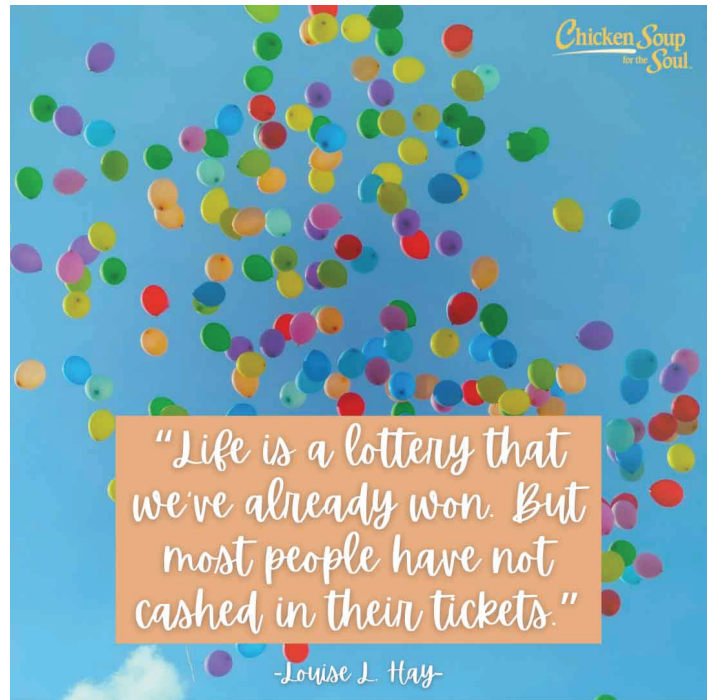


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GDILIVE.COM





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Woody's
Place

Webster Area
vs.
Groton Area
7 p.m.,
Friday,
Sept. 4, 2020
Doney Field,
Groton

When this light is on at
Woody's Place, all are
welcome to stop and have
a cold drink and share
good stories about the
Tigers!

Simulcasting locally on 89.3 FM

[Click here for the program](#)

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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GFP Commission Extends Pheasant Hunting Season, Keeps Bag Limits at 3 and Allows Unrestricted Harvest on Shooting Preserves

PIERRE, S.D. - For the first time in the history of South Dakota pheasant hunting, pheasant hunters will be able to begin hunting pheasants at 10 a.m. CT (9 a.m. MT) for the entire pheasant season, including the resident-only season, which begins this year on Saturday, October 10.

Hunters will also have the opportunity to hunt ringnecks for a couple of extra weeks as the Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission extended the season to January 31, 2021.

These extensions will provide additional opportunity for hunters and bring South Dakota in line with pheasant hunting states like Nebraska and Kansas that surround the pheasant hunting capital.

"It's very exciting to offer these expanded opportunities to those who want to experience the greatest pheasant hunting in the nation," said Kelly Hepler, Secretary of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks.

"Behind Governor Noem's Second Century Initiative, this is one more way we are working to secure South Dakota's great outdoor heritage and the next 100 years of pheasant hunting in our state."

The commission ultimately decided to retain the daily bag limit of three pheasants for the statewide season, but did vote to adopt an unrestricted harvest opportunity for those hunting on a private shooting preserve from Sept. 1 through the end of the statewide pheasant season. The commission amended the original proposal and voted to approve the modification allowing preserve hunters the opportunity if they obtained a statewide nonresident small game license plus a habitat stamp and, for residents, a combination license and the habitat stamp.

Early Fall Canada Goose Season Starts September 5

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks (GFP) reminds goose hunters that the early fall Canada goose season begins Saturday, Sept. 5.

The daily bag limit is eight Canada geese per day.

"Canada goose production has been good this year with large numbers of goslings observed throughout the summer," said senior waterfowl biologist, Rocco Murano.

Unlike recent years, dry field conditions and good harvest progression on small grains and silage should make for excellent hunting conditions.

"Dry fields coupled with a high percentage of juvenile geese should make for a great early fall season," noted Murano. "For hunters who have sat out the last season or two due to poor conditions, this would be the year to dust off the decoys and hit the field."

Early Fall Canada Goose season runs through the end of the September.

What you need to know to vote this fall

Dear Editor:

I wanted to take this opportunity to share information concerning the upcoming general election, which will be held Nov. 3. South Dakota voters have the choice of voting in-person on Election Day or by casting an absentee ballot.

South Dakota's absentee voting processes have long been in place and provide security measures to ensure the integrity of our elections. Only registered South Dakota voters are eligible to vote absentee. To verify you are a registered voter, you may contact your local county auditor or search the Voter Information Portal (VIP) on our website at www.sdsos.gov. The deadline to register to vote in the general election is Oct. 19. If needed, voter registration forms are available on our website or from your county auditor.

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To request an absentee ballot, you must submit an absentee application form to your county auditor. The form must be notarized or accompanied by a copy of your photo ID. Acceptable forms of photo ID include a South Dakota driver's license or non-driver ID card, passport or other picture ID issued by the United States government, tribal photo ID, or current student photo ID issued by a South Dakota high school or postsecondary education institution. You may download an absentee ballot application form from our website or contact your county auditor to request an application. County auditor contact information to return your form is also available on our website.

Voters that completed an absentee ballot application form earlier this year will receive a ballot if they marked the option of receiving absentee ballots for all elections or the general election on their request form. If you cannot recall whether you requested an absentee ballot for the general election, you may contact your county auditor or check the VIP page on our website. The VIP page will also provide additional information such as your sample ballot and polling location.

South Dakota's absentee voting period begins 46 days prior to the election on Sept. 18. We encourage voters wishing to use this option to request your absentee ballot as soon as you're able – which you can do right now – and return the ballot to your county auditor with sufficient time allowed for mail delivery.

If you choose not to vote absentee-by-mail, please note you have the option to in-person absentee vote with your county auditor up to the day before the election or vote at the polls on Nov. 3. On Election Day, polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. local time. Our office, along with your local election officials, continue working to provide a safe environment for our election workers and voters. I would like to encourage anyone interested in becoming an election worker to contact their county auditor. Election workers, which are paid positions, play a crucial role in ensuring free, fair, and accessible elections for all South Dakotans. These positions provide you with a rewarding opportunity to give back to your community and help strengthen our democracy.

The goal of all election officials in South Dakota is to ensure every South Dakotan has access to exercise their right to vote in fair and honest elections. Citizens exercising their right to vote is the foundation of our democracy and I encourage everyone to participate.

Sincerely,

Steve Barnett
South Dakota Secretary of State



Preschool Developmental
Screening
Groton Area Schools #06-6

Preschool Developmental Screening is for children ages 3-5 who reside in the Groton Area School District. The child needs to be 3 years of age before the screening date/day. This screening is not required to enter Kindergarten.

The screening consists of communication skills, motor skills, and concepts.

If your child is already receiving services or enrolled at Groton Elementary School they will not need to be screened. If your child has already been screened but you have concerns please contact the elementary school. If you are new to the district and have a child under the age of 5, we also ask you to contact the elementary school.

Screenings will be held on an appointment only basis. Please contact Paula Johnson at 605-397-2317 or Paula.M.Johnson@k12.sd.us to schedule a screening time.

CATHOLIC FAMILY SERVICES
IS NOW OFFERING

GRIEF SHARE

2020 DATES
• SEPTEMBER 15
thru NOVEMBER 24

2021 DATES
• FEBRUARY 2
thru APRIL 13
• JUNE 1
thru AUGUST 10
• SEPTEMBER 14
thru NOVEMBER 23

Grief Share is a worldwide Christian-based program. It is a support group for adults who have lost a loved one through death. It combines educational videos, a workbook titled "Your Journey From Mourning to Joy" and time for discussion. The group runs for 11 weeks.

Participants can attend in person at Catholic Family Services or your own parish can participate via Zoom for the educational component and then hold small group discussion lead by an identified team leader. (CFS will train the identified leader and offer continued support.)

[sfcatholic.org/cfs](https://www.sfcatholic.org/cfs) 800-700-7867(STOP)

Catholic Family Services

GRIEF SHARE

Tuesdays 6pm beginning Sept 15th in the SEAS Gathering Space
(This is for adults who have lost a loved one.)

Ruby Donovan from our parish has gone through the training with the Catholic Family Service for the purpose of leading a Grief Sharing Group. Although she is not a professional, she has also gone through the grieving process concerning the loss of several family members.

After viewing the professional counselor from the Catholic Family Services via a zoom conference, Ruby will be hosting a group discussion. As you listen to the professionals and Ruby, you will see you are not alone in your grieving, there is hope and you too can journey from grief to hope.

This program, although run by Catholics is good for any person going through the grieving process. The cost of the program is \$15.00 for the workbook but we will scholarship anyone who may need help. We also need a couple volunteers to be part of the leadership team. These volunteers will help with hospitality and support for our team leader. If you are interested in this program as a volunteer or to join the group, please call our parish office at 605-397-2775 or email us at seas@nvc.net.

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#193 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Nothing's really changing. 34,900 new cases, 0.6% increase, putting us at 6,161,900. In general, the big per capita increases are mostly in the middle of the country with a few eastern states included. The declines are mostly in the west and a few southern states that recently had big outbreaks. The rest of the country is in a holding pattern. The states with the greatest increases per capita are, in order, South Dakota, Iowa, and North Dakota. The big increases are spread out in more states, and the declines are concentrated in fewer states. This is not progress.

I'll note that we now have over 51,000 cases identified on college and university campuses. There are at least six institutions with more than 1000 reported cases. Over two-thirds of colleges have at least one, and over 100 have reported at least 100 cases. That's a lot. And these outbreaks, of course, spill over to the surrounding community. Looks like another couple of college campuses are buying into the sewage surveillance model for predicting outbreaks. Utah State University began sampling wastewater on July 1 and has imposed its first mandatory testing and quarantine based on those findings from four residence halls whose wastewater testing revealed the presence of coronavirus. And Syracuse University in New York has also been basing decisions on the same sort of surveillance testing of wastewater. That appears to be becoming a thing. I will be interested to see how infection rates and campus disruption play out on campuses using this methodology and those not using it. We might have something very useful here that can be applied on a broader scale to the wider population. Data from France, which initiated this sort of surveillance, seem to indicate so.

We reported 1000 deaths in the US today, a 0.5% increase. That brings this total to 186,584. We have a new estimate of deaths to health care workers from Amnesty International, which puts its estimate for the US at 1077.

We're up to 134 infected people after that wedding in Maine that had only 65 guests. Get this: Of the 65 guests, 56 of them are now sick. Think about that; it's a true superspreader event. Even if everyone in attendance was young and healthy, the woman who died (and had not attended) was not. The people at the nursing home and prison where it spread from the wedding are not all young and healthy either. Actions have consequences.

There's a Sturgis update too; we've now identified 269 people infected in 12 states. Fifty of those are in Minnesota, but they're counting only cases in people who were actually in Sturgis during the Rally; they are not tracking secondary transmission--where someone who was in Sturgis infects others and they infect others, etc. South Dakota is reporting 105 such cases so far. I will also note that Ellsworth Air Force Base, about a 30-minute drive from Sturgis, has been placed on Status Red for Covid-19; this designation is based on the infection rates in the surrounding region. This status involves a one-hour travel restriction on leaves, restrictions on base visitors, facemask requirement, restriction of personnel to only businesses which require facemasks, restriction of personnel from restaurants, bars, casinos, fairs, and large gatherings. Smart move. As we discussed last night, we'll never know the true reach of this thing; all we can do is see what's reported.

Labor Day is just around the corner with all of its opportunities to spread virus and make lots of people sick. It's really your last great opportunity to whip this pandemic into a frenzy before it gets cold and you can move your efforts indoors. It would be smart to avoid big gatherings, but I suspect those gatherings

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are going to happen, no matter what's smart. Ideally, if you must go to a Labor Day party, you would get tested and quarantine yourself until the party. But in real life, I recommend you gather only outside, don't go in to use the bathroom, wear a mask all of the time you're not eating, keep family/household units separated by at least six feet, and bring your own food. Please stay safe.

A new study of more than 17 million people in England, including nearly 11,000 who died, was published in the journal *Nature* yesterday which confirms the factors that increase risk for death from Covid-19. There aren't any large surprises here, but more data is better and there were a couple of small surprises. I should note that the way this study was conducted means it incorporates your risk of becoming infected into the risk-of-death analyses: This is not a study of who dies once they're infected; it's a study of who in the population dies from Covid-19.

Age was found to be "strongly associated with risk." Compared with people in their 40s, you are at 65 times the risk in your 80s, 20 times the risk in your 70s, 8 times the risk in your 60s. More than 90% of deaths in England were people over 60. Sixty percent of deaths were in men. Members of ethnic minority groups are at greatly increased risk, and the "findings show that only a small part of the excess risk is explained by a higher prevalence of medical problems . . . or by higher levels of deprivation." And they found "a consistent pattern of increasing risk with greater deprivation. . . . Again, very little of this increased risk was explained by pre-existing disease or clinical factors, suggesting that other social factors have an important role."

Underlying medical conditions that create the highest risk are obesity, diabetes, severe asthma (asthma with recent use of an oral corticosteroid), respiratory disease, chronic heart disease, liver disease, stroke, dementia, other neurological diseases, reduced kidney function, autoimmune diseases, and other immunosuppressive conditions. This is interesting to me because I've been tracking on some data on asthma indicating it did not create higher risk; when a study this large disagrees, you really have to pay attention. I'm mentally moving asthma back onto my high-risk chart.

Some of the surprises: Interestingly, the authors took a look at current smoking and concluded the increased risk created by smoking "is likely to be small." Don't misunderstand me though; the damage caused to the lungs and cardiovascular system by smoking do create risks. It appears, though, that until that damage shows up, smoking in itself does not create much additional risk; the authors do suggest further study on this point. It also appears hypertension (high blood pressure) does not, by itself, create a great deal of increased risk. It appears most of the risk we've been thinking we see in people with this condition may have actually been due to conditions associated with hypertension like diabetes and obesity; when those were stripped away in the statistical adjustment, much of the hypertension-associated risk melted away. Further, there was this weird thing noted where hypertension was associated with increased risk up to the age of 70 and a lower risk thereafter. The authors weren't making a guess as to what's going on there and recommended further study there too.

Three new studies dropped yesterday that provide additional support for the use of steroid drugs in the treatment of serious cases of Covid-19. This disease has been characterized by sepsis (an overwhelming immune response to infection) and acute respiratory distress syndrome (lung injury that allows fluid to seep into lungs until they can no longer exchange oxygen with the blood); and these are conditions which have other causes as well, which means we have experience treating them. Steroids have long been sort of standard therapy for both. When you're dealing with an infection, though, there is the additional consideration that steroids inhibit immune responses, something we usually don't really want to do when you're fighting an infection. So there's been a fair amount of concern about using steroids in Covid-19 patients.

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A study of dexamethasone published in June did a lot to relieve those worries. We talked about it at the time because it showed a significant reduction in mortality in people receiving supplemental oxygen or receiving mechanical ventilation. Those results along with their own preliminary data provided such strong evidence of efficacy that other trials for steroids underway at the time were all ended prematurely: You reach a point where it doesn't seem ethical to keep your control patients on a placebo when you have this kind of evidence the treatment you're giving to your experimental patients is effective. So now those other trials have published the data they had collected before ending their trials. Their results provide further support for the use of dexamethasone and also provide support for the use of another steroid, hydrocortisone. Because these were all randomized controlled trials, their evidence is particularly strong. The WHO updated its guidelines yesterday to recommend steroids for severely or critically ill patients. It should also be noted these drugs have been around forever, so they're nonproprietary and cheap. There should be no supply issues or economic barriers at all to widespread use.

Hurshneet, 15, and Pravneet, 12, Chahdha are brothers who found themselves with time on their hands this spring, so they took over the family dining room, covering the table with crayons, markers, cardstock, and construction paper. (Not like they needed the dining room for company these days, right?) This all started when their physician parents described one night over dinner how lonely their patients were due to the strict visitation policies designed to limit the spread of coronavirus infection in hospitals. The boys decided to do something to cheer all those people up, and they started making hand-made cards--lots of them.

Their first delivery was in May, about 200 cards delivered to a local hospital. They're drawing pictures of the family dog and adding messages like "Stay Pawsitive" or "Puppy Pawsitivity." Other messages they include in cards are "Think Like a Proton. Be Positive," "Kick Covid-19," and "You Are One Tough Cookie," accompanied, of course, by a nice big drawing of a cookie. The goal is just to inspire a smile or a light moment in those lonely patients. The boys say they just want to contribute. "We want to give them positivity from the thoughts that we put into the cards."

Now, these kids are ambitious, but they could see they weren't going to be able to cover the need, so they set up a PO Box and set up a Facebook page and an Instagram account for what they're calling Project Smile so that others can contribute homemade cards too. They built a website too to make the whole operation "look more legitimate." They've had some help; of the 1300 cards they've delivered so far, around 300 were donated by others. This means, of course, these two boys have cranked out 1000 cards all by themselves since May. The feedback from hospital officials has been very positive, reporting patients really appreciate their cards.

These guys are not done recruiting help though. They are now assembling a large number of Project Smile "Kits for Kids" with stickers, markers, crayons, and other supplies donated by people who've learned about the project. These will be donated to an organization that serves vulnerable children so those children can make cards too. Pravneet explained, "The kids can have some entertainment and also feel happy, and we're also getting cards to give to hospitals, so it's a positive on both ends. We want everyone to have an amazing day. We want to help and touch as many lives as possible. That's our thing."

Seems like a pretty good "thing" to me. We should all be doing that--helping and touching as many lives as possible. Once again, we build the society we live in. If we don't like the way the current one looks, it's up to us to build it differently. Best get started.

Take care. We'll talk again.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Aug. 26	Aug. 27	Aug. 28	Aug. 29	Aug. 30	Aug. 31	Sept. 1
Minnesota	70,707	71,236	72,390	73,240	74,257	75,189	75,864
Nebraska	32,348	32,727	33,101	33,436	33,753	34,046	34,287
Montana	6,624	6,785	6,929	7,063	7,251	7340	7,421
Colorado	55,800	55,993	56,343	56,773	57041	57,223	57,424
Wyoming	3,089	3,135	3,166	3,196	3,210	3245	3264
North Dakota	10,229	10,467	10,800	11,109	11,484	11,702	11,816
South Dakota	11,505	11,571	12,194	12,517	12,942	13,322	13,509
United States	5,779,395	5,823,685	5,869,692	5,919,670	5,961,582	5,997,622	6,031,286
US Deaths	178,533	179,743	180,857	181,798	182,779	183,068	183,602
Minnesota	+409	+529	+1,154	+850	+1,017	+932	+607
Nebraska	+301	+379	+374	+335	+317	+293	+241
Montana	+135	+161	+144	+134	+188	+89	+81
Colorado	+459	+193	+350	+430	+268	+182	+201
Wyoming	+21	+46	+31	+30	+14	+35	+19
North Dakota	+229	+238	+333	+309	+375	+218	+114
South Dakota	80	+66	+623	+323	+425	+380	+187
United States	+41,339	+44,290	+46,007	+49,978	41,912	+36,040	+33,664
US Deaths	+1,504	+1,210	+1,114	+941	+981	+289	+534
	Sept. 2	Sept. 3	Sept. 4				
Minnesota	76,355	77,085	78,123				
Nebraska	34,574	34,995	35,469				
Montana	7,509	7,691	7,871				
Colorado	57,775	58,019	58,287				
Wyoming	3,282	3,311	3,334				
North Dakota	12,000	12,267	12,629				
South Dakota	13,749	14,003	14,337				
United States	6,073,121	6,115,098	6,151,101				
US Deaths	184,644	185,752	186,606				
Minnesota	+491	+730	+1,038				
Nebraska	+287	+421	+474				
Montana	+88	+182	+180				
Colorado	+351	+244	+268				
Wyoming	+18	+29	+23				
North Dakota	+184	+267	+362				
South Dakota	+240	+254	+334				
United States	+41,835	+41,977	+36,003				
US Deaths	+1,042	+1,108	+854				

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September 2nd COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Campbell County is back on the fully recovered list after they reassigned one of the positive cases away from Campbell County. Brown County has 22 positive and 14 recovered cases. Day County has one positive and one recovered, Edmunds has two positive cases, Spink County has two positive cases.

The hot spots in this report are Brookings with 40 cases, Brown with 22, Clay with 32, Codington 15, Lincoln with 17, Minnehaha with 68, and Pennington with 61.

Statewide, our positivity number increased by two percentage points to 13.5 percent. Brown County jumped to 13.3 percent. Those currently hospitalized dropped by one more to 76. North Dakota's positivity rate is 18.1 percent and they had two more deaths today. No deaths recorded in South Dakota today.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +22 (718) Positivity Rate: 13.3%

Recovered: +14 (571)

Active Cases: +8 (144)

Total Tests: 166 (8028)

Ever Hospitalized: +1 (28)

Deaths: 0 (3)

Percent Recovered: 79.5% (-0.5)

South Dakota:

Positive: +334 (14,337 total) Positivity Rates: 13.6%

Total Tests: 2,449 (198,749 total)

Hospitalized: +9 (1052 total). 76 currently hospitalized (down 1 from yesterday)

Deaths: 0 (169 total)

Recovered: +196 (11,155 total)

Active Cases: +138 (3,013)

Percent Recovered: 77.8 -0.4

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 3% Covid, 52% Non-Covid, 44% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 6% Covid, 68% Non-Covid, 26% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 5% Covid, 15% Non-Covid, 80% Available

Fully recovered from positive cases (Lost Jones, Mellette, gained Sully): Aurora 42-42, Harding 2-2, Jackson 12-11-1, Sully 8-8.

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: Fully Recovered

Beadle (9): +1 positive, +3 recovered (27 active cases)

Bennett: +5 positive, +1 recovered (19 active cases)

Bon Homme (1): +1 positive, +2 recovered (15 active cases)

Brookings (1): +40 positive, +22 recovered (185 active cases)

Brown (3): +22 positive, +14 recovered (144 active cases)

Brule: +2 positive (18 active cases)

Buffalo (3): 4 active cases

Butte (1): +3 positive, +1 recovered (26 active cases)

Campbell: -1 positive (FULLY RECOVERED)

Charles Mix: 11 active cases

Clark: 4 active cases

Clay (2) +32 positive, +15 recovered (206 active cases)

Codington (2): +15 positive, +4 recovered (160 active cases)

Corson: +3 positive, +3 recovered (15 active cases)

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Custer: +2 recovered (62 active case)
 Davison (2): +4 positive, +5 recovered (29 active cases)
 Day: +1 positive, +1 recovered (6 active cases)
 Deuel: +1 positive, +2 recovered (12 active cases)
 Dewey: +5 positive, +1 recovered (37 active cases)
 Douglas: +1 positive, +1 recovered (13 active cases)
 Edmunds: +2 positive (9 active cases)
 Fall River (1): +2 positive (32 active cases)
 Faulk (1): +1 positive (6 active cases)
 Grant: +1 positive (11 active cases)
 Gregory (1): +2 positive (23 active cases)
 Haakon: 3 active cases
 Hamlin: +3 positive, +3 recovered (22 active cases)
 Hand: +1 recovered (3 active cases)
 Hanson: +1 positive (3 active cases)
 Harding: Fully Recovered
 Hughes (4): +2 positive, +2 recovered (24 active cases)
 Hutchinson (1): +3 positive (16 active cases)
 Hyde: +1 positive (4 active cases)
 Jackson (1): Fully Recovered
 Jerauld (1): +1 positive (3 active cases)
 Jones: 2 active cases
 Kingsbury: +1 positive (7 active cases)
 Lake (6): +1 recovered (10 active cases)
 Lawrence (3): +7 positive, +8 recovered (115 active cases)
 Lincoln (2): +17 positive, +11 recovered (172 active cases)
 Lyman (3): +1 recovered (14 active cases)
 Marshall: 5 active cases
 McCook (1): +1 recovered (15 active cases)

McPherson: 1 active case
 Meade (1): +7 positive, +11 recovered (141 active cases)
 Mellette: 1 active case
 Miner: 2 active cases
 Minnehaha (70): +68 positive, +26 recovered (716 active cases)
 Moody: +1 recovered (9 active cases)
 Oglala Lakota (2): +1 positive, +1 recovered (31 active cases)
 Pennington (33): +61 positive, +45 recovered (448 active cases)
 Perkins: 12 active cases
 Potter: 13 active cases
 Roberts (1): +2 positive, +1 recovered (13 active cases)
 Sanborn: +1 positive (4 active cases)
 Spink: +2 positive (19 active cases)
 Stanley: 1 active case
 Sully: Fully Recovered
 Todd (5): +1 positive, +1 recovered (7 active cases)
 Tripp: +2 positive (5 active cases)
 Turner: +1 recovered (17 active cases)
 Union (5): +7 positive, +3 recovered (49 active cases)
 Walworth: +1 positive (16 active cases)
 Yankton (3): +2 positive, +1 recovered (71 active cases)
 Ziebach: +2 positive (18 active cases)

North Dakota Dept. of Health Report
 COVID-19 Daily Report, September 3:

- 6,544 tests (1,989)
- 12,629 positives (+360)
- 10,051 recovered (+217)
- 150 deaths (+2)
- 2,428 active cases (+143)

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	482	0
10-19 years	1462	0
20-29 years	3612	2
30-39 years	2583	7
40-49 years	2002	7
50-59 years	1949	19
60-69 years	1218	30
70-79 years	573	26
80+ years	456	78

