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Coming up on

GDILIVE.COM

Thursday, Aug. 27th: Volleyball at Britton sponsored by Ed and Connie Stauch
Friday, Aug. 28th: Football vs. EEK - Sponsored by Big Iron Auctions, Delbert Hinkelman
Saturday, Aug. 29th: Girls Soccer vs. Vermillion (sponsors being secured)

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Open enrollment rules waived for fall sports

By Dana Hess
For the S.D. Newspaper Association

BROOKINGS — Student-athletes enrolled in schools this fall that have opted for online learning and no sports because of the pandemic may be able to open enroll to other schools. That opportunity became available after action taken Monday morning by the board of directors of the South Dakota High School Activities Association.

The board met via Zoom to decide on the best way to allow those students to compete this fall, waiving the portion of the SDHSAA constitution that deals with open enrollment.

SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos said the staff also considered other options that included a fifth year of eligibility or moving fall sports to the spring. Adding a fifth year of eligibility didn't seem feasible, Swartos said.

"It disrupts the natural four-year cohort model," Swartos said. "I think it opens a pretty big can of worms."

As for moving fall sports to the spring, Swartos said that would depend on how the first weeks of the fall semester play out in regards to the spread of the virus.

"That needs to probably be a wholesale change," Swartos said. "That's when we would look at that."

The board's action Monday morning would allow students to open enroll to a new school for the fall sports season if they attend schools where athletics have been cancelled due to county/community/tribal/federal ordinances or orders. At this point schools on Indian reservations are the ones choosing online learning and canceling fall sports.

Those schools include: Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, Tiospaye Topa, Takini, Marty, St. Francis, Todd County, Lakota Tech, Pine Ridge, Red Cloud, Little Wound, Crazy Horse, Crow Creek, Lower Brule, Flandreau Indian School and Oelrichs.

Swartos explained that a student who seeks to open enroll would also complete a waiver that would call for the student to transfer back to their home school district once the fall sports season is complete.

The board's action was essentially waiving a section of the transfer rules in the organization's constitution for one sports season. The constitution calls for students who open enroll in a new district and then return to their original school district to sit out of sports competition for 45 days. The board's action waived the 45-day rule as well so students going back to their home districts would immediately be eligible for the winter sports season.

"Most of the schools involved in this have been supportive of this concept," Swartos said.

Minimum contest rules changed for volleyball, football

By Dana Hess
For the S.D. Newspaper Association

BROOKINGS — Due to the coronavirus pandemic, minimum contest rules for football and volleyball were changed Monday morning through an action taken by the South Dakota High School Activities board of directors. The board held a special meeting via Zoom.

With some high schools already canceling football contests because of local virus outbreaks, the board changed the minimum number of contests that need to be played for tournament eligibility from 10 to eight in volleyball and from six to five in football.

Board chairman Craig Cassens of Faulkton stressed that eight contests in volleyball doesn't necessarily mean playing eight matches. "That doesn't mean that you physically have to play eight," Cassens said.

As an example, SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos explained that a volleyball team that plays only four matches and goes 4-0 would also be credited with four losses for the calculation of power points for tournament seeding. Their opponents would see their power points calculated based on playing a 4-0 team rather than a 4-4 team.

The same example would be true in football, Swartos said, where a 3-0 team would have their power points for tournament seeding figured on a 3-2 record. Their opponents would figure their power points based on losses to a 3-0 team.

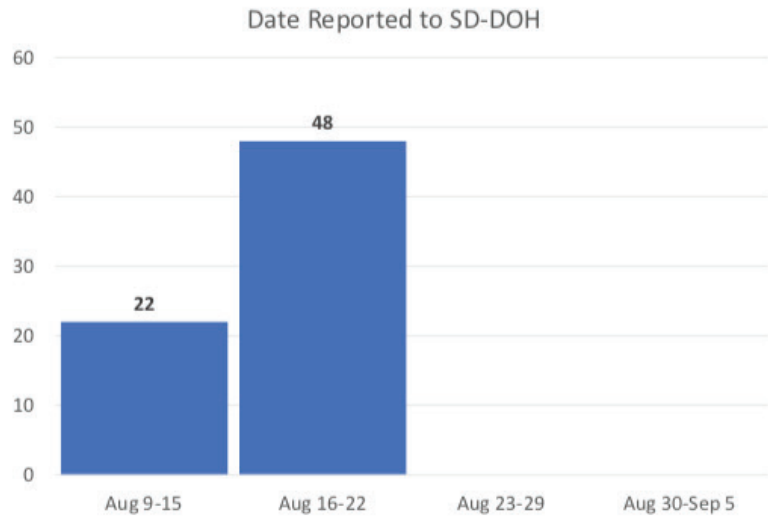
COVID-19 Cases* Within South Dakota K-12 Schools

70
Total Cases

46
Students

24
Staff

Cases in a School	Number of Schools*
0	829
1-2	51
≥3	6



* Includes cases reported to the South Dakota Department of Health (SD-DOH) on August 9 to August 22

** Includes public and non-public accredited schools and approved programs

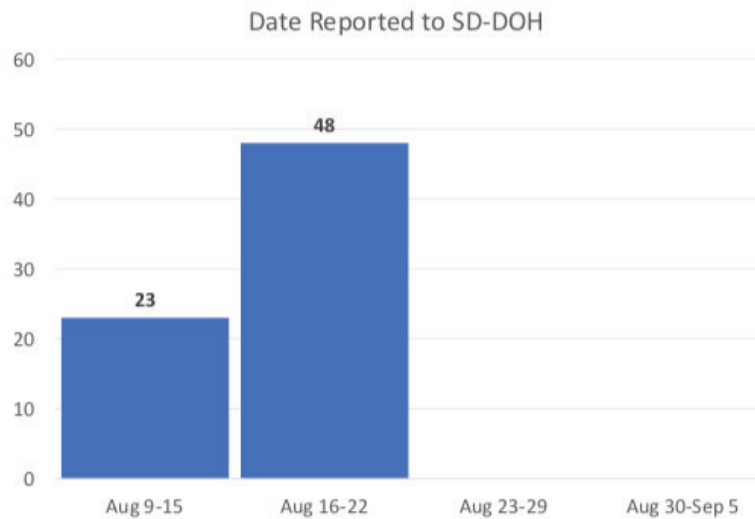
COVID-19 Cases* Within South Dakota Colleges, Universities, and Technical Schools

71
Total Cases

64
Students

7
Staff

Cases in an College, University, or School	Number of Colleges, Universities, or Schools**
0	4
1-2	4
≥3	7



* Includes cases reported to the South Dakota Department of Health (SD-DOH) on August 9 to August 22

** Includes accredited colleges, universities, and technical schools

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#183 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

It's a Monday, so I am reluctant to lean too hard on these numbers yet; but things look only a little worse than yesterday. I have 37,400 new cases reported today, a 0.7% increase to 5,750,900 cases.

I have eleven states and territories showing an increased rate of growth over a two-week period; these are Guam, Hawaii, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, Illinois, Maine, Vermont, and the US Virgin Islands. Eighteen states and territories show steady growth, Alaska, California, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Missouri, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Puerto Rico. And 25 states and territories have declining growth, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Idaho, Colorado, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Ohio, Tennessee, Alabama, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, West Virginia, Maryland, District of Columbia, Delaware, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

Whether the weekend figures hold or not, we are clearly on a downtrend nationwide. We can be sure the drops in reported cases are not due to decreased testing volume because hospitalizations and positivity have been dropping with them. These are good indications spread has slowed. The states showing the most dramatic decreases fit very well to a list of states where aggressive control measures have been undertaken. Of the states driving the decrease, all have at least some local mask mandates, and most have paused or reversed reopening policies. Before we get all cocky and mess this thing up, it is important to note, however, that the states with the biggest decreases still have case counts per 100,000 population that are higher than many of the 10 countries with the worst outbreaks; so we have a long way to go before we can say we have the virus control. Dr. Joe Gerald, associate professor of public health policy at the University of Arizona, cautioned, "We basically have 50 laboratory experiments going on right now, and every state has a slightly different policy approach. If we get complacent, this thing could get out of control again. And we'll have even less safety margin to manage it because we're starting from a higher place." So, as Grandma used to tell us, "Don't be stupid."

We are now at 177,176 deaths; there were 483 reported today, a 0.3% increase. I would really like to see Tuesday numbers show us this is a trend, not just a blip. The death rate is increasing in 12 states, Georgia, Tennessee, Iowa, Oklahoma, Kentucky, North Dakota, Indiana, Wyoming, Minnesota, Kansas, Oregon, and Hawaii.

That wedding in Maine we talked about a couple of days ago? You know, the one that had 32 cases and a death resulting from it? Well, things have gotten worse; we're up to 53 cases—41 confirmed and 12 probable. Eighty-three percent are experiencing symptoms, which seems like an unusually high number; I believe the latest numbers I've seen have at least 40% of cases asymptomatic overall in the US. Spread is now well beyond the group of people who were actually in attendance at the wedding to contacts of those folks. I hope the contact tracing is effective in this cluster so we don't see further spread.

We've been aware from the start that people who need mechanical ventilation don't always have a super-rosy outlook, whatever disease they have; but we're seeing something fairly unusual, even for a vent patient, in Covid-19 patients. They're not all waking up very well after they come off the vent. While you are being ventilated, it is usual to sedate you a lot so that you can tolerate the intubation and ventilation process. Generally, after extubation and easing up on the medications, the patient will wake up within several hours, maybe a day; that's about how long it takes for the body to eliminate any remnants of the drugs. But with some Covid-19 patients, we're looking at longer—sometimes much longer. It can take weeks or even longer; doctors are calling this persistent coma or prolonged unresponsiveness. One thing we're not very clear on is just how frequently this happens; it is one area of intense research at the moment.

And we're not always sure what's going on here. We do note that Covid-19 patients tend to need higher doses of sedatives while they're receiving ventilation; they're also frequently on the ventilator for longer than patients with other kinds of conditions. And some patients have brain injury from the infection—blood clots that cause strokes, death of tissue due to oxygen deficiency, or disrupted signal transmission in the brain due to inflammation. It may be that some would never wake. What happens is, as long as the patient

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is not waking up, there is still a need for a feeding tube, intravenous fluids, catheters to carry away waste, often some oxygen support, and for some, kidney dialysis. Among those who eventually wake up, some will have cognitive difficulties or other neurological impairments, maybe severe, afterward. It appears maybe 15% of patients in a prolonged unresponsive state show brain activity in response to verbal commands.

It's kind of standard practice after 72 hours of unresponsiveness to start asking questions about how long to continue all of these measures. If there are clear signs of brain injury, that may give some clarity about what the person's probable quality of life would be if he or she ever awakens, then that can inform families as they decide what to do. Some families, maybe not right away, but at some point, make the decision to withdraw this care so the patient can die. If the patient has written a prior directive, then that may be helpful in deciding how to go forward.

The difficulty is that we often cannot predict which patients might eventually recover, so that has spurred a great deal of research. There is a global research consortium including more than 222 sites in 45 countries that shares data in an attempt to determine the causes, to find treatments, and to enable better predictions. It appears some patients need more time and assessment before life support is withdrawn. Until we have more information, doctors who were interviewed on this subject are urging everyone to make clear to your loved ones just how you would describe a "meaningful recovery." This can provide a basis for their decision-making should they ever be confronted with the situation.

One patient who spent two weeks in such an unresponsive state after coming off a vent needed a month of rehab treatment and then was able to go home. He has some slurred speech, but is otherwise doing well. He is grateful for his own recovery, but said he worries about people who have survived but have lasting damage. "I'm not considering myself one of those, but there are many, many people who would rather be dead than left with what they have after this." That is a significant consideration. Let's hope we gain clarity about this issue before too much more time passes.

Under the heading of disturbing news, China announced it has begun public vaccination with their Covid-19 vaccine, starting with high-risk groups like health care workers and employees of some state-owned businesses last month. They had begun inoculating military personnel a month earlier and say they're considering expanding to other essential workers. What makes this disturbing instead of great news is the fact that the vaccine has not yet been through clinical trials. I think it's easy to become frustrated at the pace of developments and begin to wonder whether researchers are being too fussy; but there's significant risk associated with immunizing large swaths of your population using a vaccine which has not yet been shown to be either safe or effective.

Russia has also announced they're beginning public vaccination there too, also using a vaccine which has not been through the clinical trial process. There appears to be a sort of horse race shaping up among some countries with large populations where political leaders hijack the scientific process that safeguards public health.

Speaking of which, there is a disturbing development in the US too. As I mentioned yesterday, the FDA has just issued an EUA (emergency use authorization) for convalescent plasma, that blood product derived from recovered individuals which contains antibodies against SARS-CoV-2. When the announcement was made, both Alex Azar, the Secretary for Health and Human Services, and Dr. Stephen Hahn, the FDA Commissioner, cited results from the country's largest plasma study at the Mayo Clinic which has included some 30,000 patients. Azar said the treatment had reduced deaths by 35%. And Hahn said, "A 35 percent improvement in survival is a pretty substantial clinical benefit," going on to say if "100 people were sick, 35 would be saved by plasma." And they're wrong, not that 35% would be a substantial benefit, but that this treatment gives you that. They're wrong by a lot. According to the subset of trial patients to which they were referring, under 80, not intubated, and treated within three days of diagnosis (another problem, since this represents a tiny fraction of Covid-19 patients), if 100 people were treated, about 3 fewer would die, a number pretty close to the margin of error. That's a pretty big mistake.

Today, Hahn acknowledged this in a tweet: "I have been criticized for remarks I made Sunday night about the benefits of convalescent plasma. The criticism is entirely justified. What I should have said better is

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that the data show a relative risk reduction not an absolute risk reduction." That's fine, except that the average reader has zero idea what he's talking about here. And so the public is misled.

Here's the deal: The data Azar and Hahn were citing were not a comparison between what happened when people are given this therapy and when they are not; it is, instead, a comparison of what happened when it was administered within three days of diagnosis and when it was administered four or more days after—two very different matters. The statistic refers to, as I mentioned above, only a small portion of Covid-19 patients. And he conflated relative and absolute risk reduction, which makes the benefit look a great deal larger than it actually is. I think the best way to explain absolute versus relative risk reduction is to show you the math.

The study's findings were that 11.9% of patients in this under-80, non-intubated group died when given the therapy four or more days after diagnosis, whereas only 8.7% of them died when given it within the first three days. Now, if we compare these two numbers, we get what's called relative risk reduction. To do that, we compute the difference as a percentage; this involves subtracting the two and then doing some division to get a percentage: $[(11.9 - 8.7)/8.7] \times 100 = 37\%$. There's your 35% (OK, 37%, but who's fussing with details?) reduction.

This does NOT mean 35 people out of 100 would be "saved." That's because 35 out of 100 were never even going to die in the first place; only 11.7 out of 100 were going to die in the first place—11.7% is 11.7 out of 100. What it actually means is that 35% of the 11.7% who would have died are saved, and that's only 3.2% of the sample. So an accurate statement would be, "if 100 people were sick, 3.2 would be saved by plasma." Quite a difference, right? Which makes his initial statement highly misleading.

Neither of these guys should be making an elementary mistake like that. Azar was a pharmaceutical executive before coming to government work; he knows how drug trials work. And Hahn is a radiation oncologist who is well familiar with this sort of data. They should also not have picked a small subset of all the patients (under 80, non-intubated) and treated it as if this were the definitive approach to this analysis. And they should have pointed out that the Mayo study is not a randomized, controlled trial; there was no control group for comparison and statistical analysis, a major weakness of the evidence on which this EUA was based.

There is in fact, a fairly large group of scientists, including leading experts like Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health, who object to this EUA, saying the evidence for effectiveness is thin at best. There is also a randomized controlled study, the gold standard for clinical trials, from the Netherlands which shows no real benefit in using convalescent plasma at all; the news was so bad that they discontinued the study early.

Even so, I am not objecting here to the EUA; the earlier studies do indicate the treatment is relatively safe, after all, even if they do not provide reliable evidence of effectiveness. I am objecting to the misleading explanation for the EUA. We cannot afford to have scientists like Hahn contributing to false perceptions in the public mind as we prepare to roll out vaccines, needing wide public acceptance. In a time and place where suspicions of politicization of the pandemic run high, it is irresponsible, even dangerous, to contribute to the impression something's amiss. And these statements certainly lead one to wonder about just that. Words have meaning, and these guys need to work harder to parse their words in their public statements. So yes, it is disturbing.

Dorothy Pollack decided she needed a tattoo; earlier this month, she was celebrating her freedom and a recent birthday and persuaded her friend to drive her to a tattoo business where she had the artist add a small, happy-looking frog to her forearm. She is quite pleased with the result, but the artist explained his shock that she'd even stopped in. He'd never had a client like her, a client who is 103 years old.

Pollack was celebrating her freedom, you see, from the nursing home on lockdown where she'd been living, lonely and isolated, until her grandson and his girlfriend, the driver on her latest caper, decided to try caring for her at their home from which she could go out to her favorite bar for a hamburger and a beer on her birthday if she wanted instead of being stuck in her room, waiting for the pandemic to subside. After all, she is in good shape other than being extremely hard of hearing: She worked until about

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ten years ago and bowled in a league right up until she went into the home just a year and a half ago. She clearly has life left to live. She told the Washington Post, "After being in Covid-19 prison, I thought it was time to start living again. I decided a good way to celebrate was to get a tattoo."

The artist said, "This was a first. Dorothy is by far the oldest person I've ever tattooed. The only person who even comes close is a 76-year-old who came in here once. She sat like a soldier. I couldn't believe it. . . . When you hear from a century-old lady that she wants a tattoo, you've just got to do it." For her part, Pollack is now considering another tattoo—on the other arm.

What's more, when talking with him, she revealed another item on her bucket list: She'd never been on a motorcycle. The artist gave his dad a call, and Dad drove his bright red Harley over to the shop and took her for a spin around the parking lot. Check that off too.

Next up? Pollack wants to go skydiving. And why not? I don't think this lady is scared of shortening her life; she's far too concerned with filling it up.

Take care. We'll talk tomorrow.

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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	Aug. 24	Aug. 25
Minnesota	66,061	66,618	67,308	68,133	68,867	69,584	70,298
Nebraska	30,825	31,040	31,348	31,626	31,780	31,889	32,047
Montana	5,846	5,956	6,072	6,216	6,376	6,429	6,489
Colorado	53,631	53,901	54,230	54,586	54,883	55,143	55,341
Wyoming	2,850	2,909	2,940	3009	3009	3,046	3,068
North Dakota	8782	8968	9242	9504	9736	9876	10,000
South Dakota	10,443	10,566	10,691	10,884	11,135	11,276	11,425
United States	5,482,823	5,530,247	5,576,089	5,628,070	5,668,564	5,701,557	5,738,056
US Deaths	171,833	173,193	174,290	175,467	176,371	176,797	177,029
Minnesota	+345	+557	+690	+825	+734	+717	+714
Nebraska	+262	+215	+308	+278	+154	+109	+158
Montana	+54	+110	+116	+144	+160	+53	+60
Colorado	+261	+270	+329	+356	+297	+270	+198
Wyoming	+21	+59	+31	+69	---	+37	+22
North Dakota	+135	+186	+274	+262	+232	+140	+124
South Dakota	+83	+123	+125	+193	+251	+141	+149
United States	+38,708	+47,424	+45,842	+51,981	+40,494	+32,993	+36,499
US Deaths	+1,274	+1,360	+1,097	+1,177	+904	+426	+232

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August 24th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

No deaths in South Dakota. Bennett County had five positive cases and falls of the fully recovered list. Otherwise it's just a normal day in South Dakota. Cases here and there and recoveries here and there. Brown County had six positive and six recoveries for no change in active cases. Day County gained a positive case. South Dakota had 149 positive and 130 recovered. Hospitalized in South Dakota is up three from yesterday at 65.

A new feature this week is the number of COVID-19 cases in schools and colleges. In K-12, 829 of the 886 schools report no COVID-19. This includes public and non-public accredited schools and approved programs. Cases reported to the South Dakota Department of Health include 46 students and 24 staff members in K-12. Fifty-one schools are reporting 1-2 cases and six are reporting three or more.

Among SD Colleges, Universities and Technical Schools, the news is not so good. Four of the 15 schools have no COVID-19. Four have 1-2 cases and seven have three or more. Sixty-four students and seven staff members are reported with COVID-19. The education numbers are updated each Monday.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +6 (555) Positivity Rate: 7.3%

Recovered: +6 (464)

Active Cases: 0 (88)

Total Tests: 82 (6940)

Ever Hospitalized: 0 (24)

Deaths: 0 (3)

Percent Recovered: 83.6% (+0.2)

South Dakota:

Positive: +149 (11,425 total) Positivity Rates: 8.8%

Total Tests: 1691 (178,534 total)

Hospitalized: +6 (965 total). 65 currently hospitalized (up 3 from yesterday)

Deaths: 0 (161 total)

Recovered: +130 (9,694 total)

Active Cases: +19 (1,570)

Percent Recovered: 84.8 ---

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 3% Covid, 48% Non-Covid, 50% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 5% Covid, 62% Non-Covid, 34% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 5% Covid, 11% Non-Covid, 84% Available

Fully recovered from positive cases (Lost Bennett) Harding 2-2, Jackosn 12-11-1, 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: 3 active case

Beadle (9): +2 positive, +2 reovered (27 active cases)

Bennett: +5 positive (5 active_

Bon Homme: +1 positive, +2 recovered, 1 death

(18 active cases)

Brookings (1): +6 positive, +6 recovered (35 active cases)

Brown (3): +6 positive, +6 recovered (88 active cases)

Brule: 5 active cases

Buffalo (3): 4 active cases

Butte (1): +2 positive, +1 recovered (10 active cases)

Campbell: 1 active case

Charles Mix: +1 recovered (17 active cases)

Clark: +1 positive (2 active case)

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Clay (1): +14 positive, +1 recovered (44 active cases)
 Codrington (1): +3 positive, +11 recovered (63 active cases)
 Corson: +1 recovered (14 active cases)
 Custer: +4 positive, +4 recovered (45 active case)
 Davison (2): 10 active cases
 Day: +1 positive (7 active cases)
 Deuel: +1 positive, +1 recovered (10 active cases)
 Dewey: 24 active cases
 Douglas: +2 positive (5 active cases)
 Edmunds: 6 active cases
 Fall River: +1 positive, +1 recovered (2 active cases)
 Faulk (1): 1 active case
 Grant: +2 Recovered (7 active cases)
 Gregory: +1 positive (2 active cases)
 Haakon: 1 active case
 Hamlin: +1 positive, +3 recovered (16 active cases)
 Hand: +1 recovered (2 active cases)
 Hanson: +1 positive (3 active cases)
 Harding: Fully Recovered
 Hughes (3): +3 positive, +2 recovered (16 active cases)
 Hutchinson (1): 6 active cases
 Hyde: +1 positive, +1 recovered (1 active case)
 Jackson (1): Fully Recovered
 Jerauld (1): 1 active case
 Jones: 1 active case
 Kingsbury: 4 active cases
 Lake (6): 5 active cases
 Lawrence (1): +8 positive,+1 recovered (54 active cases)
 Lincoln (2): +8 positive, +9 recovered (113 active

cases)
 Lyman (3): 8 active cases
 Marshall: 6 active cases
 McCook (1): 3 active cases
 Meade (1): +6 positive, +4 recovered (67 active cases)
 Mellette: Fully Recovered
 Miner: Fully Recovered
 Minnehaha (69): +28 positive, +44 recovered (466 active cases)
 Moody: +1 positive (8 active cases)
 Oglala Lakota (2): +1 recovered (16 active cases)
 Pennington (33): +28 positive, +7 recovered (173 active cases)
 Perkins: +2 positive (3 active cases)
 Potter: 3 active cases
 Roberts (1): +2 positive, +1 recovered (11 active cases)
 Sanborn: Fully Recovered
 Spink: +1 recovered (10 active cases)
 Stanley: +2 recovered (1 active cases)
 Sully: +1 positive (4 active cases)
 Todd (5): +1 recovered (2 active cases)
 Tripp: Fully Recovered
 Turner: +1 positive, +4 recovered (12 active cases)
 Union (4): +3 positive, +3 recovered (21 active cases)
 Walworth: +1 positive (15 active cases)
 Yankton (3): +4 positive, +7 recovered (44 active cases)
 Ziebach: +1 positive (12 active cases)

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

- 2,584 tests (1,133)
- 10,000 positives (+127)
- 8,206 recovered (+142)
- 137 deaths (+1)
- 1,657 active cases (-17)

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	405	0
10-19 years	1031	0
20-29 years	2614	2
30-39 years	2222	6
40-49 years	1679	7
50-59 years	1659	18
60-69 years	996	29
70-79 years	438	26
80+ years	381	73

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	5684	82
Male	5741	79

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread
Aurora	42	39	410	0	Minimal
Beadle	616	580	1975	9	Moderate
Bennett	11	6	552	0	Moderate
Bon Homme	39	20	903	1	Substantial
Brookings	188	152	3055	1	Moderate
Brown	555	464	5020	3	Substantial
Brule	50	45	790	0	Minimal
Buffalo	109	102	666	3	None
Butte	29	18	859	1	Moderate
Campbell	4	3	106	0	Minimal
Charles Mix	116	99	1558	0	Minimal
Clark	18	16	421	0	Minimal
Clay	172	127	1536	1	Substantial
Codington	220	156	3161	1	Substantial
Corson	52	38	590	0	Moderate
Custer	86	41	845	0	Substantial
Davison	108	96	2555	2	Moderate
Day	32	25	692	0	Moderate
Deuel	34	24	463	0	Substantial
Dewey	65	41	2389	0	Moderate
Douglas	22	17	430	0	Minimal
Edmunds	25	19	445	0	Moderate
Fall River	24	22	1048	0	None
Faulk	29	27	211	1	None
Grant	39	32	788	0	Moderate
Gregory	9	7	422	0	Minimal
Haakon	3	2	307	0	Minimal
Hamlin	42	26	709	0	Substantial
Hand	13	11	323	0	Minimal
Hanson	22	19	234	0	Minimal
Harding	2	2	59	0	None
Hughes	111	92	1978	3	Moderate
Hutchinson	35	28	963	1	Moderate

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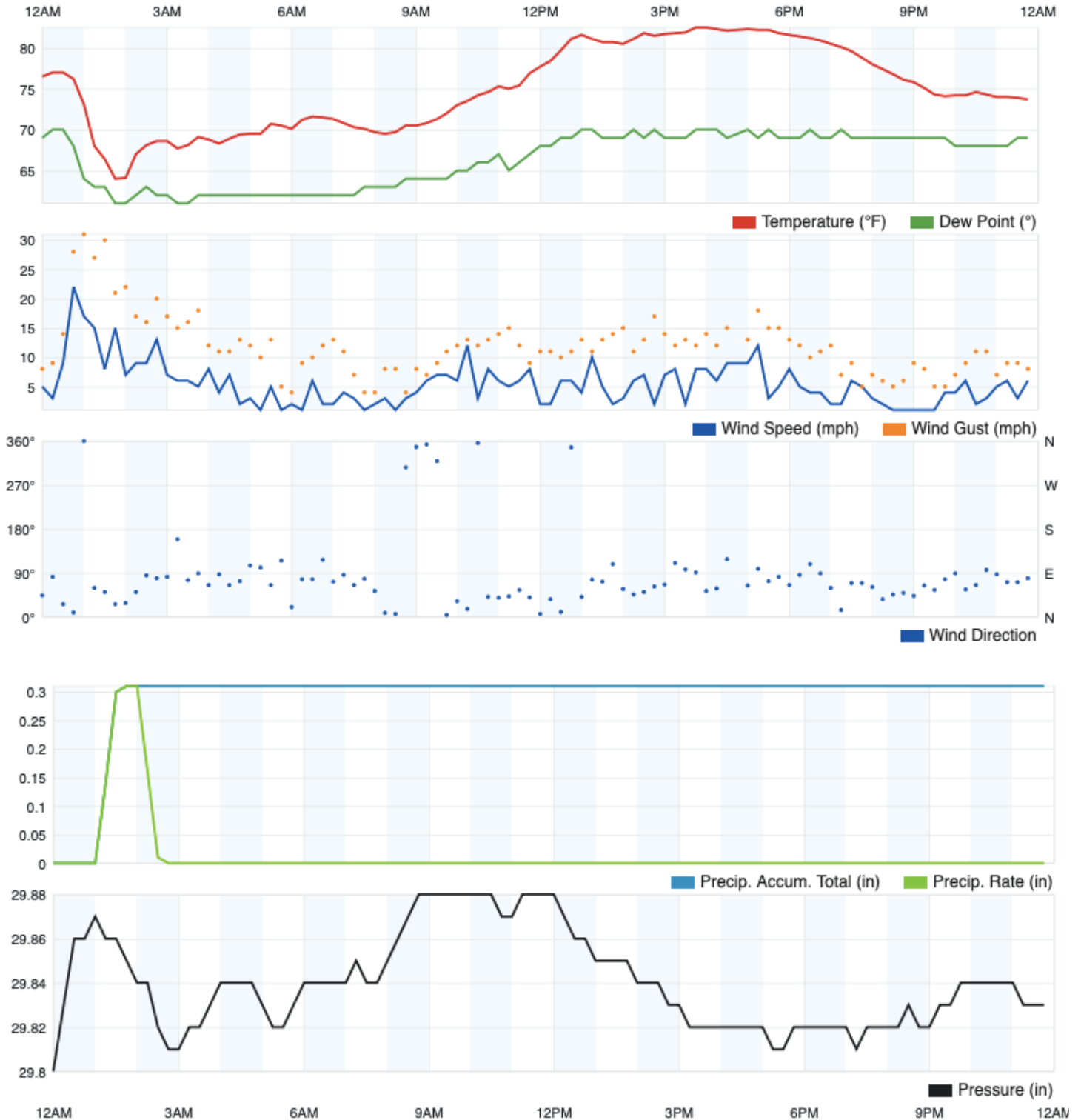
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Hyde	5	4	152	0	Minimal
Jackson	12	11	489	1	None
Jerauld	40	38	284	1	Minimal
Jones	3	2	65	0	Minimal
Kingsbury	18	14	612	0	Minimal
Lake	108	97	1016	6	Moderate
Lawrence	120	65	2284	1	Substantial
Lincoln	795	680	7629	2	Substantial
Lyman	94	83	1017	3	Minimal
Marshall	15	9	496	0	Minimal
McCook	39	31	691	1	Minimal
McPherson	10	7	233	0	Minimal
Meade	170	102	2198	1	Substantial
Mellette	24	24	402	0	None
Miner	15	15	270	0	None
Minnehaha	4924	4388	30328	70	Substantial
Moody	38	30	692	0	Moderate
Oglala Lakota	163	145	3013	2	Moderate
Pennington	1070	864	11821	33	Moderate
Perkins	8	5	208	0	Minimal
Potter	4	1	320	0	Minimal
Roberts	91	79	1982	1	Minimal
Sanborn	13	13	247	0	None
Spink	35	25	1237	0	Moderate
Stanley	20	19	291	0	Moderate
Sully	8	4	97	0	Minimal
Todd	76	69	2359	5	Minimal
Tripp	20	20	636	0	None
Turner	69	57	1004	0	Substantial
Union	235	210	2130	4	Moderate
Walworth	32	17	834	0	Substantial
Yankton	183	136	3423	3	Substantial
Ziebach	46	34	376	0	Substantial
Unassigned	0	0	10739	0	

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Hot

High: 91 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear
then Slight
Chance
T-storms

Low: 69 °F

Wednesday



Slight Chance
T-storms

High: 91 °F

Wednesday
Night



Chance
T-storms

Low: 63 °F

Thursday



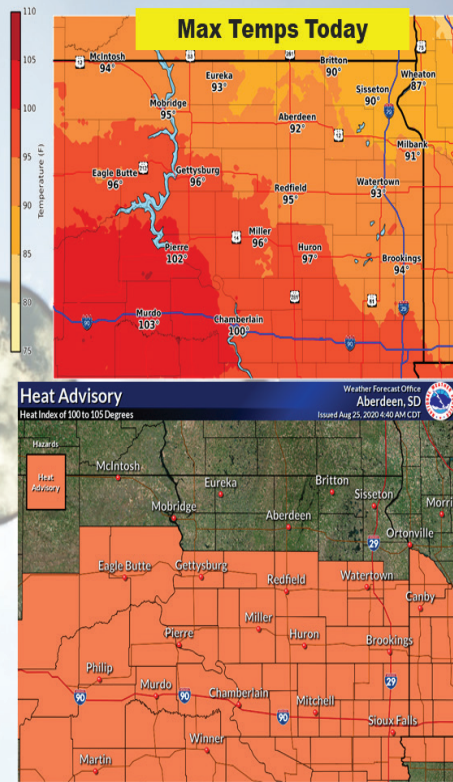
Chance
T-storms

High: 84 °F

Hot and Mostly Dry Today

Thunderstorm chances
return to the forecast
tonight through
Thursday night. The best
chance for precipitation
will be Thursday night.

