation.

But the high court returned the case to a Manhattan federal judge's courtroom to allow Trump's lawyers to raise other concerns about the subpoena. They did, arguing that it was issued in bad faith, might have been politically motivated and amounted to harassment.

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U.S. District Judge Victor Marrero rejected those arguments Thursday — and then turned down a request from Trump's lawyers to delay enforcement of the subpoena while they appeal his decision.

"The president has not demonstrated that he will suffer irreparable harm" if the records are turned over for a grand jury probe that would keep them secret, he wrote Friday morning.

Trump's lawyers asked the appeals court for the same delay and got their answer hours later.

Vance's attorneys have said they are legally entitled to extensive records to aid a "complex financial investigation."

Vance, a Democrat, began seeking the Republican president's tax returns from his longtime accounting firm over a year ago, after Trump's former personal lawyer Michael Cohen told Congress that the president had misled tax officials, insurers and business associates about the value of his assets.

Trump on Thursday blasted the quest for his financial records as a "the most disgusting witch hunt in the history of our country."

Congress is also pursuing Trump's financial records, though the Supreme Court last month kept a hold on the banking and other documents that Congress has been seeking and returned the case to a lower court.

Trump is the only modern president who has refused to release his tax returns. Before he was elected, he had promised to do so.

Postmaster says election mail will go through despite cuts

By LISA MASCARO, ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE and CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — New Postmaster General Louis DeJoy said Friday he has no plans to restore mailboxes and other agency cuts made since he took over in June, sparking fresh questions over how the Postal Service will ensure timely delivery of an expected surge of mail-in ballots for the November election.

It was DeJoy's first time publicly answering questions since summer mail delays brought a public outcry. Testifying before a Senate committee, the ally of President Donald Trump said it was his "sacred duty" that ballots arrive on time. But he told senators he did not yet have a plan for handling a crush of election mail.

From the White House, Trump delivered fresh complaints over the mail-in ballots expected because of the coronavirus pandemic. As he did, the House pushed ahead with plans for a rare Saturday vote to block the postal cutbacks and funnel \$25 billion to shore up operations.

DeJoy declared that the Postal Service "is fully capable and committed to delivering the nation's election mail securely and on-time." He distanced himself from Trump's objections about widescale mail-in voting and said ensuring ballots arrive was his "No. 1 priority between now and Election Day."

The outcry over mail delays and warnings of political interference have put the Postal Service at the center of the nation's tumultuous election year, with Americans of both parties rallying around one of the nation's oldest and more popular institutions.

The new postmaster general, a Trump donor who took the job at the start of summer to revamp the agency, is facing a backlash over changes since his arrival. Democrats warn his cost-cutting initiatives are causing an upheaval that threatens the election.

With mounting pressure, DeJoy promised this week to postpone any further changes until after the election, saying he wanted to avoid even the perception of interference. A number of blue mailboxes have been removed, back-of-shop sorting equipment has been shut down and overtime hours have been limited.

But DeJoy told senators he has no plans to restore the equipment, saying it's "not needed." And he stood by a new rule that limits late delivery trips, which several postal workers have said is a major cause of delivery delays. He vowed more changes are coming to postal operations after November.

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, said the public's concern is understandable, particularly given Trump's efforts to stop universal mail-in ballots. Many states are encouraging mail-in voting in response to voters' pandemic-related fears of going to crowded polling centers on Election Day.

Trump has said he wants to block agency emergency funding that would help the service handle a great increase in mail-in ballots.

At Friday's hearing, DeJoy said he'd had "no idea" equipment was being removed until the public outcry.

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Now that it's widely known, Democrats pressed him for his plan to ensure election mail and ballots arrive on time.

"Do you have a more detailed plan?" demanded Sen. Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire, asking for it by Sunday.

"I don't think we'll have a complete plan by Sunday night," DeJoy replied, acknowledging it was just being formed.

He is expected to testify before the House on Monday.

Republican Sen. Ron Johnson, chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, defended the postmaster and dismissed the Democratic claims of election "sabotage."

Johnson, of Wisconsin, said public outcry over the mail smacked of "ginned up" effort to rally voters — a "political hit job."

Meanwhile, attorneys general in Pennsylvania, California, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, North Carolina and Washington D.C., filed a lawsuit on Friday to halt the changes. In all, some 20 states and several voting rights groups are now suing.

As House Democrats prepare for Saturday's vote, Republicans are mounting a counter-offensive, saying the concerns about mail delivery are overblown and the money is unnecessary.

In a memo to House Republicans, leaders called the legislation a "conspiracy theory" by Democrats to "spread fear and misinformation" about mail operations.

Nevertheless, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell is eyeing a \$10 billion postal rescue as part of the next COVID-19 relief package. The White House has said it would be open to more postal funding as part of a broader bill.

The Postal Service has been struggling financially under a decline in mail volume, COVID-related costs and a rare and critics say cumbersome congressional requirement to fund in advance its retiree health care benefits.

For many, the Postal Service provides a lifeline, delivering not just cards and letters but also prescription drugs, financial statements and other items that are especially needed by mail during the pandemic.

The postal board of governors, appointed by Trump, selected DeJoy to take his job. A GOP donor, he previously owned a logistics business that was a longtime Postal Service contractor. He maintains significant financial stakes in companies that do business or compete with the agency, raising conflict of interest questions.

In a statement, the Postal Service said DeJoy has made all required financial disclosures but that he might have to divest some holdings if conflicts arise.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, whose role in postal operations is being questioned by Senate Democrats, said in a letter to Democratic leader Chuck Schumer that he had no hand in "recruiting or suggesting" DeJoy for the job.

Mark Dimondstein, president of the American Postal Workers Union, said he would judge the postmaster by "deeds, and a lot of what he said did not comport with the facts on the ground."

Republicans have long sought postal reforms to run the agency more like a private company, and Trump often complains the Postal Service should be charging Amazon and other companies higher rates for package deliveries. Mnuchin told Schumer he was reviewing those contracts.

Others say the Postal Service is not expected to be solely a money-making enterprise, often delivering to far-flung places where it is not efficient to operate.

David C. Williams, the former vice chairman of the U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors, on Thursday told lawmakers that he resigned from the board in part over DeJoy's selection, and because he believed the White House was taking extraordinary steps to turn the independent agency into a "political tool."

Associated Press writer Bruce Schreiner in Frankfort, Kentucky, contributed to this report.

The Associated Press produced this coverage with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Mural highlights Dolly Parton's Black Lives Matter quote

By KRISTIN M. HALL AP Entertainment Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Tourists are flocking to Nashville to see a new mural of Dolly Parton that celebrates her position on Black Lives Matter.

Mural artist Kim Radford had already decided to paint the mural of the country music icon on the side of a local music club called The 5 Spot, which was made famous for being one of the many filming locations for the TV show "Nashville."

But as she was finishing the mural, Radford saw an article from Billboard in which Parton said she supported the Black Lives Matter movement, saying "Of course Black lives matter. Do we think our little white (expletive) are the only ones that matter?"

So Radford quickly added the quote to the top of the mural, replacing part of the curse word with butterflies and soon enough, pictures started spreading on social media. The mural features cascading waves of Parton's signature high-volume blond hair surrounded by butterflies and wildflowers.

"I looked at her quote in particular and it was so sassy and a sensitive comment about something's that got a lot of friction in the air right now," said Radford. "And she just treated it just like Dolly does: lovingly. And it was just perfect."

The mural features cascading waves of Parton's signature high-volume blond hair surrounded by butterflies and wildflowers.

"I wanted it to be a real display of an icon, fun, bright, artistic way," said Radford. "It's a representation of an icon that Americans and really people across the globe are really proud to know and love her music."

Now less than a week old, the mural has become a hot spot for tourists visiting Music City to get a selfie. Radford herself got stopped by Dolly fans in front of the mural to pose for pictures.

"I've had fans reach out from as far as Dubai," said Radford. "A lot of women. And I have to say, 95% super positive."

Quarantines, closures: Confusion reigns as schools reopen

By TAMMY WEBBER, KIMBERLEE KRUESI and JOCELYN NOVECK Associated Press

Frightening calls from the school nurse. Waiting in vain for word from school officials. Canceled sports practices. Marching bands in quarantine.

For countless families across the country, the school year is opening in disarray and confusion, with coronavirus outbreaks triggering sudden closings, mass quarantines and deep anxiety among parents.

Schools in at least 10 states have had students and staff test positive for the virus since they began opening. The outbreaks have occurred in a variety of school settings: marching bands, high school football teams, elementary classrooms, high schools.

A Colorado high school shut down for two weeks after two students tested positive. Football teams in Utah canceled practices and games after several players came down with the virus. The entire football team and marching band in a small Alabama town were placed under quarantine because of exposure to the virus, the second time the team had to be quarantined this summer.

Michigan is reporting 14 outbreaks at schools. Mississippi started the week with about 2,000 students and 600 teachers in quarantine; the state has had 245 cases of coronavirus in teachers and about 200 in students since districts began returning to school in late July.

Joel Barnes got the call from the school nurse on Aug. 6: His 14-year-old son had been exposed to COVID-19 by a classmate at their high school in Corinth, Mississippi, and needed to be picked up right away.

By that time, Barnes and his wife had heard through the grapevine — mainly Facebook — that at least six people at the school had tested positive and more than 100 students were being told to quarantine. The district posted the information on Facebook, but never followed up with personal communication, Barnes said.

He and his wife decided to keep their son, a freshman, home to learn online even though he tested negative for the coronavirus. "It's not as difficult as worrying about him being exposed to COVID again,"

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Barnes said.

He says he's grateful the district released some limited information, but he's frustrated there wasn't more — and that the state attorney general said schools were not required to inform parents of outbreaks.

"I do understand that there are state and federal laws governing what you can say about students," said Barnes, a retired teacher, "but you're not giving out names, you're just giving out numbers."

"This is a national public health crisis," he said. On top of that, he added, "I have significant health issues, and it would not be good for me to be around someone who has it or to get it myself."

The K-12 clusters have mirrored the situation at colleges and universities that have had to shut down in-person learning and switch to virtual classes, albeit for different reasons. Many of the college outbreaks have been traced back to fraternity and sorority gatherings, crowded bars and a lack of masks and social distancing. Students around the country have been suspended for violating bans on campus parties and gatherings.

High school students have been flouting mask and social distancing rules as well. At a high school football stadium Thursday in Utah, the athletic director stopped the game, grabbed the public-address microphone and told the crowd that play would not continue until fans complied with mask and social-distancing requirements.

The developments offer a glimpse into the future for schools around the country still deciding whether to return students to the classroom and weighing the risk of broader community infection if they reopen.

U.S. health officials on Friday released a study they said showed that the right measures can keep spread of the virus low in child-care centers.

The study looked for evidence of spread of the virus at 666 child-care programs in Rhode Island that were open last month. The state required centers to reduce the number of people in programs to no more than 20, including staff. It also required adults to wear masks at all times, daily symptom screening of children and adults, and enhanced cleaning and disinfection guidelines. The CDC does not currently recommend that universal symptom screenings be conducted by schools.

Nearly 19,000 kids attended. Investigators identified only 52 confirmed and probable cases, including 30 children and 22 adults. The children ranged from less than one year old to 12, with a median age of 5.

The CDC study does seem to show that day care centers and even schools can be reopened in some places, said Dr. Mike Saag, an infectious disease expert at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

But, he quickly added, that's only in places where spread of the virus is low, and where schools and day care centers are able to do a lot of work to stay on top of new infections.

In Omaha, Nebraska, Jared Wagenknecht said he was tucking his daughter into bed earlier this month when she looked him in the eyes and said, "Daddy, I hope the coronavirus goes away before August 11." That was the day she would start first grade.

Instead, Wagenknecht's daughter and others in the K-12 district of more than 50,000 students are being taught remotely, after a plan for alternate in-person school days was scrapped.

Thirty-five confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Omaha-area schools in the early weeks of the school year. Many suburban Omaha districts, including the high school where Wagenknecht teaches social studies, have opted for 100% classroom teaching. So while he goes to school every day, his daughter learns from home.