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	7257	85
Male	7080	84

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread
Aurora	42	42	438	0	None
Beadle	642	606	2055	9	Substantial
Bennett	29	10	566	0	Substantial
Bon Homme	54	38	975	1	Substantial
Brookings	402	216	3439	1	Substantial
Brown	718	571	5536	3	Substantial
Brule	70	52	880	0	Substantial
Buffalo	110	103	680	3	Minimal
Butte	52	25	890	1	Substantial
Campbell	4	4	114	0	Minimal
Charles Mix	122	111	1723	0	Moderate
Clark	21	17	440	0	Minimal
Clay	413	205	1829	2	Substantial
Codington	372	210	3553	2	Substantial
Corson	64	49	628	0	Moderate
Custer	130	68	849	0	Substantial
Davison	146	115	2731	2	Substantial
Day	39	31	757	0	Moderate
Deuel	50	36	514	0	Substantial
Dewey	89	56	2483	0	Substantial
Douglas	32	19	458	0	Moderate
Edmunds	34	25	480	0	Moderate
Fall River	58	26	1142	1	Substantial
Faulk	34	27	229	1	Minimal
Grant	45	34	855	0	Minimal
Gregory	34	10	496	1	Substantial
Haakon	6	3	309	0	Minimal
Hamlin	63	41	815	0	Substantial
Hand	15	12	354	0	Minimal
Hanson	24	21	252	0	Minimal
Harding	2	2	59	0	None
Hughes	135	109	2105	4	Substantial
Hutchinson	49	32	1010	1	Moderate

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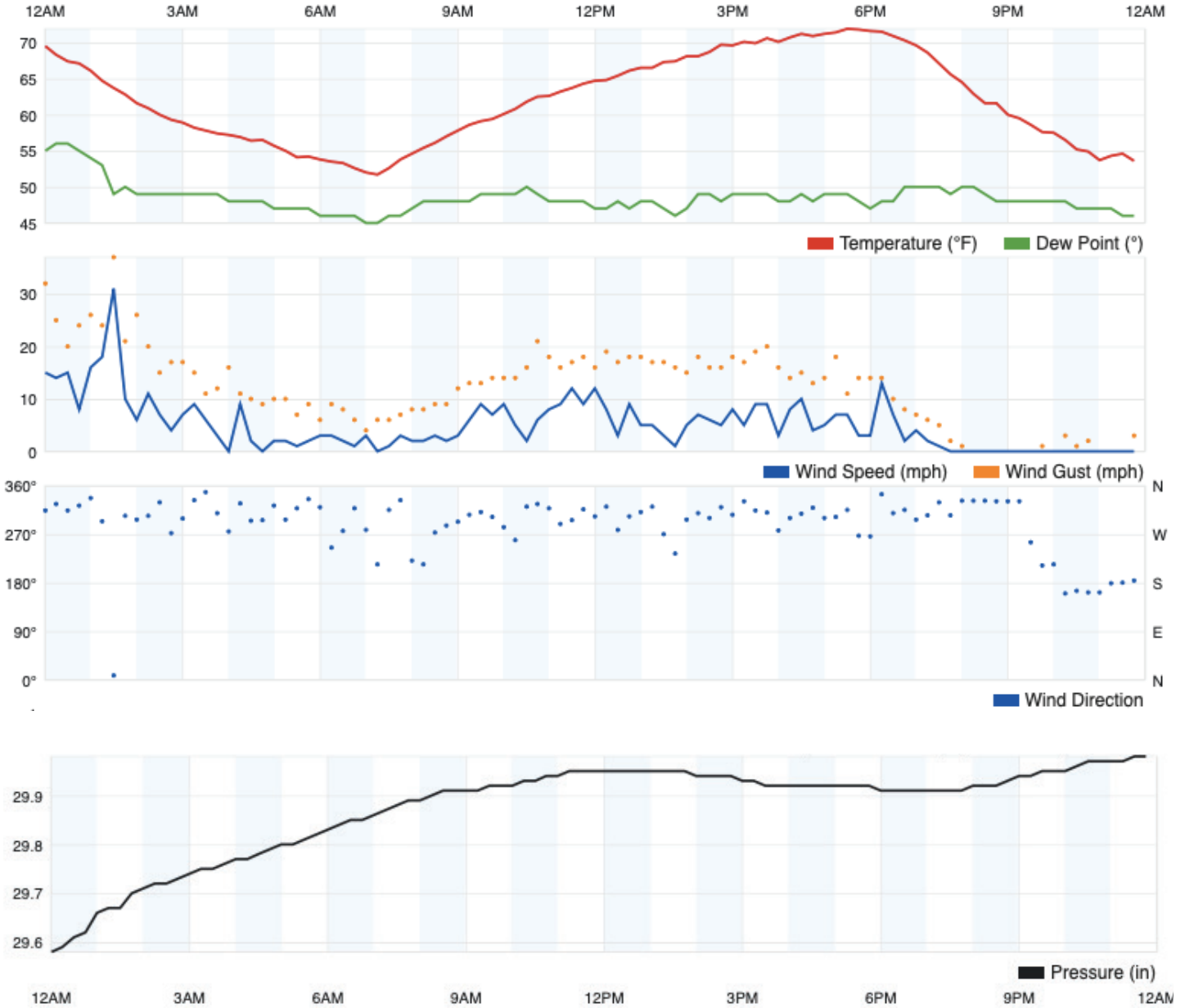
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Hyde	8	4	165	0	Minimal
Jackson	12	11	496	1	None
Jerauld	43	39	294	1	None
Jones	5	3	68	0	None
Kingsbury	24	17	666	0	Moderate
Lake	118	102	1092	6	Moderate
Lawrence	240	122	2368	3	Substantial
Lincoln	952	778	8275	2	Substantial
Lyman	104	87	1095	3	Substantial
Marshall	19	14	544	0	Moderate
McCook	53	37	742	1	Substantial
McPherson	10	9	255	0	None
Meade	324	182	2329	1	Substantial
Mellette	25	24	409	0	None
Miner	17	15	283	0	None
Minnehaha	5457	4741	32412	70	Substantial
Moody	47	38	729	0	Minimal
Oglala Lakota	186	153	3081	2	Moderate
Pennington	1536	1055	12614	33	Substantial
Perkins	19	7	231	0	Moderate
Potter	18	5	351	0	Substantial
Roberts	102	88	2175	1	Substantial
Sanborn	15	13	264	0	Minimal
Spink	56	35	1315	0	Substantial
Stanley	21	20	310	0	Minimal
Sully	8	8	107	0	Minimal
Todd	83	71	2506	5	Minimal
Tripp	25	20	679	0	Minimal
Turner	85	68	1063	0	Substantial
Union	280	226	2274	5	Substantial
Walworth	46	30	911	0	Substantial
Yankton	247	173	3642	3	Substantial
Ziebach	52	34	455	0	Minimal
Unassigned	0	0	12356	0	

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny

High: 82 °F

Tonight



Clear

Low: 50 °F

Saturday



Increasing
Clouds

High: 84 °F

Saturday
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 58 °F

Sunday

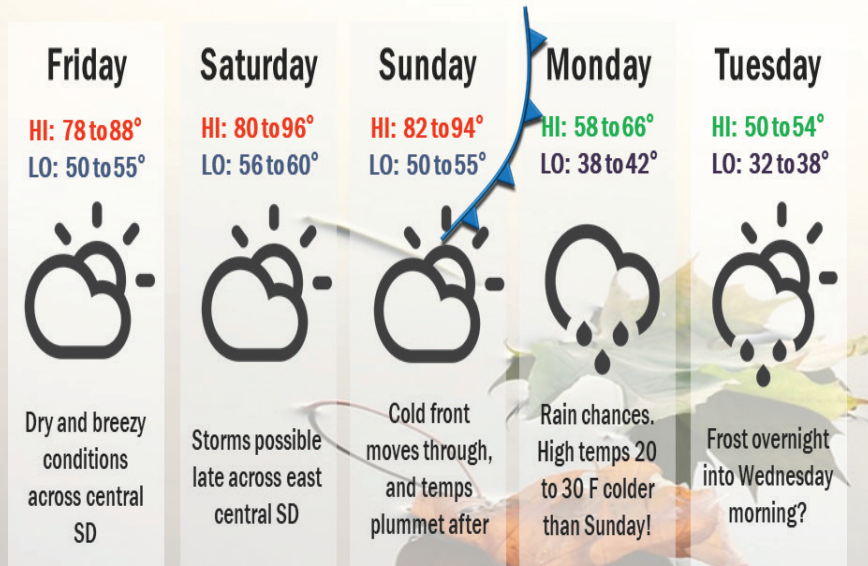


Mostly Sunny

High: 86 °F

Changes Ahead...

Much colder beginning Monday



Note: Regarding high temperatures Friday through Sunday, the Coteau accounts for the lowest portion of the ranges above and south central SD accounts for the highest portion.

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

www.weather.gov/abr

Updated: 9/4/2020 5:47 AM Central

After a few more mild to hot days (through the weekend), a big weather pattern change will begin on Monday. High temperatures will be a good 20 to 30 degrees colder on Monday compared to Sunday! Some may even see frost by Tuesday night into Wednesday morning.

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Today in Weather History

September 4, 2001: Near record or record heat hit central and north-central South Dakota on this day in 2001. High temperatures during the afternoon were in the upper 90s to around 105 degrees. Pierre and Kennebec set record highs of 105 and 106, respectively. Mobridge rose to a high of 96, and Timber Lake topped out at 98 degrees on this day in 2001.

1766: A hurricane made landfall at modern-day Galveston, Texas. The following is from David Roth of the Weather Prediction Center. "A mission, named San Augustine de Ahumado was located in what is now-days known as Chambers County. This mission was destroyed and subsequently abandoned. A seven-foot storm surge put the area under water. A richly-laden treasure fleet of 5 galleons en route from Vera Cruz to Havana was driven ashore and had to wait many weeks for assistance to come. La Caraqueña wrecked on Galveston Island while El Nuevo de Constante sank along the western Louisiana coast. Fortunately, much of the treasure and people aboard were saved."

1939 - A thunderstorm deluged Washington D.C. with 4.4 inches of rain in two hours. September of that year was very dry across much of the nation, and Washington D.C. received more rain in that two hour period than most other places in the country that entire month. (David Ludlum)

1941: A violent tornado ripped through Northeast and North Minneapolis shortly afternoon on this day. The hardest-hit location was the Soo Line Railroad's Shoreham Yards where four people died, and at least 50 were injured. The death toll at Soo Line could have been higher, but the tornado struck five minutes after the lunch bell went off, meaning 100 men left the shops.

1970 - The greatest natural disaster of record for Arizona occurred. Unprecedented rains caused rivers in central Arizona to rise five to ten feet per hour, sweeping cars and buildings as far as 30 to 40 miles downstream. Flooding claimed the lives of 23 persons, mainly campers, and caused millions of dollars damage. Water crested 36 feet above normal near Sunflower AZ. Workman's Creek was deluged with 11.40 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a state record. Moisture from Pacific Tropical Storm Norma led to the severe flooding. (4th-6th) (The Weather Channel)

1986 - An unusually strong dust devil moved across the Flagstaff Pulliam Airport. The dust devil blew open the doors of the National Weather Service office scattering papers and bringing down a ceiling-mounted light fixture. (Storm Data)

1987 - Thunderstorms developing along a stationary front produced heavy rain across the Southern Atlantic Coast States. Up to eight inches was reported north of Charleston SC. Serious flooding was reported in Monks Corner SC. Seven cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Houlton ME dipped to 32 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2000: Houston and College Station, Texas recorded their hottest day on record when highs reached 109° and 112° respectively. Houston has tied their record on August 27th, 2011. Other daily record highs included: Wichita Falls, TX: 111°, Waco, TX: 111°, Dallas, (DFW), TX: 111°, Austin, (Bergstrom), TX: 110°, Austin (Camp Mabry), TX: 110°, Dallas, TX: 110°, Victoria, TX: 110°, San Antonio, TX: 109°, Shreveport, LA: 108°, Corpus Christi, TX: 107 °F.

2007: Hurricane Felix came ashore in the pre-dawn hours as a Category 5 storm on the northeastern coast of Nicaragua. At the time of its landfall, the maximum sustained surface winds were approximately 160 mph. Felix killed at least 130 people along the coast, with damage in Nicaragua totaling \$46.7 million.

2011: The center of Tropical Storm Lee moved ashore around sunrise. However, it would be a while before Lee would weaken to a depression as it remained nearly stationary while the southern half of the circulation was over water where it could continue to derive additional energy from the warm ocean. Lee brought torrential rains to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

2016: An EF1 tornado developed in the open country area north of Merna, Wyoming. The tornado caused tree damage along its 2.45-mile path. At its widest, the tornado produced sporadic tree damage approximately 300 yards across. The trees fell on some fence line but otherwise caused no property damage.

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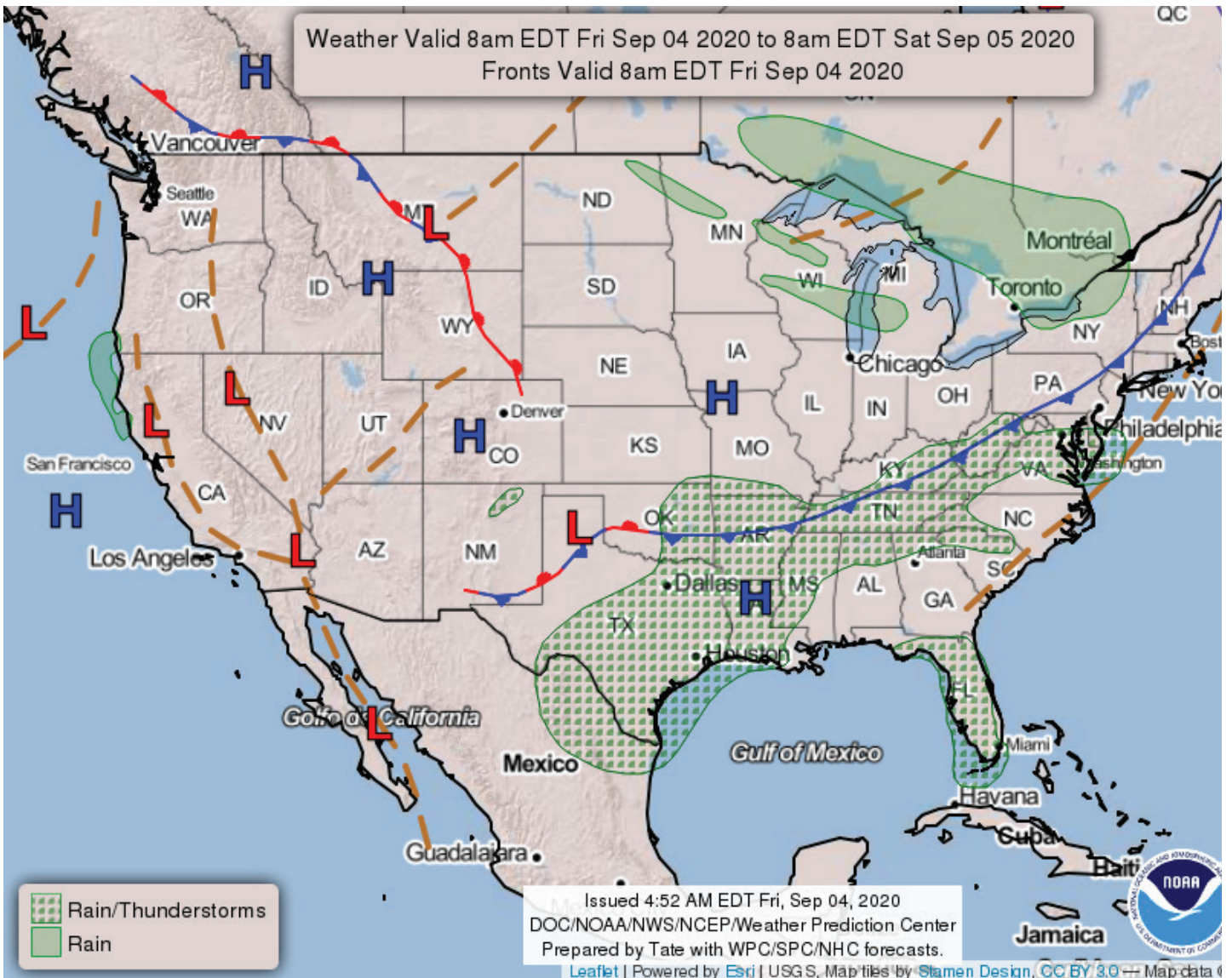
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 72 °F at 5:34 PM
Low Temp: 52 °F at 7:15 AM
Wind: 38 mph at 1:20 AM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 100° in 1922, 1931
Record Low: 30° in 1961
Average High: 77°F
Average Low: 51°F
Average Precip in Sept.: 0.22
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 16.51
Precip Year to Date: 13.35
Sunset Tonight: 8:05 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:01 a.m.



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OBSTACLES CAN BE OPPORTUNITIES

Centuries ago, a king had a group of his soldiers place a large stone in the middle of a road during the night. They worked in silence, following his orders, because he wanted no one to see them place a sack beneath the stone.

The next day he sat silently in a balcony where no one could see him and watched as the people passed by. All of them looked at the stone, paused a moment, and then walked around it. Some became angry and wanted to know who could possibly have a reason to interrupt their lives with such a horrible inconvenience. Others cursed the stone, thinking that their oaths would make a difference, and the stone would move under its own power.

Finally, an elderly peasant paused, looked at the stone, and then summoned all of his strength and pushed it out of the way. To his surprise, he discovered a purse beneath the stone. When he opened it, he discovered many gold coins and a note from the king. The note read: "Whoever moves this stone is entitled to the coins in this purse."

God works "in everything," according to the Apostle Paul, "for our good." It does not mean that whatever happens to us is "good." But that "good" will come to us if we fulfill His purpose for our lives as we grow into His likeness.

Prayer: Give us, Dear Father, the vision to see every obstacle in life as an opportunity to grow into Your likeness. May we face each barrier we face as a gift for our growth. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And we know that God causes everything to work together[a] for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. Romans 8:28

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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)
- 10/30/2020 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

Thursday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Christian def. Iroquois, 25-19, 25-15, 25-7
Arlington def. Estelline/Hendricks, 25-19, 25-21, 25-10
Avon def. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, 25-12, 25-8, 25-17
Brandon Valley def. Brookings, 25-16, 25-14, 25-13
Bridgewater-Emery def. Wessington Springs, 25-12, 25-10, 25-12
Clark/Willow Lake def. Sioux Valley, 17-25, 25-19, 25-19, 29-27
Corsica/Stickney def. Centerville, 25-10, 25-11, 25-6
Custer def. Belle Fourche, 25-19, 27-25, 25-10
Dell Rapids St. Mary def. Mitchell Christian, 25-16, 26-24, 25-9
Deubrook def. Castlewood, 25-17, 25-17, 19-25, 27-25
Elk Point-Jefferson def. Dakota Valley, 25-12, 25-15, 25-18
Elkton-Lake Benton def. Lake Preston, 25-9, 25-9, 25-14
Ethan def. Sanborn Central/Woonsocket, 25-27, 25-17, 25-22, 25-22
Faith def. McIntosh, 25-13, 25-12, 25-12
Garretson def. Baltic, 25-20, 25-16, 25-12
Gayville-Volin def. Alcester-Hudson, 25-13, 25-22, 25-20
Gregory def. Lyman, 25-19, 27-25, 27-25
Hanson def. Parkston, 25-12, 25-18, 25-23
Harrisburg def. Yankton, 25-17, 25-19, 25-20
Highmore-Harrod def. Lower Brule, 25-4, 25-8, 25-18
Hitchcock-Tulare def. James Valley Christian, 24-26, 25-22, 25-16, 26-24
Hot Springs def. St. Thomas More, 25-6, 25-9, 25-19
Howard def. Freeman, 25-13, 30-28, 19-25, 25-19
Ipswich def. Waubay/Summit, 25-12, 25-15, 25-14
Irene-Wakonda def. Canton, 25-17, 16-25, 25-22, 28-30, 15-12
Lemmon def. Harding County, 25-20, 17-25, 25-12, 25-27, 15-10
Madison def. West Central, 25-22, 25-12, 25-17
Miller def. Sully Buttes, 25-17, 25-13, 25-12
Mobridge-Pollock def. Potter County, 25-23, 25-20, 25-22
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Bon Homme, 23-25, 25-15, 25-16, 19-25, 15-11
New Underwood def. White River, 25-12, 23-25, 25-22, 22-25, 15-11
Northwestern def. Langford, 25-10, 25-10, 25-9
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland def. Canistota, 25-27, 16-25, 25-22, 25-19, 15-5
Parker def. McCook Central/Montrose, 20-25, 25-17, 25-18, 25-20
Philip def. Kadoka Area, 25-18, 28-26, 25-19
Pierre def. Mitchell, 25-15, 25-17, 25-22
Platte-Geddes def. Colome, 25-21, 25-18, 25-19
Rapid City Christian def. Wall, 25-11, 25-10, 25-12
Scotland def. Viborg-Hurley, 27-25, 25-13, 25-14
Sioux Falls Christian def. Dell Rapids, 25-15, 25-6, 25-13
Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 25-10, 25-19, 25-17
Sisseton def. Milbank, 25-15, 25-22, 25-17
Tiospa Zina Tribal def. Britton-Hecla, 25-21, 25-17, 25-18

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Tri-Valley def. Lennox, 25-19, 15-25, 25-19, 25-21
Wagner def. Chamberlain, 25-20, 25-16, 23-25, 25-23
Warner def. Leola/Frederick, 25-3, 25-9, 25-10
Watertown def. Huron, 21-25, 25-22, 25-21, 25-19
Webster def. Deuel, 25-15, 25-19, 25-21
West Lyon, Inwood, Iowa def. Tea Area, 25-11, 25-22, 25-16
Winner def. Valentine, Neb., 25-11, 25-10, 25-14
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Colman-Egan vs. DeSmet, ppd. to Sep 14th.
Freeman Academy/Marion vs. Menno, ppd.

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

Jean Rounds, wife of Sen. Mike Rounds, to undergo surgery

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — U.S. Senator Mike Rounds announced on Thursday that his wife Jean Rounds will undergo surgery to remove a malignancy that doctors found during a checkup after her cancer treatment.

Jean Rounds completed treatment in February for a tumor found near her sciatic nerve.

"While this is not the news we had hoped for, we are thankful the doctors discovered the malignancy at an early stage," said the Republican senator from South Dakota.

Doctors have scheduled the surgery for Friday morning.

Noem sends \$75 million of federal coronavirus aid to schools

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem on Thursday announced that she will send \$75 million of federal coronavirus relief funds to schools.

The Republican governor is allotting public and private schools \$500 per student from the \$1.25 billion in federal funding the state received for coronavirus relief aid. South Dakota elementary and high schools had already received \$41 million in federal funding to respond to the pandemic.

"It's crucial that our students are in the classroom this year, and we are grateful to the Trump administration for giving us the flexibility to help make that happen," Noem said.

She has pushed schools to reopen and discouraged requirements for students to wear masks. The state has reported 195 COVID-19 cases among students and staff in public schools.

Noem's office said that updated guidance from the U.S. Department of Treasury allowed the state to allocate funds to schools. The state has spent roughly \$77 million of the \$1.25 billion in federal funds, according to the latest account from state budget auditors.

Noem featured in South Dakota tourism ad airing on Fox News

By STEPHEN GROVES and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem got some high-value exposure to Republican voters across the country last week during her appearance at the Republican National Convention — and during Fox News commercial breaks.

At the governor's request, the South Dakota Department of Tourism aired a Fox News ad narrated by Noem that premiered alongside her Wednesday speech at the RNC. The 30-second spot, which cost taxpayers \$819,000, advertises the state as a place open for visitors despite the pandemic. That theme was in line with Noem's convention speech, which centered on the American ideals of "equality, freedom, and opportunity."

The ad opens with a montage of tourist attractions such as Mount Rushmore, Badlands National Park and the Crazy Horse Memorial, then crescendos with the governor introducing herself.

"Celebrate what makes America great," she says. "And experience the great places and great faces of

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South Dakota.”

Noem has courted a national following among conservatives and saw her profile rise as she took a hands-off approach to the pandemic, avoiding statewide lockdowns and business closures. The state spent \$1.5 million for a fireworks display at Mount Rushmore during an Independence Day-themed event attended by President Donald Trump.

Noem also spent \$130,000 to build a studio in the basement of the Capitol, which she has used frequently for Fox News appearances.

But Darrell Solberg, a former Democratic legislator who has been an advocate for government accountability, called the ad an “unethical” use of taxpayer money that “benefits Noem’s personal profile.”

“I think she ought to pay more attention to what is going on in the state than raising her profile on Fox News,” he said.

Coronavirus cases have surged in South Dakota. The state recorded the nation’s third-highest number of cases per capita over the last two weeks. The number of COVID-19 hospitalizations, which Noem has said drives her coronavirus strategy, has seen a slight increase.

The ad, which will run for two weeks, is a massive purchase for a state that usually spends roughly \$4.8 million in tourism promotion in an entire year. But it drew praise from those who argued Noem’s national exposure is a boon for the state.

“It was a brilliant idea in my opinion,” said Corey Lewandowski, who is a senior advisor to Trump’s re-election campaign and also advises Noem.

Ian Fury, a spokesman for the governor, said the ad was designed to appeal to people who “appreciate our approach to freedom and personal responsibility.”

He pointed to an uptick in tax revenues from the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally over previous years as evidence that the state’s tourism industry is benefiting from Noem’s approach. The rally has also been linked to coronavirus infections among 290 people spread across 12 states. Minnesota health officials reported Wednesday that a man who attended the rally died after contracting COVID-19.

Fox News averaged 7.1 million viewers during the third night of the convention when Noem spoke, making it the most-watched network. The ad is expected to get more than 85 million views during its Fox News run, according to the Department of Tourism.