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



Today will be the hottest day of the week with highs ranging from the upper 80s to around 105 degrees. Take extra precautions if your work or spend time outside today!

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Today in Weather History

August 25, 1990: Severe thunderstorms moved across central and northeastern South Dakota produce golf ball size hail and wind gusts exceeding 60 mph. One storm produced a weak F0 tornado between Bowdle and Roscoe in Edmunds County.

1814: In the early afternoon, a strong tornado struck northwest Washington D.C. and downtown. The severe tornadic storm arrived the day after the British Troops had set fire to the Capitol, the White House, and other public buildings. The storm's rains would douse those flames. The tornado did major structural damage to the residential section of the city. The tornado's flying debris killed more British soldiers than by the guns of the American resistance. The storm blew off roofs and carried them high up into the air, knocked down chimneys and fences and damaged numerous homes. Some homes were destroyed. It lifted two pieces of cannon and deposited them several yards away. At least 30 Americans were killed or injured in the heavily damaged buildings, and an unknown number of British killed and wounded.

1948: One of the worst tornadoes to strike New Zealand occurred at Hamilton on this day. This estimated F2tornado killed three people, injuring dozens, and destroying or severely damaging almost 150 houses and 50 business premises in Hamilton and Franklin.

1885 - A severe hurricane struck South Carolina causing 1.3 million dollars damage at Charleston. (David Ludlum)

1940 - New Jersey experienced its coldest August morning of record, with lows of 32 degrees at Layton and Charlotteburg. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Morning thunderstorms produced heavy rain in eastern Nebraska and southwestern Iowa. Stanton IA reported 10.50 inches of rain. Water was reported up to the handle of automobiles west of Greenwood NE. Rainfall totals for a two day period ranged from 7 to 14 inches across southwestern Iowa. Crop damage was in the millions for both states. Subsequent flooding of streams in Iowa the last week of August caused millions of dollars damage to crops, as some streams crested ten feet above flood stage. (Storm Data)

1988 - Seven cities in California reported record high temperatures for the date, including Sacramento with an afternoon reading of 104 degrees. Thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains in Arizona. Chino Valley was drenched with 2.50 inches of rain in just thirty minutes washing out a couple of streets in town. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Morning thunderstorms drenched Spencer, IN, with 4.10 inches of rain in three hours causing extensive street flooding. Evening thunderstorms in eastern Kansas produced up to six inches of rain around Emporia, and four inches of rain in just forty-five minutes near Parsons, and also produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Lake Melvern. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2005 - Katrina becomes a hurricane just before landfall in south Florida between Hallandale Beach and North Miami Beach. Maximum sustained winds at the time of landfall were near 80 mph. There were eleven fatalities in South Florida, including four by falling trees. More than 1.3 million customers lost electrical services, and preliminary insured loss estimates ranged from \$600 million to \$2 billion in the state of Florida (Associated Press).

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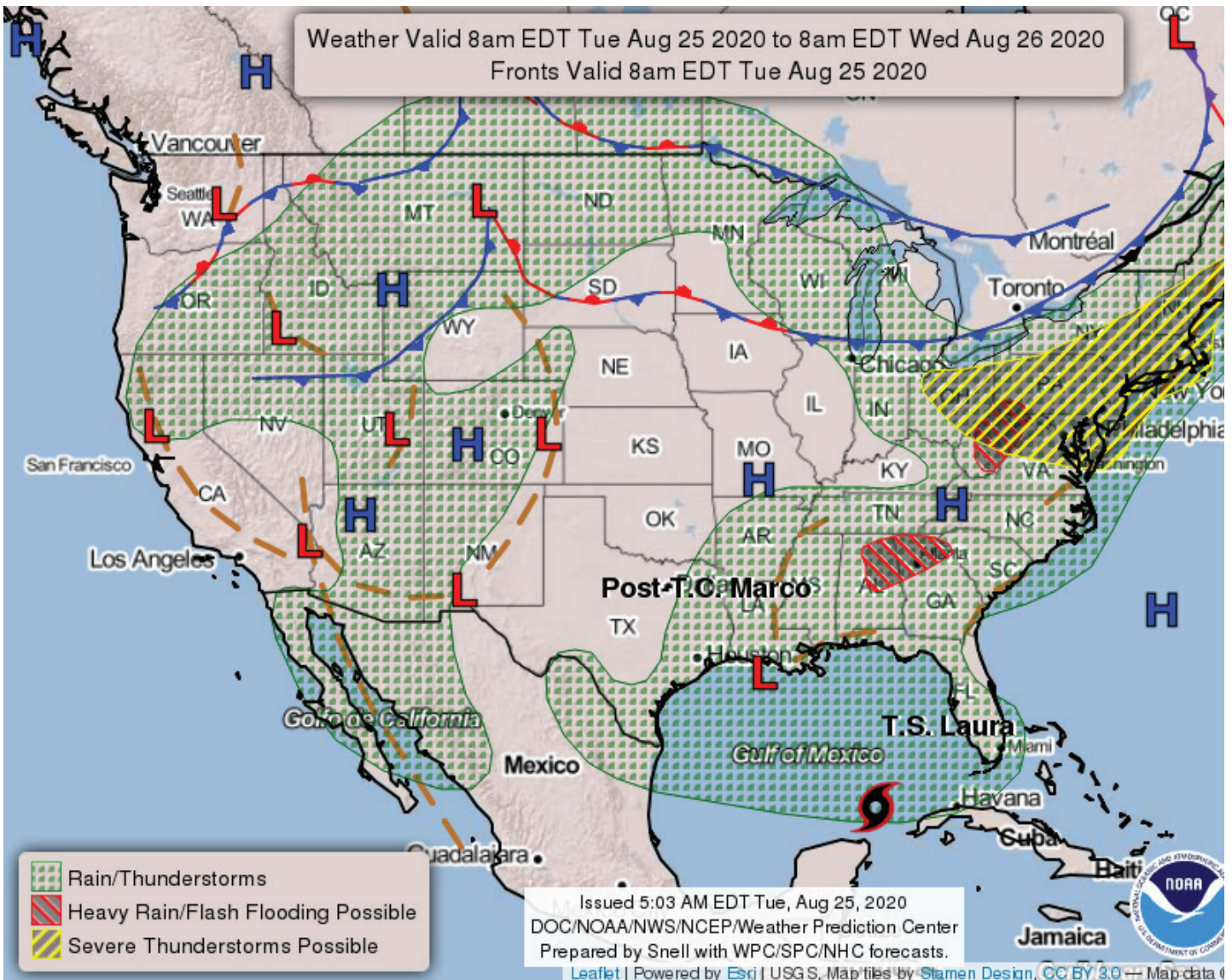
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 83 °F at 3:55 PM
Low Temp: 64 °F at 1:51 AM
Wind: 31 mph at 12:54 AM
Precip: .31

Today's Info

Record High: 101° in 1926
Record Low: 38° in 1896
Average High: 80°F
Average Low: 54°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 1.88
Precip to date in Aug.: 1.55
Average Precip to date: 15.74
Precip Year to Date: 12.16
Sunset Tonight: 8:23 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:49 a.m.



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ANGER IN ACTION

A college professor was having a difficult time getting his students to do their required assignments. As the class was about to end, he said emphatically, "When you come to class tomorrow, it would be wise to have your assignment completed and ready for my review."

The next day when class began, he said in a loud, threatening voice, "Hold up your papers with your right hand!" All of the students complied with his demand except one. He held up his paper with his left hand.

Incensed, the professor shouted, "Right hand stupid, not your left hand. Don't you know the difference?"

"Yes, sir, I do, sir," said the student. "But I lost my right hand in combat."

The Greeks had a particular phrase for anger. They called it "a brief madness." It seems appropriate. When we become angry, we lose control of ourselves, and we often say things that are hurtful, hateful, and harmful.

David, the Psalmist, was wise when he wrote, "Stop your anger! Turn from your rage....it only leads to harm."

Anger and rage are toxic, destructive emotions that reveal a desire to dominate and destroy and control others. That is not our responsibility. Our responsibility is to concentrate on God and His love, mercy, and grace in our lives and find peace as we trust Him to control us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to turn our anger into affection and our frustration into faith - knowing that You will turn our trials into triumphs if we surrender to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper - it only leads to harm. Psalm 37:8

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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

Revved by Sturgis Rally, COVID-19 infections move fast, far

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The hundreds of thousands of bikers who attended the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally may have departed western South Dakota, but public health departments in multiple states are trying to measure how much and how quickly the coronavirus spread in bars, tattoo shops and gatherings before people traveled home to nearly every state in the country.

From the city of Sturgis, which is conducting mass testing for its roughly 7,000 residents, to health departments in at least six states, health officials are trying to track outbreaks from the 10-day rally which ended on Aug. 16. They face the task of tracking an invisible virus that spread among bar-hoppers and rallygoers, who then traveled to over half of the counties in the United States.

An analysis of anonymous cell phone data from Camber Systems, a firm that aggregates cell phone activity for health researchers, found that 61% of all the counties in the U.S. have been visited by someone who attended Sturgis, creating a travel hub that was comparable to a major U.S. city.

"Imagine trying to do contact tracing for the entire city of (Washington), D.C., but you also know that you don't have any distancing, or the distancing is very, very limited, the masking is limited," said Navin Vembar, who co-founded Camber Systems. "It all adds up to a very dangerous situation for people all over the place. Contact tracing becomes dramatically difficult."

Health departments in four states, including South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska and Wyoming, have reported a total of 81 cases among people who attended the rally. South Dakota health officials said Monday they had received reports of infections from residents of two other states — North Dakota and Washington. The Department of Health also issued public warnings of possible COVID-19 exposure at five businesses popular with bikers, saying it didn't know how many people could have been exposed.

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, has defied calls to cancel large gatherings and opposes requirements to wear masks. She welcomed the event, which in previous years brought in about \$800 million in tourist spending, according to the state's Department of Tourism.

"I sat at a bar elbow-to-elbow with guys. No one was wearing masks," said Stephen Sample, a rallygoer who rode back to Arizona last week.

He had visited a bar where health authorities later issued warnings — One-Eyed Jack's Saloon — but said he had not had any COVID-19 symptoms. He discussed quarantining with his wife after he returned, but decided against it.

In a country where each state has been tasked with doing the heavy-lifting of responding to the pandemic, tracing every infection from the rally is virtually impossible. But the city of Sturgis is doing what it can to head off a local outbreak by holding mass testing for asymptomatic people.

The city, which is a sleepy tourist destination for most of the 355 days of the year outside of the rally dates, was a reluctant host this year. After many residents objected to the massive influx of people during a pandemic, city leaders decided to pay for mass testing from money they had received as part of federal coronavirus relief funding.

On Monday morning, Linda Chaplin drove with her husband to line up at the mass testing event in the parking lot of the Sturgis Community Center. They had left town during the rally, but the crowds that came before and after the event concerned them so they decided to get tested.

While the results from the test will take a couple days to process, the region is already seeing an increase in coronavirus cases.

"For a long time, people would say, 'Well, do you know anybody that has COVID?' and I would say, 'No, I don't, but I'm watching the news,'" Chaplin said. "Now, I do know some people that we've heard have COVID."

While Chaplin said the people she knows who have been infected had not participated in the rally, she

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said that many residents were relieved it's over.

"Once you get your town back and once the rally is over, it feels like the end of the summer is approaching, school is starting up," she said.

The local school district delayed the start of in-person classes this year in hopes it would give health officials time to contain an outbreak. The city also made coronavirus tests available for school staff, in addition to requiring city employees to get tested.

Although the city arranged to have 1,300 tests available, about 850 people have signed up for tests so far, according to Danial Ainslie, the city manager.

Some residents, like Eunice Peck, were not concerned about the potential for an outbreak. She rented her home out to rallygoers as a way to make extra money. She had avoided the crowds that fill the city's downtown and didn't feel the need to get a test.

"It's a very good thing for the town," Peck said of the rally.

But events like Sturgis concern health experts, who see infections growing without regard to city and state boundaries. Without a nationally-coordinated testing and tracing system, containing infections in a scenario like Sturgis is "almost impossible," said Dr. Howard Koh, a professor at the Harvard School of Public Health who worked at the Department of Health and Human Services under former President Barack Obama.

"We would need a finely orchestrated national system and we are far from that," he said. "We are really witnessing a 50-state effort with all of them going in different directions right now."

Kris Ehresmann, infectious disease director at the Minnesota Department of Health, on Friday advised people to quarantine for two weeks if they attended the rally.

She said, "We're expecting that we're going to see many more cases associated with Sturgis."

Follow Stephen Groves on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/stephengroves>

This story corrects the spelling of Navin Vembar's name.

Former South Dakota lawyer pleads not guilty in fraud scheme

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A former western South Dakota lawyer accused in a trust account scheme pleaded not guilty Monday to 30 counts of wire fraud, ten counts money laundering and one count of bank fraud.

Rena Hymans, 48, of Vale, was indicted last week by a federal grand jury. She faces 30 years in prison on the bank fraud charge and a maximum of 20 years in prison on each of the wire fraud and money laundering charges.

Authorities say Hymans devised a scheme to transfer money from a client trust account to her own business and personal accounts. The alleged fraud took place between June 2017 and January 2020.

Hymans' attorney, John Murphy, declined to comment Monday.

A trial date has not been set.

South Dakota Prep Polls

By The Associated Press

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Prep Media for the week of Aug. 24 are listed below, ranking the top-five teams, record, total points and last week's ranking. First-place votes are listed in parentheses. The polls in 11AAA, 11AA and 11A are unchanged from the preseason edition.

Class 11AAA

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----|
| 1. Roosevelt (15) | 86 | |
| 2. Brandon Valley (2) | | 67 |
| 3. O'Gorman (1) | 55 | |
| 4. Harrisburg | 29 | |
| 5. Washington | 26 | |

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Receiving votes: Lincoln 6, Watertown 1

Class 11AA

1. Pierre (18) 90
2. Yankton 60
3. Mitchell 50
4. Huron 38
5. Brookings 20

Receiving votes: Sturgis 7, Douglas 5.

Class 11A

1. Canton (13) 81
2. Tea Area (3) 68
3. Dell Rapids(2) 58
4. West Central 29
5. Dakota Valley 19

Receiving votes: Madison 7, Lennox 6, Sioux Falls Christian 2.

Class 11B

1. Winner (17) 93
2. Bridgewater-Emery-Ethan (2) 77
3. McCook Central-Montrose 49
4. Sioux Valley 40
5. St. Thomas More 19

Receiving votes: Elk Point-Jefferson 4, Garretson 1, Mobridge-Pollock 1, Hot Springs 1.

Class 9AA

1. Viborg-Hurley (19) 95
2. Lemmon2McIntosh 71
3. Deuel 41
4. Platte-Geddes 40
5. Hamlin 5

Receiving votes: Arlington-Lake Preston 8, Baltic 7, Bon Homme 4, Florence-Henry 1.

Class 9A

1. Canistota1Freeman (19) 95
2. Howard 71
3. Gregory 53
4. De Smet 32
5. Warner 23

Receiving votes: Wall 5, Britton-Hecla 4, Philip 2.

Class 9B

1. Wolsey-Wessington (14) 90
2. Colman-Egan (5) 81
3. Langford Area 51
4. Alcester-Hudson 37
5. Dell Rapids St. Mary 14

Receiving votes: Faulkton Area 5, Scotland 2, Faith 2, Kadoka Area 1, Harding County 1, Herreid-Selby Area 1.

Michigan man who climbed Mount Rushmore fined \$1,500

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Michigan climber who was spotted earlier this month on Mount Rushmore and later slipped down a cliff has been fined \$1,500.

Court documents show that dispatchers on Aug. 19 reported "a climber being seen on Mt. Rushmore on

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the top of George Washington's head" was creating a "hazardous condition" by climbing an unsafe slope, falling and forcing law enforcement to track him down.

Ayman Doppke pleaded guilty Thursday to illegally climbing the mountain, the Rapid City Journal reported. Prosecutors dismissed charges of disorderly conduct and violating an area closure.

Doppke, of Dearborn, Michigan, said he figured rangers were going to try to catch him so he decided to go down the steepest and most dangerous route in order to escape, according to an affidavit of probable cause.

Doppke fell 25 feet and tumbled down a loose gravel slope. He was arrested after he was treated by a medic but declined to be taken to the hospital.

A phone number for Doppke could not be found.

BC-VOL-SD-Prep Volleyball Polls

BC-VOL-SD-Prep Volleyball Polls,0238

HFR 5:00 pm Central

South Dakota Volleyball Polls

By The Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) - Here is the South Dakota media volleyball poll. Teams are listed with first place votes in parenthesis, record, points and previous ranking.<

Class AA

Rank-School;FPV;Rcd;TP;Pvs

1. S.F. O'Gorman;(10);26-5;54;2

2. S.F. Washington;-;20-10;35;4

3. S.F. Lincoln;-;14-12;32;NR

4. S.F. Roosevelt;-;22-11;14;5

5. Watertown;-;28-2;10;1

Others receiving votes: Aberdeen Central (12-11) 7, Huron (21-7) 6, R.C. Stevens (24-12) 5, Harrisburg (16-13) 2.<

Class A

Rank-School;FPV;Rcd;TP;Pvs

1. S.F. Christian;(10);30-8;54;1

2. Dakota Valley;-;33-4;54;3

3. Winner;-;27-6;27;5

4. Madison;-;25-9;20;2

5. McCook Central-Montrose;-;25-5;9;4

Others receiving votes: Miller (1 first place vote, 34-3) 5, St. Thomas More (32-6) 2, R.C. Christian (30-8) 2, Groton (26-10) 2, Hill City (28-4) 1.<

Class B

Rank-School;FPV;Rcd;TP;Pvs

1. Northwestern;(10);42-0;80;1

2. Faulkton Area;-;24-6;54;2

3. Warner;-;29-10;42;3

4. Chester Area;-;26-8;31;4

5. Ethan;-;28-8;18;5

Others receiving votes: Faith (32-5) 5, Burke (33-7) 1, Elkton-Lake Benton (24-8) 1.<

Police arrest man in woman's fatal stabbing in Sioux Falls

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have arrested a man in the fatal stabbing of a woman in Sioux Falls. Police said the 32-year-old Sioux Falls man was arrested without incident Sunday in Wagner. He faces charges of second-degree murder and first-degree manslaughter.

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Police were called Friday night and found a woman with a stab wound. She died of her injuries. The Argus Leader reports police did not immediately release the woman's age or name.

Pair wanted in S Indiana shooting nabbed in South Dakota

CORYDON, Ind. (AP) — Two persons of interest in a drive-by shooting in southern Indiana have been apprehended in South Dakota, Indiana State Police said Monday.

Timothy Sargent, 41, and Savanna Emich, 20, both of Ohio, were taken into custody by South Dakota authorities after allegedly being involved in a pursuit near Sioux Falls, police said. Both were lodged in the Minnehaha County Jail on Monday morning.

They were wanted in connection with a shooting Wednesday evening that wounded two people who had just left O'Bannon Woods State Park in Harrison County.

Neither Sargent nor Emich has been formally charged with any crime in Indiana, but Sargent is wanted for attempted murder in Ohio and is also a person of interest in slayings in Ohio and West Virginia, Indiana State Police said.

In the Harrison County shooting, investigators believe a family of three had just left the state park after a hike when a car pulled up behind their SUV with its high-beams on, prompting the man to pull over to let the car pass.

Instead, it pulled alongside and someone inside the car fired multiple rounds into the SUV, whose driver then crashed the vehicle.

After the shooting, officers found the car abandoned in a cornfield about 15 miles away, near the Crawford County town of Carefree, where the driver had stolen a pickup truck parked at a nearby residence.

Fierce storm surge feared as Laura bears down on Gulf Coast

By REBECCA SANTANA and JEFF MARTIN undefined

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Tropical Storm Laura entered the warm and deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico Tuesday, gathering strength on a path to hit the U.S. coastline early Thursday as a major hurricane that could unleash a surge of seawater higher than a basketball hoop and swamp entire towns.

The National Hurricane Center projected Tuesday morning that Laura will become a Category 3 hurricane before landfall, with winds of around 115 mph (185 kph), capable of devastating damage.

"This storm is going to be intensifying all the way up until landfall ... We want you to prepare as if it's going to be a Category 3," said Donald Jones, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service office in Lake Charles, Louisiana — in the bullseye of Laura's projected path.

University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy also said that he would "give it a pretty decent chance of a Category 3 or 4, not necessarily at landfall, at least during its lifetime in the Gulf."

Still a tropical storm for now, Laura passed Cuba after killing at least 11 people in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, where it knocked out power and caused flooding in the two nations that share the island of Hispaniola. The deaths reportedly included a 10-year-old girl whose home was hit by a tree and a mother and young son who were crushed by a collapsing wall.

Now forecasters are turning their attention the Gulf Coast, where up to 11 feet (3.4 meters) of sea water — storm surge — could inundate the coastline from High Island in Texas to Morgan City, Louisiana, the hurricane center said. On top of that, up to 15 inches (38 centimeters) of rain could fall in some spots in Louisiana, Jones said.

"Whatever happens, happens. We're going to roll with the punches," said Capt. Brad Boudreaux, who operates a fishing guide service in Hackberry, Louisiana, near the Texas line.

The silver lining for U.S. coastal residents is that an earlier storm — Marco — greatly weakened and became a remnant just off Louisiana's shore on Tuesday. Satellite images showed a disorganized cluster of clouds. It was relegated to what meteorologists call "a naked swirl," Jones said.

Laura was sustaining top winds of 65 mph (100 kmh) Tuesday morning after passing between the west-

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ern tip of Cuba and Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. It was centered 680 miles (1095 kilometers) southeast of Lake Charles, and moving toward the U.S. coast at 17 mph (28 kmh).

The hurricane center warned people not to focus on the details of the official forecast, since "storm surge, wind, and rainfall hazards will extend well away from Laura's center along the Gulf Coast."

In Port Arthur Texas, Mayor Thurman Bartie issued a mandatory evacuation order for the city's more than 54,000 residents starting at 6 a.m. Tuesday. People planning on entering official shelters can bring just one bag of personal belongings each, and must "have a mask" to reduce the spread of coronavirus, the order said.

"If you decide to stay, you're staying on your own," Bartie said.

Officials in Houston asked residents to prepare supplies in case they lose power for a few days or need to evacuate homes along the coast.

State emergencies were declared in Louisiana and Mississippi, and shelters opened with cots set farther apart, among other measures designed to curb infections.

Laura's unwelcome arrival comes just days before the Aug. 29 anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, which breached the levees in New Orleans, flattened much of the Mississippi coast and killed as many as 1,800 people in 2005. Hurricane Rita then struck southwest Louisiana that Sept. 24 as a Category 3 storm.

Now southwest Louisiana again faces the threat of being hit by a major hurricane, and Rita is on the mind of Ron Leleux.

"Finally we ran out of luck in 2005 with Rita," Leleux said from his home in Sulphur, where he served as mayor from 2002-2010. "When something like this comes up, I think people go back and it brings back a lot of bad memories."

In the southwest corner of Louisiana, Capt. Tommy Adams, a local fishing guide, was prepared for anything but said "you never know what's going to happen.

"I'm moving to a house a little more inland just to be on the safe side, probably about an hour north, just to be on the safe side," said Adams, who also lives in Sulphur.

In Waveland, Mississippi, a coastal town devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2015, Jeremy Burke said "our biggest threat down here is the storm surge." When Katrina struck, "the wind did do damage, but the thing that put the nail in the coffin was the storm surge," said Burke, who owns Bay Books in nearby Bay St. Louis.

Many residents in Waveland are staying in place as Laura bears down on the coast, but they also have their cars and trucks gassed up in case the forecast grows more ominous, Burke said.

"People are prepared to possibly go at the drop of a hat," he said. "We never take a storm for granted. We might have dodged a bullet with Marco, and obviously some people along the Gulf Coast are not going to be as blessed as us."

Martin reported from Marietta, Georgia. Associated Press contributors include Seth Borenstein in Kensington, Maryland, Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge; Kevin McGill in New Orleans; Jay Reeves in Birmingham, Alabama; Evens Sanon in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and Juan Lozano in Houston.

Kremlin: Navalny poisoning accusations 'empty noise'

By DARIA LITVINOVA and DAVID RISING Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — The Kremlin on Tuesday rejected accusations of involvement in an alleged attack on Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny who is in a coma in a German hospital, a day after doctors said tests indicated that he was poisoned.

The politician's allies say the Kremlin is behind the illness of its most prominent critic, with some demanding an investigation into whether Russian President Vladimir Putin was involved.

"These accusations absolutely cannot be true and are rather an empty noise," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday. "We do not intend to take it seriously."

Peskov saw no grounds for launching a criminal investigation into Navalny's condition, saying that it could

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have been triggered by a variety of causes, and determining one should come first.

"If a substance (that caused the condition) is found, and if it is determined that it is poisoning, then there will be a reason for an investigation," Peskov said.

Navalny, a politician and corruption investigator who is one of Putin's fiercest critics, fell ill on a flight back to Moscow from Siberia on Thursday and was taken to a hospital in the city of Omsk after the plane made an emergency landing.

Over the weekend he was transferred to the Charité hospital in Berlin, where doctors on Monday said they have found indications of "cholinesterase inhibitors" in his system.

Cholinesterase inhibitors act by blocking the breakdown of a key chemical in the body, acetylcholine, that transmits signals between nerve cells. Navalny is being treated with the antidote atropine.

Navalny's wife, Yulia Navalnaya, has been visiting her husband daily and made no comment to reporters as she arrived Tuesday.

Chancellor Angela Merkel personally offered Germany's help in treating Navalny and, along with other European officials, has called for a full Russian investigation. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun's was expected to bring the issue up during his visit to Russia starting Tuesday.

Charité said Monday that Navalny had undergone extensive examination by a team of physicians and that "clinical findings indicate poisoning with a substance from the group of cholinesterase inhibitors."

Cholinesterase inhibitors are a broad range of substances that are found in several drugs, but also pesticides and nerve agents. Charité said the specific substance to which Navalny was exposed isn't yet known but that a further series of comprehensive tests had been started.

Navalny's spokeswoman, Kira Yarmysh, on Tuesday said the government's reluctance to launch an investigation was expected.

"It was obvious that the crime would not be properly investigated and a culprit found. However, we all know perfectly well who that is," Yarmysh tweeted.

Experts have cautioned that it is far too early to draw any conclusions about how the agent may have entered Navalny's system, but note that Novichok, the Soviet-era nerve agent used to poison former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Britain, was a cholinesterase inhibitor.

"Cholinesterase inhibitor poisons can be given in many ways, they can be transported in many forms, and are very potent," said Dr. Richard Parsons, a senior lecturer in biochemical toxicology at King's College London. "This is why they are a favored method of poisoning people."

Dr. Thomas Hartung, of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Maryland, said such substances are easy to detect, even days and weeks after the poisoning, and that "we will know soon which substance was used."

