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**Groton Football Team defeated
EEK last night, 48-16.
The girls volleyball team
defeated Britton-Hecla, 3-0, on
Thursday.
We are livestreaming girls
soccer today.**



"THE ONLY PERSON YOU SHOULD
TRY TO BE BETTER THAN IS THE
PERSON YOU WERE YESTERDAY."
-AUTHOR UNKNOWN



Girls Soccer: Vermillion vs. Groton Area
1 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 29, 2020
Groton Soccer Complex

Sponsored By these girls junior parents:
Tricia and Bary Keith, Sadie and Nick Leicht
Karla and Russell Davidson, Tammy and Matt Locke
Bridget and Jeff Flihs.

Simulcasting locally on 89.3 FM

[Click here for the program](#)

CLOSED: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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From the S.D. Dept. of Tourism

It has been another busy week in the department as we prepared for the launch of our first ever national television buy. The ad features Governor Noem inviting people from around the country to consider South Dakota as a place to live, work, and safely explore. The spot began running on Fox News this week and will expand to other national cable outlets in the coming days. We are excited for this opportunity to showcase our beautiful state with so many who may be seeing our Great Faces and Great Places for the first time.

We hope you have found our COVID-19 Weekly Research Report to be helpful over the past few months as we navigate the pandemic together. Moving forward, we plan to send these bi-monthly, so look for the next update on September 11th. Here are this week's highlights:

For the week ending August 22, national travel spending remained unchanged from the prior week with travel spending being down -44% year-over-year.

Americans who feel the coronavirus situation will get worse in the next month dropped from 49% to 43% this week.

Total domestic air and hotel bookings in the U.S. were up 7.3% last week compared to the previous week, but still down 66% year-over-year.

Domestic bookings to Wyoming (-4%) Montana (-5%) and South Dakota (-21%) exhibited, by far, the lowest year-over-year declines.

International bookings for future travel to the U.S. increased by 6%, but were still down -76% compared to last year.

Last week, web traffic to TravelSouthDakota.com increased +97% versus the same time period last year.

93% of those who visited Mount Rushmore National Memorial since the start of the pandemic have traveled more than 200 miles, with the top 5 DMAs of origin being Minneapolis (8%), Denver (6%), Rapid City (5%), Chicago (4%) and Sioux Falls (4%).

Traffic to national parks continues to be predominantly from tourists (75%) vs. locals (25%), with more than 70% driving more than 100 miles to visit.

Close to half of all Americans (48%) state they are ready to attend conferences or conventions in-person.

Thank you to our research partners for providing this information: H2R Market Research, Tourism Economics, Destination Analysts, STR, U.S. Travel Association, Arrivalist, Miles Partnership, MMGY Travel Intelligence, ADARA, and Longwoods International.

Have a great last weekend of August!

All our best,

Jim and Team

Jim Hagen
Secretary of Tourism

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#187 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

More of the same: 37,600 new cases today, 0.6% increase to 5,916,400. Looks like Tuesday will be six-million-day. We've leveled off, which is better than increasing forever; but we've leveled off at a really high number of new case reports. At the spring peak, on April 10, the seven-day average for new cases was 31,473. At our lowest point since, on May 28, the seven-day average was 20,754; I was thinking that was a lot—way too many. And then we started the latest climb; our first 40,000+ day was June 25, and we've been below that on only a handful of days since. We hit our new, towering, peak seven-day average of 66,776 on July 25, and today that average sits at 45,604, down from last week, but still about 14,000 higher than the spring peak. We are not in good shape here; this cannot be the new normal.

Iowa has the highest seven-day average number of new cases per 100,000 population of any state and also reported a record single-day number of new cases this week. Next highest seven-day averages per 100,000 belong to North Dakota, Mississippi, Alabama, and South Dakota. Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota all also reported record single-day new case numbers this week.

We reported 1049 new deaths today, a 0.6% increase to 181,684. Again, this has leveled off, but it's leveled off at a huge number. While the seven-day average is well off the spring peak on April 17 of 2289, we're still over 1000 almost every day with a current seven-day average of 1127. It's hard to say "only" 1100 people are dying each day and feel OK about that.

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, which has done highly-regarded modeling throughout this pandemic and has been cited by the White House task force, has produced a new set of projections. It looks a bit worse than last week's number; they're now projecting 317,312 may die by December and still projecting daily deaths will pass 2000 again this year. They're also projecting we'll hit 200,000 around the middle of next month, which is just about where I had things. (If I should ever disagree with IHME and tell you about it—which is not likely—ignore me. These folks know their stuff.) Modelers, of course, are not seers; so if we wise up and start doing some things to mitigate spread, this projection does not have to become reality. I'll admit however, I am not particularly hopeful that we, individually, have suffered enough yet that we're finally willing to make some modicum of sacrifice to stop this thing. And if we're not willing to sacrifice to spare ourselves, I'm thinking we are even less willing to make any sort of sacrifice for the good of other people. I feel like it's going to get much worse before it gets better.

There has been widespread consternation about the changes in testing guidelines from the CDC this past week. The National Association of County and City Health Officials and the Big Cities Health Coalition sent a letter today to the CDC to express that they are "incredibly concerned with both the impact and the process" of the change. They mentioned the lack of evidence cited for the change and say that suggesting close contacts of confirmed cases do not need testing is "inconsistent with the science and the data." They urged a change of course in the letter.

They weren't the only ones. The President of the American Academy of Pediatrics also issued a statement, saying in part, "The inexplicable decision by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to advise against testing individuals who have been exposed to the virus but who are asymptomatic is a dangerous step backward in our efforts to control this deadly virus." She linked adequate testing to being able to open schools and keep them open, citing the importance of being in school to children's development. "To control this virus, so that we can safely re-open schools and resume activities that allow children to be healthy and happy, we need the ability to conduct widespread testing and collect more information—not less."

And on the subject of testing, a research team at Yale University has evidence saliva tests are as effective as nasal swabs. They collected saliva and nasopharyngeal swabs from patients at the same time and compared the results, finding the saliva was as useful for detecting virus. They also reported that up to 10 days after diagnosis, a higher percentage of saliva samples were positive than nasopharyngeal swabs. I have not had a Covid-19 test, but I gather from those who have that the specimen collection process

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is something less fun than your average party. Additionally, swabs have, from time to time, been in short supply, so a test that obviates the need for a swab is also going to have fewer supply chain issues. I am going to guess that on both counts an alternative would be welcomed.

I have an update on that Maine wedding that led to a cluster of cases. There were 65 people at the wedding; 30 of those became infected. Those people infected 35 others, and those cases infected another 22 people. That means we're up to 87 cases stemming from a single event, 18 of them in a prison where people are sitting ducks with little ability to practice distancing or other mitigation strategies. Fifty-nine of those 87 cases have shown symptoms, and one has died. That's a lot of trouble arising out of just one event. I am returning repeatedly to this one outbreak because it is an excellent illustration of how a single decision can have far-ranging impacts on others. There are people now sick in this outbreak who never met the happy couple, and there will likely be more. There's a lesson here for all of us.

We've talked on a few occasions about the potential to use wastewater analysis to catch outbreaks of Covid-19 early before there's been much spread; and now the University of Arizona is applying that technology to its campus. They're screening the sewage from each dorm for viral traces, the principle being that even asymptomatic individuals shed viral fragments in their feces which can be detected in sewage. Earlier this week, the wastewater from one dorm tested positive, so the school tested everyone who lives in that residence hall, identifying two asymptomatic people who were quarantined. So it appears this early warning system has benefits. It is being given a trial in various other locations across the country (and the world). With luck, measures like this one can help to keep schools open and people healthy.

We now have a confirmed case of reinfection in the US. Once again, as with the Hong Kong case recently confirmed that we talked about a few days ago, this is a person infected with a different strain each time, so we're sure it's not just a result of faulty testing or a reactivation of a not-quite-gone infection. The person is a 25-year-old in Nevada who, unlike the Hong Kong case, became quite ill the second time, just a couple of months after recovering from the initial infection. We do not at this time have information about underlying conditions that may have played a role in this man's outcomes. We are still regarding these as rare events, but this heightens the alert level for these cases.

The antiviral drug, remdesivir, has been approved under an emergency use authorization (EUA) for use in seriously ill hospitalized patients since May. That EUA was updated today to include moderately ill hospitalized patients as well. There is some preliminary data available from studies indicating it may be beneficial as a therapeutic, but results have been mixed. Until we have randomized clinical trials, where some patients are given the drug and others a placebo, we cannot know for sure whether and how much benefit it might offer. Of course, the expanded EUA makes it that much more difficult to enroll patients in such a trial: Who wants to sign up for a clinical trial where there's a 50:50 chance you'll receive a placebo when you can instead be sure of getting the drug under the EUA? The other large drawback of using the drug is that it is extremely expensive, thousands of dollars to treat just one patient.

Amy Miccalef is a Broadway costumer and crafts person; her job is to make costumes, decorate them with sequins, feathers, rhinestones, and whatever else they need, then dress the actors. She loves the camaraderie and the sense of purpose the job gives her—when she has a job, which at the moment, she does not. Broadway's been shut down for months and expects to be shut down for months more. She says, "We make magic—eight times a week. And that's gone. . . . We don't know if it's coming back. . . . When the pandemic hit, I lost everything—sense of community, sense of purpose."

Amy does have a side-hustle though, and it all started over ten years ago when her dad got sick and ended up having his colon and spleen removed. It was Christmas time, and she said, "What do you get a guy who's got everything except a colon and a spleen?" She made him one of each out of plush. She reports, "He just cried a little bit, hung 'em on the IV pole, and said, 'What do I gotta do to get out of here?'" The nurses caring for Dad loved them and kept encouraging her to sell them online. She said, "Who's gonna' buy a plush colon?" The answer: "Everyone wants a plush colon." She expanded her offerings and had been filling orders ever week, "just for basic organs."

I had a look at the website, and I have to say her plush organs have an odd charm: Colin the Colon,

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Gene the Spleen, Charles De Gall-bladder, Gaspar the Stomach, and (my personal favorite) The Ileum and the Ostomy—that one's almost out-of-stock, so apparently it's very popular. Who knew this was even a thing? Not I. Pretty fun little sideline for someone who loves to sew. I imagine it helps pay the rent too.

So when the pandemic took her job and her community away, Amy displayed the same sort of resilience her dad showed, once he'd received his new organs from her. She decided to introduce a new project, Vlad the Inhaler. That's right: a plush coronavirus for people to beat up. Oh, and one more new product: "I made the antibody. For hope."

Keep your spirits up too. Stay well. We'll talk again.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Aug. 26	Aug. 27	Aug. 28	Aug. 29			
Minnesota	70,707	71,236	72,390	73,240			
Nebraska	32,348	32,727	33,101	33,436			
Montana	6,624	6,785	6,929	7,063			
Colorado	55,800	55,993	56,343	56,773			
Wyoming	3,089	3,135	3,166	3,196			
North Dakota	10,229	10,467	10,800	11,109	11,484		
South Dakota	11,505	11,571	12,194	12,517			
United States	5,779,395	5,823,685	5,869,692	5,919,670			
US Deaths	178,533	179,743	180,857	181,798			
Minnesota	+409	+529	+1,154	+850			
Nebraska	+301	+379	+374	+335			
Montana	+135	+161	+144	+134			
Colorado	+459	+193	+350	+430			
Wyoming	+21	+46	+31	+30			
North Dakota	+229	+238	+333	+309	+375		
South Dakota	80	+66	+623	+323			
United States	+41,339	+44,290	+46,007	+49,978			
US Deaths	+1,504	+1,210	+1,114	+941			
	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 28th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Numbers remain high in South Dakota. Yesterday's numbers reflected three days worth of figures as they had a glitch in the system. Today reflects only the last 24 hours. Three deaths in South Dakota - one in the over 80 age group, one in the 50s and one in the 30s. One was in Hughes County, one in Fall River County and one in Clay County.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +14 (618) Positivity Rate: 11.6%
Recovered: +11 (506)
Active Cases: +3 (109)
Total Tests: 121 (7387)
Ever Hospitalized: 0 (24)
Deaths: 0 (3)
Percent Recovered: 81.9% (---)

South Dakota:

Positive: +323 (12,517 total) Positivity Rates: 12.8%
Total Tests: 2,524 (186,442 total)
Hospitalized: +12 (995 total). 80 currently hospitalized (up 5 from yesterday)
Deaths: +3 (165 total)
Recovered: +138 (10,170 total)
Active Cases: +182 (2,182)
Percent Recovered: 821.2 -1.0
Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 3% Covid, 51% Non-Covid, 45% Available
ICU Bed Capacity: 4% Covid, 67% Non-Covid, 29% Available
Ventilator Capacity: 5% Covid, 16% Non-Covid, 79% Available

Fully recovered from positive cases: Lost Miner, Sanborn, Gained Jerauld) Campbell 4-4, Harding 2-2, Jackosn 12-11-1, Hyde 3-3, Jerauld 40-39-1, Mellette 24-24, Perkins 4-4, Tripp 20-20.

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

Aurora: +1 recovered (1 active case)
Beadle (9): +8 positive, +1 recovered (28 active cases)
Bennett: +2 positive (13 active cases)
Bon Homme (1): +2 positive, +2 recovered (18 active cases)
Brookings (1): +16 positive, +6 recovered (69 active cases)
Brown (3): +14 positive, +11 recovered (109 active cases)
Brule: +4 positive (14 active cases)
Buffalo (3): 4 active cases
Butte (1): +3 positive (25 active cases)
Campbell: Fully Recovered
Charles Mix: +2 positive (16 active cases)
Clark: +1 positive (3 active cases)
Clay (2): +22 positive, +2 recovered (117 active cases)
Codington (1): +23 positive, +2 recovered (94 active cases)
Corson: 7 active cases
Custer: +6 positive, +3 recovered (59 active case)
Davison (2): +5 positive +1 recovered (24 active cases)
Day: +1 positive, +1 recovered (4 active cases)
Deuel: +1 recovered (11 active cases)
Dewey: +1 positive, +5 recovered (32 active cases)

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Douglas: +2 positive (8 active cases)
 Edmunds: +4 positive (8 active cases)
 Fall River (1): 7 active cases
 Faulk (1): +1 positive (4 active cases)
 Grant: 9 active cases
 Gregory: +2 positive (8 active cases)
 Haakon: +1 positive, +1 recovered (3 active cases)
 Hamlin: +1 positive, +2 recovered (16 active cases)
 Hand: -1 positive (2 active cases)
 Hanson: 4 active cases
 Harding: Fully Recovered
 Hughes (4): +3 positive (23 active cases)
 Hutchinson (1): 4 active cases
 Hyde: 1 active case
 Jackson (1): Fully Recovered
 Jerauld (1): +1 recovered (FULLY RECOVERED)
 Jones: 1 active case
 Kingsbury: 6 active cases
 Lake (6): -2 positive (4 active cases)
 Lawrence (2): +19 positive, +7 recovered (76 active cases)
 Lincoln (2): +14 positive, +15 recovered (117 active cases)
 Lyman (3): +3 positive, +1 recovered (15 active cases)
 Marshall: +1 recovered (5 active cases)
 McCook (1): +3 positive, +2 recovered (7 active cases)
 McPherson: 3 active cases.
 Meade (1): +14 positive, +7 recovered (120 active cases)
 Mellette: Fully Recovered
 Miner: +1 positive (1 active case)
 Minnehaha (69): +51 positive, +59 recovered (463

active cases)
 Moody: +2 positive (7 active cases)
 Oglala Lakota (2): +3 positive (24 active cases)
 Pennington (33): +73 positive, +17 recovered (345 active cases)
 Perkins: +1 positive (9 active cases)
 Potter: 5 active cases
 Roberts (1): 11 active cases
 Sanborn: +1 positive (1 active case)
 Spink: +3 positive, +1 recovered (19 active cases)
 Stanley: 1 active cases
 Sully: 3 active cases
 Todd (5): +1 positive, +1 recovered (3 active cases)
 Tripp: Fully Recovered
 Turner: +2 recovered (12 active cases)
 Union (4): +5 positive, +1 recovered (32 active cases)
 Walworth: +1 positive, +2 recovered (16 active cases)
 Yankton (3): +6 positive, +3 recovered (7 active cases)
 Ziebach: +1 positive (13 active cases)

**North Dakota Dept. of Health Report
 COVID-19 Daily Report, August 28:**

- 7,885 tests (1,437)
- 11,110 positives (+314)
- 8,808 recovered (+142)
- 139 deaths (+0)
- 2,163 active cases (+168)

0-9 years	431	0
10-19 years	1187	0
20-29 years	2956	2
30-39 years	2377	7
40-49 years	1807	7
50-59 years	1785	19
60-69 years	1080	29
70-79 years	481	26
80+ years	413	75

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	6273	83
Male	6244	82

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread
Aurora	42	41	420	0	Minimal
Beadle	629	592	2021	9	Moderate
Bennett	20	7	556	0	Moderate
Bon Homme	49	30	944	1	Substantial
Brookings	240	170	3203	1	Moderate
Brown	618	506	5219	3	Substantial
Brule	59	45	821	0	Minimal
Buffalo	109	102	672	3	None
Butte	44	18	888	1	Moderate
Campbell	4	4	111	0	Minimal
Charles Mix	119	103	1636	0	Minimal
Clark	19	16	428	0	Minimal
Clay	252	133	1613	2	Substantial
Codington	266	171	3297	1	Substantial
Corson	52	45	603	0	Moderate
Custer	110	51	843	0	Substantial
Davison	126	100	2607	2	Moderate
Day	35	29	714	0	Moderate
Deuel	38	27	485	0	Substantial
Dewey	73	46	2458	0	Moderate
Douglas	25	17	441	0	Minimal
Edmunds	31	23	457	0	Moderate
Fall River	32	24	1098	1	None
Faulk	32	27	221	1	None
Grant	41	32	819	0	Moderate
Gregory	16	8	452	0	Minimal
Haakon	6	3	309	0	Minimal
Hamlin	49	33	771	0	Substantial
Hand	13	11	340	0	Minimal
Hanson	23	19	241	0	Minimal
Harding	2	2	59	0	None
Hughes	124	97	2029	4	Moderate
Hutchinson	36	31	982	1	Moderate

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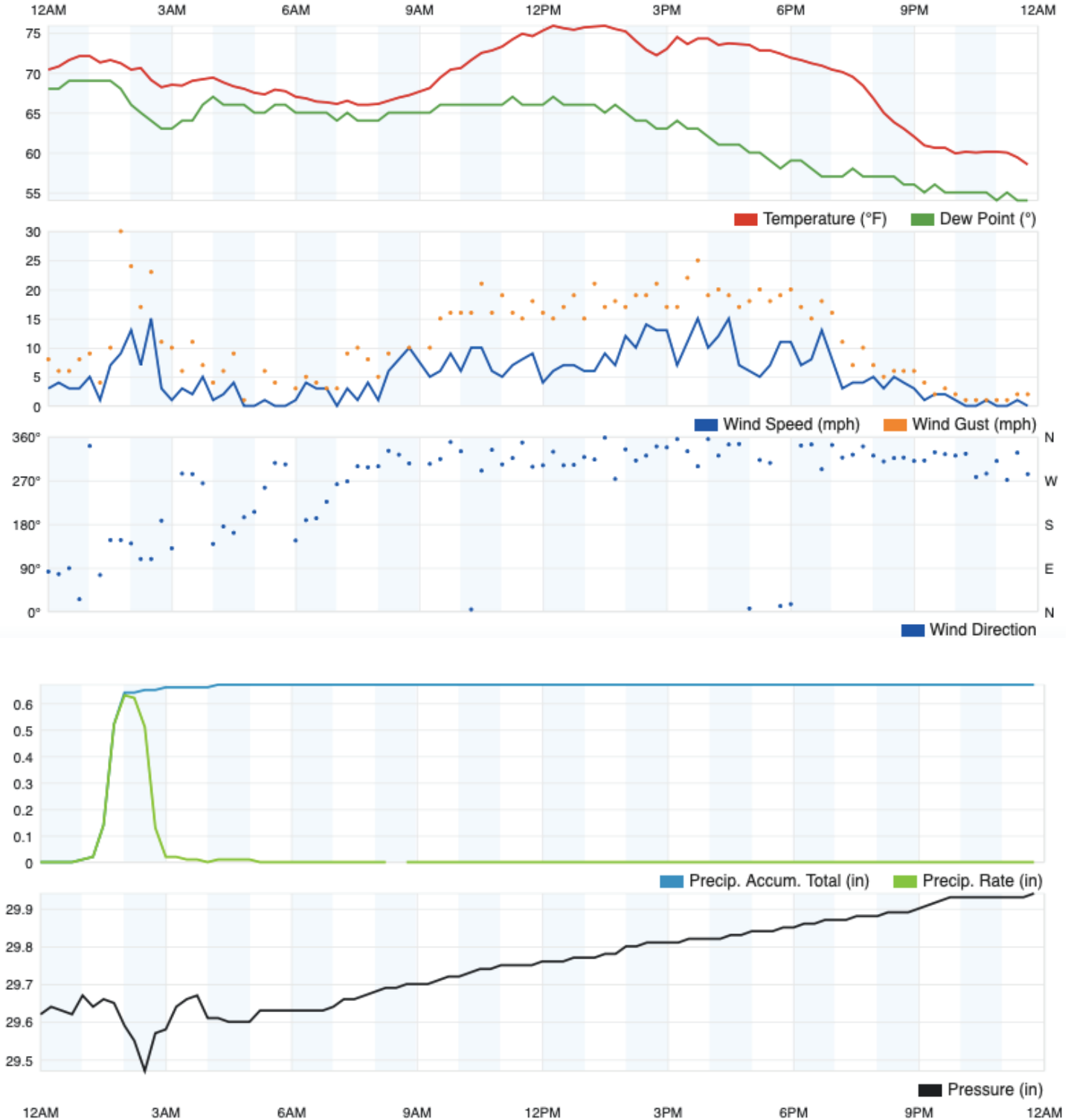
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Hyde	5	4	159	0	Minimal
Jackson	12	11	489	1	None
Jerauld	40	39	287	1	Minimal
Jones	3	2	66	0	Minimal
Kingsbury	21	15	632	0	Minimal
Lake	111	97	1044	6	Moderate
Lawrence	190	79	2369	2	Substantial
Lincoln	844	725	7850	2	Substantial
Lyman	102	84	1052	3	Minimal
Marshall	16	11	512	0	Minimal
McCook	44	36	704	1	Minimal
McPherson	10	7	243	0	Minimal
Meade	261	120	2273	1	Substantial
Mellette	24	24	404	0	None
Miner	16	15	271	0	None
Minnehaha	5079	4529	31157	70	Substantial
Moody	41	34	705	0	Moderate
Oglala Lakota	172	146	3052	2	Moderate
Pennington	1284	906	12233	33	Moderate
Perkins	14	5	223	0	Minimal
Potter	7	2	334	0	Minimal
Roberts	93	81	2090	1	Minimal
Sanborn	14	13	252	0	None
Spink	47	28	1289	0	Moderate
Stanley	20	19	301	0	Moderate
Sully	8	5	100	0	Minimal
Todd	78	70	2418	5	Minimal
Tripp	20	20	648	0	None
Turner	74	62	1023	0	Substantial
Union	249	213	2181	4	Moderate
Walworth	38	22	845	0	Substantial
Yankton	199	149	3496	3	Substantial
Ziebach	47	34	429	0	Substantial
Unassigned	0	0	11534	0	

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny

High: 79 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 56 °F

Sunday



Breezy. Sunny then Chance T-storms

High: 83 °F

Sunday Night



Showers Likely and Breezy

Low: 48 °F

Monday



Mostly Sunny

High: 72 °F

The graphic features a background image of a cornfield on the left and a sky with large, white cumulus clouds on the right. A dark grey text box in the upper right corner contains the text: "Sunday: Highs in the 80s. Chance of thunderstorms. Severe storms possible." A green text box in the lower left corner contains the text: "Today: Mostly sunny Highs: Mid 70s to the mid 80s". At the bottom, a dark grey bar contains the text: "National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD" and "weather.gov/abr".

A mostly sunny sky is expected today with highs reaching the mid 70s to the mid 80s. A cold front sliding across the region on Sunday will bring a chance of thunderstorms in the afternoon and evening hours. Some storms could be strong to severe.

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Today in Weather History

August 29, 1983: A devastating hail storm struck portions of central South Dakota. In a small part of Faulk County, hail pounded the area for two straight hours. At times, the hail was the size of baseballs. Of course, this incredible hailstorm devastated crops in the area and took out windows in area buildings. In one home, the windows were shattered, the curtains shredded, and glass shards and water ruined much of the upper floor. On some houses, the paint was peeled off by the continual pounding of the hail. Also, funnel clouds were reported just east of Lake City, and near Langford and Veblen in Marshall County. In Veblen, a pole barn was blown over, and shingles were torn off.

August 29, 1993: A severe thunderstorm hit Groton with hail, damaging lightning, and 3.43 inches of rain which flooded some basements. At the high school, lightning spits a 30-foot chimney which fell through a large skylight and sections of the roof.

1960: The storm that would become Hurricane Donna forms near Cape Verde off the African coast. It would go on to cause 150 deaths from Puerto Rico to New England over the next two weeks.

2005: Hurricane Katrina makes landfall near New Orleans, Louisiana, as a Category 3 hurricane. Despite being only the third most powerful storm of the 2005 hurricane season, Katrina was one of the worst natural disasters in the history of the United States.

1962 - Hackberry, LA, was deluged with twenty-two inches of rain in 24 hours, establishing a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1965 - A national record for the month of August was established when 2.5 inches of snow fell atop Mount Washington NH. Temperatures in New England dipped to 39 degrees at Nantucket MA, and to 25 degrees in Vermont. For many location it was the earliest freeze of record. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Some of the most powerful thunderstorms in several years developed over the piedmont of North Carolina, and marched across central sections of the state during the late afternoon and evening hours. Baseball size hail was reported around Albemarle, while thunderstorm winds downed giant trees around High Falls. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Cool air invaded the north central U.S. Ten cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Bismarck ND with a reading of 33 degrees. Deerfield, a small town in the Black Hills of South Dakota, reported a low of 23 degrees. The remnants of Tropical Storm Chris drenched eastern Pennsylvania with up to five and a half inches of rain, and produced high winds which gusted to 90 mph, severely damaging a hundred boats in Anne Arundel County MD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Evening thunderstorms produced destructive lightning in West Virginia. The lightning caused widespread damage, particularly in Doddridge County. Numerous trees were downed closing many roads. Fire companies had a difficult time tending to the many homes and trailers on fire. Anchorage AK reported a record 9.60 inches of rain for the month of August. The average annual precipitation for Anchorage is just slightly more than fifteen inches. Three day rainfall totals in northwest Missouri ranged up to 8.20 inches at Maryville. (The National Weather Summary)

2005 - Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Plaquemines Parish in southeastern Louisiana early on the 29th with maximum sustained winds near 125 mph, a strong category-three, and the third most-intense landfalling hurricane in U.S. history. The center of the hurricane passed just east of New Orleans, where winds gusted over 100 mph. Widespread devastation and unprecedented flooding occurred, submerging at least 80 percent of the city as levees failed. Farther east, powerful winds and a devastating storm surge of 20-30 feet raked the Mississippi coastline, including Gulfport and Biloxi, where Gulf of Mexico floodwaters spread several miles inland. Rainfall amounts of 8-10 inches were common along and to the east of the storm's path. Katrina weakened to a tropical storm as it tracked northward through Mississippi and gradually lost its identity as it moved into the Tennessee Valley on the 30th.

