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GDILIVE.COM



Football

7 p.m.

Friday, Sept, 11, 2020

Groton at Sisseton

**Sponsored by
Kevin & Kara Pharis**



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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Friday, Sept. 11, 2020 at Sisseton, SD USA

FOOTBALL



Sisseton Redmen

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Gr
1	Nate Tchida	RB/LB	5'7	140	9
2	Isaiah Harrison	RB/DL	6'0	190	12
3	Benecio Morales	WR/DB	5'11	150	12
5	Xavier Donnell	WR/DB	5'11	160	12
7	Ethan Despiegler	QB/DB	5'8	140	9
8	Parker Hanson	WR/DB	5'11	140	11
10	Tate Johnson	RB/DL	5'11	170	11
11	Landyn Steichan	RB/LB	6'1	180	9
12	Jay Chandhari	WR/DB	5'10	160	11
14	Carter Metz	QB/LB	6'0	175	10
15	Jairus Chanku	WR/DB	6'0	160	11
20	Quincy Harris	WR/DB	5'7	120	9
21	Dylan Goodhart	WR/DB	6'3	180	12
22	Ayden Just	WR/DB	5'8	150	11
23	Anthony Tchida	QB/DB	6'1	190	12
24	Andrew Kranhold	WR/DB	6'3	170	12
25	Blake Nielsen	RB/DB	5'8	160	12
27	Keandre White	WR/DB	5'7	120	9
30	Josh Long	RB/LB	5'8	150	10
32	Mason Herzog	WR/DB	5'6	120	9
34	Carter Schaunaman	RB/LB	5'8	210	12
35	Mikah Hamm	RB/LB	5'10	145	10
42	Kye Goodsell	WR/DB	5'10	150	12
50	Ty Langager	OL/DL	6'6	220	11
52	Ethan Skarnagel	OL/DL	5'10	260	10
54	Hunter Biel	OL/DL	5'8	150	9
55	Levi Greseth	OL/DL	6'1	220	12
56	Devan Appel	OL/DL	6'1	240	12
58	Mitchell Moen	OL/DL	6'0	180	11
64	Vincent Kriz	OL/DL	5'10	160	9
69	Dirk Neilan	OL/DL	5'10	240	12
70	Dean Shultz lii	OL/DL	6'0	175	10
72	Yamni Johnson	OL/DL	5'11	250	10

Head Coach: Lance Haug
 Asst. Coaches: Tyler Appel, Brayden Tasa, Dustin Lotzer
 Managers: Landyn Steichan
 Statisticians: Ryan Toelle
 Superintendent: Tammy Meyer
 Principal: Jim Frederick
 Ath. Director: Jack Appel
 Ath. Trainer: Dan Ziemer
 Strength/Cond.: Tyler Appel
 School Colors: Red/Black/White
 School Song: Minnesota Rouser

Groton Area Tigers

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Gr
1	Lane Tietz	QB/DB	5'9	150	9
2	Douglas Heminger	WR/DB	5'8	120	12
4	Favian Sanchez	RB/DB	5'9	165	11
5	Pierce Kettering	RB/LB	5'10	170	11
8	Jaimen Farrell	FB/TE/LB	6'1	205	12
11	Cole Simon	WR/DB	5'10	160	10
12	Ethan Gengerke	WR/DE	6'2	180	10
15	Jacob Lewandowski	QB/WR/DB	5'9	165	10
16	Colby Dunker	RB/LB	6'0	170	9
17	Andrew Marzahn	RB/DB	6'0	170	10
18	Marcos Garcia	FB/LB	6'0	175	11
20	Kaden Kurtz	QB/LB	6'0	180	11
21	Chandler Larson	TE/DE	6'1	185	12
24	Jackson Cogley	WR/DB	6'0	175	11
25	Jordan Bjerke	WR/LB	6'0	180	11
48	River Pardick	OL/DL	5'9	200	11
50	Holden Sippel	OL/DL	5'10	185	9
51	Seth Johnson	OL/LB	5'10	180	11
52	Evin Nehls	OL/DE	6'0	190	11
53	Caleb Hanten	OL/DL	6'0	180	10
54	Paxton Bonn	OL/DE	6'2	190	12
55	Adrian Knutson	OL/DL	5'10	245	12
56	Cole Bisbee	OL/LB	5'10	175	10
57	Caleb Furney	OL/DL	5'10	210	12
58	Logan Ringgenberg	OL/DL	6'0	240	9
59	Alex Morris	OL/DL	6'0	220	12
60	Tanner Mcgannon	OL/DL	5'9	185	10
64	Kale Pharis	OL/DL	6'0	220	12
66	Tate Larson	TE/DE	6'3	185	10
68	Kaleb Antonsen	OL/DL	5'10	180	10

Head Coach: Shaun Wanner
 Asst. Coaches: Travis Kurth, Seth Erickson, Dalton Locke, Lance Hawkins, Ryan Scepaniak
 Managers: Trey Gengerke, Lee Iverson, Brooke Gengerke, Alexa Herr
 Statisticians: Tom Woods, Ryland Strom
 Cheerleaders: Chloe Daly, Tiara Dehoet, Gabby Merkel, Tanae Lipp, Tessa Erdmann, Alexis Hanten, Maddie Bjerke, Trinity Smith, Cadence Feist
 Cheer Coach: Aubray Harry
 Superintendent: Joe Schwan
 Principal: Kiersten Sombke
 Ath. Director: Brian Dolan
 School Colors: Black/Gold
 School Song: Fight On

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GDILIVE.COM



Girls Soccer

1 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 12, 2020
SF Christian at Groton

Sponsored by

Neil and Melissa Gilbert ~ Tammy and Matt Locke
Brad and Janel Penning ~ Tom and Rachael Crank
Debbie and Travis Kurth