"The Novichok nerve agents, which was used in the 2018 poisoning of the Russian double agent Skripal in England, also belong to this category of substance," he said. "I said at the time that the Russians could have just left a business card at the crime scene, because the substances can be so clearly traced."

David Rising reported from Berlin.

The Latest: Hong Kong to ease distancing rules as cases drop

By The Associated Press

HONG KONG — Hong Kong will ease some social distancing measures later this week, allowing beauty salons and cinemas to reopen and relaxing an evening dine-in ban, as daily coronavirus infections in the city dwindled.

Restaurants now banned from providing dine-in services after 6 p.m. will be allowed to serve customers until 9 p.m. starting Friday. Businesses such as cinemas, beauty salons and some outdoor sports venues will be allowed to reopen, and residents will no longer be required to wear masks when exercising outdoors or while in country parks.

"Under the new normal, it is not possible for us to wait until there are no more local cases before relax-

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ing the social distancing measures," Sophia Chan, Hong Kong's health minister said in a news conference on Tuesday.

The semi-autonomous southern Chinese city had seen a surge in coronavirus infections in July, leading the government to implement its toughest social-distancing measures yet, which included limiting public gatherings to two people.

Since then infections have gradually dwindled, with the city reporting just nine infections as of Monday, the first time in more than a month that cases have fallen to single-digits. Hong Kong has recorded 4,692 infections, with 77 deaths.

Hong Kong will implement voluntary, universal community testing for up to two weeks from Sept. 1 to detect asymptomatic patients.

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

- Revved by Sturgis Rally, COVID-19 infections move fast, far
- Oil and gas operations, government facilities and others allowed to bypass environmental rules in pandemic
- GOP convention showcases rising stars, dark warnings
- Biden, Harris to get routine virus testing as in-person campaigning expected to increase
- South Korea closing schools and switching back to remote learning in the capital area
- Follow AP's pandemic coverage at <http://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

BERLIN — The World Health Organization says reports that a Hong Kong man became infected twice with the coronavirus provide important information for scientists studying immunity and developing a vaccine.

A spokeswoman for the U.N. health agency said Tuesday that the unpublished study from Hong Kong offers the first "clear documentation" that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is possible, but cautioned that the number of such cases is likely very small.

Margaret Harris noted that the case in Hong Kong was just one in 23 million lab-confirmed coronavirus infections worldwide so far.

"We will probably see other documented cases, but it seems to be not a regular event," she told reporters. "We would have seen many more cases."

Harris said the case would help researchers understand how the human body builds up immunity to the virus.

"It is not the same as the immune protection that a vaccine provides," she added, noting that part of the development of vaccines involves ensuring that they confer immunity.

"With the vaccine, you ideally want stronger immunity," Harris said. "That's one of the things you're looking for when you're studying what sort of immunity your candidate vaccine stimulates."

LONDON -- High school students in Scotland will have to wear face coverings in corridors and other communal areas from Monday, a move that is likely to pile pressure on the other constituents of the United Kingdom, including England, to follow suit.

The country's education secretary, John Swinney, said the Scottish government is giving "obligatory guidance" to students aged 12 and above to wear face coverings when moving around schools.

He also told the BBC that individual exemptions could be granted for health reasons and that masks should be worn on school buses.

Within the U.K., Scottish schools reopened first, followed by those in Northern Ireland. Schools in England and Wales are due to reopen in September.

The British government, which runs schools in England, has said there are no plans to review the guidance on face coverings in school, arguing that it would "obstruct communication between teachers and pupils."

Scotland has often led the way during the pandemic on the wider use of face coverings. It, for example,

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mandated their use in shops after they reopened weeks before England.

LONDON — AstraZeneca says it has begun testing a new antibody-based drug for the treatment and prevention of COVID-19.

The company said Tuesday that the trial would assess the safety and tolerability of a drug known as AZD7442, which combines two monoclonal antibodies, or immune system proteins that are created in the laboratory and seek to mimic natural antibodies. AZD7442 was developed by Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

The trial, which involves 48 adults in the U.K., is the first time AZD7442 has been tested on humans. If it proves safe, the drug will move on to further trials to determine whether it is effective in prevention and treatment of COVID-19.

"This combination of antibodies, coupled to our proprietary half-life extension technology, has the potential to improve both the effectiveness and durability of use in addition to reducing the likelihood of viral resistance," said Mene Pangalos, executive vice president of biopharmaceutical research at AstraZeneca.

The treatment is based on antibodies from people who recovered from COVID-19.

BERLIN — Germany is warning against travel to the Paris region and part of southeastern France as coronavirus infections rebound.

The warning against nonessential travel issued by the foreign ministry on Monday evening came as Germany's national disease control center added the Ile-de-France and Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur regions to a growing list of "risk areas."

The list currently includes most of the world outside the European Union. Inside the EU, it now includes all of Spain apart from the Canary Islands, parts of Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania and Belgium, and the two French regions. Luxembourg was recently dropped from the list.

People arriving in Germany from "risk areas" are required to undergo virus tests and self-quarantine until the results arrive.

NEW DELHI — India has reported more than 60,000 new infections in the last 24 hours, taking the country's total to 3.17 million.

The Health Ministry on Tuesday also reported 848 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking total fatalities up to 58,390.

Meanwhile, India's recovery rate has reached nearly 76% as more than 2.4 million people affected by the virus have been discharged from hospitals. The Health Ministry said that 66,550 patients — the highest in a day — recovered from the virus in the last 24 hours.

The Health Ministry said the country's COVID-19 tests per million has risen sharply to 26,016 as cumulative tests surged to nearly 36 million.

In June, India began using cheaper, faster but less accurate tests to scale up testing. Authorities have rationed the use of the more precise molecular tests that detect the genetic code of the virus. Nearly a third of the tests India is using now are the less accurate ones that screen for antigens, or viral proteins. They require frequent retesting, which isn't always happening.

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations chief says the tourist industry has been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with \$320 billion lost in exports in the first five months of the year and over 120 million jobs at risk.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a policy briefing and video address released Tuesday that tourism is the third-largest export sector, behind fuels and chemicals, and accounted for 7% of trade last year.

"It employs one in every 10 people on Earth and provides livelihoods to hundreds of millions more," he said. "It boosts economies. ... It allows people to experience some of the world's cultural and natural

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riches and brings people closer to each other, highlighting our common humanity.”

But the U.N. chief said that in the first five months of 2020, because of the coronavirus pandemic, international tourist arrivals decreased by more than half.

Guterres said the tourism impact of COVID-19 has been a “major shock” for richer developed nations “but for developing countries, it is an emergency, particularly for many small island developing states and African countries.”

Tourism for some of those countries represents over 20% of their GDP, he said.

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea is closing schools and switching back to remote learning in the greater capital area as the country counted its 12th straight day of triple-digit daily increases in coronavirus cases.

Education Minister Yoo Eun-hae said Tuesday that at least 193 students and teachers were found infected over the past two weeks in the Seoul metropolitan region, where a viral surge has threatened to erase the country’s hard-won epidemiological gains.

South Korea’s Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 280 new cases of COVID-19, pushing the 12-day total to 3,175. The country’s caseload is now at 17,945, including 310 deaths.

Yoo said most children at kindergartens, elementary, middle and high schools will receive online classes at least until Sept. 11. High-school seniors will continue to go to school so their studies are not disrupted ahead of the crucial national college exams.

The country delayed the start of the school year for weeks because of an outbreak in the southeast in spring before proceeding with phased reopenings beginning in May.

BEIJING — Beijing universities are preparing to administer virus tests to students returning to the city’s campuses.

The cost of testing all 600,000 students will be born by the universities themselves, according to the Beijing Municipal Education Commission.

University classes are scheduled to begin Sept. 9. Roughly 75 percent of Chinese students in lower grades returned to class as of last month, many on staggered schedules. The rest are expected to return by this week or on Sept. 1.

China’s National Health Commission on Tuesday reported no new local infections for a ninth straight day and said 14 new cases were found in travelers arriving from abroad. The northwestern city of Urumqi, the center of China’s most recent major outbreak, was relaxing restrictions on some residential compounds after several days of no new local infections.

MELBOURNE, Australia — Australian hot spot Victoria state has recorded an increase in new coronavirus cases, although health authorities are confident infections are continuing to trend down.

Victoria’s Health Department on Tuesday reported 148 new COVID-19 infections in the latest 24-hour period and eight deaths. Victoria reported 116 new cases and 15 deaths on Tuesday. That was the lowest daily tally of new cases since 87 were reported on July 5. The daily count has been as high as 725 news cases in early August.

State capital Melbourne is around half way through a six-week lockdown.

Trump convention blurs official business and politics

By AAMER MADHANI, DARLENE SUPERVILLE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Plenty of presidents have walked right up to the line separating official business from politics — or even stepped over it. President Donald Trump has blown past it with a bulldozer, and his planned Republican convention speech from the White House lawn this week might be the latest and most blatant example yet.

Down in the polls and facing the headwinds of a coronavirus-battered economy, Trump made the case that the White House is the easiest location for the Secret Service and law enforcement to secure for his

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acceptance speech after Republicans were forced to scale back their convention because of the pandemic. Left unsaid was that the Executive Mansion offers Trump a grand setting as he attempts to make his case that voters should stick with him in the midst of a health catastrophe that has touched nearly every aspect of American life.

"What makes this particularly galling is that the president owns a hotel four blocks away from the White House that he's shown no qualms about profiting from over the course of his presidency," said Donald Sherman, deputy director of the nonprofit government watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. "Now he feels compelled to use the White House grounds to deliver this political speech?"

That's not the only mixing of government and politics this week: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is among the Trump Cabinet officials who will address the convention, in his case a recorded address from Jerusalem while on a taxpayer-funded trip to the region. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue talked up Trump's reelection during an "official" visit Monday to a North Carolina farm with the president.

Under a federal law known as the Hatch Act, civilian employees in the executive branch cannot use their titles when doing political work. They are also prohibited from taking part in any partisan activity while on the clock. The president and vice president are exempt from the rules.

The independent Office of Special Counsel advised lawmakers earlier this month that White House advisers would not be in violation of Hatch Act rules by taking part in the convention if the event was held on the lawn or in the residence and they attended while off-duty. But if the event were held in the West Wing or in another area of the White House that is regarded as a federal room, White House officials would be prohibited from attending even while off-duty.

In addition to Pompeo, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson as well as White House senior advisers Kellyanne Conway, Ivanka Trump and Ja'Ron Smith are all slated to address the convention. The administration officials are expected to not use their titles to avoid violations, and all — with the exception of Ivanka Trump — are slated to deliver their remarks live or pre-recorded from a location outside the White House complex.

Traditionally, the big four Cabinet members — the secretaries of state, defense, treasury and attorney general — have not attended the convention. Multiple officials involved in the planning process insisted that teams of lawyers from the White House, the Trump campaign and the Republican National Committee reviewed convention plans to avoid any Hatch Act violations. The officials said the events on the White House grounds were consistent with previous presidents using the White House residence for political videos.

It's only the second time that a president will deliver his acceptance speech at the White House. In 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered his acceptance speech from the White House via radio to the Democratic convention that nominated him for an unprecedented third term.

"Any government employees who may participate will do so in compliance with the Hatch Act," White House spokesman Judd Deere said in a statement.

Ivanka Trump, who in addition to her White House role is the president's daughter, is scheduled to introduce her father before his acceptance speech on Thursday.

Her office said in a statement that she will be participating outside of normal working hours and will be speaking in her personal capacity as the president's daughter.

Neil Eggleston, who served as White House counsel in the President Barack Obama administration, however, said that while Ivanka Trump and others can take part in the convention while staying on the right side of the law, "it's completely contrary to the norms."

"People talk about the White House as the People's House," Eggleston said. "Political parties come and go, but it doesn't belong to one political party or the other."

The Trump administration is hardly the first to mix business with politics.

Obama, for instance, allowed five members of his Cabinet to address the party's 2012 convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, as he sought reelection. Four years later, as his former secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, sought the White House, Obama decided to prohibit Cabinet members from taking part.

In 2012, Kathleen Sebelius, Obama's health and human services secretary, was cited for violating federal

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law prohibiting Cabinet members from engaging in politics on the clock when she called for the president's reelection and touted the candidacy of another Democrat at an event she was attending in her official capacity.

In 2011, a report by Office of Special Counsel found that during the George W. Bush administration, senior staff members at the Office of Political Affairs violated the Hatch Act by organizing dozens of political briefings from 2001 to 2007 for Republican appointees at top federal agencies in an effort to enlist them to help elect Republicans to Congress.

The Trump administration has repeatedly stepped over the line, ethics experts said.

Perdue stepped into politics on Monday during a visit with the president to Mills River, North Carolina, to spotlight a federal food distribution program to assist workers impacted by the virus. Perdue noted appreciatively the many Trump supporters who lined the motorcade route en route to the event.

"Those were part of those forgotten people that voted for you for 2016," Perdue said. "And I've got better news for you: They and many others are going to vote for you for four more years in 2020."

In November 2018, the Office of Special Counsel found six White House officials in violation for tweeting or retweeting the president's 2016 campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" from their official Twitter accounts. Most notably, the office recommended in June 2019 that White House counselor Kellyanne Conway be fired.

Trump refused to take action against Conway, suggesting that the office was trying to take away her right to free speech. Conway, who announced this week she will be leaving the White House for personal reasons by the end of the month, is scheduled to deliver remarks to the convention on Wednesday.

Democrats have also pointed to other alleged abuses of power by Trump that had a political slant. In July, Attorney General William Barr deployed National Guard troops to clear the area outside the White House of demonstrators protesting police brutality minutes before Trump decided to stroll to a nearby historic church for a photo op.

The president acknowledged earlier this month — before altering his public position — that he's starving the U.S. Postal Service of money to make it harder to process an expected surge of mail-in ballots, which he worries could cost him the election.

Richard Painter, who served as the White House chief ethics lawyer during the George W. Bush administration, said it's unlikely that Trump's use of the White House backdrop to help his reelection effort will make a difference to the outcome of the election. But the deliberate thumbing of his nose at ethics rules and historic norms points to a "great danger."

"It goes to the core problem that the government — including the State Department and Department of Justice — are being used as extensions of the Donald Trump campaign," Painter said. "This is about a lot more than Kellyanne Conway or Ivanka Trump or someone else in the administration showing up to give a campaign speech on the White House lawn."

Madhani reported from Chicago. Associated Press writers Deb Riechmann and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

5 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. **REPUBLICANS ISSUE DIRE WARNING ON BIDEN** On the opening night of their convention, they falsely accused the Democrat of proposing to defund police, ban oil fracking, take over health care, open borders and raise taxes on most Americans.

2. **VIOLENCE ERUPTS AGAIN IN WISCONSIN** Police in Kenosha fired tear gas at hundreds of people protesting the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man, as they lit fires, threw bottles and shot fireworks at law enforcement guarding the courthouse.

3. **SCOTTISH LEADER WINNING PRAISE** Nicola Sturgeon's calm and sober response to the coronavirus

pandemic is standing in contrast to the sometimes-chaotic approach of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

4. 'WE HAVE NO WAY TO FORCE THEM OUT' Beirut's massive explosion has fueled widespread anger at Lebanon's ruling elite, whose corruption and negligence many blame for the disaster.

5. LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SAGA PERSISTS The evangelical school said Jerry Falwell Jr., embroiled in a sex scandal, had offered his resignation as president but then reversed course.

Republican convention showcases rising stars, dark warnings

By STEVE PEOPLES, MICHELLE L. PRICE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A rising generation of Republican stars offered an optimistic view of President Donald Trump's leadership but was undermined on the opening night of the GOP's scaled-back convention by speakers issuing dark warnings about the country's future and distorting the president's record, particularly on the coronavirus pandemic.

As Trump faces pressure to expand his appeal beyond his loyal supporters, Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, the Senate's sole Black Republican, and former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, the daughter of Indian immigrants, sought to cast the GOP as welcoming to Americans of color, despite the party's overwhelmingly white leadership and voting base.

"I was a brown girl in a black and white world," Haley said Monday night, noting that she faced discrimination but rejecting the idea that "America is a racist country." She also gave a nod to the Black Lives Matter movement, saying "of course we know that every single Black life is valuable."

But the prime-time convention proceedings, which featured a blend of taped and live speeches, focused largely on dire talk about Joe Biden, Trump's Democratic challenger in the November election. Speakers ominously warned that electing Biden would lead to violence in American cities spilling into the suburbs, a frequent Trump campaign message with racist undertones. One speaker called Trump the "bodyguard of Western civilization."

Scrambling to find a message that sticks, Trump's team tried out multiple themes and tactics over the course of the night. They featured optimism from those who could represent the GOP's future, attempts to characterize Biden as a vessel for socialists and far-left Democrats despite his moderate record and humanizing stories about the 74-year-old man who sits in the Oval Office.

Trump and a parade of fellow Republicans misrepresented Biden's agenda through the evening, falsely accusing him of proposing to defund police, ban oil fracking, take over health care, open borders and raise taxes on most Americans. They tried to assign positions of the Democratic left to a middle-of-the-road candidate who explicitly rejected many of the party's most liberal positions through the primaries.

The opening night of the four-day convention reflected the rising urgency fueling Trump's push to reshape a presidential contest that he's losing, at least for now, with Election Day just 10 weeks away. It will continue Tuesday, when first lady Melania Trump will deliver remarks from the White House.

Biden and his running mate, California Sen. Kamala Harris, are keeping a relatively low profile this week. In a tweet Monday night, Biden told supporters to "stay focused."

The emphasis on diversity at Trump's convention was an acknowledgement he must expand his coalition beyond his largely white base. Polling shows that Black Americans continue to be overwhelmingly negative in their assessments of the president's performance, with his approval hovering around 1 in 10 over the course of his presidency, according to Gallup polling.

One of several African Americans on Monday night's schedule, former football star Herschel Walker, defended the president against those who call him a racist.

"It hurts my soul to hear the terrible names that people call Donald," Walker said. "The worst one is 'racist.' I take it as a personal insult that people would think I would have a 37-year friendship with a racist."

But that emphasis clashed with Trump's instinct to energize his die-hard loyalists.

He featured, for example, Mark and Patricia McCloskey, the St. Louis couple charged with felonies for pointing guns at what prosecutors deemed non-violent Black Lives Matter protesters marching past their home.

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"What you saw happen to us could just as easily happen to any of you who are watching from quiet neighborhoods around our country," Patricia McCloskey said, sitting on a couch in a wood-paneled room.

"They've actually charged us with felonies for daring to defend our home," her husband said.

And Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida said Democrats will "disarm you, empty the prisons, lock you in your home and invite MS-13 to live next door."

Trump's political future may depend on his ability to convince voters that America is on the right track, even as the coronavirus death toll exceeds 177,000 and pandemic-related job losses also reach into the millions.

A deep sense of pessimism has settled over the electorate. Just 23% of Americans think the country is heading in the right direction, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Trump and his supporters touted his response to the pandemic while standing alongside front-line workers in the White House, although he glossed over the mounting death toll, the most in the world, and his administration's struggle to control the disease.

Organizers also repeatedly sought to cast Trump as an empathetic figure, borrowing a page from the Democrats' convention playbook a week ago that effectively highlighted Biden's personal connection to voters.

Those cheering Trump's leadership on the pandemic included a coronavirus patient, a small business owner from Montana and a nurse practitioner from Virginia.

"As a healthcare professional, I can tell you without hesitation, Donald Trump's quick action and leadership saved thousands of lives during COVID-19," said Amy Ford, a registered nurse who was deployed to New York and Texas to fight the coronavirus.

The first day of the 2020 Republican convention began early in the day as Trump and Vice President Mike Pence were renominated by delegates who gathered in Charlotte, the city originally selected to host the convention before the pandemic struck.

Trump paid a surprise visit to the city, where he warned delegates that "the only way they can take this election away from us is if this is a rigged election," raising anew his unsupported concerns about Americans' expected reliance on mail voting during the pandemic. Experts say mail voting has proven remarkably secure.

The fact the Republicans gathered at all stood in contrast to the Democrats, who held an all-virtual convention last week. The Democratic programming included a well-received roll call video montage featuring diverse officials from across the nation.

The Republicans spoke from the ballroom in Charlotte and were overwhelmingly white before the proceedings moved to Washington for prime-time.

Peoples reported from New York. Associated Press writers Jill Colvin and Darlene Superville contributed from Charlotte, North Carolina.

WHAT TO WATCH: Melania, Pompeo and Trump at GOP convention

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Tuesday's program at the Republican National Convention is likely to wade into familiar waters, with a lineup expected to speak on divisive issues like abortion and "cancel culture," while lambasting Democratic rival Joe Biden and the Democrats' progressive wing.

Unlike Democrats, who shifted their convention to an all-virtual affair, Republicans kept a scaled-down, in-person gathering in Charlotte, North Carolina. Several hundred delegates gathered there Monday voted to renominate President Donald Trump, but there are no in-person meetings for delegates scheduled the rest of the week.

What to watch at the convention Tuesday:

TRUMP

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Trump appeared frequently during the first day of his party's convention. While he is expected to make an appearance during prime-time Tuesday night, details haven't been released. With Biden's proposals already cast as "socialist" and "radical," the president is likely to revive those criticisms in any remarks.

THE FIRST LADY

First lady Melania Trump is set to give the marquee address from the Rose Garden. She has focused on anti-bullying initiatives during her tenure in the White House, so she may offer one of the convention's most positive addresses. Her speech at the 2016 GOP convention, the night she introduced herself to voters, was well-received but was later found to have included lines that were very close to what former first lady Michelle Obama said in her 2008 speech at the Democratic convention. A speechwriter for the Trump Organization took the blame.

POMPEO

The program includes Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, another Republican who is being closely watched for signs of future political aspirations. His decision to speak at the convention comes while the country's top diplomat has drawn condemnation from some for breaking decades of precedent keeping secretaries of state from partaking in overtly partisan politics. The State Department counters that Pompeo will be speaking in his personal capacity, not as a U.S. official.

Pompeo is expected to praise the Trump administration's foreign policy record, including the recent U.S.-brokered deal between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, in an address recorded while he's in Jerusalem on government business.

OTHER SPEAKERS

The theme for the evening is "Land of Opportunity," with speakers planning to highlight Trump's policies on trade, abortion and the opioid crisis. Two of the president's children, Eric Trump and Tiffany Trump, are scheduled, along with Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, Florida Lt. Gov. Jeanette Nuñez, former Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi and Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer.

Other speakers include anti-abortion activist Abby Johnson; Maine lobsterman Jason Joyce; Mary Ann Mendoza, an Arizona woman whose police officer son was killed in an accident caused by a man in the country illegally; and Nicholas Sandmann, a Kentucky teenager who gained attention last year for a widely shared video of his interaction with a Native American man, Nathan Phillips, during demonstrations in Washington. Sandmann and Phillips later said they were trying to defuse tensions among conflicting groups at the Lincoln Memorial.

BIDEN

Unlike Trump, who planned events to counter the Democratic convention, the Biden campaign has not scheduled its candidate to make appearances during the GOP gathering. The Biden campaign says his running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris, will be making some public appearances this week. She's expected to make the case for the Democratic ticket and against Trump's reelection.

HOW TO WATCH

The program starts at 8:30 p.m. ET (a half-hour earlier than the DNC convention) and runs through 11 p.m. ET. It's available on the GOP convention's social media channels and AT&T U-VERSE, Direct TV, Twitch, Youtube and Amazon Prime TV. CNN, C-SPAN, MSNBC and PBS will air the full prime-time presentation while ABC, CBS, Fox News Channel and NBC will air the final hour, from 10 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Scotland's handling of virus boosts support for independence

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

EDINBURGH, Scotland (AP) — There is wide agreement that Britain's devastating coronavirus outbreak has been met by strong, effective political leadership. Just not from Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

While Johnson has often seemed to flounder and flip-flop his way through the biggest national crisis in decades, Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon has won praise for her sober, straight-talking response.

The gulf between the neat, concise Sturgeon and the ruffled, rambling Johnson has catapulted the idea of Scottish independence from the United Kingdom — the long-held dream of Sturgeon's nationalist

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government — back up the political agenda.

The issue appeared settled when Scottish voters rejected secession by 55%-45% in a 2014 referendum. But after Brexit and COVID-19, “there are signs that the anchors of the union are beginning to shift,” said Tom Devine, emeritus professor of history at the University of Edinburgh.

Devine said Sturgeon’s government “has demonstrated it can manage the greatest catastrophe since World War II. And that suggests to some people who might have been on the edge of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ (for independence) that they could actually run a normal government.”

Recent opinion polls support that view.

“For the first time in Scottish polling history, we have supporters of independence outnumbering opponents over an extended period,” said John Curtice, professor of politics at the University of Strathclyde.

One long-simmering reason is Britain’s departure from the European Union. Brexit is resented by many in Scotland, which voted strongly in 2016 to remain in the bloc. The U.K. officially left the EU on Jan. 31, although the economic break — and potential shock, if a trade deal isn’t struck between the two sides — won’t occur until the end of 2020.

The new factor is the pandemic, which has put the contrasting styles of Sturgeon and Johnson to the test.

The four parts of the U.K. — England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland — acted together to impose a nationwide lockdown in March. But Sturgeon has been more cautious in lifting it for Scotland than Johnson has for England, keeping businesses such as bars and restaurants shut for longer and cautioning against a hasty return to travel and socializing.

She gives televised news conferences several days a week (Johnson’s government stopped doing so in June) and often wears a tartan face mask in public, a gesture that conveys both prudence and patriotism.

“I think she has done a great job,” said Pamela McGregor, who runs a pub in the Scottish capital, Edinburgh. “She has been very calm and very respectful.”

Curtice said Sturgeon had “leveled much more with people” than Johnson about the hardships of the pandemic.

“The U.K. government is very defensive, very reluctant to admit mistakes,” he added. “And Boris has been much more, ‘We think you need to go back to work because it’s good for the economy.’”

Johnson’s government was shaken early in the outbreak when both he and Health Secretary Matt Hancock contracted the virus. Johnson spent three nights in intensive care. His administration has made U-turns on issues including wearing masks in public and whether to quarantine arrivals from abroad.

Public trust in the government suffered when Johnson aide Dominic Cummings broke lockdown rules by driving 250 miles (400 kilometers) to his parents’ house — and kept his job. When Scottish Chief Medical Officer Catherine Calderwood flouted her own advice by traveling to her second home, she resigned within hours.

Some of the difference between the two governments is style rather than substance. Scotland shared in the U.K.’s early mistakes in confronting the pandemic, notably a failure to protect elderly residents in nursing homes, where many died.

The virus has played a part in 4,200 deaths in Scotland, which has a population of 5.5 million, making it one of the highest per-capita rates in Europe. In England, which has 10 times the population, there have been about 50,000 deaths in which COVID-19 was a factor, according to official statistics. Both figures are higher than the U.K.’s official coronavirus death toll of more than 41,000.

Ramsay Jones, a former adviser to ex-Prime Minister David Cameron, said Sturgeon is a skilled communicator, but has largely acted in concert with the U.K. government over the coronavirus.

“Has anything materially been done different? Not really,” he said. “The car that they’re presenting in the showroom looks shinier, looks well-polished, but lift the hood, it’s no different.”

Sturgeon knows that turning increased support for independence into reality will be a challenge.

An election for the Scottish Parliament is due in May. If Sturgeon’s Scottish National Party wins the anticipated majority, she is likely to demand a new independence referendum. But a binding referendum needs the U.K. government’s approval, and Johnson insists he’ll say no. Few think the cautious Sturgeon

would emulate Catalan separatists in Spain and hold an unauthorized vote.

Sturgeon is also facing potential fallout from an inquiry into how her government handled sexual assault allegations against former First Minister Alex Salmond.

Supporters of independence are encouraged, but wary.

"Although there's more and more people coming on board the independence movement, there's a sort of feeling that we're a wee bit stuck," said Gerry Mulvenna, a pro-independence activist in Edinburgh. "I sense there is a shift. But how do we get there?"

The pro-independence camp in a new referendum would also have to convince voters that an independent Scotland could thrive economically. That's not an easy task in an uncertain era.

Devine said the pandemic has shown that "it's a pretty cold world out there — and I think the Scots in the majority still remain a pretty canny people."

Many Scots say they simply have more urgent things to worry about. Edinburgh's streets in August are usually thronging with visitors to the arts festivals that turn the city into an international melting pot of creativity. This year, the city is unnaturally quiet. Many businesses are still shut or struggling.

"I feel like I'm just concentrating on the pandemic and surviving at the moment," said McGregor, who recently reopened her tiny Edinburgh bar after lockdown. "I would love to have independence, but I think maybe now is not the time."

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

New Zealand survivor to mosque gunman: 'You are the loser'

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand (AP) — A man who was shot and wounded in the New Zealand mosque attacks had a simple message for the mass-murderer responsible: "You are the loser, and we are the winners."

Mirwais Waziri was among the survivors and family members who spoke on the second day of a four-day sentencing hearing for white supremacist Brenton Harrison Tarrant, who killed 51 worshippers at two mosques during the March 2019 attacks.

Waziri said Tarrant had not shown any remorse during the hearing and so instead of giving a victim's impact statement he wanted to deliver the gunman a message. Coming from Afghanistan, Waziri said, he was sometimes associated with terrorism but now he'd been freed.

"You took that name from me," Waziri said. "Today, you are the terrorist."

His comments elicited spontaneous applause from other victims in the courtroom. Others told Tarrant during their statements that he was a coward, a monster, a rat.

Tarrant broke his impassive facade a couple of times to smirk at survivors when they made fun of him — one told him he should read the Quran during his plentiful free time, another said he was still alive because Tarrant didn't know how to shoot, except from point-blank range.

The 29-year-old Australian gunman in March pleaded guilty to murder, attempted murder, and terrorism, reversing an earlier not guilty plea. He could become the first person in New Zealand to be sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, the toughest sentence available.