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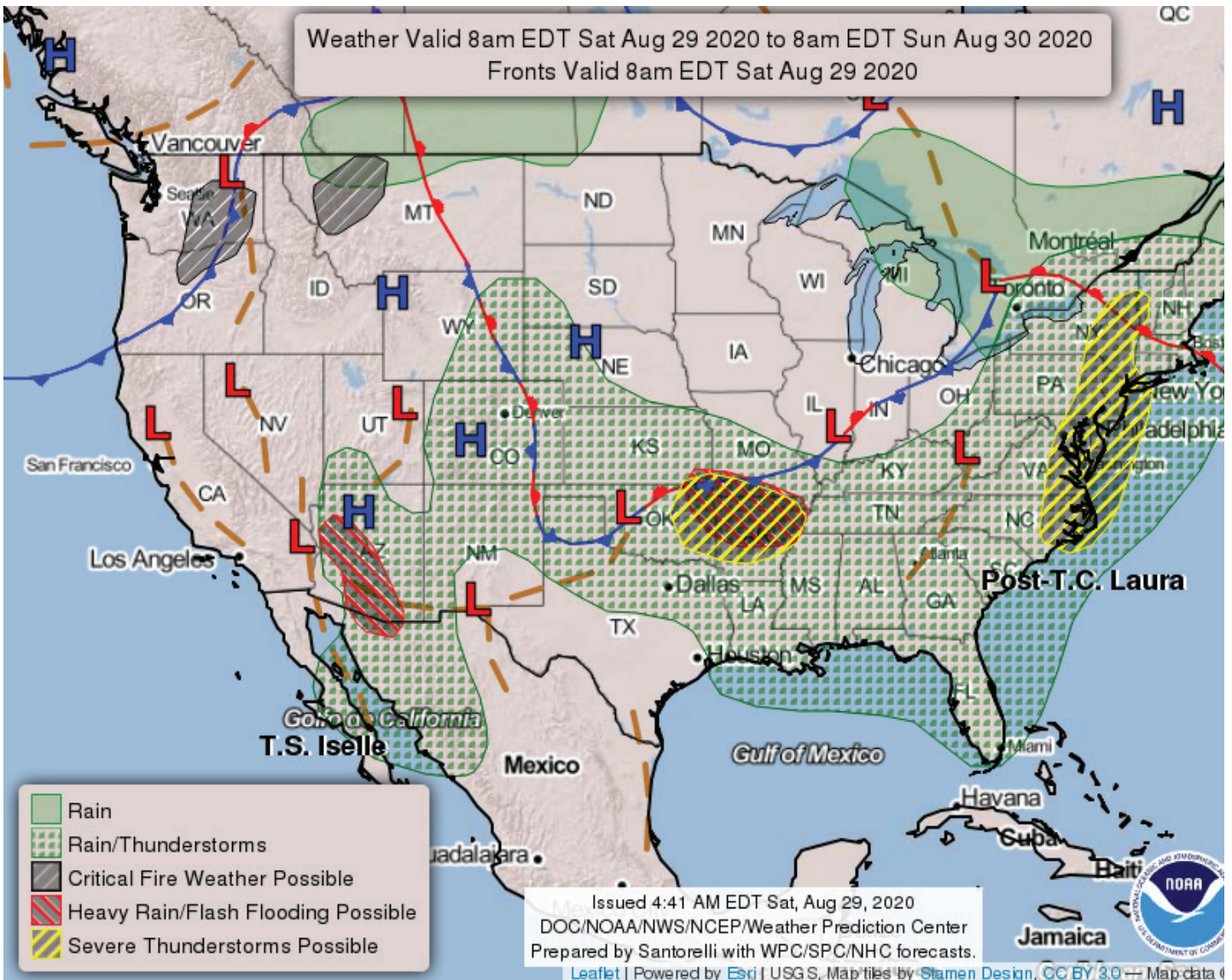
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 76 °F at 1:23 PM
Low Temp: 58 °F at 11:49 PM
Wind: 30 mph at 1:43 AM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 100° in 1961
Record Low: 30° in 1893
Average High: 79°F
Average Low: 53°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 2.19
Precip to date in Aug.: 2.37
Average Precip to date: 16.05
Precip Year to Date: 12.98
Sunset Tonight: 8:16 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:53 a.m.



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DIG DEEPER!

Henry was caught up in the gold rush. Shortly after arriving in California, he found a mine, staked a claim, and began digging. One day he found some ore, became excited, and believed he had struck it rich. He knew, without any doubt, that fame and fortune would soon be his.

He kept digging for a few weeks but eventually became discouraged and wanted to quit. Finally, a stranger approached him and offered to purchase his mine. In a moment of frustration, he agreed to sell his rights for \$11,000.00.

The new owner was excited about his purchase and began to dig where Henry stopped. And he kept digging for years and years. Eventually, the Comstock Mine produced 340 million dollars of gold!

Wanting to encourage the church in Galatia, the Apostle Paul wrote, "So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessings at the appropriate time."

We have all faced those times in our lives when we become discouraged and distressed at doing what we believe is the right thing to do. No one offers a word of thanks or encouragement, and there are no visible results to accompany our hard work. But Paul reminds us to keep on keeping on and doing good and then trust God for the results. Giving in or giving up or giving out is the sure way to forfeit the blessing that God will award us for being faithful.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may we be faithful to You in what You ask us to do. Protect us from allowing discouraging moments to destroy us and doubts to defeat us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessings at the appropriate time. Galatians 6:9

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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

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News from the Associated Press

South Dakota hospital system warns of surge in virus cases

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Monument Health leaders have told physicians and caregivers to prepare for a surge in coronavirus cases in the coming weeks.

The Rapid City Journal reports the warning came from system-wide email after a total of 60 physicians and caregivers tested positive for COVID-19 in August, including 44 in the past week.

Another 167 caregivers are being monitored following COVID-19 exposures either at work or in the community, the email said.

Brad Archer, chief medical officer, said in the email that the staff should be "extra diligent to protect your personal health."

The Rapid City-based health care system serves 20 communities in western South Dakota and eastern Wyoming. The company's website said it has more than 4,500 physicians and caregivers at five hospitals, eight specialty and surgical centers and more than 40 medical clinics and health care service centers.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

03-09-50-53-64, Mega Ball: 1, Megaplier: 3

(three, nine, fifty, fifty-three, sixty-four; Mega Ball: one; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$68 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$47 million

Friday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli 28, Webster 7

Alcester-Hudson 50, Centerville 2

Bon Homme 45, Menno/Marion 42

Bridgewater-Emery 34, Elk Point-Jefferson 6

Britton-Hecla 36, Waverly-South Shore 6

Brookings 32, Huron 23

Canistota 14, DeSmet 12

Chester 44, Avon 8

Corsica/Stickney 44, Irene-Wakonda 12

Dell Rapids 27, Lennox 18

Dell Rapids St. Mary 26, Castlewood 6

Edgemont 51, Crawford, Neb. 0

Florence/Henry 36, Deubrook 8

Gayville-Volin 12, Colman-Egan 6

Gregory 38, Burke 20

Groton Area 48, Ellendale/Edgeley/Kulm, N.D. 16

Hamlin 28, Deuel 24

Herreid/Selby Area 60, North Border 52

Hot Springs 13, Newcastle, Wyo. 7

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Howard 50, Scotland 0
Ipswich/Edmunds Central 42, Northwestern 0
Kadoka Area 36, Jones County/White River 8
Langford 41, Faulkton 12
Lemmon/McIntosh 70, Newell 0
Lyman 24, Kimball/White Lake 12
Madison 22, Dakota Valley 16
McCook Central/Montrose 64, Flandreau 12
Milbank 29, Wahpeton, N.D. 14
Mitchell 55, Douglas 28
Mobridge-Pollock 60, Miller/Highmore-Harrold 6
New Underwood 20, Rapid City Christian 7
O Gorman 43, Rapid City Stevens 0
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 48, Great Plains Lutheran 8
Parker 22, Elkton-Lake Benton 20
Philip 58, Hill City 12
Pierre 37, Sturgis Brown 0
Sioux Falls Washington 28, Aberdeen Central 21
Sioux Valley 12, Tri-Valley 6
Sisseton 34, Milnor-North Sargent, N.D. 14
Stanley County 14, Chamberlain 0
Tea Area 27, Canton 21
Timber Lake 64, Faith 14
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 26, Colome 20
Upton-Sundance, Wyo. 44, Lead-Deadwood 6
Vermillion 35, Belle Fourche 0
Viborg-Hurley 46, Arlington/Lake Preston 0
Wagner 40, Beresford 34
Wall 22, Sully Buttes 0
Warner 42, Potter County 0
West Central 42, Custer 19
Winner 36, St. Thomas More 7
Wolsey-Wessington 50, Hitchcock-Tulare 0
Woonsocket/Wessington Springs/Sanborn Central 20, Garretson 3
Yankton 58, Spearfish 10

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

NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week

By The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

CLAIM: More than 128 million people tuned in to watch the Republican National Convention's opening day, compared to just over 20 million who watched the Democratic National Convention.

THE FACTS: There's no data to back this up. In fact, available metrics show more viewers tuned into the first night of the DNC than the first night of the RNC. The Associated Press reported an estimated 17 million people watched the last hour of the Republican National Convention's opening night on Aug. 24 on

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television. That is lower than the estimated 19.7 million who tuned into the first night of the Democratic National Convention on Aug. 17. The estimates come from the Nielsen company, and account for viewers of 11 television networks. There is no way to truly calculate the total views across platforms, including all online streaming options. False claims circulated on Twitter and Facebook about viewership between the conventions. "Day 1 of the DNC: 21.4 Million Views. Day 1 of the RNC: 128.4 Million," reads one widely shared Facebook post. The AP could find no evidence for the 128.4 million figure cited in the post, which is six times greater than the figure listed for the DNC. A headline in The Hill did announce, "First night of GOP convention delivers nearly six times more views than start of Democrats' event on C-SPAN live stream." The article only referred to online C-SPAN views, which were 440,000 on the opening day of the RNC, compared to 76,000 for the DNC. Those numbers represent a small fraction of the millions of viewers who watched the conventions across multiple networks and platforms. It is possible that the 128.4 million figure in the post was generated by taking 21.4 million, which was a preliminary Nielsen estimate for the third night of the DNC, and multiplying it by six, based on a misunderstanding of the headlines about the C-SPAN numbers. Nielsen estimated the GOP enjoyed slightly more viewers than Democrats on the second night of conventions, when an estimated 19.4 million tuned into the RNC on television, versus 19.2 million who tuned into the DNC. Democrats had more viewers on the third night, with an estimated 22.8 million viewers compared to 17.3 million for Republicans. And on the final night of their respective events, the Democrats had 24.6 million viewers, while Republicans had 23.8 million.

— Associated Press writer Jude Joffe-Block reported this item from Berkeley, California.

CLAIM: Photos show four police officers who were injured by Democrats and Black Lives Matter rioters over the weekend in Portland, Seattle and nearby cities.

THE FACTS: The officers in the photos weren't injured at U.S. protests — in fact, they were on the other side of the world. The four photos in a post being shared on social media show police officers who sustained injuries in various parts of Australia in 2006, 2009, 2012 and 2019. On Aug. 25, a grid of the four photos, featuring bloodied and bandaged police officers, was circulating widely on Facebook with more than 1,200 shares and 56,000 views. "50 police officers were injured by Dems and BLM rioters over the weekend in Portland Seattle and other nearby cities," the caption read. "Pray for their safety." However, research into the origin of the photos reveals they were all taken in Australia — and not over the weekend. The photo on the top left shows a police officer kneeling in the street with his hand on his knee and his forehead dripping blood. It can be traced to a September 2012 protest in Sydney, where demonstrations against a film perceived as anti-Islamic grew violent, according to local news reports with the photo. The photo on the top right shows a police officer sitting indoors, her face covered in scratches and one hand stretched across her body to hold her other arm. Police released the photo in April 2019, after a man on parole in a Sydney suburb allegedly bit and scratched a 22-year-old officer during a welfare check, according to local reports featuring the image. In the bottom left of the grid is a photo of a police officer on what appears to be a hospital bed, his eyes closed and his uniform marred by dark stains. It stems from a Western Australia pub fight in March 2006 when a bar patron attacked a police officer trying to break up the clash, according to local news reports using the photo. The photo on the bottom right shows a police officer with swollen eyes and a bandage wrapped around the middle of his face. It was taken after a Christmas Day 2009 fight in Western Australia, which resulted in a police officer getting struck in the face with a brick, according to local news stories at the time. Though these photos don't relate to recent Black Lives Matter protests in the United States, several police officers have been injured in the demonstrations that have sprung up across the nation in the wake of George Floyd's death. The Associated Press has reported on several such incidents, including at protests in Seattle and Portland.

— Associated Press writer Ali Swenson reported this item from Seattle.

CLAIM: If a voter mails a ballot on Sunday and then shows up to a polling station to vote in person on Tuesday, election workers will not know whether the person has already voted.

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THE FACTS: Anyone who tries to vote twice with the intent of both ballots counting could be prosecuted for voter fraud, and there are checks in place to prevent a person from voting twice. When a voter shows up to vote in person, the poll book will typically indicate if the voter has been issued a vote-by-mail ballot — and may even show the poll worker if that ballot has already been processed. States vary on what happens next. In some states, a poll worker may be able to void the mailed ballot if the voter prefers to vote in person. In other states, the voter will be given a provisional ballot and election officials will later determine if the provisional ballot should be counted or not. Vote-by-mail ballots are verified before they are counted, and one check is whether the voter already voted. “States have different processes; they have their own ways of making sure that two ballots don’t get counted,” said Myrna Pérez, director of voting rights and elections at the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law. Yet social media users are sharing a post that suggests a loophole. “This is real — If I mail in my ballot on Sunday and show up to the polling station on Tuesday, they won’t know if I’ve already voted or not. That my friends...is a serious concern for all of us,” reads the inaccurate post. Matthew Weil, director of the Bipartisan Policy Center’s Elections Project warned that waiting until the Sunday before Election Day to mail a ballot will be too late in many states to have the ballot count. “I push people to vote by mail much earlier,” Weil said. Deadlines vary by state, and voting experts say voters should check the laws in their state.

— Jude Joffe-Block

CLAIM: Photos show after a recent motorcycle rally in Sturgis, South Dakota, the street was clean, while after protests in Seattle, the sidewalk was covered in mounds of trash.

THE FACTS: The photo that social media users claim shows Seattle was, in fact, taken clear across the country. It shows trash left on a street after a fire in the Greenpoint neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York — not in the Seattle neighborhood where protesters formed a self-declared autonomous zone earlier this year, as suggested by inaccurate social media posts. The photo was taken from a video shot in Brooklyn by Manny Lorrás, who captured the aftermath of a fire triggered by a cigarette thrown into trash. As for the photo from Sturgis, the exact date and time it was taken could not be determined, so it’s not clear whether it’s from after the 80th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. The Associated Press reported that thousands attended the rally from Aug. 7 to 16 despite coronavirus concerns. Each year the city measures how many people attended the event by weighing all the trash that’s generated, and this year, a city official said that total was 444 tons, down from 551 tons last year. The streets were cleaned afterward. Lorrás’ video, shot June 2, was shared by a neighborhood blog and Instagram account known as Greenpointers. “The large amount of trash sprawled across West Street on Tuesday morning was caused by a lit cigarette tossed from an apartment erupting the pile of trash bags in flames, surveillance video shows, and is apparently not related to the demonstrations last night,” said the Greenpointers Instagram post. The photo has also been shared falsely online with claims it showed the aftermath from other protests.

— Associated Press writer Beatrice Dupuy reported this item from New York.

CLAIM: Video shows oil rigs being evacuated during Hurricane Laura.

THE FACTS: No, the video wasn’t taken during that storm — or even in that part of the world. On Aug. 26, a Twitter user posted a video showing massive waves crashing against an oil rig and falsely claimed it was from Hurricane Laura. “Oil rigs evacuated ahead of soon to be Category 5 #HurricaneLaura. Potential environmental nightmare looming. Hope for the best,” the user tweeted. The false post had over 1,700 retweets on Twitter. In fact, the video shows waves hitting a swaying Borgholm Dolphin installation in the North Sea, about 145 miles east of Aberdeen, Scotland. Also, the video the Twitter user posted was stretched and mirrored, which exaggerated the impact of the waves. The BBC posted video of the incident to YouTube on January 12, 2015. One of the strongest hurricanes ever to strike the U.S., Laura roared ashore Thursday in Louisiana near the Texas border and pounded the Gulf Coast with wind and rain. The hurricane’s top wind speed of 150 mph (241 kph) put it among the most powerful systems on record in

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the U.S. Not until 11 hours after landfall did Laura finally weaken into a tropical storm as it churned toward Arkansas.

— Associated Press writer Arijeta Lajka reported this item from New York.

CLAIM: Kathy Hoffman, the state superintendent of Arizona public schools, “hates the Bible so much” that she swore her oath on a Dr. Seuss book. She is pushing child sex education that would teach kindergartners about masturbation and sex positions, and she wants to “put makeup on boys.”

THE FACTS: It’s true that Hoffman was sworn in using a children’s book, but it wasn’t one by Dr. Seuss. As for the sex education claims, these are “categorically false,” according to Richie Taylor, communications director for the superintendent. Hoffman has been a target of online hate and misinformation in recent weeks ever since endorsing the Democratic ticket for the presidency and criticizing President Donald Trump’s attempts to reopen schools. Posts with false information about Hoffman have amassed millions of views on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. They’ve also resulted in threatening messages sent to the superintendent’s office, according to Taylor. Several posts circulated the false claim that the schools chief “hates the Bible so much” she used a Dr. Seuss book for her swearing-in ceremony. The Associated Press reported in January 2019 that Hoffman took her oath with her hand on “Too Many Moose” by Lisa Bakos, a book she once used in her classroom to help students with speech impediments. There’s no evidence Hoffman’s feelings about the Bible played into the decision. According to the U.S. Constitution, “no religious test shall ever be required” for elected office in the United States. Therefore, putting a hand on the Bible during an oath of office is traditional, but not mandatory. Facebook posts also suggested Hoffman “is pushing sex education on kindergartners that includes teaching them masturbation and sexual positions.” That is false. In 2019, Hoffman asked the state board of education to consider a proposal to change the language in some of its sex education rules, according to AP reporting. The proposal included cutting language requiring boys and girls to be taught separately, adding a requirement for sex education to be medically accurate, and removing language that prohibits the “teaching of abnormal, deviate, or unusual sexual acts and practices.” It didn’t change an existing requirement that sex education be age-appropriate. The proposal was rejected by the board, and Hoffman has not advocated any further changes to the sex ed rules since then, according to Taylor. Sex education curriculum in Arizona is also optional and set at the local district level. If a district offers sex ed instruction, parents must opt in for their children to participate. A final claim in many false posts about Hoffman included that the schools chief wanted to “put makeup on boys to allow them to have a sexuality choice.” Taylor said Hoffman supports LGBTQ rights, but this particular claim is false. “She has not advocated for boys to wear makeup,” Taylor said. “Issues of sexual orientation or gender identity are personal and conversations around those issues should be between parents, students, and other trusted adults that know the individual situation of each student.”

— Ali Swenson

CLAIM: New York University has been working with a small, student-led task force to make racially segregated housing a reality in undergraduate student dorms.

THE FACTS: After a student group applied to establish a dorm floor around themes of Black history and culture earlier in the summer, NYU clarified such floors must be open to students of “all races and backgrounds.” On July 20, NYU’s student-run newspaper the Washington Square News wrote about a student group’s efforts to establish Black student housing for first-year students. According to the article, two students created an online petition demanding the housing because they felt the university didn’t provide adequate support for its Black students. A month later, an article on a website that describes itself as being associated with the “socialist movement” spun the report into the false claim that NYU intends to segregate its students based on race. “New York University moves to implement racial segregation in student dorms,” read the headline of the Aug. 24 article, which was captured in a screenshot and shared in an Instagram post viewed more than 100,000 times. “Since late June, the Office of Residential Life and Housing Services at New York University (NYU) has been working closely with a small, student-led task

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force to make racially segregated housing a reality in undergraduate student dorms," the article continued. This article is not true, according to a statement published the same day by NYU, which called the article "false and misleading." According to the statement, when students applied to create an "Exploration Floor" in the dorms based on Black history and culture earlier in the summer, the housing office staff clarified that the floor must remain open to people of any race or background. "The University strongly supports the goals of diversity, and of creating an environment that is welcoming, supportive, and inclusive for students of color and students from marginalized communities," the statement said. "However, NYU does not have and will not create student housing that excludes any student based on race."

— Ali Swenson

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South Dakota confirms 323 new cases of the coronavirus

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials on Friday reported 323 new cases of the coronavirus, including 73 in Pennington County.

The state has recorded a total of 12,194 cases of the virus since the pandemic began. South Dakota ranks 10th in the country for the number of new cases per capita in the last two weeks, according to the COVID Tracking Project.

The new cases included 98 people in their 20s, 61 between the ages of 10 and 19 and eight under 10 years old.

Minnehaha County reported 51 new cases.

The update showed a total of 2,182 active cases, an increase of 182 from Thursday. The number of hospitalizations rose by five, to 80.

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

Colorado lists 20 virus cases from Sturgis motorcycle rally

DENVER (AP) — Colorado has reported more than 20 confirmed COVID-19 cases linked to people who attended an annual motorcycle event in Sturgis, South Dakota earlier this month.

The pandemic was expected to reduce attendance at the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, KCNC-TV reported. But the event drew some 462,000 people between Aug. 7 and Aug. 16, down just 7.5% from the previous year.

Some visitors wore masks and practiced social distancing in spite of the large crowds.

State officials in Colorado are now asking those who attended the rally and have symptoms to be tested immediately, and have recommended those without symptoms be tested a week after suspected exposure.

"No one that we went with or knew up there has had any symptoms," said Kevin Bolser, co-owner of Lucky Horsehoe Customs in Englewood. Bolser said members of his group took special precautions to camp in a remote area and self-quarantine after the event.

At least eight other states have reported coronavirus cases linked to the annual rally, tallying at least 100 people with the virus.

South Dakota Republican Gov. Kristi Noem has recently stated that she questions whether face masks prevent the spread of the coronavirus, saying there is "very mixed research and the science has not proven what's effective and what isn't."

Noem also welcomed those attending the rally in a tweet before the event started.

The number of infections is thought to be far higher because many people have not been tested, and studies suggest people can be infected with the virus without feeling sick.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough

that clear up in two to three weeks. For some — especially older adults and people with existing health problems — it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

Pedestrian struck and killed in Sioux Falls

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Police are investigating after a man was struck and killed while walking in Sioux Falls.

Officials said the 23-year-old man was struck just before midnight Thursday by a pickup truck.

Sgt. Travis Olsen said officers found the Sioux Falls man dead when they arrived on scene. Police are investigating the circumstances surrounding the crash and haven't said what happened to the driver.

Reduced bond denied for man accused in Yankton homicide

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — A judge has rejected a request to lower bond for a man accused of killing a Yankton woman nearly a year ago.

De'Von Taye Lopez appeared before First Circuit Court Judge Cheryle Gering Thursday afternoon and asked for a reduction in his \$1 million, cash-only bond. Lopez is accused of killing 61-year-old Deborah Lynn Schock.

Defense attorney Chris Nipe stated that Lopez would not be a flight risk, has no prior felony convictions and would wear an ankle monitor, the Yankton Press & Dakotan reported.

But, Assistant Attorney General Katie Mallery raised concerns that Lopez may be a flight risk, citing a previous arrest warrant for failing to appear in Hughes County. She also said there are fears he may use the opportunity to contact potential witnesses and even members of Schock's family.

Gering denied the bond reduction. Schock was found strangled in a mobile home in rural Yankton County last September.

Artist Banksy on migrant crisis: 'All Black Lives Matter'

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Street artist Banksy affirmed "All Black Lives Matter" on Saturday in explaining why he is sponsoring a search-and-rescue ship that picked up dozens of African migrants adrift in the Mediterranean Sea this week.

The ship, the MV Louise Michel, appealed for help and a safe port Saturday, saying that it had rescued so many people that it could no longer safely navigate. The Italian coast guard said it sent a vessel to take 49 of the most vulnerable to bring them to safety.

Banksy confirmed his involvement in the operation in a video released on his Instagram account.

"Like most people who make it in the art world, I bought a yacht to cruise the Med," the artist wrote in captions accompanying the video. "It's a French Navy vessel we converted into a lifeboat because EU authorities deliberately ignore distress calls from non-Europeans."

The subversive artist continued "All Black Lives Matter."

The video featured footage of migrants at sea and clips of the MV Louise Michel, which is painted bright pink and features a mural depicting a young girl holding on to a heart-shaped safety float.

The ship's crew has said it is sponsored by Banksy, whose real name remains a mystery. Details of his financial involvement were not available. The crew has in recent days reported picking up several groups of migrants in the central Mediterranean in what appeared to be its maiden rescue voyage.

In a series of tweets over the past few days, the ship's crew strongly criticized the European Union over its migration policy.

The tone of the tweets has grown more urgent in the past 24 hours after the crew reported that the numbers of migrants on board were getting too high, that the ship was essentially stranded and that the crew was seeking a port to disembark the passengers. It reported women and children were among the dozens on board and in an adjacent dinghy, as well as the corpse of a migrant.

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"We need immediate assistance," the crew tweeted via its @MVLouiseMichel handle. "We are safeguarding 219 people with a crew of 10. Act #EU now!"

The crew said later Saturday that it welcomed the Italian coast guard's decision to take off 49 vulnerable migrants, and said another humanitarian rescue ship, the SeaWatch4, was also on site to help with the remainder. The SeaWatch4 has had more than 200 migrants on board for days waiting to be allowed to enter a port.

Another humanitarian aid group ship, the Mare Jonio, said Saturday it was leaving the Sicilian port of Augusta to come to the Louise Michel's aid. The Mare Jonio, which has been active in the Mediterranean for years, said it was moving up its departure by 48 hours to help the Louise Michel out.

Nicole Winfield contributed from Rome.

Follow all AP coverage of racial injustice issues at <https://apnews.com/Racialinjustice>

Activists: Militias tolerated, Kenosha protesters arrested

By JAKE BLEIBERG and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — Police officers in Kenosha were on alert after days of protests over the shooting of Jacob Blake by one of their colleagues, and they'd recently gotten a tip about "suspicious vehicles" from out of state.

So, after watching a group of people fill cans at a gas station Wednesday and then hop into a minivan with Oregon plates, the officers sped in. A bystander's video shows officers leaping out of black SUVs with guns drawn. About 25 seconds later, an officer shatters the van's passenger-side window with her baton, unlocks its door and pulls a person out.

The group turned out to be members of Riot Kitchen, a Seattle-based organization that serves food at demonstrations. Jennifer Scheurle, a member of its board of directors, said they were filling up gas cans to power a generator for their food truck.

The nine taken into custody in the SWAT-style operation Wednesday were among dozens of people arrested this week in the Wisconsin city. The arrests have highlighted activists' complaints that police have been responding to protests over the white officer's shooting that left Blake, a Black man, paralyzed, even as they've tolerated armed militia groups.

The Riot Kitchen members were charged with misdemeanor disorderly conduct, but all were free by Friday morning.

"We reject all claims that our crew was there to incite violence or build explosives," said Scheurle, who was not among those in Kenosha. "Our nonprofit organization has always been and will always be about feeding people."

Kenosha Police Chief Daniel Miskinis said at a Friday news conference that "just under 50" people had been arrested during the protests. The department later provided a list of 58 charges, more than half of them for curfew violations, but declined to specify the number of people arrested or provide names.

"I believe everybody out there in law enforcement has been friendly to both sides," Miskinis said.

An analysis of jail records since the day of Blake's shooting shows about 45% the people facing charges seemingly related to the protests live outside Wisconsin.

Those arrested were almost 70% white and about two-thirds male. The vast majority were charged with misdemeanors or civil violations, although there were also some felonies. Miskinis said one person had been charged for having a "flamethrower."

More than 20 of the people remained in jail Friday afternoon.

Adelana Akindes, a 24-year-old from Kenosha, said she spent nearly a day in a crowded cell after being arrested Wednesday while walking toward the demonstrations carrying a shield.

Police had Akindes and three others lie on the ground as they put them in handcuffs, she said, adding that officers did not read their Miranda rights or say why they were being arrested. She was released on

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Thursday evening and charged with breaking curfew.