High School Girls Soccer

Saturday, Sept. 12, 2020
Groton Soccer Complex

Groton Area Tigers

Lt.	Dk.	Name	Grade
0	0	Jaedyn Penning	7
1	1	Riley Leicht	11
2	2	Elizabeth Flihs	8
3	3	Laila Roberts	8
4	4	Sydney Leicht	9
5	5	Gretchen Dinger	8
6	6	Ani Davidson	11
8	8	Emma Schinkel	9
9	9	Kayla Lehr	8
10	10	Trista Keith	11
11	11	Allyssa Locke	11
12	12	Brooklyn Hansen	8
16	16	Kennedy Hansen	8
18	18	Faith Traphagen	8
19	19	Mia Crank	7
20	20	Cali Tollifson	7
22	22	Madeline Flihs	11
23	23	Brooklyn Gilbert	12
25	25	Regan Leicht	12
26	26	Kenzie McInerney	12
28	28	Carly Gilbert	7
29	29	Jerica Locke	7

Head Coach: Chris Kucker
Asst. Coach: Carleen Johnson
Superintendent: Joe Schwan
Principal: Kiersten Sombke
Ath. Director: Brian Dolan
School Colors: Black/Gold
School Song: Fight On

Sioux Falls Christian Chargers

Dk.	Name	Pos.	Grade
1	Katie Vanderleest	ST	8
2	Olivia Netjes	DEF	12
3	Moriah Harrison	DEF	10
4	Emma McDonald	DEF	11
5	Ashlyn Zomermaand	MID	11
6	Hailey Scholten	ST	11
7	Adalie Pritchett	DEF/MID	12
8	Reyna Moss	MID	10
9	Olivia Chear	MID	11
10	Ava Schock	MID	9
11	Kate Schnabel	DEF/MID	12
18	Alex Mccauley	MID	10
19	Megan Aukes	MID/ST	8
20	Nataya Lawrence	ST/MID	11
21	Rachel Van Nieuwenhuyzen	ST/MID	11
22	Kate Zomermaand	ST	8
23	Joscelin Jasper	MID	11
24	Sidney Schock	MID	11
00	Sierra Scholten	GK	9
14	Jamie Young	GK	11

Head Coach: Jordan Salamido
Asst. Coach: Amber Vander Veen
Managers: Katy Gulbranson, Emma Witt,
Arianna Sax
Superintendent: Jay Woudstra
Principal: Jeremy Van Nieuwenhuyzen
Ath. Director: Jim Groen
Ath. Trainer: Josh Klaassen
School Colors: Royal Blue/Silver/White
School Song: Illinois Loyalty

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Sisseton Netters edge past Groton Area

Sisseton edged out Groton Area in volleyball action Thursday in Sisseton. The varsity game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Doug and Wanda Hamilton, Patios Plus, Sign Gypsies and Hefty Seed.

The first game was tied nine times and there were five lead changes before the Redmen scored the last four points to win the first game, 25-21. The second game was tied six times and there were three lead changes before Sisseton scored the last three points to win, 25-21. The third game was tied four times and there were two lead changes as Sisseton pulled away at the end to win, 25-20.

Stella Meier had five kills and two blocks while Grace Wambach had five kills, Aspen Johnson and Mad-die Bjerke each had three kills, Allyssa Locke had two kills and two ace serves, Kenzie McInerney had two blocks and a kill, Madeline Flihs had two kills and an ace serve, and Alyssa Thaler had an ace serve. Alexis Metz led the Redmen with eight kills and an ace serve, Avery Despiegler had five kills, two blocks and an ace serve and Kierra Silk had five kills.

Sisseton won the junior varsity match, 2-1. That match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Dan and Marjae Schinkel. Groton Area scored the last 10 points of the first game to win, 25-12. The second game was tied 12 times and there were five lead changes as Sisseton rallied to win, 25-23. The Redmen jumped out to a 5-0 lead in the third set and would go on to win, 15-6. Lydia Meier led the Tigers with seven kills and four ace serves while Sydney Leicht had five kills and two ace serves.