The state’s travel website has seen a boost in traffic since the ad ran, with web sessions up by 148% compared to last year.

But the website is not the only entity to receive a rush of web traffic. Google searches for “Kristi Noem” peaked on Thursday, the day after her convention speech. Meanwhile, the number of Google searches for such terms as “South Dakota tourism” and “visit South Dakota” remained stagnant.

Don Frankenfeld, a former Republican legislator who has been a part of campaigns for greater government accountability, said there is no doubt Noem benefits personally from the ad. Still, he called it “appropriate” for her as governor to appear in an ad pitching the state’s tourist offerings.

“Every politician enjoys attention, and Gov. Noem is clearly no exception,” he said.

Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa.

Sioux Falls police investigate shooting of 17-year-old girl

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Police in Sioux Falls are investigating whether the shooting of a 17-year-old girl was an accident or intentional.

The girl was shot in the head by an 18-year-old man handling a gun at a residence Tuesday, according to police spokesman Sam Clemens.

“He was handling the gun when it went off is what we know,” Clemens said.

Clemens says the girl is hospitalized in critical condition. The man is in custody on possible charges of aggravated assault and reckless discharge of a weapon.

Federal task force kills Portland shooting suspect at arrest

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and TED WARREN Associated Press

LACEY, Wash. (AP) — A man suspected of fatally shooting a supporter of a right-wing group in Portland, Oregon, last week after a caravan of Donald Trump backers rode through downtown was killed Thursday as investigators moved in to arrest him, the U.S. Marshals Service said Friday.

The man, Michael Forest Reinoehl, 48, was killed as a federal task force attempted to apprehend him near Lacey, Washington, about 120 miles (193 kilometers) north of Portland. Reinoehl was the prime suspect in the killing of 39-year-old Aaron "Jay" Danielson, who was shot in the chest Saturday night, a senior Justice Department official told The Associated Press.

Federal agents from the FBI and the U.S. Marshals Service had located Reinoehl on Thursday after a warrant was issued for his arrest. During the encounter, Reinoehl was shot by a law enforcement officer who was working on the federal task force, the official said. The official could not discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

The official said Reinoehl had pulled a gun during the encounter. A U.S. Marshals Service statement said "initial reports indicate the suspect produced a firearm, threatening the lives of law enforcement officers."

The U.S. Marshals Service fugitive task forces, comprised of deputy marshals, other federal agents and local law enforcement officers from a variety of agencies, are responsible for apprehending violent felons and other wanted suspects.

Thurston County Sheriff's Lt. Ray Brady said four members of the fugitive task force fired their weapons, including two Pierce County Sheriff's deputies, an officer from the Lakewood Police Department and an officer from the Washington State Department of Corrections.

Brady said investigators haven't yet determined how many rounds were fired.

The suspect was alone at the time of the shooting, Brady said, with no children or other people present.

Brady said he doesn't think the suspect lived at the address where he was shot, and it's not clear what brought him to Lacey.

"We don't know that specifically yet," Brady said. "I do not believe that was his residence."

Reinoehl had described himself in a social media post as "100% ANTIFA." A regular presence at anti-racism demonstrations in Portland, he suggested the tactics of counter-protesters amounted to "warfare," and had been shot at one protest and cited for having a gun at another.

Police cited Reinoehl on July 5 on allegations of possessing a loaded gun in a public place, resisting arrest and interfering with police.

On July 26, Reinoehl was shot near his elbow after he got involved in a scuffle between an armed white man and a group of young people of color. The man who was carrying that gun, Aaron Scott Collins, told The Oregonian/OregonLive that he and a friend had just left a bar when they saw the group harassing an older Black man. His friend began filming them with a phone, and the group confronted them, calling them Nazis, he said.

Reinoehl later that day spoke to an AP videographer. His arm was wrapped in a bloody bandage; he said he was on his way to meet protest medics so they could change it.

He said he didn't know what had started the altercation between Collins and the group, but that several people had decided to intervene when they saw Collins fighting with minors.

"As soon as the adults jumped in, he pulled out a gun," Reinoehl said. "I jumped in there and pulled the gun away from people's heads, avoided being shot in the stomach and I got shot in the arm."

Reinoehl also was wanted on a warrant out of Baker County in Eastern Oregon, where court records show he skipped a hearing related to a June case in which he has been charged with driving under the influence of controlled substances, reckless driving, reckless endangerment and unlawful possession of a firearm.

Police said he drove on an interstate at up to 111 mph (179 kph), with his daughter in the car, while racing his 17-year-old son, who was in a different vehicle.

Protests have erupted daily in the Pacific Northwest city since the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

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With unruly demonstrations in Portland nearing the 100-day mark, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown and other Democratic leaders on Thursday called for an end to violence, even as federal agents were continuing to arrest protesters who allegedly assaulted law enforcement officers.

"The violence must stop," Brown wrote. "There is no place for white supremacy or vigilantism in Oregon. All who perpetrate violent crimes must be held equally accountable."

The statement does not single out the small minority of left-wing protesters who have been setting fires, vandalizing buildings and throwing objects at police. But Brown's spokesman, Charles Boyle, said it "is a collective call to action for an end to violence in Portland and affirms that those who commit violent acts must be held accountable."

Brown's condemnation of violence was also signed by almost two-dozen state and local politicians, a host of organizations including the local NAACP chapter, and the city's professional sports teams: the Trailblazers NBA team, the Timbers soccer team and the Thorns women's soccer squad.

Protesters returned Thursday night to a law enforcement building that's a frequent site of protests in Portland. Police said demonstrators threw objects at officers and vehicles at the Penumbra Kelly building. A vehicle drove through the protest, "narrowly missing people in the group," a police statement said. The driver was later stopped and cited; police additionally arrested two protesters. Support vehicles that police said were used to block traffic were cited and one was towed.

Portland Police Chief Chuck Lovell also has denounced protesters who broke windows and set a fire this week to a business in the upscale apartment building where Mayor Ted Wheeler lives. Protesters are angry that Wheeler has not stopped officers from using batons and tear gas against Black Lives Matter protesters. Wheeler now reportedly plans to move out of the building.

As of a week ago, 74 people were facing federal charges for crimes allegedly committed during demonstrations in Portland since at least May 29, U.S. Attorney Billy Williams said.

Associated Press writers Gene Johnson in Seattle, Gillian Flaccus in Portland, Oregon, Rebecca Boone in Boise, Idaho, and Andrew Selsky in Salem, Oregon, contributed to this report.

North Carolina kicks off mail voting as requests spike

By BRYAN ANDERSON and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

RALEIGH (AP) — Mail balloting in the presidential election is set to begin Friday as North Carolina starts sending out more than 600,000 ballots to voters — responding to a massive spike in requests that has played out across the country as voters look for a safer way to cast ballots during the pandemic.

The 618,000 ballots requested in the initial wave in North Carolina were more than 16 times the number the state sent out at the same time four years ago. The requests came overwhelmingly from Democratic and independent voters, a reflection of a new partisan divide over mail voting.

The North Carolina numbers were one more bit of evidence backing up what experts have been predicting for months: Worries about the virus are likely to push tens of millions of voters to vote by mail for the first time, transforming the way the election is conducted and the vote is counted.

In 2016, just one-quarter of the electorate cast votes through the mail. This time, elections officials expect the majority of voters to do so. Wisconsin has already received nearly 100,000 more requests than it did in the 2016 election. In Florida, 3,347,960 people requested ballots during the 2016 election. The state has already received 4,270,781 requests.

While ballots go out in two weeks in other battlegrounds like Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, all eyes are on North Carolina as it leads off.

Wake County, which includes the capital city of Raleigh, accounts for more than 100,000 absentee ballot requests so far. This week, the office groaned under the twin stresses of record mail voting and the pandemic.

On Thursday, workers in yellow vests and masks sat at folding tables spaced apart in a county warehouse, affixing address labels to envelopes and then putting the ballots inside. Board of Elections Director Gary

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Sims said the pandemic presents new challenges for the workers, including staying spaced out and using hand sanitizer as much as possible.

"We're already at over three times the amount of requests that we've ever had in its entirety in an election. So that's caused us to change some of our business processes," Sims said.

The increase in interest has come with an increase in partisan division.

The GOP has historically dominated North Carolina mail voting, but this year the people asking for the ballots are not generally Republicans. Democrats requested more than 326,000 ballots, and independents 192,000, while only 92,000 were sought by Republicans. Voters in the state can continue to request the ballots up until Oct. 27, though that may be too close to the Nov. 3 election for them to receive the ballot and return it to their local elections office in time.

The Democratic lead in mail ballots isn't only in North Carolina. In Maine, 60% of requests for mail ballots have been made by Democrats and 22% by independents. In Pennsylvania, Democrats have requested nearly triple the number of absentee ballots as Republicans. In Florida, where the GOP once dominated mail voting, 47.5% of requests have come from Democrats and 32% from Republicans.

"These numbers are astronomical, and on top of that there's these clear partisan differences," said Michael McDonald, a political scientist at the University of Florida who tracks early voting.

The party split comes as President Donald Trump has baselessly derided mail-in ballots as vulnerable to fraud, even though multiple studies have debunked the notion. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended the mail ballots as a safer alternative to in-person voting during the pandemic.

The numbers in North Carolina and elsewhere suggest Republicans are listening to Trump, shying away from mail ballots while Democrats rush to use them.

The Democrats' advantage in mail voting won't necessarily translate into an advantage in the election, however. Ballots cast on Election Day are expected to be mostly Republican.

"Even if the Democrats build up a huge lead in the early vote ballot, I still need to see the Election Day votes, because that's going to be that red wave," McDonald said.

Tom Bonier, chief executive officer of the Democratic data firm Target Smart, agreed. But he's seen one hopeful indicator for his party — 16% of the mail ballot requests so far have been from voters who didn't vote in 2016. They're younger than typical mail voters, as well.

"Seeing younger Democrats adapting to the technique is the first sign of a potential enthusiasm gap," Bonier said, noting it won't be possible to know if the GOP catches up until Election Day.

Campaigns usually want their voters to cast ballots by mail because they can "bank" those early votes and focus their scarce resources on getting their remaining supporters to the polls on Election Day. Trump has complicated that effort among Republicans by repeatedly condemning mail voting, even though in the five states that routinely mail ballots to all voters there has been no large-scale fraud.

On Wednesday, while in North Carolina, the president suggested that supporters vote once by mail and a second time in person to test whether the system could weed out voter fraud. The executive director of North Carolina's board of elections, Karen Brinson Bell, on Thursday warned that voting twice in the state is a felony, as is trying to induce someone to vote twice.

Republicans have tried to overcome Trump's open skepticism and persuade their own voters to use the absentee voting system. The North Carolina Republican Party, for example, has sent a series of mailers urging its voters to cast ballots through the system, accompanied by copies of Trump tweets with his criticism of mail voting edited out.

The message hasn't gotten through to Nona Flythe, 64, an unaffiliated voter who lives in Southport, on the North Carolina coast. She plans to vote a straight Republican ticket — in person — this year.

"I just think I'm stuck in my ways," Flythe said. "I've always done it that way, and I think if I socially distance and wear a mask that it's fine."

AP reporters Sara Burnett in Chicago and Sarah Blake Morgan in Raleigh contributed to this report.

Search for survivor in Beirut rubble grips grieving nation

By HUSSEIN MALLA Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Rescue workers used cranes, shovels and their bare hands in search operations that resumed early Friday in the rubble of a building that collapsed last month in Beirut's catastrophic explosion, hoping to find a survivor after a pulsing signal was detected.

The search was taking place exactly a month since the massive blast that killed and wounded thousands of people and traumatized a country that had already been suffering for months under a severe economic crisis and financial collapse. A march and a vigil were planned Friday as well as a moment of silence at 6:08 p.m., the moment that marked the most destructive single incident in Lebanon's history on Aug. 4.

The search operation unfolding in Beirut's historic Mar Mikhail district on a street once filled with crowded bars and restaurants has gripped the nation for the past 24 hours. The idea, however unlikely, that a survivor could be found a month later gave hope to people who followed the live images on television, wishing for a miracle.

Search operations first began Thursday afternoon after a sniffer dog belonging to a Chilean search and rescue team called TOPOS detected something while the team was touring Gemmayzeh and Mar Mikhail streets, and rushed toward the rubble. Images of the black and white 5-year-old dog named Flash, wearing red shoes to protect his feet, have circulated on social media with people describing him as a hero.

The episode lay bare the raw anger and grief still there, a month later.

After hours of searching, the work was suspended briefly before midnight, apparently to search for a crane. That sparked outrage among protesters who arrived at the scene claiming the Lebanese army had asked the Chilean team to stop the search. In a reflection of the staggering divide and people's lack of trust in authorities, some protesters donned helmets and started searching the rubble themselves while others made calls to try to arrange for a crane.

"Where's your conscience? There's life under this building and you want to stop the work until tomorrow?" one woman screamed at a soldier.

Members of Lebanon's Civil Defense team returned an hour after midnight and resumed work.

The army issued a statement Friday in response to the criticism, saying the Chilean team stopped work half an hour before midnight fearing that a wall might collapse on them. It added that army experts inspected the site and two cranes were brought in to remove the wall after which the search resumed.

It was extremely unlikely that any survivors would be found a month after the August blast that tore through Beirut when nearly 3,000 tons of improperly stored ammonium nitrate ignited at the port. The explosion killed 191 people and injured 6,000 others and is considered to be one of the biggest non-nuclear explosions ever recorded. Thousands of homes were damaged in the explosion, which smashed glass and blasted windows and doors for several miles around and was felt on the neighboring island of Cyprus.

It still wasn't clear what caused the fire that ignited the ammonium nitrate, but the public blames the corruption and negligence of Lebanon's politicians, security and judicial officials, many of whom knew about the chemicals' existence and did nothing about it.

On Friday morning, rescue workers were slowly removing debris with their hands and shovels, digging holes in the building's debris pile in Mar Mikhail. The more they dug, the more careful the work became to protect any possible survivors under the rubble. Later, they brought a 360-degree camera placed at the end of a long stick and pushed it into a hole in the building.

A scan from the camera did not turn up any trace of humans from that particular section.

On Thursday, the team used audio detection equipment for signals or heartbeat and detected what could be a pulse of 18 to 19 beats per minute. The origin of the pulsing signal was not immediately known but it was enough to set off the frantic search and raised new hope.

On Friday morning, the beats dropped to seven per minute, according to comments made by a Chilean volunteer to local TV station Al Jadeed.

"Ninety-nine percent there isn't anything, but even if there is less than 1% hope, we should keep on looking," Youssef Malah, a civil defense worker, said Thursday. He said the work was extremely sensitive.

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A Chilean volunteer, however, said their equipment identifies breathing and heartbeat from humans, not animals, and it detected a sign of a human. The worker, who identified himself as Francisco Lermada, said it is rare, but not unheard of, for someone to survive under the rubble for a month.

The past few weeks have been extremely hot in Lebanon, including a current heat wave with high levels of humidity.

Every now and then, the Chilean team asked people on the streets, including a crowd of journalists watching the operation, to turn off their mobiles and stay quiet for five minutes so as not to interfere with the sounds being detected by their instruments.

Two days after the explosion, a French rescue team and Lebanese civil defense volunteers had looked into the rubble of the same building, where the ground floor used to be a bar. At the time, they had no reason to believe there were any bodies or survivors left at the site.

The Latest: Madrid expands restrictions to indoor gatherings

By The Associated Press undefined

MADRID — The Madrid regional government is further restricting family reunions and social gatherings to curb a sharp spike in coronavirus cases just as schools are set to reopen.

An existing ban on outdoor meetings of more than 10 people is now being extended indoors, after most new recent infections have been tied to gatherings at homes. Funerals, burials, weddings and religious celebrations, as well as group visits to museums or guided tourism will also be restricted starting Monday.

Nearly one third of the country's new infections are in and around the Spanish capital, a region of 6.6 million. At least 16% of beds in Madrid's hospitals are occupied by COVID-19 patients, the highest rate of all Spanish regions.

Announcing the new restrictions Friday, the regional health chief said that recent data show the rate of new daily increases is slowing down.

"The pandemic in the Madrid community is stable and is controlled," said Enrique Ruíz Escudero. "We are not alarmed."

Madrid is also expanding the number of contact tracers, which has been one of the weakest links in dealing with the outbreaks. It's also purchasing 2 million kits for rapid coronavirus tests.

Spain, now edging to half a million confirmed coronavirus cases since February, is leading Europe's second wave of the pandemic, with a rate of virus prevalence above 212 per 100,000 residents for the past two weeks. Authorities say at least 29,234 people have died with the virus.

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

- August jobs report likely to point to a still-slow recovery for US employment
- Mexico downplays coronavirus cases among medical personnel
- The death of an Alabama town's mayor has brought a reckoning in the place where he spent his entire life
- Chickens replace students in Kenyan school as struggling educators make what money they can after studies postponed
- More than 100 South African healthcare workers have protested against poor working conditions and urged the government to end corruption in the purchase of COVID-19 personal protective equipment.
- Tyson Foods says it is planning to open medical clinics at several of its U.S. plants to improve the health of its workers and better protect them from the coronavirus.

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

BUDAPEST, Hungary — Hungary has registered 459 new cases of the coronavirus, the highest daily

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figure since the start of the pandemic.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban told state radio that his government has three main objectives regarding the second wave of the pandemic: Protect those the most at-risk, like the elderly; create conditions needed for schools to function; and rev up the economy.

Orban said Friday that "if the economy has to stop again, we're all going to be in a very difficult situation."

Hungary's decision to close its borders to most foreigners from Sept. 1 has drawn criticism from the European Union, but Orban said that despite the objections from Brussels, "in a few days they will be doing what we are," because without new border rules they won't be able to stem the spread of the virus.

Hungary has registered 7,382 confirmed cases and 621 deaths.

PARIS — France has closed 22 of its 62,000 schools since in-person classes resumed this week because of virus infections.

Of those, 10 were on the French Indian Ocean island of Reunion, where access to health care is poorer than on mainland France and the number of virus patients in hospitals has jumped in recent weeks.

Education Minister Jean-Blanquer told Europe-1 radio that overall, French schools have reported about 250 suspected virus cases per day since they started reopening Tuesday.

Not all those cases turn out to be positive, but once a suspicion is reported, schools must follow an extensive government protocol that can include sending a whole class home for online learning or shutting the whole school.

Blanquer says the number of disruptions remains relatively low compared to the number of schools in France.

The French government, like many around Europe, ordered the in-person reopening of all schools this week to tackle inequalities worsened by lockdowns and get parents back to work to revive the economy.

France recorded more than 7,000 new virus cases Thursday, the highest daily rate in Europe and up from several hundred a day in May and June, in part thanks to ramped-up testing. More than 30,700 people with the virus have died in France.

ROME — A senator who is a top aide to Silvio Berlusconi said the former premier was admitted to a Milan hospital early Friday as a precaution to monitor his coronavirus infection.

Sen. Lucia Ronzulli told RAI state TV Friday morning that the media mogul, 83, who tested positive for COVID-19 earlier in the week, was doing "well. He spent the night well" in hospital.

She said he was undergoing "precautionary monitoring" of his infection.

State radio later said he was admitted to San Raffaele hospital, where his private doctor is based, shortly after midnight, after having COVID-19 "symptoms" and would have tests but didn't give details.

On Thursday, Berlusconi, in a strong but somewhat nasal voice, told his supporters he no longer had fever or pain. Italian media have said two of his adult children also were recently diagnosed with COVID-19 and are self-isolating.

The media mogul spent some of his summer vacation at his seaside villa on Sardinia's Emerald Coast. Many of Italy's recent cases of COVID-19 have been linked to clusters in people who vacationed on Sardinia.

PRAGUE — The number of people infected with COVID-19 has continued to surge to record levels in the Czech Republic, surpassing 600 for the second straight day.

The Health Ministry says the day-to-day increase reached 680 new confirmed cases on Thursday, a new record.

Health authorities are expected to discuss a response to the spike later on Friday.

The Czech Republic has had a total of 26,452 infected with COVID-19, 426 have died. Currently, 177 people were hospitalized while 40 needed intensive care.

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Danish border controls to Germany and Sweden but also at airports on Friday

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changed status from permanent to random, Denmark's national police said.

The "adjusted" control "will provide a smoother settlement and thus a shorter waiting time for travelers into Denmark," police said in a statement.

The decision was made by the government late Thursday.

On March 14, Denmark introduced permanent border controls to prevent foreign nationals without "a legitimate purpose of entry" from entering the Scandinavian country "with an increased risk of infection as a result" as authorities then phrased it.

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea will extend elevated social distancing restrictions imposed in the greater capital area for another week as it looks to contain a coronavirus resurgence that threatens to erase hard-won epidemiological gains.

Health Minister Park Neung-hoo announced the decision Friday after health workers reported 198 new cases of COVID-19, mostly from the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area, where about half of the country's 51 million people live.

Through next Sunday, restaurants in the capital area will be required to provide only takeouts and deliveries after 9 p.m., as they have been doing since Aug. 30. Indoor sports venues like fitness centers and billiard clubs and after-school academies in the region will have to remain closed.

Authorities have shut down churches and nightspots nationwide and shifted most schools back to remote learning to slow the viral spread.

NEW DELHI — The number of people infected with the coronavirus in India rose by another 83,000 and is near Brazil's total, the second-highest in the world.

The 83,341 cases added in the past 24 hours pushed India's total past 3.9 million, according to the Health Ministry. Brazil has confirmed more than 4 million infections while the U.S. has more 6.1 million people infected, according to Johns Hopkins University.

India's Health Ministry on Friday also reported 1,096 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking total fatalities up to 68,472.

India's case fatality rate of 1.75% is well below the global average of 3.3%, the ministry said. Experts have questioned whether some Indian states have undercounted deaths.

India added nearly 2 million coronavirus cases in August alone.

In a country of 1.4 billion people, only those places most affected by the virus remain under lockdown. People are crowding markets and other public spaces with potential safety measures like masks and social distancing largely unenforced.

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — New Zealand reported its first death from the coronavirus in more than three months on Friday.

Health authorities said a man in his 50s died at an Auckland hospital where he was being treated for the virus following a small outbreak in the city that began last month. New Zealand has reported more than 1,700 cases and 23 deaths.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said New Zealand would keep its current coronavirus restrictions until at least mid-September.

A lockdown in Auckland has been eased, but crowd sizes are limited across the country and masks mandated on public transport.

"As with last time, a cautious approach is the best long-term strategy to get our economy open and freedoms back faster in the long term," Ardern said.

SYDNEY — Australian authorities have added 53 deaths at nursing homes from earlier this year to the country's total of coronavirus deaths.

Those deaths plus six that officials reported Friday for the previous 24 hours raises Australia's toll from the pandemic to 737.

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Victoria state officials say the 53 earlier deaths were determined from reconciling numbers from July and August. An outbreak in the city of Melbourne has raced through dozens of aged-care homes, resulting in hundreds of deaths.

The outbreak in the state appears to be slowly waning, with Victoria officials reporting 81 new confirmed coronavirus cases Friday.

Victoria state chief health officer Brett Sutton says that "this is the stubborn tail of the epidemic curve."

5 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. **FEDS KILL PORTLAND SHOOTING SUSPECT** Michael Reinoehl, suspected of fatally shooting a supporter of a right-wing group in Portland, Oregon, last weekend, was killed as investigators moved in to arrest him in Washington state.

2. **ECONOMISTS PREDICT JOB GAINS FOR AUGUST** Yet so deep were the layoffs that began in March at the outset of the pandemic that millions of Americans remain burdened by job losses that might prove permanent.

3. **POLICE USE OF SPIT HOODS SCRUTINIZED** While many in law enforcement defend the mesh bags as vital to prevent officers from being spit on or even bitten, critics have denounced them as dangerous and inhumane.

4. **VIRUS SPURS SPIKE IN MAIL VOTING** North Carolina begins to send out about 600,000 ballots to voters who have requested them, a group that is overwhelmingly Democrat and independent.

5. **NFL BETTING BIG ON GAMBLING INDUSTRY** The Raiders are set to open a multi-billion-dollar stadium not far from the Las Vegas Strip and this spring the league loosened its gambling policies as they relate to sponsorship opportunities.

Boseman honored as hometown hero in native South Carolina

ANDERSON, S.C. (AP) — Chadwick Boseman was remembered as a hometown hero who brought a sense of pride to his native Anderson, South Carolina.

The city paid tribute to Boseman in a public memorial on Thursday evening. The actor, who became widely popular through "Black Panther," was honored after he shockingly died last week at the age of 43 following a private four-year battle with colon cancer.

A viewing of "Black Panther" was held at an outdoor amphitheater where people practiced social distancing. Most attendees wore masks, while others — mostly kids — dressed up in Black Panther costumes.

Some artwork of Boseman was displayed onstage during the tribute.

"He is the epitome of black excellence," said Deanna Brown-Thomas, the daughter of legendary singer James Brown and president of her father's family foundation. She remembered when Boseman visited her family in Augusta, Georgia, before the actor portrayed her father in the 2014 film "Get on Up."

Boseman was a playwright who acted and directed in theater before playing the Marvel Comics character King T'Challa in "Black Panther," which became one of the top-grossing films in history. He also wowed audiences in his portrayal of other Black icons, including Jackie Robinson in "42" and Thurgood Marshall in "Marshall," and shined in other films such as Spike Lee's "Da 5 Bloods."

Brown-Thomas joked about how her family teased Boseman for being too tall to play her father. But she said Boseman was perfect for the role, admiring his humility as a high-profile actor.

"He wasn't Hollywood, and that's what I loved about him," she said.