"As a parent and educator, yes, we want students back to school," Wagenknecht said. But he added: "The only way we're going to be able to be in school very long and stay back is to get the infection rate down."

In Tennessee, many parents have watched in dismay as Gov. Bill Lee's administration waffled for weeks on how much information the state would provide on outbreaks in schools. Tennessee was one of the earliest states to begin reopening schools, while also experiencing one of the fastest per-capita spreads in the country.

The Republican's health secretary had initially declared such information would not be released, only for Lee to later reverse course.

But after two weeks of no new information, Lee flipped again when his top education and health officials announced the state was barred by federal privacy laws from releasing such data. The governor changed

course again Thursday when he said his administration would ask the federal government for permission to release it.

Parents and education officials have been outraged over the lack of transparency.

John Little, a father of a sixth grader who has been doing virtual schooling since Aug. 4, said he was "dumbfounded" when he heard Lee say privacy laws prevented the release of more detailed data. He and other families are looking to the governor to help them make informed decisions.

"I just think releasing this information is the right thing to do," Little said.

Webber reported from Fenton, Michigan, Kruesi from Nashville, Tennessee, and Noveck from New York. Associated Press writers Dave Kolpack in Fargo, North Dakota, and Mike Stobbe in New York contributed to this report.

Loughlin, Giannulli get prison time in college bribery plot

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Apologizing publicly for the first time for crimes their lawyers insisted for months they didn't commit, "Full House" star Lori Loughlin and her fashion designer husband, Mossimo Giannulli, were sentenced to prison Friday for using their wealth and privilege to cheat their daughters' way into the college of their choice.

The two-month prison sentence for Loughlin and five-month term for Giannulli bring to a close the legal saga for the highest-profile parents ensnared in the college admissions bribery scheme — a scandal that rocked the U.S. educational system and laid bare the lengths some wealthy parents will go to get their kids into elite universities.

Fighting back tears, Loughlin told the judge her actions "helped exacerbate existing inequalities in society" and pledged to do everything in her power to use her experience as a "catalyst to do good." Her lawyer said she began volunteering with special needs students at an elementary school.

"I made an awful decision. I went along with a plan to give my daughters an unfair advantage in the college admissions process and in doing so I ignored my intuition and allowed myself to be swayed from my moral compass," Loughlin, 56, said during the hearing held via videoconference because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Hours before in a separate hearing, Giannulli, whose Mossimo clothing had long been a Target brand until recently, told the judge he "deeply" regrets the harm to his daughters, wife and others.

"I take full responsibility for my conduct. I am ready to accept the consequences and move forward, with the lessons I've learned from this experience," Giannulli, 57, said in a stoic statement.

In her lawyer's own words, Loughlin became the "undisputed face of the national scandal" thanks to her fame. Her arrest shattered her clean image and destroyed her acting career.

"Lori lost the acting career she spent 40 years building," attorney BJ Trach said. "She has become intertwined with the college admissions scandal."

Attorneys for the couple described them as devoted parents motivated by a love for their children. Trach alluded to bullying endured by their daughters, including Olivia Jade Giannulli — a social media star who has a popular YouTube channel — since the charges were made public. The bullying forced the family to hire security for their daughters, Trach said.

U.S. District Judge Nathaniel Gorton expressed outrage at the couple's greed, calling Loughlin's life "charmed" and a "fairytale," with success and plentiful wealth.

"Yet you stand before me a convicted felon and for what? For the inexplicable desire to grasp even more," Gorton said.

Both Loughlin and Giannulli were ordered to surrender Nov. 19.

Under the plea deals with prosecutors — unusual because the proposed terms were binding once accepted, instead of granting the judge sentencing discretion — Giannulli will also pay a \$250,000 fine and perform 250 hours of community service. Loughlin will pay a \$150,000 fine and perform 100 hours of

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community service.

Loughlin, who gained fame for her role as the wholesome Aunt Becky in the sitcom "Full House" that ran from the late 1980s to mid-1990s, and Giannulli were among 50 people charged last year in the case federal prosecutors dubbed "Operation Varsity Blues," which uncovered hefty bribes to get undeserving kids into college with rigged test scores or fake athletic credentials. Nearly 30 parents have pleaded guilty while 10 are headed to trial.

Unlike other prominent parents charged in the case who quickly admitted to the charges — including "Desperate Housewives" actor Felicity Huffman — Loughlin and Giannulli fiercely fought the allegations for more than a year, with their lawyers accusing prosecutors of withholding evidence that would exonerate the couple.

The duo made no public comments about the allegations in the months after their arrest and guilty plea and — unlike other parents in the case — did not submit letters expressing regret or notes of support from family and friends to the judge in the days leading up to their sentencing, although Gorton said the defense provided two letters in support of Loughlin on Friday.

Prosecutors described Giannulli as "the more active participant in the scheme," though they said Loughlin "was nonetheless fully complicit."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Kristen Kearney said Giannulli displayed "a complete disregard for right and wrong," which "deserves a meaningful sentence of imprisonment."

The couple worked with the admissions consultant at the center of the scheme — Rick Singer— to pay half a million dollars in bribes to get their daughters into USC as crew recruits. Singer, who has also pleaded guilty, was expected to testify against them had they gone to trial.

Investigators recorded phone calls and emails showing the couple worked with Singer to secure admission with fake athletic profiles depicting their children as star rowers.

Prosecutors said the couple allowed the girls "to become complicit in crime," instructing them to pose on rowing machines for photos — Singer told them he needed a picture of their older daughter looking "like a real athlete" — and warning their younger daughter not to say too much to her high school counselor. Giannulli angrily confronted the counselor for questioning their crew credentials, according to court documents.

Loughlin's lawyer said she had little direct communication with Singer and never saw the fraudulent athletic profiles made for the teens.

"Of all the parents charged, not a single one had less active participation in the scheme than Lori," Trach said.

Giannulli's and Loughlin's prison terms are in line with the sentences other parents have gotten so far. The harshest punishment has gone to Douglas Hodge, a former CEO of a top investment company, who got nine months for paying bribes totaling \$850,000 to get four of his children into the University of Southern California and Georgetown University as athletic recruits.

Huffman served nearly two weeks behind bars last year after admitting to paying \$15,000 to have someone correct her daughter's entrance exam answers.

Also Friday, prosecutors announced charges against another parent, who authorities said has also agreed to plead guilty. Mark Hauser, a California insurance and private equity executive, agreed to pay \$40,000, to rig his daughter's ACT exam, prosecutors said. An attorney for Hauser declined to comment.

Bannon partners had history of cashing in on Trump movement

By BERNARD CONDON and JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — One is a triple-amputee Iraq war veteran who ran news sites stoking right-wing rage, often with exaggerated stories. Another owns a company that sells Donald Trump-themed energy drinks. And the third is an ex-columnist for Breitbart and an entrepreneur who has left a trail of failed businesses.

The men charged along with former White House strategist Steve Bannon in a scheme to skim hundreds of thousands of dollars from a crowd-funded project to build a border wall came together through a shared

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devotion to Trump and a sometimes checkered history of trying to make money off his political movement.

Prosecutors say their promises not to take even a penny from the more than \$25 million in donations turned out to be lies, allowing them to make such purchases as a luxury Range Rover, a fishing boat, home renovations and cosmetic surgery.

Some court observers believe at least some of the participants believed they could get away with it because their man was in the White House.

"This cast of characters was using Bannon as a front to get the people behind them," said David S. Weinstein, a former federal prosecutor in Miami. "Him thinking he wasn't going to get caught — and if he did, that he would be pardoned — may have factored a little bit into why he was involved."

At the head of the We Build The Wall venture was 38-year-old veteran Brian Kolfage of Miramar Beach, Florida, who since losing both legs and an arm in a rocket attack in Iraq has become a conservative activist, motivational speaker and constant presence on social media, haranguing the left, praising Trump and provoking others.

"We need to elect stone-cold killers," he posted on Twitter last month. "We will soon have a revolution in this country."

Hours after his arrest Thursday, he took to Facebook, portraying the case as an underhanded attempt to kill Trump's reelection chances.

"Democrats love a good political witch hunt before the elections," he wrote.

Bannon picked up on that charge on his podcast, "War Room," on Friday, hardly sounding like someone who only hours earlier was charged with fraud and money laundering, crimes that carry up to 20 years in prison.

"This was to stop and intimidate people that want to talk about the wall. This is to stop and intimidate people that have President Trump's back on building the wall," said Bannon, who has pleaded not guilty. "This is a political hit job."

As for Kolfage, he called him "an American hero."

A serial entrepreneur, Kolfage started a string of ventures and side businesses over the years. He has raised money to help mentor wounded veterans and, after one of his news sites was shut down, rallied supporters to Fight4FreeSpeech. This year, he launched a company to buy up and distribute N95 masks, solicited donations for a lawsuit against Black Lives Matter protesters, and called for a boycott of the NFL and NBA over their embrace of the movement.

Kolfage has posted pictures on Instagram of his sleek, Jupiter Marine fishing boat named "Warfighter," which recently participated in a boat parade for Trump's campaign. The government is now seeking to seize it.

"He has a knack for seeing what is missing from someone's project or company and helping them fill that gap," said Dustin Stockton, a partner in his mask company and We Build the Wall who was not charged on Thursday. "Despite his significant disabilities, he is upbeat and optimistic about the future, which people find inspiring."

Stockton said federal agents served him and his wife with subpoenas and with warrants for their cell-phones. He would not comment on the case beyond that.

Another charged Thursday, 49-year-old Timothy Shea of Castle Rock, Colorado, owns an energy drink company called Winning Energy whose cans bear a cartoon superhero image of Trump and claim to contain 12 ounces of "liberal tears."

Also indicted was Andrew Badolato, 56 of Sarasota, Florida, describes himself as a venture capitalist on his personal website and a "hobbyist conservative" enjoying a "new lease on life after suffering a major heart attack in December 2014 and being brought back to life."

Bannon has known Badolato for years, joining forces nearly two decades ago in a publicly traded nasal spray company called SinoFresh Healthcare that eventually got tangled up in a legal dispute about corporate funds and other issues. The two also worked on films together, reportedly including planned documentaries on Ronald Reagan and Sarah Palin.

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Badolato touts his contributions to Breitbart News and suggests that some of his articles "were responsible for one of the largest national political narrative shifts of the election year."

We Build the Wall had been under criminal investigation in Florida since last year, after authorities received complaints from donors, and officials there said they referred their findings to the FBI.

"This fraud needs to be shut down and audited immediately," one complainant wrote, according to records released by the state.

Kolfage called the state inquiry "hilarious" on Twitter. "None are donors," he wrote, referring to the complainants, "one cites fake news, and all are democratic voters according to records. HAVE FUN!"

Attorney General William Barr said he had been made aware of the investigation of Bannon months ago but had not received regular briefings.

Donald Trump Jr. once praised We Build The Wall as an "amazing" grassroots campaign. But the president on Thursday said he didn't like the crowd-funding effort to build a private wall and considers such matters the role of government.

In a tweet last month, Trump said the project involved a "tiny" stretch of a wall in a tricky area and "was only done to make me look bad."

The organizers solicited donations as recently as days before the indictment, riling up Trump supporters on a Facebook page and promoting the wall as a solution to drug trafficking and illegal immigration.

To date, the effort that once promised as many as 100 miles of wall has built less than five.

Some followers voiced skepticism, complaining that not enough progress on the wall was being made and that they had not received their purchase of autographed steel bollards the group advertised.

"What's the hold up?" Dan Mineart asked under one post. "It seems like 'build the wall' was just a catchy campaign slogan to fire everyone up. It ain't happening."

Former sailor details misconduct by SEALs pulled from Iraq

By JAMES LAPORTA and JULIE WATSON Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — U.S. Navy intelligence specialist Colleen Grace was asleep on a remote air base in Iraq in 2019 when she was woken up by knocking on the door next to her room, and then a voice she recognized.

The voice belonged to a Navy corpsman she knew. He was upset and speaking loudly to the Army colonel who lived next door. Grace heard the corpsman say that a sailor who attended a Fourth of July barbecue had just been raped by a Navy SEAL on the base. The corpsman asked the colonel what to do because the victim was afraid that if she reported the incident, retribution would follow.