GRIEF SHARE

Tuesdays, 6 p.m., beginning Sept. 15, 2020

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church

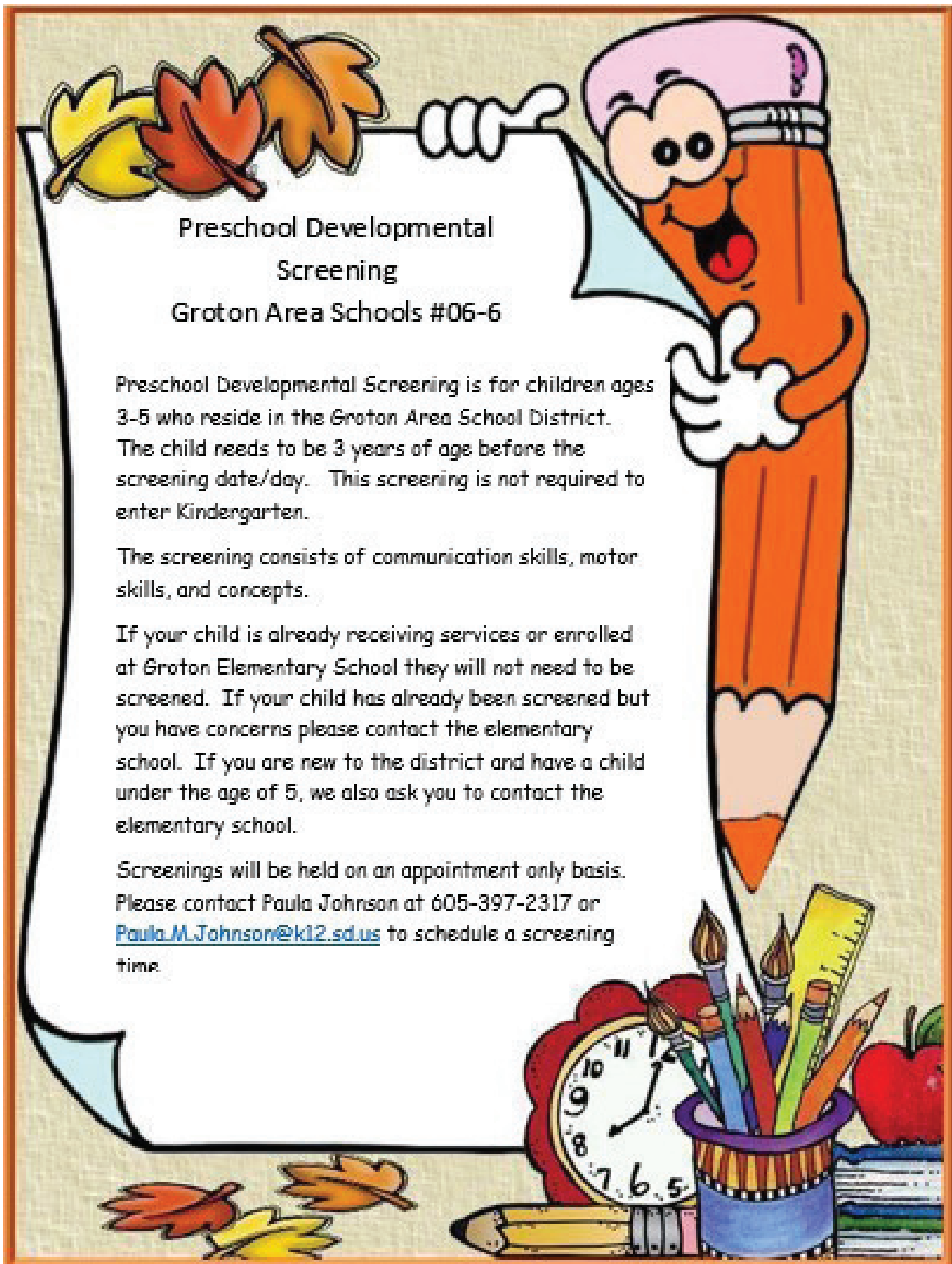
Gathering Space

(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 for the workbook, but we will scholarship anyone who may need help. We also need a couple of volunteers to be part of the leadership team. 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.



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.

#200 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

This is Update #200. I never intended to get here. Never occurred to me that we would. And yet here we are. Here's what I had to say on the occasion of my 100th post: "No kidding! I did not miscount. We really are at #100. That sort of knocks me over. Who'd have thought back in February I'd still be at this in June? Not me. Sadly, at this point, it looks very much like there will be a #200 one day. This does not thrill me: Much as I enjoy our little chats, I really want this thing to be over and people to stop dying from it. But for now, we bravely soldier on."

As I have frequently pointed out, I am neither an epidemiologist nor an infectious disease expert, just a retired one-time microbiologist who likes to explain things. What I write here is not my expert scientific opinion because I am not an expert in pandemics or coronaviruses or medicine, so I do not have an expert scientific opinion on these things. What you see here is simply my presentation of what those folks who do have such expertise are telling us, explained, I hope, in a way that is accessible to people who are not scientists. When someone asks me a question, if it's a general one about how viruses work or what a vaccine is, I can frequently answer that from my own knowledge; but most of the time when someone asks something about this particular virus or the course of this pandemic or whether a certain drug seems to have promise, you may be assured I am finding out what those experts are saying and reporting that back to you, not just relying on my best guess.

Now at this point, I'm not going to be foolish and predict there will not be a #300; in fact, I'm kind of thinking there will be. Maybe a #400 too. Because I don't think this virus is going to magically go away, even once we have a vaccine. (Why? Because the first vaccines are likely to be only partially effective and there's a good chance a lot of folks will refuse the vaccines. Some of those same folks will also refuse to exercise even the most basic precautions. Additionally, a good vaccination program will take time to ramp up and execute, even if we could convince everyone to sign on.) I think we're going to be living in this altered state of reality for some months yet; with luck and good decisions, fewer, but with bad luck or poor decisions, more. I expect somewhere between now and #300, I'm going to get tired and slow down: Some days I am already tired and slow here at a piddly 200. So we'll see how that plays out.

In the meanwhile, thanks for coming along on this ride with me. I hope you find value in the work I'm doing and that you find understanding this thing a little bit better as it unfolds helps you to cope with the uncertainty and changes we are all experiencing. Hang in there.

Now, to business:

The reporting period for today's data is short; if you will recall, last night I pulled the reports down a few hours later than usual, so to get back on track tonight, I'm covering a few less than 24 hours for today. I guess this is a good week to do that since the day-to-day isn't settled in yet from the long weekend. There were 35,300 new cases reported today, a 0.6% increase to 6,414,000. We have now had 191,572 deaths in the US; today 864, a 0.5% increase, were reported today.

I read a round-up of what we know so far about Covid-19 infections in animals. It makes sense animals can become infected; after all, this is an animal virus—or it used to be. Most coronaviruses are; this one just took a left turn into humans back in November or so. The animals we are now concerned with are the ones we live and work with. Short version: This is not a very large concern. It is possible for an animal to get this virus from you and for you to get it from an animal, but neither one appears to be happening very much at all.

As for your pet getting the virus from you, there have been a handful of cases where that has happened, but considering the world's had some 28 million cases, it's hard to find a word for how rare this is: those big zoo cats who were sick in New York that were infected by a zookeeper, a few dogs and cats (ferrets, hamsters, etc.) presumably infected by their owners, and some minks on a mink farm in the Netherlands infected by a farm worker; but the number of confirmed reports is really, really small. Animals don't seem to transmit it among themselves except where they are living in close proximity as they do in a zoo or on a farm. Most of the time, these infected animals don't get sick; when they do, it's usually not serious.

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Overall, this is just not something to keep you awake at night. It is recommended you have someone else care for your pet if you're sick, stay in a different room from your pet, and avoid cuddling and snuggling until you're no longer shedding virus. If you're the only one available to care for your pet, then it's probably wise to wear a mask around the animal and minimize your contact as much as the pet will permit. (I know, I know, but do what you can.) That said, transmission is probably highly unlikely anyhow.

So how about your pet infecting you? Well, that would require the animal becoming infected in the first place. It helps a lot that your pet doesn't go off to work every day or hang out in the bars at night. The chance your pet gets the virus is really, really tiny: Where would he get it? Your daily walks with the dog are not going to be a source of infection for him, and you're probably not having big parties where the dog mingles with guests and their dogs. Also, there are zero cases on record where that's happened. It may be theoretically possible, but we're not seeing it.

All in all, this is not a big deal at all. And the best way to keep yourself and your pets safe is to keep yourself and your pets safe. You already know how to do that.