Anderson mayor Terence Roberts said people around town always knew Boseman would be special.

"You know, he was always reading and always trying to get better," Roberts said. "So from a work ethic point of view, it just doesn't happen overnight. He showed us that we've got to hone our skills and just persevere."

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In Anderson, a city of about 28,000 people, "there's deep sadness and grief, but it has a bounce out of it that is such inspiration," city spokeswoman Beth Batson said. That's because Boseman inspired so many people in the community, she said.

"It has been amazing to watch the grief, so to speak, blossom," she said. "Now young people say 'what can I do, what can I be.'"

Pastor Samuel Neely said Boseman was active in church, speech and debate. The pastor said he baptized Boseman. He also praised Boseman for having high character.

"Even though he plays these different people, I still see the person I knew as a child," said Neely, who was Boseman's childhood pastor. "When I see him, it's almost like seeing my own child. He's still Chad."

Thursday's tribute was not a funeral, and members of Boseman's immediate family did not plan to be in attendance, Boseman's publicist, Nicki Fioravante, said in a statement.

"On behalf of the Boseman Family, we appreciate the community's outpouring of love and admiration for Chadwick," Fioravante said.

Associated Press Entertainment Writer Jonathan Landrum Jr. contributed to this report from Los Angeles.

Asia Today: India adds another 83K, nears 2nd most in world

NEW DELHI (AP) — The number of people confirmed to be infected with the coronavirus in India rose by another 80,000 and is near Brazil's total, the second-highest in the world.

The 83,341 cases added in the past 24 hours pushed India's total past 3.9 million, according to the Health Ministry. Brazil has confirmed more than 4 million infections while the U.S. has more 6.1 million people infected, according to Johns Hopkins University.

India's Health Ministry on Friday also reported 1,096 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking total fatalities up to 68,472.

India's case fatality rate of 1.75% is well below the global average of 3.3%, the ministry said. Experts have questioned whether some Indian states have undercounted deaths.

India added nearly 2 million coronavirus cases in August alone. Pune, Mumbai, New Delhi and Chennai are its worst-hit cities, but new hot spots continue to feed surges in cases in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other states.

In a country of 1.4 billion people, only those places most affected by the virus remain under lockdown. People are crowding markets and other public spaces with potential safety measures like masks and social distancing largely unenforced.

Justifying lifting of lockdown restrictions while infections are surging, Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said the testing capacity has been ramped up and safety procedures put in place.

"While lives are important, livelihoods are equally important," Bhushan said.

India's economy contracted by 23.9% in the April-June quarter, its worst performance in at least 24 years.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— Australian authorities on Friday added 53 earlier virus deaths from aged-care homes and six new deaths to their tally, bringing the total number of virus deaths to 737. Victoria state officials said they have been reconciling numbers from July and August. An outbreak in the city of Melbourne has raced through dozens of aged-care homes, resulting in hundreds of deaths. The outbreak appears to be slowly waning, with Victoria officials reporting 81 new cases on Friday. "This is the stubborn tail of the epidemic curve," said Brett Sutton, Victoria's chief health officer. Meanwhile, authorities in New South Wales, home to the largest city, Sydney, reported eight new cases.

— An independent panel appointed by the World Health Organization to review its coordination of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic will have full access to any internal U.N. agency documents, materials and emails necessary. The panel's co-chairs are former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark. The 11 others include Dr. Joanne Liu, who was an outspoken WHO critic during the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, and Dr. Zhong Nanshan, a renowned

Chinese doctor who was the first to publicly confirm human-to-human transmission of the coronavirus.

— New Zealand reported its first death from the coronavirus in more than three months on Friday. Health authorities said a man in his 50s died at an Auckland hospital where he was being treated for the virus following a small outbreak in the city that began last month. New Zealand has reported more than 1,700 cases and 23 deaths. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said New Zealand would keep its current coronavirus restrictions until at least mid-September. A lockdown in Auckland has been eased, but crowd sizes are limited across the country and masks mandated on public transport.

— South Korea will extend elevated social distancing restrictions in the greater capital area for another week as it looks to contain a coronavirus resurgence that threatens to erase hard-won epidemiological gains. Health Minister Park Neung-hoo announced the decision Friday after health workers reported 198 new cases of COVID-19, mostly from the Seoul metropolitan area, where about half of the country's 51 million people live. Through next Sunday, restaurants in the capital area can provide only takeouts and deliveries after 9 p.m., as they have been doing since Aug. 30. Indoor sports venues like fitness centers and billiard clubs and after-school academies will remain closed. Authorities have shut down churches and nightspots nationwide and shifted most schools back to remote learning.

Attempts to halt Kremlin critic Navalny have failed so far

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — All the attempts over the years to stop the work of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny have failed — so far.

He's been jailed repeatedly and twice put on trial for embezzlement and fraud. He's been put under house arrest and splashed in the face with green antiseptic, damaging his sight. He was hospitalized last year for a suspected poisoning while in custody. His brother was jailed for over three years on fraud charges.

Now Navalny is in an induced coma in a Berlin hospital after suffering what German authorities say was a poisoning with a chemical nerve agent while the opposition leader and corruption fighter was traveling from Siberia on Aug. 20. The Kremlin has denied involvement, and questioned whether he was poisoned at all.

Initially stunned by the attempt on his life, his supporters soon got back to work on their latest campaign against the government of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"We've got more anger and more motivation to work harder in order to, among other things, show the Kremlin that these methods of pressuring the opposition don't work," said Lyubov Sobol, one of Navalny's closest allies.

His top strategist Leonid Volkov said Navalny's team put all their regular work on hold as they arranged his transfer from a hospital in Omsk, where the plane carrying the unconscious activist had made an emergency landing. They publicized his plight for 48 hours, from the moment the plane landed in Omsk to the minute when the medevac plane carrying Navalny took off for Berlin.

"Starting from Sunday, when he was already in Berlin, I firmly told everyone — and everyone understood, of course — that, 'Guys, I'm sorry but we need to get back to our normal work,'" Volkov said. "We've got to slog away at Smart Voting."

The Smart Voting project was launched in 2018 and is designed to oust the Kremlin's dominant United Russia party — which Navalny has dubbed "the party of crooks and thieves" — from regional governments and legislatures.

The project aims to identify and campaign for candidates who are most likely to beat those backed by the Kremlin in various elections.

Last year, the Smart Voting project helped opposition candidates win 20 out of 45 seats on the Moscow city council. This year, Navalny's team hopes to use it in 31 Russian regions where elections on various levels are scheduled for Sept. 13. In some of those regions, the team put forward its own candidates.

Navalny, 44, has been a thorn in the Kremlin's side even though he is barred from running against Putin because of the 2017 conviction for embezzlement — a charge he says was politically motivated. In public statements, Putin refuses to even speak Navalny's name.

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Through his two popular YouTube channels detailing government corruption, Navalny's reach has spread across the vast country. In 2017, he set up a network of campaign offices in a bid to challenge Putin in the 2018 presidential election. Even though he was banned from running against Putin, Navalny kept the infrastructure in place.

These regional "headquarters" began their own investigations of graft by local officials and recruited activists, some of whom would later run for office. Navalny believes that ending the dominance of United Russia in regional parliaments and administrations will undermine "the formal mechanism" of Putin's rule.

After Navalny was hospitalized in Germany, his team used the moment to promote Smart Voting, filling social media with calls to register on the project's online platform that tells voters which candidates to support in their area. Volkov said the appeals have increased registrations.

On Monday, they released a 40-minute expose of corruption in Novosibirsk, a large city in Siberia where a coalition of over 30 opposition candidates is running for the city council. The video, which has gotten over 4 million views on YouTube, was shot during Navalny's fateful trip to Siberia.

"The foundation of Putin's power is not the State Duma, as one would think. No," Navalny says in the video, stressing the importance of the local elections.

"Their main power is in United Russia having a majority in every regional legislature and a majority in every big city council. If (United Russia) loses this majority, the power of the villains melts away immediately," he says.

From these regional roots, Navalny's team hopes to go all the way to the State Duma -- Russia's lower house of parliament -- and deploy the Smart Voting strategy in the 2021 parliamentary election.

"It's a dress rehearsal, a decisive test of strength before the elections to the State Duma," Volkov said.

Navalny's ability to mobilize voters next year poses a key challenge for the Kremlin, because those elections will determine who controls the State Duma in 2024. That's when Putin's current term expires and he is expected to seek re-election, thanks to a reset of his term limits after lawmakers and voters approved changes to Russia's constitution this year. And Putin's approval ratings have fallen recently amid growing public frustration over the declining economy.

The Smart Voting strategy could indeed upend government plans for the new parliament, said Nikolai Petrov, a senior research fellow in Chatham House's Russia and Eurasia Program, but he said Navalny's personal involvement is crucial.

"Navalny is unique because no one but him ... has enough authority to consolidate votes for various non-Kremlin forces and ensure defeat of the Kremlin's candidates," Petrov said.

Still, Navalny has built an organization that goes beyond the appeal of one man. With him jailed so often, his supporters are used to working on their own, as is his network of over 40 regional cells nationwide.

"Navalny was imprisoned for 30 or 50 days last year, and the work didn't stop. It's the same now. Yes, of course, it was a shock for us, but we didn't stop our campaigns," said Ksenia Fadeyeva, who runs the regional headquarters in the Siberian city of Tomsk and is running for city council.

At the same time, his supporters admit that his charisma and popularity are an asset, even though his anti-corruption campaigns have angered many in power even outside the Kremlin.

Tomsk was one of Navalny's stops on his recent trip to Siberia. Fadeyeva says she was "pleasantly surprised" by how well he is known.

"We walked around the city center, and a lot of people recognized him. To be honest, I didn't expect that many people to approach (Navalny), say hello, ask for a photo, want to talk," Fadeyeva said.

A 40-minute video exposing corruption in Tomsk was released Thursday by Navalny's team, and in five hours received over 850,000 views.

"We don't hide that our political organization — vast and sophisticated — is built around a charismatic leader, which is both a strength and a weakness," Volkov said. "A leaderless protest can't be beheaded, but it is much harder for a leaderless protest to succeed."

Volkov admits that hardly anyone on the team has as much "political capital" or could rally people like Navalny, who could come up with "thoughts and ideas that were interesting to a lot of people," as well as effective forms of communication.

"The Kremlin understands that, and it understands that with ... one horrific criminal act it can try and nullify a significant part of what we've done," he added.

In the meantime, there's no other option but to continue the work.

"You do what you can. We campaign the way we can," Volkov said. "We invest all the resources that we have. And we do what we do."

Associated Press journalist Alexander Roslyakov contributed.

Suspect in shooting no stranger to protests, violence

By GENE JOHNSON and GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The man believed to have fatally shot a supporter of President Donald Trump following skirmishes between Black Lives Matter protesters and a pro-Trump caravan in Portland, Oregon, was a regular at the demonstrations that have roiled the Northwest city for months.

Michael Forest Reinoehl, 48, had described himself in a social media post as "100% ANTIFA," suggested the tactics of counter-protesters amounted to "warfare," and had been shot at one protest and cited for having a gun at another.

Reinoehl was himself killed Thursday when he pulled a gun as federal agents confronted him near Lacey, Washington, a senior Justice Department official told The Associated Press, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the investigation.

His encounter with federal agents came shortly after Reinoehl gave an interview to VICE News in which he appeared to acknowledge having killed Aaron J. Danielson, 38, on Saturday. In the interview, Reinoehl said he "had no choice" but to do what he did because he thought he and his friend were about to be stabbed.

"You know, lots of lawyers suggest that I shouldn't even be saying anything, but I feel it's important that the world at least gets a little bit of what's really going on," Reinoehl told the TV news program. "I had no choice. I mean, I, I had a choice. I could have sat there and watched them kill a friend of mine of color. But I wasn't going to do that."

His Instagram feed includes photos from several Portland protests, including one of a bruise where he said he had been struck by a bean bag. He suggested the tactics of counter-protesters amounted to "warfare," and had been shot at one protest and cited for having a gun at another.

His sister said in a text message to AP that she told police he appeared to be a person caught on video running from the scene of the fatal shooting. She provided the statement on the condition of anonymity, citing dozens of threats her family had received since people online identified him from a video of the shooting.

Danielson was fatally shot in the chest Aug. 29 after a caravan of Trump supporters, estimated at about 600 cars, encountered Black Lives Matter protesters as they drove through the downtown and skirmishes broke out. Video taken by a live-streamer appeared to show Danielson, a member of the right-wing group Patriot Prayer, spraying pepper spray just before he was shot.

Early on July 5, police cited Reinoehl on allegations of possessing a loaded gun in a public place, resisting arrest and interfering with police.

On July 26, Reinoehl was shot near his elbow after he got involved in a scuffle between an armed white man and a group of young people of color. The man who was carrying the gun, Aaron Scott Collins, told The Oregonian/OregonLive that he and a friend had just left a bar when they saw the group harassing an older Black man. His friend began filming them with a phone, and the group confronted them, calling them Nazis, he said.

In the ensuing scuffle, Collins said, he was struck in the head with a skateboard and fell down. He felt people trying to grab his gun from its holster, and he decided to pull it out to get control of it. Reinoehl, whom he did not know, then began grabbing at the slide, Collins said.

Reinoehl later that day spoke to an AP videographer. His arm was wrapped in a bloody bandage; he said

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he was on his way to meet protest medics so they could change it.

He said he didn't know what had started the altercation between Collins and the group, but that several people had decided to intervene when they saw Collins fighting with minors.

"As soon as the adults jumped in, he pulled out a gun," Reinoehl said. "I jumped in there and pulled the gun away from people's heads, avoided being shot in the stomach and I got shot in the arm."

He added: "It's escalating to a point where they're trying to disrupt us in every way that's illegal. They're shooting at us, they're sending people in who are starting fights. It's terrible. ... It's warfare."

Reinoehl was also wanted on a warrant out of Baker County in eastern Oregon, where court records show he skipped a hearing related to a June case in which he has been charged with driving under the influence of controlled substances, reckless driving, reckless endangerment and unlawful possession of a firearm.

Police said he drove on an interstate at up to 111 mph, with his daughter in the car, while racing his 17-year-old son, who was in a different vehicle. His daughter also has attended protests with him; at one, she was photographed carrying a baseball bat.

"I'm trying to give her an education," he told the AP. "She's going to be contributing to running this new country that we're fighting for."

Reinoehl wrote on his Facebook page that he was a professional snowboarder for Deviation, a Portland ski and snowboard company, and he posted several videos of himself and his son snowboarding. But in a statement Monday, Deviation said Reinoehl had never been an employee or sponsored athlete of the company.

One friend who knows Reinoehl through snowboarding said he had been sponsored by various companies over the years and had sometimes won "big air" competitions — to the point that his nickname became "Big Mike." The friend described him as "a really nice guy, a gentle giant" who sometimes fashioned himself into "a defender role." The friend spoke on the condition of anonymity, citing threats he had received online. He sent Reinoehl a message recently to ask if he was all right; Reinoehl hadn't responded, he said.

In her text message, Reinoehl's sister said they were never close and she had been estranged from him for the past three years. She said she learned about his potential involvement in the shooting when she received a threatening phone call Sunday — the first of 60 that day.

She added: "Violence and hate are never acceptable. ... When people use violence to fight for peace and equality, all we get is more violence, and the cause suffers."

Johnson reported from Seattle. Associated Press writer Michael Balsamo contributed from Washington, D.C.

Ex-Marine wins Democratic primary for Joe Kennedy III's seat

By WILLIAM J. KOLE Associated Press

Jake Auchincloss has won a packed primary to become the Democratic nominee in the race to fill the U.S. House seat being vacated by Rep. Joe Kennedy III in Massachusetts.

The Newton city councilor, a former Marine, edged out six other Democratic candidates in the crowded field for the open 4th Congressional District — a contest that took until early Friday to decide because of a deluge of mailed-in ballots that overwhelmed several cities and towns.

Nearly 1 million voters, skittish over the coronavirus pandemic, used the mail option for Tuesday's primary. A state judge late Wednesday had approved a petition from Secretary of State Bill Galvin asking for more time for cities and towns to complete their vote tallies.

After graduating from Harvard College in 2010, Auchincloss served as a captain in the U.S. Marines. He commanded infantry in Afghanistan in 2012 and led an anti-narcotics platoon in Panama in 2014. He was elected to the Newton City Council in 2015. He also worked at a cybersecurity startup and as a senior manager at Liberty Mutual's innovation lab.

Auchincloss, a moderate, was also briefly registered as a Republican in part of 2013 and 2014 while he worked to help elect GOP Gov. Charlie Baker — a background his primary rivals had publicly questioned.

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He listed among his priorities making "health care a right, not a job perk," protecting reproductive rights and combating the pollution that causes climate change. During the campaign, Auchincloss also said he wanted to help rebuild the country that sent his grandfather — "a poor Jewish kid" — to college during WWII.

Auchincloss narrowly defeated fellow Democrats Jesse Mermell, Becky Grossman, Alan Khazei, Natalia Linos, Isshane Leckey, Ben Sigel and Chris Zannetos.

State law allows campaigns to ask for recounts in specific precincts or city wards, and it wasn't immediately clear if Mermell, a former aide to ex-Gov. Deval Patrick, would pursue that option. She had until Friday to decide, and Auchincloss held an unofficial 1,800-vote advantage, or just under 1.2%.

Kennedy opted not to seek reelection so he could challenge incumbent U.S. Sen. Edward Markey in the Senate Democratic primary, but lost that bid Tuesday, becoming the first member of the Kennedy political dynasty to lose a congressional race in Massachusetts.

Auchincloss will face Republican Julie Hall, an Air Force veteran who defeated David Rosa on the GOP ticket Tuesday, in the Nov. 3 general election for the right to represent the heavily Democratic district.

The district winds from the Boston suburbs of Newton and Brookline south through Attleboro, Taunton and Fall River.

The few other members of Massachusetts' all-Democratic congressional delegation who had faced primary opponents — Reps. Richard Neal, Stephen Lynch and Seth Moulton — all breezed through Tuesday's runoff.

Death of longtime mayor from COVID-19 stuns Alabama town

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

CLANTON, Ala. (AP) — It seemed like Billy Joe Driver, 84, was always around in this Alabama city after 36 years as mayor.

Most weekdays you'd find Driver working at a first-floor conference table at Clanton City Hall, and many nights he'd eat at Green's Small Town Diner with friends. On Fridays it was lunch at the local senior center, and Wednesday night and Sunday meant worship at his church, Temple Assembly of God.

All that visibility meant people noticed when Driver disappeared from public in June, and friends bowed in prayer when word got out he was sick with what many had assumed was a big-city disease, COVID-19. Driver died of the illness in July, forcing a reckoning that's still rippling through the community.

The new coronavirus is just as dangerous in central Alabama as in New York City, people now know, and older folks who were close to Driver look askance these days at others who flout Alabama's mandatory mask rule in stores or at high school football games. Many are staying home more than they did early in the pandemic.

Losing the best-known person in town to a disease that had seemed so distant was a wake-up call for Clanton, friend Sammy Wyatt said.

"People had gotten lax on trying to protect everyone else. They weren't wearing their masks like they ought to," she said. "I think with Mayor Driver's death, it opened people's eyes and they realized, 'I could be next with this.'"

Vanessa McKinney said Driver's death "devastated our community."

"We were taking it serious before, but after that, it really shook us to the core," said McKinney, who runs Chilton Senior Connections, the senior center that Driver helped create in an old store and visited regularly.

Located halfway between Birmingham and Montgomery, Clanton is a city of about 8,800 people that's best-known for agriculture — its exit off Interstate 65 is marked by a water tower shaped like a giant peach. Conservative to the core, churches are at the heart of the community, where many spend their whole lives.

Born in Clanton in 1935, when Alabama's economy was mainly agricultural and many roads weren't paved, Driver finished high school and went to work at age 18 for the county engineering department, said younger brother Don Driver, 75. Driver helped plan roads that residents still travel today.

Driver joined the volunteer fire department and was elected to Clanton City Council, where he spent 12 years, before running for mayor and winning on his first try in 1984. He never lost a bid for reelection and

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lived on a shady street in the same small house he bought as a teen after getting that first job.

Driver was "just city, and that's it," said his brother.

"You'd see him out riding at night hunting something, and if they had any kind of problem, he'd be out there with them at night," Driver said.

No one is positive how Driver was infected with the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19 — it could have been at a city meeting — but he began feeling badly around Father's Day weekend in June, said daughter Kim Driver Hayes, who lived next door to her dad with her husband.

Hospitalized in Clanton and his condition worsening, Driver got his daughter to help him call City Council members, his pastor, a city supervisor, and others — 12 people in all — to say goodbye by phone before he was transferred to a hospital in Birmingham to be put on a ventilator.

"He was just telling them thank you and that he loved them," she said. "The last thing he said to them was, 'I'll see you in heaven. Be ready to go.'"

Hayes, who's a nurse, was herself sick with a milder case of COVID-19 by then; she believes she got it days earlier while helping her father work on a door. More than a half-dozen relatives caught it in all, including the mayor's brother, Don, who is still recovering.

The mayor didn't get better and died on July 9.

"I got to see him about 30 minutes before he passed away," Hayes said. "It was the worst time of my life."

City Councilman Bobby Cook gathered city workers together and announced the death of his longtime friend with tears in his eyes. The Clanton Fire Department informed townspeople what had happened in a message on its Facebook page.

A few days later, mourners huddled around a green tent for a brief graveside service, but something more was needed to acknowledge the man who, for many, was the heart of Clanton. So about 60 people, all wearing masks and with sanitized hands, gathered last Friday for a memorial service at the senior center where he liked to eat lunch.

With mourners' chairs spread apart and paper peaches hanging overhead, Cook got up to speak. He's the interim mayor until a newly elected mayor, Jeff Mims, takes over in November.

Cook recalled the way Driver would often hear out a citizen's request for help, perhaps say he couldn't do something, then add: "Let me see what I can do." More often than not, Cook said, Driver came through.

"The man had more in his head about what was going on in the city than you could write in a book," Cook said. "He was an honest guy."

Analysis: China's rise takes the world into uncharted waters

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Twice in the 20th century, Japan challenged the West, first in a military-led attempt to become an imperial power and then as an industrial powerhouse. Now it is China's turn to take the global stage.

Seventy-five years after Japan's surrender in World War II, and 30 years after its economic bubble popped, the emergence of a 21st century Asian power is shaking up the status quo.

As Japan did, China is butting heads with the established Western powers, which increasingly see its growing economic and military prowess as a threat. In turn, China, again like Japan, feels the West is trying to limit its rise, fueling nationalistic sentiment among both its public and leaders.

What's changed, though, is the global landscape — post-colonial to start, and one of nuclear-armed states, global institutions and much deeper economic interdependence.

China's goals are similar to Japan's — to assert control in its immediate neighborhood while securing resources for its economic growth — but its means are different. Rather than imposing direct control through armed invasion, China is relying on economic enticements, cultural outreach and a gradual buildup of its military forces to boost its standing.

"The means by which China would increase its power are vastly different, as are the means by which other countries might resist it," said Jennifer Lind, an Asia expert at Dartmouth University.

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The rest of Asia is watching with a mixture of opportunism and trepidation, eager to benefit from China's trade and investment, wary of its size and strength and its sprawling territorial claims. Much larger than Japan, with 10 times the population, it is potentially better able to go toe-to-toe with an established superpower.

China's Belt and Road Initiative is building ports, railways and other infrastructure across not just Asia but also Africa and elsewhere in the developing world. Less welcome is China's growing presence in the South China Sea, where it chases away the fishing boats of its Southeast Asian neighbors and has built artificial islands to stake out its territorial claims.

Ramon Navaratnam lived through Japan's World War II occupation of Malaysia as a boy. The veteran commentator advises working with China, not against it.

"We must be able to win them over," he said. "In other words live peacefully with the dragon, don't antagonize it."

In a different era, when the sun never set on the British Empire, a rising Japan sought to join the league of European colonial powers by invading and occupying China and several Southeast Asian nations, often in brutal fashion.

Japan formally surrendered 75 years ago this week on board the USS Missouri, its empire-building ambitions in tatters after U.S. atomic bombs leveled two cities, ushering in the nuclear age. Chinese leaders marked the anniversary Thursday in a brief and solemn ceremony at a memorial hall that remembers those who fought the Japanese.

Rana Mitter, an Oxford University scholar and author of a book on the Japanese invasion of China, cautions against comparisons between then and now.

"The age of classic empires is over," he said. "Tomorrow's disputes will be about economics and technology, both civilian and military. Reading history is useful and necessary but it is not a guide to the future."

Foreshadowing those disputes, Japan tussled with trading partners from France to the U.S. as it rebuilt itself into the world's second largest economy after World War II. Japanese-made cars, steel and consumer electronics were blamed for rising unemployment in the industrial West.

As those frictions peaked in the 1980s, China was experimenting with market-style reforms. Four decades later, Japan remains wealthy but has stagnated, while China is now the No. 2 economy and the one embroiled in a trade war with the United States.

Again similar to Japan, China is accused of stealing technology and falling short on promises to open its own markets as it strives to become a global competitor in industries from electric cars to advanced medical equipment.

More fundamentally, China's ruling Communist Party fears that its one-party system will never be accepted by the West, said Richard Heydarian, a Philippine analyst who has written extensively about the U.S.-China rivalry in the Pacific.

That generates "the sense that ... no matter what they do, the West will always see them as a threat" and seek to contain or sabotage China's rise, he said.

Take the Belt and Road Initiative, which has reached America's backyard in Latin America and is viewed by the West as a gambit to increase Chinese influence overseas. Or the South China Sea, where U.S. Navy aircraft carriers push back against China, which in turn feels encircled by U.S. military bases from South Korea to Guam.