"They wanted to scare us," said Akindes, who is Black. "They wanted to make an example of us."

The early days of demonstrations and unrest after Blake's shooting saw some people destroying buildings, setting fires and hurling objects at police, who responded at times with tear gas. The last three nights have been mostly peaceful, and police have not fired tear gas or pepper balls. But they have used tactics that local activists see as heavy handed.

On Thursday night, police pulled over several cars of people headed to protests. They arrested a group of people in one vehicle and searched the car of another group.

"There has been no respect for anybody's civil rights," said Isaac Wallner, a 30-year-old Kenosha activist. "It's been a police free for all. They do whatever they want."

Wallner, who is Black, contrasted this with what he characterized as a tolerant, or even friendly, attitude police have taken toward the white men who've come to the city outfitted with heavy vests and long guns, including a 17-year-old charged with fatally shooting two people and wounding a third.

Earlier in the week, sheriff's deputies shot pepper balls at protesters and arrested them when they failed to quickly leave after being told they were breaking curfew. But officers in an armored vehicle with "Sheriff" on the side were also recorded at night tossing water bottles to men carrying rifles.

"We appreciate you guys. We really do," someone can be heard calling from the vehicle in a video of the exchange.

Kenosha County Sheriff David Beth said Friday that the officer seen giving out water was not one of his deputies, and the person who said he appreciated what the armed civilians were doing "doesn't mirror all of law enforcement's perspective on what happened."

Bleiberg reported from Dallas. Associated Press reporters Lindsay Whitehurst in Salt Lake City and Scott Bauer in Madison, Wisconsin, contributed.

Laura cleanup begins; weeks without power or water ahead

By STACEY PLAISANCE and MELINDA DESLATTE Associated Press

LAKE CHARLES, La. (AP) — The destructive storm surge has receded, and the clean up has begun from Hurricane Laura, but officials along this shattered stretch of Louisiana coast are warning returning residents they will face weeks without power or water amid the hot, stifling days of late summer.

The U.S. toll from the Category 4 hurricane stood at 14 deaths, with more than half of those killed by carbon monoxide poisoning from the unsafe operation of generators.

President Donald Trump plans to tour the damage in Louisiana and neighboring Texas on Saturday.

Across southwestern Louisiana, people were cleaning up from the hurricane that roared ashore early Thursday, packing 150 mph (240 kph) winds. Many were deciding whether they wanted to return home to miserable conditions or wait until basic services are finally restored.

At First United Methodist Church in Lake Charles, a work crew was battling water that continued to pour into the church building as it rained Friday.

"This roof blew off. There's some of it over there," said Michael Putman, owner of Putman Restoration, pointing to part of the roof resting near the side of the building. A pile of black garbage bags sat outside the church, filled with insulation and ceiling tile.

Putman lives in Shreveport, which also got damage from the storm. But he said he drove down to Lake Charles to help the minister, who was his high school pastor.

"We slept in our truck in the parking lot last night," he said.

Simply driving was a feat in Lake Charles, a city of 80,000 residents hit head on. Power lines and trees blocked paths or created one-lane roads, leaving drivers to negotiate with oncoming traffic. Street signs were snapped off their posts or dangling. No stoplights worked, making it an exercise in trust to share the road with other motorists.

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Mayor Nic Hunter cautioned that there was no timetable for restoring electricity and that water-treatment plants "took a beating," leaving barely a trickle of water coming out of most faucets. "If you come back to Lake Charles to stay, make sure you understand the above reality and are prepared to live in it for many days, probably weeks," Hunter wrote on Facebook.

Caravans of utility trucks were met Friday by thunderstorms in the sizzling heat, complicating recovery efforts.

The Louisiana Department of Health estimated that more than 220,000 people were without water. Restoration of those services could take weeks or months, and full rebuilding could take years.

Forty nursing homes were relying on generators, and assessments were underway to determine if more than 860 residents in 11 facilities that had been evacuated could return.

The much weaker remnants of the hurricane continued to move across the Southern U.S., unleashing heavy rain and isolated tornadoes. North Carolina and Virginia could get the brunt of the worst weather Saturday, forecasters said.

When the storm moves back over the Atlantic Ocean, forecasters said it could become a tropical storm again and threaten Newfoundland, Canada.

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards called Laura the most powerful hurricane to strike the state, meaning it surpassed even Katrina, which was a Category 3 storm when it hit in 2005. He said Friday that officials now believe the surge was as high as 15 feet (4.5 meters).

Saturday marks the 15th anniversary of Katrina.

Hurricane Laura also killed nearly two dozen people in Haiti and the Dominican Republic en route to the U.S. Gulf Coast.

In Lake Charles, chainsaws buzzed and heavy machinery hauled tree limbs in the front lawn of Stanley and Dominique Hazelton, who rode out the storm on a bathroom floor. A tree punctured the roof not far from where the couple was taking cover.

They regretted staying.

"There's people without homes," Stanley Hazelton said. "So it was dumb. We'll never do it again. We'll never stay through another hurricane again."

Associated Press journalists Jamie Stengle in Dallas; Janet McConnaughey in New Orleans; John L. Mone in Holly Beach, Louisiana; Paul J. Weber in Austin, Texas; Seth Borenstein in Kensington, Maryland; and Adrian Sainz in Memphis, Tennessee, contributed to this report.

Belarus cracks down on journalists, 2 AP staff deported

By JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Belarus, shaken by three weeks of massive protests against its authoritarian president, on Saturday cracked down hard on the news media, deporting some foreign journalists reporting in the country and revoking the accreditation of many Belarusian journalists.

Two Moscow-based Associated Press journalists who were covering the recent protests in Belarus were deported to Russia on Saturday. In addition, the AP's Belarusian staff were told by the government that their press credentials had been revoked.

"The Associated Press decries in the strongest terms this blatant attack on press freedom in Belarus. AP calls on the Belarusian government to reinstate the credentials of independent journalists and allow them to continue reporting the facts of what is happening in Belarus to the world," said Lauren Easton, the AP's director of media relations.

The Belarusian Association of Journalists said accreditation was also taken away from Belarusians working for several other media. Germany's ARD television said two of its Moscow-based journalists also were deported to Russia, a Belarusian producer faces trial on Monday and their accreditation to work in Belarus was revoked. The BBC said that two of its journalists working for the BBC Russian service in Minsk also had their accreditation revoked.

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The program director for ARD's biggest regional affiliate, WDR, which oversees coverage of Belarus, called the treatment of its camera team "absolutely unacceptable."

"This shows once again that independent reporting in Belarus continues to be hindered and is made almost impossible," Joerg Schoeneborn said.

Protests in Belarus began after the Aug. 9 election that officials said gave President Alexander Lukashenko a sixth term in office with 80% support. Protesters say the election results were rigged and are calling for Lukashenko, who has run the country since 1994, to resign.

The protests, some of which drew enormous crowds estimated at 200,000 or more, are the largest and most sustained challenge of Lukashenko's 26 years in office, during which he consistently repressed opposition and independent news media.

The hard-line leader has cast about for a strategy to end the wave of protests, with little success. In the first days of demonstrations, around 7,000 people were arrested. Some protesters were killed and many of the detainees were beaten by police. The violence didn't deter the protests and may have galvanized the opposition. Strikes have broken out in several state-owned factories, which are the backbone of Belarus' economy.

The U.S. Embassy in Belarus on Saturday issued a statement saying "we are concerned by the continued targeting of journalists, the blocking of independent media and opposition websites, intermittent internet blackouts and random detentions of peaceful citizens exercising their rights of freedom of assembly and speech."

Follow AP's coverage of Belarus at <https://www.apnews.com/Belarus>

Delayed but alive, Tour de France sets off from Nice

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN and JOHN LEICESTER undefined

NICE, France (AP) — The strangest Tour de France ever finally set off on Saturday from the Riviera city of Nice in an extraordinarily subdued atmosphere, amid fears the race could be stopped well before it reaches Paris.

The sight of the 176 riders on the starting line was already seen as a big win by organizers and French government officials relieved the mega-event drawing hundreds of thousands of roadside fans every summer could take place. After the European soccer championships and the Olympic Games were postponed to 2021, the Tour — delayed by two months — survived the COVID-19 pandemic.

But the normally buoyant atmosphere surrounding the event made way for brooding feelings. Instead of the usual pulsating crowds, riders were greeted by an eerie silence as their names were read out on a stage where they were presented to an empty square in downtown Nice, overlooked by a stone statue wearing a mask marked "protect ourselves". A quiet crowd of a couple of hundred people, all masked, were kept 50 meters away behind metal barriers.

Since its inception in 1903, the race has only been canceled during the two world wars.

But the number of daily COVID-19 cases has been rising steadily across France, prompting concerns the Tour will have to be stopped if the situation deteriorates further.

"It's a first miracle that we are able to start this race, but we want a second miracle to happen, which is the Tour de France to arrive in Paris," UCI president David Lappartient said. "The goal is really to reach Paris."

Jean-Michel Blanquer, the French minister in charge of sports, said the chances of the Tour being cancelled before reaching Paris were "very slim", but also added "everything is possible. That type of thing could happen but of course I hope that it won't and I think that it won't because the Tour organizers have done an extraordinary job".

To ensure the 22 teams competing at the constantly traveling event remain virus-free, organizers have put in place stringent rules keeping them away from fans.

Tour spectators and riders usually mingle at the start of stages, posing for pictures together and exchanging

ing a few words. All this was impossible Saturday at the start of the 156-kilometer Stage 1, with fans not allowed to take selfies with their heroes or to get autographs. They could not approach the team buses of last year's winner Egan Bernal and former world champion Peter Sagan, which were parked side by side.

Instead of the usual throngs, the park where the buses are gathered was largely empty, with, at best, just a few small clumps of people to cheer the riders as they rode past.

In addition to the social distancing imposed, French health authorities have also decided that an entire team will be expelled from the race if two or more of their members, including staff, test positive for COVID-19 within a week, increasing the probability that only a fraction of the peloton will reach the Champs-Elysees in three weeks' time.

On the starting line, riders kept their masks on until the last minute. After a uniformed band played the Marseillaise, the riders started rolling as planes trailing white smoke roared overhead. The crowd at the start, mostly just one row deep, cheered as they pedaled past, finally with their masks off.

More AP sports: <https://apnews.com/apf-sports> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Blake's family to lead Kenosha rally against police violence

By STEPHEN GROVES and AMY FORLITI Associated Press

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — Family members of Jacob Blake, a Black man who was paralyzed after a Kenosha police officer shot him in the back, are leading a march and rally Saturday to call for an end to police violence.

Event organizers said the demonstration would include a march to the Kenosha County Courthouse and speeches by members of Blake's family, Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes, U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore and other community leaders.

"We are heartbroken and enraged, but we are steadfast in our demand for justice," Tanya Mclean, a Blake family friend who helped organize the event, said in a statement. She said Blake's shooting is not an isolated incident, but part of a "brutal, racist system."

"We're here to demand an end to police violence and systemic racism in Kenosha," Mclean said. "No more piecemeal reforms and useless committees. No more Band-Aid solutions over the bullet wounds. The time for transformational change is now."

Kenosha Police Officer Rusten Sheskey was responding to a domestic abuse call on Sunday when he shot Blake seven times in the back. Blake is paralyzed from the shooting, his family said, and is recovering in a Milwaukee hospital.

The shooting, which was captured on cellphone video, sparked new protests against racial injustice and police brutality, just three months after the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police touched off a wider reckoning on race.

Protesters have filled Kenosha's streets every night, and on Tuesday, two people were killed by an armed civilian. The commander of the National Guard said Friday that more than 1,000 Guard members had been deployed to help keep the peace, and more were on the way.

Investigators have said little about what led to Blake's shooting. The Kenosha police union said Blake had a knife and fought with officers, putting one of them in a headlock as two efforts to stun him with a Taser were unsuccessful. State investigators have said only that officers saw a knife on the floor of the car.

In the cellphone footage recorded by a bystander, Blake walks from the sidewalk around the front of an SUV to his driver-side door as officers follow him with their guns drawn and shout at him. As Blake opens the door and leans into the SUV, an officer grabs his shirt from behind and opens fire. Three of Blake's children were in the vehicle.

The man who recorded the video, 22-year-old Raysean White, said he heard police yell at Blake, "Drop the knife! Drop the knife!" before gunfire erupted. White said he didn't see a knife in Blake's hands. State investigators have said only that officers saw a knife on the floor of the car.

Ben Crump, an attorney for Blake's family has said Blake did nothing to provoke police and has called

for Sheskey's arrest.

Forliti reported from Minneapolis.

Thousands march in Mauritius over dead dolphins, oil spill

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Honking and drumming, tens of thousands of people protested Saturday in Mauritius over the government's slow response to an oil spill from a grounded Japanese ship and the alarming discovery of dozens of dead dolphins in recent days.

Outraged over the Indian Ocean island nation's worst environmental disaster in years, protesters displayed signs such as "You have no shame" and "I've seen better Cabinets at IKEA." "Inaction," one protester scrawled on an inflatable dolphin held above the crowd.

They marched peacefully through the capital, Port Louis, a month after the ship struck a coral reef a mile offshore. It later cracked under the pounding surf and spilled around 1,000 tons of fuel oil into fragile marine areas.

"It's clear we are at a turning point in the history of our country," a commentary in the Le Mauricien newspaper said, as residents said the demonstration could politicize a broader section of the population.

Addressing the crowd in Port Louis, some speakers called for top officials to step down. There was no immediate government comment. Other protests were reported outside the Mauritius High Commission in London and in Paris and Perth, Australia.

"I'd be surprised if it's not close to 100,000" people who attended the march, local writer Khalil Cassimally said. Public demonstrations aren't common in Mauritius, but "one of the things that really binds people together is the sea," he said. "It's one of the jewels of this country, and everyone feels very passionately about this."

Another protest is planned on Sept. 12 in Mahebourg, one of the most affected coastal villages, Cassimally said.

Mauritius depends heavily on tourism, and the spill has been a severe blow on top of the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, which has limited international travel.

Authorities on Friday said at least 39 dead dolphins have washed ashore but it's not yet clear what killed them. The government said no fuel oil was found in two necropsies so far and called the deaths a "sad coincidence."

Civil society groups should be present as necropsies continue, and independent experts should give a second opinion, local environmental group Eco-Sud said Friday.

Some experts fear water-soluble chemicals in the fuel are to blame.

"Something that is also concerning is that we don't know the possible long-term effects. The oil is a new low-sulfur fuel oil that is being introduced to reduce air pollution," Jacqueline Sauzier with the Mauritius Marine Conservation Society told the journal Nature this week. "This is the first time that type of oil has spilled, so there have been no long-term studies on the impacts."

Residents and environmentalists have demanded investigations into why the MV Wakashio strayed miles off course. Its captain and first officer have been arrested and charged with "endangering safe navigation."

The ship ran aground on July 25 and began leaking fuel Aug. 6 into the Mahebourg Lagoon, fouling a protected wetlands area and a small island that was a bird and wildlife sanctuary.

Thousands of civilian volunteers worked for days to try to minimize the damage, creating makeshift oil barriers by stuffing fabric bags with sugar cane leaves and empty plastic bottles to keep them afloat. Environmental workers carefully ferried dozens of baby tortoises and rare plants to shore, plucking some trapped seabirds out of the goo.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth blamed bad weather for the government's slow response. Experts from ship owner Nagashiki Shipping, France and the United Nations have since arrived at the scene, and multiple investigations are underway.

The ship's remaining fuel was pumped out before the vessel finally split in two.

French authorities harden COVID-19 rules at Tour de France

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN AP Sports Writer

NICE, France (AP) — French authorities have made it harder for Tour de France teams to reach the finish line in Paris by deciding they will be expelled from the race if two or more of their members, including staff, test positive for COVID-19 within a week.

Following guidelines issued by the health authorities, the move was announced Saturday by Tour organizers just a few hours before the start of the three-week race's opening stage in the Riviera city of Nice. It overruled a decision from cycling's governing body, the UCI, that had eased the Tour's exclusion rules.

Under the UCI protocol announced Friday, it would have been up to organizers to decide whether to throw a team out after two positive tests, with staff members not counted.

There are 22 squads of eight riders competing at the Tour, but a total of 30 members per team when staff are included.

"From two positive cases in a group of 30, there is a real risk of elimination of a team," Tour director Christian Prudhomme told France Info radio.

The UCI's revised protocol had excluded staff members from the calculations following complaints from teams who feared their riders would be unfairly excluded from the race.

This week, four staff members of the Belgian team Lotto-Soudal were sent home after "non-negative" coronavirus tests. The team said a mechanic and a member of the rider support staff returned "one positive and one suspicious result." Both left the race bubble along with their roommates.

In case of a positive result during the race, the UCI has urged organizers to "do everything possible" to perform a retest and a blood analysis before the next stage. The measure is aimed at avoiding false positive tests that could rule out healthy riders.

Tour organizers have set up a mobile coronavirus lab that can produce results in two hours and handle 50 tests a day on race days. However, Prudhomme said he can't guarantee a rider will be given the additional tests before he is removed from the race following an initial positive result.

"If it's in the evening, we will adapt so it can be done. But if we have a positive in the morning, he obviously won't be on the starting line if we don't have time for the follow-up test," Prudhomme said.

More AP sports: <https://apnews.com/apf-sports> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

For health workers, the pandemic Tour de France is a big ask

By JOHN LEICESTER AP Sports Writer

NICE, France (AP) — Surely too busy racing to notice, the 176 riders who started the Tour de France on Saturday sped close to a sprawling hospital where caregiver Maude Leneveu is still reeling from furious months treating patients stricken and dying from COVID-19.

After her 12-hour days of cleaning their bedpans, changing the sheets, feeding them and trying to calm their fears, she'd then go home to breastfeed her baby daughter.

"We're all exhausted," the 30-year-old Leneveu says.

With coronavirus infections picking up again across France and her hospital in the Mediterranean city of Nice preparing for a feared second wave of patients by readying respirators and other gear, Leneveu suspects she might soon be called back to the coronavirus front lines. That would ruin her hopes of taking a short holiday after the Tour leaves Nice on Monday and heads deeper into France, after two days of racing around the city.

But while no fan of the race herself, and despite the health risks of pushing ahead with cycling's greatest roadshow in the midst of the pandemic, Leneveu is adamant that the three-week Tour must go on, because "life must continue."

"These are already tough times and it will be very, very hard to endure over the long term if, on top of

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all this, we don't allow people to escape via the television, with events like this," she said. "Many of my family members adore it and they would have been very sad if there'd been no Tour de France, because it's emblematic."

That the Tour, delayed from July, survived the health crisis that wiped out scores of other sporting events testifies to the emotional, political and economic clout steadily accumulated by the race during its 117-year history, both in France and beyond.

For race organizers and the French government, the reward of successfully steering the Tour to the finish in Paris on Sept. 20 will be a striking message — that the country is getting back on its feet after the first deadly wave of infections and learning to live with its epidemic that has claimed more than 30,500 lives in France.

The risk is that so many riders might fall sick during the 3,484-kilometre (2,165-mile) odyssey that organizers are forced to cut it short. Not reaching Paris would lead to questions, already being voiced by medical personnel and others, about whether the race should never have set off from Nice at all.

On the eve of the start, the city's main public hospital network had just 10 hospitalized COVID patients, all grouped in one location. But infections across the country are steadily rising, with 7,379 new cases declared Friday, another new daily high since the country eased out of lockdown in May.

Marine, a final-year medical student at the city's Pasteur Hospital, which the Tour races past on the first two stages Saturday and Sunday, said after finishing her morning shift in the emergency ward Friday that the riders should have stayed home. Because she didn't have permission from hospital authorities to speak to the media, she asked that she be identified only by her first name.

"It doesn't seem very reasonable," she said. "Plus, we're under pressure at the hospital at the moment. There are very few beds, so we're not equipped to cope with a big influx of sick patients. If there are more infections because of the Tour, it's going to be complicated for us to manage ... it would have been better to cancel it."

But for riders, in a year that had seemed ruined with races thrown into disarray and training done at home on stationary bikes, the Tour is a blessing, a treasured opportunity to secure paychecks and possibly new contracts by shining on French roads.

"We all understand that it's not a given the race will finish," said Richie Porte, an Australian riding his 10th Tour, for the Trek-Segafredo team. "But full credit to the organizers for getting this race off the ground because cycling needs this race to at least start."

Although crowds were eerily thin as the Tour set off Saturday, support for the race among bystanders was strong.

Hospital emergency ward nurse Alexandre Dehaye, who also has spent months battling the epidemic on the front lines and was manning a first-aid station on Nice's seafront Saturday, said the crowds were so small that he didn't think people were putting themselves at risk by turning out to cheer on the riders.

"It's reassuring for people to get back their bearings, what they knew before, to see that life goes on and hasn't ground to a halt," he said. "We have to live normally, with the virus."

It hasn't escaped health workers that the bonus of 1,500 euros (\$1,785) paid to some of them by the government for their heroism at the height of France's epidemic, when people in lockdown across the country cheered them on from their windows every night, is small potatoes compared to prizes that Tour riders can pick up on the roads.

The Tour winner gets 500,000 euros (\$595,000). Winners of the 21 stages earn 11,000 euros. There is an additional array of smaller prizes, among them: 1,500 euros for winning any of the many sprints within stages and 800 euros for riding first to the top of the toughest climbs.

Leneveu said her take-home pay for four 12-hour hospital shifts per week is 1,450 euros (\$1,725) a month. She was among those that got the COVID bonus after two months treating the sick. She said she had to wear plastic trash bags over her gowns and two, sometimes three, layers of household gloves in the first weeks when proper protection was lacking. She emerged from the experience so exhausted and exasperated that she asked to shift to part-time work from September.

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"It was like being armed with bayonets against cannons," she said. "We've really lost the will to fight."

More Tour de France coverage: <https://apnews.com/TourdeFrance>

Census, like Post Office, politicized in election year

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — The postal service isn't the only staid federal agency to be drawn into a political battle in 2020.

Unlike the department charged with delivering mail, however, the U.S. Census Bureau has been here before. It has found itself targeted by politicians repeatedly since it conducted its first nationwide head count in 1790.

The reason is obvious: The census determines not only how much federal money each state gets but also how many congressional seats and Electoral College votes.

"The census was political from the very beginning and remains so," former Census Bureau director Kenneth Prewitt wrote in an essay almost two decades ago. "Although the science of measurement is used to complete the task as accurately as possible, the central purpose of the census remains: to shift power from one set of interests to another."

And yet some fear that this year — during a time of historic partisan and cultural divides — the scientific task of measuring the country's population is more at risk than ever of being overtaken by politics.

Throughout this year's census, lawmakers, civil rights groups, states and cities have been engaged in a battle with President Donald Trump's administration as it unsuccessfully tried to add a citizenship question; filled three top positions with political appointees who have limited experience; and issued a directive to exclude residents living illegally in the country when drawing congressional districts.

"What this administration has done is unprecedented in breadth and scope," said Thomas Saenz, who heads the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. "Every decision made about the conduct of the census has been politically infected."

Political interference has real consequences, said Terri Ann Lowenthal, a former congressional staffer who specializes in census issues.

"Any time political leaders of whatever stripe question data ... try to direct how data are collected, I think it undermines confidence in the agencies and the process," Lowenthal said. "People are less likely to participate and the quality of the data collected diminishes over time."

MALDEF and other civil rights organizations have gone to court to challenge Trump's efforts. They claim the Republican administration wants to exclude people in the country illegally when congressional districts are drawn in order to benefit Republicans and non-Hispanic whites. Civil rights groups, states and cities are also challenging the Census Bureau's decision to complete the census a month early, which they fear will leave minority communities undercounted.

Census officials asked for an extension of an end-of-the-year deadline to turn in numbers used for drawing congressional districts, a request that passed the Democrat-controlled House. But then — when it appeared unlikely the measure would go anywhere in the Republican-controlled Senate — the bureau announced it would try to meet the original deadline. To do so, however, officials noted that they would have to finish up the census by the end of September instead of the end of October.

At times, the goals of the Census Bureau's career staff have been at odds with the agenda of political appointees in the Commerce Department, which oversees the bureau. For instance, the bureau's chief scientist warned that adding a citizenship question would result in a less accurate count.

"There's a set of very good professionals in the Census Bureau and they are dedicated people," said Steven Murdock, a former Census Bureau director in the George W. Bush administration. "If you bring in people with totally different goals for the census that could lead to real problems."

Politics have a long history of influencing the census, from determining which questions are asked to what happens with the numbers that are collected.

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After the 1920 census, Congress failed to redraw congressional districts in response to pushback from rural districts that didn't want to cede power to fast-growing cities, the primary destinations for immigrants.

In the 1940 and 1960 censuses, the Census Bureau found itself in the political cross-hairs after it asked questions about income and the number of bathrooms homes had. And during the 1970 and 1980 censuses, political fights were waged over how to fix the undercounting of minorities.

But perhaps the closest parallel to the 2020 census is what happened in the lead-up to the 1990 census, said Margo Anderson, a historian at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

After decades of criticism for undercounting minorities, the Census Bureau came up with a technical method to correct it. The Republican administration under President Ronald Reagan shot it down, however. An associate director resigned in protest.

"Essentially, the Commerce Department went in and said, 'Oh, no you don't,'" Anderson said. "It was a bald political attack on the agency."

Johnny Zuagar, whose union represents career workers at the Census Bureau, said the debate over the agency's politicization overlooks the hard work that rank-and-file employees are putting in, day after day, to get an accurate head count.

Some workers have moved temporarily from metro Washington to far-flung states, away from their families, to work on the head count in regional offices. Others have been working late into the night every day and on weekends. Workers at the bureau's National Processing Center in Indiana are coming into the facility to process paper census forms despite risks from the pandemic, said Zuagar, president of Census Council 241.

"In this hyperpolitical season, it's just like people who deliver the mail. There are actually people doing the work," Zuagar said. "They don't bring their politics to work. They are trying to do something that is very difficult."

Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/MikeSchneiderAP>

With the conventions now over, what's next in campaign 2020?

By BILL BARROW and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden have emerged from their presidential nominating conventions with each candidate believing he has a head of steam. Trump's job approval ratings and standing in polls are perilously low for an incumbent, but Biden and other Democrats vividly remember 2016, when Trump made an against-all-odds October comeback and defeated Hillary Clinton.

Five key questions as the 2020 campaign moves toward the fall home stretch:

WHAT WILL A COVID-19 CAMPAIGN LOOK LIKE?

Expect a flurry of travel and speeches as the candidates spend the next nine weeks desperately trying to move the needle and win new votes against the backdrop of a global pandemic.

Trump is set to launch an aggressive travel schedule with multiple events a week, according to advisers. After an arena rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, early this summer drew a paltry crowd, his campaign has settled on a new format in the age of the coronavirus: packing smaller crowds into open-air airport hangars. The campaign has also been handing out masks at its events and, on Friday, told attendees they would be mandatory, per local regulations. He's also planning a series of policy speeches and is expected to continue to use the powers of his office — including signing executive orders and issuing pardons — to help his prospects.

Biden is planning to ramp up travel to battleground states after Labor Day after spending most of the spring and summer at his home in Wilmington, Delaware, holding mostly virtual events, with only occasional travel to tightly controlled gatherings. Campaign co-chair Cedric Richmond said the former vice president will be active but emphasized that Biden's events still will follow public health guidelines. That means no indoor, crowded rallies and lots of mask-wearing. Expect plenty of roundtables, meet-and-greets and question-and-answer sessions. If there are larger gatherings, the drive-in watch party outside Biden's

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nomination acceptance address could be the blueprint.

WHOSE VERSION OF THE OTHER CONVINCES MORE VOTERS?

Trump will continue trying to win back suburban, female and older voters, and win over independents and people who didn't vote four years ago, by painting the election as a stark choice between law and order and anarchy and between a radical, socialist takeover and economic prosperity. Never mind that Biden has spent decades in the political establishment and California Sen. Kamala Harris, his running mate, is a former prosecutor. Trump will use every scare tactic he can muster.