We know Covid-19 patients exhibit neurologic or cognitive symptoms with some frequency, and there is growing evidence that, at least in some, it invades the brain tissue. Something like 40 to 60% of hospitalized patients have neurologic and/or psychiatric symptoms, but no one thinks all of those are due to infection in the brain. Some of them, for example, are explained by the virus's tendency to cause abnormal blood clotting, which can lead to strokes; but others do appear to be due to the virus actually getting into the brain. This is probably rare, but there may be genetic susceptibility in some folks, or perhaps some people just have a high viral load which facilitates entry into the brain.

Thing is, brains are a particular problem for pathogens. The brain is well protected from invasion by microorganisms; there is something called the blood-brain barrier composed of highly-selective endothelial cells that block the passage of many soluble substances, as well as most pathogens, into the brain from the bloodstream. For this coronavirus, there is the additional obstacle presented by a lack of ACE2 (angiotensin-converting enzyme-2) in brain tissue. You may recall that ACE2 receptors are the virus's route of entry to host cells where it can replicate and cause trouble. While the brain has few of these receptors, some nervous system cells do have them. The olfactory bulbs at the base of the brain which receive sensory information from your smell receptors and regulate your sense of smell have some ACE2 receptors and also may provide a route of entry to the brain; there's a thought that those ACE2 receptors are the source of our problems. We're still working out the details of that, so this whole thing is still pretty speculative; but there does appear to be something there.

A research team at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in Great Britain documented brain infection in tissue from a person who died of Covid-19, in a mouse model, and in organoids, clusters of brain cells in tissue culture. The virus doesn't destroy the infected cells, but cuts off oxygen to adjacent cells, which causes them to die. It decreases the number of connections between cells in the brain, damage which may or may not be reversible. This sort of infection, when it occurs, may be more lethal than lung infection. We'll see what further research shows.

We've talked and talked about the fact that older people are at risk, about the fact that our immune systems don't work so well as we age. Let's talk about why because this informs how we treat and how we approach vaccination for older people.

Your first line of defense against a virus is what's called your innate immune system. We've had this part of the talk before, but to review, this is the set of responses which are general, rather than specific, responding to all manner of threats in pretty much the same way—sending out alerts to recruit cells in a coordinated response and initiating inflammation to start slowing the virus down. This is the same system that does general clean-up around the body, clearing away damaged cells, defective products, and debris; this goes on even in the absence of an infection, just part of the service. As we age, there's a lot more clean-up to do, more damaged cells, more defective proteins, more junk lying around. What happens is that, faced with a never-ending workload, the innate immune system begins to operate in a fairly constant state of alert, maintaining low-grade inflammation most of the time. Tissue cells tend to release inflam-

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matory substances too as we age, which ramps up the level of inflammation. What this means is that you have a lot of immune proteins, like cytokines, running around most of the time. This phenomenon appears to be linked to frailty; the higher levels of this sort of all-systems-alert seem to occur most often in people who are in a fragile state of health. And all of this baseline inflammation makes it harder for the messages this innate system sends out when there is a genuine threat to reach their intended targets. There is also a heightened risk the system may overreact to a threat, leading to those enormously damaging cytokine storms we've discussed. This can also cause a poorer response to vaccines; there is some evidence such people respond better to vaccines now in use (no experience yet with these new Covid-19 ones) if we treat them with anti-inflammatory drugs for a few days before the vaccine is administered.

Your next line of defense kicks in a few days after the innate response; we've talked about this one too, your adaptive response. This is the specific response, that is, targeted to a specific pathogen, the one that involves the production of antibodies and a cell-mediated response. As we age, this set of responses slows down too, taking longer to get things underway. And so, by the time it kicks into gear, it's facing sort of an inflammatory mess due to those prior activities of the innate system. Amber Mueller, a postdoctoral researcher at Harvard Medical School described it in terms of firefighters arriving at a house fire: "You have a whole neighborhood of pedestrians or bystanders that are just hanging around, screaming their heads off, causing chaos to the point that it makes it harder for the firefighters to find the fire—to find the infection—and then put it out effectively."

All that delay means the virus is pretty well established before you get around to dealing with it; and this is the situation in which you're going to get seriously ill. Another strike against you is that T cells aren't as available or as efficient in older individuals. As you run into infections throughout life, some of the T-cell supply is assigned to each one; those are the cells that copy themselves during an infection, play a role in almost every major aspect of the adaptive response, and then hang around afterward in case you encounter that pathogen again. So the older you get, the fewer fresh, unassigned T cells you have left. The ones you do have aren't as successful at copying themselves, and they may not be as useful in future infections as they used to be.

With this understanding, scientists are testing drugs that help with these aging-related problems. For a while, we were thinking drugs that reduce cytokines, ones used to treat other inflammatory conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, might be useful, but those haven't so far been working out so well. On the other hand, dexamethasone, a steroid which is a powerful anti-inflammatory, has been quite successful in reducing mortality. Thing is, studies must be designed to account for the different immune responses we see in older people; they're not necessarily going to look like studies done in the young. And vaccines for the elderly may need, as we've discovered with influenza vaccine, higher doses of antigen or adjuvants to boost the response. Work continues.

We baseball fans were pleased, if nervous on behalf of the players, to see the Major League Baseball season get underway, shortened and late, but still baseball. It's weird to watch games played in empty stadiums, and knowing this, the powers-that-be in the organizations and broadcasting have tried to compensate for that. They pipe in crowd noise from past seasons, and if you look at a game on TV, but don't look too closely, there are fans in the stands. Some broadcasts superimpose video of fans from past games over the empty seats; others just show a less-crowded venue with only a few fans. And on closer examination, you will discover those few are not live fans—rules are rules, after all; they're cardboard cut-outs of people. The team we watch has filled the seats behind home plate with photos of past great players. And it turns out for many teams you can send a photo of yourself to the organization and, for a fee which is in many organizations donated to charity, they'll put that photo on a giant cardboard cut-out and place it in the seats to "watch" the game.