"And that's real," Grace heard Hospitalman First Class Gustavo Llerenes tell Col. Thomas Collins, a physician's assistant with the Florida National Guard. "It's a good ol' boy's network."

She said she heard Collins urge Llerenes to keep his voice down, saying the walls between the rooms were thin.

Grace, who could no longer hear the conversation between medical professionals, looked down at her phone to check the time. Just then Grace noticed a missed text from a friend asking her to come over. "Urgent," the message read.

When Grace got to her friend's room around 1:50 a.m., she found the sailor curled up in her bed. A giant black bruise marred her jawline. Several other marks lined her neck. It was then that Grace realized the overheard conversation about a rape was about her friend.

Grace said her friend told her the sex started out consensual in the SEAL's room, but then he started biting and choking her. Her friend told her that at one point she thought "what is he going to do with my body when he kills me?" because she said he was strangling her so hard she couldn't breathe.

Grace gingerly asked her if it would be OK to photograph her injuries. She said she lifted her friend's shirt to find more bruises — on her breast, a shoulder, her stomach.

Grace sent the photos to her friend's phone, and then hugged her and cried, unsure of what would happen next.

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But she and her friend would not stay silent.

Within weeks, the entire Foxtrot platoon of SEAL Team 7, known as Trident 1726, was sent home early to San Diego. It was an extremely rare move to cut short the mission of a unit that was there to combat remnants of ISIS. Navy officials have given few details other than to say there was an alleged sexual assault and drinking at a Fourth of July barbecue in Iraq in 2019 in violation of Navy rules barring deployed troops from consuming alcohol.

The story of the platoon being pulled from Iraq has been previously reported, but documents obtained by The Associated Press through the Freedom of Information Act and interviews with nearly a dozen people give the first in-depth view into what led to the rare recall. The documents and interviews show that women deployed with the SEALs say they were ogled and sexually harassed during the deployment. Records obtained by the AP from the Naval Criminal Investigative Service also reveal a previously unknown reported allegation of sexual misconduct against the SEAL platoon chief, Special Warfare Operator Chief Nicholas Olson, two days before the Fourth of July barbecue. Olson denies any wrongdoing.

The platoon was withdrawn after the Navy made an unusually public push to strengthen order and discipline in its secretive elite force amid a series of scandals involving SEALs. The misconduct has included cocaine use and tampering of drug tests by members of SEAL Team 10 based in Virginia, and last year's conviction of Navy SEAL Adam Matthews, who was sentenced to one year in military prison for his role in the 2017 hazing-related death of an Army Green Beret in Africa.

The Navy fired three SEAL leaders in the aftermath of the alleged rape on the Iraq air base and charged Special Warfare Operator First Class Adel A. Enayat, an enlisted SEAL, with sexual assault, aggravated assault via strangulation and assault by battery for allegedly biting the victim on the face, according to his charge sheet. He faces a court-martial in November.

A hearing in the case was held Friday at Naval Base San Diego. At the hearing, Jeremiah Sullivan, the lawyer for the SEAL, said he was concerned Enayat, who identifies as "non-white," cannot get a fair trial because of systemic racism in the military justice system, pointing out that there are no Black judges on the Navy bench.

Sullivan said Enayat is innocent and "we look forward to trying his case in a court of law." Enayat, who was charged Dec. 30, filed a counter claim in February against the sailor alleging she sexually assaulted him, taking advantage of him when he was "incapacitated."

AP originally did not name Enayat because of the counter claim. But the Naval Criminal Investigative Service on Friday confirmed that it closed the investigation into Enayat's allegation after his lawyer decided to have him not talk to investigators. AP has a policy of not identifying victims unless they choose to be named.

Grace is the first service member to come forward to talk about what happened at Ain al-Asad air base in western Iraq. She spoke to the AP in an exclusive interview, detailing what she witnessed that night, describing what she said were attempts by Olson, the platoon chief, to stop the alleged sexual assault from being reported, and revealing other misconduct towards another female sailor working with the SEAL platoon during the 2019 deployment to Anbar Province.

AP spoke to other service members on the deployment who asked not to be named or quoted for fear it could jeopardize their military careers. The sailor who reported being sexually assaulted on July 4, 2019, declined to be interviewed. Llerenes, the Navy corpsman, also declined to be interviewed for this story. Multiple attempts were made to connect with Col. Collins but were unsuccessful.

The drinking at the Fourth of July barbecue in Iraq and the alleged sexual assault that same night came only two days after the acquittal of Special Warfare Operator Chief Edward Gallagher, who was accused by his platoon members of killing a captive Islamic State fighter and shooting civilians during a deployment to Iraq in 2017. Gallagher was also a member of SEAL Team 7 in Iraq but with a different platoon and under different leadership.

Gallagher — who was convicted of a single charge for posing with the dead teen militant's body for a picture — got support from President Donald Trump, who prevented the military from taking disciplinary

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action against the ex-SEAL, pitting the commander-in-chief against the Navy's top brass.

The Fourth of July incident led to a second ethics review of America's commando forces in a year. The review by the Special Operations Command found a problematic culture that overemphasized combat and put troops at times far from supervision, opening the door to inappropriate behavior.

Navy SEAL Capt. Todd Perry, the commander of the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Iraq in 2019, blamed the "Gallagher Effect," a term coined by leadership to denote the corrosive influence on a platoon such as the one Gallagher's behavior had on order and discipline.

"It only took one bad platoon chief to influence the entire platoon," that the no-drinking rule did not apply to them and that the "brotherhood" was more important than the Navy — "just as Gallagher was able to do with the dishonorable members of his platoon" during his deployment in 2017, Capt. Perry stated in an interview with an Army officer investigating the Fourth of July incident, according to military records obtained by AP. During the interview in Baghdad on July 29, 2019, Perry made no mention of any sexual assault allegations.

About a dozen female service members were attached to the SEAL platoon during a six-month deployment to Iraq that began in March of 2019.

On the air base, Grace and the other service members who supported Special Operations Task Force-West, the unit responsible for missions inside Anbar Province, Iraq, lived at Camp Fenin while the SEALs stayed at Camp Freiwald, about a 10-minute walk away.

The deployment — Grace's first with the SEALs — was slow, she said. Others who had deployed previously to Iraq told her they had never seen it so quiet. She was asked to identify ISIS targets for the SEALs in an area that had been largely untouched for the past nine months.

Grace said the women worked hard to earn the respect of the SEALs. "We're in there 18 hours a day. We wanted their respect. We were doing good work for these guys," she said.

But Grace said the intelligence staff was under a lot of pressure from the SEALs to do more. "People were itching to get outside the wire at every opportunity," but not a lot of information was coming in that they could act on, Grace said.

Then she said she started receiving text messages from Olson, the platoon chief, late at night that were not work-related. At first, she thought it was because he thought highly of her work.

"After I'd been invited over to that side of the camp to have drinks on multiple occasions, I was like this is inappropriate, and that's kind of when he and I stopped speaking," Grace said.

The Fourth of July was a holiday and for some of the special operators, there was even more reason to pop open a bottle with the military jury in San Diego acquitting Gallagher, ending a war crimes case that had tarnished the commando force's image.

Grace said only two days earlier, one of her friends had knocked on her door crying and said Olson exposed himself to her after they met at a makeshift lounge on Camp Freiwald.

According to a July 16, 2019, report of the incident by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, a male, whose name was redacted, met a female to talk privately on July 2. He told her "how all of the team wants to sleep with you," and "we all talked about who will be the first one to do it."

The male then reached into his pants and "exposing his penis," grabbed her from behind her neck and pulled her toward his groin area, according to the report. Afterwards, the male drove the woman to a base cafeteria and asked her to walk back alone to her room so no one would see them together. Later, the woman received a text from the man apologizing for his behavior. The AP was able to confirm the incident involved Olson and a sailor through interviews with service members on the deployment.

Grace said her friend told her that Olson also said how everyone had noticed the nipples poking through the T-shirts of the female sailors during their daily briefings. She added that her friend said there were other "vile comments." Olson's lawyer, Timothy Parlatore, said his client denies making any inappropriate comments.

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"I feel violated on her behalf," Grace said. "But also like wow, we are not respected. We are not members of the team. We are pieces of meat that these people ogle."

Parlatore, who also represented Gallagher, said the July 2 allegation is false and was made by an intelligence specialist who held back information necessary to kill ISIS.

"These individuals have the motivation to lie about my client," Parlatore said.

The victim signed a statement on July 13, 2019, saying she did not wish to participate in the investigation. In the signed statement, obtained by AP, it states she understood the chances of the suspect being brought to justice would be greatly reduced without her assistance. The case was closed.

The woman told Grace she did not want to report Olson for exposing himself to her on July 2 because she was concerned it would hurt her career.

"She was tough as nails and she didn't want anyone to know that anything affected her ever," Grace said.

After the alleged incident with Olson, the woman told Grace that she would only go to the barbecue for a short while, and she wasn't going alone. With her friends off to celebrate and the night to herself, Grace face-timed with her family in Michigan, watched Netflix, and then fell asleep.

Hours later, Grace was woken up by the knocking and rushed to help another friend, who said she had just been raped. The Navy corpsman and the female sailor who had been assaulted two days earlier were consoling the victim when Grace got to her room. They told Grace that Olson had stopped outside her room twice that night and warned that everyone at the barbecue will get into trouble if the second woman reported the rape, Grace said.

Parlatore, Olson's attorney, denies that the SEAL chief tried to stop anyone from reporting the rape.

The woman followed the advice of doctors on base who told her she would need to go to Baghdad to be examined and report the July 4 rape. She was told to not take anything off and put her uniform pants over what she already had on.

Grace rode with her in an ambulance to where a helicopter was waiting.

At about 4:25 a.m., Grace hugged her friend, who boarded the aircraft, and then returned to her room.

"I was a wreck, so of course I called my mom," Grace said. "She told me to block my door, have my gun by my bed and write everything down."

After the Fourth of July, Grace said she could no longer stay silent about the July 2 assault, even though the woman who told her about the incident with Olson "was adamant that I don't tell, but I had to. I felt a duty. Her privacy mattered less because our other friend was raped."

Her only regret, Grace said, is she did not take notes July 2 like she did following the Fourth of July when she had the benefit of hindsight and "went straight to my computer and typed everything up that I could remember, dates, times, who I talked to, all of it."

Grace said her work environment worsened after the Fourth of July barbecue.

She went back to work hours after seeing her friend off. No one mentioned why a member of the intelligence staff was not at her desk, Grace said.

On July 8, Grace grew concerned that the Navy would try to cover up things and wrote to U.S. Rep. Mark Takano, chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, relaying her detailed notes and naming everyone she knew was involved that night. She told the California Democrat that Olson was sure he would have the power to convince her friend not to report the July 4 assault and that she was concerned that more than 24 hours had passed before the crime scene — Enayat's room — was secured.

"I said to myself, if they try (to) cover this incident up, I'll tell the New York Times exactly how Eddie Gallagher's old unit is doing things," Grace wrote. "Perhaps I should have more faith in my Chain of Command, and I pray that I am not overreacting. However, the more that I think about it, the more I see it is not totally outside the realm of possibility that higher-level leadership will get involved in order to ensure that this quietly disappears."

Almost a week would go by before it was brought up by the commanding officer, Cmdr. Edward Mason, of SEAL Team 7, who visited the base to discuss it on July 10.

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"It was nice to hear someone finally acknowledge that something had happened," Grace said.

Mason ordered Enayat to be examined by a bio forensics specialist, his room swept for evidence, and his weapons locked up. He also had Enayat and Olson sent home.

On July 11, investigators arrived in Iraq. Two weeks later the entire platoon was sent home after members refused to cooperate with the investigation without having a lawyer present, according to a person who spoke to members of the team. The person, who asked not to be named, said the SEALs were perceived guilty from the start.

Some of the SEALs blamed the female Navy sailors for the interruption in the mission, and the tension made it difficult to do their job effectively, Grace said.