If his 2016 race is any indication, expect Trump to launch a scorched-earth strategy if he feels he's losing come October. Realizing his only shot then was to drive up Clinton's unfavorable ratings to match his own, Trump's campaign used every trick they could think of, including inviting women who accused Bill Clinton of rape and unwanted sexual advances to appear at one of the debates.

Attacks on Biden's family? Accusations he's drugged up or senile? There is no line Trump won't cross to win.

Biden will continue to hammer Trump as a fundamental threat to democracy and try to make the case that the president is a selfish, corrupt figure incapable of empathy. Biden will sell himself as a steady, experienced hand with a progressive policy agenda on issues including climate action and criminal justice -- just not as progressive as Trump tries to make him when he blasts Biden as the front man for a "radical" takeover.

Biden's campaign believes that he is enough of a known quantity that voters beyond Trump's base simply won't buy the president's descriptions of the former vice president. If they are right, they see Trump's base-driven campaign as one that opens up a wide coalition -- from progressives who aren't in love with Biden to anti-Trump moderates Republicans -- for the Democratic ticket.

CORONAVIRUS AND AN OCTOBER SURPRISE?

Biden has defined his White House bid from the start as a moral and competency case against Trump. The COVID-19 pandemic has only intensified the approach. Biden's campaign believes there's no cover for Trump with the coronavirus death toll surpassing 180,000 and climbing, cases nearing the 6 million mark, unemployment hovering in double digits and Congress at an impasse on further economic aid.

In remarks Thursday before Trump's nomination acceptance speech, Harris summarized the campaign's thinking: "Trump's incompetence is nothing new," she said, "but in January of this year, it became deadly." She said the incumbent "failed at the most basic and important job of a president ... to protect us."

Trump is hoping for a late development that could be a campaign game-changer: The release of a vaccine that would mark the beginning of the end of the pandemic on his watch, before Americans vote. His administration has been doing everything it can to accelerate the process, along with hyping new therapeutics, even when it's not clear they work. "We'll produce a vaccine before the end of the year, or maybe even sooner," he said in his convention keynote. It's unclear, however, whether science can deliver on his timetable.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE DEBATES?

They're crucial.

The conventions largely succeeded in fulfilling both campaigns' objectives, so the debates -- scheduled for Sept. 29, Oct. 15 and Oct. 22 -- will be the most high-profile opportunities for the candidates to highlight contrasts, animate core supporters and cajole the small but critical slice of persuadable voters.

Biden and his team say they relish the idea of confronting Trump face to face. "The debates will give the V.P. the chance to call Trump on all of his B.S.," Richmond said.

It also will be another chance for the 77-year-old Democrat to work to dismantle Trump's framing that Biden is too old for the job. Richmond said that narrative could backfire on Trump, himself a 74-year-old who regularly mangles syntax and offers meandering answers.

Some in Trump's camp seem to agree. After months of trying to cast Biden as feeble and mentally di-

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minated, they're now talking up Biden's abilities as a way to try to lower expectations on Trump's side. "Joe Biden is really good at debates," Trump campaign adviser Jason Miller has been saying, portraying Biden as much more skilled than Hillary Clinton.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO HAVE A WINNER?

It might not be on election night.

The campaigns and national parties are engaged in lawsuits across many states, arguing over rules for absentee voting amid the pandemic, and that litigation could continue if results are close on Nov. 3.

Republicans and Democrats alike are pushing their supporters to ask for absentee mail ballots, even as Trump continues to question the integrity of the election before a single vote is cast.

Don't expect that landscape to change between now and Election Day -- or even for several weeks afterward. Trump has refused to say whether he'll accept the results if he loses, and Clinton has warned Biden not to concede if the election is remotely close.

One thing is clear, though: The Constitution sets Inauguration Day as Jan. 20, and barring catastrophic developments, either Trump or Biden will take the oath of office that day.

Barrow reported from Atlanta.

France's horses killed in mysterious ritual-like mutilations

By ELAINE GANLEY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Armed with knives, some knowledge of their prey and a large dose of cruelty, attackers are going after horses and ponies in pastures across France in what may be ritual mutilations.

Police are stymied by the macabre attacks that include slashings and worse. Most often, an ear — usually the right one — has been cut off, recalling the matador's trophy in a bullring.

Up to 30 attacks have been reported in France, from the mountainous Jura region in the east to the Atlantic coast, many this summer, the agriculture minister said Friday. One attack was registered in February, according to the newsmagazine *Le Point*. With each attack, the mystery only seems to grow.

"We are excluding nothing," Agriculture Minister Julien Denormandie said Friday on France-Info, before heading to a riding club in the Saone-et-Loire region, in east central France, where a horse was attacked a day earlier.

"Ears are cut off, eyes removed, an animal is emptied of its blood ...," he said, spelling out the morbid fates befalling one of France's most beloved animals.

"All means are in motion to end this terror," the minister tweeted.

After the first solid sighting of an attacker, gendarmes in Auxerre, in Burgundy, released a composite sketch this week based on a description by a man who wrangled with two attackers at his animal refuge in a village in the Bourgogne-Franche-Comte region.

"I used to have confidence putting my horses out to pasture. Today, I have fear in my gut," Nicolas Demajeau, who runs the refuge, Ranch of Hope," said Thursday on regional TV station France 3.

Alerted by his squealing pigs, Damajeau faced down two attackers last Monday. He himself was injured in the arm in a struggle with one intruder wielding a pruning knife as the other slashed the sides of two ponies, now recovering but "traumatized," he said. The men fled in a vehicle.

The following day, an attacker or attackers bled a young pony in the Saone-et-Loire. In another case, some of a horse's organs were removed.

A donkey who reportedly participated in past Christmas markets in Paris was killed in a gruesome attack in June.

The mutilation of horses is not a French phenomenon, or is it new. In the 1980s and 1990s, hundreds of horses in Britain, then in Germany, were mutilated while in medieval times, the tails, lips or ears of horses would be cut as acts of vengeance against owners.

In France, theories abound as to whether the mutilations are a morbid rite of an unknown cult, a chill-

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ing “challenge” relayed by social media or copycat acts. Speculation is widespread as to how barbaric acts, some surgical, could be perpetrated without solid knowledge of equine anatomy or on a horse in a pasture presumably able to flee.

“A fearful horse in a pasture won’t get caught. The horse who feels confident with people ... he’ll come, find it normal that you put a harness on it or a rope around its neck,” said veterinarian Aude Giraudet, chief of the equine division at the prestigious National Veterinary School of Alfort, outside Paris.

“I’m not sure you need great knowledge of horses,” Giraudet said in an interview. Knowing how to approach them, from the front not the rear, is important. An ear can be slashed off while the horse is standing, but the animal would need to be prostrate for grislier mutilations, she said. The veterinarian stressed that she didn’t want to describe how to put a horse on the ground so as not to “give the least sort of tools to make it easier” for those out to kill them.

“If I were in Normandy, I think I would be very very worried about this epidemic,” she said, adding that security measures should be taken — at the very least installing cameras.

Two mutilations have been reported in Normandy, France’s horse country. Pauline Sarrazin, the owner of one victim, Lady, mounted a private Facebook group, “Justice for our Horses” after the savage June 6 killing of her horse near Dieppe, on the Atlantic coast. Aimed at sharing stories and advice, the group now has nearly 17,000 members.

France’s horse world is increasingly gripped by fear.

The president of the French Federation of Equitation offered on Friday to help police investigating the scattered cases. Serge Lecomte said earlier the federation would be a civil party in each case.

“We’re all afraid,” said Veronique Dupin, an official of a riding club in the Yvelines region west of Paris, asking that the exact location of the stable not be identified out of caution. Her club installed cameras last year because of intruders, and someone sleeps there nightly.

“Despite that, we’re not at ease,” she said, stressing how vulnerable horses can be. “They may be big, but they’re lambs.”

Chadwick Boseman, who embodied Black icons, dies of cancer

By RYAN PEARSON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — First Chadwick Boseman slipped on the cleats of Jackie Robinson, then the Godfather of Soul’s dancing shoes, portraying both Black American icons with a searing intensity that commanded respect. When the former playwright suited up as Black Panther, he brought cool intellectual gravitas to the Marvel superhero whose “Wakanda forever!” salute reverberated worldwide.

As his Hollywood career boomed, though, Boseman was privately undergoing “countless surgeries and chemotherapy” to battle colon cancer, his family said in a statement announcing his death at age 43 on Friday. He’d been diagnosed at stage 3 in 2016 but never spoke publicly about it.

The cancer was there when his character T’Challa visited the ancestors’ “astral plane” in poignant scenes from the Oscar-nominated “Black Panther,” there when he first became a producer on the action thriller “21 Bridges,” and there last summer when he shot an adaptation of a play by his hero August Wilson. It was there when he played a radical Black leader — seen only in flashbacks and visions — whose death is mourned by Vietnam War comrades-in-arms in Spike Lee’s “Da 5 Bloods.”

“A true fighter, Chadwick persevered through it all, and brought you many of the films you have come to love so much,” his family said. “It was the honor of his career to bring King T’Challa to life in Black Panther.” Boseman died at his home in the Los Angeles area with his wife and family by his side, his publicist Nicki Fioravante told The Associated Press.

Boseman is survived by his wife and a parent and had no children, Fioravante said.

Born and raised in South Carolina, where he played Little League baseball and AAU basketball, Boseman graduated from Howard University in Washington, D.C. He wrote plays, acted and directed in theater and had small roles in television before landing his breakthrough role.

His striking portrayal of the color-line-demolishing baseball star Robinson opposite Harrison Ford in

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2013's "42" drew attention in Hollywood and made him a star. A year later, he wowed audiences as Brown in the biopic "Get On Up."

Boseman died on a day that Major League Baseball was celebrating Jackie Robinson day. "His transcendent performance in '42' will stand the test of time and serve as a powerful vehicle to tell Jackie's story to audiences for generations to come," the league wrote in a tweet.

Expressions of shock and despair poured in late Friday from fellow actors, athletes, musicians, Hollywood titans, fans and politicians. Viola Davis, who acted alongside Boseman in "Get On Up" and the upcoming Wilson adaptation, said: "Chadwick.....no words to express my devastation of losing you. Your talent, your spirit, your heart, your authenticity."

"He was a gentle soul and a brilliant artist, who will stay with us for eternity through his iconic performances," said Denzel Washington, who funded a scholarship Boseman used to study theater at Oxford and produced the upcoming Wilson film.

Disney executive chairman Bob Iger called Boseman "an extraordinary talent, and one of the most gentle and giving souls I have ever met." "Captain America" actor Chris Evans called Boseman "a true original. He was a deeply committed and constantly curious artist. He had so much amazing work still left to create."

Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden tweeted that Boseman "inspired generations and showed them they can be anything they want — even super heroes." Boseman's final tweet was an image of himself and U.S. Sen. Kamala Harris, celebrating her selection as Biden's running mate.

His T'Challa character was first introduced to the blockbuster Marvel cinematic universe in 2016's "Captain America: Civil War," and his "Wakanda forever" salute became a pop culture landmark after the release of "Black Panther" two years ago.

"I don't think the world was ready for a 'Black Panther' movie before this moment. Socially and politically, it wasn't ready for it," he told AP at the time.

The film's vision of Afrofuturism and the technologically advanced civilization of Wakanda resonated with audiences, some of whom wore African attire to showings and helped propel "Black Panther" to more than \$1.3 billion in global box office. It is the only Marvel Studios film to receive a best picture Oscar nomination.

Boseman said he more easily identified with the film's antagonist, played by Michael B. Jordan, who had been cut off from his ancestral roots: "I was born with some Killmonger in me, and I have learned to T'Challa throughout my studies," he told AP while promoting the film.

"It's the place where you start. All African Americans, unless they have some direct connection, have been severed from that past. There's things that cannot be tracked," he continued. "You were a product, sold. So it's very difficult as an African American to connect at some points directly to Africa. I have made that part of my search in my life. So those things were already there when I got into the role."

The character was last seen standing silently dressed in a black suit at Tony Stark's funeral in "Avengers: Endgame." A "Black Panther" sequel had been announced, and was one of the studio's most anticipated upcoming films.

Even at the outset of his Hollywood career, Boseman was clear-eyed about — and even skeptical of — the industry in which he would become an international star.

"You don't have the same exact experience as a Black actor as you do as a white actor. You don't have the same opportunities. That's evident and true," he told AP while promoting "42." "The best way to put it is: How often do you see a movie about a black hero who has a love story ... he has a spirituality. He has an intellect. It's weird to say it, but it doesn't happen that often."

"Black Panther," written and directed by Ryan Coogler, helped drive a conversation in Hollywood about the importance of featuring non-white characters in and hiring non-white filmmakers for its most high-profile films. Actor Simu Liu, starring in Marvel's first film centered on an Asian character, tweeted: "Without Chadwick, and what he gave to his character, there is no Shang Chi. Period. My career rides on the coattails of a great man."

In addition to Robinson and Brown, Boseman portrayed the future U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall in 2017's "Marshall." He humanized the larger-than-life historical figures with the same soulful, reserved dignity — interrupted by flashes of sparkling wit — that he would later bring to T'Challa.

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He took on his first producing job in last year's action thriller "21 Bridges," in which he also starred. Boseman completed one last performance, in a Netflix adaptation of August Wilson's "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom."

He revered the playwright famous for his depiction of the Black experience, writing in a 2013 Los Angeles Times essay: "For the songs, rituals and folklore that were lost in slavery's middle passage, his plays are those forgotten songs remixed for the struggles of adapting to these shores ... In the similar way that Wilson's work was influenced by the blues of Bessie Smith, Muddy Waters and W.C. Handy, my plays were infused with Tupac, Biggie and Black Star."

Boseman first got into theater, acting and writing plays as an undergrad at Howard. He visited Africa for the first time during college with director and theater professor Mike Malone, working in Ghana to preserve and celebrate rituals with performances on a proscenium stage. He told AP the trip had been "one of the most significant learning experiences of my life."

Boseman had roles on TV shows like ABC Family's "Lincoln Heights" and NBC's "Persons Unknown," but before "42" he had only acted in one film, 2008's football drama "The Express."

Asked about his own childhood heroes and icons, Boseman cited Black political leaders and musicians: Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Bob Marley, Public Enemy, A Tribe Called Quest and Prince.

While deeply private and often guarded in his public appearances and interviews, he made clear that he understood the significance of his work and its impact on the broader culture.

At the 2019 Screen Actors Guild Awards, "Black Panther" won best ensemble, electrifying the room. Before an auditorium full of actors, Chadwick Boseman stepped to the microphone. He quoted Nina Simone: "To be young, gifted and black," and put the moment in context.

"We know what it's like to be told there isn't a screen for you to be featured on, a stage for you to be featured on. ... We know what's like to be beneath and not above. And that is what we went to work with every day," said Boseman. "We knew that we could create a world that exemplified a world we wanted to see. We knew that we had something to give."

AP Film Writer Jake Coyle contributed to this report.

Riots in Sweden after Quran burning by far-right activists

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Far-right activists burned a Quran in the southern Swedish city of Malmo, sparking riots and unrest after more than 300 people gathered to protest, police said Saturday.

Rioters set fires and threw objects at police and rescue services Friday night, slightly injuring several police officers and leading to the detention of about 15 people.

The violence followed the burning Friday afternoon of a Quran, near a predominantly migrant neighborhood, that was carried out by far-right activists and filmed and posted online, according to the TT news agency.

Later, three people were arrested on suspicion of inciting hatred against an ethnic group after kicking the Muslim holy book.

Zimbabwe's 'keyboard warriors' hold protests off the streets

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Unable to protest on the streets, some in Zimbabwe are calling themselves "keyboard warriors" as they take to graffiti and social media to pressure a government that promised reform but is now accused of gross human rights abuses.

Activists use the hashtag #zimbabweanlivesmatter to encourage global pressure on President Emmerson Mnangagwa's government.

Tens of thousands of people, from Jamaican reggae stars to U.S. rap and hip-hop musicians, have joined African celebrities, politicians and former presidents in tweeting with the hashtag.

But some analysts say online protests might not be enough to move Mnangagwa, who increasingly relies

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on security forces to crush dissent despite promising reforms when he took power after a coup in 2017. Tensions are rising anew in the once prosperous southern African country. Inflation is over 800%, amid acute shortages of water, electricity, gas and bank notes and a health system collapsing under the weight of drug shortages and strikes by nurses and doctors.

Revelations of alleged corruption related to COVID-19 medical supplies led to the sacking of the health minister and further pressure on Mnangagwa.

His government has responded to the rising dissent with arrests and alleged abductions and torture.

Before July, few Zimbabweans knew about Jacob Ngarivhume, a fringe opposition politician. Then he went on social media to announce an anti-government protest planned for the end of July.

Soon, #July31 swelled into a movement. The government panicked, jailed Ngarivhume and journalist Hopewell Chin'ono, deployed the military and police to thwart the protest and arrested dozens of people who tweeted about it.

"Social media is making waves in Zimbabwe. It is really helping people access information about government scandals faster and cheaper so it makes them want to act," said Elias Mambo, publisher of ZimMorn-ing Post, which publishes investigative stories online and on WhatsApp groups.

Angry, but afraid to take to the streets, Zimbabweans are turning to their computers and smartphones to protest. They are also splashing graffiti with colorful anti-government messages on the walls of stadiums, cemeteries and city buildings.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the chairman of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, have expressed concern over the government's alleged abuses.

"The online campaign massively helped place the political crisis and human rights abuses in Zimbabwe on the global map. Zimbabweans are realizing that social media has a massive international influence," said the Human Rights Watch director for southern Africa, Dewa Mavhinga.

Cyril Ramaphosa, president of neighboring South Africa and chairman of the African Union, dispatched special envoys to meet Mnangagwa. But they returned without meeting the opposition despite having kept them on standby, inviting anger in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Zimbabweans had earlier used social media to protest against the previous government of Robert Mugabe. The army briefly allowed street protests in 2017, but only to use the crowds as pressure to force Mugabe out. Now, activists say, the same military is making the streets dangerous for them.

"Digital activism cannot be ignored and cannot be confronted by traditional authoritarian tactics, as shown by the #zimbabweanlivesmatter campaign," said Alexander Rusero, a political analyst based in the capital, Harare.

Yet the latest online campaign, like previous ones, appears to have only hardened the government's resolve to crush dissent.

In response to the online campaign amid renewed international pressure, Mnangagwa during a national address described his rivals and critics as "destructive terrorist opposition groupings," "dark forces" and "a few bad apples" that should be "flushed out."

Security agents have continued arresting activists even after the July protest was foiled, according to human rights groups and the main opposition MDC Alliance party.

Analysts said such a hardline reaction shows that online campaigns without "ground activism" are unlikely to force the ruling ZANU-PF party to institute reforms that could weaken its hold on power and related economic benefits.

"Online activism needs to correlate to, and not supplant, ground activism. A delicate balance of the two will render ZANU-PF ineffective," Rusero said.

The ruling party "has demonstrated that it will do anything, including crude repression, to stay in power. So it is up to citizens and activists to raise the costs of abuses," said Mavhinga, whose rights group has been documenting alleged abuses.

"Keyboard warriors help to amplify the voices of agony from within Zimbabwe, but without robust and sustained campaigns on the ground, the social media campaigns would fizzle out," he said.

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Some activists are raising similar questions.

"Beyond tweeting about Hopewell (Chin'ono) and Jacob (Ngarivhume), what citizen actions can we do to put pressure for their release," 21-year-old Namatai Kwekwedza tweeted days after the foiled protest.

She faces multiple charges related to breaching the peace for being one of the few Zimbabweans brave enough to participate in anti-government marches in recent months. She faces a fine or up to five years in prison on each charge.

"Some of us are ready, (but) it only works with the numbers," she said, adding: "This whole business of being too afraid is stupid. We are already dead. We have to fight for our future."

Shock, grief, and gratitude after death of Chadwick Boseman

By The Associated Press undefined

"He was a gentle soul and a brilliant artist, who will stay with us for eternity through his iconic performances over his short yet illustrious career. God bless Chadwick Boseman." — Denzel Washington, via a statement.

"Chadwick.....no words to express my devastation of losing you. Your talent, your spirit, your heart, your authenticity.....It was an honor working beside you, getting to know you....Rest well prince...May flights of angels sing thee to thy heavenly rest. I love you!" — Viola Davis, co-star in "Get on Up" and the upcoming adaptation of August Wilson's "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," via Instagram.

"During the premiere party for Black Panther, Chadwick reminded me of something. He whispered that when I received my honorary degree from Howard University, his alma mater, he was the student assigned to escort me that day. And here we were, years later as friends and colleagues, enjoying the most glorious night ever! We'd spent weeks prepping, working, sitting next to each other every morning in makeup chairs, preparing for the day together as mother and son. I am honored that we enjoyed that full circle experience. This young man's dedication was awe-inspiring, his smile contagious, his talent unreal. So I pay tribute to a beautiful spirit, a consummate artist, a soulful brother... 'thou aren't not dead but flown afar...'. All you possessed, Chadwick, you freely gave. Rest now, sweet prince." — Angela Bassett, co-star in "Black Panther," via Instagram.

"I don't have words. Rest In Peace, Bruh. Thank you for all you did while you were here. Thank you for being a friend. You are loved. You will be missed." — Boseman's "Black Panther" co-star Sterling K. Brown.

"I'm absolutely devastated. This is beyond heartbreaking. Chadwick was special. A true original. He was a deeply committed and constantly curious artist. He had so much amazing work still left to create. I'm endlessly grateful for our friendship. Rest in power, King." — Chris Evans, who played Captain America in multiple Marvel films, via Twitter.

"What a man, and what an immense talent. Brother, you were one of the all time greats and your greatness was only beginning. Lord love ya. Rest in power, King." — Mark Ruffalo, Boseman's co-star in "Avengers: Infinity War" and "Avengers: Endgame," via Twitter.

"THANK YOU @chadwickboseman for all you gave us. We needed it & will always cherish it! A talented & giving artist & brother who will be sorely missed." — Samuel L. Jackson, co-star in "Avengers: Endgame", via Twitter.

"This is a crushing blow." — director and actor Jordan Peele on Twitter.

"Our hearts are broken and our thoughts are with Chadwick Boseman's family. Your legacy will live on forever." — Marvel Studios, via Instagram.

"Heartbroken. My friend and fellow Bison Chadwick Boseman was brilliant, kind, learned, and humble. He left too early but his life made a difference." — Kamala Harris, on Twitter. Harris and Boseman were both graduates of Howard University, and his final tweet celebrated her selection as Joe Biden's running mate.

"The true power of @ChadwickBoseman was bigger than anything we saw on screen. From the Black Panther to Jackie Robinson, he inspired generations and showed them they can be anything they want — even super heroes." — Joe Biden, via Twitter.

"We are devastated by the tragic loss of Chadwick Boseman. His transcendent performance in '42' will stand the test of time and serve as a powerful vehicle to tell Jackie's story to audiences for generations

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to come." — Major League Baseball, via Twitter.

"This broke me." — Actor and writer Issa Rae on Twitter.

"i will miss you, birthday brother. you were always light and love to me. my god." Don Cheadle, via Twitter.

"So stunned. Honored to have worked with @chadwickboseman early on. Truly an amazing man. God bless his wife and family in this difficult time. Rest In Peace, brother." — Terry Crews, via Twitter.

"A warrior of light til the very end. A true king. I am without words. May he rise in power." — Actor Kerry Washington, on Twitter.

"I met you at the premier of 42 in Pittsburgh in 2013. Even though you were in the spotlight and all eyes were on you, I remember you saying, 'I'm that one that's starstruck by all of these athletes here.' That's the man you were. Humble. You will be missed." — Philadelphia Phillies outfielder Andrew McCutchen, a former National League Most Valuable Player when he played for Pittsburgh, on Twitter.

"Just when you thought 2020 couldn't get any worse... A deeply gifted man is gone too soon. His memory will blaze on fiercely... from here to eternity." — Mark Hamill, on Twitter.

"Hard to hear about this. Rest in love, brother. Thank you for shining your light and sharing your talent with the world. My love and strength to your family." — Dwayne Johnson, via Twitter.

"Our makeup artists are friends and he used to get on the phone and ask me to sing "You Mean The World To Me" because it was his favorite song of mine and now this song will be forever dedicated to him." — Toni Braxton, recording artist, on Twitter.

"In power. Eternally in power." — "Moonlight" director Barry Jenkins, via Twitter.

"We love you, Chadwick. Your legacy will never die." — Lena Waithe, on Twitter.

"An immeasurable loss. From "Black Panther" to "Da 5 Bloods," Chadwick Boseman brought strength and light to the screen, every time." — The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, via Twitter.

"We've lost a great one. My heart is truly broken." — Octavia Spencer on Instagram.

A wobble, luck and preparations lessened Laura's devastation

By SETH BORENSTEIN, MELINDA DESLATTE and JANET McCONNAUGHEY Associated Press

LAKE CHARLES, La. (AP) — Hurricane Laura was a monster storm that could have, even should have, wreaked much more destruction than it did, except for a few lucky breaks and some smart thinking by Gulf Coast residents, experts say.

Just before striking Louisiana, Laura wobbled. It wasn't much, maybe 15 miles (24 kilometers) for a Category 4 storm that was nearly the width of two states. But it was enough to move the worst of the storm surge east of Lake Charles and into a far less populated area.

And even before that, Laura threaded a needle between well-populated New Orleans, Port Arthur and Houston and came ashore in Cameron Parish, which is the second least-populated county along the coast. The population of the average Atlantic and Gulf Coast county is 322,000 people. Cameron Parish has less than 7,000.

Before Laura struck, local governments and residents took the right steps and got out of harm's way for the most part, a veteran New Orleans disaster expert said.

The storm was still devastating, but not quite as catastrophic as it might have been.

"It was really, really bad instead of apocalyptic," Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach said.

Lauren Sylvester heeded the mandatory evacuation, leaving her townhouse in Lake Charles on Wednesday to stay with her mom in New Iberia. Between the evacuation order and the storm surge projections, she didn't want to take a risk.

"On the TV, the picture kept getting worse and worse. They said it was going to be 9 feet and above. It was freaking me out so much," Sylvester said Friday. "I didn't want to be stuck in my attic with no way to get out."

Her home was right in the "red zone" of 9 feet (2.7 meters) of flooding, but "it didn't happen," she said. She came home to some lost shingles and downed trees. There was no water damage.

"We got really lucky," she said. "We were really blessed."

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Lawrence "Lee" Faulk of nearby Grand Lake, a member of the Cameron Parish governing body called a police jury, said if the storm had been 10 miles (16 kilometers) to the west, "Lake Charles and this part of the parish would have got all that water."

National Hurricane Center storm surge specialist Jamie Rhome referred to the storm's last-minute course change as the "little wobble that saved" Lake Charles. In the end, the city got maybe half the storm surge it could have received, he said.

The worst storm surge is to the east of a hurricane's eyewall because of the combination of the storm's counterclockwise whirl and northward movement. As Laura wobbled more to the east, Lake Charles got the eyewall, and the worst surge hit farther east in the marshlands, Klotzbach said.

Before the storm arrived, the hurricane center warned of up to 20 feet (6 meters) of storm surge, and Rhome said it was in that ballpark.

Storm surge warnings and estimates represent the most reasonable bad scenario, or the worst 10% of the thousands of calculations meteorologists make, Rhome said.

Emergency managers use those figures to get their evacuation messages across properly, said hurricane expert Brian McNoldy of the University of Miami.

Much like the now-forgotten Hurricane Bret that hit Texas in 1999, the location where Laura came ashore also made a big difference, he said.

"There aren't that many lowly inhabited places along the coastline, and it managed to find one of them," McNoldy said.

Another factor was simply smart behavior by the local population, experts said.

Shirley Laska, a sociologist who studied Louisiana disasters at the University of New Orleans and co-founded the Lowlander Center, said parish leaders, emergency managers and citizens did the right thing before the storm.

"I'm pretty much a cynic and a critic, but I think these parishes did wonderfully. And I mean both the citizens and the leaders," Laska said. "But they got out of Dodge. They evacuated as they were told."