"Ultimately, the most significant legacy of the war in Asia is the lasting imprint of U.S. power," both military and economic, said former American diplomat Mintaro Oba.

It's unclear how their differences will play out in a 21st century environment. That both China and the U.S. can threaten each other with nuclear arms puts at least a partial check on any thoughts of going to war.

The greater risk is that the world's two largest militaries get drawn into a limited conflict, perhaps inadvertently, over an issue such as Taiwan, the self-governing island that China claims as its territory and the U.S. supplies with arms.

Economically, the U.S. and some others are pressing companies to reduce their reliance on China. The

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Trump administration is putting curbs on Chinese tech companies, from telecom giant Huawei to the highly popular TikTok video app, and leaning on its allies to do the same.

But for many, breaking up with China's efficient factories and huge consumer market would be difficult and costly.

China assembles most of the world's smartphones, personal computers and other electronics for Apple, Dell and other brands. Its growing market is critical to foreign automakers and other industries when American and European demand is flat.

"There was just no way that Japan could match the United States, even in the Pacific," Heydarian said. "Where China is quite different is that its sheer size gives it increasing parity with the United States in ways that Japan never enjoyed."

That makes China, military conflict or not, a potentially more formidable challenger in the years to come.

Ken Moritsugu, the Greater China news director for the Associated Press, has covered Japan and China since 2013. AP writers Eileen Ng in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Jim Gomez in Manila, Philippines, and Foster Klug in Tokyo contributed to this report.

August jobs report likely to point to a still-slow recovery

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States keeps regaining more of the jobs that vanished when the viral pandemic flattened the economy early this spring. Yet so deep were the layoffs that began in March that millions of Americans remain burdened by job losses that might prove permanent.

Economists have forecast that employers added 1.4 million jobs in August and that the unemployment rate fell from 10.2% to 9.8%, according to a survey by data provider FactSet. That rate would still be just below the peak unemployment level of the 2008-2009 Great Recession.

The Labor Department will issue the August jobs report at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time Friday.

While a monthly gain above 1 million would show that some businesses are still willing to add workers, it would take many months to return to pre-pandemic job levels even if that pace could be sustained. And many economists think hiring is slowing. The economy still has roughly 13 million fewer jobs than it did when the coronavirus struck in March.

Friday's jobs data will be the second-to-last employment report — for most voters, the most visible barometer of the economy — before Election Day, Nov. 3. President Donald Trump faces the daunting task of seeking re-election in the worst economic downturn since the 1930s. Yet voters in surveys have generally given him higher marks on the economy than they have on other aspects of his presidency.

The jobs report coincides with growing signs that more companies are making permanent job cuts rather than temporary furloughs. That trend could keep the unemployment rate persistently high. It is typically harder for an unemployed worker to find a new job at a new company or in a new industry than to return to a previous employer.

Casino and hotel operator MGM Resorts, slammed by declines in travel and tourism, said last week that it's eliminating 18,000 jobs. Coca Cola, which derives half its sales from stadiums, theaters and other venues that have been largely shut down, is offering buyouts to 4,000 employees. Salesforce said it is cutting 1,000 jobs. Bed, Bath & Beyond will shed 2,800.

A Federal Reserve report this week based on anecdotal reports from businesses found "rising instances of furloughed workers being laid off permanently as demand remained soft."

Roughly 29 million Americans are receiving state unemployment aid, although their total benefits, on average, have shrunk by more than half since the expiration of a \$600-a-week federal supplement more than a month ago. The Trump administration has set up a program that will provide some of the unemployed with \$300 a week.

But new rules and requirements will make many of the unemployed ineligible. Only people who receive at least \$100 a week in state unemployment aid will qualify for the \$300 federal supplement — a require-

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ment that could exclude at least 850,000 Americans.

The ongoing job losses and economic slump have left a rising share of Americans out of work for longer periods. From June to July, the number of people who were unemployed for 15 weeks or longer tripled to more than 6 million.

One consequence is that rising stress and anxiety are evident at therapists' offices and mental health hotlines around the country. Calls from March through July to the U.S. government-funded Disaster Distress Helpline, which offers counseling and emotional support, surged 335% from the same period last year.

And half of U.S. adults reported at least some signs of depression, such as hopelessness, feelings of failure or an inability to derive pleasure from daily activities, in a survey published Wednesday in the medical journal JAMA Network Open. That amounted to twice the rate from a survey two years ago.

"Not many days go by where I don't have a couple where one partner or both are not working or furloughed," said Todd Creager, a therapist in Southern California who treats mostly middle- to upper-middle-class adults.

What's more, the economy appears to be operating on two tracks, resulting in an uneven and unequal recovery. Manufacturers are enjoying a solid rebound in demand for cars, appliances and electronics, with factory orders nearly back to pre-pandemic levels.

Home sales are also booming. So are home prices. Sales of existing homes surged by the most on record in July and are now nearly 9% higher than a year ago.

In addition, wealthier and well-educated workers have been far less likely to lose jobs to the pandemic than lower-income and minority workers have, in part because of a greater ability to work from home.

The coronavirus has also reshaped much of the consumption of affluent households: While spending less on restaurants and at shops and movie theaters, they are buying new homes to gain more space or renovating their houses to serve as workplaces as well as homes.

Associated Press Writer Lindsey Tanner contributed to this report from Chicago.

Mayor suspends officers involved in man's suffocation death

By CAROLYN THOMPSON and MICHAEL HILL Associated Press

ROCHESTER, N.Y. (AP) — Seven police officers involved in the suffocation death of Daniel Prude in Rochester, New York, were suspended Thursday by the city's mayor, who said she was misled for months about the circumstances of the fatal encounter.

Prude, 41, who was Black, died when he was taken off life support March 30. That was seven days after officers who encountered him running naked through the street put a hood over his head to stop him from spitting, then held him down for about two minutes until he stopped breathing.

Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren announced the suspensions at a news conference amid outrage that city officials had previously kept quiet about Prude's death.

While denying a cover-up, Warren acknowledged that Prude "was failed by the police department, our mental health care system, our society, and he was failed by me."

Hours after the announcement, a crowd of protesters unswayed by the suspensions demonstrated late into the night outside Rochester's police headquarters. Officers doused some protesters with a chemical spray and repeatedly fired an irritant into the crowd to drive activists away from metal barricades ringing the building. Protesters protected themselves with umbrellas, dashed for cover, then returned to be fired on again.

Journalists were among those hit by pellets during the confrontation, which came on the second day of peaceful demonstrations over Prude's death.

The mayor said she only became aware that Prude's death involved the use of force on Aug. 4. Initially, she said, Police Chief La'Ron Singletary portrayed it as a drug overdose, which is "entirely different" than what Warren said she witnessed in body camera video. The mayor said she told the chief she was "deeply, personally and professionally disappointed" in his failure to accurately inform her what happened to Prude.

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Warren said the seven officers would still be paid because of contract rules and that she was taking the action against the advice of attorneys.

"I understand that the union may sue the city for this. They shall feel free to do so," she said.

Approached at a community event, Singletary declined to comment but said he would speak later.

Messages left with the union representing Rochester police officers were not returned.

Prude's death happened just as the coronavirus was raging out of control in New York and received no public attention at the time.

His family held a news conference Wednesday and released police body camera video obtained through a public records request that captured his fatal interaction with the officers.

The videos and other records detailed how police had gone looking for Prude after he bolted from his brother's home early on March 23, hours after receiving a mental health evaluation at a hospital.

When officers found Prude he was completely naked, on the street in a light snow. He lay on the ground as they handcuffed him, then grew agitated, shouting and writhing and demanding that the officers give him a gun.

Officers put a hood over his head because he had been spitting and then pressed his face into the pavement for two minutes, police video shows.

The hoods are intended to protect officers from a detainee's saliva and have been scrutinized as a factor in the deaths of several prisoners in recent years.

The videos show Prude, his voice muffled by the hood, begging the white officer pushing his head down to let him go. As the officer, Mark Vaughn, says, "Calm down" and "Stop spitting," Prude's shouts became anguished whimpers and grunts.

"OK, stop. I need it. I need it," Prude says.

The officer lets Prude go after about two minutes when he stops moving and falls silent. Officers then notice water coming out of Prude's mouth and call over waiting medics, who start CPR.

A medical examiner concluded that Prude's death was a homicide caused by "complications of asphyxia in the setting of physical restraint." The report lists excited delirium and acute intoxication by phencyclidine, or PCP, as contributing factors.

In his final months, Prude, who was known to his Chicago-based family as "Rell," had been having mental health problems and had been going back and forth between his Chicago home and his brother's place in Rochester, relatives said.

"My father should have been met with a mental health specialist. He should not have been killed in the street," his 18-year-old daughter, Tashyra Prude, said in an interview with The Associated Press. "He did not deserve that. He was treated like an animal. And I want this to be a step toward justice for not only my father, but justice for people like Breonna Taylor, who were killed by the police."

New York Attorney General Letitia James' office took over the investigation of the death in April. It is still not complete.

"The Prude family and the greater Rochester community deserve answers, and we will continue to work around the clock to provide them," James said in a statement Thursday.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in a statement that he watched video of Prude's fatal encounter with police Wednesday night.

"What I saw was deeply disturbing and I demand answers," he said, adding that he was confident James' investigation would be thorough. "For the sake of Mr. Prude's family and the greater Rochester community I am calling for this case to be concluded as expeditiously as possible."

Demonstrators came out on Thursday evening for a second straight night, about 200 of them gathering near the street corner where Prude was restrained by police. Some activists felt suspending the officers was not enough.

"This is a cover up and honestly our mayor, our police chief, they should be bought up on criminal charges," said Justin Morris.

Earlier Thursday, Prude's brother, Joe Prude, said all his younger brother wanted that morning was "somebody to grab him up and help him."

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"No matter how you look at the situation, the man was absolutely in his birthday suit, handcuffed behind his back, on the ground already, in freezing weather," Joe Prude said. "How could you sit here and label that man a threat to you when he's already cuffed up? How could you throw a bag over his head?"

Hill reported from Albany. Associated Press writers Michael R. Sisak, Ted Shaffrey and Jennifer Peltz in New York and Don Babwin in Chicago contributed to this report.

Report: Trump disparaged US war dead as 'losers,' 'suckers'

By JAMES LAPORTA Associated Press

DELRAY BEACH, Fla. (AP) — A new report details multiple instances of President Donald Trump making disparaging remarks about members of the U.S. military who have been captured or killed, including referring to the American war dead at the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery in France in 2018 as "losers" and "suckers."

Trump said Thursday that the story is "totally false."

The allegations were first reported in *The Atlantic*. A senior Defense Department official with firsthand knowledge of events and a senior U.S. Marine Corps officer who was told about Trump's comments confirmed some of the remarks to *The Associated Press*, including the 2018 cemetery comments.

The defense officials said Trump made the comments as he begged off visiting the cemetery outside Paris during a meeting following his presidential daily briefing on the morning of Nov. 10, 2018.

Staffers from the National Security Council and the Secret Service told Trump that rainy weather made helicopter travel to the cemetery risky, but they could drive there. Trump responded by saying he didn't want to visit the cemetery because it was "filled with losers," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to discuss it publicly.

The White House blamed the canceled visit on poor weather at the time.

In another conversation on the trip, *The Atlantic* said, Trump referred to the 1,800 Marines who died in the World War I battle of Belleau Wood as "suckers" for getting killed.

Trump emphatically denied the *Atlantic* report Thursday night, calling it "a disgraceful situation" by a "terrible magazine."

Speaking to reporters after he returned to Washington from a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, Trump said: "I would be willing to swear on anything that I never said that about our fallen heroes. There is nobody that respects them more. No animal — nobody — what animal would say such a thing?"

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Trump only amplified his criticism of McCain as the Arizona lawmaker grew critical of his acerbic style of politics, culminating in a late-night "no" vote scuttling Trump's plans to repeal the Affordable Care Act. That vote shattered what few partisan loyalties bound the two men, and Trump has continued to attack McCain for that vote, even posthumously.

The magazine said Trump also referred to former President George H.W. Bush as a "loser" because he was shot down by the Japanese as a Navy pilot in World War II.

EPA chief pledges more cleanups, less focus on climate

By JOHN FLESHER AP Environmental Writer

Environmental Protection Agency chief Andrew Wheeler on Thursday defended the Trump administration's record on protecting the nation's air and water and said a second term would bring a greater focus on pollution cleanups in disadvantaged communities and less emphasis on climate change.

In a speech commemorating the 50th anniversary of the EPA's founding, Wheeler said the agency was moving back toward an approach that had long promoted economic growth as well as a healthy environment and drawn bipartisan support.

"Unfortunately, in the past decade or so, some members of former administrations and progressives in Congress have elevated single issue advocacy – in many cases focused just on climate change – to virtue-signal to foreign capitals, over the interests of communities within their own country," he said.

Environmental groups and former EPA chiefs from both parties have accused Wheeler and his predecessor, Scott Pruitt, of undermining the agency's mission by weakening or eliminating dozens of regulations intended to protect air and water quality, reduce climate change and protect endangered species.

"EPA was founded to protect people—you, me and our families—but the Trump administration has turned it into an agency to protect polluters," said Gina McCarthy, who led the agency during the Obama administration and now is president of the NRDC Action Fund, the political arm of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Under President Donald Trump, EPA has raised the bar for requiring environmental reviews of highway and pipeline construction; reduced limits and reporting requirements for methane emissions; rolled back vehicle fuel economy and emissions standards; slashed the number of protected streams and wetlands; and repealed federal limits on carbon emissions from power plants.

Courts have blocked some of the changes, but others have taken effect.

In his remarks, Wheeler said that if Trump is re-elected EPA would support "community-driven environmentalism" that emphasizes on-the-ground results such as faster cleanup of Superfund toxic waste dumps and abandoned industrial sites that could be used for new businesses.

He pledged to require cost-benefit analyses for proposed rules and to make public the scientific justification for regulations, saying it would "bring much needed sunlight into our regulatory process" and saying opponents "want decisions to be made behind closed doors."

Critics say a science "transparency" policy EPA is considering would hamper development of health and safety regulations by preventing consideration of studies with confidential information about patients and businesses.

Wheeler spoke at the Richard Nixon library in Yorba Linda, California. The Republican president established the EPA in 1970 amid public revulsion over smog-choked skies and waterways so laced with toxins they were unfit for swimming or fishing. Some of the nation's bedrock environmental laws, such as the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, were enacted during his administration.

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Wheeler, an EPA and Senate staffer in the 1990s and a former coal industry lobbyist, said the agency had accomplished much. Lead gasoline, paint, asbestos and dioxins and hundreds of hazardous chemicals and compounds have been banned, he said.

"America's environment today is cleaner than it's ever been in our lifetimes," he said, adding that during the Trump administration, air pollution has fallen while Superfund cleanups have accelerated and EPA programs have pumped \$40 billion into clean-water infrastructure upgrades.

But the agency has become too bureaucratic and confrontational, he said — delaying permits needlessly, issuing conflicting orders to businesses and communities, and backing policies that worsen some environmental problems to solve others.

East Coast governors have blocked natural gas pipelines in the name of fighting climate change but the result has been more gas imports from Russia, Wheeler said. He blamed California's support of greater reliance on renewable energy and less on gas for rolling power blackouts that had resulted in sewage spills.

"Instead of confusing words with actions, and choosing empty symbolism over doing a good job, we can focus our attention and resources on helping communities help themselves," Wheeler said.

McCarthy and five other former EPA chiefs whose terms date as far back as the Reagan administration issued a statement this month saying Trump had abandoned the agency's "core mission of protecting human health and the environment."

"Actions during the Trump administration have further decreased public confidence in the agency's credibility, undercut its historic dedication to high ethical standards, and affected employee morale," they said in a joint statement.

Report: Trump disparaged US war dead as 'losers,' 'suckers'

By JAMES LAPORTA Associated Press

DELRAY BEACH, Fla. (AP) — A new report details multiple instances of President Donald Trump making disparaging remarks about members of the U.S. military who have been captured or killed, including referring to the American war dead at the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery in France in 2018 as "losers" and "suckers."

Trump said Thursday that the story is "totally false."

The allegations were first reported in *The Atlantic*. A senior Defense Department official with firsthand knowledge of events and a senior U.S. Marine Corps officer who was told about Trump's comments confirmed some of the remarks to *The Associated Press*, including the 2018 cemetery comments.

The defense officials said Trump made the comments as he begged off visiting the cemetery outside Paris during a meeting following his presidential daily briefing on the morning of Nov. 10, 2018.

Staffers from the National Security Council and the Secret Service told Trump that rainy weather made helicopter travel to the cemetery risky, but they could drive there. Trump responded by saying he didn't want to visit the cemetery because it was "filled with losers," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to discuss it publicly.

The White House blamed the canceled visit on poor weather at the time.

In another conversation on the trip, *The Atlantic* said, Trump referred to the 1,800 Marines who died in the World War I battle of Belleau Wood as "suckers" for getting killed.

Trump emphatically denied the *Atlantic* report Thursday night, calling it "a disgraceful situation" by a "terrible magazine."

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Biden, in Kenosha, says U.S. confronting ‘original sin’

By BILL BARROW, WILL WEISSERT and SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — Joe Biden told residents of Kenosha, Wisconsin, that recent turmoil following the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man, could help Americans confront centuries of systemic racism, drawing a sharp contrast with President Donald Trump amid a reckoning that has galvanized the nation.

“We’re finally now getting to the point where we’re going to be addressing the original sin of this country, 400 years old ... slavery and all the vestiges of it,” Biden said at Grace Lutheran Church, where he met with community leaders after a private session with Blake and his family.

The visit marked the former vice president’s first trip to the battleground state of Wisconsin as the Democratic presidential nominee and was a vivid illustration of the contrast he offers to Trump.

While Biden spent more than an hour with the Blake family, Trump didn’t mention Blake during his own trip to Kenosha on Tuesday. Where Biden traced problems in the criminal justice system back to slavery, Trump refused to acknowledge systemic racism and offered his unvarnished support to law enforcement, blaming the recent violence on “domestic terror.”

“I can’t say if tomorrow God made me president, I can’t guarantee you everything gets solved in four years,” Biden said. But “it would be a whole lot better, we’d get a whole lot further down the road” if Trump isn’t re-elected.

“There’s certain things worth losing over,” he concluded, “and this is something worth losing over if you have to — but we’re not going to lose.”

Blake remains hospitalized after being shot in the back seven times by a white Kenosha police officer while authorities were trying to arrest him on Aug. 23. The shooting is the latest police confrontation with a Black man to spark protests. It follows demonstrations that swelled nationwide after George Floyd was

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killed by a white Minneapolis officer in May.

Outside Grace Lutheran, Blake's uncle, Justin Blake, compared Trump's and Biden's respective visits as he marched and chanted with a crowd. "Trump didn't ask about my nephew. Trump didn't mention my nephew's name while he was here," Justin Blake said.

Justin Blake called Biden "more of a unifier" and credited the Democrat for bringing up criminal justice changes before being asked. But Justin Blake said "we're holding everybody's feet to the fire. Nobody gets a free pass."

Biden heard similar sentiments inside the church, where residents offered searing accounts of their struggles.

Porsche Bennett, an organizer for Black Lives Activists Kenosha, told Biden she's "tired" at just 31 years old and worried for her three young, Black children. "For so many decades we've been shown we don't matter," she said, adding that she's heard promises from plenty of politicians, but not "action."

Biden answered that, because he's white, "I can't understand what it's like to walk out the door or send my son out the door or my daughter and worry about, just because they're Black, they might not come back."

But he compared the current era of cell phone videos of violent police actions to television footage showing civil rights protesters being beaten more than a half-century ago. He called both circumstances a politically crucial awakening for white Americans. Biden also stressed the disproportionate effects of the coronavirus pandemic and its economic fallout on non-whites.

"I think the country is much more primed to take responsibility, because they now have seen what you see," Biden told Bennett, the community organizer.

Barb DeBerge, owner of DeBerge Framing & Gallery, told Biden of the deep pain exposed by the protests and how it has reached many business owners whose establishments have been burned. DeBerge noted her shop still stands, but said, "I just I don't think I really grieved as much as I should because being a business owner, I have to keep going, I have to keep working."

Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers, a Democrat, said that he'd asked both Biden and Trump not to come. "I would prefer that no one be here, be it candidate Trump or candidate Biden," Evers said in a news conference.

Yet Kenosha was mostly calm for Biden's visit, other than some verbal jousting outside the church between activists, including Bennett, and at least one Trump supporter.

Michelle Stauder, a 60-year-old retired Kenosha school teacher said Biden is "here spreading the word of peace and rebuilding."

Kenneth Turner stood nearby with a Trump-Pence yard sign. "Everyone is blaming Trump for everything," the 50-year-old Kenosha man said. "But problems here have been around a long time before Trump."

Biden criticized Trump for his sweeping condemnations of protesters, his absolute defense of law enforcement and denials that Americans with black and brown skin face barriers that whites do not — statements aimed by the president at his overwhelmingly white political base.

During his Kenosha trip Tuesday, Trump toured damaged buildings and discussed ways to quell unrest with law enforcement officials. Trump was greeted by supporters who occasionally mixed with and yelled at Black Lives Matter organizers.

The president amplified his approach Thursday evening in Pennsylvania, another state that could decide the election. "Biden went (to Kenosha) today. There was nobody there. There was nobody there," Trump said. At about the same time, Biden was greeted after an evening event by hundreds of supporters who chanted, "Let's go Joe!"

Trump also repeated his baseless assertion that Biden supports riots. Biden, in fact, has repeatedly condemned violence, most recently on Thursday, and he has criticized Trump for not denouncing a 17-year-old Illinois teen now charged with killing two protesters after he traveled to Kenosha armed and intent, he said, on protecting local businesses.

Biden, who enjoyed police union backing for much of his political career, has defended police officers for bravery and public service. But he said again Thursday that policing must be overhauled. He repeated

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his promise of a national commission on policing if he's elected.

Biden does not want to "defund the police," contrary to Trump's claims. But he proposes that local forces agree to certain best practices as a condition of federal grants. He also wants to spend more on other public agencies, such as mental health services, to ease social problems police must handle by default.

Most police officers are "decent people," Biden said in Kenosha, but he added that "every organization" has "bad people." That, he said, gives the country "a chance to change things, and we can."

As he boarded his plane for a return trip to his Delaware home, Biden said he didn't know if his trip to Kenosha was more successful than Trump's.

"But I felt good about it," he said. "I think we brought people together and I felt good about it."

Barrow reported from Atlanta. Associated Press writer Zeke Miller in Washington, and Michael Tarm and Noreen Nasir in Kenosha, Wisconsin, contributed.

Asian shares follow Wall Street lower as investors pull back

ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

Asian markets skidded Friday after Wall Street had its worst day since June, as investors' exuberance faltered after a spate of record highs.

Shares fell across the region Friday, with Tokyo's Nikkei 225 shedding 1.1%.

There was little going on regionally to alter the market's trajectory after the U.S. benchmark S&P 500 gave up 3.5%, its biggest loss in three months, and the Nasdaq fell 5% as high-flying technology companies took a tumble after months of spectacular gains.

There seemed to be no explicit catalyst for the sell-off, with economic data coming in roughly where the market had expected and no companies issuing foreboding warnings. But the market felt due for a breather, analysts said.

There is still plenty of money sloshing through financial systems with the Federal Reserve and many other central banks unleashing massive amounts of cash through bond purchases, while keeping interest rates ultra low.

"While I don't think it's a healthy meltdown, getting rid of some of the short term speculator froth will offer up better levels for the Wall of Money to indulge as we know the Fed is not going anywhere soon," Stephen Innes of AxiCorp said in a commentary.

The Nikkei 225 shed 255.04 points to 23,210.49 while the Hang Seng in Hong Kong lost 1.9% to 24,528.82. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gave up 2.6% to 5,952.70 and the Shanghai Composite index slipped 1.2% to 3,344.38.

Wall Street's unloading of technology shares on Thursday ended with Apple plunging 8%. Amazon lost 4.6% and Facebook gave back 3.8%.

Investors have been betting those companies will keep making huge profits as people spend even more time online with their devices during the pandemic. They've also assigned lofty market values to new-found darlings such as Zoom Video Communications as many Americans work remotely and students do online learning.

Even with Thursday's losses, Apple is still up 64.7% for the year, and Amazon is up 82.3%. Zoom's gain for the year is still a whopping 460.4%.

"There's really very little to justify (these stocks' upward move) other than euphoria," said Mark Hackett, chief of investment research at Nationwide.

The gains have been based on "very optimistic assumptions" about the virus's impact on the economy, as well as on prospects for Congress and the White House coming up with another economic relief package.

The number of Americans who applied for unemployment benefits fell last week to 881,000, slightly better than what economists had expected, but companies are still letting workers go at numbers well above those seen in the Great Recession. So the jobs picture remains extremely bleak, with tens of millions of Americans still unemployed.

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Investors will be paying close attention Friday when the Labor Department releases its August job report. Economists surveyed by FactSet forecast that the U.S. economy created 1.4 million jobs in August, down from 1.74 million jobs in July.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 2.8%, to 28,292.73. A day earlier it crossed 29,000 for the first time since February.

The S&P 500 index lost 125.78 points to close at 3,455.06. The technology-heavy Nasdaq dropped 598.34 points to 11,458.10.

Semiconductor companies also fell sharply. Nvidia, Qorvo and Advanced Micro Devices fell 8% or more. Even with Thursday's drop Nvidia is still the biggest gainer in the S&P 500 so far this year.

In energy trading, U.S. benchmark crude gave up 29 cents to \$41.08 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It lost 14 cents to \$41.37 on Thursday. Brent crude, the international standard, declined 28 cents to \$43.79 per barrel.