"We were ostracized and that's a very difficult position to be in when you're trying to feed people mission information," she said. "We were treated like pariahs after the July 4th thing, you know, because we were the people that had lied ... so that the team would go home."

In video conferences, Navy brass gave stern warnings that the SEAL teams cannot have any more bad press, Grace said.

Olson was reprimanded and has since lost his Trident pin, the symbol of his membership in the SEALs. Parlatore said the Navy cited his platoon's drinking and the July 2 allegation. He is appealing the decision. The Naval Special Warfare Command declined to comment due to pending litigation.

The Navy's top SEAL, Rear Adm. Collin Green, fired Mason, Command Master Chief Hugh Spangler, and Navy SEAL Lt. Cmdr. Luke Im, saying their leadership failures led to a breakdown of order and discipline within two units in Iraq.

Mason and Spangler filed a complaint with the Department of Defense Inspector General to demand the independent agency investigate the firings.

Both men, who have since retired, said in the complaint that they were being used as scapegoats because Green was upset over Navy prosecutors losing the Gallagher case. They accused Navy leadership of putting the SEALs at risk when they pulled the platoon immediately out of Iraq.

The inspector general determined there was insufficient evidence from the complaint to open an investigation, said Dwerna Allen, an agency spokeswoman.

Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Mike Gilday, supports Green's actions, his spokesman Cmdr. Nate Christensen said. Green has made changes and "taken a 'back to basics' leadership approach to ensure that his community fully demonstrates both professional competency and character in all they do."

Grace said she underwent therapy because of what happened in Iraq. She left the Navy in February.

"It literally broke my heart because these were people that were my heroes," she said of the SEALs. "It was going to be the highlight of my career, and what do I learn? That these people would rather, you know, have each other's backs and cover up a sexual assault."

LaPorta reported from Delray Beach, Florida.

Contact AP's global investigative team at Investigative@ap.org.

Thousands in Mali's capital welcome president's downfall

By BABA AHMED Associated Press

BAMAKO, Mali (AP) — Thousands marched Friday in the streets of Mali's capital to celebrate the overthrow of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, as the West African nation's political opposition backed the military's junta plan to eventually hand over power to a civilian transitional government.

But as opponents of the former regime moved ahead with plans for the future, the international community continued to express alarm about the coup that deposed Mali's democratically elected leader this week. There are concerns that the political upheaval will divert attention away from the more than seven-year international fight against Islamic extremists who have used previous power vacuums in Mali to expand their terrain.

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Soldiers from the junta calling itself the National Committee for the Salvation of the People made a brief appearance Friday at Bamako's Independence Square, where they thanked the crowd of thousands for their support.

"We have come to complete your work. This is your struggle," Col. Major Ismaël Wagué told the demonstrators, before introducing two more officials in the junta's leadership — a first vice president and a third vice president.

Keita — first elected in a 2013 landslide the year after a similar military coup — saw his popularity plummet after his 2018 re-election as the Malian army faced punishing losses from jihadist attacks. Then after dozens of legislative elections were disputed this spring, demonstrators began taking to the streets calling for his resignation. He offered concessions and regional mediators intervened, but his opponents who formed a coalition known as M5-RFP made clear they would accept nothing short of his departure.

On Friday, they welcomed the week's developments but insisted they remained "deeply attached to democracy." The junta has promised it will return the country to civilian rule but has given no time frame for doing so. Mali was not due to have another election until 2023.

Military juntas across West Africa have not always been in a rush to hand over power even when promising to do so — after the country's March 2012 coup, the first democratic election was not held until the following August.

The regional bloc known as ECOWAS signaled it would send another delegation to Bamako soon and called for the mobilization of a regional standby military force, and indication it was preparing contingency plans in case negotiations again failed.

ECOWAS leaders have suspended Mali's membership, closed its borders with the country and said that financial sanctions would be imposed against the junta leaders.

Wagué, the junta spokesman, insisted Keita had resigned of his own free will despite soldiers having detained him after surrounding his private residence and firing shots into the air. The 75-year-old ousted leader remained in military custody Friday along with the prime minister.

"The president of the republic resigned on his own after making an analysis of the country's situation," Wagué said. "For us, this is a civil transition, not a military one, and the president of the transition must reach a consensus among the forces of the nation."

U.N. human rights officials have met with Keita and other officials being held by the junta, according to Guillaume Ngefa, the Mali representative for the U.N. High Commission on Human Rights. He gave no further details on the meeting but confirmed that Mali's finance minister has been released.

A distressed Keita, wearing a mask amid the COVID-19 pandemic, resigned on national broadcaster ORTM on Tuesday just before midnight and three years before his final term was to end.

"If today, it pleases certain elements of the military to decide this should end with their intervention ... I must submit to it," he said. "I wish no blood to be shed to keep me in power."

The United Nations and France have been urging a return to constitutional order in Mali, amid fears that Islamic extremists could once again gain ground. The United Nations spends \$1.2 billion annually on the peacekeeping mission in Mali, which has 16,500 peacekeepers.

French Defense Minister Florence Parly said counter-terrorism operations have continued despite this week's coup and France is working with European and regional allies "to find a solution to this grave crisis."

"It is important that we continue our combat against terrorism in the region" for the security of the Sahel and of Europe, she said Friday in Paris.

French and U.N. soldiers patrolled the streets in Mali's northern city of Gao on Friday, where there was worry of more chaos.

Mali's 2012 coup created a power vacuum that allowed jihadists to seize control of key northern cities until a French-led military operation pushed the rebels out of the urban centers the following year.

But since being pushed out of the northern cities, the jihadists have regrouped in rural areas and launched relentless attacks on the Malian military, as well as the U.N., French and regional forces in the country. The extremists have moved south, inflaming tensions between ethnic groups in central Mali.

Wagué, the junta spokesman, said the new military rulers were doing everything possible to be sure that

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jihadists did not gain ground.

Col. Assimi Goita, Mali's new strongman, had been head of a special military unit based in central Mali. He also had taken part in the annual Flintlock training organized by the U.S. military to help Mali and other Sahel countries better fight extremists.

While Mali's Islamic insurgency started before Keita took office, many felt his government did not do enough to end the violence.

Associated Press writers Carley Petesch and Krista Larson in Dakar, Senegal, and Angela Charlton in Paris contributed to this report.

S&P 500 ticks higher to record, powered again by tech stocks

By STAN CHOE and ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — The S&P 500 ticked higher to close at another all-time high Friday, powered by strength for technology stocks and a couple reports on the U.S. economy that were better than expected.

The benchmark index rose 11.65 points, or 0.3%, to 3,397.16, even though the majority of stocks in the index weakened. It followed up on losses across Europe after more discouraging reports there indicated a slowdown in its economies.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 190.60, or 0.7%, to 27,930.33, and the Nasdaq composite added 46.85, or 0.4%, to 11,311.80.

The S&P 500 surpassed its prior closing high of 3,389.78, which was set on Tuesday after the index erased the last of its historic losses from the coronavirus pandemic. Despite its record-setting week, the market's momentum has slowed recently after roaring back from its nearly 34% plunge from late February into March.

The S&P 500 rose 0.7% for the week. It was the seventh gain for the index in the last eight weeks, but the last two have been the most modest during that stretch.

Investors are still waiting for more clarity on several fronts, which could drive the next big move up or down.

The economy has shown some signs of stalling recently, with Friday's reports from Europe the latest reminder that a steady rise in coronavirus cases may be undermining growth. They follow a U.S. report from Thursday that showed that the number of workers applying for unemployment benefits picked up last week.

But the picture remains mixed. A separate report from IHS Markit on Friday said preliminary data suggests output from the U.S. private sector is at an 18-month high. Sales of previously occupied homes were also stronger in July than economists expected, as activity exploded in every region of the country.

Those reports helped the U.S. stock market recover from declines earlier in the morning.

"The housing market is strong," said Quincy Krosby, chief market strategist at Prudential Financial. "This week has been about housing. Each one of these reports has been strong."

Stocks of homebuilders climbed following the data, including a 3.2% rise for D.R. Horton. But it was additional gains for tech stocks that did the most work in the S&P 500's rally.

Most stocks on Wall Street fell, and the smaller companies in the Russell 2000 small-cap index lost 11.83, or 0.8%, to 1,552.48. Even within the S&P 500 index of big companies, 56% of stocks were lower, with energy producers and financial stocks dropping. But a 1.2% rise for tech stocks in the S&P 500 helped offset that.

Tech has remained remarkably resilient through the pandemic and continued to churn out big profits as work-from-home and other tech-friendly trends accelerate. Apple, which this week became the first U.S. company to have a market value of more than \$2 trillion, rose 5.2%.

Big tech stocks, which generally have strong balance sheets and deliver strong growth, will likely continue to be attractive to investors as long as there are questions about economic growth, said Krosby.

"One of the most important factors in this market and for the broadening of the market in order to include

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those names that have not participated is: You want to see the unemployment landscape heal, and you want to see those initial unemployment claims come down," she said. "That's a major focus for analysts because we're a consumer-led economy. People need jobs in order to consume."

Deere was another big winner after it reported profit for the latest quarter that was double what Wall Street expected. Its shares rose 4.4%.

The Federal Reserve is continuing to prop up markets and the economy by keeping interest rates at nearly zero and buying reams of bonds. But stimulus from Congress has lapsed, and Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill continue to haggle.

Investors say the economy and markets need another round of big support from Congress for the recovery to continue.

"Ultimately, it will take some combination of bad data, bad markets and good politics to break the impasse," economist Ethan Harris wrote in a BofA Global Research report. "Meanwhile, every passing week without meaningful legislation lengthens the mini-recession. This is not the kind of August break this economy needs."

Beyond Capitol Hill, investors are also waiting for the latest developments in the rising tensions between the world's two largest economies.

China's Commerce Ministry on Thursday said that Chinese and U.S. trade envoys will hold a meeting by phone "in the near future" to discuss an agreement aimed at resolving their tariff war. No details on timing were given.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury dipped to 0.63% from 0.64% late Thursday.

In European stock markets, Germany's DAX slipped 0.5%. France's CAC 40 fell 0.3%, while the FTSE 100 in London lost 0.2%.

Earlier, Asian markets closed higher. Japan's Nikkei 225 gained 0.2%, South Korea's Kospi rose 1.3% and Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 1.3%.

Benchmark U.S. crude oil fell 48 cents to settle at \$42.34 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, lost 55 cents to \$44.35 per barrel.

AP Business Writer Yuri Kageyama contributed.

US buildings closed in Portland after car-bomb threat made

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — At least two federal buildings in Portland have been closed and the FBI is investigating after a car bomb threat was made, the officials said Friday.

The threat, which was received Thursday, warned of the intention to use a car bomb to target federal property in Portland, according to two law enforcement officials. A number of federal offices in the area have been closed because of the threat, the officials said. The officials could not discuss the investigation publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Investigators are trying to determine whether the threat is credible, the FBI said in a statement.

The Portland office of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court was closed because of a threat of violence in the area, according to the court's website. Also closed was the Mark O. Hatfield Federal courthouse, which was the site of weeks of violent protests last month.

Demonstrators have taken to the streets of Oregon's largest city nightly since the May police killing of George Floyd and clashed repeatedly with federal agents dispatched to protect the courthouse. A statement on the courthouse website did not say why the building had closed.

The FBI's statement said: "If we develop information indicating a credible threat, we will notify the public."

Protesters this week have focused their ire on the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement building in Portland.

People in a group of about 100 late Thursday and before dawn Friday sprayed the building with graffiti, hurled rocks and bottles at agents and shined laser lights at them, Portland police said in a statement.

Agents set off smoke or tear gas and used crowd-control munitions to try to disperse the crowd, The

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Oregonian/OregonLive reported. Three people were arrested, police said in their statement.

It wasn't clear if that building was included in the alleged threat or if the threat was connected in any way to those protests.

Associated Press writer Michael Balsamo contributed to this report.

NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week

By The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

CLAIM: Biden's tax rate on a family making \$75,000 dollars a year would go from 12% to 25%.