Elizabeth Griffin Tietjens, a veterinarian in Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana, fled her house on Monday after hearing repeated warnings about Laura. She drove 12 hours to be with her husband at Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia. Upon her return Friday, she found huge wind-torn gaps in the roof of her home.

Her landlord, Kevin Pickett, and his entire family fled too.

"Everybody left, everybody learned their lesson during (2005's Hurricane) Rita," Pickett said, "and so everybody vacated."

Laska said she believes the monthslong pandemic helped make everyone more attentive to risk. Add to that Tropical Storm Marco, which threatened the region only a few days earlier and then fizzled. People were prepared well ahead of time.

Danny Lavergne, director of the Cameron Office of Emergency Preparedness, acknowledged that Laura inflicted the worst damage the area ever got. But, he said, "There's nobody missing, no one injured, no one dead." Most of the 150 to 200 people who refused to evacuate were on the western end of the parish.

"They survived the wind because there was no water," Lavergne said.

Borenstein reported from Kensington, Maryland. McConnaughey reported from New Orleans. Associated Press video journalist John Mone contributed from Vinton, Louisiana.

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears, Melinda Deslatte at @MelindaDeslatte, John Mone at @JohnMone and Janet McConnaughey at @JanetMcCinNO.

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Abe says 'gut wrenching' resignation leaves goals unfinished

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By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's longest-serving prime minister, Shinzo Abe, said he is stepping down because a chronic health problem has resurfaced. He told reporters Friday that it was "gut wrenching" to leave many of his goals unfinished.

Abe has had ulcerative colitis since he was a teenager and has said the condition was controlled with treatment. Concerns about his health began this summer and grew this month when he visited a Tokyo hospital two weeks in a row for unspecified health checkups. He is now on a new treatment that requires IV injections, he said. While there is some improvement, there is no guarantee that it will cure his condition and so he decided to step down after treatment Monday, he said.

"It is gut wrenching to have to leave my job before accomplishing my goals," Abe said Friday, mentioning his failure to resolve the issue of Japanese abducted years ago by North Korea, a territorial dispute with Russia and a revision of Japan's war-renouncing constitution.

He said his health problem was under control until earlier this year but was found to have worsened in June when he had an annual checkup.

"Faced with the illness and treatment, as well as the pain of lacking physical strength ... I decided I should not stay on as prime minister when I'm no longer capable of living up to the people's expectations with confidence," Abe said at a news conference.

In a country once known for its short-tenured prime ministers, the departure marks the end of an unusual era of stability that saw the Japanese leader strike up strong ties with President Donald Trump even as Abe's ultra-nationalism riled the Koreans and China. While he pulled Japan out of recession, the economy has been battered anew by the coronavirus pandemic, and Abe has failed to achieve his cherished goal of formally rewriting the U.S.-drafted pacifist constitution because of poor public support.

Abe said he achieved a stronger Japan-U.S. security alliance and the first visit by a serving U.S. president to the atom-bombed city of Hiroshima. He also helped Tokyo gain the right to host the 2020 Olympics by pledging that a disaster at the Fukushima nuclear plant was "under control" when it was not.

Recently, "the coronavirus impact on the economy was a blow to Abe, who was stuck at home and lacking an opportunity to make any achievement or show off his friendship with Trump, and was pushed into a corner," said Koichi Nakano, an international politics professor at Sophia University in Tokyo.

Abe continued to bolster Japan's defense capability to respond to America's needs, Nakano said. "For those who believe the Japan-U.S. alliance is paramount, that was his major achievement," he said. But Abe bulldozed his expanded defense policy and other contentious issues through parliament, repeatedly neglecting public opinion, Nakano said.

Trump paid tribute to his "great friend" Abe, telling reporters about Air Force One that he was surprised to hear of his resignation.

"We had a great relationship. And I just feel very bad for him. Because it must be very severe. Look, for him to leave — he loves his country so much and for him to leave, I just can't imagine what it is. He's a great gentleman and so I'm just paying my highest respect," Trump said.

Abe is a political blue blood who was groomed to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather, former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi. His political rhetoric often focused on making Japan a "normal" and "beautiful" nation with a stronger military and bigger role in international affairs.

Abe, whose term ends in September 2021, is expected to stay on until a new party leader is elected and formally approved by the parliament, a process which is expected to take several weeks.

Abe became Japan's youngest prime minister in 2006, at age 52, but his overly nationalistic first stint abruptly ended a year later because of his health.

In December 2012, Abe returned to power, prioritizing economic measures over his nationalist agenda. He won six national elections and built a rock-solid grip on power, bolstering Japan's defense role and capability and its security alliance with the U.S. He also stepped up patriotic education at schools and raised Japan's international profile.

Abe on Monday became Japan's longest-serving prime minister by consecutive days in office, eclipsing

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the record of Eisaku Sato, his great-uncle, who served 2,798 days from 1964 to 1972.

But his second hospital visit Monday accelerated speculation and political maneuvering toward a post-Abe regime.

Ulcerative colitis causes inflammation and sometimes polyps in the bowels. People with the condition can have a normal life expectancy but serious cases can involve life-threatening complications.

After his recent hospital visits were reported, top officials from Abe's Cabinet and the ruling party said he was overworked and badly needed rest.

His health concerns came as his support ratings plunged due to his handling of the coronavirus pandemic and its severe impact on the economy, on top of a stream of political scandals, including his own.

There are a slew of politicians eager to replace Abe.

Shigeru Ishiba, a 63-year-old hawkish former defense minister and Abe's archrival, is a favorite next leader in media surveys, though he is less popular within the governing party. A low-key former foreign minister, Fumio Kishida, Defense Minister Taro Kono, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, and economic revitalization minister Yasutoshi Nishimura, who is in charge of coronavirus measures, are widely mentioned in Japanese media as potential successors.

Abe was often upstaged in dealing with the coronavirus pandemic by Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike, a former governing party conservative who is seen as a potential prime minister candidate by some. But she would have to first be elected to parliament to be in the running for the top job.

Analysts say no major change of policy is expected whoever succeeds Abe, though Japan may return to an era of short-lived leadership.

The end of Abe's scandal-laden first stint as prime minister was the beginning of six years of annual leadership change, remembered as an era of "revolving door" politics that lacked stability and long-term policies.

When he returned to office in 2012, Abe vowed to revitalize the nation and get its economy out of its deflationary doldrums with his "Abenomics" formula, which combines fiscal stimulus, monetary easing and structural reforms.

Perhaps Abe's biggest regret was his inability to fulfill a long-cherished goal of his grandfather and himself to formally rewrite the pacifist constitution. Abe and his ultra-conservative supporters see the U.S.-drafted constitution as a humiliating legacy of Japan's World War II defeat.

He was also unable to achieve his goal of settling several unfinished wartime legacies, including normalizing ties with North Korea, settling island disputes with neighbors and signing a peace treaty with Russia formally ending their hostilities in World War II.

Abe said he will focus on his treatment for now and "continue his political activity and support a new administration as a lawmaker."

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

Too risky? Fed pressed to expand aid to some businesses

By MARCY GORDON AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the economy still in the pandemic's grip, the Federal Reserve is facing a decision on whether to stretch an emergency lending program in a way that could bring more risk for the government and taxpayers. Lawmakers are pressing the central bank to deliver more aid to struggling small and mid-sized businesses.

The economic recovery has been uneven and painfully slow in the wake of shutdowns from the coronavirus. The pandemic has killed some 180,000 people in the U.S., and the number of laid-off workers collecting jobless benefits exceeds 14.5 million.

And now many lawmakers are asking the Fed to expand its lending to small and medium-sized businesses, by allowing companies to offer assets such as commercial properties as collateral. They warn that hard-hit hotels and shopping malls could suffer a huge wave of foreclosures, hurting local communities

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and jobs across the country.

"Inaction would be disastrous for taxpayers, for employees, for communities," Rep. Van Taylor, a Texas Republican who is a leader of the bipartisan effort, said in an interview. He said the point is to save the jobs of the anxious hotel housekeepers, shift supervisors and other employees he's heard from, most of them minorities.

The decision is on the doorstep of Fed Chairman Jay Powell and Steven Mnuchin, the Trump administration's treasury secretary. Using money from Congress' coronavirus relief package, the Treasury Department is guaranteeing the Fed's lending programs — hundreds of billions each — to corporations, smaller businesses and state and local governments.

Powell and Mnuchin have said they're considering the option.

But some critics say the lending expansion would be risky, and might actually help big investors in the companies rather than the workers.

The Fed faces a sort of Goldilocks dilemma over risk: How much is just right? With the prospect of continued economic hardship and severe unemployment on the near horizon, the central bank has to balance the benefits of government aid against the risk of losses to taxpayers.

The economic disruptions caused by the coronavirus health crisis called for massive federal aid programs, unprecedented in scope. U.S. taxpayers are funding them. So if a company fails after receiving a government emergency loan and can't repay it, taxpayers take the loss.

Lawmakers are pressing for a broader approach in part because the Fed's Main Street lending program for small and mid-sized businesses, to which it's committing up to \$600 billion, has had a slow start, with only modest borrower interest. They want the Fed to allow companies to qualify based on assets such as commercial properties, rather than measures of financial condition.

But Bharat Ramamurti, a Democratic appointee to the new Congressional Oversight Commission, says he has serious concerns. "It's risky because it can be hard for the Fed to accurately appraise assets right now," he told The Associated Press. "And in some important cases like hotels, it would help deep-pocketed property owners like private equity firms without any guarantee of helping bellhops and waitstaff and housekeepers."

The only one of four members on the oversight panel who isn't a member of Congress, Ramamurti was a senior policy adviser to Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a leading Democratic critic of Wall Street and corporations.

Leveraging the funds from Congress' relief package, the Treasury Department is guaranteeing trillions of dollars — up to \$4.5 trillion — in the Fed's lending programs. The financial wizardry rests on a key assumption: The companies receiving the loans are deemed likely to repay once the crisis has passed and the economy has recovered.

Mnuchin has laid out the administration's gamble. He says it's possible that the government could lose some of the money it puts up. "Our intention is that we expect to take some losses. That's our base-case scenario," Mnuchin told Congress.

Mnuchin has spoken approvingly of the results from the \$425 billion bailout of banks and automakers during the 2008-09 financial crisis, under the administrations of George W. Bush and then Barack Obama. In that case the government took stakes in the companies and finished with a \$15 billion profit for taxpayers several years later as the economy recovered, the companies repaid their loans and their stock prices rebounded.

"There are scenarios ... where we could lose all of our capital, and we are prepared to do that," Mnuchin has said. "There are scenarios where the world gets better and we could actually make a small amount of money."

Powell, for his part, said, "We continue to be open to playing with the formula and making adjustments." However, he added, "More debt may not be the answer here; debt doesn't solve every problem."

The Fed could play it fairly safe, lending to "fallen angel" companies that were in sound financial shape before the pandemic but then were starved of cash by the economic disruption. In that case the central bank may be accused of helping businesses that could borrow in the private markets and don't need gov-

ernment aid. If it makes riskier loans, the Fed may be seen as propping up teetering “zombie” businesses that could default on payments. By law, the Fed cannot lend to insolvent companies.

The bipartisan group of over 100 U.S. House members pushing the changes, led by Reps. Taylor and Al Lawson, D-Fla., have asked Mnuchin and Powell to set up a Treasury-backed lending program for struggling companies that issue debt tied to their commercial mortgages, which is bought by investors.

The chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, also has made the case to Mnuchin and Powell, though proposing a somewhat different approach. And the two Republican members of the oversight commission, Rep. French Hill of Arkansas and Sen. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, said in a hearing that assessing companies’ ability to repay based on the value of their commercial properties, rather than just financial condition or cash flow, could help hotel workers by keeping the businesses afloat.

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Trump still faces skepticism in suburbs following convention

By THOMAS BEAUMONT, AAMER MADHANI and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pat Newell backed Donald Trump in 2016.

But after Trump’s speech at the Republican National Convention this week included no mention of the police shooting of Jacob Blake that spurred demonstrations in her hometown of Kenosha, Wisconsin, the white retired public relations specialist said the president still had work to do before she’ll commit to voting for him again in November.

“He simply ignored it,” said Newell, 71, a reliable Republican voter who has also been put off by aspects of Trump’s handling of the coronavirus pandemic but approves of his stewardship of the economy. “That’s so bothersome.”

The president can ill afford to lose voters like Newell. His convention underscored the campaign’s conviction that Trump’s path to reelection rests primarily on voters who backed him four years ago. In a no-room-for-error calculus, he produced a week of programming with fervent appeals to core supporters and limited outreach to anyone else.

Republican strategists and Trump backers offered mixed reviews of whether the strategy will right a campaign that has been set back by his handling of the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting economic collapse as well as his response to unrest this summer spurred by high-profile cases of police brutality against Black men and women, including this week’s shooting in Wisconsin.

Looking to stanch eroding support among suburban women and waffling supporters put off by his style, Trump sought to make the case he alone has what it takes to maintain law and order and steer the nation out of public health and economic crises. He spent nearly as much energy branding his Democratic opponent, Joe Biden, as a Trojan horse being used by the radical left.

The GOP convention’s target audience, according to campaign officials, was mostly former Trump supporters, those Republicans or independents who may have backed him in 2016 but grew unhappy with his rhetoric or handling of the pandemic. The goal, by trying to humanize Trump and demonize Biden, was to set up a permission structure to make those voters feel comfortable enough to vote for Trump again, even if they cared for his policies far more than his personality.

Officials believe they accomplished that over the four-day convention and are encouraged by internal numbers that show Trump had begun closing the gap on Biden even before the events of this week in Washington. The campaign’s theory of the election has long been to turn out Trump’s base — a smaller set of the electorate than which backs Biden, but more enthusiastic — while also trying to win over nonvoters and drive up negative impressions of Biden so that some of his possible backers stay home.

Tina Giza, who waited hours to see Trump in New Hampshire at his first post-convention rally on Friday, was full of praise for the RNC.

“He had so many different speakers from all sectors and experiences, talking about all the things he’s done for different groups, different ethnic groups. It was just awesome,” said Giza, 64, a retired nurse

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from Connecticut. "It was very uplifting, very positive. It made me feel really good watching it."

The president's advisers privately acknowledge minefields lay ahead in the final nine weeks before Election Day.

Trump aides are warily watching the calendar as Labor Day approaches, concerned that the three-day weekend, traditionally marked by parties and sizable gatherings, could trigger a spike in infections just like they believe Memorial Day did at the other bookend of summer, according to three White House and campaign officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations.

Even without another surge in coronavirus deaths and infections, some Trump backers say he needs to do more to unite a fractured nation.

"He's obtuse, and he doesn't get it," said Lee Davis, who watched parts of the convention from Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, a Republican-leaning exurb of Milwaukee. "But I don't think he's a racist. I just think he's incapable of moving comfortably to talking about race. It's one of the many things he handles poorly because he's nihilist."

The 55-year-old white insurance underwriter is exactly the sort of voter that Trump is relying on as he tries to repeat his success in battlegrounds like Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania — states where he narrowly won in 2016 but polls show he faces a difficult fight.

In the half-ring of suburban and ex-urban counties around Milwaukee, where Trump won but underperformed by historic GOP standards in 2016, Trump likely will need to improve his margins. Democrats made gains in swing-voting rural areas in Wisconsin far from the metro area in the 2018 midterms and 2020 special elections.

"The president's problems are bigger than any one speech could fix," said Republican strategist Alex Conant. "He is trying to stop bleeding in suburbs. He's trying to stop bleeding with seniors and independent voters."

The convention programming included fiery speeches by the president's personal attorney Rudy Giuliani warning of greater chaos in the streets should Biden win, endorsements from law enforcement officials and an emotional address from the widow of a retired St. Louis police officer who was killed this summer while helping a friend whose shop had been broken into during the unrest that was affecting many cities.

Trump barely addressed broader issues of police brutality and racial injustice during a speech Thursday that spanned more than an hour, saying simply, "We will ensure equal justice for citizens of every race, religion, color and creed."

"This whole dynamic is incredibly complicated at this point," said David Winston, a strategist who works closely with congressional Republicans. "Post-election, there may be some Monday morning quarterbacking. But in the middle of it, it's hard to say what's the right answer."

During the convention, Trump surrogates sought to soften his image with women by highlighting some of his female administration officials and concern for them outside the job.

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany recalled how Trump and first lady Melania Trump checked in on her after she went through a preventive surgery to avoid developing breast cancer. Kellyanne Conway, his outgoing senior adviser, applauded Trump for handing her the reins for the closing of the 2016 campaign — making her the first woman to manage a winning presidential campaign.

Trump's daughter and senior adviser Ivanka Trump spotlighted that 70% of new jobs created went to women in 2019 and described him as a doting grandfather. She also acknowledged Trump's use of social media — he regularly uses the platform to put political opponents, businesses and cultural figures who are at odds with him on blast — isn't for everyone.

"I know his tweets can feel a bit ... unfiltered," said Ivanka Trump in introducing the president before his acceptance speech. "But the results speak for themselves."

Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa, and Madhani from Chicago. Associated Press writer Holly Ramer contributed to this report from Londonderry, N.H.

At D.C. march, families decry 'two systems of justice'

By AARON MORRISON, KAT STAFFORD and ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Standing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. famously laid out a vision for harmony between white and Black people 57 years ago, his son issued a sobering reminder about the persistence of police brutality and racist violence targeting Black Americans.

"We must never forget the American nightmare of racist violence exemplified when Emmett Till was murdered on this day in 1955, and the criminal justice system failed to convict his killers," said Martin Luther King III, speaking to thousands who gathered Friday to commemorate the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

"Sixty-five years later (after Till's murder), we still struggle for justice — demilitarizing the police, dismantling mass incarceration, and declaring as determinately as we can that Black lives matter," King said.

Even in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, many felt compelled to join civil rights advocates in Washington to highlight a scourge of police and vigilante violence that gave way to what many feel is an overdue reckoning on racial injustice. Some stood in sweltering temperatures in lines that stretched for several blocks, as organizers took temperatures as part of coronavirus protocols. Organizers reminded attendees to practice social distancing and wear masks throughout the program, although distancing was hardly maintained as the gathering grew in size.

They gathered following another shooting by a white police officer of a Black man — this time, 29-year-old Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin, last Sunday — sparking demonstrations and violence that left two dead. As peaceful protests turned to arson and theft, naysayers of the Black Lives Matter movement issued calls for "law and order."

The Rev. Al Sharpton, whose civil rights organization, the National Action Network, planned Friday's commemoration, had a message for naysayers.

"Some say to me, 'Rev. Al, y'all ought to denounce those that get violent, those that are looting,'" Sharpton said. "All of the families (of victims of police and vigilante violence) have denounced looting. What we haven't heard is you denounce shooting."

Sharpton asked, "We will speak against the looting, but when will you speak against wrong police shooting?"

Sharpton and King stood with relatives of an ever-expanding roll call of victims: Blake, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, Ahmaud Arbery, Trayvon Martin, and Eric Garner, among others.

Arbery and Martin both were killed by men who pursued them with guns and whose arrests were delayed until residents protested.

"There are two systems of justice in the United States," said Jacob Blake Sr., the father of the man whose shooting by police in Kenosha left him paralyzed from the waist down. "There's a white system and a black system -- the black system ain't doing so well."

"No justice, no peace!" he proclaimed.

Philonise Floyd, the brother of George Floyd, stared out at the massive march audience and said he wished his brother was there to see it.

Friday's march shaped up to be the largest political gathering in Washington since the pandemic began. Many attendees wore T-shirts of the late Rep. John Lewis who, until his death last month, was the last living speaker at the original March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. That march went on to become one of the most famous political rallies in U.S. history, and one of the largest gatherings with over 200,000 people in attendance.

Organizers said they intended to show the urgency for federal policing reforms, to decry racial violence, and to demand voting rights protections ahead of the November general election. A handful of satellite marches were held in South Carolina, Florida, Nevada, Utah and Colorado.

Democratic vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris, in a video, said the original conveners would be disappointed that Black Americans are still marching for justice and equality under the law.

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"I have to believe that if they were with us today, they would share in our anger and frustration as we continue to see Black men and women slain in our streets, and left behind in our economy and justice system that has too often denied Black folks our dignity and rights," she said.

Former Vice President Joe Biden tweeted his support for the march.

Although President Donald Trump did not comment on the march Friday, the Republican National Committee marked the event's anniversary by highlighting the president's record as a "champion for the Black community."

"While there is more work to be done, Donald Trump is the leader to make it happen," Paris Dennard, an RNC senior communications advisor, said in a statement.

Activist Frank Nitty, who said he walked 750 miles for 24 days from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Washington for Friday's march, spoke to the audience about persistence in the fight for justice.

"Are y'all tired? Because I'm tired," Nitty said. "They think this is a negotiation, but I came here to demand change. My grandson ain't gonna march for the same things that my granddaddy marched for."

Navy veteran Alonzo Jones-Goss, 28, who traveled from Boston to participate in the march, said the nation has seen far too many tragic events that claimed the lives of Black Americans and other people of color, and "that needs to come to an end."

Following the rally, participants marched to the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial in West Potomac Park, next to the National Mall, and then dispersed. Some participants headed toward Black Lives Matter Plaza, right outside of the White House, which was renamed from Pennsylvania Avenue during protests in June.

Chants of "Black lives matter" and "No justice, no peace" echoed through downtown Salt Lake City Friday morning, as about 200 people marched from the state Capitol to Washington Square Park for Utah's March on Washington.

"If people still can't see why we're out here and why we're marching and why people are loud and angry then they're blind," said Joshua Chamberlain, a realtor from Holladay, Utah. "There's racism happening every day and -- especially by police brutality -- people are dying from it."

In Colorado, several dozen people rallied at a prominent statue of Martin Luther King Jr. in Denver's City Park. Democratic U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet cited the names of George Floyd, Elijah McClain and victims of police brutality.

"You know and I know what happened to them would never happen to me," said Bennet, who is white.

Sharpton instructed those in other states to march on their U.S. senators' offices and demand their support for federal policing reforms and reinvigorated voter protections, in Lewis' memory.

In June, the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives passed the George Floyd Justice In Policing Act, which would ban police use of stranglehold maneuvers and end qualified immunity for officers, among other reforms. A Republican-authored police reform bill, introduced in June by South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, who is Black, failed a procedural vote in the Senate because Democrats felt the measure didn't go far enough to address officer accountability.

In July, following Lewis' death, Democratic senators reintroduced legislation that would restore a provision of the historic Voting Rights Act of 1965 gutted by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2013. The law previously required states with a history of voter suppression to seek federal clearance before changing voting regulations.

Both measures are awaiting action in the Republican-controlled Senate.

Aaron Morrison reported from New York. Kat Stafford and Ashraf Khalil reported from Washington, and journalists from across the AP contributed to this report. Morrison and Stafford are members of the AP's Race and Ethnicity team.

GOP portrayal of urban mayhem doesn't always match reality

By MICHELLE R. SMITH and GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

At almost every turn at the Republican National Convention, speakers from the president on down por-

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trayed American cities like Portland, Oregon, New York and Chicago as lawless Democratic wastelands that have been overrun with violence, looting and destruction that is forcing residents to flee for safer locales.

The reality on the ground is much more nuanced.

In downtown Portland this week, tourists from Texas enjoyed gyros at a food cart, a couple from the suburbs soaked up the afternoon sun and a recent transplant from Indiana strummed an acoustic guitar outside a shuttered Apple store, in front of a mural that's dedicated to Black people killed by police.

"It's a pretty day and we feel just perfectly safe as long as we've got our masks on," said Benjamin Green, a warehouse forklift operator from Beaverton, Oregon. "I don't see why there's any need to be scared to walk around out here."

The picture of American cities overwhelmed by violence has become a central theme of the 2020 presidential race. In his convention acceptance speech Thursday night, President Donald Trump called for "law and order" and said the country can never allow "mob rule." But for the most part that portrait doesn't line up with reality.

In Portland, protests have played out for more than 90 consecutive nights, frequently ending with vandalism. Hundreds of people have been arrested. But the disruption is mostly concentrated in small pockets of the city.

In those spots, including the two blocks around the federal courthouse and around some police precincts, graffiti is common and stores and restaurants are open, but boarded up. Downtown businesses this week urged the mayor to do more to address the problems.

In contrast, most neighborhoods in the city of nearly 700,000 people are untouched by the violence. Parks attract young families and joggers, and bars and restaurants cater to customers with outdoor seating areas spaced out for COVID-19.

"It seems business as usual," said Garrett Martin, who was visiting downtown from Fort Worth, Texas, with his fiancée. "We've been to a few shops. It's just the same regulations as everywhere else -- we have to wear masks."

Experts say violent crime has generally remained stable and low. Still, homicides and shootings are on the rise in many cities, but experts say it's too soon to say whether the trend will continue, or what's driving it. Double-digit unemployment, frustrations over the pandemic and tensions over police violence could all be factors.

In many major cities, there was looting and some property destruction during the height of the George Floyd racial justice protests, but order was restored months ago in most places.

David Abrams, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, created a database tracking crime statistics in about 25 major cities during the pandemic.

The numbers are nuanced: overall violent crime is down, but there have been increases in homicides and shootings over the summer. For the first half of the year, he said, homicides were up 20% in the cities they follow.

Abrams cautions that it can be misleading to focus on crime statistics over a short time frame, such as week-to-week or month-to-month.

"If you look at a longer time horizon over 10 years, 20 years, 30 years. I mean, crime is down immensely from what it was in the 80s and 90s," he said.

In New York City, police recorded 280 killings through Aug. 23, up from 208 during the same period last year. Victims include a teacher hit by a stray bullet while walking his dog and a 1-year-old boy shot in his stroller.

But for a broader perspective, there were nearly 2,300 murders in New York City in 1990. In 2000, the number was 673.

The last time New York saw homicides on the scale of 2020 was in 2012, when there were 419. Back then, it was something to celebrate — the lowest number of murders in four decades. Then-Mayor Mike Bloomberg proclaimed New York City the safest big city in America.

That's around the time that Kelly Baillon moved into her neighborhood just south of Prospect Park in Brooklyn. Baillon said she had never heard a gunshot — until Aug. 14, when her neighbor was shot in the

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chest outside their apartment building in the middle of the afternoon. Within a week, three more men were shot in her neighborhood, and two died.

"I'm afraid to walk outside," Baillon said. "I can't leave my house without feeling like I'm about to start crying. Just sheer anxiety."

Feeling unsafe, she flew to visit family near Bend, Oregon.

In Minneapolis, city streets have mostly returned to the way they were before the protests and destruction that rocked the city for days after Minneapolis police killed Floyd on May 25, said Michelle Phelps, a sociology professor who studies crime and policing at the University of Minnesota.. But there are still some reminders of the violence, in the form of burned out buildings.

Floyd's killing sparked thousands of protests in cities and small towns across the nation. Nearly all were peaceful, and about 95% of those counted so far by the group crowdcounting.org did not have any property damage.

On Wednesday, a new wave of unrest hit Minneapolis, but in a limited area. False rumors of another police shooting of a Black man drove people downtown, where some then damaged, burglarized or burned businesses. Two police officers were injured. It turned out that the man, a suspect in a homicide, had shot himself as police were closing in.

Focusing just on that chaos misses the deeper story, Phelps said. The rise in homicides is happening in the context of a pandemic that has disrupted lives and amid the public breach of trust that was Floyd's killing.

"When people are disconnected from their jobs, when people's employment is terminated or their hours cut back, when whole families are struggling to feed themselves, we have a mass epidemic of homelessness. ... We should expect all of that to influence crime as well," Phelps said. "It's a powder keg."

The highest risk of violence, she notes, is borne by young men of color in the poorest neighborhoods.

Phelps, a self-described white lady who lives in an upper-middle class neighborhood, said she knows no one who has moved out of the city, contrary to the assertions by South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, who claimed Wednesday night that people who could afford to were fleeing cities.

Back in Portland, Mayor Ted Wheeler this week took exception to the portrayal of his city as lawless.

"The current national depiction of our city as a dark dystopia with nonstop violence is a lie," he said.