I became aware of a sort of sweet trend when a friend posted to social media about sending Grandpa to watch his favorite team; the family had sent a WWI-era military photo of their deceased grandfather to be placed in the seats, giving him one more season to enjoy. This is apparently a thing across the country. A Giants-loving family in the Bay Area sent a photo of a lost-too-young brother along with one of their dad, and now father and son sit together at every home game in a place Dad has been unable to

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bring himself to visit ever since his son died. A family in Washington placed their baseball-crazy daughter, tragically lost to a rare infection shortly after completing kindergarten. There are many pet cats and not a few dogs at the games. A student killed in the tragic school shooting in Parkland, Florida, is attending games in 14 ballparks this summer. There's an image of a semipro player from the '20s (that's the 1920s) who died 40 years ago seated next to his 92-year-old daughter. Her son set that one up, sending her a card on her birthday that read, "You always wanted to take your father to a Mariner's game but were unable to. . . . Until now." Quiet or splashy, there's some serious lemonade-making going on there. And the world is a bit kinder for it.

Be well. I'll be back tomorrow.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Sept. 9	Sept. 10	Sept. 11
Minnesota	81,608	81,868	82,249
Nebraska	36,477	36,917	37,373
Montana	8,381	8,468	8,663
Colorado	59,674	59,920	60,185
Wyoming	3,483	3520	3559
North Dakota	13,872	14,110	14,443
South Dakota	15,403	15,571	15,834
United States	6,328,099	6,359,313	6,397,547
US Deaths	189,699	190,784	191,802

Minnesota	+383	+260	+381
Nebraska	+502	+440	+456
Montana	+65	+87	+195
Colorado	+187	+246	+265
Wyoming	+58	+37	+39
North Dakota	+71	+238	+337
South Dakota	+105	+169	+263
United States	+28,930	+31,214	+38,234
US Deaths	+533	+1,085	+1,018

	Sept. 2	Sept. 3	Sept. 4	Sept. 5	Sept. 6	Sept. 7	Sept. 8
Minnesota	76,355	77,085	78,123	78,966	79,880	80,587	81,225
Nebraska	34,574	34,995	35,469	35,661	35,805	35,886	35,975
Montana	7,509	7,691	7,871	8,018	8,164	8,264	8,316
Colorado	57,775	58,019	58,287	58,655	58,989	59,274	59,487
Wyoming	3,282	3,311	3,334		3,386	3,425	No Report
North Dakota	12,000	12,267	12,629	12,974	13,334	13,631	13,801
South Dakota	13,749	14,003	14,337	14,596	14,889	15,109	15,300
United States	6,073,121	6,115,098	6,151,101	6,210,699	6,246,162	6,277,902	6,299,169
US Deaths	184,644	185,752	186,606	187,874	188,540	188,942	189,166

Minnesota	+491	+730	+1,038	+843	+914	+707	+638
Nebraska	+287	+421	+474	+192	+144	+81	+89
Montana	+88	+182	+180	+147	+146	+100	+52
Colorado	+351	+244	+268	+368	+334	+285	+213
Wyoming	+18	+29	+23		+52	+39	
North Dakota	+184	+267	+362	+345	+360	+297	+170
South Dakota	+240	+254	+334	+259	+293	+220	+191
United States	+41,835	+41,977	+36,003	+59,598	+35,463	+31,740	+21,267
US Deaths	+1,042	+1,108	+854	+1,268	+666	+402	+224

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September 10th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

After several days of being death-free, South Dakota had four today and North Dakota had three deaths. In South Dakota, they were two males and two females. Three in the 80+ age group and one in the 70s. One was from Clay County, one from Minnehaha County and Bennett County and Corson County each had their first death. The two biggest counties had more recoveries than positive cases. Codington County recorded 74 positive cases, the largest number in the state. Brown County had 23 positive and 13 recoveries. Others in double digits are Brookings with 18, Lawrence with 10, Lincoln with 15, Meade with 16, Minnehaha 36 and Pennington 35.

Others locally have Day with two positive cases (8 active), Edmunds with five positive cases (20 active), Marshall with one positive and one recovery (4 active), McPherson with no change (5 active) and Spink with one positive (27 active). Clay County, which had a big spike recently, now is seeing a big spike in recoveries with four positive and 21 recoveries, leaving 97 active cases. Walworth County has four new cases with 23 active cases now.

Positivity rates are 11.7 percent in South Dakota, 27.8 percent in Brown County and 19.4 percent in North Dakota.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +23 (871) Positivity Rate: 27.8%
Recovered: +13 (694)
Active Cases: +10 (174)
Total Tests: 83 (8,771)
Ever Hospitalized: +0 (30)
Deaths: 0 (3)
Percent Recovered: 79.7% (-0.6)

South Dakota:

Positive: +263 (15,834 total) Positivity Rates: 11.7%
Total Tests: 2,256 (213,660 total)
Hospitalized: +11 (1,120 total). 83 currently hospitalized (up 7 from yesterday)
Deaths: +4 (177 total)
Recovered: +237 (13,201 total)
Active Cases: +22 (2,456)
Percent Recovered: 83.4% +0.0
Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 3% Covid, 50% Non-Covid, 46% Available
ICU Bed Capacity: 3% Covid, 64% Non-Covid, 32% Available
Ventilator Capacity: 5% Covid, 13% Non-Covid, 82% Available
Fully recovered from positive cases (Lost Harding, Gained Mellette): Aurora 42-42, Jackson 12-11-1, Mel-

lette 25-25, Miner 17-17, 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): +2 positive, +2 recovered (25 active cases)
Bennett (1): +2 positive, +3 recovered (13 active cases)
Bon Homme (1): +1 positive (14 active cases)

Brookings (1): +18 positive, +11 recovered (147 active cases)
Brown (3): +23 positive, +13 recovered (174 active cases)
Brule: +1 positive (11 active cases)
Buffalo (3): +1 positive (3 active cases)
Butte (1): +1 positive, +3 recovered (20 active cases)
Campbell: Fully Recovered
Charles Mix: +1 positive (12 active cases)
Clark: 4 active cases
Clay (4) +4 positive, +21 recovered (97 active cases)

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	8014	89
Male	7820	88

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cases

Codington (2): +74 positive, +20 recovered (232 active cases)

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

Custer (1): +6 positive, +7 recovered (50 active case)

Davison (2): +1 positive, +4 recovered (28 active cases)

Day: +2 positive (8 active cases)

Deuel: +2 positive, +3 recovered (10 active cases)

Dewey: +6 positive (40 active cases)

Douglas: +3 positive, +2 recovered (10 active cases)