Tarrant is noticeably thinner than when he was first arrested. At the current hearing, he hasn't shown the brazenness he did at his first court appearance the day after the attacks, when he made a hand gesture sometimes adopted by white supremacists.

During Tuesday's hearing, relatives and survivors described how more than a year after the attacks, they were still having trouble sleeping, enjoying life and providing for their families.

Rashid Omar, whose 24-year-old son Tariq was killed at the Al Noor mosque, said he'd desperately held out hope his son had survived until police and Muslim leaders read out a list of those who'd died.

"My body felt completely weak and everything went silent," Omar said.

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He started crying with his family even though he'd intended to remain strong.

"As a parent, no matter how old your children are, they'll always be your baby," he said.

Each day has become a burden to endure and he finds even simple tasks hard to complete, Omar said. He wakes up tired and with no energy. He once loved photography, he said, but now can't bear to pick up a camera.

Omar's wife Rosemary said she functions from moment to moment, often in a fog. The loss and grief is debilitating, she said, and has cast a shadow over everything in their lives.

"It's like I'm broken, and I see my family as broken," she said.

Many of those who spoke described ongoing financial strain.

Motasim Uddin, who was shot in the leg and spent more than three months hospitalized, said he hadn't been able to return to his job as a welder and was worried about his future, especially as he was trying to support his parents in Bangladesh.

"I cannot forget what happened, what I saw," Uddin said. "I try to forget, but I wake up thinking about it."

Noraini Milne, whose 14-year-old son Sayyad was killed, said her own survival came as a blessing as she planned to spend her life helping others.

"You chose to perform a despicable and cowardly act," she said to Tarrant.

Tarrant has dismissed his lawyers and is representing himself during the sentencing.

The attacks targeting people praying at the Al Noor and Linwood mosques shocked New Zealand and prompted new laws banning the deadliest types of semi-automatic weapons.

They also prompted global changes to social media protocols after the gunman livestreamed his attack on Facebook, where it was viewed by hundreds of thousands of people.

Weeks after blast, Lebanon patronage system immune to reform

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

Three weeks after a catastrophic explosion ripped through Beirut, killing nearly 200 people and rendering thousands homeless, the change many hoped for is nowhere in sight. Instead, activists said they are back to square one.

The same politicians whose corruption and negligence the public blames for the disaster are negotiating among themselves over forming a new government. Calls for early elections have petered out. To devastated Beirutis, still sweeping shards of glass and fixing broken homes, the blast revealed the extent to which an entrenched system of patronage remains impervious to reform.

In fact, the tools that the ruling elite have used to ensure a lock on power the past 30 years are only more powerful.

Rising poverty amid a severe economic crisis gives them greater leverage, with more people desperate for the income their patronage provides. Their grip on electoral politics was made tighter by an election law they passed in 2017, making it harder for independents to win seats. And there are armed groups affiliated with political parties.

"Basically, we have no way to force them out," said Nizar Hassan, a civil activist and an organizer with LiHaqqi, a political movement active in the October mass anti-government protests.

Lebanon's political parties are strictly sectarian, each rooted in one of the country's multiple religious or ethnic communities. Most are headed by sectarian warlords from Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war — or their families — who stand at the top of powerful local business holdings. The factions pass out positions in government ministries and public institutions to their followers or carve out business sectors for them, ensuring their backing.

Opposition parties that cross sectarian lines with a reform agenda struggle to break that barrier. They are divided and lack grassroots support. They have also increasingly been met with brute force by security agencies.

Street protests have been dramatic. But the array of anti-government movements were not sizable enough to push for sea-change reforms, Hassan said.

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"To seize the moment, you need people on grassroots level that are ready to announce they support it, and this doesn't really exist in Lebanon," he said.

Civic movements like LiHaqqi are not well-financed, face intimidation and can hardly afford to book air-time on mainstream channels, where elites are regular talking heads.

A sliver of hope is found in growing support from businessmen who once financed elites but have become increasingly frustrated, Hassan and other activists said.

Business owners began having a change of heart around the beginning of the year, as the economy deteriorated, hyperinflation flared and many people fell into poverty, said Paul Abi Nasr, a member of the Association of Lebanese Industrialists.

"The business community used to stay out of this from fear of retribution on their businesses," he said. "But with the situation so dire already, a lot are now much more forthcoming."

That has translated into a small stream of money to civil groups, though limited to covering organization and lobbying.

Industrialists and businessmen have helped prop up the patronage system, but most "were forced to play along," Abi Nasr said. Politicians helped businesses in return for kickbacks and political support when needed.

Those in government who have witnessed the system from the inside maintain it cannot reform itself.

"People like me, after years in the world of government, basically feel that the system is immune to reform," said Khalil Gebara, who left his job as an adviser to the Interior Ministry.

"But at the same point, the total collapse of the system will unleash a Pandora's box of all kinds of sectarian conflicts," said Gebara, now a consultant to the World Bank. "I don't know what I should hope for."

The wake-up call for Lebanon's activists came not during the October uprising, when tens of thousands took to the streets in protest against the corrupt political class, but four years ago when Beirut held municipal elections.

It was the first time that a candidate slate emerging from a protest movement, Beirut Madinati, won in an electoral district. The small victory emboldened activists to look to polls to bring change.

It also spooked elites. The following year, they passed a new electoral law. It created a proportional representation system that ostensibly aimed to address demands of civil society and improve representation for minority sects.

But they "gerrymandered every aspect of the law in order to ensure that all political parties in power will be re-elected and none of the voices in the opposition could be," said elections expert Amal Hamdan.

Under the law, a special formula determines the minimum threshold of votes for candidates to win seats. The factions worked to ensure those thresholds were high — ranging from 8% to 20% — and difficult for independents to gain, lawmakers and advisers with knowledge of the drafting of the law said.

In the south, for example. Shiite Hezbollah rejected proposals for a 5% threshold and arranged one as high as 20%, said Chantal Sarkis, an expert in political affairs and former adviser to Samir Geagea's Lebanese Forces throughout negotiations over the law.

Activists like Hassan said the core problem lies with lack of grassroots support to initiate real political change. "When it comes to actual political dominance over the social fabric — everything is really manifest on local level."

In his home district in the Chouf, where former warlord and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt is dominant, LiHaqqi supporters faced intimidation on the ground during the 2018 general election, Hassan said.

The father of one activist was sacked from his government job; mothers begged their activist children to stop canvassing in case powerful politicians got wind; others said they would vote for establishment parties because they wanted jobs. Not a single village allowed them to hold public events.

In the wake of the Aug. 4 explosion, when nearly 3,000 tons of improperly stored ammonium nitrate ignited at the Beirut port, political parties have set up field offices offering humanitarian and other assistance to victims.

Now with the falling Lebanese lira, Hassan fears establishment parties have more clout than before.

"It's even cheaper for them to buy people."

AP FACT CHECK: Trump, GOP distort on health care, vote fraud

By HOPE YEN, AMANDA SEITZ and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump made a dizzying array of misleading claims about voting fraud and health care as fellow Republicans opened their convention with speeches distorting the agenda of his Democratic rival, Joe Biden.

Trump falsely asserted that he was the one who ensured that people with preexisting medical problems will be covered by health insurance; actually that was Democratic President Barack Obama. Several speakers accused Biden of proposing to defund police, ban fracking, take over health care and open borders — none of that true.

A look at statements Monday at the Republican National Convention:

HEALTH CARE

TRUMP: "We protected your preexisting conditions. Very strongly protected preexisting ... and you don't hear that."

THE FACTS: You don't hear it because it's not true.

People with preexisting medical problems have health insurance protections because of Obama's health care law, which Trump is trying to dismantle.

One of Trump's alternatives to Obama's law — short-term health insurance, already in place — doesn't have to cover preexisting conditions. Another alternative is association health plans, which are oriented to small businesses and sole proprietors and do cover preexisting conditions.

Neither of the two alternatives appears to have made much difference in the market.

Meanwhile, Trump's administration is pressing the Supreme Court for full repeal of the Obama-era law, including provisions that protect people with preexisting conditions from health insurance discrimination.

With "Obamacare" still in place, preexisting conditions continue to be covered by regular individual health insurance plans.

Insurers must take all applicants, regardless of medical history, and charge the same standard premiums to healthy people and those who are in poor health, or have a history of medical problems.

Before the Affordable Care Act, any insurer could deny coverage — or charge more — to anyone with a preexisting condition who was seeking to buy an individual policy.

Democratic attacks on Republican efforts to repeal the health law and weaken preexisting condition protections proved successful in the 2018 midterms, when Democrats won back control of the House.

VOTING FRAUD

TRUMP, on mail-in voting: "Absentee — like in Florida — absentee is good. But other than that, they're very, very bad."

THE FACTS: He's making a false distinction. Mail-in ballots are cast in the same way as absentee mail ballots, with the same level of scrutiny such as signature verification in many states.

In more than 30 states and the District of Columbia, voters have a right to "no excuse" absentee voting. That means they can use mail-in ballots for any reason, regardless of whether a person is out of town or working.

In Florida, the Legislature in 2016 voted to change the wording of such balloting from "absentee" to "vote-by-mail" to make clear a voter can cast such ballots if they wish. So there is no "absentee" voting in that state, as Trump alludes to.

More broadly, voter fraud has proved exceedingly rare. The Brennan Center for Justice in 2017 ranked the risk of ballot fraud at 0.00004% to 0.0009%, based on studies of past elections.

Only nine states currently have plans for "universal" mail-in voting, where ballots are sent automatically to registered voters. Five of those states relied on mail-in ballots even before the coronavirus pandemic raised concerns about voting in person.

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TRUMP, on the November vote count and Democrats: "We have to be very, very careful and this time they are trying to do it with the whole post office scam. They will blame it on the post office. You can see them setting it up."

THE FACTS: No postal scam has emerged from the Democrats. Instead Trump has given credence to suspicions that he wants to suppress mail-in voting to help his chances in the election.

He's said as much. In an interview this month, he admitted he's trying to starve the U.S. Postal Service of money in order to make it harder to process an expected surge of mail-in ballots, which he worries could cost him the election.

Trump explicitly noted funding provisions that Democrats are seeking in a relief package that has stalled on Capitol Hill. Without the additional money, he said, the Postal Service won't have the resources to handle a flood of ballots from voters who are seeking to avoid polling places during the coronavirus pandemic.

"If we don't make a deal, that means they don't get the money," Trump told Fox Business Network. "That means they can't have universal mail-in voting; they just can't have it."

Over the weekend, the House approved legislation that would reverse recent changes in postal operations and send \$25 billion to shore up the agency before the November election, but the White House has said Trump would veto it.

During a House hearing, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy acknowledged that Trump's repeated attacks on mail-in ballots are "not helpful," but he denied that recent cuts were linked to the election.

TRUMP, on defective ballots in an election: "What does defective mean? It means fraud."

THE FACTS: No, defective ballots do not equate to fraud. The overwhelming majority aren't.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, the vast majority of ballots are disqualified because they arrive late, a particular worry this year because of recent U.S. Postal Service delays and an expected surge in mail-in voting during the coronavirus pandemic.

Ballots also are deemed defective if there is a missing signature — common with newer voters unfamiliar with the process — or it doesn't match what's on file. In addition, some states require absentee voters to get a witness or notary to sign their ballots.

"None of those are fraud," said Wendy Weiser, director of Brennan's democracy program at NYU School of Law. When suspected cases are investigated for potential fraud, studies have borne out the main reason for defects is voter mistake, she said.

Defective ballots also disproportionately impact voters of color, and recent lawsuits have successfully challenged some requirements as posing health risks or disenfranchising voters. Earlier this year, for instance, a federal judge ruled that a South Carolina requirement to have witnesses to mail-in ballots could put voters' health at risk and suspended it for the June primary. Other states including Minnesota and Rhode Island have also suspended that requirement due to the pandemic.

While the rates of defective ballots are unacceptable, "people should still feel confident in their votes, and they should follow-up," Weiser said. "People should know these problems are being fought over and hopefully many will be mitigated and addressed before November."

POLICE

REP. STEVE SCALISE of Louisiana on the police: "Joe Biden has embraced the left's insane mission to defund them."

THE FACTS: No, Biden has explicitly rejected the call by some on the left to defund the police. He has proposed more money for police, conditioned on improvements in their practices.

Biden's criminal justice agenda, released long before the protests over racial injustice, proposes more federal money for "training that is needed to avert tragic, unjustifiable deaths" and hiring more officers to ensure that departments are racially and ethnically reflective of the populations they serve.

Specifically, he calls for a \$300 million infusion into federal community policing grant programs. That's more money, not less.

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BIDEN AGENDA

NIKKI HALEY, former ambassador to the United Nations, on the Democrats: "They want a government takeover of health care. They want to ban fracking and kill millions of jobs."

REP. JIM JORDAN of Ohio on the Democratic agenda: "Defund the police, defund border patrol and defund our military."

RONNA McDANIEL, chairwoman of the Republican National Committee: "You deserve to know that they would ban fracking and eliminate fossil fuels, which would kill millions of good-paying jobs and raise the cost of driving our cars and heating our homes. You deserve to know that they want a complete government takeover of our health care system, so moms like me won't be able to take our kids to the same pediatrician they've been seeing for years."

THE FACTS: Those aren't Biden's positions. A number of Republican speakers seized on proposals of the Democratic left, in some cases distorting those positions, and assigned them to Biden, who doesn't share those views.

He does not favor a government takeover of health care; instead he proposes building on "Obamacare," which preserves the private insurance market while expanding Medicaid.

He also did not endorse proposals to cease border enforcement or even to decriminalize illegal crossings.

Biden supports banning only new oil and gas permits, fracking included, on federal land. But most U.S. production is on private land — the U.S. Bureau of Land Management says production on federal land accounted for less than 10% of oil and gas in 2018.

In a March 15 primary debate, Biden misstated his energy policy, suggesting he would allow no new fracking. His campaign quickly corrected the record. Biden has otherwise been consistent on his middle-of-the-road position, going so far as to tell an anti-fracking activist that he "ought to vote for somebody else" if he wanted an immediate fracking ban.

PANDEMIC

DONALD TRUMP JR. on the coronavirus response: "The president quickly took action and shut down travel from China."

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

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

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

Dr. Anne Schuchat, the No. 2 official at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, also told The Associated Press that the federal government was slow to understand how much coronavirus was spreading from Europe, which helped drive the acceleration of outbreaks across the U.S. in late February. Trump didn't announce travel restrictions for many European countries until mid-March.

DONALD TRUMP JR.: "The president acted quickly and ensured ventilators got to hospitals that needed them most. He delivered PP&E to our brave front-line workers."

THE FACTS: No, not all hospitals and front-line workers got the ventilators and personal protective equipment they needed. States were left scrambling in the early weeks of the pandemic, while Trump scoffed at some of their requests, calling them inflated.

New York acquired a shipment of 1,000 ventilators from the Chinese government and 140 from the state of Oregon. Massachusetts borrowed the New England Patriots' jet to pick up 1 million masks from China.

While California Gov. Gavin Newsom was tracking down 10,000 ventilators for his state, he got 170 broken

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ones from the national stockpile. And a federal shipment of 300,000 N95 masks that Illinois was supposed to receive in March turned out to be less-effective surgical masks instead, Gov. J.B. Pritzker said at the time.

ECONOMY

DONALD TRUMP JR, on his father: "So if you're looking for hope, look to the man who did what the failed Obama-Biden administration never could do and built the greatest economy our country has ever seen."

THE FACTS: That's false. The economy was healthy before the coronavirus pandemic hit but not the best in U.S. history.

Economic gains largely followed along the lines of an expansion that started more than a decade ago under Obama. And while posting great job and stock market numbers, Trump never managed to achieve the rates of economic growth he promised in the 2016 campaign, nor growth rates seen in the past.

The Obama-Trump years yielded the longest economic expansion in U.S. history, but not the greatest,

McDANIEL: "You deserve to know about their plans to raise taxes on 82% of Americans."

THE FACTS: That's not the plan. Biden says he won't raise taxes on anyone making under \$400,000.

An analysis of Biden's tax plan by the 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.

TRUMP JR. on his father: "He's pledged to repeal the Trump tax cuts, which were the biggest in our country."

THE FACTS: Trump's tax cuts are nowhere close to the biggest in U.S. history.

It's a \$1.5 trillion tax cut over 10 years. As a share of the total economy, a tax cut of that size ranks 12th, according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. President Ronald Reagan's 1981 cut is the biggest, followed by the 1945 rollback of taxes that financed World War II.

Post-Reagan tax cuts also stand among the historically significant: President George W. Bush's cuts in the early 2000s and Obama's renewal of them a decade later.

Biden has pledged to raise taxes on wealthy people and not the middle class and working class.

Seitz reported from Chicago. Associated Press writers Matthew Daly and Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar in Washington and Bill Barrow in Atlanta contributed to this report.

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

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Republican Convention takeaways: All Trump, all the time

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump aggressively asserted control over the Republican National Convention on Monday, overshadowing the prime-time speakers, as he made clear he wants voters to focus on him.

Takeaways from the first night of the convention:

AN OMNIPRESENT CONVENTION PRESENCE

Trump. Trump. And more Trump.

Never one to shy away from the spotlight, Trump showed he will be omnipresent at the convention, appearing every night and sure to dominate the proceedings.

He made certain he was highly visible Monday with some preliminary appearances and a spasm of tweets.

Traditionally, the presidential nominee — including Democrat Joe Biden last week — makes a fleeting

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convention appearance or two early in the week but largely stays on the sidelines, building anticipation for the acceptance speech on the final night.

Trump has tossed that conventions' convention aside.

He is expected to appear every night, potentially joining First Lady Melania Trump and Vice President Mike Pence at their prime-time speeches.

To Trump, the answer to nearly any crisis is almost always more Trump.

Some Republican operatives have expressed private worry that America is suffering from Trump fatigue.

But the president is not one to cede the stage. On Monday, he soaked in gauzy homage from supporters. He watched triumphal footage of his presidency and attack ads on Biden. And he inserted himself in the program several times, a likely preview of the next three days.

DIVERSITY COUNTER-PROGRAMMING

Republicans are not known as the party of diversity. But on Monday, the party showcased two of its stars, Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina and the state's former governor, Nikki Haley, to try to tell a different story.

Both argued that the president and his party had done a lot to help minorities across the nation.

"We live in a world that only wants you to believe in the bad news, racially, economically and culturally-polarizing news," said Scott, the party's only African American senator. "We don't give into cancel culture, or the radical — and factually baseless — belief that things are worse today than in the 1860s or the 1960s." He added that Biden would turn the U.S. into a "socialist utopia."

Both Scott and Haley, who is Indian-American, blasted Democrats for taking minority voters for granted and for not doing more to stop what they depicted as lawlessness in American cities amid the protests that have swept the nation after George Floyd, a Black man, died under the knee of a white Minneapolis police officer.

"America is a story that's a work in progress. Now is the time to build on that progress, and make America even freer, fairer and better for everyone," said Haley, who served as Trump's ambassador to the United Nations. "That's why it's tragic to see so much of the Democratic Party turn a blind eye toward riots and rage."

Trump's campaign doesn't expect large gains among minority voters, but it does hope that those same voters are not energized to turn out in great numbers for Biden.

BE AFRAID. BE VERY AFRAID

Trump complained last week that Democrats "held the darkest and angriest and gloomiest convention in American history." But on opening night of their convention, Republicans are doing their share, spreading fear of a Biden victory on Nov. 3.

"Make no mistake: No matter where you live, your family will not be safe in the radical Democrats' America," Mark and Patricia McCloskey, the St. Louis couple who pointed firearms at Black Lives Matter protesters outside their house in June, were to say.

Conservative activist Charlie Kirk warned the convention that a Trump victory was imperative to "ensure that our kids are raised to love America, not taught to hate our beautiful country."

Trump, he added, "is the bodyguard of Western civilization."

Tanya Weinreis, a small business owner, warned of "the terrifying prospect of Joe Biden."

South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott was to argue Democrats are campaigning on a "cultural revolution" for a "fundamentally different America."

The apocalyptic messaging comes as Trump's campaign strategists are aiming to motivate their own base with dire warnings of a Biden win — and to do their best to depress votes for the Democratic ticket from moderate voters who aren't sold on Trump either.

VIRUS IN REMISSION AT RNC

The Republican National Convention is a testament to the campaign Trump wishes he could run.

For nearly six months, the coronavirus pandemic has upended every aspect of American society and scuttled the type of campaign — full of packed rallies and combustible issues — that Trump wanted to steer.

But the lineup and themes of the convention beginning Monday made mentions of the COVID-19 pandemic only in the context of what were portrayed of Trump's successes, with scant attention to the more

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than 175,000 Americans who have died, or the fact that Americans overwhelmingly give the president low marks for his handling of the crisis.

Trump made an appearance at the White House with everyday Americans, without recommended social distancing and with no one wearing a mask.

Even the setting of the program is meant as a rebuke to the virus. While the Democrats held a virtual convention out of respect for social distancing and public health guidelines, the president has insisted on the trappings of a convention, including in-person, live speeches and a crowd of up to 1,000 people on the White House South Lawn to hear his acceptance speech Thursday night.

DONALD TRUMP, EMPATHIZER

The tributes to Trump for his leadership and policies were standard partisan fare. But Republicans also tried to show a side of the president that is rarely on display — namely, empathy.

Empathy is considered one of Biden's signature traits, but Trump wanted Americans to see that side of him, too.

"There's only one person who has empathized with everyday Americans and actually been fighting for them over the past four years, and that is President Donald Trump," said RNC Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel.

Herschel Walker, the former professional football player, countered assertions that Trump is racist. Walker said he would not abide a racist. "Some people don't like his style," he said, adding: "People on opposing teams didn't like it when I ran right over them either. But that's how you get the job done."

The comments appeared to be an attempt to mitigate the effect Trump's rhetoric and behavior have had on his support among moderate voters, suburban women and older voters.

Rep. Jim Jordan, one of Trump's most bombastic backers, testified to Trump's "intensity and his willingness to fight. But what I also appreciate is something most Americans never see — how much he truly cares about people." He spoke of how Trump consoled his family after the death of his nephew.

Kenosha protesters, police clash again after Black man shot

By MIKE HOUSEHOLDER and TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — Anger over the shooting of a Black man by police spilled into the streets of Kenosha for a second night Monday, with police again firing tear gas at hundreds of protesters who defied a curfew, threw bottles and shot fireworks at law enforcement guarding the courthouse.

The southeastern Wisconsin city became the nation's latest flashpoint in a summer of racial unrest after cellphone footage of police shooting Jacob Blake — apparently in the back, as he leaned into his SUV while his three children sat in the vehicle — circulated widely on social media Sunday. The 29-year-old was hospitalized in serious condition.

The shooting drew condemnation from Democratic Gov. Tony Evers, who also called out 125 members of the National Guard on Monday after protesters set cars on fire, smashed windows and clashed with officers in riot gear the previous night.

Police first fired tear gas Monday about 30 minutes after the 8 p.m. curfew took effect to disperse protesters who chanted, "No justice, no peace" as they confronted a line of officers who wore protective gear and stood shoulder-to-shoulder in front of the courthouse entrance. But hundreds of people stuck around, screaming at police and lighting fires, including to a garbage truck near the courthouse.

Tensions had flared anew earlier Monday after a news conference with Kenosha Mayor John Antarmian, originally to be held in a park, was moved inside the city's public safety building. Hundreds of protesters rushed to the building and a door was snapped off its hinges before police in riot gear pepper-sprayed the crowd, which included a photographer from The Associated Press.

Police in the former auto manufacturing center of 100,000 people midway between Milwaukee and Chicago said they were responding to a call about a domestic dispute when they encountered Blake on Sunday. They did not say whether Blake was armed or why police opened fire, they released no details on the dispute, and they did not immediately disclose the race of the three officers at the scene.

The man who said he made the cellphone video, 22-year-old Raysean White, said he saw Blake scuffling with three officers and heard them yell, "Drop the knife! Drop the knife!" before the gunfire erupted. He

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said he didn't see a knife in Blake's hands.

The governor said he has seen no information to suggest Blake had a knife or other weapon, but that the case is still being investigated by the state Justice Department.

The officers were placed on administrative leave, standard practice in a shooting by police. Authorities released no details about the officers and did not immediately respond to requests for their service records.

Evers was quick to condemn the bloodshed, saying that while not all details were known, "what we know for certain is that he is not the first Black man or person to have been shot or injured or mercilessly killed at the hands of individuals in law enforcement in our state or our country."

Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden said the officers "must be held accountable."

"This morning, the nation wakes up yet again with grief and outrage that yet another Black American is a victim of excessive force," he said, just over two months before Election Day in a country already roiled by the recent deaths of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta and Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky. "Those shots pierce the soul of our nation."

Republicans and the police union accused the politicians of rushing to judgment, reflecting the deep partisan divide in Wisconsin, a key presidential battleground state. Wisconsin GOP members also decried the violent protests, echoing the law-and-order theme that President Donald Trump has been using in his reelection campaign.

"As always, the video currently circulating does not capture all the intricacies of a highly dynamic incident," Pete Deates, president of the Kenosha police union, said in a statement. He called the governor's statement "wholly irresponsible."

The shooting happened around 5 p.m. Sunday and was captured from across the street on the video posted online. Kenosha police do not have body cameras but do have body microphones.

In the footage, Blake walks from the sidewalk around the front of his SUV to his driver-side door as officers follow him with their guns pointed and shout at him. As Blake opens the door and leans into the SUV, an officer grabs his shirt from behind and opens fire while Blake has his back turned. Seven shots can be heard, though it isn't clear how many struck Blake or how many officers fired.

White, who said he made the video, said that before the gunfire, he looked out his window and saw six or seven women shouting at each other on the sidewalk. A few moments later, Blake drove up in his SUV and told his son, who was standing nearby, to get in the vehicle, according to White. White said Blake did not say anything to the women.

White said he left the window for a few minutes, and when he came back, saw three officers wrestling with Blake. One punched Blake in the ribs, and another used a stun gun on him, White said. He said Blake got free and started walking away as officers yelled about a knife.

Civil rights attorney Ben Crump, representing Blake's family, said Blake was "simply trying to do the right thing by intervening in a domestic incident."

Police did not immediately confirm either man's account.

Blake's partner, Laquisha Booker, told NBC's Milwaukee affiliate, WTMJ-TV, that the couple's three children were in the back seat of the SUV when police shot him.

"That man just literally grabbed him by his shirt and looked the other way and was just shooting him. With the kids in the back screaming. Screaming," Booker said.

Blake's grandfather, Jacob Blake Sr., was a prominent minister and civil rights leader in the Chicago area who helped organize a march and spoke in support of a comprehensive housing law in Evanston, Illinois, days after the 1968 slaying of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Rachel Noerdlinger, publicist for the National Action Network, told The Associated Press that the Rev. Al Sharpton spoke Monday to Blake's father, who called the civil rights leader for his support. Blake's father will speak at Sharpton's March on Washington commemoration on Friday, Noerdlinger said.

Karissa Lewis, national field director of Movement for Black Lives, a coalition of more than 150 Black-led organizations that make up the broader Black Lives Matter movement, said the shooting was yet another example of why activists have called for defunding police departments.

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"There's no amount of training or reform that can teach a police officer that it's wrong to shoot a Black man in the back seven times while his children watch," Lewis said in a statement first shared with the AP.

Online court records indicate Kenosha County prosecutors charged Blake on July 6 with sexual assault, trespassing and disorderly conduct in connection with domestic abuse. An arrest warrant was issued the following day. The records contain no further details and do not list an attorney for Blake.

It was unclear whether that case had anything to do with the shooting.

Crump, who has also represented the Floyd and Taylor families, said Blake's family has asked that demonstrations in response to his shooting remain peaceful.

"They don't believe violence to be the solution," he said.

For more than 100 years, Kenosha was an auto manufacturing center, but it has now largely been transformed into a bedroom community for Milwaukee and Chicago. The city is about 67% white, 11.5% Black and 17.6% Hispanic, according to 2019 Census data. Both the mayor and police chief are white. About 17% of the population lives in poverty.

Webber reported from Fenton, Michigan. Associated Press reporters Scott Bauer and Todd Richmond in Madison, Wisconsin, Jeff Baenen in Minneapolis, Aaron Morrison in New York City and Mike Householder in Kenosha contributed.

GOP convention showcases rising stars, dark warnings

By STEVE PEOPLES, MICHELLE L. PRICE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A rising generation of Republican stars offered an optimistic view of President Donald Trump's leadership on Monday, but were undermined on the opening night of the GOP's scaled-back convention by speakers issuing dark warnings about the country's future and distorting the president's record, particularly on the pandemic.

As Trump faces pressure to expand his appeal beyond his loyal supporters, Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, the Senate's sole Black Republican, and former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, the daughter of Indian immigrants, sought to cast the GOP as welcoming to Americans of color, despite the party's overwhelmingly white leadership and voting base.

"I was a brown girl in a black and white world," Haley said, noting that she faced discrimination but rejecting the idea that "America is a racist country." She also gave a nod to the Black Lives Matter movement, saying "of course we know that every single Black life is valuable."

But the prime-time convention proceedings, which featured a blend of taped and live speeches, focused largely on dire talk about Joe Biden, Trump's Democratic challenger in the November election. Speakers ominously warned that electing Biden would lead to violence in American cities spilling into the suburbs, a frequent Trump campaign message with racist undertones. One speaker called Trump the "bodyguard of Western civilization."

Scrambling to find a message that sticks, Trump's team tried out multiple themes and tactics over the course of the night. They featured optimism from those who could represent the GOP's future, attempts to characterize Biden as a vessel for socialists and far-left Democrats despite his moderate record, and humanizing stories about the 74-year-old man who sits in the Oval Office.

Trump and a parade of fellow Republicans misrepresented Biden's agenda through the evening, falsely accusing him of proposing to defund police, ban oil fracking, take over health care, open borders and raise taxes on most Americans. They tried to assign positions of the Democratic left to a middle-of-the-road candidate who explicitly rejected many of the party's most liberal positions through the primaries.