THE FACTS: False posts circulating on Facebook and Twitter claim that Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden has proposed a staggering tax increase for families making \$75,000 a year. A current federal tax rate of 12 percent applies to families making up to \$80,000, or individuals making up to \$40,000. That would still apply under Biden, who has vowed publicly not to raise taxes on anyone making less than \$400,000. "Nobody making under \$400,000 bucks would have their taxes raised. Period. Bingo," Biden said in an interview on CNBC in May. Biden has proposed increasing the corporate tax rate to 28 percent. He has also proposed a 12.4 percent Social Security tax for income above \$400,000, in addition to rolling back the 2018 tax cuts that President Donald Trump signed into law for those making \$400,000 or more. An analysis of his tax plan performed by University of Pennsylvania's Penn Wharton Budget Model in March found that the bottom 90 percent of income earners would not pay more in federal income taxes under Biden's proposal. Another analysis of Biden's tax plan by the Tax Policy Center, a non-partisan think tank in Washington, D.C., predicted a slight increase for the bottom 99 percent of earners. On average, the report said earners in varying brackets could pay between an extra \$30 to \$590, as a result of Biden's tax plan. But that increase, the Tax Policy Center said, would not be the result of Biden directly raising taxes on those earners. Instead, the Tax Policy Center predicted workers would indirectly pay more because of Biden's plan to increase the corporate tax, a cost which some employers could pass along in ways to their own employees.

— Amanda Seitz reported this item from Chicago.

CLAIM: Vice President Mike Pence said he will not debate Democratic vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris.

THE FACTS: There is no evidence to support a widely viewed social media post stating "Pence said he won't debate Kamala!" In fact, after Biden announced Harris as his running mate, Pence indicated enthusiasm to face off at their scheduled debate on Oct. 7 in Salt Lake City, Utah. "So my message to the Democratic candidate for vice president: Congratulations – I'll see you in Salt Lake City," Pence said on Aug. 11 in front of a crowd of supporters in Arizona. The next day on Fox News, Pence brought up his upcoming debate against Harris again. "I think she is a skilled debater," Pence told host Sean Hannity. "But I can't wait to get to Salt Lake City and be on the stage with her to compare Joe Biden's nearly 50 years in public life, the agenda of the radical left, the agenda that she has embraced throughout her political career, with the results of this president and this administration."

-- Jude Joffe-Block reported this item from Berkeley, California.

CLAIM: Three photos spreading on social media show that Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and U.S. Sens. Kamala Harris and Cory Booker did not wear masks at a rally together, revealing their hypocrisy during the coronavirus pandemic.

THE FACTS: The photos were taken at a campaign rally in Detroit on March 9. That was before the

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U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention began recommending Americans wear masks and before Michigan announced its first presumptive positive coronavirus case. The photos, which show Biden, Harris, Whitmer and Booker standing next to each other addressing a large crowd without face masks, were shared widely on social media during the Democratic National Convention. One photo shows Whitmer embracing Biden onstage. Dozens of posts featuring the photos accused the politicians of advising constituents to wear masks and engage in social distancing measures during the coronavirus pandemic, while disregarding their own recommendations. "Not a mask in sight, Governor," read one Facebook post viewed more than 50,000 times. "Tell me again why you are trying to force Michigan to wear one." But an internet search for Michigan events attended by the four politicians reveals the photos were taken on March 9, at a Detroit rally on the eve of the state's primary election. Associated Press photos of the event show the setting and the clothing worn by the politicians match the photos currently spreading on social media. Michigan did not announce its first presumptive positive case of the coronavirus until a day later, on March 10. It wasn't until early April that the CDC began advising all Americans to wear cloth face coverings to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, according to reporting by the AP. All four politicians have been photographed wearing face masks in public settings in recent months.

— Ali Swenson reported this item from Seattle.

CLAIM: The argument that Americans rely on the United States Postal Service for Social Security benefits is invalid because the Social Security Administration stopped mailing paper checks in 2013.

THE FACTS: The SSA encourages Americans to create digital accounts and receive their benefits electronically, but hundreds of thousands of users still count on the Postal Service to get their checks every month. As lawmakers in Washington fought with the president over funding for the Postal Service ahead of an election that will likely involve unprecedented levels of mail-in voting, several politicians pointed out that Americans rely on the mail for essential services such as Social Security. Democrats doubled down on that argument during the first night of the Democratic National Convention, with host Eva Longoria Bastón saying, "Social Security beneficiaries count on the post office to get their checks." Conservative websites and social media users quickly pushed back on those claims, pointing to a 2013 initiative by the U.S. Department of the Treasury that was meant to phase out paper checks and transition them to all-electronic delivery. "I wonder if CNN will fact check itself," read one Instagram post with a video clip from the first night of the Democratic National Convention. "Social Security stopped sending paper checks in 2013..." It's true that there was a federal government initiative to move toward electronic payments in 2013, and the vast majority of Social Security recipients receive electronic payments. But the SSA confirmed to The Associated Press in an email that hundreds of thousands of Americans still rely on the Postal Service to get their checks. "Currently, the Social Security Administration pays approximately 71.6 million (98.8%) Social Security and SSI benefits electronically per month and mails nearly 850,000 (1.2%) per month," wrote Mark Hinkle, acting press officer for the agency. The SSA also mails millions of paper statements every year to workers aged 60 and older who do not receive Social Security benefits and don't have digital accounts.

— Ali Swenson

CLAIM: Locked mailboxes in front of a post office in Burbank, California, are proof that massive voter suppression is underway ahead of the election.

THE FACTS: The boxes were locked to prevent theft, Postal Service officials said. Social media users are sharing photos of locked mailboxes in front of the Downtown Station post office in Burbank, California, suggesting the move is to suppress voting in upcoming elections. "Spread this far and wide! This is massive voter suppression happening in front of us! The Post Office in Burbank, CA. All outdoor boxes locked shut. The entrance to the Post Office is locked and you can't mail a letter?" the post on Facebook with the photo of the locked boxes said. A Postal Service official told the AP that anti-theft locking devices were placed on the boxes in front of the Burbank Post Office to deter mail theft. The are locked during the hours the post office is closed. "The use of Collection Box Anti-theft locking devices, such as at the

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Burbank Post Office, have been in place since approximately 2016 and this device was developed as a mail theft deterrent," said Evelina Ramirez, a Postal Service spokeswoman. The locks are placed on the boxes after the last collection of the day and removed at the start of then next business day. Ramirez said openings on the back of the box allow for mail to be deposited into the collection box, while the locks on the front are designed to keep mail from being removed. A video online of the locked boxes circulating on Twitter shows the letter opening on the back of the locked USPS collection boxes. The posts online come as concerns grow that the Trump administration is working to undermine the Postal Service before the election. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Sunday called Congress back into session to address concerns.

— Beatrice Dupuy reported this item from New York.

CLAIM: There was fraud in Michigan's Aug. 4 statewide primary election because "deceased people" cast ballots, and 8% of all votes cast were rejected because the voter was dead.

THE FACTS: Michigan election authorities have not found any evidence votes were cast on behalf of dead people in the Aug. 4 primary election. Rather, a small portion of voters who had cast absentee ballots died before Election Day. Those ballots were disqualified. They represented 8% of all rejected absentee ballots, not 8% of all ballots cast. Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson said last week that 10,694 absentee ballots were disqualified in the state's recent primary. About 8% of those rejected ballots, 846, were rejected because the voters "died after casting their absentee ballot but before Election Day," according to an Aug. 14 press release from Benson's office. "We get monthly updates from the Social Security Administration that allows us to update the qualified voter file with the list of everyone who is deceased," Benson's spokesperson Tracy Wimmer told the AP. Wimmer said that the voters in question were eligible to vote when they requested their absentee ballots but died in the period before Election Day. She said the fact that her office caught and rejected those ballots during the verification process "validates that the system works." Still, facts about Michigan voting were twisted on social media. "BREAKING: MASSIVE VOTER FRAUD IN MICHIGAN PRIMARY," read one popular but misleading Instagram post. Donald Trump Jr. retweeted a Breitbart article headlined, "Michigan Rejects 846 Mailed Ballots 'Because the Voter Was Dead,'" and added the inaccurate claim, "Hey, it was only about 8% of the votes cast which I imagine are amateur numbers for the democrats in places like Michigan." In 2016, an even larger number of absentee ballots — around 1,700 — were disqualified in Michigan because the voter died before Election Day, according to Wimmer. "There wasn't evidence of fraud then, and there's not evidence of fraud now," she told the AP.

— Jude Joffe-Block

CLAIM: Guinness World Records "certified" that the boat parade supporting President Trump in Clearwater, Florida, was the "largest boat parade in history."

THE FACTS: The Guinness World Records told The Associated Press on Monday that the application for the Clearwater boat parade supporting Trump is still being reviewed. It could take up to 15 weeks to confirm whether it broke the current record. The parade of boats, most flying pro-Trump and U.S. flags, began near Clearwater on Saturday, Aug. 15. Parade organizers were hoping to break world records. "This is gonna be the MOAB... Mother of all Boat Parades...The current world record according to Guinness Book of World Records was achieved in Malaysia in 2014 and had a recorded 1,180 boats," the organizer's website, Conservative Grounds, stated. "In honor of the 45th President Donald J. Trump we will beat the world record in his name." Social media users falsely claimed on social media that the boat parade already broke records: "Guinness Book of World Records certified that today's Trump boat parade was the largest boat parade in history. Clearwater, Florida," said one Facebook user. The post had more than 1,000 shares. Officials at Guinness World Records said they are examining whether the Trump boat parade was the largest, a process that could take weeks. "We can confirm we have received an application for this title and attempt. We are currently awaiting evidence to review," Amanda Marcus, public relations manager at Guinness World Records, told the AP in an email. "Our standard application review process can take

up to 12-15 weeks of submission. Once received and reviewed, our Records Management Team will then confirm the success or failure of the record attempt," Marcus said. The largest parade on record occurred on Sept. 13, 2014, during Malaysia Day celebrations in the Kemaman District of Terengganu, Malaysia. There were 1,180 boats in the parade.

— Arijeta Lajka reported this item from New York.

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EU agrees to cut taxes on US lobsters in modest trade pact

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Maine lobsters should soon be returning to European pots under a modest trade agreement announced Friday.

In a big win for Maine's beleaguered lobster industry, the European Union agreed to drop its 8% tariff on U.S. lobsters for the next five years and to work to make the move permanent.

For its part, the United States agreed to cut in half tariffs on EU imports worth about \$160 million a year, including some prepared meals, crystal glassware and cigarette lighters. The tariff cuts are retroactive to Aug. 1.

U.S. lobster imports to the EU came to about \$111 million in 2017 before falling off in the face of rising tensions between the trading partners and an EU trade agreement with Canada that favored Canadian lobster. Maine's lobster industry had pleaded for relief.

"This is a great piece of news," said independent Sen. Angus King of Maine. "The lobster industry has been under a great deal of pressure."

"This will level the playing field between Canadian and Maine lobsters," Republican Maine Sen. Susan Collins said in Kennebunkport, Maine, where she had lunch with former President George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, at their summer home.

King noted, though, that it might take a while for Maine lobster producers to redevelop relations with European customers who have been buying from Canada.

Overall U.S. lobster exports dropped 19% last year to \$561 billion from 2018. They are down another 43% this year as the coronavirus pandemic has paralyzed global trade.

The pact announced Friday covers a fraction of U.S.-EU trade, which came to more than \$1.3 trillion last year. The limited deal is part of ongoing trade negotiations that were announced in 2018.

"We intend for this package of tariff reductions to mark just the beginning of a process that will lead to additional agreements that create more free, fair, and reciprocal transatlantic trade," U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and EU Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan said in a joint statement.

Associated Press writer David Sharp in Kennebunkport, Maine, contributed to this story.

Low rates and heavy buyer demand send US home sales surging

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

SILVER SPRING, Md. (AP) — Spurred by ultra-low mortgage rates, home buyers rushed last month to snap up a limited supply of existing houses, causing the pace of purchases to jump by a record-high 24.7%.