Edmunds: +5 positive (20 active cases)

Fall River (1): +1 positive, +9 recovered (28 active cases)

Faulk (1): +1 positive (13 active cases)

Grant: +3 positive, +2 recovered (17 active cases)

Gregory (1): +2 positive, +1 recovered (24 active cases)

Haakon: 2 active cases

Hamlin: +1 recovered (16 active cases)

Hand: 3 active cases

Hanson: -1 positive, +1 recovered (1 active case)

Harding: 1 active case

Hughes (4): +2 positive, +1 recovered (19 active cases)

Hutchinson (1): +1 positive, +1 recovered (15 active cases)

Hyde: +1 positive (5 active cases)

Jackson (1): Fully Recovered

Jerauld (1): +1 positive, +1 recovered (4 active cases)

Jones: 3 active cases

Kingsbury: 5 active cases

Lake (6): +5 positive, +1 recovered (21 active cases)

Lawrence (4): +10 positive, +3 recovered (84 active cases)

Lincoln (2): +15 positive, +12 recovered (139 active cases)

Lyman (3): 3 active cases

Marshall: +1 positive, +1 recovered (4 active cases)

McCook (1): +5 positive (16 active cases)

McPherson: 5 active case

Meade (1): +16 positive, +8 recovered (86 active cases)

Mellette: Fully Recovered

Miner: Fully Recovered

Minnehaha (72): +36 positive, +45 recovered (504 active cases)

Moody: +1 positive, +1 recovered (17 active cases)

Oglala Lakota (2): +3 positive, +1 recovered (27 active cases)

Pennington (33): +35 positive, +43 recovered (327 active cases)

Perkins: +1 recovered (9 active cases)

Potter: +1 positive (11 active cases)

Roberts (1): +2 positive, +2 recovered (14 active cases)

Sanborn: 3 active cases

Spink: +1 positive (27 active cases)

Stanley: 1 active case

Sully: Fully Recovered

Todd (5): 6 active cases

Tripp: +1 positive (6 active cases)

Turner: +2 positive, +2 recovered (16 active cases)

Union (5): +2 positive, +5 recovered (33 active cases)

Walworth: +4 positive, +1 recovered (23 active cases)

Yankton (3): +1 positive, +4 recovered (42 active cases)

Ziebach: +3 positive (15 active cases)

North Dakota Dept. of Health Report
COVID-19 Daily Report, September 10:

- 6,358 tests (1,739)
- 14,443 positives (+337) (19.3%)
- 11,930 recovered (+197)
- 160 deaths (+3)
- 2,353 active cases (+133)

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	516	0
10-19 years	1675	0
20-29 years	4054	2
30-39 years	2796	7
40-49 years	2162	7
50-59 years	2133	19
60-69 years	1343	30
70-79 years	640	28
80+ years	515	84

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread
Aurora	42	42	455	0	None
Beadle	656	622	2119	9	Moderate
Bennett	37	23	584	1	Substantial
Bon Homme	60	45	1028	1	Moderate
Brookings	556	408	3803	1	Substantial
Brown	871	694	5973	3	Substantial
Brule	77	66	914	0	Substantial
Buffalo	113	107	688	3	Minimal
Butte	62	41	894	1	Substantial
Campbell	4	4	122	0	None
Charles Mix	128	116	1835	0	Minimal
Clark	23	19	464	0	Minimal
Clay	483	382	1986	4	Substantial
Codington	516	330	3894	2	Substantial
Corson	71	62	656	1	Substantial
Custer	145	94	853	1	Substantial
Davison	165	135	2888	2	Substantial
Day	45	37	809	0	Moderate
Deuel	61	51	549	0	Substantial
Dewey	101	61	2616	0	Substantial
Douglas	37	27	487	0	Moderate
Edmunds	49	29	500	0	Moderate
Fall River	71	42	1186	1	Substantial
Faulk	45	31	251	1	Substantial
Grant	55	38	909	0	Substantial
Gregory	46	21	537	1	Substantial
Haakon	8	6	312	0	Minimal
Hamlin	72	56	857	0	Substantial
Hand	16	13	374	0	None
Hanson	24	23	273	0	Minimal
Harding	3	2	59	0	None
Hughes	152	131	2287	4	Moderate
Hutchinson	58	42	1067	1	Substantial