The dollar slipped to 106.16 Japanese yen from 106.18 yen late Thursday. The euro edged higher to \$1.1854 from \$1.1852.

AP Business writers Ken Sweet and Damian Troise contributed.

Fraud concerns over California's unemployment benefits

By ADAM BEAM Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Concerns are growing about possible widespread fraud in California's unemployment system following numerous reports of people receiving unsolicited letters, some with debit cards, from the state's jobless agency, and a suspicious number of claims involving independent contractors.

The California Employment Development Department has paid a staggering \$76.9 billion in unemployment benefits since the start of the pandemic, processing more than 11.9 million claims, most the result of Gov. Gavin Newsom's decision to shut down much of the economy to slow the spread of the disease.

The U.S. Department of Labor reported Thursday that California had processed more than 405,000 Pandemic Unemployment Assistance claims last week, accounting for more than half of all such claims nationally. Congress authorized the program earlier this year to help people not normally eligible to receive unemployment benefits, including independent contractors.

Michael Bernick, former director of the Employment Development Department and now an attorney at the Duane Morris law firm, called that a "ridiculously high percentage."

"This may be the potential fraud given the very, very outsized — ridiculously outsized — number of claims filed in California," he said.

In recent weeks, several reports have emerged of people receiving dozens of letters from the Employment Development Department that include the personal information of others.

David Robertson said his son applied for unemployment benefits at the end of April. His son got a letter in August saying he was entitled to \$167 per week, he said. But when they called the agency to ask more questions, they found that the contact information on his son's account had been changed and more than \$14,000 in benefits had been issued to someone else.

"How did this happen? They can't answer any of these questions," Robertson said during a news conference this week organized by Republican Assemblyman Jim Patterson of Fresno.

Amy Brooks said she was denied unemployment benefits months ago. But she has recently received 24 pieces of mail from the agency. The letters have her address but different names and Social Security numbers. At least three contained debit cards.

"There's no way this is a clerical error," said Brooks, who lives in Fresno. "How can my address be linked to all of these people?"

Gov. Gavin Newsom said Wednesday he is "concerned about fraud in this space." He said the state is working with local and federal authorities.

"It is a top priority for all of us," Newsom said.

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Employment Development Department spokesperson Aubrey Henry said the agency is aware of the letters and is "developing methods to stop and prevent such claims from being paid."

"It's extraordinarily unfortunate that fraudsters tend to become much more active during emergency situations like the current COVID situation," Henry said.

California Auditor Elaine Howle last month said the Employment Development Department was at high risk for waste and fraud, citing the large number of claims that have overwhelmed the agency. In the state Legislature, the Joint Legislative Audit Committee on Thursday approved an emergency audit of the agency, including an analysis of the number and percentage of claims approved, denied, pending and backlogged.

"The auditor warned clearly for potential for waste fraud and abuse," said Assemblyman Jim Patterson, a Republican from Fresno. "We are now seeing what that waste, fraud and abuse looks like."

Before this, the biggest concern about unemployment benefits in California was the backlog of more than 1 million people still waiting on benefits. Last month, the agency told lawmakers it is unable to answer 60% of the calls it receives for help, pledging to hire more than 3,000 people for its call center to keep up with unprecedented demand.

The agency has been under enormous pressure from lawmakers and the public to work through that backlog. But one of the reasons it takes a while to process claims is because the agency has to screen for fraud, Bernick said.

"That's the trade off," he said. "You can reduce certain procedural checks, but what you risk is a potential increase in fraud."

Trump suggests polling place double-check for mail-in voters

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Thursday that people who vote early by mail should show up at their local polling places on Election Day and vote again if their ballots haven't been counted, a suggestion that experts said would lead to chaos, long lines and more work for election officials during a public health crisis.

In a series of tweets, Trump encouraged voters to go to their polling site to "see whether or not your Mail In Vote has been Tabulated (Counted). If it has you will not be able to Vote & the Mail In System worked properly."

But information on whether a ballot has been counted is typically not available right away. In several states, absentee ballots aren't even counted until after polls close. What can be checked is whether an absentee ballot has been received, and in some cases, whether it has passed a security review and will be submitted for counting.

Election officials warned that a flood of voters showing up on Nov. 3 to check the status of their ballots would mean even more disruption during the coronavirus outbreak and lengthy waits. Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the North Carolina State Board of Elections, said it also could undermine public health efforts.

The board "strongly discourages" people from following the president's guidance, Brinson Bell said in a statement. "That is not necessary, and it would lead to longer lines and the possibility of spreading COVID-19."

Trump's latest remarks raising questions about the integrity of mail voting came the same day that the Department of Homeland Security sent a memo to election officials warning that "Russia is likely to continue amplifying criticisms of vote-by-mail and shifting voting processes amidst the COVID-19 pandemic to undermine public trust in the electoral process," according to an official familiar with the memo but not authorized to speak publicly.

It's the latest warning by U.S. officials that Russia may be using some of the same criticisms as Trump.

Many states offer ways for voters to verify the status of their ballot online that provide information on when an absentee ballot request has been received, when a ballot has been sent, when the ballot has been received by a local election office and whether it has passed the security review and been accepted.

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These are typically available on the website of the state election board or the secretary of state.

Voters in the few states that don't provide this information online have the option to call their local election office.

Trump has for months claimed without proof that there could be widespread voter fraud in November. That's despite officials in states that have relied on mail-in ballots saying there is little evidence of fraudulent activity. Multiple studies have also debunked the notion of pervasive voter fraud in general and in the vote-by-mail process.

On Wednesday, Trump first seemed to urge absentee voters to go to their polling place on Election Day to see if they could vote again. His remarks drew widespread alarm from various officials and voting rights groups, saying that if voters were somehow able to cast a second ballot, they could face prosecution for voting twice.

"Let me be perfectly clear: voting twice is illegal, no matter who tells you do to it. The president's idea is a great one for people looking to go to jail," said Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel.

Karen Hobart Flynn, president of Common Cause, said: "You cannot test election integrity rules by breaking them, any more than you can rob a bank to make sure your money is safe."

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany blamed the media for taking Trump's words out of context. She said the president said mail-in voters should go to the polls to make sure their votes got tabulated, and if they weren't, they should vote in person.

"The president does not condone unlawful voting," McEnany said.

Trump's tweets on Thursday appeared to be an effort to clarify the earlier remarks. But they continued to cause concern for election officials who would have to deal with voters showing up at polling places on Election Day to demand information on their absentee ballots.

All states track absentee ballots, so they know which voters have requested an absentee ballot and, of those, how many have returned their ballots. This information is available to poll workers on Election Day for the check-in process, either through paper or electronic poll books.

If a voter shows up at a polling place on Election Day, after having requested an absentee ballot, this will be readily apparent. Depending on state rules, a voter might be able to cancel their absentee ballot but some might be instructed to cast a provisional ballot that will trigger a review process to determine whether the person is a valid voter and whether their absentee ballot was received and counted.

Provisional ballots are the last to be reviewed and counted. If a voter's absentee ballot was not counted, their provisional ballot would be counted.

Having large numbers of people casting provisional ballots would create long lines at polling places on Election Day because it's more time consuming for poll workers to work through than issuing a regular ballot. Once polls close, it's much more work for election officials.

"It's just going to increase the strain on the system," said Jennifer Morrell, a former election official in Colorado and Utah. "All those provisional ballots that have been issued, they are all going to have to be researched. You need to be so thorough. You don't want to disenfranchise anyone who has the right to vote and you also don't want to let a vote be processed if it shouldn't be."

Cassidy reported from Atlanta. Associated Press reporter Jonathan Drew in Durham, North Carolina, contributed to this report.

Britney Spears shows love for #FreeBritney in court filing

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Britney Spears is welcoming public scrutiny of the court conservatorship that has controlled her life and money for 12 years as she seeks to push her father out of power, according to a Thursday court filing.

Spears filed an objection unprecedented in the 12 years of the conservatorship to a motion from her father, James Spears, to seal a recent filing in the case, forcefully arguing that the public ought to know

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what is happening to her and tacitly voicing her support for the #FreeBritney movement among fans that her father has shown scorn for.

"Britney's conservatorship has attracted an unprecedented level of scrutiny from mainstream media and social media alike," the filing says. "Far from being a conspiracy theory or a 'joke' as James reportedly told the media, in large part this scrutiny is a reasonable and even predictable result of James' aggressive use of the sealing procedure over the years to minimize the amount of meaningful information made available to the public."

"The world is watching," the filing later says.

James Spears and the conservatorship's attorneys who work for him have constantly sought to have courtrooms closed and filings sealed in the case. Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Brenda Penny has routinely approved the moves.

But Britney Spears objects to the sealing of her father's motion to have attorney Andrew Wallet returned to his role of co-conservator along with James Spears.

"Britney believes it is consistent not only with her personal best interests but also with good public policy generally that the decision to appoint a new conservator of her estate be made in as open and transparent a manner as possible," her filing says. "The sealing motion is supposedly being brought by her father to 'protect' Britney's interests, but she is adamantly opposed to it."

The arguments to seal have said that Britney Spears' private medical information, details about her children and trade secrets must be protected. But she argues in her opposition that none of those things are revealed in this or many other filings in the case.

A conservatorship, known in many states as guardianship, is usually reserved for people with a severely diminished capacity to make decisions for themselves. In cases like Britney Spears', who was put under control when she was having psychological problems and her life was in a downward spiral in 2008, they rarely last this long.

Recent filings showed that Britney Spears' assets, which the conservatorship controls, totaled about \$50 million at the start of 2020.

Her father and Wallet acted for years as her co-conservators, until Wallet stepped aside last year, briefly leaving James Spears in sole control. Citing health concerns, James Spears temporarily stepped down as conservator of his daughter's personal affairs, but he stayed conservator of her finances. Jodi Montgomery became conservator of Britney's person.

After years of silence on the conservatorship, which Spears has agreed was necessary at first, she has suddenly begun to publicly express her wishes, though she has stopped short of declaring she wants it to end entirely.

She said in court papers last month that she wanted Montgomery to stay on permanently, and strongly objected to his father retaking her role.

And in a new filing Wednesday, she said she wants a financial company, Bessemer Trust, to be the conservator overseeing her money, a move that would push James Spears out entirely.

An email seeking comment from James Spears' attorneys was not immediately returned.

She has also sought a financial role for her sister Jamie Lynn Spears as a trustee in a recent filing.

The dueling motions set up a showdown between James and Britney Spears that will be the subject of an October hearing and could stretch into a longer court fight.

Thursday's motion also includes what might be called a shout-out to the fans in the #FreeBritney movement, who have collectively called online for her release from court control and have consistently protested outside her court hearings.

"At this point in her life when she is trying to regain some measure of personal autonomy," the filing says, "Britney welcomes and appreciates the informed support of her many fans."

Follow AP Entertainment Reporter Andrew Dalton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/andyjamesdalton>.

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'The Batman' shoot suspended after positive COVID-19 test

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

A person working on "The Batman" production has tested positive for COVID-19 and the U.K. shoot has been temporarily suspended.

A spokesperson for Warner Bros. said Thursday that the individual is currently isolating in accordance with established protocols.

Robert Pattinson is starring as the caped crusader in the new film from director Matt Reeves which had resumed filming a few days ago after an almost six-month hiatus because of the coronavirus pandemic. It was one of the first major productions to resume in the U.K. with enhanced safety and distancing measures in place.

Hollywood has been slowly and cautiously getting back to work around the world in the COVID-era. "Jurassic World: Dominion" is another major Hollywood production that started up again recently in the U.K., at Pinewood Studios outside of London. And other blockbusters have been filming around the world including Disney's "Avatar" in New Zealand. Each country has its own set of safety protocols and guidelines.

Regardless of how eager people are to get back on set, uncertainty looms over the safety of it, liabilities and public relations headaches should anyone get sick. The New York Times reported in August that a few crewmembers on Universal's "Jurassic World" had tested positive, had quarantined and no one became seriously ill.

"The Batman" had had a brush with coronavirus in March as well. Andrew Jack, a famed dialect coach and actor who had been working on the movie before lockdown, contracted coronavirus and died. Reeves at the time tweeted that they were "heartbroken."

"The Batman" was originally supposed to hit theaters in June 2021 but was pushed back to October because of the delays. The cast includes Zoë Kravitz, Colin Farrell, Jeffrey Wright, Andy Serkis and Paul Dano.

Democrats request Hatch Act probe of Republican convention

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats on the House Oversight Committee are seeking an investigation into what they call repeated violations of the federal Hatch Act by members of the Trump administration during last month's Republican National Convention.

The 1939 law is intended to limit political activity by federal employees in their official capacity, although it does not apply to the president and vice president.

Throughout the convention, administration officials "repeatedly used their official positions and the White House itself to bolster President (Donald) Trump's re-election campaign," the lawmakers wrote in a letter to the independent Office of Special Counsel. "We are alarmed that President Trump and some senior administration officials are actively undermining compliance with — and respect for — the law."

Trump gave his acceptance speech for the GOP presidential nomination at the White House, and Acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf appeared in a video of a naturalization ceremony on White House grounds led by Trump. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also spoke to the convention through a video link while in Israel on official travel, and numerous officials used the White House for convention speaking engagements.

"We are particularly concerned with the consequences of White House actions on career employees who may have felt pressured to help organize and put on these events, potentially subjecting them to legal jeopardy," the Democrats wrote Wednesday. "Career employees have faced severe consequences for behavior far less egregious than what the country witnessed last week."

For example, a Department of Energy employee who provided a tour of a federal facility to a congressional candidate was forced to resign, and a Defense Logistics Agency employee who included the phrase "Vote Republican" in a PowerPoint presentation received a suspension of 30 days without pay.

The Office of of Special Counsel is an independent investigative and prosecutorial agency that oversees executive branch officials, including their compliance with the Hatch Act.

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In addition to Trump's speech and the naturalization ceremony, a regional administrator at the Department of Housing and Urban Development interviewed New York City tenants for a video segment that was shown at the convention. Several participants later said they were not aware the interviews would be used at the convention.

Vice President Mike Pence's use of Maryland's Fort McHenry to film a keynote address also raised questions about the role of White House employees and National Park Service resources, Democrats said.

White House spokesman Judd Deere called the request by Democrats "just another witch hunt" that will "waste valuable time and money." GOP convention events were planned and executed by the Trump campaign and the Republican National Committee, he said, adding: "Any government employees who did participate did so in compliance with the Hatch Act."

The Trump White House has taken an ambivalent approach to the ethics rules and norms that guided past administrations. And Wolf and Pompeo now join a lengthy list of other Trump officials who have taken a cavalier approach specifically to the Hatch Act.

Trump has joked he would "excuse anyone found to be violating" the Hatch Act on his behalf. White House chief of staff Mark Meadows dismissed concerns about such violations, telling Politico: "Nobody outside of the Beltway really cares."

Past secretaries of state have gone to lengths to avoid the appearance of partisan political activity, particularly during nominating conventions for the administrations they served. Pompeo's speech shattered that precedent and even went against the guidance he issued to American diplomats, advising that federal law prevented them from overtly taking sides in the presidential campaign.

Two government watchdog groups have filed separate ethics complaints against Wolf and Pompeo over their actions during the GOP convention.

Beleaguered Belarus leader shuffles aides to tighten control

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The authoritarian leader of Belarus reshuffled his top government lieutenants Thursday in an apparent attempt to strengthen his position amid weeks of protests pushing for him to resign after 26 years in office.

President Alexander Lukashenko promoted Valery Vakulchik, who led the state security agency that still goes under the Soviet-era name of KGB, to be the secretary of the presidential Security Council. He replaced Vakulchik with Ivan Tertel, who previously served as head of the State Control Committee.

Lukashenko has been the target of protests challenging his reelection to a sixth term in office. Opponents say the Aug. 9 election in which he was given 80% of the vote was rigged. AP journalists have spoken to poll workers in several places who have explained how the vote was manipulated.

Observers saw Thursday's appointments as an attempt by the president to further tighten control over the Eastern European nation of 9.5 million that he has ruled with an iron fist for 26 years.

"It's part of a clear trend toward the strengthening of the police state," said Alexander Klaskousky, an independent Minsk-based political analyst. "The repressions will escalate."

During the first few days of post-election protests, police detained nearly 7,000 people and beat hundreds, drawing international outrage and causing the anti-government demonstrations to swell. The government has since switched tactics and tried to halt the protests with threats, selective detention of protesters and the prosecution of activists. Some striking workers say they have been threatened with job losses.

The Interior Ministry said 24 people were detained Wednesday on charges of taking part in unsanctioned protests. They could receive fines or jail sentences of up to 15 days if convicted.

Targeting the protest leaders, Belarusian prosecutors have opened a criminal probe of the Coordination Council that opposition activists set up after the election to try to negotiate a transition of power. Two of its members were given 10-day jail sentences on charges of staging unsanctioned protests last week, and a court in Minsk handed them new 15-day sentences Thursday.

"It looks like a mockery,. The authorities have stopped paying attention to the law," said Valiantsin Ste-

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fanovich of the Viasna human rights center in Belarus.

Another council member detained this week on tax evasion charges faces up to seven years in prison if convicted.

As they try to stifle dissent, authorities also have revoked the accreditation of many Belarusian journalists and deported some foreign journalists, including two Moscow-based Associated Press journalists. In addition, the AP's Belarusian journalists were told that their press credentials had been revoked.

Several Belarusian journalists were detained this week and charged with taking part in unsanctioned protests. Late Wednesday, police detained two popular TV anchors who resigned from state TV in solidarity with the protesters.

About 50 independent journalists demonstrated Thursday evening outside the Interior Ministry's headquarters in Minsk, calling for the detained journalists to be released.

The United States and the European Union have criticized the Aug. 9 presidential election as neither free nor fair and urged Belarusian authorities to engage in a dialogue with the opposition, a demand Lukashenko has dismissed.

Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven was Thursday about his country's proposals to facilitate dialogue between the Belarusian government and the opposition. He said the offer was made because Sweden assumes the presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe next year.

"We thought it was an idea to offer an organization in which Belarus is a member as a forum for dialogue," he said. "That was the offer. It's still open. But it's up to Belarus, of course, to take the decision."

Lukashenko has sought to secure support from Russia, which has a union treaty with Belarus envisaging close political, economic and military ties. Russian President Vladimir Putin says he stands ready to send police to Belarus at Lukashenko's request if the demonstrations turn violent.

On Thursday, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin traveled to the Belarusian capital to discuss conditions for Belarus to refinance a Russian loan. During a meeting with Lukashenko, Mishustin noted progress in strengthening the two countries' union agreement.

In a gesture of political support for Russia as it contends with Western criticism over the alleged poisoning of Putin critic Alexei Navalny, Lukashenko said Belarusian intelligence had eavesdropped on a phone call allegedly indicating that the poisoning was a sham.

Navalny is being treated in Germany, where doctors say tests indicated the dissident was poisoned with a Soviet-era nerve agent, Novichok. Chancellor Angela Merkel on Wednesday called Navalny's poisoning an attempted murder that aimed to silence one of Putin's fiercest critics and called for a full investigation.

"We intercepted an interesting call, which clearly showed that it was a falsification," Lukashenko said, adding that the conversation involved people in Warsaw and Berlin whom he didn't name. "There was no poisoning of Navalny."

Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed to this report.

Follow AP's coverage of the political crisis in Belarus at <https://apnews.com/Belarus>

A month on, signal in Beirut rubble raises hope for survivor

By BILAL HUSSEIN Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A pulsing signal was detected Thursday from under the rubble of a Beirut building that collapsed during the horrific port explosion in the Lebanese capital last month, raising hopes there may be a survivor still buried there.

The effort unfolded after the sniffer dog belonging to the Chilean search and rescue team first detected something as the team was going through Gemmayzeh Street in Beirut and rushed toward the rubble of a building. The street was one of the hardest-hit in the Aug. 4 explosion.

The team then used audio detection equipment for signals or heartbeat, and detected what could be a pulse of 18 to 19 beats per minute. The origin of the pulsing signal was not immediately known but it set

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off a frantic search and raised new hope.

It is extremely unlikely that any survivors would be found a month after the blast that tore through Beirut in August when nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate ignited at the port. The explosion killed 191 people and injured 6,000 others and is considered to be one of the biggest non-nuclear explosions ever recorded. Thousands of homes were damaged.

"Ninety-nine percent there isn't anything, but even if there is less than 1% hope, we should keep on looking," said Youssef Malah, a civil defense worker. He said his men would continue working throughout the night, adding that the work was extremely sensitive.

A Chilean volunteer, however, said their equipment identifies breathing and heartbeat from humans, not animals, and it detected a sign of a human. The worker who identified himself as Francesco Lermonda said it is rare, but not unheard of, for someone to survive under the rubble for a month.

The past few weeks have been extremely hot in Lebanon, including a current heat wave with high levels of humidity.

As night fell, rescue workers set up light projectors to work through the darkness. The Lebanese Red Cross set up a tent nearby.

Every now and then, the Chilean team asked people on the streets, including a crowd of journalists watching the operation, to turn off their mobiles and stay quiet for five minutes so as not to interfere with the sounds being detected by their instruments.

Two days after the explosion, a French rescue team and Lebanese civil defense volunteers had looked into the rubble of the very same building, where the ground floor used to be a bar. At the time, they had no reason to believe there were any bodies or survivors left at the site.

In another chilling reminder of the horrific explosion a month ago, the Lebanese military said it discovered more than 4 tons of ammonium nitrate near Beirut's port on Thursday.

According to the military, army experts were called in for an inspection and found 4.35 tons of the dangerous chemical in four containers stored near the port. There were no details on the origin of the chemicals or their owner,

The military statement said that customs officials had called in the army to inspect containers at a facility near the port, where they found 4.35 tons of ammonium nitrate. It said army experts were "dealing with the material," an apparent reference that it was being destroyed.

The port chief, Bassem al-Qaisi, told reporters on Thursday that there are 43 containers containing flammable material left in the area, adding that the army is doing its best to keep the containers safe. Al-Qaisi said he has repeatedly asked customs authorities to take away the material.

Days after the Aug. 4 blast, French and Italian chemical experts working amid the remains of the port identified more than 20 containers carrying dangerous chemicals. The army later said that these containers were moved and stored safely in locations away from the port.

French experts as well as the FBI have taken part in the investigation into the Aug. 4 blast, at the request of Lebanese authorities. Their findings have yet to be released.

So far, authorities have detained 25 people over last month's explosion, most of them port and customs officials.

Also Thursday, the lead investigator in the port blast, Fadi Sawwan, heard testimony from the country's caretaker prime minister, Hassan Diab, according to the official National News Agency.

Diab, who resigned under pressure following the explosion, is the most senior politician to testify before judicial authorities.

Associated Press writers Zeina Karam and Bassem Mroue contributed reporting.

Election chiefs worry about uncertainty as voting nears

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and ALAN SUDERMAN Associated Press

Political battles and pending court fights threaten to upend months of planning for the pandemic election,

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election officials are warning. In key states, they remain hamstrung with only weeks to prepare.

Ongoing partisan litigation could dictate dramatic last-minute changes to rules and procedures in several states. Legislatures continue debating laws that could change how votes are processed. Meanwhile, money to pay for counting 150 million or more votes during the pandemic is stalled in Congress.

Time is short. Though Election Day is two months away, ballots are being mailed to voters on Friday in North Carolina. By the end of the month early voting will be underway in states like Minnesota, Virginia and Vermont.

Many election officials in states likely to decide the presidential race — the frontline planners — say they believe they will be ready. But in interviews they also warned of a worrisome uncertainty that could undermine efforts to run a safe, fair and accurate election.

"I've got a growing list of things that I'd normally do, but I can't," said Forrest Lehman, elections director in central Pennsylvania's Lycoming County.

Lehman says he's been scrambling since the coronavirus hit in March. He's recruited dozens of new poll workers to replace those who may be vulnerable to infection. He's ordered supplies to ensure in-person polling stations can be clean and safe. His four-person office bought a new \$11,000 machine that opens envelopes to prepare for an expected avalanche of mail ballots.

Still, he's braced for trouble. In Pennsylvania, courts have yet to decide whether the state can expand the use of drop boxes to collect ballots, if mail ballots need to be received or just postmarked by Election Day, and who's allowed to monitor polling places. The legislature is also considering a change to election procedures.

"We don't know what the rules are," Lehman said.

At least 170 lawsuits have been filed across the country over voting procedures, many by groups tied to the two major political parties or by the parties themselves. Some still pending this year could have major consequences.

In Wisconsin, a judge has yet to rule on a Democratic lawsuit seeking several changes, including lifting the state's requirement that voters provide identification to get absentee ballots. In Nevada and Montana, the Trump campaign is suing to prevent the states from sending out mail ballots to all voters.

Rulings can set off confusion. In Iowa, two judges last week invalidated 64,000 absentee ballot requests that they said were improperly filled out, after the Trump campaign sued. Democrats asked another judge to rule them valid.

It's not just lawsuits. In several states, lawmakers have been unable to agree on new procedures, including recommendations from often-nonpartisan election officials.

Among the most pressing is when election officials can count the vote. In Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, states that could determine the presidential race, election laws bar officials from processing mail ballots before Election Day.

Election officials in those states have warned for months that those laws will not only slow the tally of mailed ballots, but could fuel distrust in the outcome.

The laws ensure that the first publicly available numbers will be a count of in-person voters, who are more likely to be Republicans. The full number of Democratic votes — and the ultimate winner of each state — could come days later. That could leave Americans with a distorted impression of the results for days.