The opening night of the four-day convention reflected the rising urgency fueling Trump's push to reshape a presidential contest that he is losing, at least for now, with Election Day just 10 weeks away. It will continue on Tuesday when first lady Melania Trump will deliver remarks from the White House.

Biden and his running mate, California Sen. Kamala Harris, are keeping a relatively low profile this week. In a tweet Monday night, Biden told supporters to "stay focused."

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The emphasis on diversity at Trump's convention was an acknowledgement that he must expand his coalition beyond his largely white base. Polling shows that Black Americans continue to be overwhelmingly negative in their assessments of the president's performance, with his approval hovering around 1 in 10 over the course of his presidency, according to Gallup polling.

One of several African Americans on Monday night's schedule, former football star Herschel Walker, defended the president against those who call him a racist.

"It hurts my soul to hear the terrible names that people call Donald," Walker said. "The worst one is 'racist.' I take it as a personal insult that people would think I would have a 37-year friendship with a racist."

But that emphasis clashed with Trump's instinct to energize his die-hard loyalists.

He featured, for example, Mark and Patricia McCloskey, the St. Louis couple charged with felonies for pointing guns at what prosecutors deemed non-violent Black Lives Matter protesters marching past their home.

"What you saw happen to us could just as easily happen to any of you who are watching from quiet neighborhoods around our country," Patricia McCloskey said, sitting on a couch in a wood-paneled room.

"They've actually charged us with felonies for daring to defend our home," her husband said.

And Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida said Democrats will "disarm you, empty the prisons, lock you in your home, and invite MS-13 to live next door."

Trump's political future may depend on his ability to convince voters that America is on the right track, even as the coronavirus death toll exceeds 177,000 and pandemic-related job losses also reach into the millions

A deep sense of pessimism has settled over the electorate 10 weeks before Election Day. Just 23% of Americans think the country is heading in the right direction, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Trump and his supporters touted his response to the pandemic while standing alongside front-line workers in the White House, although he glossed over the mounting death toll, the most in the world, and his administration's struggle to control the disease.

Organizers also repeatedly sought to cast Trump as an empathetic figure, borrowing a page from the Democrats' convention playbook a week ago that effectively highlighted Biden's personal connection to voters.

Those cheering Trump's leadership on the pandemic included a coronavirus patient, a small business owner from Montana and a nurse practitioner from Virginia.

"As a healthcare professional, I can tell you without hesitation, Donald Trump's quick action and leadership saved thousands of lives during COVID-19," said Amy Ford, a registered nurse who was deployed to New York and Texas to fight the coronavirus.

The first day of the 2020 Republican convention began early in the day as Trump and Vice President Mike Pence were renominated by delegates who gathered in Charlotte, the city that was originally selected to host the convention before the pandemic struck.

Trump paid a surprise visit to the city, where he warned delegates that "the only way they can take this election away from us is if this is a rigged election," raising anew his unsupported concerns about Americans' expected reliance on mail voting during the pandemic. Experts say mail voting has proven remarkably secure.

The fact that the Republicans gathered at all stood in contrast to the Democrats, who held an all-virtual convention last week. The Democratic programming included a well-received roll call video montage featuring diverse officials from across the nation.

The Republicans spoke from the ballroom in Charlotte and were overwhelmingly white before the proceedings moved to Washington for prime-time.

Peoples reported from New York. Associated Press writers Jill Colvin and Darlene Superville contributed from Charlotte, North Carolina.

The Latest: Guilfoyle says she's a 1st-generation American

WASHINGTON (AP) — In her Republican National Convention speech, Kimberly Guilfoyle described herself as a first-generation American, citing her mother's Puerto Rican roots.

But Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory, and its residents are U.S. citizens.

Guilfoyle, a Trump campaign adviser and the girlfriend of Donald Trump Jr., cited her family history on Monday to make the case that she knows how dangerous a socialist agenda would be for the nation.

She says her mother was a special education teacher from Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, while her father, whom she described as "also an immigrant," came to this nation in pursuit of the American dream." Her father is from Ireland.

Now, she says, "I consider it my duty to protect that dream."

The Trump campaign did not immediately respond to a request for clarification.

Kimberly Guilfoyle describes herself as a first-generation American, but also notes that her mother is a special education teacher from Aguadilla, Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory and its residents are U.S. citizens.

Guilfoyle, a Trump campaign adviser, cited her roots to make the case that she knows how dangerous a socialist agenda would be for the nation.

She says, "my father, also an immigrant, came to this nation in pursuit of the American Dream. Now, I consider it my duty to fight to protect that dream."

Guilfoyle advocated for Trump on the opening night of the Republican National Convention.

The Trump campaign did not immediately respond to a request for clarification.

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MONDAY'S REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION:

- Republicans nominate Trump, who questions election integrity
- AP-NORC poll: Trump faces pessimism as GOP convention opens
- Pompeo shattering precedent, sparking fury with RNC speech
- St. Louis couple, in RNC speech, defends show of weapons

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HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott says he is living the American dream and cites "the evolution of the Southern heart" as the reason he, as a Black man, was able to win a primary election against a son of Strom Thurmond.

Scott, the only Black GOP senator, was the closing speaker at the Republican National Convention on Monday. He recounted growing up in a single-parent household and failing out of ninth grade before finding a mentor and becoming a small-business owner.

The senator says any insinuation that America has gone backward is false. He talked about his 2010 primary win against Paul Thurmond, son of the segregationist senator, in a congressional race.

He says, "In an overwhelmingly white district, the voters judged me not on the color of my skin but on the content of my character." He says, "We live in a world that only wants you to believe in the bad news, racially economically and culturally polarizing news."

Scott says America isn't "fully where we want to be." But he says, "I thank God almighty we are not where we used to be."

Donald Trump Jr. is ridiculing Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden with name-calling in a fiery speech to the televised Republican National Convention.

But more broadly, President Donald Trump's eldest son is painting his father's opponent for the presidency as part of a movement aimed at stripping the nation of its most basic freedoms.

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"In the past, both parties believed in the goodness of America," the younger Trump says. "This time, the other party is attacking the very principles on which our nation was founded," citing freedom of thought, speech, religion and the rule of law.

Mocking Biden's past meetings with Chinese leaders as vice president, he calls the Democrat "Beijing Biden" and pokes at his decades in the Senate and previously unsuccessful presidential bids by calling him "The Loch Ness Monster of the swamp."

But the younger Trump offered a full-throated support of his father's campaign theme that protests for racial justice are lawless, violent mobs intent on toppling long-honored past leaders.

He says, "It's almost like this election is shaping up to be church, work and school versus rioting, looting and vandalism."

Kimberly Guilfoyle apparently didn't get the memo when GOP leaders declared that Americans would hear an uplifting message at this week's Republican National Convention.

Guilfoyle, who is Donald Trump Jr.'s girlfriend and a Trump campaign adviser, gave the loudest speech of the night Monday. She shouted at times and warned that Democratic leaders "want to destroy this country."

She says, "They want to steal your liberty, your freedom. They want to control what you see and think, and believe, so they can control how you live!"

At another point, she said of Democrats, "Don't let them step on you. Don't let them destroy your families, your lives and your future. Don't let them suppress future generations because they told you and brainwashed you and fed you lies that you weren't good enough!"

Guilfoyle finished the speech with a broad smile and upraised arms, saying that Trump is the leader who will rebuild the promise of America.

"The best is yet to come!" she declared.

Former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley is recounting how states like her native South Carolina have rebounded from racist violence, saying, "America is not a racist country."

During the first night of Republicans' national convention, the former South Carolina governor said Monday that, "in much of the Democratic Party, it's now fashionable to say that America is racist."

Referencing the 2015 shooting of nine Bible study attendees by a white man at a historic Black church in Charleston, Haley noted that South Carolina didn't erupt into the violence seen after some shootings of Black Americans in other cities.

Haley also took a spin off the Black Lives Matter movement's terminology, saying that the lives of Black police officers shot in the line of duty, Black small-business owners affected during rioting and "Black kids who've been gunned down on the playground – their lives matter, too."

Haley is seen as one of the rising stars in the Republican Party, with a recent move back to South Carolina and a memoir sparking conversation that she may mount a presidential run of her own, possibly as soon as 2024. She says President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence "have my support."

A white St. Louis couple criminally charged for waving guns during a Black Lives Matter protest outside their home says Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden would invite unchecked lawlessness into American suburbs.

Mark and Patty McCloskey on Monday at the Republican National Convention reinforced the theme outlined in President Donald Trump's campaign ads. The Republican is painting his opponent as complicit with rioting and violence that has taken place in some cities in recent months amid racial justice protests, the vast majority of which have been peaceful.

Patty McCloskey says, "They want to abolish the suburbs altogether by ending single-family home zoning." She says the actions "would bring crime, lawlessness and low-quality apartments into thriving suburban neighborhoods."

She says, "These are the policies that are coming to a neighborhood near you,." She adds, "Your family

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will not be safe in the radical Democrats' America."

Parkland father Andrew Pollack says he believes the "safety of your kids depends" on whether President Donald Trump wins a second term.

Pollack's 18-year-old daughter, Meadow, was killed in February 2018 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida. He spoke Monday at the Republican National Convention and credits Trump for forming a school safety commission that issued dozens of recommendations designed to make schools safer.

Pollack blames a culture of leniency that failed to hold the gunman accountable for many transgressions that occurred before the shooting, which killed 17 people. He says gun control laws didn't fail his daughter, but people did.

Pollack blames the school for ignoring those warning signs. He also says "far-left Democrats" implemented a policy designed to reduce school suspensions that he says blames teachers for student failures.

A Black Democratic lawmaker in Georgia's state legislature says he's supporting President Donald Trump because they've made improvements benefiting the Black community.

During the opening night of Republicans' convention Monday, state Rep. Vernon Jones said "all hell broke loose" when he announced his support for Trump. But Jones said he stands by his decision in part because Trump has backed initiatives including increased funding for HBCUs, criminal justice reform and "the most inclusive economy ever."

Jones says, "The Democratic Party does not want Black people to leave the mental plantation" on which they've toiled. He added, "Black voices are becoming more woke and louder than ever."

Earlier, former NFL star Herschel Walker said "it hurts my soul" to hear anyone refer to Trump as a racist, adding it's "a personal insult that people would think I would have a 37-year friendship with a racist."

Ohio congressman Jim Jordan is describing an empathetic moment he shared with President Donald Trump, part of an effort that aides said is aimed at presenting a side of the president many Americans don't see.

At the Republican National Convention on Monday, Jordan recounted a phone conversation with Trump as the Ohioan was en route to visit his grieving family after Jordan's nephew died in a car accident.

Jordan says he asked Trump if he'd like to say hello to the boy's father.

Jordan adds: "For the next five minutes, family and friends sat in complete silence as the president of the United States took time to talk to a dad who was hurting. That's the president I know."

Jordan's story comes a week after nightly vignettes of Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden's connection with people who have lost spouses, children and jobs, part of an empathetic narrative the party built to contrast with Trump.

Republican National Committee Chair Ronna McDaniel is scoffing at Democrats' choice of actor Eva Longoria to host one night of their convention, suggesting they couldn't find a "real housewife."

McDaniel dismissed Longoria, a star of "Desperate Housewives," on Monday as a "famous Hollywood actress who played a housewife on TV." McDaniel said, "I'm actually a real housewife and a mom from Michigan."

It echoed a comment made by Trump last month when he warned "The Suburban Housewives of America" in a tweet that a Joe Biden presidency would "destroy your neighborhood." He warned of an "invasion" and said he had scrapped a program to allow "low income housing" in the suburbs.

But McDaniel herself is an executive with a full-time job running a nationwide political organization with a multimillion-dollar budget.

The leader of the pro-Trump organization Turning Point USA is calling the president "the bodyguard of Western civilization."

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Kirk said at the start of the evening portion of the Republican National Convention on Monday that President Donald Trump had reclaimed the U.S. government "from the rotten cartel of insiders that have been destroying our country."

He says, "We may not have realized it at the time, but this fact is now clear: Trump is the bodyguard of Western civilization."

He added that Trump was "elected to defend and strengthen the American way of life."

President Donald Trump will appear at the opening night of the Republican National Convention in a taped video with six former hostages freed during the Trump administration.

A campaign official said Monday that the former prisoners are among more than a dozen religious or other people whose release the Trump administration helped broker. They are Michael White, Sam Goodwin, Pastor Andrew Brunson, Joshua and Tamara Holt, and Pastor Bryan Nerran.

The convention is also set to feature a speech from the parents of Kayla Mueller, who died while a prisoner of the Islamic State group.

White, a Navy veteran, was imprisoned in Iran. Brunson, an evangelical pastor, was imprisoned in Turkey, Goodwin was held in Syria, the Holts in Venezuela and Nerran in India.

Trump has championed his hostage release program, which was led for years by now-national security adviser Robert O'Brien.

A forklift has damaged a brick walkway at the national monument Fort McHenry, where Republicans were building a stage for Vice President Mike Pence's appearance for the party's national convention.

A national parks advocacy group expressed outrage at the damage, saying stewardship of national monuments should be nonpartisan and professional.

National Park Service spokesperson Stephanie Roulett confirmed the damage in an email Monday. She says the damaged bricks dated from a 1930s restoration at the fort.

Built in 1798, Fort McHenry and the Americans in it successfully defended Baltimore Harbor from the British Navy in the War of 1812. The scene inspired Francis Scott Key to write "The Star-Spangled Banner." The U.S. designates the fort as a national monument and historic shrine.

This month, the Maryland Republican Party asked for and got a special-use permit from the National Park Service to use the fort as a backdrop for Pence's political address Wednesday during the Republican National Convention.

Republicans will have about 8,000 Roman candles, shells, comets and other fireworks ready to shoot into the sky around the Washington Monument on Thursday to celebrate President Donald Trump's acceptance of the presidential nomination.

The National Park Service said Monday that it had approved the fireworks permit to mark the renomination of the president, who has demonstrated a fondness for big pyrotechnics and fetes at national monuments.

The permit details the fireworks that are planned. The parks service said the Republican National Committee would be responsible for all costs of the show as well as for reimbursing the agency for its work overseeing the event on Thursday, the last day of the Republican National Convention.

Mike Litterst, spokesperson for the National Park Service's National Mall, said Monday that the service has received no permit requests so far for protests timed to the convention.

President Donald Trump says without evidence that the coronavirus is fading, a claim that he has been making for months.

In the toss-up state of North Carolina, Trump spoke on a tarmac in Fletcher to several hundred cheering supporters — the majority not wearing masks — after he addressed delegates at the Republican National Convention in Charlotte.

Trump says the nation will "put this horrible incident coming from China behind us and we will have the

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vaccines very soon, but it's going to be fading, and it is starting to fade."

The U.S. coronavirus death toll and case count have been climbing for months. More than 176,000 Americans have now died of the coronavirus, by far more than any other country.

Trump predicted positive third quarter results for the U.S. economy and said next year would be even better.

After brief remarks, Trump drove to Mills River, where he was to tour Flavor First Growers and Packers and speak at a Farmers to Families food box distribution program.

Along the motorcade route to Mills River, some people expressed their disapproval of Trump's presidency. One man, wearing a mask, held a cloth banner that said: "Mr. Trump Spewing Lies. Spreading COVID."

President Donald Trump is accusing Democrats of using voters' concerns about COVID-19 to steal the upcoming presidential election.

Trump told delegates at the Republican National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, on Monday that the only way Democrats can win is "if this is a rigged election."

Until he won, Trump also warned that the 2016 election was going to be rigged.

He says Americans know how to keep themselves safe from the coronavirus and can go to the polls, eliminating the need to mail in their ballots. He said, without providing evidence, that that creates fraud.

Voter fraud has proved exceedingly rare. The Brennan Center for Justice in 2017 ranked the risk of ballot fraud at 0.00004% to 0.0009%, based on studies of past elections.

Trump says other votes will be "harvested" by people going door-to-door to collect ballots that voters have not submitted. In addition, he says some states are not verifying signatures on ballots. He did not provide evidence for those claims.

President Donald Trump is championing the stock market, telling delegates at the Republican National Convention that if he's not reelected, the country will go in a "horrible direction."

He said Monday that the upcoming presidential election is the most important in the history of the United States. He says, "Our country can go in a horrible direction or in an even greater direction."

He says the U.S. economy was humming along at high levels before the coronavirus pandemic. Trump condemned governors who are continuing to keep their states shut down to stem the spread of the virus.

It was a jab at his Democratic opponent, Joe Biden, who has said that further shutdowns are needed to battle the virus.

Liberty: Falwell agreed to resign, then reversed course

By SARAH RANKIN and ELANA SCHOR Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Jerry Falwell Jr.'s future at evangelical Liberty University amid a sex scandal was uncertain Monday, after the school said he had offered his resignation but then reversed course.

Falwell agreed to "resign immediately as President of Liberty University today but then instructed his attorneys to not tender the letter for immediate resignation," according to a university news release distributed late Monday night.

The news of Falwell's possible departure followed the publication of news stories about his wife's sexual encounters with a much younger business partner. They marked the latest in a series of controversies related to the couple to roil the school founded by Falwell's late father, the Rev. Jerry Falwell Sr.

"I call upon the University community and supporters to be in prayer for the University and for all its leadership, past, present and future, as we walk with the Lord through this stormy time of transition," Acting Liberty President Jerry Prevo said in the news release.

Falwell had already been on an indefinite leave of absence since Aug. 7, following an uproar over a photo he posted on social media, and then deleted, showing him with his pants unzipped, stomach exposed and arm high around the waist of his wife's pregnant assistant.

"Since that time, additional matters came to light that made it clear that it would not be in the best inter-

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est of the University for him to return from leave and serve as President," according to the news release, which said the school's board was meeting Tuesday.

On Monday night, attorneys for Falwell and the school were negotiating the details of a possible departure, according to a person close to the school's board of trustees who also spoke on condition of anonymity because the person was not authorized to discuss it.

Falwell did not return a call from the AP seeking comment, but several news outlets quoted Falwell as saying that he has not agreed to leave the post permanently.

The uncertainty developed a day after Falwell issued a statement to The Washington Examiner publicly disclosing that his wife had an extramarital affair and saying the man involved had been threatening to reveal the relationship "to deliberately embarrass my wife, family, and Liberty University unless we agreed to pay him substantial monies."

Falwell said he was seeking mental health counseling after dealing with fallout from the affair, which he said he had no role in.

"Over the course of the last few months this person's behavior has reached a level that we have decided the only way to stop this predatory behavior is to go public," the statement said.

But hours before the school official confirmed Falwell's resignation, Reuters reported that he knew of his wife's affair and participated in some of the liaisons as a voyeur. The news agency based the information on an interview with Giancarlo Granda, whom they identified as the man involved in the affair.

Falwell, an early and ardent supporter of President Donald Trump, started his leave of absence shortly after the photo with his wife's assistant drew widespread criticism and calls for his resignation. Falwell has said the photo was taken in good fun at a costume party during a family vacation.

Critics of the photo said it was evidence of hypocritical behavior from the leader of a university where students must follow a strict code of conduct that includes modest dress and a ban on alcohol consumption and premarital sex.

The possible break with Falwell came amid growing calls for an overhaul of leadership at the school, where alumni recently launched a campaign urging him to step aside.

"I really think the board of directors should have done this a long time ago, and if there's anybody who needs to go next, it needs to be them," said Maina Mwaura, a Liberty graduate who helped organize a June letter from Black alumni criticizing Falwell.

"This school has become the laughingstock of the country," Mwaura added, noting that the board could have prevented the current furor had it acted more quickly to rein in Falwell. The founder's son was given a long leash for poor behavior, Mwaura said, "because he was the rainmaker" who brought in significant financial resources.

Falwell's work to shore up Liberty's finances after taking over as president in 2007 bolstered his already significant goodwill among the school's board members, several of whom were close to his late father. But as the younger Falwell's propensity toward divisive public behavior grew — and particularly after his endorsement of Trump in early 2016 — dissatisfaction built up with what some critics saw as a shift toward being conservative first and Christian second.

Schor reported from New York.

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

'In the bullseye:' Gulf preps for Laura to slam as hurricane

By KEVIN MCGILL and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — As Tropical Storm Marco made landfall, the Gulf Coast turned its attention Monday to Laura, another system following just behind that could grow into a supercharged Category 3 hurricane with winds topping 110 mph (177 kph) and a storm surge that could swamp entire towns.

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Still a tropical storm for now, Laura, which is forecast to become a hurricane on Tuesday, churned just south of Cuba after killing at least 11 people in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, where it knocked out power and caused flooding in the two nations that share the island of Hispaniola. The deaths reportedly included a 10-year-old girl whose home was hit by a tree and a mother and young son who were crushed by a collapsing wall.

Laura was located about 81 miles (128 km) northeast of the western tip of Cuba and 765 miles (1,231 km) southeast of Lake Charles, Louisiana. The storm was moving west northwest at 20 mph (32 kmh) with maximum sustained of 65 mph (104 kmh).

The center of Laura will move away from Cuba and over the southeastern Gulf of Mexico overnight. The storm is then forecast to move over the central and northwestern Gulf of Mexico Tuesday night and Wednesday, and approach the northwestern coast of the Gulf of Mexico Wednesday night.

"Our sights are on Laura now," Gov. John Bel Edwards told a news briefing. "It has the potential to be a major hurricane."

Shrimp trawlers and fishing boats were tied up in a Louisiana harbor ahead of the storms. Red flags warned swimmers away from the pounding surf. Both in-person classes and virtual school sessions were canceled in some districts.

In Port Arthur Texas, Mayor Thurman Bartie warned that unless the forecast changes and pushes Laura's landfall farther east, he will ask the city's more than 54,000 residents to evacuate starting at 6 a.m. Tuesday.

"If you decide to stay, you're staying on your own," Bartie said.

Officials in Houston asked residents to prepare supplies in case they lose power for a few days or need to evacuate homes along the coast.

Across the border in Louisiana's Cameron Parish, residents were preparing as well. Mandatory evacuation orders were issued for much of the parish, where officials said seawater pushed inland by the storm could submerge small coastal communities. In other coastal areas residents moved possessions to higher ground, filled sandbags and in one case, moved pews and other items from a church that has flooded before.

"Right now we're right in the bullseye but that could change," said Jeff Benoit, owner of B&O Kitchen and Grocery, a restaurant and Cajun food store in the southwest Louisiana city of Lake Charles. He was busy Monday, keeping track of what local officials were saying and preparing to shut the small business down if need be.

"It's just a matter of putting up some meats, making sure that's secure, best I can, anyway, and get the heck out of here," Benoit said.

State emergencies were declared in Louisiana and Mississippi, and shelters were being opened with cots set farther apart, among other measures designed to curb coronavirus infections.

Edwards encouraged evacuees to stay with relatives or in hotels. But officials said they made virus-related preparations at state shelters in case they are needed.

As Marco was on its deathbed, the National Hurricane Center issued its first storm watches for Laura.

Forecasters posted a hurricane watch from Port Bolivar, Texas, to Morgan City, Louisiana, a tropical storm watch from Port Bolivar to San Luis Pass, Texas, and from Morgan City to the mouth of the Mississippi, where a collapsing Marco made landfall around 6 p.m. local time.

Heavy rain was expected across portions of the north-central Gulf Coast overnight, according to the National Hurricane Center. In Pensacola, Marco produced a one-day record rainfall of 2.22 inches, breaking a record set in 1961. But forecasters predicted Marco would no longer be a tropical storm by the end of the night.

More workers were being evacuated from production platforms in the Gulf of Mexico in anticipation of Laura's arrival, reducing offshore oil and gas production to less than one-fifth the normal activity. The Interior Department said Monday that 281 platforms had been evacuated by around midday. That's nearly half of those normally with workers on site.

The department estimated that 82% of oil production and 57% of natural gas production in the Gulf has been shut down.

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Much of the region was also put under a storm surge watch. Forecasters warned of storm surge as high as 11 feet in western Louisiana. Add to that 4 to 10 inches of rain expected when Laura arrives starting late Wednesday.

Once Laura moves into the toasty waters of the Gulf of Mexico that serve as fuel for storms, forecasters predict it will rapidly strengthen to hurricane status ahead of an expected Wednesday landfall. The question is just how much.

"I would still give it a pretty decent chance of a Category 3 or 4, not necessarily at landfall, at least during its lifetime in the Gulf," University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy said. Many, but not all, storms in that area weaken just before landfall because of a late influx of dry air, he said.

The punch from back-to-back storms comes just days before the Aug. 29 anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, which breached the levees in New Orleans, flattened much of the Mississippi coast and killed as many as 1,800 people in 2005. Then a little less than a month later came Hurricane Rita which struck southwest Louisiana on Sept. 24 as a Category 3 storm.

On the Louisiana coast at Holly Beach in an area nicknamed the "Cajun Riviera," Eric Monceaux was frantically packing what he could take with him. Hit first by Hurricane Rita in 2005 and again by Ike in 2008, he does not plan to come back if Laura does its worst.

"That would be strike three," he said. "I'm 62, and I gave it two strikes. The third one is 'strike three, you're out' like a baseball game."

Borenstein reported from Kensington, Maryland. Associated Press writers Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge; Jeff Martin in Marietta, Georgia; Rebecca Santana in New Orleans; Jay Reeves in Birmingham, Alabama; Evens Sanon in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and Juan Lozano in Houston contributed to this report.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump, GOP distort on health care, vote fraud

By HOPE YEN, AMANDA SEITZ and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump made a dizzying array of misleading claims about voting fraud and health care Monday as fellow Republicans opened their convention with speeches distorting the agenda of his Democratic rival, Joe Biden.

Trump falsely asserted that he was the one who ensured that people with preexisting medical problems will be covered by health insurance; actually that was Democratic President Barack Obama. Several speakers accused Biden of proposing to defund police, ban fracking, take over health care and open borders — none of that true.

A look at statements at the Republican National Convention:

HEALTH CARE

TRUMP: "We protected your preexisting conditions. Very strongly protected preexisting ... and you don't hear that."

THE FACTS: You don't hear it because it's not true.

People with preexisting medical problems have health insurance protections because of Obama's health care law, which Trump is trying to dismantle.

One of Trump's alternatives to Obama's law — short-term health insurance, already in place — doesn't have to cover preexisting conditions. Another alternative is association health plans, which are oriented to small businesses and sole proprietors and do cover preexisting conditions.

Neither of the two alternatives appears to have made much difference in the market.

Meanwhile, Trump's administration is pressing the Supreme Court for full repeal of the Obama-era law, including provisions that protect people with preexisting conditions from health insurance discrimination.

With "Obamacare" still in place, preexisting conditions continue to be covered by regular individual health insurance plans.

Insurers must take all applicants, regardless of medical history, and charge the same standard premiums to healthy people and those who are in poor health, or have a history of medical problems.

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Before the Affordable Care Act, any insurer could deny coverage — or charge more — to anyone with a preexisting condition who was seeking to buy an individual policy.

Democratic attacks on Republican efforts to repeal the health law and weaken preexisting condition protections proved successful in the 2018 midterms, when Democrats won back control of the House.

VOTING FRAUD

TRUMP, on mail-in voting: "Absentee — like in Florida — absentee is good. But other than that, they're very, very bad."

THE FACTS: He's making a false distinction. Mail-in ballots are cast in the same way as absentee mail ballots, with the same level of scrutiny such as signature verification in many states.

In more than 30 states and the District of Columbia, voters have a right to "no excuse" absentee voting. That means they can use mail-in ballots for any reason, regardless of whether a person is out of town or working.

In Florida, the Legislature in 2016 voted to change the wording of such balloting from "absentee" to "vote-by-mail" to make clear a voter can cast such ballots if they wish. So there is no "absentee" voting in that state, as Trump alludes to.

More broadly, voter fraud has proved exceedingly rare. The Brennan Center for Justice in 2017 ranked the risk of ballot fraud at 0.00004% to 0.0009%, based on studies of past elections.

Only nine states currently have plans for "universal" mail-in voting, where ballots are sent automatically to registered voters. Five of those states relied on mail-in ballots even before the coronavirus pandemic raised concerns about voting in person.

TRUMP, on the November vote count and Democrats: "We have to be very, very careful and this time they are trying to do it with the whole post office scam. They will blame it on the post office. You can see them setting it up."

THE FACTS: No postal scam has emerged from the Democrats. Instead Trump has given credence to suspicions that he wants to suppress mail-in voting to help his chances in the election.

He's said as much. In an interview this month, he admitted he's trying to starve the U.S. Postal Service of money in order to make it harder to process an expected surge of mail-in ballots, which he worries could cost him the election.

Trump explicitly noted funding provisions that Democrats are seeking in a relief package that has stalled on Capitol Hill. Without the additional money, he said, the Postal Service won't have the resources to handle a flood of ballots from voters who are seeking to avoid polling places during the coronavirus pandemic.

"If we don't make a deal, that means they don't get the money," Trump told Fox Business Network. "That means they can't have universal mail-in voting; they just can't have it."

Over the weekend, the House approved legislation that would reverse recent changes in postal operations and send \$25 billion to shore up the agency before the November election, but the White House has said Trump would veto it.

During a House hearing, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy acknowledged that Trump's repeated attacks on mail-in ballots are "not helpful," but he denied that recent cuts were linked to the election.

TRUMP, on defective ballots in an election: "What does defective mean? It means fraud."

THE FACTS: No, defective ballots do not equate to fraud. The overwhelming majority aren't.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, the vast majority of ballots are disqualified because they arrive late, a particular worry this year because of recent U.S. Postal Service delays and an expected surge in mail-in voting during the coronavirus pandemic.

Ballots also are deemed defective if there is a missing signature — common with newer voters unfamiliar with the process — or it doesn't match what's on file. In addition, some states require absentee voters to get a witness or notary to sign their ballots.

"None of those are fraud," said Wendy Weiser, director of Brennan's democracy program at NYU School of Law. When suspected cases are investigated for potential fraud, studies have borne out the main reason

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for defects is voter mistake, she said.