Associated Press writers Michael R. Sisak and Michael Balsamo contributed to this report.

Weather slows California wildfires; thousands allowed home

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — California wildfires were slowly being corralled Friday as cooler, humid weather and reinforcements aided firefighters and tens of thousands of people were allowed back home after days of death and destruction.

In the past two days, evacuation orders were lifted for at least 50,000 people in the San Francisco Bay Area and wine country, officials with the state fire agency, Cal Fire, said.

In heavily damaged areas, crews were working to restore electricity and water so more people could return to their homes.

Around the state, hundreds of wildfires — coming months earlier in the season than expected — have killed at least seven people, burned more than 2,000 square miles (5,200 square kilometers) and pushed firefighter resources to the breaking point. Two are among the largest wildfires in recent state history.

In central California, a blaze burning in Sequoia National Forest in Tulare County prompted officials to order people living in several small communities to immediately evacuate Friday. Two fires in the area merged earlier this week and have scorched 37 square miles (96 square kilometers). They were burning with no containment.

Wildfires are so bad in the western United States that about 200 active duty U.S. Army soldiers are being mobilized to help fight them, said officials with the National Interagency Fire Center. This is the first active duty mobilization for wildfire support since 2018.

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More than 5,900 square miles (15,280 square kilometers) have burned so far this year, and 105 large wildfires are burning across the western United States.

In California, about 170,000 people were under evacuation orders at the peak of the fires.

But a heat wave eased this week, and in the past few days cooler, more humid weather patterns slowed the spread of three massive complexes of wildfires in Northern California as aid poured in from out of state and California National Guard troops joined the fight.

Evacuation orders for more than 20,000 people were lifted over the past 24 hours in San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties, where a massive blaze caused by lightning was 27% surrounded, fire officials announced.

Three people reported missing in evacuation zones had been found, but there was a new report of one missing person, Santa Cruz County sheriff's Chief Deputy Chris Clark said.

The fire has burned at least 575 homes. But the tally could rise, and about 52,000 people remained evacuated. Clark could not say exactly when they would be allowed back home.

Clark also reported that firefighters doing mop-up work and putting out spot fires around a golf course found an open tool box containing an apparent pipe bomb. A bomb squad detonated the device, and detectives are investigating, Clark said.

In the eastern San Francisco Bay Area, a fire that has burned in seven counties was 40% surrounded.

Parts of Solano County and Lake County, north of San Francisco, began allowing people back home on Thursday. Solano opened additional areas Friday morning.

Evacuation orders in the wine counties of Napa and Sonoma were lifted Wednesday for about 35,000 people who had been told to leave after lightning ignited dozens of blazes more than a week ago. The fire complex, which is 35% contained, has killed five and destroyed more than 1,000 buildings.

Associated Press writer John Antczak in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Laura victims may go weeks without power; US deaths reach 14

By MELINDA DESLATTE and STACEY PLAISANCE Associated Press

LAKE CHARLES, La. (AP) — The Louisiana coastline devastated by Hurricane Laura began a long and gloomy recovery Friday as hundreds of thousands of people still without water and power confronted the possibility that basic services may not return for weeks or even longer. The number of dead climbed to at least 14.

A day after the Category 4 storm hit, more bodies emerged in the aftermath in Louisiana and neighboring Texas. The deaths included five people killed by fallen trees and one person who drowned in a boat. Eight people died from carbon monoxide poisoning due to unsafe operation of generators, including three inside a Texas pool hall, where authorities say the owner had let seven Vietnamese shrimp boat laborers and homeless men take shelter. The other four were in critical condition.

The lack of essential resources was grim for the many evacuated residents eager to return.

Chad Peterson planned to board up a window and head to Florida. "There's no power. There's no water. There's no utilities," he said.

Thousands of people who heeded dire warnings and fled the Gulf Coast returned to homes without roofs, roads littered with debris and the likelihood of a harsh recovery that could take months.

Lawrence "Lee" Faulk came back to a home with no roof in hard-hit Cameron Parish, which was littered with downed power lines. His metal storage building, 24 feet square, was thrown into a neighbor's oak trees.

"We need help," Faulk said. "We need ice, water, blue tarps — everything that you would associate with the storm, we need it. Like two hours ago."

The White House said President Donald Trump would visit the region Saturday and survey the damage.

Simply driving in Lake Charles, a city of 80,000 residents that sustained some of the worst damage, was a feat. Power lines and trees blocked paths or created one-lane roads that drivers had to navigate with oncoming traffic. Street signs were snapped off their perches or dangled, and no stoplights worked, making it a trust exercise with those sharing the roads.

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Mayor Nic Hunter cautioned that there was no timetable for restoring electricity and that water-treatment plants "took a beating," resulting in barely a trickle of water coming out of most faucets. "If you come back to Lake Charles to stay, make sure you understand the above reality and are prepared to live in it for many days, probably weeks," Hunter wrote on Facebook.

Caravans of utility trucks were met Friday by thunderstorms in the sizzling heat, complicating recovery efforts.

Forty nursing homes were also relying on generators, and assessments were underway to determine if more than 860 residents in 11 facilities that had been evacuated could return. Water outages remained a major problem in evacuated facilities, the Louisiana Department of Health said.

Meanwhile, the hurricane's remnants threatened to bring flooding and tornadoes to Tennessee as the storm, now a tropical depression, drifted north. Forecasters warned that the system could strengthen into a tropical storm again upon returning to the Atlantic Ocean this weekend.

In the storm's wake, more than 600,000 homes and businesses were without power in Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas, according to poweroutage.us, which tracks utility reports.

The Louisiana Department of Health estimated that more than 220,000 people were without water. Restoration of those services could take weeks or months, and full rebuilding could take years.

Ira Lyles returned to find that his downtown Lake Charles salon called The Parlor House survived with little damage, but his home was destroyed.

"It tore the front off, tore the front of the roof off, picked up my camper trailer and hit the side wall, and the side wall buckled and cracked inside," he said. "I think it's going to be a wash."

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards called Laura, which packed a top wind speed of 150 mph (241 kph), the most powerful hurricane to strike Louisiana, meaning it surpassed even Katrina, which was a Category 3 storm when it hit in 2005. He said officials now believe the surge was as high as 15 feet and added that tens of thousands of people were displaced by the storm.

Late Friday night, Edwards announced that the president had approved Louisiana's major disaster declaration request, saying in a statement that the step paves the way for getting aid to the hard-hit communities.

More than 580,000 coastal residents were put under evacuation as the hurricane gained strength in the Gulf of Mexico. Laura was the seventh named storm to strike the U.S. this year, setting a new record for U.S. landfalls by the end of August. Laura hit the U.S. after killing nearly two dozen people in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

In Lake Charles, chainsaws buzzed and heavy machinery hauled tree limbs in the front lawn of Stanley and Dominique Hazelton, who rode out the storm on a bathroom floor. A tree punctured the roof just a few feet from where the couple was taking cover.

They regretted staying.

"There's people without homes," Stanley Hazelton said. "So it was dumb. We'll never do it again. We'll never stay through another hurricane again."

Associated Press contributors include Jamie Stengle in Dallas; Janet McConnaughey in New Orleans; John L. Mone in Holly Beach, Louisiana; Paul J. Weber in Austin, Texas; Seth Borenstein in Kensington, Maryland; and Adrian Sainz in Memphis, Tennessee.

Teen accused of killing 2 thrust into debate over protests

By STEPHEN GROVES and BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

ANTIOCH, Ill. (AP) — A white 17-year-old who says he went to protests in Wisconsin to protect businesses and people has become a flashpoint in a debate over anti-racism demonstrations that have gripped many American cities and the vigilantism that has sometimes met them.

On Tuesday, Kyle Rittenhouse grabbed an AR-15 style rifle and joined several other armed people in the streets of Kenosha, where businesses had been vandalized and buildings burned following a police shooting that left Jacob Blake, a Black man, paralyzed. By the end of the night, prosecutors say, Rittenhouse had killed two people and severely wounded a third.

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At a hearing Friday, a judge postponed a decision on whether Rittenhouse, who is in custody in Illinois, should be returned to Wisconsin to face charges, including first-degree intentional homicide that could land him in prison for the rest of his life.

To some, Rittenhouse is a domestic terrorist whose very presence with a rifle incited the protesters. But to others — who have become frustrated with demonstrations and unrest across the country — he's seen as a hero who took up arms to protect people who were left unprotected.

"Kyle is an innocent boy who justifiably exercised his fundamental right of self-defense. In doing so, he likely saved his own life and possibly the lives of others," said Lin Wood, a prominent Atlanta attorney who is now part of a team representing Rittenhouse.

The protests in Kenosha are just the latest to erupt during a reckoning over policing and racial injustice following the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police. As they have in other cities, rallies devolved into violence and vandalism at some points, and the National Guard was called in. The commander of the force said Friday over 1,000 guard members had been deployed, and more were on the way.

Rittenhouse, once part of a youth cadet program for aspiring police officers, can be seen on his Facebook page posing in a blue police uniform with a silver badge and broad-brimmed hat. In other online photos and videos, he takes target practice and brandishes a rifle above the caption, "Blue Lives Matter."

On Tuesday night, as Rittenhouse stood in front of a boarded-up building, he spoke to a reporter from the Daily Caller news site.

"People are getting injured and our job is to protect this business," Rittenhouse said. "And part of my job is to also help people. If there is somebody hurt, I'm running into harm's way. That's why I have my rifle."

Rittenhouse and a friend armed themselves on Tuesday and made their way to a mechanic shop whose owner had put out a call for protection, according to a statement from John Pierce, an attorney representing Rittenhouse. In the attorney's description of events, Rittenhouse had tried to offer medical help to injured people before he was "accosted by multiple rioters," leading him to open fire.

The hashtag #FreeKyleRittenhouse has trended on Twitter, a self-described Christian fundraising site, GiveSendGo, says it has raised more than \$100,000 for Rittenhouse's defense, and a post including photos of Rittenhouse cleaning up graffiti in Kenosha before the shooting was shared and liked thousands of times.

The night of the shootings, Rittenhouse is seen on video as a green-shirted figure running across a parking lot with a rifle followed by a man later identified as Joseph Rosenbaum, 36, according to a criminal complaint. Rosenbaum throws a plastic bag at Rittenhouse, misses, then five shots ring out, and Rosenbaum falls to the ground. He later was declared dead.

"I just killed somebody," Rittenhouse says into his cellphone, according to the complaint, and he starts running and several people give chase. "Beat him up!" one person in the crowd says. Another yells, "Get him! Get that dude!"

Rittenhouse trips and falls. One man holding a skateboard appears to try to grab the gun from Rittenhouse. A shot rings out, and the man, Anthony Huber, 26, staggers away. He also died.

In the scuffle, lasting just seconds, Rittenhouse shoots a third person armed with a handgun, according to the complaint. That man, Gaige Grosskreutz, 26, has a deep wound to his arm but has survived.

After the shootings, Rittenhouse can be seen walking toward police with his gun slung over his shoulder and his hands in the air. Police riding in tactical vehicles roll right past him. He later turned himself in in his hometown of Antioch, Illinois, according to Kenosha Police Chief Daniel Miskinis.

The police have faced questions about that response.

On Friday, Miskinis described a chaotic scene to reporters and said that "there was nothing to suggest that this person (Rittenhouse) was involved in any criminal behavior."

Miskinis said it was not a lapse in judgment to not stop Rittenhouse and ask for identification to see if he was old enough to carry a weapon, given the number of people on the street, many wearing masks that obscured their faces.

Wisconsin allows gun owners to openly carry in public, but a person under 18 can't legally possess or carry a firearm unless that person is hunting or target practicing with an adult or in the military.

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Before the shooting, some officers were seen on video thanking the group Rittenhouse was with for their help and tossing them bottles of water.

Kenosha County Sheriff David Beth told reporters Friday those officers were not his deputies. He added that he was not asking armed citizens to help law enforcement respond to unrest.

Before the shooting, Rittenhouse lived in a quiet apartment complex a half-hour's drive away from Kenosha, with his single mother, Wendy Rittenhouse, a 45-year-old nursing assistant who filed for bankruptcy two years ago.

Jeanie Quillin, who lived in an apartment building next door, did not know the Rittenhouses but said area residents were on edge over the teen's arrest and their fears that the demonstrations could come to their doorsteps.

"I want to know how a 17-year-old could get ahold of an AR-15," she added.

Rittenhouse's mother did not return calls Thursday, and the nursing home listed in court papers as her employer, Libertyville Manor, would not confirm she still worked there.

Rittenhouse dropped out of high school during the 2017-18 school year, according to a statement from a school district official sent to The Washington Post. A year earlier, court records show, his mother had asked for an order of protection from police for Rittenhouse and his now 19-year-old sister, McKenzie, saying that a 13-year-old bully was calling her son "dumb" and "stupid" and threatening him. She eventually dropped the matter.

On his social media posts, Rittenhouse appeared to be an enthusiastic participant in the Public Safety Cadet program run by local police departments that trains 14- to 21-year-olds in the basics of law enforcement. Beyond confirming he was involved, the Grayslake Police Department would not comment further.

On his 16th birthday, he appealed to Facebook friends to help him celebrate by donating to a nonprofit supporting police called Humanizing the Badge.

Rittenhouse also did a stint as a part-time lifeguard at the YMCA in Lindenhurst, Illinois, according to Man-Yan Lee, a representative for the organization's metro Chicago branch. He was furloughed in March due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In videos on his TikTok account, which has just 25 followers, he is seen assembling and disassembling a rifle and what appears to be a shotgun.

"Bruh, I'm just tryna be famous," he says on his TikTok bio page.

Condon reported from New York. Associated Press writers Scott Bauer and Todd Richmond in Madison, Wisconsin; Jake Bleiberg in Dallas; Don Babwin and Sophia Tareen in Chicago; Tammy Webber in Fenton, Michigan; and David Klepper in Providence, Rhode Island, contributed, as did news researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York.

For AP coverage of racial injustice issues: <https://apnews.com/Racialinjustice>

Victims of shooting during Kenosha protests engaged gunman

CHICAGO (AP) — A man known for his love of skateboarding, a Texas transplant to the state and a college student acting as a volunteer medic were killed or wounded this week by a 17-year-old gunman during a night of protests on the streets of Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Kyle Rittenhouse, of Antioch, Illinois, has been charged with fatally shooting two protesters and wounding a third. Attorneys representing Rittenhouse have said he acted to defend himself.

Kenosha County prosecutors said in court records this week that the first person shot around 11:45 p.m. on Tuesday has been identified as Joseph Rosenbaum, 36, of Kenosha.

Prosecutors said Rosenbaum followed Rittenhouse into a used car lot, where he threw a plastic bag at the gunman and attempted to take the weapon from him.

The medical examiner found that Rosenbaum was shot in the groin, back and left hand. The wounds fractured his pelvis and perforated his right lung and liver. He also suffered a superficial wound to his left

thigh and a graze wound to his forehead.

Friends have told local media that Rosenbaum was originally from Texas and previously lived in Arizona before moving to Wisconsin this year, where his young daughter lives. According to his Facebook page, he worked at a Wendy's restaurant in Kenosha.

The Associated Press was unable to reach family members by phone this week.

Rittenhouse then ran down the street and was chased by several people shouting that he just shot someone before he tripped and fell, according to the complaint and video footage.

Anthony Huber, 26, of Silver Lake, was shot in the chest after apparently trying to wrest the gun away from Rittenhouse, the complaint said.

Hannah Gittings, Huber's girlfriend, told WBBM-TV that he pushed her out of the way before chasing after the man others on the street had identified as the shooter.

Huber's friends gathered at a Kenosha skate park this week to remember him and his passion for skateboarding. According to court records, Huber had a skateboard in his right hand and used it to "make contact" with Rittenhouse's left shoulder as they struggled for control of the gun.

Other protesters remembered Huber on Wednesday night near the spot where he was shot, and Gittings told the group that he was an amazing person.

"He took down an armed gunman with nothing but his (profanity) skateboard," Gittings said, according to the Chicago Tribune.

The Kenosha News reported that local protest organizers said both Rosenbaum and Huber had participated in demonstrations this spring and summer, beginning with the May death of George Floyd after a Minnesota police officer pressed his knee into the handcuffed man's neck.

"They came out here every time with us," said Porche Bennett, a Kenosha resident who has organized protests. "Sweet. Loving. They were the sweetest hearts, souls. I called Anthony my hippie guy. They were sweet guys."

Bennett said she was particularly grateful to Huber, who stood in front of her when authorities used tear gas during protests outside the Kenosha County Courthouse this week.

The third man to be shot was wounded in the left arm. Court records said Gaige Grosskreutz, 26, appeared to be holding a gun when he approached Rittenhouse after he shot at Huber.

Grosskreutz is an activist who volunteered as a medic during the Kenosha demonstrations, according to Milwaukee activist Bethany Crevensten.

She said Grosskreutz was part of a group of roughly two dozen activists who have demonstrated around Milwaukee in the wake of Floyd's death and went to Kenosha to protest. Grosskreutz, who was wearing a backpack and cap labeled "paramedic," was shot in the arm, Crevensten said.

"He was a hero and he is a hero," she said.

Grosskreutz, of West Allis, was recovering after surgery and was not yet giving interviews, Crevensten said this week.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported that Grosskreutz is a senior at Northland College in Ashland and the college registrar's office said he is set to graduate in December.

The paper also reported that he previously worked as a special events coordinator, wilderness medical instructor and sea kayak guide at Lost Creek Adventures in Cornucopia, according to an online LinkedIn profile. The company offers kayak tours, rentals and programs on wilderness skills within the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.

Kenosha police union gives its version of Blake shooting

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — The Kenosha police union on Friday offered the most detailed accounting to date on officers' perspective of the moments leading up to police shooting Jacob Blake seven times in the back, saying he had a knife and fought with officers, putting one of them in a headlock and shrugging off two attempts to stun him.

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The statement from Brendan Matthews, attorney for the Kenosha Professional Police Association, goes into more detail than anything that has been released by the Wisconsin Department of Justice, which is investigating.

The Sunday shooting of Blake, a Black man, put the nation's spotlight on Wisconsin and triggered a series of peaceful protests and violence, including the killing of two people by an armed civilian on Tuesday. Blake is paralyzed from the shooting, his family said, and recovering in a Milwaukee hospital.

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul, who leads the state Justice Department, said in a statement Friday evening that the agency is trying to conduct an impartial investigation and can neither confirm nor deny the union's version of events.

Ben Crump, an attorney for Blake's family, did not immediately respond to emails seeking comment. He said earlier this week that Blake was only trying to break up a domestic dispute and did nothing to provoke police, adding that witnesses didn't see him with a knife. Crump has called for the arrest of the officer who shot Blake and for the two other officers involved in the shooting to be fired.

Cellphone video shows Kenosha Police Officer Rusten Sheskey and another officer following Blake with their guns drawn as he walks around the front of a parked SUV as they responded to a domestic dispute.

According to Matthews, the officers were dispatched there because of a complaint that Blake was attempting to steal the caller's keys and vehicle. Matthews said officers were aware that Blake had an open warrant for felony sexual assault before they arrived.

Blake was armed with a knife, but officers did not initially see it, Matthews said.

"The officers first saw him holding the knife while they were on the passenger side of the vehicle," he said.

The bystander who recorded the shooting, 22-year-old Raysean White, said he saw Blake scuffling with three officers and heard them yell, "Drop the knife! Drop the knife!" before gunfire erupted. He said he didn't see a knife in Blake's hands. State investigators have said only that officers saw a knife on the floor of the car. They have not said whether Blake threatened anyone with it.

Matthews said officers made multiple requests to Blake to drop the knife, but he was uncooperative. He said officers used a Taser on Blake, but it did not incapacitate him.

"Blake forcefully fought with the officers, including putting one of the officers in a headlock," Matthews said. A second stun from a Taser also did not stop him, he said.

As Blake opened the driver's door of the SUV, Sheskey pulled on Blake's shirt and then opened fire. Blake's three children were in the backseat.

"Based on the inability to gain compliance and control after using verbal, physical and less-lethal means, the officers drew their firearms," Matthews said. "Mr. Blake continued to ignore the officers' commands, even with the threat of lethal force now present."

The state Justice Department has released almost no information about Sheskey or the other two officers, Vincent Arenas and Brittany Meronek.

An annual Kenosha Police Department report indicates Sheskey was hired as an officer in 2013.

In an August 2019 interview with the Kenosha News, Sheskey said he had always wanted to go into law enforcement, noting that his grandfather served the city as a police officer for 33 years.

"What I like most is that you're dealing with people on perhaps the worst day of their lives and you can try and help them as much as you can and make that day a little bit better," Sheskey told the newspaper. "And that, for the most part, people trust us to do that for them. And it's a huge responsibility, and I really like trying to help people. We may not be able to make a situation right, or better, but we can maybe make it a little easier for them to handle during that time."

Sheskey, who appears to be white based on photographs and video, was moved to the bike patrol in 2017, according to the Kenosha News interview.

He was among a group of officers named in a handwritten federal lawsuit filed last year by a man in the Kenosha County jail, Lathan Steven Ward, who accused the officers of damaging his door while they were breaking it down to execute a no-knock warrant in August 2018. He also accused the officers of racial profiling and causing him pain and shame. U.S. District Judge J.P. Stadtmueller dismissed the case, ruling

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Ward's allegations weren't sufficient to sustain the lawsuit.

Before Sheskey joined the Kenosha Police Department he worked for the campus police department at University of Wisconsin-Parkside in Kenosha from the fall of 2009 to the spring of 2013. He served in various roles, including as a dispatcher, enforcing parking regulations and as a police officer, university records show.

Investigators have not said how many complaints may have been filed against Sheskey, whether his superiors ever disciplined him or whether he earned any commendations.

Arenas has been with the Kenosha Police Department since February 2019 and previously served with the U.S. Capitol Police Department from June 2017 through January 2019, authorities said. Arenas served in the Marines from 2012 to 2017 and did not do any combat deployments, the Marine Corps said.

Meronek joined the Kenosha police force in January. She received a technical diploma from the criminal justice law enforcement academy at Gateway Technical College in May, according to school records.

The Associated Press has filed a request under Wisconsin's open records law with both the state Department of Justice and the Kenosha Police Department for the officers' service records. Government agencies typically take weeks or months to turn over documents in response to such requests.

Sheskey and Meronek did not respond to emails sent to possible addresses for them and Arenas did not return a phone message left at a possible phone number for him. No one returned messages left at possible telephone numbers for officers' family members. No one answered the door Thursday at Sheskey's home.

Associated Press reporters Stephen Groves in Kenosha, Scott Bauer in Madison, Wisconsin, Amy Forliti in Minneapolis and researchers Monika Mathur in Washington, D.C., and Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

Health experts decry Trump's shunning of virus rules

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Public health experts expressed concern Friday about President Donald Trump's largely mask-free, socially un-distanced Republican convention event on the White House lawn, saying some of his 1,500 guests may have inadvertently brought and spread the coronavirus to others.

"There almost certainly were individuals there who were infected with COVID-19 but don't know it," said Dr. Leana Wen, an emergency physician and public health professor at George Washington University.

"I worry about these individuals infecting one another and most certainly going back to their home," said Wen, who previously served as Baltimore's health commissioner.

Trump delivered his speech accepting the GOP presidential nomination at the Thursday night event, which continued a pattern of flouting coronavirus safety guidelines.

Few in the audience wore masks when virtually all leading public health professionals, including the administration's, say face coverings play a big part in slowing virus transmission.

Chairs were placed inches apart instead of the recommended 6 feet, leaving attendees little room to practice social distancing.

Only those guests the White House expected to be in "close proximity" to Trump and Vice President Mike Pence were to be tested for COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus.

Though public health officials have said outdoors is safer than indoors, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also puts the risk of COVID-19 spreading at its highest at large outdoor events and in-person gatherings where people cannot stay 6 feet apart and attendees come from out of town.

Trump's campaign issued a statement from Dr. Robert Darling, chief medical officer of Patronus Medical Corp., who said the Republican National Committee's protocols are in "full compliance" with multiple guidelines issued by the CDC, the District of Columbia health department and other leading health authorities. He provided no details.

The campaign said Darling, a former White House physician to President Bill Clinton, has been working with the RNC to make sure the proper protocols are in place at convention sites.

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In Charlotte, North Carolina, where delegates met Monday to nominate Trump for reelection, the city required a process to be put in place to trace people's contacts in the event of an outbreak, including requiring attendees to wear trackers on their lanyards.

Masks and social distancing requirements were also in place, and attendees were required to complete a daily temperature screening and wellness questionnaire. They were tested before departing for Charlotte and retested upon arrival.

Out of nearly 800 coronavirus tests administered, two attendees and two people supporting the Charlotte event tested positive after they arrived, the county health department said. The four individuals were instructed to isolate, and any known close contacts were notified and given instructions on quarantining, the department said.

Public health officials also expressed concern over a march in Washington on Friday to commemorate the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The size of the event had been scaled back because of coronavirus concerns.

Participants underwent temperature checks as part of coronavirus protocols. Organizers also reminded the marchers to practice social distancing and wear masks, though many were bare-faced and packed together.

Before a Trump rally Friday night in New Hampshire, a campaign advisory said masks for attendees were "required" in accordance with Republican Gov. Chris Sununu's executive orders, and would be provided.

Before Trump arrived, many in the crowd did not put their masks back on after singing the national anthem. They later booed when a campaign staffer called on them to do so.

Wen, the former Baltimore health official, said the White House event gives the public the false impression that precautions are no longer necessary.

"We, in public health, have been trying to share, to put out guidance on what to do, and when we have the president of the country and top leaders doing exactly what we are asking people not to do, how can we be seen as credible?" she asked.

On Friday, North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis said he "fell short of my own standard" and apologized for not keeping his face mask on at the White House.

Tillis, who is in a tough reelection bid against Democrat Cal Cunningham, has been consistent about talking up face coverings as a key method to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Tillis' campaign tweeted a picture of the first-term senator wearing a mask on the White House lawn on Thursday before Trump's speech. But other media outlets later showed images of the crowd during the speech and Tillis was seen not wearing his mask.

"I thought it was very hard not to recoil at those images," said Dr. Howard Koh, a public health professor at Harvard and a former assistant secretary at the Department of Health and Human Services under President Barack Obama.

Koh said one mitigating factor was that Trump held the event outdoors.

He said wearing facial coverings during outbreaks is expected behavior in some Asian societies and social distancing, wearing masks and avoiding large crowds are new social norms that can save lives in the United States as well.

Koh said the same guidance applies to protests, but that moving around during demonstrations might help curb the spread of the virus.

Kansas girl's killer 5th federal inmate executed this year

By MICHAEL TARM and JIM SALTER Associated Press

TERRE HAUTE, Ind. (AP) — A Kansas girl's killer Friday became the fifth federal inmate put to death this year, an execution that went forward only after a higher court tossed a ruling that would have required the government to get a prescription for the drug used to kill him.

Questions about whether the drug pentobarbital causes pain prior to death had been a focus of appeals for Keith Nelson, 45, the second inmate executed this week in the Trump administration's resumption of

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federal executions this summer after a 17-year hiatus.

Nelson, who displayed no outward signs of pain or distress during the execution, was pronounced dead at a federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana, at 4:32 p.m. EDT — about nine minutes after the execution began.

There was silence from Nelson when a prison official looming over him asked if he had any last words to witnesses behind the execution-chamber glass. Those observers included the mother of 10-year-old Pamela Butler, who Nelson raped and strangled with a wire 21 years ago.

Nelson didn't utter a word, grunt or shake his head no. After the official waited for about 15 seconds, his eyes fixed on Nelson waiting in vain for any sign of an answer, he turned away and began the execution procedure.

Nelson didn't appear to deliberately move a muscle or turn his head toward the family witness room, where Pamela's mom wore a T-shirt emblazoned with her daughter's picture. Angel wings jutted out from behind Pamela's image.

But earlier, before curtains opened enabling witnesses to see inside the chamber, Nelson's spiritual adviser, Sister Barbara Battista, was allowed to walk up and stand two feet from the gurney, lean in and hear his last words, she told The Associated Press later.