The July surge in sales reported Friday by the National Association of Realtors marked the second straight month of accelerating home purchases. The back-to-back increases have helped stabilize the home buying market, which all but froze early this spring when the viral pandemic erupted across the United States.

With July's increase, to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 5.86 million, purchases of existing homes are up 8.7% from a year ago. Near record-low mortgage rates have made homes more affordable for buyers, and many are acting to capitalize on them. The average rate on a 30-year fixed rate mortgage is

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now 2.99%, the mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday. A year ago, it was 3.55%.

The figures also point to a persistently unequal recovery: Many higher-paid white-collar workers, who have disproportionately kept their jobs and can work remotely, are able to buy homes, in some cases far from their employers' headquarters.

By contrast, renters are more likely to work in lower-paying service jobs at restaurants, hotels, gyms, and hair salons, where layoffs have been rampant and their ability to pay rent is declining. The expiration of a federal moratorium on evictions has also raised their risk of losing their home.

In a few of the country's most expensive housing markets — notably New York and San Francisco — real estate professionals say they're seeing more people leaving high-priced city apartments to buy homes in outer suburbs. The loss of urban amenities and concern that the risk of infection is higher in denser areas may be contributing to that trend.

But nationally, an analysis by Zillow has found, urban and suburban areas are showing similar strength. Many suburbs are becoming hot home sellers' markets, Zillow said, but so have many urban areas.

"There is some localized evidence of a softer urban market, particularly in the highest-priced markets, San Francisco and Manhattan, and an eye-catching divergence in sale prices, but no evidence of a widespread flight to suburban pastures," said Jeff Tucker, an economist at Zillow.

"The primary issue in much of the country," Tucker said, "is the inventory drought, both urban and suburban, that's failing to meet the surprisingly robust demand from buyers eager to lock in record-low mortgage rates."

In a pocket of southern Vermont, sales to out-of-state buyers, including from New York City, have surged, said Janet Boyd, an agent in Wilmington.

In the past six weeks, Boyd said, she's sold more than twice the number of homes that she did in the same period last year. About 80% of the buyers are from out of state.

Some of the newcomers to Vermont, including renters and second-home owners, came to ride out the pandemic and decided to stay, she said.

"It's just like 9/11 — they feel safe," Boyd said.

But in other metro areas, too, some people are casting eyes toward the suburbs.

Peter Lau and his wife recently got a quick offer on their home in the District of Columbia, allowing them to move to suburban Rockville, Maryland. Lau, who has two young children, said the pandemic, along with low mortgage rates, accelerated their suburban move.

"We definitely were talking about getting more space, and COVID pushed us over the edge," said Lau, 40.

He and his wife wanted a layout more compatible with their new reality: Working remotely, they need room for a home office and for their children to do remote learning.

"We felt that if these changes to how we work are even semi-permanent, our previous house just didn't work anymore," Lau said.

In the midst of the pandemic-induced recession, housing has emerged as one of the few resilient sectors of the economy. An unusually sparse supply of homes is both helping fuel demand and keeping sales lower than they might otherwise be. The supply in July was down 2.6% from June and 21% from a year ago. At the current sales pace, there is a 3.1-months supply of houses — down from 3.9 months in June and 4.2 months a year ago.

The result is that homes put up for sale are vanishing quickly. Homes were on the market for an average of 22 days in July, down by two days from June. And they are disappearing seven days faster than in the same month last year. The NAR said more than two-thirds of homes sold in July had been on the market for less than a month.

Economists say the aggressive buying reflects, in part, pent-up demand from the spring, when the usual surge in sales was blocked by the coronavirus outbreak.

"A lot of people are making up ground for the lost spring home-buying season," said Odeta Kushi, an economist at First American, a title insurance company.

Kushi noted that the unemployment gap between renters and homeowners has widened. Typically, unemployment among renters is about 4.4 percentage points higher than among homeowners. Since the

pandemic has intensified, that gap has jumped to 6.4 percentage points.

And even as home sales have grown, so have mortgage delinquencies. The proportion of homeowners who are 30 days or more behind on their payments jumped to 8.2% in the April-June quarter, up from 4.4% in the first three months of the year, according to the Mortgage Bankers' Association. That was the largest quarterly increase in record, the MBA said.

In the meantime, the shortage of homes for sale is boosting prices. The median price has topped \$300,000 for the first time on record, settling at \$304,100. That's up a sharp 8.5% from July 2019.

"With only 3.1 months of existing supply on the market, even with the recent pickup in the pace of home building, the lack of inventory is going to continue to be a hurdle by limiting some prospective buyers' choices and weakening their purchasing power," said Mike Fratantoni, chief economist at the Mortgage Bankers Association.

AP Writers Christopher Rugaber in Washington, Ken Sweet in New York and Lisa Rathke in Marshfield, Vermont, contributed to this report.

Belarus leader blames US for chaos, vows to end protests

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

MINSK, Belarus (AP) — Authorities in Belarus detained a leader of striking factory workers and threatened demonstrators with criminal charges Friday in a bid to stop the massive post-election protests challenging the country's authoritarian president, who accused the United States of fomenting the unrest.

Investigators also summoned several opposition activists for questioning as part of a criminal probe into a council they created with the goal of coordinating a transition of power for the ex-Soviet nation that President Alexander Lukashenko has ruled with an iron fist for 26 years.

Protesters are demanding that Lukashenko resign, accusing him of stealing a sixth term in office by rigging the country's Aug. 9 presidential election. Many are fed up with sinking living standards and the lack of opportunities under Lukashenko, and their disgust grew deeper as he dismissed the coronavirus pandemic and refused to order a lockdown.

Unfazed by government threats, thousands of demonstrators on Friday formed "chains of solidarity" across the capital of Minsk before marching to the central Independence Square as post-election protests entered their 13th straight day. Motorists honked and slowed down to block traffic in a show of solidarity.

"I have come through the hell, they were beating me without stop for two days," said Artyom Progin, an artist whose legs have black marks from police clubs. "Bruises and scratches will heal, but the memory of these crimes will last."

The 65-year-old leader blamed the U.S. for instigating the protests that started on election night and intensified after officials declared him the winner with 80% of the vote.

"The U.S. is planning and directing everything, and the Europeans are playing up to it," Lukashenko said while visiting a state farm Friday.

The United States on Thursday described the Belarus presidential election as neither free nor fair and urged authorities to engage in a dialogue with the opposition council. European Union leaders are preparing sanctions against Belarusian officials.

Speaking to agricultural workers, Lukashenko bluntly rejected Western offers to mediate between his government and the opposition, telling the U.S. and the EU to mind their own business.

"They should sort out their own affairs first," he said.

Belarus' Interior Ministry said Friday that Yevgeny Bokhvalov, who organized a strike at the huge Minsk Automobile Plant, was detained, but gave no further details. Workers at the factory manufacturing heavy trucks have been on strike since Monday to push for Lukashenko's resignation, as have workers at many other industrial plants across the country.

The strike committee at the giant Belaruskali potash factory in Soligorsk said agents from state security agency KGB detained one of the organizers of the walkout, Dmitry Kudelevich, but he managed to escape

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through a toilet window and fled to neighboring Ukraine.

The labor action has presented a tough challenge for Lukashenko, who has relied on blue-collar workers as his core support base for decades. He has warned that strikers could be fired and ordered law enforcement to protect factory managers from opposition pressure.

"Most of all, Lukashenko fears the factory workers' protest, so he tries to scare strike organizers and stop the strikes," said Sergei Dylevsky, the leader of the strike-organizing committee at the Minsk Tractor Plant.

Dylevsky, a member of the opposition Coordination Council, was summoned for interrogation along with another council member, lawyer Maxim Znak.

"Even if they arrest us, it will not stop the protests and make Lukashenko look legitimate," Dylevsky said.

The Prosecutor General's office has opened a criminal probe into the creation of the Coordination Council, charging it violated the constitution and threatened national security. The council members have rejected the accusations and insist their actions fully comply with Belarusian law.

The council has called for a new presidential election organized by a newly formed election commission, as well as for an investigation into the protest crackdown and compensation for victims of police violence.

In a bid to stem the daily demonstrations, Belarus Prosecutor General Alexander Konyuk on Friday warned that participants in unsanctioned protests could face criminal charges.

During the first four days of post-election protests, police detained almost 7,000 people and injured hundreds with rubber bullets, stun grenades and clubs. At least three protesters died and scores displayed serious bruises from police beatings. On Friday, the state Investigative Committee opened an inquiry into the claims that police raped women in custody.

The ferocious crackdown fueled massive outrage and swelled protesters' ranks, forcing authorities to change tactics and stop breaking up crowds. But after standing back for several days, police again beefed up their presence on the streets and deployed outside major factories that have joined the strike.

On Friday, Lukashenko once again derided the opposition as Western puppets and vowed to take action quickly.

"You shouldn't worry about that. It's my problem that I must solve. And believe me, we will solve it in the nearest days," he said.

To counter the opposition pressure, thousands of Lukashenko's supporters have rallied in Minsk and other cities over the past days.

"The country needs stability and peace, and they are trying to enforce a revolution on us," said 46-year-old electrician Dmitry Shparzh who attended Friday's rally in Minsk. "How should Lukashenko react? Naturally, he is moving to restore order."

Hundreds of state television employees have also gone on strike this week, shaking the government's control of the media. Lukashenko acknowledged Friday that several Russian TV journalists were working at Belarusian state TV to fill the gap.

Seeking to tighten government control over information, the state publishing house has stopped printing top independent newspapers, the Narodnaya Volya and Komsomolskaya Pravda, citing equipment malfunction.

"It effectively amounts to the introduction of censorship," said Narodnaya Volya editor Iosif Seredich.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Lukashenko's leading election challenger and the wife of an opposition blogger who has been jailed since May, urged factory workers to continue striking in a video released Friday.

Tsikhanouskaya, who left Belarus for Lithuania after contesting the election results that gave her 10% of the vote, spoke Friday at a news conference in Vilnius, calling for a new election. Her lawyer on Friday submitted a formal appeal to Belarus' Supreme Court to try to get the Aug. 9 vote invalidated.

"New fair, free and transparent elections must be held," Tsikhanouskaya said. "The people of Belarus have woken up, and they do not want to live in fear and lies anymore."

Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow and Liudas Dapkus in Vilnius, Lithuania, contributed to this report.

Follow AP's coverage of the political turmoil in Belarus at <https://www.apnews.com/Belarus>

Mounting US deaths reveal an outside toll on people of color

By ANNA FLAGG and DAMINI SHARMA of The Marshall Project and MIKE STOBBE and LARRY FENN of The Associated Press undefined

As many as 215,000 more people than usual died in the U.S. during the first seven months of 2020, suggesting that the number of lives lost to the coronavirus is significantly higher than the official toll. And half the dead were people of color — Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and, to a marked degree unrecognized until now, Asian Americans.

The new figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention highlight a stark disparity: Deaths among minorities during the crisis have risen far more than they have among whites.

As of the end of July, the official death toll in the U.S. from COVID-19 was about 150,000. It has since grown to over 170,000.

But public health authorities have long known that some coronavirus deaths, especially early on, were mistakenly attributed to other causes, and that the crisis may have led indirectly to the loss of many other lives by preventing or discouraging people with other serious ailments from seeking treatment.

A count of deaths from all causes during the seven-month period yields what experts believe is a fuller — and more alarming — picture of the disaster and its racial dimensions.

People of color make up just under 40% of the U.S. population but accounted for approximately 52% of all the “excess deaths” above normal through July, according to an analysis by The Associated Press and The Marshall Project, a nonprofit news organization covering the criminal justice system.

“The toll of the pandemic shows just how pervasive structural racism is,” said Olugbenga Ajilore, senior economist at the Center for American Progress, a public policy organization in Washington.

Earlier data on cases, hospitalizations and deaths revealed the especially heavy toll on Black, Hispanic and Native Americans, a disparity attributed to unequal access to health care and economic opportunities. But the increases in total deaths by race were not reported until now; nor was the disproportionate burden on Asian Americans.