Defective ballots also disproportionately impact voters of color, and recent lawsuits have successfully challenged some requirements as posing health risks or disenfranchising voters. Earlier this year, for instance, a federal judge ruled that a South Carolina requirement to have witnesses to mail-in ballots could put voters' health at risk and suspended it for the June primary. Other states including Minnesota and Rhode Island have also suspended that requirement due to the pandemic.

While the rates of defective ballots are unacceptable, "people should still feel confident in their votes, and they should follow-up," Weiser said. "People should know these problems are being fought over and hopefully many will be mitigated and addressed before November."

POLICE

REP. STEVE SCALISE of Louisiana on the police: "Joe Biden has embraced the left's insane mission to defund them."

THE FACTS: No, Biden has explicitly rejected the call by some on the left to defund the police. He has proposed more money for police, conditioned on improvements in their practices.

Biden's criminal justice agenda, released long before the protests over racial injustice, proposes more federal money for "training that is needed to avert tragic, unjustifiable deaths" and hiring more officers to ensure that departments are racially and ethnically reflective of the populations they serve.

Specifically, he calls for a \$300 million infusion into federal community policing grant programs. That's more money, not less.

BIDEN AGENDA

NIKKI HALEY, former ambassador to the United Nations, on the Democrats: "They want a government takeover of health care. They want to ban fracking and kill millions of jobs."

REP. JIM JORDAN of Ohio on the Democratic agenda: "Defund the police, defund border patrol and defund our military."

RONNA McDANIEL, chairwoman of the Republican National Committee: "You deserve to know that they would ban fracking and eliminate fossil fuels, which would kill millions of good-paying jobs and raise the cost of driving our cars and heating our homes. You deserve to know that they want a complete government takeover of our health care system, so moms like me won't be able to take our kids to the same pediatrician they've been seeing for years."

THE FACTS: Those aren't Biden's positions. A number of Republican speakers seized on proposals of the Democratic left, in some cases distorting those positions, and assigned them to Biden, who doesn't share those views.

He does not favor a government takeover of health care; instead he proposes building on "Obamacare," which preserves the private insurance market while expanding Medicaid.

He also did not endorse proposals to cease border enforcement or even to decriminalize illegal crossings.

Biden supports banning only new oil and gas permits, fracking included, on federal land. But most U.S. production is on private land — the U.S. Bureau of Land Management says production on federal land accounted for less than 10% of oil and gas in 2018.

In a March 15 primary debate, Biden misstated his energy policy, suggesting he would allow no new fracking. His campaign quickly corrected the record. Biden has otherwise been consistent on his middle-of-the-road position, going so far as to tell an anti-fracking activist that he "ought to vote for somebody else" if he wanted an immediate fracking ban.

PANDEMIC

DONALD TRUMP JR. on the coronavirus response: "The president quickly took action and shut down travel from China."

THE FACTS: He didn't shut down travel from China. He restricted it. Dozens of countries took similar

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steps to control travel from hot spots before or around the same time the U.S. did.

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

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

Dr. Anne Schuchat, the No. 2 official at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, also told The Associated Press that the federal government was slow to understand how much coronavirus was spreading from Europe, which helped drive the acceleration of outbreaks across the U.S. in late February. Trump didn't announce travel restrictions for many European countries until mid-March.

DONALD TRUMP JR.: "The president acted quickly and ensured ventilators got to hospitals that needed them most. He delivered PP&E to our brave front-line workers."

THE FACTS: No, not all hospitals and front-line workers got the ventilators and personal protective equipment they needed. States were left scrambling in the early weeks of the pandemic, while Trump scoffed at some of their requests, calling them inflated.

New York acquired a shipment of 1,000 ventilators from the Chinese government and 140 from the state of Oregon. Massachusetts borrowed the New England Patriots' jet to pick up 1 million masks from China.

While California Gov. Gavin Newsom was tracking down 10,000 ventilators for his state, he got 170 broken ones from the national stockpile. And a federal shipment of 300,000 N95 masks that Illinois was supposed to receive in March turned out to be less-effective surgical masks instead, Gov. J.B. Pritzker said at the time.

ECONOMY

DONALD TRUMP JR, on his father: "So if you're looking for hope, look to the man who did what the failed Obama-Biden administration never could do and built the greatest economy our country has ever seen."

THE FACTS: That's false. The economy was healthy before the coronavirus pandemic hit but not the best in U.S. history.

Economic gains largely followed along the lines of an expansion that started more than a decade ago under Obama. And while posting great job and stock market numbers, Trump never managed to achieve the rates of economic growth he promised in the 2016 campaign, nor growth rates seen in the past.

The Obama-Trump years yielded the longest economic expansion in U.S. history, but not the greatest,

McDANIEL: "You deserve to know about their plans to raise taxes on 82% of Americans."

THE FACTS: That's not the plan. Biden says he won't raise taxes on anyone making under \$400,000.

An analysis of Biden's tax plan by the 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.

TRUMP JR. on his father: "He's pledged to repeal the Trump tax cuts, which were the biggest in our country."

THE FACTS: Trump's tax cuts are nowhere close to the biggest in U.S. history.

It's a \$1.5 trillion tax cut over 10 years. As a share of the total economy, a tax cut of that size ranks 12th, according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. President Ronald Reagan's 1981 cut is the biggest, followed by the 1945 rollback of taxes that financed World War II.

Post-Reagan tax cuts also stand among the historically significant: President George W. Bush's cuts in the early 2000s and Obama's renewal of them a decade later.

Biden has pledged to raise taxes on wealthy people and not the middle class and working class.

Seitz reported from Chicago. Associated Press writers Matthew Daly and Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar in Washington and Bill Barrow in Atlanta contributed to this report.

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

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Kenosha delayed body cameras for years before Blake shooting

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — City and law enforcement leaders in Kenosha, Wisconsin, unanimously endorsed the use of body cameras in 2017 as a way to increase police accountability and collect evidence at scenes of domestic violence, among other benefits.

But since then, they have balked at the price tag, raised policy concerns and put off implementation. The delays meant that officers who were on the scene of Sunday's shooting of Jacob Blake while responding to a domestic call were not equipped with technology that could give their perspective on an incident that has roiled the nation.

Instead, the public has only seen video captured by a neighbor that shows an officer shooting an unarmed Blake, 29, in the back several times as the Black man tried to get into a vehicle with his three children. It doesn't show what happened before or after the shooting like body camera footage would.

The shooting has prompted civil unrest in Kenosha, a city of 100,000 people between Milwaukee and Chicago. But it also shined a light on Kenosha's delays in equipping its roughly 200 police officers with body-worn cameras, which has made the city fall behind many of its neighbors and similar-sized peers.

"This is a tragedy. But at least some good could come from this if this is finally the incident where Kenosha says, 'we've got to get body cameras on these cops right away,'" said Kevin Mathewson, a former member of the common council.

Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian confirmed Monday that current plans call for the city to buy them in 2022 — more than five years after he endorsed their adoption. Kenosha officers do have cameras in their squad cars, but it's unclear whether any captured the shooting.

Mathewson pushed the city to buy cameras during his tenure on the council from 2012 to 2017, saying he saw them as a tool to remove bad police officers from the department after a series of troubling use-of-force and misconduct incidents. Body cameras became particularly popular nationwide as a way to improve policing after the 2014 fatal shooting of Michael Brown, a Black 18-year-old, by a white officer in Ferguson, Missouri.

Mathewson recalled proposing a budget amendment to buy the equipment in early 2017 and hitting resistance from the mayor, police chief and other council members, who argued that would be unwise without clear state regulations governing their use.

By then, Kenosha had already fallen behind most other midsized police departments nationwide that were moving forward with body camera programs. By 2016, 56% of departments with between 100 and 250 officers had acquired them, and most had some officers wearing them, according to a 2018 U.S. Department of Justice study. Their use is believed to have increased substantially since then, although funding challenges remain.

Instead of proving the money immediately, Kenosha's council passed a unanimous resolution in March 2017 recommending their use, listing their numerous benefits and noting that the police chief, the district attorney and the mayor were in favor.

But the resolution said that their adoption in Kenosha hinged on the state providing guidance to departments on usage, storage, public records and privacy issues.

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Gov. Tony Evers signed a law in February outlining body camera regulations for police departments. The law requires footage to be retained for 120 days at minimum — longer in certain cases — and says recordings are generally subject to Wisconsin's open records law.

Kenosha initially planned to buy the cameras this year, but funding shortfalls and technological concerns prompted the city to push that back to 2022, said Rocco LaMacchia, chairman of the council's public safety committee.

"We have moved it back so many times," he said. "I got a feeling this is going to move up on the ladder really fast because of what's going on around the United States right now. Body cameras are a necessity. There's no doubt about it."

Of the Blake shooting, he said, "The body camera footage on this one would have told right from wrong right away."

The city's current plans call for purchasing 175 Axon body cameras from Taser International and a five-year evidence storage and maintenance plan in 2022. After the first year, the city would incur an estimated \$145,000 cost annually for using Evidence.com to store video evidence.

Michael Bell Sr. has been advocating for police reforms since officers in Kenosha fatally shot his 21-year-old son, Michael Bell Jr., in 2004. He has had success at the state level, helping in 2014 to push through a law requiring outside investigation when people die in the hands of law enforcement. But the retired U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel said officials in Kenosha have consistently failed to act on years of calls for police body cameras, which he likened to the "black box" on an airplane.

"I feel that there has been no movement," he said. "Every time they put (body camera funding) into the budget it's been kicked downstream."

But the ongoing storage costs are significant as cities face budget crises during the coronavirus pandemic and many critics push for cuts to police departments, said Steven Casstevens, president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Casstevens, the police chief in Buffalo Grove, Illinois, said he recently asked Vice President Mike Pence to make federal funding available for those costs, which many departments can't afford. Until now, grants have mostly covered the upfront costs of buying the equipment, he said.

"There's a demand to defund the police. Yet the flip side is that people are demanding body cameras," he said. "You can't have it both ways."

He said the cameras are helpful but have not turned out to be the game-changing reform that many had hoped. One reason: Some officers fail to activate their cameras during life-and-death encounters, he said.

An increasing number of studies also suggest the cameras do not change how often officers use force.

In Milwaukee, officers used slightly less force after starting to wear cameras at first but then returned quickly to normal levels, said Daniel Lawrence, a researcher at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C., who studied their adoption.

Complaints against officers dropped significantly, but it's unclear whether that's due to improved interactions, citizens' fears of filing false claims or both, he said.

Body camera footage of the Blake shooting would have been important, but video from squad cars or other sources may be able to provide key perspectives for investigators, Lawrence said.

"The cameras themselves can provide a lot of insight into an officer's mindset before an after a shooting, but they may not be the crucial piece of evidence that makes or breaks a case," he said.

AP reporter Jake Bleiberg contributed from Dallas.

Redwoods survive wildfire at California's oldest state park

By MARTHA MENDOZA Associated Press

BOULDER CREEK, Calif. (AP) — When a massive wildfire swept through California's oldest state park last week it was feared many trees in a grove of old-growth redwoods, some of them 2,000 years old and among the tallest living things on Earth, may finally have succumbed.

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But an Associated Press reporter and photographer hiked the renowned Redwood Trail at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on Monday and confirmed most of the ancient redwoods had withstood the blaze. Among the survivors is one dubbed Mother of the Forest.

"That is such good news, I can't tell you how much that gives me peace of mind," said Laura McLendon, conservation director for the Sempervirens Fund, an environmental group dedicated to the protection of redwoods and their habitats.

Redwood forests are meant to burn, she said, so reports earlier this week that the state park was "gone" were misleading.

The historic park headquarters is gone, as are many small buildings and campground infrastructure that went up in flames as fire swept through the park about 45 miles (72 kilometers) south of San Francisco.

"But the forest is not gone," McLendon said. "It will regrow. Every old growth redwood I've ever seen, in Big Basin and other parks, has fire scars on them. They've been through multiple fires, possibly worse than this."

When forest fires, windstorms and lightning hit redwood trees, those that don't topple can resprout. Mother of the Forest, for example, used to be 329 feet tall (100 meters), the tallest tree in the park. After the top broke off in a storm, a new trunk sprouted where the old growth had been.

Trees that fall feed the forest floor, and become nurse trees from which new redwoods grow. Forest critters, from banana slugs to insects, thrive under logs.

On Monday, Steller's jays searched for insects around the park's partially burned outdoor amphitheater and woodpeckers could be heard hammering on trees. Occasionally a thundering crash echoed through the valley as large branches or burning trees fell.

When Big Basin opened in 1902 it marked the genesis of redwood conservation. The park now receives about 250,000 visitors a year from around the world, and millions have walked the Redwood Trail.

The park only recently reopened after COVID-19 related closures and now is closed because of the fire. The road in is blocked by several large trees that fell across it, some waist-high, some still on fire.

While there is a great deal of work to be done rebuilding campgrounds, clearing trails and managing damaged madrones, oaks and firs, Big Basin will recover, McLendon said.

"The forest, in some ways, is resetting," she said.

State Parks District Superintendent Chris Spohrer said he was pleased to know the redwoods had survived. He said an assessment team had only been able to check buildings so far, and that he hopes they can inspect the trees in the coming days.

"The reason those trees are so old is because they are really resilient," he said.

Postal leader defends changes, denies 'sabotaging' election

By MATTHEW DALY and ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Postmaster General Louis DeJoy told lawmakers Monday that he has warned allies of President Donald Trump that the president's repeated attacks on the legitimacy of mail-in ballots are "not helpful," but denied that recent changes at the Postal Service are linked to the November elections.

DeJoy, who has come under intense scrutiny over sweeping policy changes at the U.S. Postal Service, faced new questions on mounting problems at the agency as it prepares to deliver record numbers of ballots this fall as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

During an exchange with Rep. Gerald Connolly, D-Va., DeJoy first denied having contacted the president's campaign team, but later backtracked, saying he has "spoken to people that are friends of mine that are associated with the campaign" over Trump's baseless claims that mail voting will lead to fraud.

"I have put word around to different people that this is not helpful," DeJoy said during a six-hour House Oversight Committee hearing.

DeJoy faced tense questions from lawmakers over mail delivery delays seen since he took the helm in mid-June. It was his second appearance before Congress in four days.

"I am not engaged in sabotaging the election," DeJoy said, adding that, like Trump, he personally plans

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to vote by mail.

The hearing quickly became a debate over the delivery disruptions being reported nationwide. Democrats said the changes under DeJoy's watch are causing widespread delays, but Republicans dismissed the worries as unfounded and part of a Democratic "conspiracy" against Trump.

The pandemic has pushed the Postal Service into a central role in the 2020 elections, with tens of millions of people expected to vote by mail rather than in-person. At the same time, Trump has acknowledged he is withholding emergency aid from the service to make it harder to process mail-in ballots, as his election campaign legally challenges mail voting procedures in key states.

Trump again raised the prospect of a "rigged election" Monday as he spoke about mail-in voting at the Republican National Convention. Experts say mail voting has proven remarkably secure.

DeJoy, a former supply-chain CEO and a major donor to Trump and the GOP, set in motion a series of operational changes this summer that delayed mail across the country. DeJoy told the House panel that election mail is his "No. 1 priority," adding that he will authorize expanded use of overtime, extra truck trips and other measures in the weeks before the election to ensure on-time delivery of ballots.

He disputed reports that he has eliminated overtime for postal workers and said a Postal Service document outlining overtime restrictions was written by a mid-level manager. Last week, DeJoy said he was halting some of his operational changes "to avoid even the appearance of impact on election mail."

Still, DeJoy vehemently refused to restore decommissioned mail-sorting machines and blue collection boxes, saying they are not needed. He also said he would continue policies limiting when mail can go out as well as a halting of late delivery trips, which postal workers have said contributes to delays.

"What the heck are you doing?" Rep. Stephen Lynch, D-Mass. asked DeJoy.

"Either through gross incompetence, you have ended the 240-year history of delivering the mail reliably on time. Or ... you're doing this on purpose and deliberately dismantling this once proud tradition," Lynch said.

DeJoy has downplayed delivery delays and said the agency is fully capable of processing this year's mail-in ballots. He urged voters to request mail-in ballots at least 15 days before the Nov. 3 election and mail them back at least seven days prior to Election Day.

Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., chair of the Oversight committee, accused DeJoy of withholding information from Congress and threatened to subpoena the postmaster general for additional records. On Saturday, Maloney's committee released internal Postal Service documents detailing delays in a range of mail services, including first-class and Priority Mail.

The oversight hearing came two days after the House approved legislation to reverse changes at the Postal Service and send \$25 billion to shore up the agency ahead of the November election. Twenty-six House Republicans broke with Trump to back the House bill, which passed 257-150, but there was little sign of bipartisanship at Monday's hearing.

At one point, Rep. Jim Cooper, D-Tenn., questioned DeJoy's role as a fundraiser for Trump's 2016 election, leading to a heated exchange. Cooper pointedly reminded DeJoy that it's a felony to delay delivery of the mail.

DeJoy said he's in "full compliance" with ethics rules and said he resented the line of questions.

Rep. John Sarbanes, D-Md., told DeJoy flatly that he does not trust him.

Republicans took the opposite approach, repeatedly apologizing to DeJoy for the harsh questions and dismissing the Democrats' inquiries about mail delivery delays as a conspiracy theory.

"You're getting a berating up here," Rep. Ralph Norman, R-S.C., told DeJoy.

At one point Rep. Katie Porter, D-Calif., fired off a round of quick, seemingly basic questions — How much does it cost to mail a postcard? How many people voted by mail in the last election? -- only to find DeJoy did not know the answers.

"I'm concerned about your understanding of this agency," she said.

DeJoy said many of the operational changes, such as removal of sorting machines, were underway before he arrived. When Porter and other Democrats pressed him on who ordered the changes, DeJoy

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did not provide an answer.

Rep. Mike Quigley, D-Ill., compared the hearing to “punching Jell-O” and said DeJoy’s goal was to “avoid at all cost answering a question directly.”

It’s unclear where lawmakers go from here. The House’s postal bill is certain to stall in the GOP-held Senate and faces a veto threat from the White House. Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said Trump would consider additional money only as part of a broader coronavirus relief package.

Associated Press writer Lisa Mascaro contributed to this story. Izaguirre reported from Charleston, W.Va.

The Associated Press produced this coverage with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Thousands allowed to bypass environmental rules in pandemic

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, CATHY BUSSEWITZ, JOHN FLESHER, MATTHEW BROWN and MICHAEL CASEY
Associated Press

Thousands of oil and gas operations, government facilities and other sites won permission to stop monitoring for hazardous emissions or otherwise bypass rules intended to protect health and the environment because of the coronavirus outbreak, The Associated Press has found.

The result: approval for less environmental monitoring at some Texas refineries and at an army depot dismantling warheads armed with nerve gas in Kentucky, manure piling up and the mass disposal of livestock carcasses at farms in Iowa and Minnesota, and other risks to communities as governments eased enforcement over smokestacks, medical waste shipments, sewage plants, oilfields and chemical plants.

The Trump administration paved the way for the reduced monitoring on March 26 after being pressured by the oil and gas industry, which said lockdowns and social distancing during the pandemic made it difficult to comply with anti-pollution rules. States are responsible for much of the oversight of federal environmental laws, and many followed with leniency policies of their own.

AP’s two-month review found that waivers were granted in more than 3,000 cases, representing the overwhelming majority of requests citing the outbreak. Hundreds of requests were approved for oil and gas companies. AP reached out to all 50 states citing open-records laws; all but one, New York, provided at least partial information, reporting the data in differing ways and with varying level of detail.

Almost all those requesting waivers told regulators they did so to minimize risks for workers and the public during a pandemic — although a handful reported they were trying to cut costs.

The Environmental Protection Agency says the waivers do not authorize recipients to exceed pollution limits. Regulators will continue pursuing those who “did not act responsibly under the circumstances,” EPA spokesman James Hewitt said in an email.

But environmentalists and public health experts say it may be impossible to fully determine the impact of the country’s first extended, national environmental enforcement clemency because monitoring oversight was relaxed. “The harm from this policy is already done,” said Cynthia Giles, EPA’s former assistant administrator under the Obama administration.

EPA has said it will end the COVID enforcement clemency this month.

Refinery giant Marathon Petroleum, already struggling financially before the pandemic, was one of the most aggressive in seeking to dial back its environmental monitoring. On the same day EPA announced its new policy, the Ohio-based company asked Indiana officials for relief from its leak detection, groundwater sampling, spill prevention, emissions testing and hazardous waste responsibilities at its facilities statewide. Indiana declined to issue a comprehensive waiver but agreed to consider individual requests.

“We believe that by taking these measures, we can do our part to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus,” Tim Peterkoski, environmental auditing and processes manager for Marathon Petroleum, told the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

Marathon also pushed for and was granted permission to skip environmental tests at many of its refineries and gas stations in California, Michigan, North Dakota and Texas.

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Spokesman Jamal Kheiry said Marathon sought broad regulatory relief early in the pandemic, when it was uncertain how long lockdowns would last or how its operations would be affected. But the company continued emissions monitoring and other activities and usually met deadlines, he said.

Penny Aucoin, a resident of New Mexico's oil-rich Permian Basin, said since the pandemic, she and her husband have spent days begging regulators to investigate surges of noxious gas or hisses that they feared could signal a dangerous leak from one of the many oil and gas companies operating near their mobile home.

"There's nobody watching," Aucoin said. "A lot of stuff is going wrong. And there's nobody to fix it."

Maddy Hayden, New Mexico's environmental spokesperson, said her agency stopped in-person investigations of citizen air-quality complaints from March to May to protect staff and the public but stood ready to respond to emergencies.

Almost every state reported fielding requests from industries and local governments to cut back on compliance. Many were for activities like delaying in-person training or submitting records by email rather than paper. Others, however, were requests for temporary exemptions or extensions on monitoring and repairs to stop the flow of harmful soot, toxic compounds, disease-carrying contaminants or heavy metals, AP found.

Regulators, for example, waived in-person inspections at parts of a former nuclear test site in Nevada, switching to drive-by checks.

North Carolina allowed Chemours Co., which is cleaning up dangerous PFAS industrial compounds in drinking water, to pause sampling of residential wells because it would require entering elderly residents' homes.

Saint-Gobain, whose New Hampshire plant has been linked by the state to water contaminated with PFAS chemicals, has requested delaying smokestack upgrades that would address the problem. The company says the delays are necessary partly due to problems the company's suppliers and contractors have faced because of the coronavirus.

State Rep. Rosemarie Rung, a Democrat who uses bottled water due to the PFAS contamination, said the company was "just dragging their feet."

The AP's findings run counter to statements in late June by Susan Bodine, EPA's assistant administrator for enforcement, who told lawmakers the pandemic was not causing "a significant impact on routine compliance, monitoring and reporting" and that industry wasn't widely seeking relief from monitoring.

A separate analysis of EPA enforcement data shows 40% fewer tests of smokestacks were conducted in March and April compared with the same period last year, according to the Environmental Data and Governance Initiative, a network of academics and non-profits.

Hewitt, the EPA spokesman, said the agency did not know why there were fewer tests but pointed to the plunge in economic activity accompanying the pandemic, and said closed facilities would have been unable to test smokestacks.

Oil and gas companies received a green light to skip dozens of scheduled tests and inspections critical for ensuring safe operations, such as temporarily halting or delaying tests for leaks or checking on tank seals, flare stacks, emissions monitoring systems or engine performance, which could raise the risk of explosions.

Taken together, the missed inspections for leaks could add hundreds or thousands of tons of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, and could be making refinery work more dangerous, said Coyne Gibson, a former oil and gas engineer and a member of the Big Bend Conservation Alliance in Texas.

"The whole point of leak detection is to avoid people being harmed from a leak of toxic material," said Victor Flatt, environmental law professor at the University of Houston. "If you suspend leak detection, you don't even know if it's happening."

Monitoring and other pollution regulations often are depicted as legally mandated paperwork requirements, said Philip J. Landrigan, a biology professor and director of the Program for Global Public Health and the Common Good at Boston College. But air pollution alone increases risks of heart disease, stroke, lung disease and premature births, and when environmental standards are not held to, "as surely as night

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follows day there are going to be an increased number of deaths from those causes," Landrigan said.

EPA's policy was "primarily related to record keeping, training and flexibility in the timing of routine inspections where there may have been limited personnel or capabilities due to COVID-19," said Frank Macchiarola, senior vice president at The American Petroleum Institute, which pushed for the policy. He maintained the industry's pollution control equipment continues to operate.

In North Dakota, regulators granted Oklahoma-based ONEOK's request to bypass groundwater sampling at its natural gas liquids processing plant in Garden Creek, where regulators said at least 837,000 gallons of natural gas liquids have spilled from a leak since 2015.

ONEOK skipped sampling because of safety concerns about third-party contractors traveling during the pandemic, and the company resumed sampling in June, spokesman Brad Borrer said.

Some states were generous with exemptions. Arkansas granted a blanket, months-long waiver to oil and gas companies for safety testing of temporarily abandoned wells and other activities.

Alaska authorized delayed inspections at dozens of massive tanks used to store petroleum, and let companies defer drills designed to ensure they can quickly respond to major oil spills. It also said the state would take no action against companies for not complying with some air pollution regulations in instances related to COVID-19.

In Wyoming, regulators gave breaks on air emissions rules in about 300 cases, mostly for oil and gas companies, including ExxonMobil and Sinclair.

It wasn't just huge industry that requested the exemptions.

As supply chains broke down at the start of the outbreak, Minnesota granted more than 90 waivers on how many animals could be stuffed into feedlots, potentially raising risks of water contamination from manure. Farms and landfills in Iowa received variances on animal disposal regulations to allow for the mass burial and composting of livestock.

Michigan approved or was reviewing requests from several cities to delay replacing lead water pipes or testing for lead, spurred in some instances by the Flint water crisis.

Eric Schaeffer, a former director of EPA's office of civil enforcement under President George W. Bush, dismissed assurances from governments that reducing monitoring during the outbreak wouldn't lead to a surge in pollutants.

"It's like saying we're going to remove the radar guns and remove speedometers, but you still have to comply with the speed limit," said Schaeffer, now head of the Environmental Integrity Project advocacy group. "That doesn't make sense."

Knickmeyer reported from Oklahoma City, Bussewitz from New York City, Flesher from Traverse City, Michigan, Brown from Billings, Montana, and Casey from Boston.

Zoom glitches, briefly grinding US schools to a halt

By MAE ANDERSON AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Teachers and parents got a brief glimpse of a new kind of pandemic-era nightmare Monday when Zoom — the video-conferencing service that powers everything from distance learning to business meetings to casual, socially distant get-togethers — abruptly went dead.

For roughly two-and-a-half hours Monday morning, many users were unable to load the Zoom website; others could neither host nor join scheduled meetings. Zoom fixed the problem by 11:30 a.m. ET, the company reported on its status page.

The timing was less than ideal, since many schools across the U.S. were just starting online instruction after a summer surge in the coronavirus pandemic scotched many plans to reopen classes with students present in the flesh.

"Today was horrible," said Jacqueline Donovan, a professor at Broward College in Broward County, Florida. Her 12-year-old daughter Michaela and 14-year-old son Jayden were trying to log onto Zoom classes, but unable to.

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"They were both panic stricken and anxious," she said. Meanwhile, Donovan herself was trying to hold her first class, an introduction to business, and getting frantic emails from her own students. Her class was eventually canceled.

"You become so accustomed to the software working, then (when it doesn't) you realize how dependent you are on the software and it's a little scary," she said.

Zoom did not disclose the cause of the problem, which appeared to hit both coasts of the U.S. especially hard. Its shares fell less than 3% during regular trading.

Grade schools, high schools and universities are relying on Zoom and competing technologies like Microsoft Teams to teach remotely and reduce the chance of infection during the pandemic. Schools began opening over the past month with a wide array of in-person, hybrid and online schooling plans. In 2019, during a normal school year, about 80 percent of elementary and secondary schools had opened by the last week of August, according to Pew Research.

Internet services from Facebook to Amazon go down all the time, but few have become so crucial to companies, government and schools that their absence can spur brief moments of panic. These days, when Zoom goes down, it's more like a power outage or phones going dead, making it a modern sort of utility for a nation still enduring the ravages of COVID-19.

Zoom and similar services "have been elevated to what we call 'mission critical applications,'" said technology analyst Tim Bajarin, president of consultancy Creative Strategies. "They're no longer nice to have, they're now must have."

While Zoom has built up server farms and spent millions investing in its software, it was still a relatively nascent company when the coronavirus hit in March, Bajarin said. "The bottom line is, software glitches happen."

Bryan Grant in Crystal Lake, Illinois, had just corralled his 3 1/2-year old twins and 5-year-old son in front of computers to start their first days at pre-school and kindergarten. Then came an urgent message from their school, 30 minutes ahead of classes, to use Google instead.

He rushed to install the software and sign in, but the classes descended into semi chaos as the children in the kindergarten class unmuted themselves, something they can't do on Zoom. His five-year-old was nearly in tears as he tried to follow the rules and raise his hand for a question, but was talked over by other kids who unmuted themselves.

"It was very difficult to change on the fly like this, to something we're very familiar with on Zoom, to the other Google product," he said. "We were prepared for one thing and this completely did a 180 on all of us, it was pretty difficult today."

Grant, who also uses Zoom for his job as a financial aid specialist, thinks the country may be almost too dependent on one product.

"It actually does really show you how much we are all depending on Zoom," he said. "It should be considered essential. Every effort needs to be made to make sure this is available for everyone."

Darlene DiFrischia in Greeley, Colorado, figured her daughter's first day of kindergarten on a laptop was going to be challenging no matter what. But the Zoom outage made it worse. Their first meeting of the day was canceled, but eventually they made it online. "The teacher was great, she found a way to make it work," she said.

DiFrischia said she fought to keep her spirits up for her daughter, as she expects she'll have to for quite some time.

"It's their kindergarten year — I can't be grumpy about it because it has to be magical, so we have to fake it," DiFrischia said. "This whole year to me is just going to be hilarious. It has to be, or I'll cry every day."