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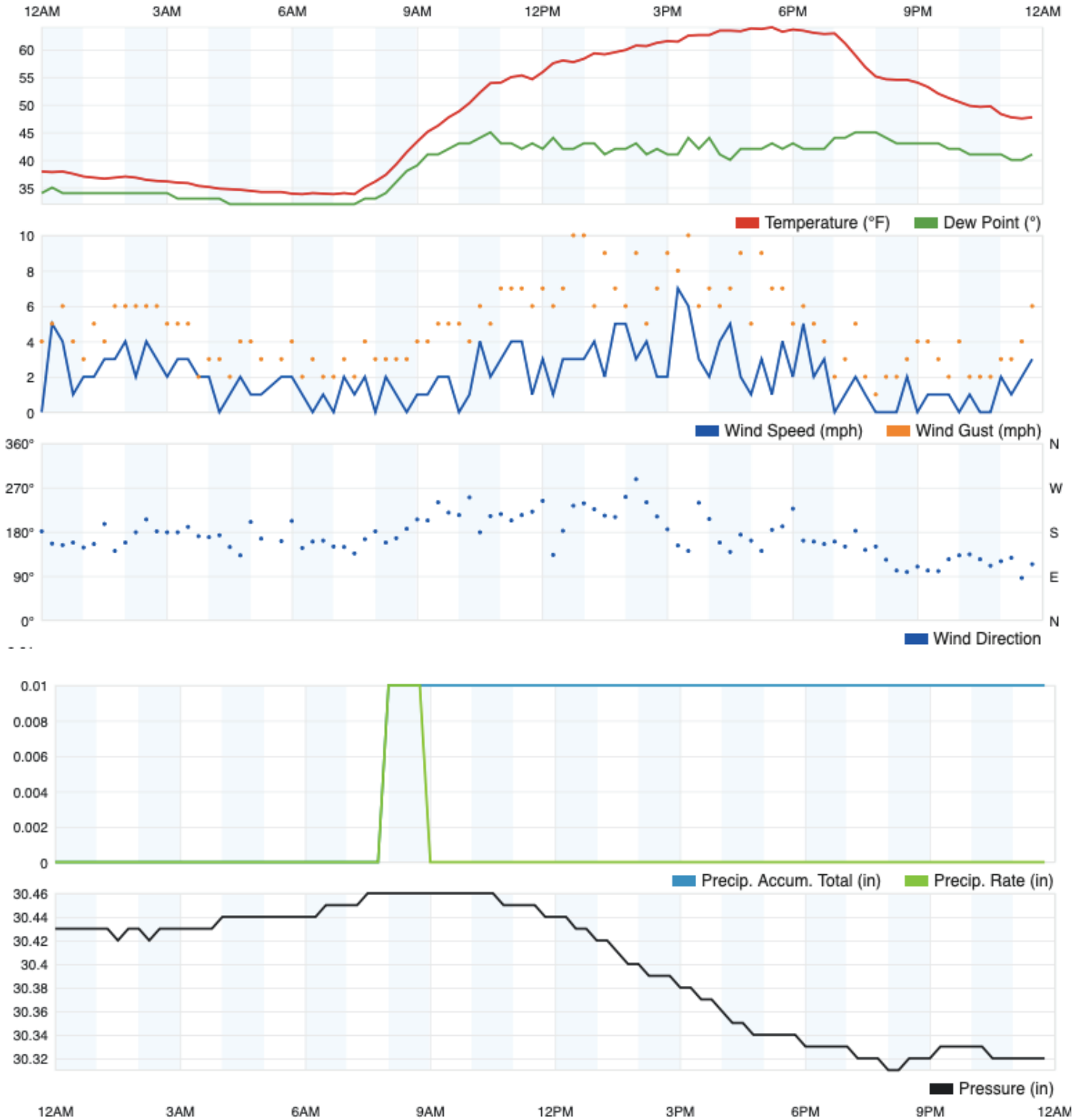
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Hyde	8	5	176	0	Minimal
Jackson	12	11	515	1	None
Jerauld	47	42	300	1	Moderate
Jones	6	3	80	0	Minimal
Kingsbury	27	22	699	0	Minimal
Lake	140	113	1132	6	Moderate
Lawrence	277	199	2387	4	Substantial
Lincoln	1030	889	8813	2	Substantial
Lyman	104	98	1126	3	None
Marshall	22	18	566	0	None
McCook	66	49	778	1	Moderate
McPherson	16	11	267	0	Minimal
Meade	364	277	2372	1	Substantial
Mellette	25	25	420	0	Minimal
Miner	17	17	298	0	Minimal
Minnehaha	5689	5113	33947	72	Substantial
Moody	58	40	765	0	Substantial
Oglala Lakota	198	169	3117	2	Substantial
Pennington	1701	1341	13075	33	Substantial
Perkins	24	17	247	0	Moderate
Potter	26	15	381	0	Moderate
Roberts	109	94	2287	1	Moderate
Sanborn	15	14	276	0	Minimal
Spink	73	46	1377	0	Substantial
Stanley	23	22	333	0	Minimal
Sully	8	8	113	0	None
Todd	87	76	2570	5	Moderate
Tripp	30	24	706	0	Moderate
Turner	99	83	1109	0	Substantial
Union	298	260	2351	5	Substantial
Walworth	62	39	954	0	Substantial
Yankton	263	218	3845	3	Substantial
Ziebach	58	43	488	0	Moderate
Unassigned	0	0	13317	0	

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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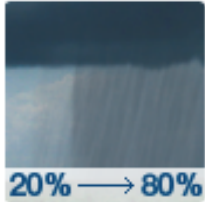
Today

Tonight

Saturday

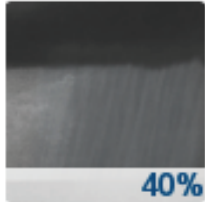
Saturday
Night

Sunday



Slight Chance
Showers then
Showers

High: 60 °F



Chance
Showers

Low: 49 °F



Slight Chance
Showers

High: 70 °F



Clear

Low: 47 °F



Sunny

High: 76 °F

Rain Showers Today

- *Rain showers are expected for most of the area today
- *A rumble or two of thunder is not out of the question
- *Areas with the most rainfall will be the eastern quarter of South Dakota and west central Minnesota where a quarter to half inch of rain is possible.

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Updated: 9/11/2020 3:54 AM Central

Rain showers are expected for most of the area today. While frequent lightning is not expected, a rumble or two of thunder is possible. Some of these showers may linger through Saturday morning in far northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota.

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Too Soon To Be This Cold!



ABERDEEN's **high temperature** of 52 F on Sept 8th is the average **high** for October 26th
WATERTOWN's **high temperature** of 47 F on Sept 8th is the average **high** for November 3rd
PIERRE's **high temperature** of 47 F on Sept 8th is the average **high** for November 10th
MOBRIDGE's **high temperature** of 52 F on Sept 8th is the average **high** for October 28th
SISSETON's **high temperature** of 51 F on Sept 8th is the average **high** for October 29th

ABERDEEN's **low temperature** of 32 F on Sept 9+10th is the average **low** for October 17th
WATERTOWN's **low temperature** of 32 F on Sept 10th is the average **low** for October 22nd
PIERRE's **low temperature** of 32 F on Sept 10th is the average **low** for October 27th
MOBRIDGE's **low temperature** of 31 F on Sept 9th is the average **low** for October 29th
SISSETON's **low temperature** of 32 F on Sept 9th is the average **low** for October 27th

Feel like these cold temperatures arrived wayyyy too soon? Climatologically speaking, these past few days are what you'd generally expect in mid October to early November! Fortunately, for those who aren't ready for this kind of weather yet, we'll likely see a rebound back to around normal by Sunday, and even above normal to start the new work-week.

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Today in Weather History

September 11, 1978: High winds to 65 mph damaged the roofs of several barns outside of Watertown during the early evening.

1900: The remnants of the Great Galveston Hurricane were located over central Iowa on this day. Eastern Nebraska, northwest Iowa, and southern Minnesota show four-plus inches of rain from this storm.

1961: Hurricane Carla made landfall on the northeast part of Matagorda Island, Texas as a strong Category 4 storm.