Republicans have resisted changes to those laws, arguing there's no need to revise long-standing statutes and contending it could make the system vulnerable to fraud. In Pennsylvania, the legislature is debating a bill to allow earlier processing, but it's unclear the measure will pass and be signed by Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf before Election Day.

In Michigan, election officials have also been pleading unsuccessfully with their Republican-controlled legislature to change the law on mail processing. Jocelyn Benson, the Democratic secretary of state, said her office is now looking for other ways to help local clerks speed up the count.

One big target is Detroit, which stumbled badly in mail ballot counting during last month's primary. In more than 70% of the city's precincts, the number of counted absentee ballots did not match the number recorded. The state's canvassing board has called for Benson's office to take control of Detroit's elections in November, and on Wednesday her office announced it will jointly oversee the voting along with the city.

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Benson and Detroit City Clerk Janice Winfrey both attributed the errors to exhausted staff and novice workers who couldn't start processing mail ballots until Election Day.

"They got tired. They didn't care. They threw everything in a box and left," Winfrey said.

Errors like that could have disastrous consequences in November.

Trump has spread distrust of mail voting among Republicans, baselessly claiming it could lead to massive fraud although that has not occurred in the five states that regularly mail ballots to all voters. On Wednesday, Trump encouraged voters in North Carolina to attempt to vote twice — both by mail and in-person — as a way to test the system. Voting twice is a felony in the state.

Later, Trump slightly walked back those comments, tweeting that people who vote early by mail should show up at polling places and vote again if their ballots haven't been counted

"We're faced with the president undermining vote by mail," said Arizona Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, a Democrat. "It's just another level of misinformation we have to contend with."

Hobbs said a big part of her election preparation is countering misinformation on social media. Her office has been contacting Facebook about misleading posts and trying to get a verified blue check mark on local election offices' Twitter accounts, so voters know the information from those accounts are legitimate.

Adding to the chaos is rapper Kanye West's quixotic presidential bid. Lawsuits trying to remove or insert West's name on the ballot could delay the printing of ballots in states like Arizona, Ohio, Virginia and Wisconsin.

Amid the uncertainty, election officials have tried to focus on what they can control and learning lessons from the chaotic spring primaries.

In Milwaukee, election officials expect to have most of the city's 184 polling stations open for the general election. Only five polling places were open in April and lines stretched for blocks.

The Wisconsin Elections Commission has ordered 125,000 masks, 130,000 pairs of gloves, 5,600 spray bottles to hold 10,000 liters of disinfectant. It has purchased 1 million pens so all voters get their own and 6,000 rolls of painter's tape to mark floors to ensure social distancing.

In Florida and North Carolina, election offices filed requests with their emergency management counterparts to get protective gear.

"The pandemic makes it feel like you're becoming a healthcare administrator as well as an election official," said Claire Woodall-Vogg executive director of Milwaukee's elections commission.

It's been hard to pay for these new expenses, and election experts say states have had to defer public information campaigns or take other steps to handle the cost. Congress allocated \$400 million in election aid in the spring, but another \$3.6 billion that the Democratic-controlled House passed has been stalled by the Republican-controlled Senate.

Charities have stepped into the void, as Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, donated \$300 million to foundations that had already started ending millions to help cash-strapped election offices.

Philadelphia, which received \$10 million in those initial grants, hopes to have close to its typical number of polling places open — about 800, said spokesman Nick Custodio.

"We're going to try to have as normal an election as possible," Custodio said.

Associated Press writers Julie Carr Smyth in Columbus, Ohio and Corey Williams in Detroit contributed to this report.

After a long slumber, U.S. cinemas awaken on pivotal weekend

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

STAMFORD, Conn. (AP) — With the previews about to start, a trickle of masked moviegoers made their way into one of the first U.S. screenings of "Tenet" at the Bow Tie Majestic 6 in downtown Stamford, Connecticut. They took their seats Tuesday night, eyeing the empty seats between each other and a little giddy at being back at the movies for the first time in many months.

Philip Scarante and Andy Flores, both 25, went every Tuesday religiously before theaters closed in March.

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"It's just our thing," Scarante said. Seeing Nolan's latest mind-bending spectacle later on a smaller screen held no appeal. They sat down in center seats, up close.

"Everyone seems to have a mask on," Scarante noted, looking around in the sparsely populated theater. "I didn't expect that many people to show up."

More Americans will make their way back to the movies this weekend than any since the pandemic shuttered theaters in March. After a few weeks of catalog films and minor releases, the \$200 million "Tenet" is the first must-see main event of the pandemic, a mega-movie litmus test for how ready U.S. moviegoers are to return to cinemas.

At the same time, another \$200 million movie, the Walt Disney Co.'s live-action "Mulan" remake is debuting not in theaters, as it originally intended to back in March, but on the streaming service Disney+. In an innovative, untested release, "Mulan" will be available for \$30 only to Disney+ subscribers Friday.

Each movie could chart a new way forward for Hollywood in the COVID-19 era, and potentially beyond. "Tenet," which grossed a hefty \$53.6 million in 41 international territories last weekend, could prove that blockbuster moviegoing can be resuscitated with half-capacity theaters and safety protocols -- or that people aren't ready to sit in the dark with strangers. "Mulan" could open up a new premium on-demand window to the largest film franchises -- or prove that big-time box office ("Mulan" had been projected to make around \$750 million in theaters) can't be replicated in the home.

Labor Day weekend, usually among the sleepest days of the year in theaters, has turned into a dramatic showdown with maybe the fate of the industry at stake, as two high-priced experiments test the possibilities of a new reality.

"The world we're in right now, the concept of releasing the film absolutely everywhere for everyone to go and see on the same weekend, clearly that's absolutely not an option for the foreseeable future," said Nolan in an interview. "So if that pushes the industry into different ways of thinking and some of them being older distribution models, that hopefully can work."

Warner Bros. is rolling out "Tenet" where they can. After debuting in Europe, Canada and Korea last weekend, "Tenet" on Thursday lands in the 75% open U.S. theaters, along with cinemas in China on Friday. Some states, like New York, have kept theaters closed, though more are coming online just in time for "Tenet." New Jersey and some California cinemas are to reopen Friday.

The strong international launch of "Tenet" proved that many people are eager to come back. The U.S., though, may be a different story. Though COVID-19 cases and deaths are declining, they are still far more elevated than in most parts of the world. Cases are approaching six million in the U.S., with deaths surpassing 180,000. Epidemiologists, most more concerned about school re-openings, remain cautious about any large indoor gatherings.

Meanwhile exhibitors are clinging to survival. New product, they've said, is essential to their making it through the pandemic. Connecticut's Bow Tie Cinemas opened earlier this summer and then closed when major releases were again postponed. At the "Tenet" preview screening Tuesday, the married couple Trudy and Phil Davies, with a tub of popcorn between them, said they came for "the chance to do something different" but also to contribute to the recovery.

"We came here to help things get back up and running," Trudy Davies said. "Not just for the movie businesses, for everybody. As long as it's done in a sensible way."

As difficult as the circumstances are, Warner Bros. also sees opportunity. "Tenet" has virtually no competition in cinemas and will play continuously for not just weeks but months. It has the big screen to itself. At one Boston AMC, "Tenet" is playing 86 times from Friday to Sunday.

Disney has released other, smaller films into theaters (Fox's "The New Mutants" and Fox Searchlight's "The Personal History of David Copperfield") but it has thus far either postponed or sent to streaming its bigger movies. Like "Hamilton," "Mulan" will be used to boost the 60 million-plus subscriber base of Disney+. Announcing the release plan last month, Disney chief executive Bob Chapek called it a "one-off."

"We don't see this as a new window, but it's an opportunity to learn," Disney's distribution chief Cathleen Taff said. "The one thing about this pandemic we've learned is we can't be set in our ways. We have to

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be fluid.”

The move didn't please theater owners, but Wall Street has endorsed it. Benjamin Swinburne, an analyst with Morgan Stanley, said in a note to investors that he sees premium on-demand “as long-term structurally beneficial to film studios, and likely less cannibalistic to moviegoing than feared.”

Which way things break is anyone's guess, but the releases of “Tenet” and “Mulan” may go a long way to redefining a movie business in the midst of technological and social upheaval. The movies lying in wait -- “Wonder Woman 1984” (Oct. 2), Marvel's “Black Widow” (Nov. 6), Pixar's “Soul” (Nov. 20) -- will be watching.

Settling in for “Tenet,” Jose Alvarez, a 20-year-old from nearby White Plains, New York, was thrilled to be back at the movies.

“Because movies are amazing. We're saving a lot of money because now we're at home,” said Alvarez with his mask pulled below his chin. “Not much to do there. Staying inside is not good for the health.”

AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr contributed to this report.

Facebook curbs political ads - for 7 days before US election

By ZEN SOO AP Technology Writer

Bracing for a contentious election with no immediate results and possible “civil unrest,” Facebook is enacting a host of measures to ensure its platform is not used to sow chaos and spread misinformation before, during and after the U.S. presidential election.

But it's not clear the changes are enough.

The company said Thursday it will restrict new political ads in the week before the election and remove posts that convey misinformation about COVID-19 and voting. It will also attach links with official results to posts by candidates and campaigns that prematurely declare victory.

“This election is not going to be business as usual. We all have a responsibility to protect our democracy,” Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said in a post on Thursday. “That means helping people register and vote, clearing up confusion about how this election will work, and taking steps to reduce the chances of violence and unrest.”

Some activists hailed the new policies but said the onus will be on Facebook to enforce them. And others were skeptical that they'll really make a difference.

“Voting starts in North Carolina tomorrow. Election Day isn't in two months, it's tomorrow and every day after. Which means voters in that state and many others that vote early will be subject to months of dishonest ads on Facebook's platform,” said Shaunna Thomas, co-founder and executive director of UltraViolet, a women's organization critical of Facebook.

She called the announcement a “PR stunt designed to distract from the fact that Facebook is the single biggest vector of dangerous misinformation and voter suppression campaigns in the United States.”

Siva Vaidhyanathan, a Facebook expert at the University of Virginia, said the company again proved itself incapable of effectively snuffing out dangerous misinformation last week when it failed to remove postings by right-wing militia organizers urging supporters with rifles to converge on Kenosha, Wisconsin.

“Facebook's biggest problem has always been enforcement,” he said. “Even when it creates reasonable policies that seem well-meaning, it gets defeated by its own scale. So I am not optimistic that this will be terribly effective.”

Facebook and other social media companies are being scrutinized over how they handle misinformation, given problems with President Donald Trump and other candidates posting false information and Russia's ongoing attempts to interfere in U.S. politics.

Facebook has long been criticized for not fact-checking political ads or limiting how they can be targeted at small groups of people.

With the nation divided, and election results potentially taking days or weeks to be finalized, there could be an “increased risk of civil unrest across the country,” Zuckerberg said.

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Civil rights groups said they directly pitched Zuckerberg and other Facebook executives to make many of the changes announced Thursday.

"These are really significant steps but everything is going to depend on the enforcement," said Vanita Gupta, who was head of the Obama Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and now leads the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. "I think they're going to be tested on it pretty soon."

In July, Trump refused to publicly commit to accepting the results of the upcoming election as he scoffed at polls that showed him lagging behind Democratic rival Joe Biden. Trump also has made false claims that the increased use of mail-in voting because of the coronavirus pandemic allows for voter fraud. That has raised concern over the willingness of Trump and his supporters to abide by election results.

Under the new measures, Facebook says it will prohibit politicians and campaigns from running new election ads in the week before the election. However, they can still run existing ads and change how they are targeted. Many voters, however, are expected to vote by mail well ahead of Election Day.

Trump campaign spokeswoman Samantha Zager criticized the ban on new political ads, saying it would prevent Trump from defending himself on the platform in the last seven days of the presidential campaign.

Posts with obvious misinformation on voting policies and the coronavirus pandemic will also be removed. Users can only forward articles to a maximum of five others on Messenger, Facebook's messaging app. The company also will work with Reuters to provide official election results and make the information available both on its platform and with push notifications.

After being caught off-guard by Russia's efforts to interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Facebook, Google, Twitter and other companies put safeguards in place to prevent it from happening again. That includes taking down posts, groups and accounts that engage in "coordinated inauthentic behavior" and strengthening verification procedures for political ads. Last year, Twitter banned political ads altogether.

Zuckerberg said Facebook had removed more than 100 networks worldwide engaging in such interference over the last few years.

"Just this week, we took down a network of 13 accounts and two pages that were trying to mislead Americans and amplify division," he said.

But experts and Facebook's own employees have said the measures have not been enough to stop the spread of misinformation, including from politicians. Internal dissent among Facebook employees might have helped influence Zuckerberg's decision to do something, said Joan Donovan, a disinformation researcher at Harvard University.

"This is a huge about-face for Facebook in this moment because for so long they said they were unwilling to moderate political speech and now at this stage they are drawing very sharp lines and I think that's because their company cannot survive another four-year scandal," she said.

Facebook had previously drawn criticism for its ads policy, which cited freedom of expression as the reason for letting politicians like Trump post false information about voting.

Associated Press Writers Matt O'Brien, Barbara Ortutay and Frank Bajak contributed to this report.

More than 250 arrested since Blake shooting in Wisconsin

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — More than 250 people have been arrested since the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, with more than half from outside the county that the southeastern Wisconsin city is in, police reported Thursday.

Blake, a Black man, was shot seven times in the back by a white police officer on Aug. 23, sparking three nights of unrest that resulted in roughly two dozen fires and damage to numerous downtown businesses. Two nights after the shooting, prosecutors say 17-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse fatally shot two demonstrators and wounded a third. His attorney claims it was self defense.

Kenosha police updated arrest figures Thursday, saying of the 252 people arrested, 132 did not live in Kenosha County. Rittenhouse came from his home in Antioch, Illinois, about 15 miles (25 kilometers) from Kenosha, to join others who walked the streets with rifles saying they were there to protect businesses

from damage.

Four people arrested filed a federal civil rights lawsuit Wednesday, alleging that police were not arresting pro-police demonstrators like Rittenhouse who were breaking a curfew, while targeting others. The city's attorney called the lawsuit baseless and said it should be dismissed.

The city on Wednesday ended a curfew that had been in place since Aug. 24, a sign of calming tensions in the city of about 100,000 midway between Milwaukee and Chicago. President Donald Trump visited Kenosha on Tuesday to thank law enforcement for their efforts and his Democratic rival Joe Biden was in Wisconsin on Thursday and met with members of Blake's family and Kenosha community leaders.

The police said damage to city property was about \$2 million and damage to county property was about \$385,000.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives was investigating more than 23 fires, police said.

A new \$300 federal jobless benefit? Not likely for some

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

JACKSON, Mississippi (AP) — Down to a weekly unemployment check of \$96, Fakisha Fenderson brushed aside her doctor's advice last month and began looking for a job.

In mid-May, Fenderson's employer, a door manufacturer, sent her home after a co-worker tested positive for the coronavirus. But the 22-year-old, who is six months pregnant and has asthma, felt desperate for work after a \$600-a-week federal jobless benefit expired at the end of July.

Even worse, she doesn't qualify for a smaller \$300-a-week check the Trump administration is now offering. That program, announced Aug. 8, requires the jobless get at least \$100 in state benefits to qualify.

"It would have been such a huge help," said Fenderson, who has a 1-year old son and lives in Laurel, Mississippi. "It's kind of crazy, and it doesn't make sense."

The administration rolled out the new \$300-a-week benefit, using money from a \$44 billion disaster relief fund, after Congress and the White House failed to agree to extend the \$600 payment. It was initially announced as \$400, but that included an additional \$100 from state funds that almost no states are providing.

Yet because of a raft of restrictions and bureaucratic hurdles, more than 1 million of the unemployed won't receive that \$300 check, and their financial struggles will deepen. Many, like Fenderson, were low-paid workers whose state unemployment aid falls below the \$100 weekly threshold. That stands to widen the inequalities that disproportionately hurt Black and Latino workers, who are more likely to work in low-wage jobs.

Some gig and contract workers won't qualify, either. What's more, the Trump administration's program requires the unemployed to certify that their job loss stemmed from the coronavirus — a provision that could trip up many. And the disaster relief money that is funding the new benefit could run dry in coming weeks.

On Thursday, the government said the number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits fell last week to a still-elevated 881,000. It shows that the pandemic keeps forcing many businesses to slash jobs. Counting all the government's aid programs, roughly 29 million people are receiving some form of unemployment aid.

The rules to qualify for the new \$300 federal check could undercut the administration's efforts to aid the jobless at a time of high unemployment. Eliza Forsythe, an economist at the University of Illinois, calculates that about 6% of people receiving state unemployment aid — 840,000 Americans — won't qualify for the \$300 federal benefit because they earned too little before the pandemic. And that figure is likely an underestimate, Forsythe said, because it doesn't include gig and contract workers.

In California, nearly 200,000 recipients of jobless aid receive less than \$100, according to the California Policy Lab. Officials in North Dakota have estimated that only 41% of their jobless aid recipients will qualify for the \$300 benefit. In Texas, up to 347,000 recipients, about one-fifth of the state's total, may not qualify.

Responding to the problem, five states — New Hampshire, Kentucky, West Virginia, Montana, and Vermont — have said they will raise their minimum weekly unemployment payouts to \$100 so that the unemployed

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in their states can receive the \$300 check, said Andrew Stettner, a senior fellow at the Century Foundation. Forty-four states have gained approval from the federal government to provide the \$300 federal check, though these authorizations are typically for just three weeks of payments. States must then apply for additional weeks. Just seven states, with 15% of the nation's unemployed, have begun paying out the benefit, the Century Foundation calculates.

The \$300 benefit can be retroactive, so many states will pay it to people who were unemployed in early August. That could drain the available money by mid-September.

Each state sets its weekly unemployment benefit using formulas based on the income the recipients received in their most recent jobs. For people earning the minimum wage or not much above it, that can mean minuscule aid. Mississippi's minimum payment is \$30. Nevada's is just \$16, Connecticut's \$15.

The new requirement that the unemployed certify that their job loss was due to the coronavirus will disqualify many, said Michele Evermore, a policy analyst at the National Employment Law Project. Most recipients of state jobless aid haven't had to answer that question before, Evermore said, and it might not be clear that their eligibility for the \$300 depends on the answer. Some may think they're being asked whether they have had COVID-19, Stettner said. And some layoffs, of course, are unrelated to the virus.

Then there are those Americans who earned most of their money before the viral outbreak as contract or gig workers but also worked part time in traditional jobs. The government's \$2 trillion relief package made gig workers and contractors eligible for unemployment aid for the first time — but only if all their income was from such work.

If these workers spent even one or two days a week in traditional jobs, they must apply for aid through regular state unemployment programs, based on their modest income from that work. This could limit their benefit checks to less than \$100 and bar them from receiving the \$300 supplement.

Among them is Rachel Goff, a musician in South Bend, Indiana, who plays the viola in five different orchestras. About 60% of her pre-pandemic income, she said, came from gig work — performing at weddings and providing private music lessons. The orchestras would typically pay her regular wages with W-2 forms. So Goff, who hasn't played a regular concert since spring, is receiving unemployment aid of just \$97 a week.

"When I found out that I wouldn't be eligible for the \$300, that kind of broke me, to be honest," she said. "That seems so arbitrary."

Goff, 41, has performed for orchestras in Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and in Las Vegas, all of which have suspended performances. Weddings have dried up. Some teaching work has returned, but Goff estimates that all told, including her unemployment aid, she's receiving just 25% of her pre-pandemic income.

She's had to delay roof repairs, and she finds herself calculating what groceries she can afford — something she hadn't pondered "since I was a poor graduate student."

Fenderson, meanwhile, was offered a job at a Sonic Drive-In but didn't take it because she feared she'd lose health benefits that her current employer, Masonite International, is paying for. She hopes to return to Masonite in January after giving birth.

For now, it's a struggle. She moved out of a mobile home and into her parents' house, where her sister also lives. It's been hard for the family to get by on her mother's pay as a manager at McDonald's.

While she was receiving the \$600-a-week federal check through July, Fenderson was able to sock away some money. It's all gone now.

"You get to feel so desperate," she said. "It's scary and it's stressful."

Rugaber reported from Washington. AP Writers Geoff Mulvihill in Cherry Hill, New Jersey; Holly Ramer in Concord, New Hampshire, and Adrian Sanz in Memphis, Tennessee, contributed to this report.

Once seen as loners, male elephants shown to follow elders

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A line of elephants trundles across a dusty landscape in northern Botswana, ears

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flapping and trunks occasionally brushing the ground. As they pass a motion-activated camera hidden in low shrubbery, photos record the presence of each elephant.

What's special about this group? It's only males.

Female elephants are known to form tight family groups led by experienced matriarchs. Males were long assumed to be loners, because they leave their mother's herd when they reach 10 to 20 years of age.

A new study shows that teenage males aren't anti-social after all. Younger male elephants were seen tagging along behind older males as they travel from place to place. It's more evidence in an emerging body of research that shows older males — like their female counterparts — play an important role in elephants' complex society.

For the study published Thursday in the journal *Scientific Reports*, researchers analyzed photos of 1,264 sightings of male African savannah elephants traveling toward the Boteti River in 2017 and 2018. They found that younger males seldom traveled alone and older males most often led groups of mixed ages.

"Mature male elephants often take a position at the front of the line when they are leading the group" to streams or seasonal grazing grounds, said Diana Reiss, director of the Animal Behavior and Conservation Program at Hunter College, who was not involved in the new study.

"In human societies, grandparents are valued because they make really important contributions — helping with childcare and passing down knowledge gained over decades," she said. "We're now learning this pattern is also true for some other long-lived mammals, including dolphins, whales and elephants."

This is the first such study of African savannah elephants. A 2019 paper used motion-activated cameras to describe similar male group dynamics among Asian elephants.

Scientists have long known more about breeding herds of female elephants, said Connie Allen, a biologist at the University of Exeter and a co-author of the new paper. "But males also have multifaceted social lives, and their groupings aren't only shaped by kinship ties," she said.

When several young orphaned male elephants were introduced into a park in Pilanesberg, South Africa, in the mid-1990s, the young males were extremely aggressive and killed 40 white rhinoceros. But their behavior was moderated after six older male elephants were added to the park.

"In some way, the older males created order, and all that pandemonium was quelled," said Carl Safina, an ecologist at Stony Brook University, who was not involved in the new study. "We're still learning about how male elephants acquire their cultural understanding of how to act, whom to defer to, and where resources like food and water sources are located."

Because of their larger size and longer tusks, mature male elephants are most often targeted by poachers and legal trophy hunters in Africa.

But future conservation strategies should take into account the mentorship role that older males play, said Allen, the study co-author. "Males are more enigmatic. But it turns out they aren't such loners," she said.

Follow Christina Larson on twitter: @larsonchristina

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AP Explains: Novichok that sickened Navalny a Cold War relic

By FRANK JORDANS and VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Novichok, a deadly nerve agent that has left Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny in a coma and nearly killed a former Russian spy and his daughter in 2018, was the product of a highly secretive Soviet chemical weapons program. Here is a look at the agent and the history of its development.

HOW LETHAL IS NOVICHOK?

Novichok, the nerve agent used in the attack that nearly killed former spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, in the English city of Salisbury on March 4, 2018, has been described as much deadlier than

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any U.S. equivalents.

Just a few milligrams of the odorless liquid — the weight of a snowflake — are enough to kill a person within minutes. The agent could be diluted to the desired concentration and added to food or drink, or applied to surfaces or clothes.

Scientists say the nerve agent could remain deadly for a long time — even if a few tiny drops are left in a syringe or impregnated into wood or fabric.

In the Salisbury attack, it was sprayed on the front door of Skripal's house after being smuggled into Britain in a counterfeit Nina Ricci perfume bottle. The Skripals spent weeks in critical condition before recovering, and a local woman died after being exposed to the bottle, which was found by her boyfriend.

WHAT DO THE RUSSIANS SAY ABOUT NOVICHEK POISONINGS?

Russia fiercely denied British accusations over the Skripals' poisoning, accusing London and other Western nations of using the incident to fan an anti-Russian campaign. It has followed the same path of denial in this summer's Navalny poisoning.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Wednesday called Navalny's poisoning an attempted murder that aimed to silence one of Putin's fiercest critics and called for a full investigation, saying "there are very serious questions now that only the Russian government can answer, and must answer."

Russia, however, has demanded that Germany share its data backing up its conclusion that Navalny was poisoned and has called for a joint investigation effort.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, insisted Thursday that "there is no reason to accuse the Russian state" over the poisoning. He said Moscow expects Berlin to provide information that would help a Russian probe into the cause of Navalny's illness, and that Russia doctors in Siberia, where Navalny was taken after he fell ill on Aug. 20, found no evidence of poisoning.

Sergei Naryshkin, the head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, even claimed it can't be excluded that Navalny's poisoning was a provocation of Western intelligence agencies.

WHEN WAS NOVICHOK DESIGNED?

The Soviet program to design a new generation of chemical weapons began in the 1970s to counter the latest U.S. chemical weapons.

Soviet leaders wanted the equivalent of U.S. binary weapons — agents made up of relatively harmless components that turn deadly when mixed, making them easier to operate than regular chemical weapons. While Novichok class poisons were highly lethal, the program was only partly successful, as some of the components were as toxic as the military-grade nerve agents.

The Soviet leadership eventually lost interest in chemical weapons. Novichok-class agents only were manufactured in lab quantities. Vladimir Uglev, a top scientist in the program, has estimated about 100 kilograms (220 pounds) were made.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO TRACE NOVICHOK'S SOURCE?

Russian experts who have worked on the Novichok class of agents have warned it may never be possible to determine the nerve agent's origin.

To determine what specific lab produced a given sample of Novichok, it's necessary to find an identical specimen from the same batch — an impossible task.