Associated Press Writer Andrew Dalton in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Local virus cases in Gaza raise fears of a wider outbreak

By FARES AKRAM Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Authorities in the Gaza Strip on Monday announced the first coronavirus

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cases spread through the community, raising fears of a potentially devastating outbreak in the impoverished Palestinian territory blockaded by Israel and Egypt.

Until now, all the cases reported in Gaza were linked to quarantine facilities for residents returning from abroad.

The Health Ministry said four people from the same family have tested positive for the virus in central Gaza and investigations were underway to track the source of the infection. A full lockdown was imposed on the al-Maghazi refugee camp, where the family lives.

The ministry said a woman from Gaza who was allowed to travel to Jerusalem for medical treatment tested positive. Health workers in Gaza then tested her family members, revealing the four cases.

The Islamic militant Hamas group, which rules Gaza, announced a 48-hour curfew in the entire territory, closing businesses, schools, mosques and cafes.

Hamas seized control from rival Palestinian forces in 2007. In response, Egypt and Israel imposed a crippling blockade on the territory, which is home to some 2 million Palestinians.

Israel says the blockade is needed to keep Hamas from importing and manufacturing arms. Hamas and Israel have fought three wars and countless skirmishes in the last 13 years.

Tensions have risen in recent weeks as Palestinian militants have launched incendiary balloons and rockets across the Gaza frontier. Israel has responded with airstrikes on targets linked to Hamas. There have been no deaths or serious injuries on either side.

The recent attacks were coordinated by Hamas to pressure Israel to ease the blockade. Instead, Israel has closed Gaza's sole commercial crossing and its fishing zone. The territory's only power plant was forced to shut down for lack of fuel, leaving most Gazans with just four hours of electricity a day.

Gaza's health infrastructure has been hollowed out by years of war and isolation, and would be ill-equipped to cope with a major outbreak. Gaza's health facilities only have around 100 ventilators, more than half of which are already being used.

The discovery of the local cases comes despite months of strict efforts taken to prevent community transmission.

Since March, Hamas has imposed mandatory isolation for 21 days at designated quarantine centers for all those returning by way of Israel and Egypt. Authorities have detected 109 cases in the quarantine facilities since March, and 72 of them have recovered. The only fatality in Gaza was a woman who had underlying health problems.

The coronavirus causes mild to moderate symptoms in most patients, who recover within a few weeks. But it is highly contagious and can cause severe illness or death, particularly in older patients or those with medical conditions.

The apparent success in keeping the virus out had led to the lifting of virtually all measures to contain it. Schools recently reopened, and wedding halls and mosques have been operating normally for more than two months.

To-go drinks an elixir for public, a lifeline for business

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

DETROIT (AP) — The coronavirus is shaking up America's liquor laws.

At least 33 states and the District of Columbia are temporarily allowing cocktails to-go during the pandemic. Only two — Florida and Mississippi — allowed them on a limited basis before coronavirus struck, according to the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States.

Struggling restaurants say it's a lifeline, letting them rehire bartenders, pay rent and reestablish relationships with customers. But others want states to slow down, saying the decades-old laws help ensure public safety.

Julia Momose closed Kumiko, her Japanese-style cocktail bar in Chicago, on March 16. The next day, Illinois allowed bars and restaurants to start selling unopened bottles of beer, wine and liquor, but mixed drinks were excluded.

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Momose spent the next three months collecting petition signatures and pressing lawmakers to allow carryout cocktails. It worked. On June 17, she poured her first to-go drink: a Seaflower, made with gin, vermouth, Japanese citrus fruit and fermented chili paste. A carryout bottle, which serves two, costs \$32.

Momose has been able to hire back four of her furloughed employees. A group she co-founded, Cocktails for Hope, is now helping restaurants buy glass bottles in bulk for carryout.

"Part of getting cocktails to go approved was embracing the fact that this isn't going to fix everything, but it is going to fix something," Momose said. "All these little things that we do will keep us open and keep our staff employed."

U.S. liquor laws — many of which date to the end of Prohibition in 1933 — are a confusing jumble that vary by state, city and county.

Carryout cocktail regulations — which were passed starting in March — only deepen that confusion. Lawmakers approved carryout cocktails in some states; governors approved them in others. Nevada passed no statewide measure, but individual cities like Las Vegas and Reno allow them. In Pennsylvania, only restaurants and bars that lost 25% of average monthly total sales can sell cocktails to go.

Most carryout cocktail regulations require customers to buy food with their mixed drinks. Lids or seals are generally required, but some states say drinks also need to be transported in the trunk. Marbet Lewis, a founding partner at Spiritus Law in Miami who specializes in the alcohol industry, says IDs should be checked — online or in person — by restaurants and bars as well as by delivery drivers.

Some states, like Arizona, allow third party delivery companies like DoorDash to deliver cocktails; Kansas only allows delivery within a 50-foot radius.

The laws also have different sunset dates. Alabama is only allowing carryout cocktails through Sept. 15, while Colorado and Massachusetts have extended them into next year. Michigan is allowing them through 2025.

Last month, Iowa became the first state to permanently allow carryout and delivery of cocktails. Lawmakers in Ohio and Oklahoma are considering a similar measure, and the governors of Texas and Florida have expressed support for the change.

There is overwhelming public support for making cocktails to go permanent, says Mike Whatley, vice president of state and local affairs for the National Restaurant Association. Between 75% and 80% of respondents have said they support carryout cocktails in numerous state polls, Whatley said.

U.S. restaurants and bars have lost an estimated \$165 billion since March due to lockdowns and social distancing requirements, the association said. In a May survey of 3,800 restaurants, the association found that 78% of operators who were selling alcohol to go had brought back laid-off employees, compared to 62% of operators overall.

But some are urging states not to be too hasty. Mothers Against Drunk Driving worries that permanent carryout cocktails will lead to an increase in drunken driving unless laws make clear that the drinks can't be consumed until the buyer is in a safe location.

The U.S. government hasn't released preliminary drunk driving data for 2020. But Jonathan Adkins, the executive director of the Governors Highway Safety Association, said there's no anecdotal evidence that drunk driving has spiked during the pandemic.

Patrick Maroney, a former liquor control officer in Colorado who is now a consultant, said carryout beer and wine — which was allowed in around 15 states prior to the pandemic — are different from cocktails because the containers are sealed by the manufacturer and the alcohol content is lower. Cocktails are mixed at the bar, so the alcohol content can vary and they may not be properly sealed, he said.

Maroney said states need to make sure police and health officials are consulted before changing laws that have worked for decades. He noted that California reported a spike in reports of alcohol delivery to minors in April.

"Are law enforcement officials worried about an 'open air' type atmosphere?" he said. "Is the law restricted to at-home consumption? How do they enforce it?"

Maroney received funding from the Center for Alcohol Policy — which is funded by beer wholesalers — for a recent research paper raising concerns about carryout cocktails.

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Even before the coronavirus hit, there was a push to modernize alcohol laws to reflect the growing popularity of food delivery, Lewis said. She thinks lawmakers will have a hard time reinstating bans on carryout cocktails once the pandemic eases.

"Once you get the genie out of the bottle and there hasn't been a problem, how do you get it back in?" she said.

Still, restaurant and bar owners say they're not worried that patrons will get so used to carryout that they'll stop going out even after the coronavirus has passed.

"I think that people are social. People enjoy the bar experience and like being waited on," said Dave Kwiatkowski, who owns the Sugar House cocktail bar in Detroit, which closed March 15 but was able to reopen July 10 for carryout service.

Kwiatkowski normally employs a staff of 16. For now, it's just him at the door and a bartender making drinks.

"It's enough to pay the electricity and the insurance, and it's nice to give at least a couple of people some jobs," he said.

Kwiatkowski does wonder how he'll handle carryout demand once the pandemic has ended and there's a crowd in the bar on a Saturday night. But that will be a good problem to have, he said. He wants carryout cocktails to be permanently legalized.

"I think this is probably going to change how we do business forever," he said.

As world grapples with pandemic, schools are the epicenter

By LEAH MARGARET WILLINGHAM and LISA MARIE PANE Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — The world is settling into a new normal for everyday life amid the coronavirus pandemic: online school classes, intermittent Zoom outages, museums that will only allow about a quarter of their usual visitors.

More than 800,000 people worldwide have perished from the virus and more than 23.5 million have contracted it, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University — figures experts say understate the true toll due to limited testing, missed mild cases and other factors.

Older people and those with underlying health conditions appear to be the most vulnerable. However, there's uncertainty about long-term effects and what impact millions of school children around the globe returning to classrooms might have on the virus' spread.

A significant red flag emerged in Hong Kong, where scientists say they have the first evidence of someone being reinfected with the virus that causes COVID-19. The case raises alarm bells, suggesting that surviving an infection does not provide lifelong immunity.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Just in time for back-to-school, the World Health Organization has updated its guidance for mask-wearing by children, notably saying those 6 to 11 years old should wear them to fight the coronavirus, but that it depends on local factors and other criteria.

Kids under 6 years old should not wear masks, WHO says, while those over 12 should wear them just like adults should, notably in cases where physical distancing cannot be ensured and in areas of high transmission rates.

The recommendations expanded upon previous WHO guidance that children under the age of 12 were not considered as likely to spread the virus as much as adults. Children in general do face less severe symptoms than adults, with the elderly the most vulnerable to severe infection.

ZOOM OUTAGES

The popular video conferencing tool, Zoom, experienced partial outages during the first day of school for thousands of students who are relying on the technology to connect with educators.

Technical issues occurred across the U.S., with the most reports on the East Coast, as well as in Europe, according to downdetector.com, which monitors self-reported outages. The disruptions lasted about 90 minutes, according to the company.

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Grade schools, high schools and universities are relying on Zoom and competing technologies like Microsoft Teams to learn remotely, and reduce the chance of infection during the pandemic.

Zoom Video Communications became a familiar tool to millions of new users after the spread of COVID-19 made face-to-face meetings risky. It now has about 300 million users.

MISSISSIPPI

An entire fourth grade class in Mississippi has been quarantined after a student and more than half of a school's fourth grade teachers tested positive for coronavirus, just a few weeks after beginning the school year.

Lafayette County School District Superintendent Adam Pugh said the district notified the families of more than 200 fourth grade students at Lafayette Upper Elementary School to quarantine for two weeks.

"We don't have enough staff to cover our entire fourth grade class in-person, so we had to send everybody home, to do virtual lessons," he said.

NEW YORK

Museums across New York and gyms in some parts of the state outside of New York City are being allowed to reopen as coronavirus restrictions are cautiously eased.

Under guidelines announced by Gov. Andrew Cuomo, museums must keep visitors to no more than 25% occupancy and must use timed ticketing. New York City museums that will open over the next few weeks include the Metropolitan Museum of Art on Aug. 29 and the American Museum of Natural History on Sept. 9.

Cuomo said gyms and fitness centers could open at 33% capacity starting Monday, but New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said the city's gyms would stay closed until at least Sept. 2.

Cultural institutions and gyms across the state have been closed since March when nonessential businesses were forced to shut down to stop the virus' spread. New York was the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak during the spring but has so far succeeded in staving off a second wave of infections.

HONG KONG MAN REINFECTED

Scientists say they have the first evidence of someone being reinfected with the virus that causes COVID-19. Genetic tests revealed that a 33-year-old man returning to Hong Kong from a trip to Spain in mid-August had a different strain of the coronavirus than the one he'd previously been infected with in March, said Dr. Kelvin Kai-Wang To, the microbiologist who led the work.

The man had mild symptoms the first time and none the second time; his more recent infection was detected through screening and testing at the Hong Kong airport.

"It shows that some people do not have lifelong immunity" to the virus if they've already had it, To said. "We don't know how many people can get reinfected. There are probably more out there."

MEXICO

Millions of Mexican school children returned to classes using a system that cobbles together online classes, instruction broadcast on television and radio programming but no in-person classes as of yet.

The Mexican government enlisted the country's largest private television companies to dedicate channels to school programming around the clock. Education officials developed schedules giving students at each level multiple opportunities to watch their classes.

Education Secretary Esteban Moctezuma said officials decided to rely on television because it has a far greater penetration than the internet.

CONNECTICUT

A spike in coronavirus cases in Danbury, Connecticut, has led Western Connecticut State University to temporarily move all classes online and bar students from returning to residence halls for at least two weeks.

Nearly 900 students were expected to begin moving into dorms on Sunday, but school President John Clark announced the new restrictions on Saturday. About 60 students who moved in early are being told to stay on campus for the next two weeks, and commuting students must stay off campus.

Pane reported from Boise, Idaho. Associated Press journalists from around the globe contributed to this report.

Mexico lucha libre wrestlers struggle to survive amid virus

By MARK STEVENSON and MARCO UGARTE Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Few of Mexico's cultural traditions have been hit as hard by the coronavirus pandemic as "lucha libre" wrestling. The death toll among wrestlers has risen dramatically and wrestling arenas are closed, throwing almost everyone out of work.

One enterprising band of aspiring young wrestlers, the three Olivares brothers in Mexico City's Xochimilco borough, have put up an impromptu ring on one of the district's famous "floating gardens."

They plan to offer livestreamed online exhibitions for now — and when restrictions on live sports are lifted, to perform for tourists enjoying the newly reopened canals that run through the floating fields.

They now make their living selling flowers that they grow on Xochimilco's artificial islands — known as chinampas — and peddle tacos and tortas elsewhere in the borough.

"We said: 'Why not? We have the ring, we have the chinampa, we have everything,'" said the oldest brother, 25, who wrestles under the name "Ciclónico." "So we decided to bring this beautiful sport to this gorgeous landscape."

With river boat tours of the floating gardens just reopening — though public lucha libre matches before live audiences are still largely banned — the brothers are betting they can be part of the tourism rebirth.

Others wrestlers have already taken the sport online. Victor Gongora, who wrestles under the name "Herodes Jr.," has been wrestling in matches live-streamed online for about \$12, though people can pay as little as \$3 to get tapes of the match after it's over.

But he acknowledges that it's not the same without the roaring, swearing crowds that are a key part of the rowdy events.

"It's part of the culture of Mexico. Lucha libre in Mexico has always been something done in arenas full of people," said Gongora. "It's the preferable way."

But until arenas reopen — Gongora says his first match with fans at 30% capacity will be held next week — bouts that are transmitted online by video streaming are a temporary fix. "It is a way to help out with the expenses, just enough to get by on," he said.

Many less technologically savvy wrestlers aren't even that lucky.

"The majority of us come from very poor backgrounds, lower class families," said the head of the Mexico City Boxing and Lucha Libre Commission, who wrestles under the name "Fantasma."

"The savings they (the wrestlers) had are gone, they spent them already," said Fantasma, who has helped arrange city support payments of about \$75 per month for luchadores. "The situation is just critical, very, very bad."

Gongora said some wrestlers he knows have had to sell gym and wrestling equipment to get through the five months since the arenas shut down.

Fantasma has taken to organizing food donations from local supermarkets for out-of-work wrestlers and has encouraged them to start street stands to get by.

"I tell them, put up a street stand to sell fruit juice, a stand to sell quesadillas. Don't spend your money, buy supplies" for the stands.

But it is not just the economic woes that are ravaging lucha libre.

There appears to have been a sharp upturn in deaths among wrestlers since the pandemic began in Mexico in March, though how many of those were due to COVID-19 is not certain.

Fantasma says 60 wrestlers, out of a universe of perhaps 2,000 or 3,000, have died so far this year, far more than in a normal year. Asked how many of this year's deaths were due to COVID-19, he says he's not sure, adding: "We don't want to say, out of respect" for the wrestlers' families. There is a stigma attached to dying of the disease for many in Mexico.

But he reels off a list of those whose deaths are publicly known to be of COVID-19: "Estrella Blanca Jr., Blackman II, Golden Bull, Matematico II."

Gongora's own father, the original "Herodes," died in July at the age of almost 70, though Gongora says:

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"It was heart attack, it wasn't COVID."

The sport, with its theatrical stunts and tradition of "rudos" — villainous, rule-breaking bad guys — and "tecnicos" — the handsome good guys, is clearly struggling to survive.

But few of the schemes contain as much cultural preservation as that of the Olivares brothers in Xochimilco. They are simultaneously defending lucha libre and the vastly older agricultural tradition of the floating gardens, which date back to Aztec times and which are constantly threatened by pollution and encroaching development.

It has been a struggle. Their boat almost sank under the weight of the wrestling ring when they transported it to their chinampa. But they hope to offer packages of chinampa tours and lucha libre matches.

In the meantime, they sell their chinampa-grown flowers at Xochimilco's traditional market, then prepare tortas and tacos at their food stall and then practice their wrestling at matches that are still largely closed to the public.

They say they do it to honor their late father, who wrestled under the name "Gran Felipe." His 19-year old son has assumed his name, wrestling as "Gran Felipe Jr."

"He taught us to love and respect lucha libre, and we do this to honor his name today," said the son.

Police shooting lays bare Wisconsin's deep partisan divide

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — The shooting by police in Wisconsin of a Black man sparked strong words of condemnation and a demand for Republicans to take action from the state's Democratic governor, who said he stood by those who demand justice. Republicans and the police union countered Monday that the governor went too far, urging caution in making any judgments about what sparked the shooting.

The divergent reactions to the shooting Sunday by Kenosha police is just the latest example of the deep divide in Wisconsin, a key presidential battleground state that has been at the forefront of partisan battles for the past decade ranging from redistricting to union rights. More recently, Republicans ignored Gov. Tony Evers' call to do away with in-person voting for the state's April presidential primary in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic.

Cellphone footage posted on social media Sunday appeared to show police shooting Blake multiple times in the back as he opened a door and leaned into an SUV. The state Department of Justice said officers were responding to a domestic incident, but it has not released more details. Blake was in serious condition Monday at a Milwaukee hospital.

Protests erupted in Kenosha in the hours after the shooting, sparking concerns of more unrest across the country similar to what was seen after the May death of George Floyd while in the custody of Minneapolis police. Chris Ott, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin, said the shooting "looks like attempted murder."

"Exhale," said Republican state Sen. Van Wanggaard, a retired police officer from Racine, which is next to Kenosha. "Everyone should take a deep breath. ... We must let law and reason, not emotion, guide the next steps."

But Evers was passionate in his response, saying he stands with everyone who has demanded justice, equity and accountability and against excessive use of force when engaged with Black people.

"While we do not have all of the details yet, what we know for certain is that he is not the first Black man or person to have been shot or injured or mercilessly killed at the hands of individuals in law enforcement in our state or our country," Evers said.

Wanggaard was among Republicans who condemned Evers for his comments, which were issued just as protesters took to the streets in Kenosha and clashed with police.

"The best leaders attempt to diffuse situations, not escalate them," Wanggaard said. "Evers' statement was irresponsible and inflammatory. He jumped to conclusions without first having all the facts. At a time when stereotyping situations is especially risky, Evers stereotyped every police interaction with people of color — harming both."

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Pete Deates, president of the Kenosha police union, called Evers' statement "wholly irresponsible."

"As always, the video currently circulating does not capture all the intricacies of a highly dynamic incident," Deates said in a statement. "We ask that you withhold from passing judgment until all the facts are known and released."

Evers called a special session of the GOP-controlled Legislature starting Aug. 31 to pass a package of police reform bills he put forward in June, following Floyd's death. The Legislature has not taken any action on the measures and can't be forced to vote on them in the special session, either. The bills would ban the use of chokeholds by Wisconsin police officers, as well as limit other uses of force.

Republican Assembly Speaker Robin Vos on Monday said he was creating a task force to examine police policies and standards, racial disparities, educational opportunities and public safety. Vos said by calling for a special session, the governor "is choosing to turn to politics again by dictating liberal policies that will only deepen the divisions in our state."

Evers said he didn't expect Vos to take action on the bills.

"In general, he seemed to be unmoved by my request," Evers said.

Wisconsin Republicans echoed a law-and-order theme that President Donald Trump has been using in his reelection campaign, including during stops to Minnesota and Wisconsin last week. While calling for peaceful protests, Wisconsin Republicans also urged patience given the ongoing investigation.

Jim Steineke, Republican majority leader of the Wisconsin Assembly, didn't call out Evers by name but urged elected officials to "resist the temptation to rush to judgment."

"The frustration and anger that many in our communities are feeling must be met with empathy, but cannot be further fueled by politicians' statements or actions that can stoke flames of violence," Steineke said.

Evers, in the second year of his first term, has been stymied by Republicans who control the Legislature and have it as their goal in November to build majorities strong enough to override any gubernatorial veto. The state also is at the forefront of the presidential race, with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi last week emphasizing the recurring message that "it's all riding on Wisconsin." Trump won Wisconsin by less than a percentage point in 2016.

Follow Scott Bauer on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/sbauerAP>

Police in Belarus detain opposition activists amid protests

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

MINSK, Belarus (AP) — Police in Belarus on Monday detained several leading opposition activists as well as a handful of protesters taking part in a wave of demonstrations challenging the reelection of authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko in balloting that they say was rigged.

The Coordination Council, which was set up by the opposition to negotiate a transfer of power, said members Sergei Dylevsky and Olga Kovalkova were detained in the capital of Minsk. Later in the day, the opposition also reported the detention of Alexander Lavrinovich, a strike leader at a major industrial plant.

Police also detained at least five of several hundred people who had gathered in Minsk's Independence Square on Monday, the 16th straight day of protests, and another five in other cities, activists said.

The actions signaled Lukashenko's determination to stifle massive post-election demonstrations that have entered their third week. The 65-year-old Belarusian leader, who has been in power since 1994, toted an assault rifle in a show of force as he arrived at his residence by helicopter on Sunday while protesters rallied nearby.

Last week, Lukashenko warned that the opposition council's members could face charges for creating what he described as a parallel government. Prosecutors then opened a criminal inquiry on charges of undermining national security, an allegation rejected by the council.

Several other council members, including Belarus' most famous writer, Svetlana Alexievich, who won the 2015 Nobel Prize in literature, have been summoned for questioning over the protests in an apparent attempt by authorities to intimidate them.

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Dylevsky played a leading role in organizing a strike at the Minsk Tractor Plant, one of the multiple labor actions at top factories last week in support of the protests that posed a major challenge to Lukashenko. Lavrinovich led the strike organizing committee at another major factory, the Minsk Wheeled Tow Truck Plant.

Kovalkova is a top associate of the main opposition challenger in the disputed Aug. 9 election, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who entered the race after her husband was jailed and prevented from running. She fled to Lithuania after the vote under official pressure.

Tsikhanouskaya met Monday with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun in Lithuania's capital, Vilnius. In a statement issued by her campaign headquarters, she reaffirmed her readiness for talks on a transition of power to settle the crisis in Belarus. Tsikhanouskaya also thanked the United States for supporting the Belarusian people.

"She is a very impressive person and I can see why she is so popular in her country," Biegun said after meeting her. "The United States cannot and will not decide the course of events in Belarus, this is the right of Belarusian people."

The U.S. and the European Union have dismissed the election as neither free nor fair and urged authorities to start a dialogue with the opposition.

Sunday's anti-Lukashenko demonstration in Minsk drew an estimated 200,000 people pushing for him to step down. A protest a week earlier attracted a similar number in the largest rallies ever held in the former Soviet nation of 9.5 million people.

The demonstrations are challenging the official results of the election, which gave Lukashenko a sixth term with an unlikely 80% of the vote.

The president, who cultivates an air of machismo, has dismissed the opposition as puppets of the West and accused the U.S. of fomenting the unrest.

Video on Sunday showed him getting off his helicopter with a Kalashnikov automatic rifle. He was accompanied by his 15-year-old younger son, who also carried a rifle.

The Belarusian leader commented to his aides that the protesters "ran away like rats" and then thanked riot police who encircled the presidential residence.

"The authorities are afraid of the majority and clearly nervous," said Maria Kolesnikova, a leading member of the opposition council, in describing Lukashenko's actions in the face of the protests.

She described the detentions of her colleagues as "crude pressure and an attempt to scare us."

"They ignore our proposals for a dialogue and respond with repressions," she told The Associated Press.

The protests were galvanized by a brutal crackdown in the initial days after the election, when police detained nearly 7,000 people. Hundreds were injured when officers dispersed peaceful protesters with rubber bullets, stun grenades and clubs. At least three people died.

Lukashenko on Monday dismissed Belarus' ambassador to Slovakia, Igor Leshchenya, who denounced the crackdown and handed in his resignation.

As crowds swelled amid public outrage, the authorities backed off and let demonstrations go unhindered. However, they again bolstered police cordons around the city since last week and threatened opposition activists with criminal charges.

Five demonstrators who set up improvised audio equipment for speakers in Independence Square on Monday evening were detained by police, said Valiantsin Stefanovich of the Viasna rights center. The square has been the epicenter of daily rallies, and police had not intervened for the past 12 days.

Another five protesters were detained in other cities, Stefanovich added, signaling the toughening of the government's stance. "With pinpoint repressions, the authorities are trying to neutralize the most active," he said.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert criticized the threats against the striking factory workers and deplored "the very martial, threatening backdrop which Mr. Lukashenko created on the weekend." He emphasized that "a dialogue between the leadership and the Belarus society is urgently needed."

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German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said while visiting Ukraine on Monday that Germany, which currently holds the EU presidency, urged Russia to use what influence it has with Lukashenko "to make clear to him that he can no longer get past this dialogue."

U.S. Ambassador to Russia John Sullivan said that Biegun, the No. 2 U.S. diplomat who is set to visit Moscow on Tuesday and Wednesday, will be "urging the Russian government to join us in respecting the democratic rights and aspirations of the Belarusian people, not intervening in that process."

Russia and Belarus have a union treaty envisaging close political, economic and military ties, and Lukashenko said he secured a promise from Russian President Vladimir Putin to provide security assistance, if needed.

The Belarusian leader has sought to rally Moscow's support by trying to cast his foes as anti-Russia, although the protesters in Belarus have not displayed anti-Russia slogans.

Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said Moscow has shunned contacts with the Belarusian opposition, arguing that such a move would amount to meddling in a neighbor's internal affairs.

"We consider it wrong and have no intention to do so, at least not during the current 'hot' stage," Peskov said.

Seeking Putin's support amid the protests, Lukashenko also has accused NATO of harboring aggressive plans and bolstering its forces in neighboring Poland and Lithuania, and he ordered a massive military exercise near those borders. The alliance has rejected Lukashenko's claims.

Lukashenko's office said he and Putin had another call Monday to discuss the domestic situation in Belarus and the developments on its western frontier. The Kremlin said in its readout of the call that Lukashenko told Putin about his efforts to "normalize the situation in the country."

Associated Press writers Vladimir Isachenkov and Jim Heintz in Moscow, Liudas Dapkus in Vilnius, Lithuania, and Geir Moulson and Kirsten Grieshaber in Berlin contributed.

Follow AP's coverage of Belarus at <https://www.apnews.com/Belarus>

Scientists say Hong Kong man got coronavirus a second time

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer

University of Hong Kong scientists claim to have the first evidence of someone being reinfected with the virus that causes COVID-19.

Genetic tests revealed that a 33-year-old man returning to Hong Kong from a trip to Spain in mid-August had a different strain of the coronavirus than the one he'd previously been infected with in March, said Dr. Kelvin Kai-Wang To, the microbiologist who led the work.

The man had mild symptoms the first time and none the second time; his more recent infection was detected through screening and testing at the Hong Kong airport.

"It shows that some people do not have lifelong immunity" to the virus if they've already had it, To said. "We don't know how many people can get reinfected. There are probably more out there."

The paper has been accepted by the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases* but not yet published, and some independent experts urged caution until full results are available.

Whether people who have had COVID-19 are immune to new infections and for how long are key questions that have implications for vaccine development and decisions about returning to work, school and social activities.

Even if someone can be infected a second time, it's not known if they have some protection against serious illness, because the immune system generally remembers how to make antibodies against a virus it's seen before.

It's not clear how different a virus needs to be to trigger illness, but the new work suggests that "COVID patients should not be complacent about prevention measures" and should continue social distancing, wearing masks and other ways to reduce infection, To said.

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Two experts with with no role in the work agreed.

"We've always known reinfection was a possibility and I think this is highly suggestive" that it occurred in this case, said Dr. Jesse Goodman, a former U.S. Food and Drug Administration chief scientist now at Georgetown University. "If there is a reinfection, it suggests the possibility there was residual immunity ... that helped protect the patient" from getting sick again, Goodman said.

However, "if immunity wanes from natural infection, it could be a challenge for vaccines" and may mean booster shots are needed, he added.

Julie Fischer, a microbiologist at CRDF Global, a nonprofit health group in Arlington, Virginia, said the study gives convincing evidence that reinfection can happen.

"The real question is what this means for severity of disease" if that occurs, and whether such people can infect others, she said.

One expert saw the report as good news. Dr. Paul Offit, a vaccine expert at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, said it's encouraging the reported reinfection was without symptoms.

"That's a win as far as I'm concerned" because it suggests a first infection may protect a person from moderate to severe disease the second time around, he said in an interview streamed by the Journal of the American Medical Association.

A mid-May survey by the doctors' information-sharing site Sermo found that 13% of the 4,173 doctors responding believed that they had treated one or more patients who were reinfected. Among the respondents, 7% of those in the U.S. and 16% in other countries thought they'd seen such a case.

However, health officials have also wondered whether people who tested positive long after their initial illness were simply showing signs of not completely clearing the virus rather than being infected anew.

AP medical writers Linda A. Johnson and Carla K. Johnson contributed to this report.

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Apple CEO Tim Cook is fulfilling another Steve Jobs vision

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Business Writer

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP) — Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, who died in 2011, was a tough act to follow. But Tim Cook seems to be doing so well at it that his eventual successor may also have big shoes to fill.

Initially seen as a mere caretaker for the iconic franchise that Jobs built before his 2011 death, Cook has forged his own distinctive legacy. He will mark his ninth anniversary as Apple's CEO Monday — the same day the company will split its stock for the second time during his reign, setting up the shares to begin trading on a split-adjusted basis beginning Aug. 31.