"He said he wanted me to tell his lawyers he didn't have to wear an adult diaper during the execution. He was glad about that," she said. "He'd also told me (days) earlier he didn't want to be forced to do that, that it was undignified."

Battista, who stayed in the chamber as Nelson was put to death, standing farther away, said her interpretation of his silence during the public portion was that he was afraid if he said anything, he might then say something inappropriate.

Battista, a longtime anti-death penalty activist, said she made a point of addressing Nelson by his first name in his last minutes alive.

"He wanted someone there who would call him 'Keith' rather than 'Inmate Nelson,'" she said.

Nelson, whose face was obscured from witnesses behind a medical mask, remained still even as the lethal dose of pentobarbital was delivered. None of his limbs twitched or quivered, though his chest and midsection briefly heaved and shuttered involuntarily.

The relative stillness and quiet was a contrast to the scene on Oct. 12, 1999, as Nelson grabbed Pamela off the street and threw her into his truck. As Pamela screamed, one of her sisters who saw her abducted began screaming, too.

Pamela had been returning to her Kansas City, Kansas, home on inline skates after buying cookies. As he drove off with her, he made a rude gesture to her sister as she screamed. He later raped the fifth-grader and strangled her with a wire.

Pamela's mom, Cherri West, said she didn't expect Nelson to express remorse. She said, if anything, she thought he might curse at her and her family as he had done during criminal proceedings.

"I wasn't expecting him to say anything because he never had no remorse," she said. "I have no remorse for him."

Nelson showed no remorse during a sentencing hearing statement and instead "blistered the district court and the victim's family with a profanity laden tirade," the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals noted in one ruling.

After he was declared dead and curtains were again drawn across the windows, Battista was allowed to say a prayer over, touch and anoint Nelson's body, she said.

Nelson's attorneys, Dale Baich and Jen Moreno, said in a statement Friday that they had come to know him as someone other than a killer, that they "saw his humanity, his compassion, and his sense of humor."

"The execution of Keith Nelson did not make the world a safer place," they said.

A flurry of filings by Nelson's legal team over several weeks zeroed in on pentobarbital, which depresses the central nervous system and, in high doses, eventually stops the heart.

In one filing in early August, Nelson's attorneys cited an unofficial autopsy on one inmate executed last month, William Purkey, saying it indicated evidence of pulmonary edema in which the lungs fill with fluid and causes a painful sensation akin to drowning.

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The federal government has defended the use of pentobarbital, disputing that Purkey's autopsy proved he suffered. They have also cited Supreme Court ruling precedent that an execution method isn't necessarily cruel and unusual just because it causes some pain.

In her overturned ruling, U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan halted Nelson's execution early Thursday, saying laws regulating drugs require the prescriptions, even for executions. Within hours, an appellate panel tossed her ruling.

Nelson's crime was horrific by any measure.

Nelson, who didn't previously know Butler or her family, told a co-worker a month earlier he planned to find a female to kidnap, torture, rape and kill because he expected to go back to prison anyway on other charges, prosecutors said.

After killing Butler, he dumped her body in a wooded area near a Missouri church.

With the execution Wednesday of Lezmond Mitchell — the only Native American on federal death row — the federal government under President Donald Trump registered more executions in 2020 than it had in the previous 56 years combined.

The executions of Nelson and Mitchell were carried out the same week as the Republican National Convention, where many Trump supporters sought to portray him as a law-and-order candidate.

Salter reported from St. Louis. AP reporters Mike Balsamo and Jessica Gresko also contributed to this report.

Follow Michael Tarm on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/mtarm>

Health agencies' credibility at risk after week of blunders

By MATTHEW PERRONE and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The credibility of two of the nation's leading public health agencies was under fire this week after controversial decisions that outside experts said smacked of political pressure from President Donald Trump as he attempts to move past the devastating toll of the coronavirus ahead of the November election.

The head of the Food and Drug Administration grossly misstated, then corrected, claims about the life-saving power of a plasma therapy for COVID-19 authorized by his agency. Then the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention quietly updated its guidelines to suggest fewer Americans need to get tested for coronavirus, sparking outrage from scientists.

Trump's own factual misstatements about COVID-19 are well documented, but the back-to-back messaging blunders by public health officials could create new damage, eroding public trust in front-line agencies. That's already raising concerns about whether the administration will be forthcoming with critical details about upcoming vaccines needed to defeat the pandemic.

"I do worry about the credibility of the FDA and CDC, especially at a time when the capacity of the federal government to advance public health should be a priority for all policymakers," said Daniel Levinson, former longtime inspector general of the Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees both the FDA and the CDC.

On Friday, FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn removed a conservative public relations official involved in the botched plasma announcement from her role heading the agency's press office, according to a person familiar with the matter, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe private conversations.

The move came less than two weeks after the White House tapped Emily Miller for the role. Miller previously worked as a reporter for the right-wing One America News Network and as a staffer for Sen. Ted Cruz's reelection campaign. She did not return calls seeking comment Friday.

An FDA spokesperson said late Friday that Miller remains an appointee within the agency.

Trump administration officials said Wednesday that the CDC testing guidance was revised by the White House virus task force "to reflect current evidence," but did not detail what that was. The new recommendations say it's not necessary for most people who have been in close contact with infected people, but don't feel sick, to get tested. Outside experts said that flies in the face of the scientific consensus that

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wide-scale testing is needed to stamp out new infections.

The week began with Hahn forced to backtrack after using an erroneous statistic describing the effectiveness of the blood plasma therapy granted emergency use for COVID-19, as Trump twisted the facts and inflated the significance of the move.

Hahn "hurt his own credibility, he hurt that of his agency and he probably hurt the credibility of the next vaccine that will get approved," said Daniel Carpenter, a Harvard University professor of government.

The U.S. has invested billions of dollars in efforts to quickly develop multiple vaccines against COVID-19. But public fears that a vaccine is unsafe or ineffective could be disastrous, derailing the effort to vaccinate millions of Americans.

The American Medical Association urged the FDA to set up new processes to keep the medical community in the loop on vaccine developments, warning that public confidence is at stake. The group has also challenged the CDC to produce scientific data to back up its new testing recommendation.

"We need to see light," said Dr. Susan Bailey, AMA's president. "There is a concern that if you are not seeing the data, you have to wonder why."

A White House spokesperson said Friday that every decision the CDC and FDA have made under the Trump administration has been "data-driven to safely save lives."

The administration's Sunday rollout of the news that the FDA had granted emergency authorization for blood plasma in treating COVID-19 was marred by exaggerations and inaccuracies. The plasma, taken from patients who have recovered from the coronavirus, is rich in infection-fighting antibodies, which may benefit those still battling the disease.

Trump described the move as "historic" and touted the plasma's "incredible rate of success." But the FDA's own scientific memo made clear that more research is needed to prove whether it works.

Hahn echoed Trump and Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar in claiming that 35 more people out of 100 would survive the coronavirus if they were treated with plasma. That figure grossly overstated preliminary findings from the Mayo Clinic, which cannot be used to draw broader conclusions about survival.

The error amounted to a rookie statistical mistake, particularly egregious for a cancer specialist like Hahn. He apologized for the misstatement more than 24 hours later.

The FDA's press statement on plasma struck an unusually political tone for the science-based agency, touting the move as "another achievement in the administration's fight against pandemic."

Miller's appointment as FDA's assistant commissioner for media affairs was also unusual, given the position is typically held by FDA civil servants, not political appointees. Her previous stints in journalism had focused primarily on gun advocacy issues, not health or medicine.

In a parallel shakeup, HHS canceled the contract of a longtime FDA communications consultant who had advised Hahn to correct the misstatements on plasma.

"I did advise the commissioner to correct the record. I think that's the correct position to take," said Wayne Pines, in an interview with The Associated Press. "I have always been an advocate for protecting FDA's reputation and the trust that the American public must have in the FDA."

Pines said he didn't know if the cancellation of his contract was related to his advice to Hahn. An HHS official declined to comment on personnel matters.

The FDA declined to make Hahn available for an interview but pointed to comments this week in which he said he accidentally misquoted the plasma survival figure in an effort to simplify information for patients. He also denied political pressure played any role in FDA's decision on convalescent plasma.

Dr. Jesse Goodman, FDA's former chief scientist, said convalescent plasma probably met the bar for FDA emergency authorization, which merely requires that potential benefits outweigh risks.

But he and other former FDA staffers said they disagreed with the decision and worried that it followed pressure from Trump.

"I believe that FDA made this decision itself, however that kind of pressure is very toxic and will erode trust in FDA decisions in the future," said Goodman, now a professor at Georgetown University.

FDA staff generally supported the decision on plasma, according to a person familiar with the deliberations, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe private conversations. The authorization makes it

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easier for U.S. hospitals to use it.

But several top scientists from the National Institutes of Health weren't yet convinced of its effectiveness. The internal debate was first reported last week by The New York Times.

Trump reacted quickly, telling reporters: "It could be a political decision because you have a lot of people over there that don't want to rush things because they want ... to do it after Nov. 3."

Then, on Saturday, Trump fired off a Twitter blast aimed at the "deep state, or whoever, over at the FDA."

Pressure from Azar also ratcheted up ahead of the FDA's Sunday authorization, the person familiar with the discussions said.

HHS did not respond to questions about whether Azar pressed the FDA. Instead a spokesperson referred to recent interviews in which Azar denied politics influenced the decision.

Events surrounding the FDA's plasma decision resembled the agency's March authorization of hydroxy-chloroquine, the anti-malaria drug vigorously promoted by Trump.

After prodding by the White House, the FDA authorized distribution of the drug despite concerns. In June, the agency reversed course after studies showed the drug was ineffective and could cause sometimes fatal heart problems.

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Trump, at NH rally, sows fears about 'thugs,' 'anarchists'

By ZEKE MILLER and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

LONDONDERRY, N.H. (AP) — Fresh off accepting the Republican Party's nomination, President Donald Trump said Friday he was the only thing standing between "democracy and the mob," as he lashed out at protesters who accosted his supporters as they left the White House the night before.

Sowing fear about the implications of a Joe Biden victory to battleground state voters, Trump held a rally in New Hampshire on Friday evening. Looking to close his Democratic rival's lead with just over two months until Election Day, Trump was launching an aggressive travel schedule — and continuing to flout coronavirus guidelines.

Trump opened his rally with a rant against demonstrators who confronted those leaving his convention speech on the South Lawn. Some guests at the political event, including Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, needed to be escorted by police officers to safety upon leaving the White House grounds.

"They walked out to a bunch of thugs," Trump said, criticizing District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser for not doing more to protect his supporters. "Unhinged, manic rage. You ought to see last night in Washington, it was a disgrace."

It marked his latest attempt to frame the general election as a dire choice between two futures for the nation — a theme he was expected to amplify on the campaign trail.

Trump said he directed White House chief of staff Mark Meadows to study how to call in the National Guard to the nation's capital. Trump previously ordered federal troops to the District in May amid protests over the killing of George Floyd in the custody of Minneapolis police.

"We're not supposed to go in unless we call it an insurrection, and that's a big statement," Trump said. "But you know what we're going to do. ... We're going to have to look at it because we're not going to let that happen to people that go to the White House to celebrate our country."

Trump said the protesters were "anarchists," adding: "They're just looking for trouble. Has nothing to do with George Floyd. Has nothing to do with anything. They don't even know who George Floyd is."

"The agitators will go from rioting in the streets to running the halls of government," he added, saying voters needed to support him to "save democracy from the mob."

"No one will be safe in Biden's America," he added.

Speaking in New Hampshire, a state he lost in 2016 by fewer than 2,000 votes and is a top pickup op-

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portunity for him in 2020, Trump repeated unfounded allegations that thousands of voters were bused into the state from neighboring Massachusetts four years ago.

Trump also launched a new attack on Democratic vice presidential candidate Kamala Harris, speculating on the possibility that she could assume the presidency from the 78-year-old Biden. "You know I want to see the first woman president also, but I don't want to see a woman president get into that position the way she'd do it, and she's not competent," Trump said. "She's not competent."

He suggested his own daughter, White House senior adviser Ivanka Trump, as a more suitable occupant for the Oval Office.

Trump departed the White House by motorcade Friday, requiring it to weave through District of Columbia streets packed with demonstrators participating in a commemoration of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The motorcade made it to Joint Base Andrews without incident. Isolated groups of protesters on street corners made their presence felt through gestures directed at the motorcade.

While the coronavirus kills 1,000 Americans each day, Trump defied his own administration's pandemic guidelines on Thursday to speak for more than an hour to a tightly packed, largely mask-less crowd. In New Hampshire, a campaign advisory said masks for attendees are "required" in accordance with Republican Gov. Chris Sununu's executive orders, and would be provided.

Similar indoor-outdoor rallies at aircraft hangars in recent weeks have seen limited compliance with face covering mandates. The event format has become the Trump campaign's go-to amid the pandemic.

Before Trump arrived, many in the crowd did not put their masks back on after singing the national anthem. They later booed when a campaign staffer called on them to do so.

"This is a peaceful protest," read official signs handed out by the Trump campaign, echoing a rationale Trump has used to violate local ordinances and contrast his political events with racial justice protests sweeping the nation.

Eric Gravel, 39, of Burlington, Vermont, who waited in line at a food truck before Trump spoke, wore a T-shirt that read "COVID-19. Just tested positive for FRAUD." He was not wearing a mask.

"They'll tell me to put one on. I won't," he said.

"I believe it's a disease but I believe it is used by a control mechanism to enslave society," he said.

"By liberals," a woman in front of him interjected.

Trump is anxious for a return to normal activities and complained on the way to New Hampshire about the state of the college football season. In the Big Ten conference, coaches and medical personnel are working on multiple plans for staging a football season — including one that would have the league kicking off during the Thanksgiving weekend. The conference is filled with teams from battleground states that will prove critical in the upcoming election.

"No, I want Big Ten, and all other football, back - NOW," Trump tweeted. "The Dems don't want football back, for political reasons, but are trying to blame me and the Republicans. Another LIE, but this is what we are up against! "

Trump's pace of travel is expected to pick up to a near-daily pace. Biden, who has largely weathered the pandemic from his Delaware home, announced Thursday that he will soon resume limited campaign travel.

Trump mocked Biden's announcement, saying, "Today it was announced that Joe Biden is coming out of the basement," speculating it was "because the poll numbers have totally swung."

Trump last attempted to visit New Hampshire six weeks ago, when he called off a trip on the eve of a scheduled campaign rally citing the threat from a tropical storm — but also as his campaign worried that attendance would be sparse amid a nationwide surge in virus cases. That rally was to have been Trump's first since his embarrassing return to the campaign trail in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in June, where he spoke to a half-empty arena and an anticipated overflow crowd never materialized.

Associated Press staff writer Holly Ramer contributed to this report. Freking reported from Washington.

Biden, Harris prepare to travel more as campaign heats up

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By BILL BARROW and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After spending a pandemic spring and summer tethered almost entirely to his Delaware home, Joe Biden plans to take his presidential campaign to battleground states after Labor Day in his bid to unseat President Donald Trump.

No itinerary is set, according to the Democratic nominee's campaign, but the former vice president and his allies say his plan is to highlight contrasts with Trump, from policy arguments tailored to specific audiences to the strict public health guidelines the Biden campaign says its events will follow amid COVID-19.

That's a notable difference from a president who on Thursday delivered his nomination acceptance on the White House lawn to more than 1,000 people seated side-by-side, most of them without masks, even as the U.S. death toll surpassed 180,000.

"He will go wherever he needs to go," said Biden's campaign co-chairman Cedric Richmond, a Louisiana congressman. "And we will do it in a way the health experts would be happy" with and "not the absolutely irresponsible manner you saw at the White House."

Richmond said it was "always the plan" for Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris to travel more extensively after Labor Day, the traditional mark of the campaign's home stretch when more casual voters begin to pay close attention.

Trump and Republicans have for months mocked Biden as "hiding in his basement," because Biden has anchored his campaign from his Wilmington, Delaware, residence since mid-March, when public health officials first recommended that Americans severely limit close social contact.

Biden has conducted online fundraisers, campaign events and television interviews from his home, but traveled only sparingly for speeches and roundtables with a smattering of media or supporters. His only confirmed plane travel was to Houston, where he met with the family of George Floyd, the Black man who was killed by a white Minneapolis police officer on May 25, sparking nationwide protests. Even some Democrats worried quietly that Biden was ceding too much of the spotlight to Trump. But Biden aides have defended their approach. "We will never make any choices that put our staff or voters in harm's way," campaign manager Jen O'Malley Dillon said in May.

Throughout his unusual home-based campaign, Biden blasted Trump as incompetent and irresponsible for downplaying the pandemic and publicly disputing the government's infectious disease experts. Richmond said that won't change as Biden ramps up travel.

"We won't beat this pandemic, which means we can't restore the economy and get people's lives back home, unless we exercise some discipline and lead by example," Richmond said, adding that Trump is "incapable of doing it."

As exhibited by his acceptance speech Thursday, Trump is insistent on as much normalcy as possible, even as he's pulled back from his signature indoor rallies after drawing a disappointing crowd in Tulsa, Oklahoma on June 20. Trump casts Biden as wanting to "shut down" the economy to combat the virus. "Joe Biden's plan is not a solution to the virus, but rather a surrender," Trump declared on the White House lawn. Biden, in fact, has not proposed shutting down the economy. He's said only that he would be willing to make such a move as president if public health experts advise it. The Democrat also has called for a national mask mandate, calling it a necessary move for Americans to protect each other. Harris on Friday talked about the idea in slightly different terms than Biden, acknowledging that a mandate would be difficult to enforce.

"It's really a standard. I mean, nobody's gonna be punished. Come on," the California senator said, laughing off a question about how to enforce such a rule during an interview that aired Friday on "Today." "Nobody likes to wear a mask. This is a universal feeling. Right? So that's not the point, 'Hey, let's enjoy wearing masks.' No."

Harris suggested that, instead, the rule would be about "what we — as responsible people who love our neighbor — we have to just do that right now."

"God willing, it won't be forever," she added.

Biden and Harris have worn protective face masks in public and stayed socially distanced from each other when appearing together at campaign events. Both have said for weeks that a rule requiring all Americans

to wear them could save 40,000 lives in just a three-month period. While such an order may be difficult to impose at the federal level, Biden has called on every governor in the country to order mask-wearing in their states, which would likely achieve the same goal.

Trump has urged Americans to wear masks but opposes a national requirement and personally declined to do so for months. He has worn a mask occasionally more recently, but not at any point Thursday at the Republican National Convention's closing event, which violated the District of Columbia's guidelines prohibiting large gatherings.

NBA playoffs resume Saturday as sides detail new commitments

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Basketball Writer

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — NBA players want change that makes their communities safer. They want people to vote — hopefully in their home arenas.

And they want to keep playing basketball.

Teams returned to the court Friday after the NBA and the National Basketball Players Association agreed on commitments that made players comfortable continuing.

An emotional Chris Paul, the union president, detailed the events of the previous two days, when players upset by the latest police shooting of a Black man left them considering leaving the Disney campus and going home.

"We're all hurt, we're all tired of just seeing the same thing over and over again and everybody just expects us to be OK just because we get paid great money," Paul said. "We're human, we have real feelings and I'm glad that we got a chance to get in a room and talk with one another and not just cross paths and say good luck in your game today."

All 13 teams remaining in the postseason scheduled practice Friday — the anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, as Paul noted — though some declined to speak with reporters. Games are to resume Saturday with the Milwaukee Bucks taking on the Orlando Magic in the rescheduled Game 5 of their series.

The other two games Saturday will be Oklahoma City Thunder versus the Houston Rockets followed by the Portland Trail Blazers against the Los Angeles Lakers.

Play stopped Wednesday when the Bucks didn't take the court for their playoff game against Orlando, showing their frustration with the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Wisconsin and acts of racial injustice.

Guard Danny Green said Lakers players were resting ahead of their scheduled night game when they got the word about the Bucks. He said there were some heated moments when players met that night, given their surprise at the Bucks' actions, but he didn't think they would get to the point of deciding not to play.

"I mean, we all know that that would make a statement," he said. "We obviously are here. So we're all here, we all want to play. We know we have a chance to do something special too, but we know there are things more important than that, than winning a championship.

"We're going to be Black men forever. That's not going to ever change. So if it comes down to winning a championship or doing something better for our people, for our communities, we're going to pick that first."

Games were postponed the last two days, during which players met among themselves and with coaches and owners before an agreement to resume was reached.

"The key to this thing is that I think we all needed to take a breath," Clippers coach Doc Rivers said. "We needed a moment to breathe. It's not lost on me that George Floyd didn't get that moment. But we did and we took it. And the players took it, and they got to refocus on the things that they wanted to focus on outside of their jobs."

High on that list is voting, mentioned frequently in a joint statement by the league and the NBPA.

Many within the league of primarily Black players have focused on the importance of voting, and the need for places in inner cities where minorities can do so safely. With no NBA games to play be played in November, arenas are an ideal place for it.

Atlanta, Detroit, Charlotte and Sacramento were already on board, and Houston's Toyota Center was

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locked in this week. Madison Square Garden and the arenas for Dallas and Utah were added Friday, along with the Forum in Inglewood, California, owned by Clippers owner Steve Ballmer. Rivers also said Miami is working hard to make its facility available.

All team owners who also control their arena property will work with local officials to turn their buildings into a voting location for the 2020 general election to allow for safe, in-person voting.

Paul pointed out that practice facilities would be helpful if arenas can't be secured.

The players and the league will also immediately establish a social justice coalition, made up of players, coaches and owners, that will focus on issues such as voting access and advocating for meaningful police and criminal justice reform.

And the NBA and players will work with TV networks to create advertising spots during the remainder of the postseason to promote greater engagement in the election process and their communities.

Paul said he'd never seen anything like the events of the previous days during his 15 years in the league. He also spoke with Blake's father.

Not continuing the playoffs would have been another crushing blow during an already damaging season financially for the NBA and its players.

With lost revenue from China after TV partners stopped televising games when Houston general manager Daryl Morey tweeted support of democratic protesters in Hong Kong, and no fans in arenas since March because of the coronavirus pandemic, the league was already headed for losses of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Players had other reasons for wanting to stay.

"We understand how strong our voice is, how powerful our voice is and ultimately we decided if we go away from this stage we don't necessarily have that same platform so we stood in solidarity," Paul said. "We're going to continue to play but we're also going to continue to make sure that our voices are heard."

More AP sports: <https://apnews.com/apf-sports> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Bragging rights to Biden over Trump in television ratings

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — In the competition for attention at their makeshift conventions, Democrat Joe Biden can claim bragging rights over President Donald Trump.

But it was close. The Nielsen company says that 23.8 million viewers watched the final hour of Thursday's Republican convention on television, when Trump gave his acceptance speech before an audience gathered outdoors on the White House grounds.

A week earlier, Nielsen said 24.6 million people were watching Biden accept the Democratic nomination for president.

More people likely watched via video streams, but there was no reliable third-party measurement of those users.

Viewership was down sharply for the four-night party programs, staged largely as television productions because of the coronavirus pandemic, compared to the more traditional conventions that nominated Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton in 2016.

Whether or not it's an omen, more people (32.2 million) watched Trump accept the Republican nomination in 2016 than turned out for Clinton (29.8 million).

Over four nights this year, Democrats averaged 21.6 million television viewers while Republicans had 19.4 million. Democrats had more viewers on three of the four nights, with Tuesday the only exception, Nielsen said.

If anything, the ratings this year illustrated the tendency of viewers to stay with their tribes. For example, 9.2 million people watched Trump speak on Fox News Channel Thursday, by far the most of any network.

Fox is the destination of choice for most of Trump's fans, and they voted with their remotes. In the final hour of coverage, Fox News averaged 7.81 million viewers on the four nights of the the Republican con-

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vention, and 2.36 million for the Democrats.

Similarly, the left-leaning MSNBC reached an average of 5.74 million viewers for coverage of the Democrats anchored by Rachel Maddow, Joy Reid and Nicolle Wallace. For the Republicans, the three anchors had a 1.7 million average, Nielsen said.

It's difficult to tell how much of the ratings slippage was inevitable, because television viewership in general is down from four years ago, and how much was due to the infomercial-like presentations of both parties. It didn't feel like a convention, since hundreds of delegates were unable to gather in an arena to cheer their favorites.

The presentation was primarily virtual for the Democrats and, for the Republicans, a collection of mostly pre-taped speeches concluding with the spectacle on the White House lawn.

Party leaders will conduct postmortems to see whether any elements of these presentations will survive in four years, when presumably delegates will be able to gather in one city to meet.

Pace was an advantage this year. The productions, which ran with very few noticeable glitches, moved swiftly with shorter speeches and little dead time. That was an adjustment for television networks, which generally could count on dead time and long-winded speakers so their analysts had time to talk.

The Democrats' roll call vote, with delegates filmed at notable landmarks in their state or territory, was a winner that deserves to live on.

Some of the speakers thrived on an intimacy that could not be replicated in a drafty arena, most notably Ann Marie Dorn, the widow of a St. Louis police officer who spoke on the final night of the GOP convention.

But the lack of audience often made the speakers stilted and overly rehearsed and, in the case of the Republicans, many seemed to be reading a speech written by the same person.

Then there was Kimberly Guilfoyle, Donald Trump Jr.'s girlfriend, whose high-decibel speech to an empty auditorium made her a punchline. It was so loud, Comedy Central's Trevor Noah joked, that Canada called the cops.

And, if anything, balloon and funny hat makers will be lobbying for a return to tradition.

Ecuador couple certified as oldest married pair, nearly 215

By GONZALO SOLANO Associated Press

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Julio Mora slipped away from his parents to secretly marry Waldramina Quinteros one February day. Both families disapproved.

Seventy-nine years later, they're still together — he at 110 years of age, and she at 104, both lucid and both in good health, though relatives say they're a little depressed because they miss their big family get-togethers due to the pandemic.

There are longer marriages, but at the moment no other between people so old, according to Guinness World Records — just short of a combined 215 years.

Mora was born on March 10, 1910, and Quinteros on October 16, 1915. They wed on February 7, 1941, in the first church built by the Spanish in Quito: La Iglesia de El Belen.

The two retired teachers live in Ecuador's capital of Quito, where in mid-August they received the Guinness certification.

Their daughter Cecilia says they're both lucid and active, although they no longer have the agility they had before. But "for a month they have been different, more downcast because they miss large family gatherings."

And they can gather quite a crowd: four surviving children, 11 grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

"Since March, we have not had any of that," Cecilia said. "My parents need family contact."

She said her father enjoys watching television and drinking milk and that her mother, who enjoys deserts, likes to read the newspaper every morning.

Previously listed as the oldest were an Austin, Texas, couple, Charlotte Henderson and John Henderson who have a combined age of 212 years and 52 days.

Top general says no role for military in presidential vote

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. armed forces will have no role in carrying out the election process or resolving a disputed vote, the top U.S. military officer told Congress in comments released Friday.

The comments from Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, underscore the extraordinary political environment in America, where the president has declared without evidence that the expected surge in mail-in ballots will make the vote "inaccurate and fraudulent," and has suggested he might not accept the election results if he loses.

Trump's repeated complaints questioning the election's validity have triggered unprecedented worries about the potential for chaos surrounding the election results. Some have speculated that the military might be called upon to get involved, either by Trump trying to use it to help his reelection prospects or as, Democratic challenger Joe Biden has suggested, to remove Trump from the White House if he refuses to accept defeat. The military has adamantly sought to tamp down that speculation and is zealously protective of its historically nonpartisan nature.

"I believe deeply in the principle of an apolitical U.S. military," Milley said in written responses to several questions posed by two Democratic members of the House Armed Services Committee. "In the event of a dispute over some aspect of the elections, by law U.S. courts and the U.S. Congress are required to resolve any disputes, not the U.S. military. I foresee no role for the U.S. armed forces in this process."

Milley's tone reflects the longstanding views of military leaders who insist that the nation's military stays out of politics and that troops are sworn to protect the country and uphold the Constitution.