With this new data, Asian Americans join Blacks and Hispanics among the hardest-hit communities, with deaths in each group up at least 30% this year compared with the average over the last five years, the analysis found. Deaths among Native Americans rose more than 20%, though that is probably a severe undercount because of a lack of data. Deaths among whites were up 9%.

The toll on Asian Americans has received far less attention, perhaps in part because the numbers who have died -- about 14,000 more than normal this year -- have been far lower than among several other groups. Still, the 35% increase in Asian American deaths is the second-highest, behind Hispanic Americans.

In an average year, somewhere around 1.7 million people die in the United States between January and the end of July. This year the figure was about 1.9 million, according to the CDC.

Of the possible 215,000 additional deaths above normal through July -- a total that has since risen to as many as 235,000 --- most were officially attributed to coronavirus infections. The rest were blamed on other causes, including heart disease, high blood pressure and other types of respiratory diseases.

The CDC has not yet provided a breakdown by race and ethnicity of the deaths from other causes. The newly released data is considered provisional and subject to change as more information comes in. Certain categories of deaths — suicides or drug overdoses, for example — often involve lengthy investigations before a cause is assigned.

The outbreak's disproportionate effect on communities of color is not limited to a specific region of the country.

The virus first hit urban areas on the East and West coasts. But according to University of Minnesota researcher Carrie Henning-Smith, disparities have also been seen as the disease spread across the country to Southern and Western states with large rural populations.

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For example, Arizona reported almost 60% more Native American deaths so far this year compared with previous years, and New Mexico recorded over 40% more. Between the two states, over 1,100 more Native Americans have died than normal.

Another surprise: Only about half of the Asian American deaths have been officially linked to COVID-19, lower than for all other groups. Jarvis Chen, a lecturer at Harvard University's public health school, said Asian Americans may not be getting tested at the same rate as other groups, for reasons that are unclear, and that could result in some virus deaths being attributed to something else.

Dr. Namratha Kandula of Northwestern University echoed that theory. She also cautioned against generalizing about the underlying health of Asian Americans as a whole, noting that they are a diverse group from many different nations and cultures.

"It's not enough to clump them all together because it does not tell the whole story," she said.

Charlton Rhee, whose parents came to the U.S. from South Korea, lost both of them to COVID-19 this spring as the virus surged in New York City.

His mother, Eulja Rhee, went out one day, and when she returned, "she told me someone had coughed in her face" as she was getting off a bus, said Rhee, a nursing home administrator in Queens. "She was wearing a mask, but it got into her eyes."

She died in the hospital, just shy of her 75th birthday.

Rhee found out a day later that his father, Man Joon Rhee, had tested positive. "He had caught it from my mother," he said. "His heart was broken. And he said to me that he wanted to know if it was OK to be with Mom."

He stayed home, receiving hospice care, and died at 83.

"The Asian American community has suffered greatly during this," and government officials provided little help, especially initially, Rhee said. Community associations had to step in with food drives, personal protective equipment and other help.

Racial disparities in deaths predate COVID-19, and many forces combine to produce them:

— Some communities of color are more likely to have lower incomes and to share living space with larger families, increasing the risk of transmission.

— They have higher rates of health problems, including diabetes, obesity and lung ailments, the result of living in places where healthier foods are harder to get and the environment is polluted. Those same factors can make them more likely to become severely ill or die from the coronavirus.

— They are more often uninsured and tend to live farther from hospitals.

— They are disproportionately incarcerated, which has been linked to long-term effects on health.

— Experts point to a long history of discrimination that causes distrust of the health care system.

— And people of color are more likely to fill essential roles that require them to keep going to work during the pandemic.

Dr. Sobiya Ansari, who works predominantly with Black immigrant cancer patients in New York City, worries when they miss or postpone radiation or screenings. Already, the city has seen double the number of Black deaths this year compared with previous years.

"If a storm hits and you're safe inside your house, you're safe," she said. "Then there is a population of people that don't even have umbrellas. The storm hits, and they're just really swept away."

AP video journalist Marshall Ritzel contributed to this story.

This story is a collaboration between The Associated Press and The Marshall Project that explores the true toll of the coronavirus pandemic on communities of color. Anna Flagg and Damini Sharma reported for The Marshall Project.

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Harris' dual identities challenge America's race labels

By SALLY HO Associated Press

It was just 20 years ago that the U.S. census began to allow Americans to identify as more than one race. And now, the country is on the threshold of seeing the name of Kamala Harris -- proud daughter of a Jamaican father and Indian mother -- on the national ballot.

Harris' historic nomination for vice president on the Democratic ticket is challenging America's emphasis on identity and labels.

While her dual heritage represents several slices of the multicultural and multiracial experience, many have puzzled over how to define her — an issue people of diverse backgrounds have long had to navigate.

Harris has long incorporated both sides of her parentage in her public persona, but also has been steadfast in claiming her Black identity, saying her mother -- the biggest influence on her life -- raised her and her sister as Black because that's the way the world would view them.

"My mother instilled in my sister, Maya, and me the values that would chart the course of our lives," Harris said in a Wednesday night speech at the Democratic National Convention to accept her party's nomination. "She raised us to be proud, strong Black women. And she raised us to know and be proud of our Indian heritage."

A 2015 Pew Research Center study found that multiracial people in the U.S. were growing at a rate three times faster than the general population. A majority said they were proud of their mixed-race background, but had been subjected to racial slurs or jokes. And about 25% said they were bothered by people making assumptions about their racial background.

Harris herself has lamented how others feel a need to define her, despite how comfortable she is in her own skin.

"I didn't go through some evolution about who am I and what is my identity," she said in a June interview with the Los Angeles Times' "Asian Enough" podcast. "And I guess the frustration I have is if people think that I should have gone through such a crisis and need to explain it."

For others from multiracial backgrounds, however, the journey can be fraught. On her Instagram account, Amanda Neal proudly declares that she's "HELLA BLACK, HELLA PINAY," referring to the demonym for a woman of Filipino descent. But the 30-year-old voice instructor in Chicago says it's taken much time and self-reflection to fully embrace both sides of her racial identity.

As a young girl, Neal said people often tried to make her choose one identity over the other because her mother is an immigrant from Philippines and her father is an African American who grew up in Chicago and Hawaii. And she said some Filipino relatives told her to avoid sounding or acting "too Black."

"It turned into an anti-Blackness that I didn't even know I had," she said.

Sheila SathWarner's two sons are Black and Asian, just like Harris. SathWarner is Indian American, and her husband is of African Caribbean descent via St. Croix.

While one boy looks more Indian and the other more Black, SathWarner said she has stressed their Black heritage, much like Harris' mother. She encourages them to embrace the natural texture of their hair and reminds them to never play with toy guns for fear of them being targeted by police.

"We've always talked to them about both their heritages. We have been committed to visiting St. Croix," said SathWarner, a middle-school principal from Alameda, California. "They are both Black."

The subject is inextricably linked to the "one drop rule," a legal principle rooted in slavery that anyone with even a drop of Black lineage could not own land or be free. Today, it manifests itself in the way people visually categorize others and the social hierarchy between races, said Sarah Gaither, a Duke University professor studying race who herself is Black and white.

No one carries the same experience or should serve as "identity police," said Gaither, who stressed the importance of allowing multiracial, multicultural people to define for themselves who they are, and accepting that a biracial person's identity may evolve.

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Officially, the U.S. census claims that about 3.5% of U.S. residents identified as two or more races in 2018, up from 2.4% in 2000. But when Pew conducted its own survey, its number increased five-fold when accounting for people who identified as one race but said that at least one of their parents was a different race or multiracial, as well as people who had at least one grandparent of a different race than themselves or their parents.

And though respondents were allowed to identify as more than one race in the U.S. census beginning in 2000, the race category options still are not all-encompassing.

People of Middle Eastern or North African descent have long struggled with what to pick. Advocates had unsuccessfully pushed for a separate category for the 2020 census, but the Census Bureau for now encourages people in those categories to identify as white. And even though Hispanic identity isn't a race, Latinos often aren't sure how to answer the race question and select "some other race" on census forms.

Aside from the way they outwardly present, how multiracial people are raised and conditioned by their families, their exposure to certain relatives and the makeup of their community surroundings also are important factors in how they identify.

Former President Barack Obama, whose father was Kenyan and mother was white, identifies as Black, while Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, whose father is white and mother is Black, has indicated a preference for being identified as biracial.

Then there's pro golfer Tiger Woods, who coined the term "Cablinasian" because his mixed-race parents were of white, Black, Asian and native American ancestry. Woods' unorthodox choice has offended some African Americans, who view it as a rejection of his Black identity.

For most of his childhood, Benjamin Beltran identified with his dad's roots as a Filipino growing up in Saginaw, Michigan, with few other Asian Americans. At times, that made his white mother worry he was forgetting her ancestry, which traces to Scotland and Ireland. Still, most people assume he is Latino.

The 26-year-old college administrator living in Washington, D.C., said he started shifting to identify as multiracial and biracial when he began hanging out with more Asian Americans in college, because he found his life experience was not quite syncing with his former preferred label.

"What I think is really cool is her identity is not simple," Beltran said of Harris. "It's complex and it's nuanced and it's reflective of more and more Americans in this day and age."

AP journalists Noreen Nasir in Chicago and Michael Schneider in Orlando, Fla. contributed.

Follow AP reporter Sally Ho on Twitter at http://twitter.com/_sallyho

AP Exclusive: Barr 'vehemently opposed' to pardoning Snowden

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General William Barr said he would be "vehemently opposed" to any attempt to pardon former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden, after the president suggested he might consider it.

The attorney general's comments in an interview with The Associated Press come days after President Donald Trump said he would "look at" whether to pardon Snowden, who was charged under the Espionage Act in 2013 with disclosing details of highly classified government surveillance programs.

"There are many, many people — it seems to be a split decision that many people think that he should be somehow treated differently, and other people think he did very bad things," Trump said of Snowden at a news conference on Saturday. "And I'm going to take a very good look at it."

The Justice Department's criminal complaint against him was dated just days after Snowden's name first surfaced as the person who had leaked to the news media that the NSA, in classified surveillance programs, gathered telephone and Internet records to ferret out potential terror plots.

"He was a traitor and the information he provided our adversaries greatly hurt the safety of the American people," Barr said. "He was peddling it around like a commercial merchant. We can't tolerate that."

Snowden remains in Russia to avoid prosecution even as the federal charges against him are pending. It was unclear how serious Trump was, particularly given that years earlier he had denounced Snowden as a spy deserving of execution. But Trump's distrust of his own intelligence community has been a staple of his tenure, particularly because of its conclusion that Russia intervened in the 2016 presidential election on his behalf, and he has at times bemoaned the broad surveillance powers that the intelligence agencies have at their disposal.

Any effort to pardon Snowden would unquestionably infuriate senior intelligence officials, who say his disclosures caused extraordinary damage and will have repercussions for years to come.

In a memoir published last year, Snowden wrote that his seven years working for the NSA and CIA led him to conclude that the U.S. intelligence community had "hacked the Constitution" and put everyone's liberty at risk and that he had no choice but to turn to journalists to reveal it to the world.

"I realized that I was crazy to have imagined that the Supreme Court, or Congress, or President Obama, seeking to distance his administration from President George W. Bush's, would ever hold the IC legally responsible — for anything," he wrote, using an abbreviation for the intelligence community.

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In moving speech, boy says Biden helped him overcome stutter

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Even in a week filled with emotional endorsements of Joe Biden, Brayden Harrington's stands out.

The 13-year-old boy sat in his home, speaking to a cellphone camera and reading, carefully, from a piece of paper. He looked up and told the world how the former vice president, by speaking about his own experience, had helped him overcome a difficult challenge.

"We stutter," Brayden said in a video that aired Thursday, shortly before Biden accepted his party's presidential nomination on Thursday's final night of the Democratic National Convention. The Concord, New Hampshire, teen got stuck briefly on the "s" sound and bravely worked his way through the word. His face showed strain but also determination to force out the sound.

"It's really amazing to hear that someone became vice president" despite stuttering, Brayden said. "He told me about a book of poems by Yeats that he would read out loud to practice."