Grooming Cook as heir apparent was "one of Steve Jobs' greatest accomplishments that is vastly underappreciated," said long-time Apple analyst Gene Munster, who is now managing partner of Loup Ventures.

The upcoming four-for-one stock split, a move that has no effect on share price but often spurs investor enthusiasm, is one measure of Apple's success under Cook. The company was worth just under \$400 billion when Cook the helm; it's worth five times more than that today, and has just become the first U.S. company to boast a market value of \$2 trillion. Its share performance has easily eclipsed the benchmark S&P 500, which has roughly tripled in value during the past nine years.

But it hasn't always been easy. Among the challenges Cook has faced: a slowdown in iPhone sales as smartphones matured, a showdown with the FBI over user privacy, a U.S. trade war with China that threatened to force up iPhone prices and now a pandemic that has closed many of Apple's retail stores and sunk the economy into a deep recession.

Cook, 59, has also struck out in into novel territory. Apple now pays a quarterly dividend, a step Jobs resisted partly because he associated shareholder payments with stodgy companies that were past their prime. Cook also used his powerful perch to become an outspoken advocate for civil rights and renewable

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energy, and on a personal level came out as the first openly gay CEO of a Fortune 500 company in 2014.

Apple declined to make Cook available for an interview. But it did point to 2009 comments Cook made to financial analysts when he was running the company while Jobs battled pancreatic cancer.

Asked what the company might look like under his management, Cook said that Apple needs "to own and control the primary technologies behind the products we make." It has doubled down on that commitment, becoming a major chip producer in order to supply both iPhones and Macs. He added that Apple would resist exploring most projects "so that we can really focus on the few that are truly important and meaningful to us."

That laser focus has served Apple well. At the same time, though, under Cook's stewardship, Apple has largely failed to come up with breakthrough successors to the iPhone. Its smartwatch and wireless ear buds have emerged as market leaders, but not game changers.

Cook and other executives have dropped hints that Apple wants make a big splash in the field of augmented reality, which uses phone screens or high-tech eyewear to paint digital images into the real world. Apple has yet to deliver, although neither have other companies that have hyped the technology.

Apple also remains a laggard in artificial intelligence, particularly in the increasingly important market for voice-activated digital assistants. Although Apple's Siri is widely used on Apple devices, Amazon's Alexa and Google's digital assistant have made major inroads in helping people manage their lives, particularly in homes and offices.

Apple also has stumbled a few times under Cook's leadership.

In 2017, it alienated customers by deliberately but quietly slowing the performance of older iPhones via a software update, ostensibly to spare the life of aging batteries. Many consumers, though, viewed it as a ploy to boost sales of newer and more expensive iPhones. Amid the furor, Apple offered to replace aging batteries at a steep discount; later it paid \$500 million to settle a class-action lawsuit over the matter.

Apple has also faced government investigations into its aggressive efforts to minimize its corporate taxes and complaints that it has abused control of its app store to charge excessive fees and stifle competition to its own digital services. On the tax front, a court ruled in July that Apple did nothing wrong.

Cook has turned the app store into the cornerstone of a services division that he set out to expand four years ago. At the time, it was growing clear that sales of the iPhone — Apple's biggest money maker — were destined to slow down as innovations grew sparse and consumers kept their old devices for longer.

To help offset that trend, Cook began to emphasize recurring revenue from app commission, warranty programs and streaming subscriptions to music, video, games and news sold for the more 1.5 billion devices already running on the company's software.

After doubling in size in less than four years, Apple's services division now generates \$50 billion in annual revenue, more than all but 65 companies in the Fortune 500. Wedbush Securities analyst Daniel Ives estimates Apple's services division by itself is worth about \$750 billion — about the same as Facebook currently is in its entirety.

That division could be worth even more now had Cook done something many analysts believe Apple should have done at least five years ago by dipping into a hoard of cash that at one point surpassed \$260 billion to buy Netflix or a major movie studio to fuel its video streaming ambitions.

Buying Netflix seemed like within the realm of possibility five years ago when the video streaming service was valued at around \$40 billion. Now that Netflix is worth more than \$200 billion today, that idea seems off the table, even for a company with Apple's vast resources.

Civil rights group pushes back at GOP condemnation

By JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican National Committee delegates approved a resolution condemning the Southern Poverty Law Center, calling the legal advocacy group dedicated to fighting extremism "a far-left organization with an obvious bias."

The resolution was approved over the weekend ahead of the start of the Republican National Conven-

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tion on Monday in Charlotte and escalates a long-held battle between conservative groups and the SPLC.

"The SPLC is a radical organization, and that the federal government should not view this organization as a legitimate foundation equipped to provide actionable information to DHS or any other government agency," said the resolution, which challenged the legitimacy of the organization to identify hate groups. The resolution claimed that it "puts conservative groups or voices at risk of attack."

The SPLC, which conducts investigations and engages in civil rights litigation, said in a statement Monday that the resolution gave "comfort to hate groups" and accused the RNC of being selective in its condemnation.

Margaret Huang, the president and chief executive of the group, said the resolution was designed to "excuse the Trump administration's history of working with individuals and organizations that malign entire groups of people — including Black Lives Matter advocates, immigrants, Muslims and the L.G.B.T.Q. community — with dehumanizing rhetoric."

The resolution was the latest clash between the SPLC and conservative groups over the Alabama-based organization's Hatewatch list, which tracks radical and extremist groups. Conservatives accuse the SPLC of pursuing a partisan agenda and sweeping up groups with a conservative agenda with explicitly racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan.

The civil rights group, championed by many on the left, has denied that assertion, saying that groups with "beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics" make their list. The RNC resolution cited the presence of the anti-abortion Family Research Council (FRC) on the list, accusing the SPLC of leading to a 2012 shooting at the FRC.

The RNC also approved resolutions defending the federal celebration of the Christopher Columbus holiday; condemning "cancel culture" and reaffirming its support for President Donald Trump.

AP Top 25: Clemson No. 1, followed by Ohio State, Alabama

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

Clemson is the preseason No. 1 in The Associated Press Top 25, a poll featuring nine Big Ten and Pac-12 teams that gives a glimpse at what has already been taken by the pandemic from an uncertain college football season.

Ohio State (1,504 points) was a close No. 2 behind Trevor Lawrence and Clemson (1,520), which starts atop the rankings for the second straight season. The Tigers beat the Buckeyes in a thrilling College Football Playoff semifinal last season.

Alabama is No. 3, Southeastern Conference rival Georgia is No. 4 and defending Big 12 champion Oklahoma is No. 5. Defending national champion LSU is No. 6.

The 85th edition of the AP rankings will be like none before.

When the season starts — if the season starts — the Buckeyes and 53 other Bowl Subdivision teams will no longer be eligible for inclusion in the Top 25 because they have postponed their seasons to the spring.

The Big Ten, where Ohio State and No. 7 Penn State play, and the Pac-12, home to No. 9 Oregon, canceled their fall sports seasons because of concerns about the coronavirus. The Mid-American and Mountain West conferences have also said they will try to play spring football.

The SEC, Atlantic Coast Conference, Big 12, American Athletic, Conference USA and Sun Belt are forging ahead with fall sports, with changes: The three remaining Power Five conferences, the SEC, ACC, and Big 12, have eliminated all or most nonconference games and delayed the start of their seasons from one to three weeks.

Erased from the college football schedule this year were a host of tantalizing nonconference matchups: Ohio State at No. 9 Oregon; No. 10 Notre Dame vs. No. 12 Wisconsin at Lambeau field in Green Bay; No. 14 Texas at LSU; No. 17 Southern California vs Alabama in Arlington, Texas; No. 11 Auburn vs. No. 18 North Carolina in Atlanta.

For now, big conference games such as Ohio State-Michigan and Washington-Washington State could still be made up in the spring.

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All Division I teams were eligible for the preseason AP Top 25, but after the season starts, only teams scheduled to play in the fall are eligible. That leaves 76 FBS teams from which to choose.

If a spring season is played, the AP will consider doing rankings for those teams, too.

BACK-TO-BACK

Clemson had never been preseason No. 1 until last season, and now starts there again. It's the eighth time since the preseason poll started in 1950 that a team has been preseason No. 1 two straight seasons. Alabama had been preseason No. 1 from 2016-18, a three-year run.

The Tigers finished last season No. 2 after losing the championship game to LSU, snapping a remarkable run of nine seasons in which Clemson has finished with the same or better ranking than it started. That included the last five seasons in which Clemson outperformed its preseason ranking, twice finishing No. 1 after starting No. 2.

The ACC's Tigers, who also welcome back star running back Travis Etienne, standout offensive tackle Jackson Carman and sturdy defensive tackle Tyler Davis, will try to become the 12th preseason No. 1 to finish No. 1. Only two teams have gone wire-to-wire as No. 1: Florida State in 1999 and USC in 2004.

DEFENDING CHAMPS

LSU is the first defending national champion to start the following season outside the top five since Auburn in 2011 (post-Cam Newton, the Tigers were ranked No. 23 in the preseason poll). LSU lost a Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback and No. 1 overall NFL draft pick, too, in Joe Burrow.

Myles Brennan is the new QB for the Tigers, who had 14 players selected in the last draft, including five in the first round. There is plenty of talent coming back with All-America receiver Ja'Marr Chase, cornerback Derek Stingley Jr., and nose tackle Tyler Shelvin.

The Tigers will try to become the first back-to-back national champions since Alabama in 2011 and '12.

FANCY SEEING YOU HERE

— No. 18 North Carolina is ranked in the preseason for the first time since 2016.

— No. 19 Cincinnati makes its first appearance in the AP preseason poll. The Bearcats have finished ranked each of the last two seasons.

— No. 20 Minnesota is making its first preseason poll appearance since 2004. The Gophers were one of the surprise teams of last season, starting unranked and ending up No. 10, their best finish since 1962.

STREAKING

Ohio State extended the longest active streak of preseason Top 25 appearances with 32, followed by Oklahoma with 21, LSU with 20, Georgia with 19, Alabama with 13 and Clemson with nine.

STRONG SECOND

The Buckeyes' 21 first-place votes in the preseason Top 25 were the most by a non-No. 1 team since Ohio State in 2008, when it also had 21 and was one behind top-ranked Georgia. Florida, which was No. 5 in the 2008 preseason poll with five first-place votes, won the national title that year.

CONFERENCE CALL

The Southeastern Conference, as usual, leads the way with seven teams in the Top 25, including six of the first 13 teams.

The Big Ten is next with six, but when the regular season starts No. 6 Penn State, No. 12 Wisconsin, No. 16 Michigan, No. 19 Minnesota and No. 24 Iowa will no longer be eligible for votes. Same goes for No. 9 Oregon, No. 17 USC and No. 22 Utah of the Pac-12.

SEC — 7 (Nos. 3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 25).

Big Ten — 6 (Nos. 2, 7, 12, 16, 19, 24).

Big 12 — 4 (Nos. 5, 14, 15, 23).

ACC — 3 (Nos. 1, 10, 18).

Pac-12 — 3 (Nos. 9, 17, 22).

American — 2 (Nos. 20, 21).

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WHO: Children aged 6-to-11 should wear masks at times, too

JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Just as millions of children are heading back to school, the World Health Organization says those aged 6 to 11 should wear masks in some cases to help fight the spread of coronavirus.

The recommendations presented Monday follow the widespread belief that children under 12 are not considered as likely to propagate the virus as much as adults. Children in general face less severe virus symptoms than do adults, with the elderly the most vulnerable to severe infection and death.

Now WHO says decisions about whether children aged 6 to 11 should wear masks should consider factors like whether COVID-19 transmission is widespread in the area where the child lives; the child's ability to safely use a mask; and adult supervision when taking the masks on or off.

"Luckily, the vast majority of children who are infected with the virus appear to have mild disease or asymptomatic infection, and that's good news," said Maria Van Kerkhove, technical chief of the U.N. health agency's emergencies program.

She still cautioned that some children can develop severe cases of coronavirus and even die.

The shift comes as confirmed COVID-19 infections worldwide have surpassed 23 million and confirmed deaths have passed 809,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Experts say the tally understates the true toll of the pandemic due to limited testing, missed mild cases and other factors.

The U.N. health agency for months trailed many governments in backing the widespread use of masks, a point not lost on critics, who said WHO was too slow to get on board with the benefits of general mask use. WHO had expressed concern that people who put on masks might unwittingly spread the virus from an unclean hand to their face, and insisted that health-care providers needed masks first amid some shortages.

Since then, researchers have found that the virus can be transmitted through aerosols — tiny droplets emitted when people talk, laugh, sing or sneeze — and mask-wearing can cut down on the amount of virus that people are exposed to.

Some policymakers, including public transport authorities in Europe and elsewhere, have set the bar for mask-wearing in crowded places like buses and trains at age 12 — with everyone older required to put them on.

Acknowledging gaps in both research and understanding of the virus, WHO said kids under age 6 should not wear masks, while those 12 to 18 should wear them just like adults should — notably in cases where physical distancing cannot be ensured and in areas of high transmission.

WHO advises a "risk-based approach" for kids aged 6 to 11 that balances various factors.

"Everyone agrees how important it is that schools are operating safely," Van Kerkhove said. "We've outlined how that can be done in terms of physical distancing and hand hygiene stations, respiratory etiquette, the potential use of masks by either the workers or the children themselves."

WHO said the current evidence suggests virus cases reported from kids stemmed mostly from transmission within households and that "documented transmission among children and staff within educational settings is limited."

Parents, health officials and educators in countries around the world have been wrestling with the safety questions posed by having millions of children go back to school during a pandemic.

Over the weekend, Britain's top public health officials issued a joint statement saying that children were more likely be harmed by staying away from school than from being exposed to COVID-19.

They said children are less likely to catch COVID-19 than adults and have "an exceptionally low risk" of dying from the disease. By contrast, they said studies show that not going to school limits children's ability to succeed in life and may worsen physical and mental health problems.

"Very few, if any, children or teenagers will come to long-term harm from COVID-19 due solely to attend-

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ing school," the medical officers said. "This has to be set against a certainty of long-term harm to many children and young people from not attending school."

The recommendations by WHO on Monday also noted lingering uncertainty about the effectiveness of transparent face shields, with WHO calling for more research into their use in response to COVID-19.

Danica Kirka in London contributed to this story.

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

AP-NORC poll: Trump faces pessimism as GOP convention opens

By JULIE PACE and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is promising to outline an optimistic vision for America at this week's Republican convention. But he'll be speaking to a public deeply pessimistic about the direction of the country and overwhelmingly dissatisfied with his and the federal government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Most Americans think there isn't enough being done to help individual Americans, small businesses or public schools as the pandemic stretches on, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Overall, just 31% of Americans approve of Trump's leadership on the pandemic, a significant drop from 44% approval in March, when the virus began sweeping through the United States.

The public's negative assessment of how Trump is handling the crisis puts him on the defensive as his November face-off against Democrat Joe Biden nears. One of Trump's challenges as his convention opens on Monday night is to convince Americans that anything about his response to the pandemic will change or improve if voters give him four more years in office.

Yet Trump has shown little willingness to acknowledge that a course correction of any kind is needed. He's repeatedly cast the virus as all but defeated, even when cases were sharply increasing, including in states he needs to win in November. He's also insisted the U.S. has vastly outperformed other countries in tackling the pandemic, despite the fact the U.S. has the most confirmed cases (more than 5.7 million) and most confirmed deaths (more than 176,000) of any country in the world.

"To be persuasive, there needs to be a strategy and not just rhetoric," Whit Ayres, a Republican pollster, said of Trump's challenge this week.

The president heads into his four-night nominating convention with an overall approval rating of 35%. That's down from 43% in March but still within range of where Trump has been for much of his presidency. Where he falls within that range as Election Day nears could make a difference to his reelection prospects.

His support continues to be driven overwhelmingly by Republicans, with 79% approving of his job performance compared with just 5% of Democrats.

Trump must also contend with Americans' persistently negative view of the country's direction as he asks voters to stay the course instead of handing the reins over to Biden. The AP-NORC poll finds that just 23% think the country is heading in the right direction, while 75% think it's on the wrong path.

Republican strategist Gail Gitcho said the national mood makes it imperative for the president to strike an optimistic tone during his convention.

"The most important time for optimism is when pessimism is rampant," said Gitcho, who advised Sen. Mitt Romney's 2012 presidential campaign. "That's when it is most needed and works best."

The president's highest marks continue to come on the economy: 47% of Americans approve of his stewardship of the economy, though that, too, is down from 56% approval in March. Trump is expected to lean hard into his economic credentials during the convention, arguing that when the pandemic subsides, he can again lead the country into a period of sustained growth and job creation.

Trump's advisers are also seizing on remarks Biden made last week in which he said he would shut the

country down to stop further spread of the virus if that's what public health experts recommend. They believe Americans are weary of pandemic restrictions and focused instead on ways to safely keep the economy up and running.

Biden, in an interview with ABC News, said he would "be prepared to do whatever it takes to save lives because we cannot get the country moving until we control the virus."

As the country grapples with how to keep businesses afloat and open schools for in-person learning, Americans see little help flowing to those who need it most. Two-thirds of Americans say the government is doing too little to help the individuals and small businesses. A similar share thinks the government needs to do more to help public schools with their finances.

The poll was conducted after Congress left for its August recess without passing a new round of pandemic assistance. House Democrats approved a \$3 trillion relief package that included money for schools, state and local governments and other entities, but Republicans balked at the price tag and some of the provisions. It's unclear whether lawmakers can break the logjam when they return to the Capitol in September.

The lack of action on Capitol Hill appears to have contributed to Congress' sinking approval rating. Just 13% of Americans approve of the job Congress is doing during the pandemic, down from 31% in March. The federal government as a whole has also taken a hit with the public, with approval down from 38% in March to 23% now.

Americans remain more positive in their views of how state governments are handling the pandemic, with 44% approving of their state's performance. Democrats are somewhat more likely than Republicans to approve of state government, 51% to 41%.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,075 adults was conducted Aug. 17-19 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.1 percentage points.

Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>.

Top Trump aide Kellyanne Conway to leave White House

By JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Kellyanne Conway, one of President Donald Trump's most influential and longest serving advisers, announced Sunday that she would be leaving the White House at the end of the month.

Conway, Trump's campaign manager during the stretch run of the 2016 race, was the first woman to successfully steer a White House bid, then became a senior counselor to the president. She informed Trump of her decision in the Oval Office.

Conway cited a need to spend time with her four children in a resignation letter she posted Sunday night. Her husband, George, had become an outspoken Trump critic and her family a subject of Washington's rumor mill.

"We disagree about plenty but we are united on what matters most: the kids," she wrote. "For now, and for my beloved children, it will be less drama, more mama."

She is still slated to speak at the Republican National Convention this week. Her husband, an attorney who renounced Trump after the 2016 campaign, had become a member of the Lincoln Project, an outside group of Republicans devoted to defeating Trump.

The politically adversarial marriage generated much speculation in the Beltway and online. George Conway also announced Sunday that he was taking a leave of absence from both Twitter and the Lincoln Project.

Mark Meadows, Trump's chief of staff, said Monday that her departure leaves a "big hole" at the White House.

"This is all about making priority for family," Meadows told "CBS This Morning." "That's what this president is about and that's what Kellyanne Conway is about."

Her departure comes at an inopportune time for Trump, who faces a deficit in the polls as the Republican National Convention begins on Monday. Asked on CBS whether her departure signals a fear Trump might lose, Meadows called the question "cynical."

"Anybody who knows Kellyanne Conway knows that she has never shied away from a fight," Meadows said. "To suggest that is just not based on the facts."

Kellyanne Conway worked for years as a Republican pollster and operative and originally supported Sen. Ted Cruz in the 2016 Republican primary. She moved over to the Trump campaign and that August became campaign manager as Stephen Bannon became campaign chairman; Bannon was indicted two days ago for fraud.

Conway cited a need to help her children's remote learning during the coronavirus pandemic as a need to step away from her position. She had remained a trusted voice within the West Wing and spearheaded several initiatives, including on combating opioid abuse.

She was also known for her robust defense of the president in media appearances, at times delivering dizzying rebuttals while once extolling the virtues of "alternative facts" to support her case. Conway was also an informal adviser to the president's reelection effort but resisted moving over to the campaign.

Her exit was first reported by The Washington Post.

Families confront New Zealand mosque shooter at sentencing

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand (AP) — Families and survivors had their first chance to confront the white supremacist who slaughtered 51 worshippers in a mass shooting at two New Zealand mosques as his four-day sentencing hearing began Monday.

"You killed your own humanity, and I don't think the world will forgive you for your horrible crime," said a tearful Maysoon Salama, the mother of 33-year-old Atta Elayyan, who was killed in March 2019 attacks. "You thought you can break us. You failed miserably."

The gunman, 29-year-old Australian Brenton Harrison Tarrant, pleaded guilty in March to 51 counts of murder, 40 counts of attempted murder and one count of terrorism — the first terrorism conviction in New Zealand's history. He could become the first person in New Zealand to be sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, the toughest sentence available.

Tarrant was brought into the Christchurch High Court shackled and wearing a gray prison outfit. In the dock, unshackled and surrounded by five officers, he showed little emotion throughout the hearing. He occasionally looked around the room, tapped his fingers, and watched the survivors as they spoke.

The courtroom was only half full due to coronavirus distancing requirements, while many others watched from adjacent courtrooms where the hearing was streamed. Survivors and family members occasionally wept and comforted each other.

Two dozen victims and family members told the court about the pain of losing husbands, wives, sons and brothers. Some had family members around them for support, others spoke through translators or on pre-recorded videos from abroad.

One of those was grandmother Saira Patel, who spoke from Melbourne in Australia and described the moment she thought she would die in the Linwood mosque.

"I stretched both my arms toward my husband so we would die together," she said.

But it was her husband of 36 years, Musa, who was shot in the back. When paramedics arrived, she said, they told her to push on the bullet hole to lessen the bleeding, but her hands kept slipping with all the blood. When they took over, she said, she held her husband's warm hands until they dropped. He had died.

"I'm still searching for my husband's beautiful face in the crowds, but he's nowhere to be seen," she said.

Some speakers raised their voices in anger when they addressed the gunman. One said nothing less than the death penalty would be fair. Janna Ezat, whose son Hussein Al-Umari was killed, looked at Tarrant and spoke softly.

"I forgive you," she said. "The damage is done, Hussein will never be here. I only have one choice and

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that is to forgive.”

Monday’s hearing began with prosecutors outlining the attacks in a 26-page summary of facts, the first detailed account by authorities about what happened that day, including the revelation that Tarrant had intended to burn down the mosques.

Crown prosecutor Barnaby Hawes said Tarrant moved to New Zealand in 2017 and began buying an arsenal of high-powered weapons, as well as 7,000 rounds of ammunition.

Two months before the attacks, Tarrant flew a drone directly over the Al Noor mosque, recording an aerial view of the grounds and buildings and taking note of the entry and exit doors, Hawes said.

Hawes said the gunman planned his attacks for when the maximum number of worshippers were present, and that 190 people were in the Al Noor mosque for Friday prayers on the day of the attacks.

In his car, the gunman had six guns — two AR-15 rifles, two other rifles, and two shotguns, the court heard. He also brought with him four modified gas containers that he planned to use to burn down the mosques after he finished shooting, Hawes said. The gunman later told police he wished he had used them and that he wished he’d shot more people.

Hawes also detailed the bravery of Naeem Rashid, who was killed at the Al Noor mosque.

“He ran at the defendant from the southeastern corner of the room. When Mr. Rashid was approximately 1 meter from the defendant, the defendant swung the AR-15 around and fired four shots at point-blank range,” Hawes said.

“Mr. Rashid crashed into the defendant and the defendant went down on one knee,” Hawes said, adding that Tarrant was able to get back up and shoot Rashid again.

At the second mosque, Abdul Aziz chased Tarrant down the driveway screaming at him, prosecutors said, and threw a discarded rifle at his car, shattering a window. Aziz was not injured.

Tarrant has dismissed his lawyers and is representing himself during the sentencing, raising fears he could try to use the occasion as a platform to promote his racist views. He can choose to speak once the survivors have spoken, although the judge will likely shut down any attempts he makes to grandstand.

New Zealand abolished the death penalty for murder in 1961, and the longest sentence imposed since then has been life imprisonment with a minimum 30-year non-parole period. Justice Cameron Mander will decide on the gunman’s sentence at the end of the hearing.

The attacks targeting people praying at the Al Noor and Linwood mosques shocked New Zealand and prompted new laws banning the deadliest types of semi-automatic weapons. They also prompted global changes to social media protocols after the gunman livestreamed his attack on Facebook, where it was viewed by hundreds of thousands of people.

Prosecutors said that after Tarrant left the Linwood mosque he planned to drive to the town of Ashburton and attack a third mosque. But he was rammed by two police officers, dragged out of his car and arrested.

Gamal Fouda, the imam of the Al Noor mosque who survived the shooting, told the court that the gunman’s actions were misguided.

“We are a peaceful and loving community who did not deserve your actions,” Fouda said. “Your hatred is unnecessary. If you have done anything, you have brought the world community closer with your evil actions.”

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Aug. 25, the 238th day of 2020. There are 128 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On August 25, 1944, during World War II, Paris was liberated by Allied forces after four years of Nazi occupation.

On this date:

In 1718, hundreds of French colonists arrived in Louisiana, with some settling in present-day New Orleans.

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In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed an act establishing the National Park Service within the Department of the Interior.

In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a measure providing pensions for former U.S. presidents and their widows.

In 1967, George Lincoln Rockwell, founder of the American Nazi Party, was shot to death in the parking lot of a shopping center in Arlington, Virginia; former party member John Patler was later convicted of the killing.

In 1980, the Broadway musical "42nd Street" opened. (Producer David Merrick stunned the cast and audience during the curtain call by announcing that the show's director, Gower Champion, had died earlier that day.)

In 1981, the U.S. spacecraft Voyager 2 came within 63,000 miles of Saturn's cloud cover, sending back pictures of and data about the ringed planet.

In 2001, rhythm-and-blues singer Aaliyah (ah-LEE'-yah) was killed with eight others in a plane crash in the Bahamas; she was 22.

In 2012, Neil Armstrong, 82, who commanded the historic Apollo 11 lunar landing and was the first man to set foot on the moon in July 1969, died in Cincinnati, Ohio.

In 2009, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, the liberal lion of the U.S. Senate, died at age 77 in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts, after a battle with a brain tumor.

In 2014, a funeral was held in St. Louis for Michael Brown, the Black 18-year-old who was shot to death by a police officer in suburban Ferguson.

In 2017, Hurricane Harvey, the fiercest hurricane to hit the U.S. in more than a decade, made landfall near Corpus Christi, Texas, with 130 mph sustained winds; the storm would deliver five days of rain totaling close to 52 inches, the heaviest tropical downpour ever recorded in the continental U.S. The hurricane left at least 68 people dead and caused an estimated \$125 billion in damage in Texas.

In 2018, Sen. John McCain of Arizona, who had spent years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam before a 35-year political career that took him to the Republican presidential nomination, died at the age of 81 after battling brain cancer for more than a year.

Ten years ago: North Korea welcomed Jimmy Carter back to Pyongyang as the former U.S. president arrived to bring home Aijalon Mahli Gomes (EYE'-jah-lahn MAH'-lee gohms), an American jailed in the communist country since January 2010 for entering the country illegally from China.

Five years ago: French authorities formally opened a terrorism investigation into a foiled attack four days earlier; a prosecutor said minutes before he slung an assault rifle across his chest and walked through a high-speed train, suspect Ayoub El-Khazzani of Morocco had watched a jihadi video on his cellphone.

One year ago: Thousands turned out for a benefit hosted by comedian Dave Chappelle in Dayton, Ohio, for victims' families and survivors of a shooting rampage earlier in the month that killed nine people and left dozens injured. Joe Walsh, a former Illinois congressman and tea party favorite who'd become a radio talk show host, announced a challenge to President Donald Trump for the Republican nomination in 2020, saying Trump was unfit for office. (Walsh ended his challenge six months later.) Opera star Placido Domingo received a standing ovation as he took to the stage at the Salzburg Festival in Austria, his first performance since nine women accused him of sexual harassment in a report by The Associated Press. A team from suburban New Orleans defeated Curacao 8-0 to claim the Little League World Series title.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Sean Connery is 90. Actor Tom Skerritt is 87. Jazz musician Wayne Shorter is 87. Movie director Hugh Hudson is 84. Author Frederick Forsyth is 82. Movie director John Badham is 81. Filmmaker Marshall Brickman is 81. Rhythm-and-blues singer Walter Williams (The O'Jays) is 77. Actor Anthony Heald (held) is 76. Rock singer-actor Gene Simmons is 71. Actor John Savage is 71. Author Martin Amis (AY'-mihs) is 71. Country singer-musician Henry Paul (Outlaws; Blackhawk) is 71. Rock singer Rob Halford is 69. Rock musician Geoff Downes (Asia) is 68. Rock singer Elvis Costello is 66. Movie director Tim Burton is 62. Actor Christian LeBlanc is 62. Actor Ashley Crow is 60. Actor Ally Walker is 59. Country singer Cyrus (AKA Billy Ray Cyrus) is 59. Actor Joanne Whalley is 59. Rock musician Vivian Campbell (Def Leppard) is 58. Actor Blair Underwood is 56. Actor Robert Maschio is 54. Rap DJ Terminator X (Public

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Enemy) is 54. Alternative country singer Jeff Tweedy (Wilco) is 53. Actor David Alan Basche (BAYSH) is 52. Television chef Rachael Ray is 52. Actor Cameron Mathison is 51. Country singer Jo Dee Messina is 50. Model Claudia Schiffer is 50. Country singer Brice Long is 49. Actor-writer-director Ben Falcone (fal-KOHN') is 47. Actor Eric Millegan is 46. Actor Alexander Skarsgard is 44. Actor Jonathan Togo is 43. Actor Kel Mitchell is 42. Actor Rachel Bilson is 39. Actor Blake Lively is 33. Actor Josh Flitter is 26.