Facing accusations for the Skripals's poisoning, Russia has charged that the U.S., Britain and other Western countries had acquired the expertise to make the nerve agent and that the Novichok used in that attack could have come from them.

COULD IT FALL INTO THE WRONG HANDS?

The main Soviet research center that designed the Novichok-class agents was in Shikhany, a town in southwestern Russia. It was one of the "closed cities" isolated by the KGB. The sprawling facility also housed chemical depots and a military firing range, where nerve agents were tested throughout the Cold War.

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Some Novichok-related research also was conducted at a main Moscow research center, which shared samples with other labs across the Soviet Union.

Despite the U.S. oversight to dismantle Russia's chemical arsenals after the Soviet collapse, scientists involved in the program said they couldn't exclude that some lab workers might have been tempted to sell toxic substances amid the economic and political turmoil in the 1990s.

MURKY STATUS

Moscow said in 2017 it completed the destruction of 40,000 metric tons of chemical weapons left over from the Soviet era, an effort that spanned two decades under close international oversight.

The Novichok-class agents weren't originally mentioned in the Chemical Weapons Convention, an international document that outlawed chemical weapons.

Last year, however, they were added to the list of chemicals that require special verification measures under the treaty's provisions. The move came after the 2018 Salisbury attack and marked the first time the list had been updated.

Frank Jordans reported from Berlin.

Room with a view: US Open seeds get taste of the suite life

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The see-and-be-seen scene in the U.S. Open's Arthur Ashe Stadium corporate suites is different this year: The usual cast of celebrities, socialites and sponsors — banned, along with all spectators, because of the pandemic — has been replaced by the stars of the sport themselves.

The 64 seeded players in the women's and men's singles draws, along with past champions Venus Williams, Kim Clijsters and Andy Murray, were assigned those special boxes to use as personal lounges while they remain in the Grand Slam tournament.

The suites have outdoor seats where players hang out to take in the action, including Williams' sister, Serena, who brought her dog along to what can have the feel of balconies in the atrium of an apartment complex.

"It's nice to just be able to watch a match and not be disturbed, not disturbing anyone else," said 2017 U.S. Open champion Sloane Stephens, who is seeded 26th. "It's actually a very cool vibe to be a tennis player and also be, like, a fan and watch."

So there Stephens was Wednesday, eating edamame out of a paper bowl during 17-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic's second-round victory.

A shirtless Dominic Thiem showed up, too, keeping an eye on the guy who beat him in this year's Australian Open final.

"They're watching you, right? They're there," Djokovic said. "You can sense that there is also that kind of additional pressure to perform well in front of them."

On Tuesday, 2012 Open champ Murray's first match at a major championship in nearly 20 months drew all sorts of attention as it stretched to five sets across more than 4½ hours.

Former No. 1 Naomi Osaka showed up, mask on. So did Murray's second-round opponent Thursday night, Felix Auger-Aliassime, a Canadian seeded 15th.

Two-time major champion Garbiñe Muguruza was there, using a fork and knife to eat lunch; 10th-seeded Andrey Rublev's utensils of choice were chopsticks.

"I wanted to see at least a couple of games," Rublev said, "because I knew it was going to be a really high level of smart rallies."

Murray noticed the folks there in the otherwise nearly deserted, nearly silent, arena, which can accommodate an audience of more than 23,000.

"Just sort of having some people around in a very empty stadium — the biggest tennis stadium that we play in — it certainly helped me, for sure," said Murray, who checked out some of fellow Briton Kyle

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Edmund's loss to Djokovic.

"For me, it's not always, like, what the person is saying, but often when I'm playing, when there's big crowds and stuff, I often engage and make eye contact with people in the crowd," Murray said. "Gives me some energy and stuff. That helps."

Stefanos Tsitsipas, a 22-year-old from Greece who is seeded No. 4, noted that he never could have afforded these seats in the past. He also kiddingly complained about the sightlines from his corner box — "Not the best view" — and noted: "I wish they had a picture of me in my suite, but they only have pictures of Serena, Rafa and Roger. I'll have to wait for that."

Clijsters personalize her porch a bit, setting up a basketball hoop so players practicing on Ashe could aim a tennis ball for the rim. Lettering on her suite's window teases, a la a carnival: "Win A Prize."

"Some did OK, yeah," she said. "Some were way off."

Clijsters called the suites "a nice bonus."

In the words of 2017 runner-up Madison Keys, they're "a massive privilege."

Fits in with the unique vibe of the 2020 U.S. Open.

Players have the run of the place when they're not competing or training. No fighting their way through hoi polloi around the grounds. Leisure activities are set up on the plaza outside Ashe — billiards table, putting green, giant chess set and more.

A bit of the feel of an exclusive club, and the suites add to the luxury for those in position to merit one. They're also valuable with locker-room time and space limited in the name of social distancing.

"Having a place that I can just go and there's no one else and I can just sit there by myself is really nice," said Keys, who's seeded No. 7. "I spend most of my time on-site there. I eat all my meals in there. I do a lot of my warmup in there. I stretch in there. I pretty much live in my suite. ... I love that I can kind of peek out and see what's going on."

Better keep winning, though.

Players who lose a match also lose their suite after that round ends (although anyone also entered in doubles gets to hang onto the spot until they're also eliminated in that event).

Those areas are cleaned and disinfected, then awarded to the highest-ranked player — based on the entry list, not the current WTA and ATP lists — remaining in the departing player's event. So aside from all of the millions of dollars on offer, and the valuable ranking points, there's also some extra incentive for unseeded players.

Caroline Garcia, for example, effectively cleared out a space for herself by eliminating No. 1 seed Karolina Pliskova 6-1, 7-6 (2) Wednesday.

So the 50th-ranked Garcia was cleared to be movin' on up to the suite side Thursday, as were Victoria Azarenka, Iga Swiatek, Ugo Humbert and John Millman.

It's not exactly a win-and-you're-in setup, although Jessica Pegula, an American ranked 63rd, found the idea intriguing.

"That," she said, "would be a great rule."

Still, Pegula, whose parents own the NFL's Buffalo Bills and NHL's Buffalo Sabres, could earn herself a turn in the fancy digs if she beats No. 8 seed Petra Kvitova, a two-time Wimbledon champion, when they play Friday.

"It's not that big of a deal to me. But it is nice thought," Pegula said. "That would be a nice perk."

Follow Howard Fendrich on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/HowardFendrich>

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Still too soon to try altering human embryo DNA, panel says

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer

It's still too soon to try to make genetically edited babies because the science isn't advanced enough to ensure safety, says an international panel of experts who also mapped a pathway for any countries that

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want to consider it.

Thursday's report comes nearly two years after a Chinese scientist shocked the world by revealing he'd helped make the first gene-edited babies using a tool called CRISPR, which enables DNA changes or "edits" that can pass to future generations. He Jianqui did this to three babies when they were embryos to try to make them resistant to infection with the AIDS virus and described it in exclusive interviews with The Associated Press.

Mainstream scientists condemned his experiment as unethical, and He was sentenced to three years in prison for violating Chinese laws. The experts commission was formed in the aftermath by the U.S. National Academy of Medicine, U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the United Kingdom's Royal Society.

The group doesn't take a stance on whether editing embryos is ethical, just whether it's ready scientifically -- and deems that it's not. A separate panel formed by the World Health Organization is to report on ethics issues later this year.

The commission does say that if a country allows this, it should be limited to cases where people have no or very poor options for having a child without the disease. Initial attempts should be for serious diseases caused by a single gene, such as muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis, the blood disorder beta thalassemia and Tay-Sachs, a neurological disease, the report says.

Altering genes to try to enhance traits such as muscle mass or height is not endorsed.

It gives "much better clarity about what it would take to go forward and that now is not the time," said Jeffrey Kahn, bioethics chief at Johns Hopkins University and a member of the panel.

Whether editing is acceptable from an ethics and societal perspective "needs to be answered country by country," he said. "You're modifying a future human. It's a big step."

The panel recommended that:

-- Pregnancy with edited embryos should not be attempted unless it's clearly possible to make only the intended gene changes and not any unintended ones, which can't be done now.

-- Extensive public discussions should be held before any country decides to allow editing embryos, eggs or sperm. A regulatory system needs to be in place to ensure oversight and publication of results, and to prevent bias or discrimination.

-- Initial uses should be limited to cases meeting four criteria: a serious disease caused by a single gene; editing is limited to changing a problem DNA sequence to one that is known to be safe in the general population; no embryos without the problem gene are edited, and parents lack a good way to have a child without the disease because of fertility problems or other issues.

-- Edited embryos should be studied in the lab to ensure they're developing normally, and tests should be done to verify that all cells were altered as intended, before they're used to attempt pregnancy.

-- An international scientific advisory panel should be formed to give regular updates on science advances, assess if requirements have been met for embryo editing, review results from any cases and help any countries seeking advice.

"Our group was very concerned about the potential for rogue scientists" to proceed on their own, and included advice that there needs to be a way for whistleblowers to report unethical work, said Richard Lifton, president of the Rockefeller University in New York and co-leader of the panel.

Some scientists not connected with the work expressed surprise at the panel's inclusion of diseases such as sickle cell and cystic fibrosis, which have a wide range of severity and existing treatments.

If drugs or gene therapy after birth can treat a disease, "then it doesn't make sense to me to layer the additional medical and ethical risks" of editing embryos to try to prevent it, said David Liu, Harvard University professor and co-founder of several gene editing companies. He is paid by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, which also supports AP's Health & Science Department.

Jennifer Doudna, a gene editing pioneer from the University of California, Berkeley, said she also was struck by the inclusion of cystic fibrosis.

"It's a disease that can be managed in some cases," she said.

Gene editing of blood cells after birth seems a potential cure for sickle cell, and "there's already been success with one patient" using CRISPR, she noted.

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Kahn said not every case would meet all of the criteria the panel set, and if gene therapy turns out to work, "I think we have a different conversation" about editing's risks and benefits.

Regardless, the report shows that editing embryos, eggs or sperm should not be done yet because "the technology is too early stage," Doudna said.

"If there ever was confusion or if anyone in the past could say it wasn't clear ... it's now very clear" that it's taboo, she said. Gene editing is a powerful technology and should be pursued with international standards and full transparency, "not having it happening in the shadows."

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

Jobless claims fall to 881,000 but layoffs remain elevated

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of laid-off Americans applying for unemployment benefits fell to a still-elevated 881,000 last week, evidence that the viral pandemic keeps forcing many businesses to slash jobs.

The latest figures, released Thursday by the Labor Department, suggest that nearly six months after the eruption of the coronavirus, the economy is still struggling to sustain a recovery and rebuild a job market that was devastated by the recession. In the previous week, more than 1 million had sought jobless aid.

All told, the government said that 13.3 million people are continuing to receive traditional jobless benefits, up from 1.7 million a year ago.

The nearly 1 million people who keep applying for unemployment aid each week point to a sluggish pace of improvement. Before the pandemic struck the economy in March, the number of people seeking jobless aid had never topped 700,000 in a week, not even during the depths of the 2007-2009 Great Recession. The economy has recovered 9.3 million, or only 42%, of the jobs that were lost in March and April.

"The data show that layoffs remain widespread and the recovery in the labor market is occurring at a frustratingly slow pace," economists Nancy Vanden Houten and Gregory Daco of Oxford Economics wrote in a research note.

Thursday's figure, though historically high, marked the lowest number of jobless claims since the viral pandemic first paralyzed the economy in March. But beginning this week, the department tweaked the way it adjusts its calculations to account for seasonal changes, thereby making it difficult to compare last week's figure with previous weeks'. Unadjusted for seasonal variations, though, the numbers show that 833,000 Americans applied for benefits last week, up from 826,000 the week before.

In addition to the laid-off people who applied last week for state benefits, 759,000 others sought jobless aid under a new program that has made self-employed and gig workers eligible for the first time. That figure isn't adjusted for seasonal trends, so it's reported separately. But including that group, the Labor Department said 29.2 million people are receiving some form of unemployment benefits, though that figure might be inflated by double-counting by some states.

On Friday, when the government issues the jobs report for August, it's expected to report that employers added roughly 1.4 million jobs last month. That would still leave the economy about 11 million jobs short of the number it's lost to the pandemic.

Still, the auto and housing industries have made solid gains, bolstered by rock-bottom loan rates. American factories, too, have been on the upswing for three straight months. Yet many companies across the spectrum — from small businesses to hotels, restaurants, airlines and entertainment venues — remain deeply hurt by a loss of customers.

A wave of layoff announcements by major companies has heightened concerns that many job losses will end up being permanent. Ford is offering buyouts to try to shrink its U.S. white-collar workforce by 1,400. MGM Resorts is laying off 18,000, about a fourth of its U.S. staff. Coca-Cola, heavily reliant on entertainment venues, is offering buyouts to 4,000.

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United and American airlines, hurt by diminished air travel, said they will cut thousands of jobs unless the government provides additional aid to help cover payroll costs. Salesforce is cutting 1,000 jobs, Bed Bath & Beyond 2,800.

Many economists warn that mass layoffs will continue and that any recovery will likely falter as long as the virus rages and Congress doesn't extend another round of rescue aid for the unemployed and for state and local governments. The economy, in the meantime, will likely struggle.

The recovery remains fragile because of a still-elevated level of confirmed COVID-19 cases and the government's failure to enact another emergency rescue package. The recent expiration of a \$600-a-week federal jobless benefit has deepened the difficulties for America's unemployed. The Trump administration is now providing a stripped-down version of that benefit — \$300 a week — though not all the unemployed will qualify for it.

A summertime resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the South and West forced many businesses to close again in July, though the data firm Womply has concluded that closings have mostly stabilized over the past month.

Homebase, a provider of scheduling software for small businesses, reports that small business hiring has flat-lined since June. More than 20% of small businesses remain closed, Homebase says.

The now-expired \$600-a-week federal jobless benefit had helped sustain Chuck Caple after he was forced to close his hair salon in Richmond, Virginia, and a side business training hair stylists.

"With the \$600," Caple said, "it made a difference. Everything got back on track."

With that weekly check having lapsed, he is relying on income from his wife's job and collecting just \$158 a week in state unemployment benefits.

"That's like lunch money," he said. "That's money you give kids for a paper route."

Progressive challengers' year: 3 wins and some close calls

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Progressives trying to shove Congress to the left by competing in this year's Democratic primaries ousted three moderate incumbents, won other victories and established themselves as a force that's not going away.

But some challengers lost, and their overall wins were a modest number compared with the 535 House and Senate members. That means it's been a mixed bag of results for progressives in this year's races, leading party centrists to minimize those gains and assert that congressional Democrats' power is really wielded by moderates.

"Centrists won the big enchilada, the presidential race," said Jim Kessler, an executive vice president at the moderate Third Way, citing Joe Biden's triumph over Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders for the party's nomination. Kessler wasn't impressed with the three progressive challengers who defeated Democratic incumbents, either.

"If this is what they call a win, they can have this cycle every two years for the next 20," he said. "I'd be thrilled."

As the long parade of House and Senate Democratic state primaries finally nears its end, progressives suffered a high-profile setback Tuesday in western Massachusetts. Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse, 31, openly gay and backed by a host of progressive stars, lost an expensive bid to defeat Rep. Richard Neal, a 16-term House veteran who chairs the Ways and Means Committee.

But that same night in the same state, 74-year-old Sen. Edward Markey, buttressed by progressive support, held off a challenge from Rep. Joe Kennedy III. The defeated 39-year-old member of the storied Kennedy political clan boasted support from establishment stalwarts like House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., to no avail.

"It's not your age that counts — it's the age of your ideas," tweeted Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., 30, who backed Markey and whose unexpected 2018 primary win over a long-term incumbent established her as a progressive celebrity with clout. The two co-sponsored one of progressives' most

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prized proposals: Green New Deal legislation to curb emissions that help cause climate change.

Earlier this year, immigration attorney Jessica Cisneros narrowly lost a bid against moderate Democratic Rep. Henry Cuellar in south Texas, while Rep. Carolyn Maloney of New York, chairwoman of the House Oversight Committee, survived her own primary scare. Other high-profile progressive hopefuls lost Senate Democratic primaries in Colorado, Kentucky, Maine and Texas, and House contests in states including Georgia, New York and Ohio.

But 2020 bore other progressive wins, too.

Jamaal Bowman, a Black educator raised by a single mom, defeated House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot Engel of the Bronx and Westchester, New York. Outside Chicago, businesswoman Marie Newman defeated Illinois Rep. Dan Lipinski, one of Congress' few anti-abortion Democrats. And in a race between two Black candidates, community activist Cori Bush defeated 10-term Rep. William Lacy Clay in St. Louis after claiming Clay wasn't involved enough in the Black Lives Matter movement.

All three were endorsed by the grassroots group Justice Democrats, which boosted Ocasio-Cortez to her 2018 victory. Two other Justice Democrat candidates also made it to the November elections in districts in California and Nebraska.

Other liberal groups also claimed victories. Fifteen challengers backed by the Congressional Progressive Caucus, which boasts more than 100 members of Congress, advanced to the November general elections, though there was plenty of overlap between their endorsements and those of other organizations. That gives progressives shots at winning more seats in states including New Mexico, New York, Texas and Washington.

With the proportion of House incumbents losing primaries seldom topping 5% since World War II, progressives said this year's results have been strong.

"They're an effective and well-funded operation now," said Sean McElwee, who does polling and research for progressive Democrats.

In addition, all four members of the House's "Squad" of progressive women of color first elected in 2018 should all be back next year. Ocasio-Cortez and Reps. Rashida Tlaib of Michigan and Ilhan Omar of Minnesota won primaries, while Rep. Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts didn't even face a challenge. All represent strongly Democratic districts.

Liberals argue that polls show why they're winning: wide support for their proposals to battle climate change, expand health care access and boost the minimum wage to \$15 hourly.

"We really are where the general public is at," said Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Wis., co-chair of the progressive caucus.

Progressives say their successes mean momentum that's already pushing Democrats' agenda leftward, such as Biden's embrace of a public option for health care.

They also see growing clout for progressives within Congress, especially if Biden defeats President Donald Trump in November. That would be a welcome change for progressives like Ocasio-Cortez who arrived eager to flex their muscles, leading to clashes with party leaders like Pelosi who tried keeping Democrats unified.

Waleed Shahid, Justice Democrats' spokesman, said progressive electoral victories mean "you might see other incumbents and leaders try to figure out how to earn the support of progressives instead of just trashing them."

With this year's progressive wins mostly in Democratic-held districts, moderates argue that those victories will do little to alter Democrats' power in the House, where they currently hold 232 of the 435 seats.

It's even possible there will be more moderates in the chamber next year. If Democrats increase their majority, it would likely be by defeating Republicans in closely divided districts where moderates have the best chances of winning.

"These districts are pragmatic, not anti-business districts," said Rep. Ami Bera, D-Calif., a leader of the chamber's moderate New Democrat Coalition, which also claims around 100 members.

Former Rep. Joseph Crowley, whom Ocasio-Cortez defeated in their 2018 primary, agreed that it's moderates who will wield the power in the House.

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"The pathway to having won the majority in the House of Representatives was through moderates" who defeated Republicans, Crowley, who was part of the House Democratic leadership, said in an interview Wednesday. "Not Democrats replacing Democrats. So that's where the power of the majority lies."

Livestock ship carrying 42 crew sinks off Japan's coast

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese rescuers were searching Thursday for a livestock ship that a survivor said sank with 42 crew members aboard during rough weather off a southern Japanese island, the coast guard said.

A Filipino crew member was rescued late Wednesday after Japanese navy P-3C surveillance aircraft spotted him wearing a life vest and waving while bobbing in the water.

The man, who is currently hospitalized but in good health, told rescuers that the ship stalled when an engine stopped, then capsized after being hit by a powerful broadside wave and sank, coast guard regional spokesman Yuichiro Higashi said.

The survivor, a chief officer, said he quickly put on a life jacket and jumped into the sea, following an instruction in an emergency onboard announcement. He has not seen any other crew members since then, Higashi said.

The 11,947-ton Gulf Livestock 1 ship was carrying 5,800 cows west of Amami Oshima in the East China Sea when it sent a distress call early Wednesday. The weather was rough in the area due to Typhoon Maysak.

The typhoon has since passed the area and the weather during the search is fine, Higashi said.

The ship's other crew members include 38 others from the Philippines, two from New Zealand and two from Australia.

The ship left the port of Napier in northeastern New Zealand in mid-August and was on its way to Tangshan on China's eastern coast.

Its automatic identification system tracker gave its last position nearly two days ago, according to the ship-tracking website MarineTraffic.com. Based on that position, it was sailing in high winds of 58 knots (66 miles or 107 kilometers per hour), MarineTraffic.com said.

The ship's operator, Gulf Navigation Holdings PJSC, based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, declined to comment. The company, traded on the Dubai Financial Market, says it owns and operates chemical tankers, livestock vessels and other ships.

This story corrects the ship's departure date from New Zealand to mid-August instead of Tuesday and the port to Napier, not Nepier.

Associated Press writer Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Sept. 4, the 248th day of 2020. There are 118 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 4, 1781, Los Angeles was founded by Spanish settlers under the leadership of Governor Felipe de Neve.

On this date:

In 1888, George Eastman received a patent for his roll-film box camera, and registered his trademark: "Kodak."

In 1944, during World War II, British troops liberated Antwerp, Belgium.

In 1957, Arkansas Gov. Orval Faubus used Arkansas National Guardsmen to prevent nine Black students from entering all-white Central High School in Little Rock. Ford Motor Co. began selling its ill-fated Edsel.

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In 1962, The Beatles, with new drummer Ringo Starr, recorded "Love Me Do" at EMI Studios in London. (The more familiar version with substitute drummer Andy White and Starr on tambourine was recorded a week later.)

In 1969, the Food and Drug Administration issued a report calling birth control pills "safe," despite a slight risk of fatal blood-clotting disorders linked to the pills.

In 1971, an Alaska Airlines jet crashed near Juneau, killing all 111 people on board.

In 1974, the United States established diplomatic relations with East Germany.

In 1998, Internet services company Google filed for incorporation in California.

In 1999, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat signed a breakthrough land-for-security agreement during a ceremony in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

In 2006, "Crocodile Hunter" Steve Irwin, 44, died after a stingray's barb pierced his chest.

In 2014, comedian Joan Rivers died at a New York hospital at age 81, a week after going into cardiac arrest in a doctor's office during a routine medical procedure.

In 2018, Amazon became the second publicly-traded company to reach \$1 trillion in market value, following closely behind Apple. Comic actor Bill Daily, the sidekick to leading men on TV's "I Dream of Jeannie" and "The Bob Newhart Show," died in New Mexico at the age of 91.

Ten years ago: Protesters hurled shoes and eggs at Tony Blair in Dublin, Ireland, as he held the first public signing of his memoir as British prime minister amid high security. Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Paul Conrad, 86, died in Rancho Palos Verdes.

Five years ago: Hosting Saudi Arabia's new monarch for the first time, President Barack Obama said the U.S. shared King Salman's desire for an inclusive, functioning government in Yemen; their talks also addressed the Iran nuclear deal, a source of lingering tension in the U.S.-Saudi relationship. Hundreds of migrants, exhausted after breaking away from police and marching for hours toward Western Europe, boarded buses provided by Hungary's government after Austria and Germany said they would let them in.

One year ago: During an Oval Office meeting, President Donald Trump displayed a map of the National Hurricane Center forecast for nearly a week earlier that showed that Hurricane Dorian could track over Florida; the map included what appeared to be a hand-drawn half-circle that extended the cone of uncertainty over part of Alabama. (Trump had been publicly corrected by the National Weather Service after he had tweeted that Alabama would be among the states that would likely be hit "harder than anticipated.") A list of spending projects released by the Pentagon showed that officials would be cutting funding from projects including schools, target ranges and maintenance facilities to pay for the construction of 175 miles of fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border; a total of \$3.6 billion would be diverted to the barrier.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Mitzi Gaynor is 89. Soul singer Sonny Charles is 80. Actor Kenneth Kimmins is 79. Singer Merald "Bubba" Knight (Gladys Knight & The Pips) is 78. TV personality and veterinarian Dr. Jan (yahn) Pol (TV: "The Incredible Dr. Pol") is 78. World Golf Hall of Famer Raymond Floyd is 78. Actor Jennifer Salt is 76. World Golf Hall of Famer Tom Watson is 71. Rhythm-and-blues musician Ronald LaPreard is 70. Actor Judith Ivey is 69. Rock musician Martin Chambers (The Pretenders) is 69. Actor Lawrence Hilton-Jacobs is 67. Actor Khandi Alexander is 63. Actor-comedian Damon Wayans Sr. is 60. Rock musician Kim Thayil is 60. Actor Richard Speight Jr. is 51. Actor Noah Taylor is 51. Actor Ione (eye-OH'-nee) Skye is 50. Actor-singer James Monroe Iglehart is 46. Pop-rock singer-DJ-musician-producer Mark Ronson is 45. Rhythm-and-blues singer Richard Wingo (Jagged Edge) is 45. Rock musician Ian Grushka (New Found Glory) is 43. Actor Wes Bentley is 42. Actor Max Greenfield is 41. Country singer Granger Smith is 41. Singer Dan Miller (O Town) is 40. Singer Beyonce (bee-AHN'-say) Knowles is 39. Country singer-musician Tom Gossin (Gloriana) is 39. Actor-comedian Whitney Cummings is 38. Actor-comedian Kyle Mooney (TV: "Saturday Night Live") is 36. Folk-rock musician Neyla Pekarek (NEE'-lah peh-KAYR'-ehk) (formerly with The Lumineers) is 34. Pop-rock singer-songwriter James Bay is 30. Actor Carter Jenkins is 29. Actor Trevor Gagnon is 25.