Biden has spoken frequently about how overcoming a stutter was one of the hardest things he's done in life. Brayden and Biden met at a February CNN town hall in Concord, where Biden spoke about learning to cope with a severe childhood stutter. He's talked publicly through the years about the anger and frustration of being mocked by classmates and a nun in Catholic school — and how that motivated him to work to overcome it.

"It has nothing to do with your intellectual makeup," he said at the town hall.

After that event, Biden invited Brayden backstage to talk more about learning to control a stutter. Biden noted that he'd practiced by speaking as he looked at himself in the mirror. He also gave the boy a speech he'd prepared for delivery, complete with markings he'd made on its pages that showed where he had time to take breaks and pauses so that the words would come out more smoothly.

Brayden held up that speech for convention viewers on Thursday.

"I'm just trying to be a kid," Brayden said. "And in a short amount of time, Joe Biden made me feel more confident about something that's bothered me my whole life. Joe Biden cared. Imagine what he could do for all of us."

"Kids like me are counting on you to elect someone we can all look up to," he added.

Biden has talked about his stutter often on the presidential campaign trail and how it sometimes returns on certain words, especially if he's tired.

After he talked about it during a Democratic primary debate in December — and even started to make the sounds of a stutter — then-White House press secretary Sarah Sanders ridiculed Biden on Twitter. The

tweet was later deleted and Sanders apologized. Biden said afterward that he had no regrets "because I know what it's like to be humiliated."

Biden's sister and longtime political adviser, Valerie Biden Owens, told The Associated Press in a recent interview that, as tough as it was on him as a child, stuttering helped Biden emerge a stronger man.

"The stutter at the time was horrible for him. But I think it was a great gift, because he did not let the stuttering define him," she said. "He did not let somebody else's opinion of him and description of him as a lesser person define him. What he developed as a result of that, this little boy, he developed a backbone of steel."

Asia Today: Seoul surge appears to spread around South Korea

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea added its most new virus cases in months on Friday, driven by a surge around the capital that appears to be spreading nationwide.

The 324 new infections was its highest single day total since early March and the eighth consecutive triple-digit daily increase.

Most of the new cases are in the densely populated Seoul region, where health workers are scrambling to track transmissions from sources including churches, restaurants, schools and workers.

But the new infections reported Friday were from practically all major cities, including Busan, Gwangju, Daejeon, Sejong and Daegu, the southeastern city that was the epicenter of a massive outbreak in late February and March.

The new figures reported by South Korea's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention brought the nation's caseload to 16,670, including 309 deaths.

Health authorities managed to contain the virus in the Daegu region by April, ramping up tests and using cellphone location data, credit-card records and security camera videos to trace and isolate contacts, which allowed the country to weather the outbreak without placing meaningful restrictions on its economy.

Another factor was that the narrowness of the Daegu outbreak effectively aided its containment — most were linked to a single church congregation with thousands of members.

It's unclear whether South Korea's previous formula of success will be as effective since the Seoul region has many more people and new clusters are occurring in various places as people increasingly venture out in public.

Churches had been a major source of new cases in the Seoul area before authorities shut them this week while raising social distancing restrictions, something they had resisted for months out of economic concerns. Nightclubs, karaoke bars, buffet restaurants and computer gaming cafes are also closed and spectators have been banned again from baseball and soccer games.

Jeong Eun-kyeong, director of the KCDC, said the government should consider stronger distancing measures — possibly including banning gatherings of over 10 people, shutting schools, halting professional sports and advising companies to have employees work from home — if the virus's spread doesn't slow after the weekend.

Jeong said country is now conducting 50,000 tests per day, compared to around 20,000 per day during the Daegu outbreak.

She said 732 infections have been linked to a Seoul church led by a vocal critic of the country's president. Sarang Jeil Church pastor Jun Kwang-hun was hospitalized with COVID-19 on Monday after participating in an anti-government protest last week where he shared a microphone on stage with other activists.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— Hong Kong will offer free, universal testing to its residents starting Sept. 1. The testing program, which will last a maximum of two weeks, is on a voluntary basis. Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said that universal testing was possible due to support from Beijing, which provided resources such as laboratory staff to boost capacity in the semi-autonomous city. The program is aimed at identifying individuals who are infected but have exhibited no symptoms. The city, with a population of 7.5 million, has conducted over 1.2 million tests so far. Critics of the universal testing program say that there may be potential pri-

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vacy concerns, given that the program is supported by the Chinese Communist Party. Lam brushed aside such concerns, stating that no matter what the government did, there will always be people who come up with conspiracy theories.

— Papua New Guinea says it halted the arrival of Chinese workers after a Chinese mining company claimed to have immunized employees against COVID-19 in an apparent vaccination trial. A pandemic response official banned COVID-19 vaccine testing or trials in the South Pacific island nation after Ramu NiCo Management claimed to have vaccinated 48 Chinese employees. Papua New Guinea says any vaccine imported into the country must be approved by PNG's health authorities and must be pre-qualified by the World Health Organization. An official says the country is seeking further information from China.

— India's coronavirus caseload crossed 2.9 million with a surge of 68,898 in the past 24 hours. The Health Ministry on Friday also reported 983 more deaths, taking total fatalities to 54,849. India has been recording at least 50,000 new infections per day since mid-July. Four of India's 28 states now account for 63% of fatalities and 54.6% of cases. The ministry said more than 900,000 tests are being done and the rate of tests that are positive for the virus is averaging 8%.

— The governor of Iwate in northern Japan said the national government's "Go To" travel campaign should be considered a failure, noting the growing number of coronavirus cases. "To start it in July was a bit too soon as preparations weren't complete. It was carried out too soon, and so I think it can be called a failure," Gov. Takuya Tasso told reporters. Iwate had zero COVID-19 cases until a month ago and its 11 cases since are still the lowest among Japan's prefectures. Tasso said factors for the area's success include its low population density, limited travel and people's awareness of crisis management after Iwate was devastated by the 2011 tsunami. The "Go To" campaign promoted travel to areas of the country except Tokyo to help the badly hit tourism industry.

— Australia's hard-hit Victoria state on Friday reported its lowest number of new coronavirus cases in more than six weeks. Victoria's Health Department reported 179 new infections and nine deaths, the lowest daily increase since July 8. The state capital, Melbourne, has been under a strict lockdown for two weeks, and authorities say daily infections will have to fall to single digits or low double digits before the lockdown is relaxed.

— Sri Lanka has decided to reopen all schools after health officials declared the coronavirus is under control. About two weeks ago the education ministry allowed the resumption of several grades that will face government examinations in the coming months. The ministry has now given all schools permission to reopen if they have enough classrooms and teachers to maintain social distancing. Sri Lanka has reported 2,918 coronavirus cases, including 11 deaths.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Aug. 22, the 235th day of 2020. There are 131 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 22, 1972, President Richard Nixon was nominated for a second term of office by the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach.

On this date:

In 1846, Gen. Stephen W. Kearny proclaimed all of New Mexico a territory of the United States.

In 1851, the schooner America outraced more than a dozen British vessels off the English coast to win a trophy that came to be known as the America's Cup.

In 1862, French composer Claude Debussy (deh-byoo-SEE') was born in Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

In 1910, Japan annexed Korea, which remained under Japanese control until the end of World War II.

In 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war against Belgium.

In 1978, President Jomo Kenyatta, a leading figure in Kenya's struggle for independence, died; Vice President Daniel arap Moi (ehr-uhp MOY') was sworn in as acting president.

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In 1986, Kerr-McGee Corp. agreed to pay the estate of the late Karen Silkwood \$1.38 million, settling a 10-year-old nuclear contamination lawsuit. The Rob Reiner coming-of-age film "Stand By Me" was put into wide release by Columbia Pictures.

In 1989, Black Panthers co-founder Huey P. Newton was shot to death in Oakland, California. (Gunman Tyrone Robinson was later sentenced to 32 years to life in prison.)

In 1992, on the second day of the Ruby Ridge siege in Idaho, an FBI sharpshooter killed Vicki Weaver, the wife of white separatist Randy Weaver (the sharpshooter later said he was targeting the couple's friend Kevin Harris, and didn't see Vicki Weaver).

In 1996, President Bill Clinton signed welfare legislation ending guaranteed cash payments to the poor and demanding work from recipients.

In 2003, Alabama's chief justice, Roy Moore, was suspended for his refusal to obey a federal court order to remove his Ten Commandments monument from the rotunda of his courthouse. Texas Gov. Rick Perry pardoned 35 people arrested in the 1999 Tulia drug busts and convicted on the testimony of a lone undercover agent. (The agent, Tom Coleman, was later found guilty of aggravated perjury and sentenced to 10 years' probation.)

In 2007, a Black Hawk helicopter crashed in Iraq, killing all 14 U.S. soldiers. Hurricane Dean slammed into Mexico for the second time in as many days.

Ten years ago: Chilean President Sebastian Pinera confirmed that all of the miners trapped deep underground for 17 days were still alive after a probe came back with a handwritten note, "All 33 of us are fine in the shelter." (The miners were rescued the following October.) A proposed mosque near ground zero drew hundreds of fever-pitch demonstrators, with opponents carrying signs associating Islam with blood and supporters shouting, "Say no to racist fear!" Arjun Atwal captured the Wyndham Championship in Greensboro, North Carolina, by one stroke to become the first Indian-born PGA Tour winner.

Five years ago: A suicide car bomber attacked a NATO convoy traveling through a crowded neighborhood in Afghanistan's capital, killing at least 12 people, including four American civilian contractors. A military jet taking part in a British airshow crashed into a busy main road near Brighton in southern England, killing 11 people.

One year ago: Attorneys general from all 50 states and the District of Columbia pledged to do more to fight robocalls from scammers, telemarketers, debt collectors and others; the move came as Congress worked on anti-robocall bills. (A measure signed into law in December 2019 gave authorities more enforcement powers.) The CEO of Overstock.com resigned; Patrick Byrne's resignation came after the company issued a bizarre statement in which he referred to the "Deep State," called federal agents "Men in Black," and confirmed a relationship with Maria Butina, a gun-rights activist who was sentenced to prison for being an unregistered agent of Russia.

Today's Birthdays: Broadcast journalist Morton Dean is 85. Author Annie Proulx (proo) is 85. Baseball Hall of Famer Carl Yastrzemski (yah-STREM'-skee) is 81. Pro Football Hall of Fame coach Bill Parcells is 79. Writer-producer David Chase is 75. CBS newsman Steve Kroft is 75. Actor Cindy Williams is 73. Pop musician David Marks is 72. International Swimming Hall of Famer Diana Nyad (NY'-ad) is 71. Baseball Hall of Famer Paul Molitor is 64. Rock musician Vernon Reid is 62. Country singer Ricky Lynn Gregg is 61. Country singer Collin Raye is 60. Actor Regina Taylor is 60. Rock singer Roland Orzabal (Tears For Fears) is 59. Rock musician Debbi Peterson (The Bangles) is 59. Rock musician Gary Lee Conner (Screaming Trees) is 58. Singer Tori Amos is 57. Country singer Mila Mason is 57. Rhythm-and-blues musician James DeBarge is 57. International Tennis Hall of Famer Mats Wilander (VEE'-luhn-dur) is 56. Actor Brooke Dillman is 54. Rapper GZA (JIHZ'-ah)/The Genius is 54. Actor Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje (ah-day-WAH'-lay ah-kih-NOY'-yay ah-BAH'-jay) is 53. Actor Ty Burrell is 53. Celebrity chef Giada DeLaurentiis is 50. Actor Melinda Page Hamilton is 49. Actor Rick Yune is 49. Rock musician Paul Doucette (DOO'-set) (Matchbox Twenty) is 48. Rap-reggae singer Beenie Man is 47. Singer Howie Dorough (Backstreet Boys) is 47. Comedian-actor Kristen Wiig is 47. Actor Jenna Leigh Green is 46. Rock musician Bo Koster is 46. Rock musician Dean Back (Theory of a Deadman) is 45. Talk show host James Corden is 42. Rock musician Jeff Stinco (Simple Plan) is 42. Actor Brandon Adams is 41. Actor Aya Sumika is 40. Actor Ari Stidham is 28.