But the two Congress members, Reps. Elissa Slotkin of Michigan and Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey, said Friday that Trump's recent comments and his efforts to use the military to quell protests have fueled their concerns. The two lawmakers released Milley's answers.

"These are just prudent questions to be asking given the things that the president has been saying publicly," said Slotkin, pointing to Trump's use of the military to clear protesters from Lafayette Square and his suggestions that he may put law enforcement at the polls to make sure voting is conducted professionally. Milley's answers, she said, "demonstrated that the chairman recognized the military's role in our elections is to essentially stay out; that the military's role in the peaceful transition of power is to stay out."

Faced with polls showing he is trailing Biden, Trump last month said it was too early to guarantee he'd accept the election results.

"I have to see. Look ... I have to see," Trump said on "Fox News Sunday." "No, I'm not going to just say yes. I'm not going to say no." The Biden campaign at the time responded that "the United States government is perfectly capable of escorting trespassers out of the White House."

Trump later suggested that the election should be postponed, since the coronavirus pandemic has made it likely it could take days or weeks to count mail-in ballots. But that idea was immediately slapped down, including by top congressional Republicans, since the election date can only be changed by Congress.

Milley, known to be a student of military and constitutional history, anchored many of his responses in the nation's founding document. Asked if the military would refuse an order from the president if he was attempting to use military action for political gain rather than national security, Milley said, "I will not follow an unlawful order."

Sherrill, a former Navy helicopter pilot, said, "this is personal for me."

She said the questions reflect concerns raised by her constituents and others around the country "as we see the president refusing to say that he will accept the defeat; as we see the president of the United States of America questioning our democracy and or ability to run free and fair elections."

The attorney general and other Cabinet members should be asked similar questions, she said.

The speculation about the military getting drawn into the election is fueled by Trump's inclination to use the military as partisan props. He raised alarms — and met resistance from the Pentagon — when he threatened to use the Insurrection Act to use troops for law enforcement during the protests after

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George Floyd's death. Defense Secretary Mark Esper publicly said he opposed such a move — a stand that enraged Trump and nearly cost Esper his job.

The questions were also sent last month to Esper, and the answers were due Thursday. Esper is traveling in Asia this week, and Slotkin said he has not yet responded. Slotkin is a former CIA analyst and senior Pentagon policy adviser and Sherrill served in the Navy for about 10 years.

This is the second time in recent months that Milley has made a public stand against military involvement in politics. In June he used a speech at the National Defense University to express regret for walking with Trump through Lafayette Square in what turned out to be a photo op during public protests after the death of George Floyd.

He said photos of him there "sparked a national debate about the role of the military in civil society." And he told the military audience, "we must hold dear the principle of an apolitical military that is so deeply rooted in the very essence of our republic."

Monsoon rains wreak havoc across Pakistan, killing 63 people

By MUHAMMAD FAROOQ Associated Press

KARACHI, Pakistan (AP) — Heavy rains hit parts of Pakistan for a fifth straight night, bringing more flooding to the financial capital Karachi and towns and villages and leaving at least 63 people dead, officials said Friday. Rescuers evacuated people from flooded neighborhoods.

About 30 inches (76 centimeters) of rain have fallen in Karachi since Sunday, when monsoon rains began lashing the coastal city, forcing authorities to use boats to evacuate people trapped in flooded streets.

Forty-seven people were killed this week in Karachi in rain-related incidents, according to Murad Ali Shah, chief minister of southern Sindh province. He said authorities were working day and night to help rain-affected people in the city and elsewhere in Sindh, where Karachi is the provincial capital.

At least 16 people were killed in the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa because of flash flooding overnight, said Taimur Ali, a spokesman for the disaster management agency in the northwest.

Downed power lines caused widespread electrical outages in Karachi, adding misery to the lives of many of the 15 million residents in Pakistan's largest city. Some workers stayed at their offices and others spent the night in open areas because there was no transportation to get home in many parts of the city.

Hundreds of vehicles were dragged along city streets by powerful flood waters.

The military said it provided food to at least 10,000 people and dozens of relief camps were set up for residents. Troops also repaired embankments of a swollen canal by which floodwaters entered the city.

Eight of those killed in Karachi died when a wall fell on them in a residential area. They included children, who were playing at the time. Other casualties were reported in various parts of Sindh in the past 24 hours. More than 150 people have died in various parts of Pakistan since June in rain-related incidents and many residents were angry with authorities for not helping them.

Monsoon rains are hitting Pakistan at a time when authorities are trying to contain the spread of the coronavirus, which has caused more than 6,283 deaths since February. Pakistan reported nine more deaths Friday from COVID-19, the illness caused by the virus.

Every year, many cities in Pakistan struggle to cope with the annual monsoon deluge, drawing criticism about poor planning. The monsoon season runs from July through September.

Associated Press Writer Riaz Khan contributed to this story from Peshawar, Pakistan.

Beirut residents determined to save heritage lost to blast

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — For the past decade, art collector Nabil Debs has been working on turning his 19th century ancestral home in a historic neighborhood of Beirut to a hotel and art gallery. He planned to open it to the public in mid-August.

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Within seconds, his lifelong dream came crashing down, along with the two-story building's stone facade and front balcony as a massive explosion tore through Beirut, shearing off facades, blasting holes in buildings, doors, stones and shattering glass across the capital.

The Aug. 4 blast resulting from nearly 3,000 tons of improperly stored ammonium nitrates igniting at the port of Beirut killed more than 180 people and wounded nearly 6,000. It also damaged thousands of buildings, including dozens of charming Ottoman and French mandate-era structures which had been among the few survivors of a years-old construction frenzy replacing traditional houses with modern buildings. They include old homes, restaurants, museums and churches.

In the streets of two Beirut historic neighborhoods, Gemmayzeh and Mar Mikhael, workers are erecting scaffolding to support buildings that have stood for more than a century - now at risk of collapse.

Among them is the house of Debs, who says he is more determined to go ahead with his project, called Arthaus, that consists of 25 rooms. Days after the explosion, after he'd recovered from the shock and workers started renovation works. Now he plans the inauguration for mid-September.

"We have been working on this project for the last 10 years. For us it is a labor of love," said Debs, standing in a yard between his ancestral red-brick house, which was built in 1860, and another family home built in 1780. "We love the project, we love Beirut and we love Lebanon and that's what we are."

The day of the blast, Debs was at the house. He stepped outside into the backyard with a friend who wanted to smoke a cigarette. They were lucky. Had they gone to the front, the whole facade would have fallen on them. They miraculously escaped without a scratch.

"It was a horror story," Debs said.

He estimates his losses to be at least \$250,000 and could reach \$1.5 million, as some art pieces including sculptures were damaged.

Naji Raji, an activist and spokesman for Save Beirut Heritage, said the blast damaged more than 600 historic buildings in Beirut, of which about 40 are at risk of collapse. He said out of the 40 buildings, work has begun to support 17 of them. Raji said some estimates put the cost of renovating old buildings at about \$300 million.

The renovation work is being carried out by the Beirut Heritage Initiative, a coalition that includes among others the U.N. culture agency UNESCO, the French embassy and the architects syndicate, Raji said. The state is largely absent, apart from producing licenses for work.

Many of the buildings destroyed in the blast were proud holdouts. Since the end of the 15-year civil war in 1990, many old buildings have been demolished and replaced by modern high rises, as speculators stepped in to make fortunes. Since the blast occurred there have been reports of middlemen scouting destroyed neighborhoods and making offers to buy old buildings.

That appears to have provoked a determination by owners to save their buildings.

A giant banner placed on a damaged historic building reads in Arabic and English: "We are staying." Another banner hanged on a street in Gemmayzeh reads: "Our history is not for sale."

"National heritage should be protected. It is very important heritage for the identity of the country," UNESCO's chief Audrey Azoulay told journalists in Beirut on Thursday. She added that UNESCO launched a campaign titled "Li Beirut," or for Beirut, and called on states, the private sector and individuals to donate money.

She called for preserving the historic districts of Beirut through laws that prevent selling buildings by taking advantage of weak owners.

Earlier this month, caretaker Finance Minister Ghazi Wazni issued a decree preventing the sale of any historic building without permission from the Culture Ministry, a move that aims to prevent "exploitation."

In Gemmayzeh, Aida Qazoun, 80, moved around her four-room apartment on the ground floor of a century-old three-story building as workers fixed broken windows and cemented holes in the walls.

She returned from her son's home in the mountains, where she moved for two weeks after the blast along with her daughter who suffered an arm injury from flying glass and who also returned home.

"I got married and moved into this apartment 60 years ago. I will stay here," said Qazoun as she prepared

a pot of Arabic coffee for the workers to take a rest during a hot and humid summer day.

Hospital: Russia's Navalny still in coma but improving

By DAVID RISING and DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny is still in an induced coma from a suspected poisoning but his condition is stable and his symptoms are improving, the German doctors treating him said Friday.

Navalny, a politician and corruption investigator who is one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's fiercest critics, fell ill on a flight back to Moscow from Siberia on Aug 20 and was taken to a hospital in the Siberian city of Omsk after the plane made an emergency landing.

Last weekend, he was transferred to the Charité hospital in Berlin, where doctors found indications of "cholinesterase inhibitors" in his system.

Found in some drugs, pesticides and chemical nerve agents, cholinesterase inhibitors block the breakdown of a key chemical in the body, acetylcholine, that transmits signals between nerve cells.

Navalny, 44, is being treated with the antidote atropine. Charité said "there has been some improvement in the symptoms caused by the inhibition of cholinesterase activity."

"While his condition remains serious, there is no immediate danger to his life," the hospital said. "However, due to the severity of the patient's poisoning, it remains too early to gauge potential long-term effects."

Navalny's wife Yulia has been visiting him regularly at the hospital and Charité said physicians remain in close contact with her.

Navalny's allies insist he was deliberately poisoned and say the Kremlin was behind it, accusations that Russian officials rejected as "empty noise."

Western experts have cautioned that it is far too early to draw any conclusions about what may have caused Navalny's condition, 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.

The Russian doctors who treated Navalny in Siberia have repeatedly contested the German hospital's conclusion, saying they had ruled out poisoning as a diagnosis and that their tests for cholinesterase inhibitors came back negative.

Navalny was brought to Germany for treatment after Chancellor Angela Merkel personally offered the possibility of him being treated in Berlin.

"We have an obligation to do everything so that this can be cleared up," Merkel told reporters at her annual summer news conference on Friday. "It was right and good that Germany said we were prepared ... to take in Mr. Navalny. And now we will try to get this cleared up with the possibilities we have, which are indeed limited."

When there is more clarity about what happened, Germany will try to ensure a "European reaction" to the case, Merkel said. She cited the poisonings of Skripal and his daughter two years ago, which prompted many European countries to expel Russian diplomats and vice-versa.

Following a meeting in Berlin with his counterparts from 26 European Union countries, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said forcefully that Russia had an obligation to carry out a thorough investigation, something many countries have called for.

"Russia must contribute more to clearing up the Navalny case, and the investigations that we expect must not remain a fig leaf," Maas told reporters. "The background to this act must be investigated comprehensively and transparently, and those responsible — directly and indirectly — brought to account."

So far, Russian authorities appear reluctant to investigate the politician's condition. Navalny's team submitted a request last week to Russia's Investigative Committee, demanding authorities launch a criminal probe on charges of an attempt on the life of a public figure and attempted murder, but said there was no reaction.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he saw no grounds for a criminal case until the cause of the politician's condition was fully established. Russia's Prosecutor General's office said Thursday that a pre-

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liminary inquiry launched last week hasn't found any indication of "deliberate criminal acts committed against" Navalny.

The dissident's supporters are not surprised at the Kremlin's reaction.

"They understand that any investigation will lead to the Kremlin," Lyubov Sobol, a prominent opposition politician and one of Navalny's closest allies, told The Associated Press on Friday. "They're not launching a criminal probe ... because they will have to answer at some point what the results of the investigation are."

Sobol says while Navalny's condition hasn't prompted big protests in Russia, it has stirred the outrage brewing there.

"I saw a lot of comments from well-known public figures in Russia who have never spoken out for Alexei Navalny before, (but now) spoke their minds and said that this was outrageous, it shouldn't be this way," Sobol said. "It's a turning point."

Even with their leader in the hospital, Navalny's team continues its work on corruption investigations and regional election campaigns in Moscow and dozens of other regions. Navalny's most recent project, Smart Voting, identifies candidates that are most likely to beat those from Putin's United Russia party and his supporters actively campaign for them.

According to Sobol, the team is used to working in his absence — frequently arrested, Navalny has spent more than a year in jail in recent years.

"So we know how to work without direct orders from Navalny. We understand what we need to do," Sobol said.

Litvinova reported from Moscow. Alexander Roslyakov in Moscow and Geir Moulson in Berlin contributed.

Katrina to COVID: New Orleans' Black community pounded again

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Levee breaches from Hurricane Katrina dumped six feet of water into the New Orleans home of Mary Duplessis and her husband in 2005. The house was uninhabitable. Rebuilding meant piles of paperwork in a mountain of bureaucracy. She didn't return to the city for a year.

But as the 15th anniversary of the storm approaches, and as another monster storm narrowly missed the city, it's not memories of Katrina that weigh on Duplessis' mind. It's the coronavirus.

The Black community of New Orleans, already economically lagging behind white residents before Katrina, was pummeled by the Category 3 storm that made landfall Aug. 29, 2005 and by the lengthy rebuilding process. Images of residents, mostly Black, on top of roofs, cars and at the Superdome stadium became the most iconic of a storm that revealed to the world a city starkly divided into haves and have-nots.

Today, the city is still majority African American but has nearly 100,000 fewer Black residents than it did before Katrina. Many couldn't imagine the community taking a bigger hit than it did from Katrina, but in some ways, that's happening with the coronavirus pandemic. Data show New Orleans' Black residents dying at greater rates — a trend mirrored nationally — and finding themselves less able to bounce back economically .

After Katrina, Duplessis' husband, Barrett, was back at work as a Sheraton Hotel maintenance mechanic within weeks. Now, he's been out of work for nearly six months. They visit food banks and use disability checks and retirement saving to get by.

She fell ill with the virus in March, she said, was hospitalized for seven days. The list of people she knows who've died of COVID-19 is growing — a sister-in-law, two close friends.

"Every night I go to sleep, I say, 'Is it going to ever be the same?'" Duplessis said. "We don't know when this is going to be over with."

Black New Orleanians account for 60% of the city's population but 77% of its coronavirus-related deaths as of June, according to a study by The Data Center, a New Orleans-area think tank. Among contributing factors, the study found: African Americans are more likely to live in multigenerational homes where it's harder to self-isolate, and a larger proportion fill essential jobs that potentially put them in contact with

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infected people.

"My estimation of the COVID health and economic crisis is that it will be more severe on Black New Orleansians than Katrina was in terms of personal trauma, in terms of financial impact, in terms of potentially the number of deaths at the end of the day," said Allison Plyer, of The Data Center.

For Doreen Ketchens, the pandemic is economically much tougher than Katrina. When she isn't touring the world for clarinet concerts, she's playing in the French Quarter with her husband (sousaphone) and daughter (drums). After Katrina, she could travel for gigs around the country, but that's not an option now. A once-full calendar has dwindled to nothing.

Around her, she sees the virus's racial disparities. In one day, she lost her brother and a teacher. It's frustrating, she said: "It's only serious if you are Black or brown."

A sign on downtown's Joy Theater reads, "Everything you love about New Orleans is because of Black people" — a testament to the food, music, and parades that African Americans have created in the city.

But for the Black people who make up the tourism industry's backbone — hotel cleaners, Frenchman Street musicians, line cooks — the work usually hasn't meant wealth.

"This is still the best tourist destination in the world," said Jay H. Banks, a Black City Council member. "People want to come here because of this magic. But it certainly has not been of great benefit to the people that make the magic happen."

Black and Hispanic workers fill a disproportionate share of hotel-industry jobs paying less than \$15 hourly, while the relatively small number paying more are largely filled by white staffers, a 2018 Data Center report found.

That's amid soaring housing costs. Rents increased 50% from pre-Katrina amounts, a 2015 Housing NOLA report said. Black residents have more trouble making rent, with over 60% using at least a third of income on housing.

Renter Shaun Mills sees how the housing landscape has changed since Katrina — the double shotguns converted to single-family homes, rebuilt public housing with fewer units, pricey condos springing up.

Even before he lost his line-cook job at Harrah's sports bar amid the pandemic, he said, he struggled.

"The prices of your rent, the prices of the insurance, the living expenses, the food expenses. Everything goes up year after year except for the pay," he said. "How can you expect a grown person to be able to provide for his family?"

After Katrina, billions of recovery dollars flowed into the city, largely rebuilding structural damage. Yet Black New Orleans families are hurting, advocates say. Black households earn significantly less. About half the city's Black children live in poverty, compared with 9% of white children, The Data Center says. Analysts do point to some gains — the 2016 Medicaid expansion improved health care access, and the jail population has dropped.

Mary and Barrett Duplessis have found firmer footing since Katrina but still lived month-to-month pre-pandemic. When the virus hit, and Mary was hospitalized, Barrett was glued to his phone, awaiting updates. When she came home, he was still so worried that Mary feared he'd make himself sick.

Prayer has helped. So has staying busy at home — their iron fence is now painted black and gold, for their beloved New Orleans Saints. They try to help neighbors by giving milk or vegetables from food-bank visits. Mary's attention was briefly diverted to Hurricane Laura, as she worried the storm could make a last-minute shift toward New Orleans. They were largely spared.

Meanwhile, the bills keep coming, including September's \$900 one for health care. As long as coronavirus is around, that's one expense the Duplessises can't drop.

"I'm really scared of that COVID," Barrett said. "It scares me."

Associated Press reporter Kevin McGill in New Orleans and researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed.

VIRUS DIARY: She has her cake, but others can't eat it, too

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By TERRY TANG Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — When my birthday rolled around in June, I had to face the fact that, thanks to COVID-19, I would not be having cake with anyone. Yet I went ahead and made the cake I really wanted — a three-layer, naked strawberry chamomile cake.

The whole time though, I asked myself: Why was I going to the trouble? Why did I buy a box of chamomile teabags to steep in cream for that perfect filling? Why did I feel the ridiculous need to find edible flowers for cake decorations? The only one who would be physically in the room was the dog. And Penny doesn't care how a cake tastes, let alone how it looks.

One of the great byproducts of this pandemic has been the number of people who suddenly discovered the star baker hiding inside of them. For me, it has been the opposite.

Coronavirus snuffed out what I most enjoy about baking — the sharing. Baking is as much a part of my identity as reporting. It's a currency I playfully barter with. It's how I show my sincerest appreciation. It's how I make friends in my community.

Every few months, I knock on the door of the Phoenix Fire Department station down the street from my home to offer homemade cupcakes or cookies. Sometimes it's a quick drop-off. Other times, it turns into a chat and a chance for me to ask them about their work. But it's been routine enough that there's at least one or two people on each crew who know me.

Now, there's a sign on the door that says "closed for public entry." And of course, I wouldn't attempt to give them anything even if I had worn the world's best PPE in the kitchen.

I also like to bring cupcakes to the staff at the place where I get my massages as a thank you. But I know they couldn't accept them, and I'm still too nervous to get a massage.

Knowing I will likely be working from home for the rest of the year, I can't help but feel sad at the traditions I will miss bringing to my newsroom.

At Halloween, I won't be making dark chocolate cupcakes with candy-melt spider webs. And I won't get to serve them in my spooky, eight-legged cupcake holders.

When election night arrives in November, I'm not going to show up with sugar cookies shaped like the United States and slathered with red and blue frosting (I make sure that even the baked goods can't be accused of media bias).

As for my birthday cake, I did parade it on a Zoom call with my family, who are all in the San Francisco Bay area. But then it became like one of those "mukbang" videos — the South Korean-grown trend of livestreaming oneself gorging on large amounts of food. Everyone was yelling "eat it" and requesting that I describe how it tasted. Not the birthday party I pictured.

There was one bright spot. I did end up finding a few friends who were willing to take some cake off my hands. It was too hot to eat outside with any of them, so I donned gloves to package each piece. I either placed it in front of their door like a hotel bellhop or quickly passed it to them like it was a hot potato.

Instead of watching their reactions when they ate my cake (half the fun for a baker), I got told how good it tasted via text.

I know this is trivial compared to what other people are going through because of COVID-19. But I am looking forward to a time when I can, in my own way, make life a little sweeter once again.

Virus Diary, an occasional feature, showcases the coronavirus pandemic through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world. Terry Tang is a member of the AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Follow her on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ttangAP>

Protesters try to drown out Trump speech, yell at Sen. Paul

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hundreds of demonstrators gathered around the White House for a "noise demonstration and dance party" in an attempt to drown out President Donald Trump's speech accepting the Republican presidential nomination.

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And later, a crowd enveloped U.S. Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky as he left the convention, yelling for him to say the name of police shooting victim Breonna Taylor, who was killed in his state.

"I hope you hear us, Trump," the leader of the popular local band TOB shouted Thursday night near the site of Trump's speech. The band blared Go-Go music, a distinctive D.C. variant on funk, as it moved in the direction of the White House, where Trump delivered his acceptance speech to a crowd of more 1,500 people on the South Lawn.

One protester held up a sign, "Nightmare on Pennsylvania Avenue" — the street where the White House is located.

There was no indication that Trump heard the protesters, but there were a few points when a mix of sirens, music and blowhorns could be heard in the background and spectators in the back turned to see where the sounds were coming from.

Acknowledging the coronavirus pandemic, many demonstrators wore masks but there was no social distancing.

"Make some noise if you want to drown out Trump," protest organizer Justin Johnson said.

After the convention concluded, there were skirmishes as protesters yelled and threw water bottles at police at the historic St. John's Church near Black Lives Matter Plaza. There were some arrests.

Video posted online showed dozens of people confronting Paul and his wife, who were flanked by police officers, on a street after midnight. Protesters shouted "No Justice, No Peace" and "Say Her Name" before one appears to briefly clash with an officer, pushing him and his bike backward, sending the officer into Paul's shoulder.

Paul later tweeted that he had been "attacked" by a "crazed mob" a block from the White House. The senator and his wife kept walking and did not appear to have been touched by any of the protesters or to have suffered any injuries.

Videos showed other attendees also being confronted by protesters after leaving Trump's event.

There was a robust police presence, but the noise demonstration outside the White House was generally peaceful. There was a moment of levity at the end.

"You guys gotta get some rhythm," a protester told Secret Service officers.

"Would you have rhythm if you were wearing 30 pounds of gear," one responded.

The demonstration was significantly smaller than the protests that rocked the nation's capital this past spring after George Floyd died at police hands in Minneapolis.

Floyd's family and the families of other Black Americans who were victims of police violence were expected to participate Friday in a commemoration of the 1963 March on Washington that is being led by the Rev. Al Sharpton and Martin Luther King III.

Before Trump spoke, there was a brief standoff between police and demonstrators, who shouted anti-police slogans. "Free the people, fight the power," they chanted. Nearby protesters set up a small guillotine, with the District of Columbia flag as the blade.

Lafayette Park, a traditional site of demonstrations across from the White House, was sealed off and there were some street closures.

The groups ShutdownDC and Long-Live Go-Go had put out word in advance about the planned "noise demonstration and dance party" to coincide with Trump's speech.

"We'll be at the White House on Thursday to drown out (Trump's) racist rhetoric with another vision for the future of our country," the groups said in a statement.

A longtime D.C. signature sound, Go-Go music emerged last year as a battle anthem for activists fighting fast-moving gentrification in the nation's capital. The music has been a regular presence in recent protests against racial injustice and rolling Go-Go trucks with live bands have appeared frequently at the epicenter of the protests, which was renamed by the city as Black Lives Matter Plaza

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

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Today in History

Today is Saturday, Aug. 29, the 242nd day of 2020. There are 124 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Aug. 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast near Buras, Louisiana, bringing floods that devastated New Orleans. More than 1,800 people in the region died.

On this date:

In 1862, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing began operations at the United States Treasury.

In 1877, the second president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Brigham Young, died in Salt Lake City, Utah, at age 76.

In 1943, responding to a clampdown by Nazi occupiers during World War II, Denmark managed to scuttle most of its naval ships.

In 1944, 15,000 American troops of the 28th Infantry Division marched down the Champs Elysees (shahms ay-lee-ZAY') in Paris as the French capital continued to celebrate its liberation from the Nazis.

In 1957, the Senate gave final congressional approval to a Civil Rights Act after South Carolina Sen. Strom Thurmond (then a Democrat) ended a filibuster that had lasted 24 hours.

In 1964, Roy Orbison's single "Oh, Pretty Woman" was released on the Monument label.

In 1966, the Beatles concluded their fourth American tour with their last public concert, held at Candlestick Park in San Francisco.

In 1982, Academy Award-winning actor Ingrid Bergman died in London on her 67th birthday.

In 2008, Republican presidential nominee John McCain picked Sarah Palin, a maverick conservative who had been governor of Alaska for less than two years, to be his running mate.

In 2009, funeral services were held in Boston for Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, who was eulogized by President Barack Obama; hours later, Kennedy's remains were buried at Arlington National Cemetery outside Washington.

In 2012, the NFL announced it would open the regular season with replacement officials.

In 2018, Sen. John McCain was remembered as a "true American hero" at a crowded service at the North Phoenix Baptist Church after a motorcade carried McCain's body from the state Capitol. Kanye West apologized on a Chicago radio station (WGCI) for calling slavery a "choice."

Ten years ago: Five years after Hurricane Katrina's wrath, President Barack Obama sought to reassure disaster-weary Gulf Coast residents during a speech at Xavier University that he would not abandon their cause. "Mad Men" received its third consecutive Emmy Award for best drama series; "Modern Family" won for best comedy series. The United States' five-year reign as Little League World Series champions ended as Tokyo defeated Waipahu, Hawaii, 4-1. Brian McCann hit a game-winning homer with help from video replay, giving the Atlanta Braves a stunning 7-6 victory over the Florida Marlins; it was the first time a game ended using a video review.

Five years ago: Church bells rang marking the decade since Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast; local and congressional leaders laid wreaths at a memorial in New Orleans holding the unclaimed and unidentified bodies from the deadly storm. An Egyptian court sentenced three journalists for Al-Jazeera English to three years in prison for broadcasting "false news," sparking an international outcry. Triple Crown winner American Pharoah lost to Keen Ice in the \$1.6 million Travers Stakes before a stunned crowd at Saratoga Race Course. Author and motivational speaker Wayne W. Dyer, 75, died in Hawaii.

One year ago: Authorities in Virginia said they'd taken down a multi-state drug ring, seizing enough cheap fentanyl from China to kill 14 million people. President Donald Trump said the United States planned to withdraw more than 5,000 troops from Afghanistan, and would then determine future drawdowns. Satellite images showed that a rocket at an Iranian space center that was supposed to conduct a satellite launch had exploded on its launch pad; it would be Iran's third failed launch of the year.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Betty Lynn (TV: "The Andy Griffith Show") is 94. Movie director William Friedkin is 85. Actor Elliott Gould is 82. Actor Deborah Van Valkenburgh is 68. Former Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew is 65. Dancer-choreographer Mark Morris is 64. Country musician Dan Truman (Diamond Rio) is 64.

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Actor Rebecca DeMornay is 61. Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch (GOR'-suhch) is 53. Singer Me'Shell NdegeOcello (n-DAY'-gay-OH'-chehl-oh) is 52. Rhythm-and-blues singer Carl Martin (Shai) is 50. Actor Carla Gugino is 49. Rock musician Kyle Cook (Matchbox Twenty) is 45. Actor John Hensley is 43. Actor Kate Simses is 41. Rock musician David Desrosiers (Simple Plan) is 40. Rapper A+ is 38. Actor Jennifer Landon is 37. Actor Jeffrey Licon is 35. Actor-singer Lea Michele is 34. Actor Charlotte Ritchie is 31. Actor Nicole Gale Anderson is 30. MLB pitcher Noah Syndergaard (SIHN'-dur-gahrd) is 28. Rock singer Liam Payne (One Direction) is 27.