1992: Hurricane Iniki struck the island of Kaua'i with winds of 145 mph and a central pressure of 27.91 inches of mercury, making it a Category 4 hurricane. Iniki is the strongest hurricane to strike Hawaii Islands in recent history.

2011: Hurricane Erin was off the coast of New Jersey and New York on this day.

1949 - An early snowstorm brought 7.5 inches to Helena MT. In Maine, a storm drenched New Brunswick with 8.05 inches of rain in 24 hours, a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1961 - Very large and slow moving Hurricane Carla made landfall near Port Lavaca TX. Carla battered the central Texas coast with wind gusts to 175 mph, and up to 16 inches of rain, and spawned a vicious tornado which swept across Galveston Island killing eight persons. The hurricane claimed 45 lives, and caused 300 million dollars damage. The remnants of Carla produced heavy rain in the Lower Missouri Valley and southern sections of the Upper Great Lakes Region. (David Ludlum) (Storm Data)

1976 - Up to five inches of rain brought walls of water and millions of tons of debris into Bullhead City AZ via washes from elevations above 3000 feet. Flooding caused more than three million dollars damage. Chasms up to forty feet deep were cut across some roads. (The Weather Channel)

1986 - Thunderstorms caused flash flooding and subsequent river flooding in central Lower Michigan. Up to 14 inches of rain fell in a 72 hour period, and flooding caused 400 million dollars damage. (Storm Data)

1987 - Late afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in Texas, and spawned three tornadoes. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 70 mph at Goodnight TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Snow blanketed parts of the Central Rocky Mountain Region and the Central Plateau, with ten inches reported at Mount Evans in Colorado. Smoke from forest fires in the northwestern U.S. reached Pennsylvania and New York State. Hurricane Gilbert, moving westward over the Caribbean, was packing winds of 100 mph by the end of the day. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Nine cities in the north central U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Havre MT with a reading of 23 degrees. Livingston MT and West Yellowstone MT tied for honors as the cold spot in the nation with morning lows of 17 degrees. Thunderstorms produced hail over the Sierra Nevada Range of California, with two inches reported on the ground near Donner Summit. The hail made roads very slick, resulting in a twenty car accident. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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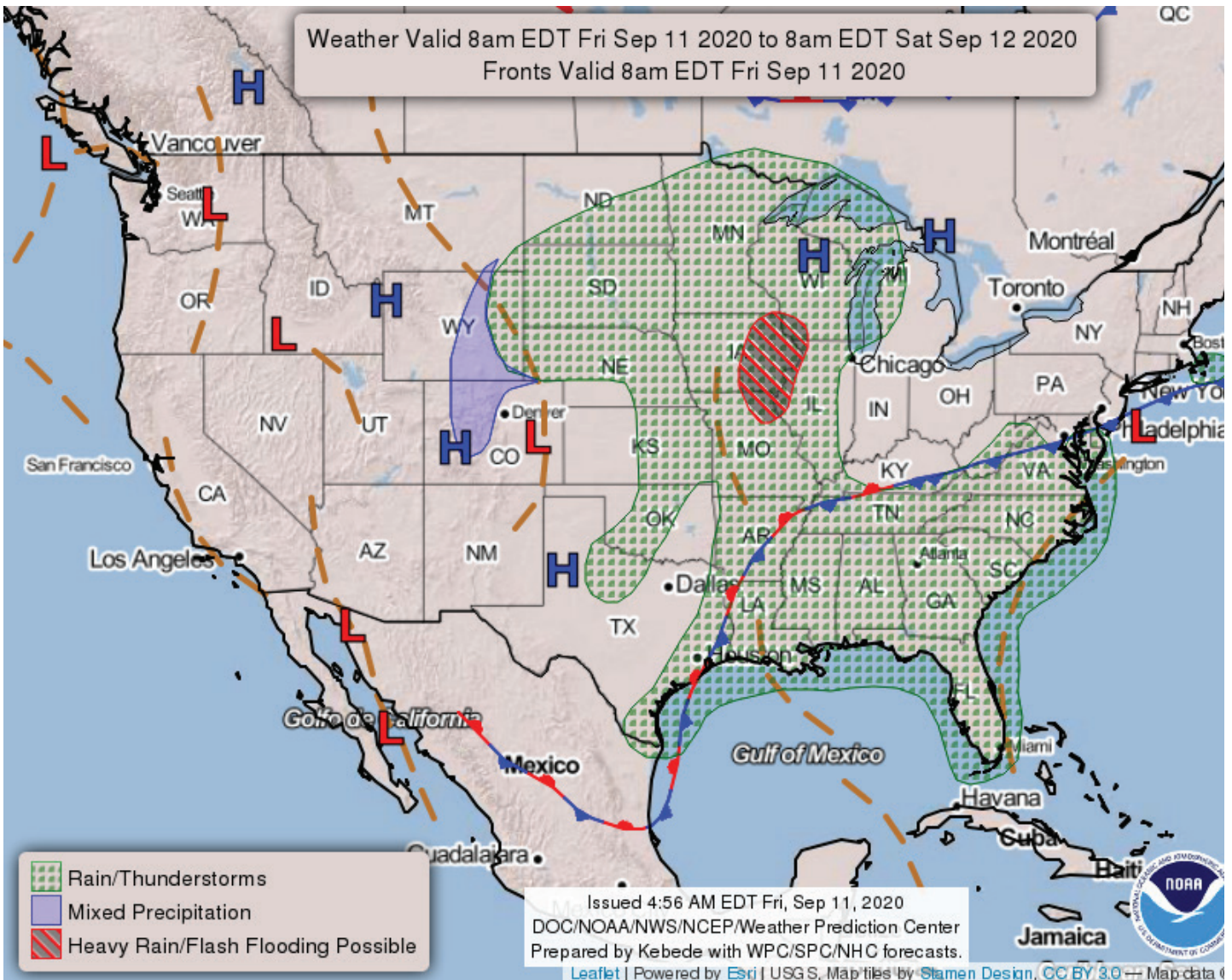
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 64 °F at 5:04 PM
Low Temp: 34 °F at 6:53 AM
Wind: 10 mph at 12:40 PM
Precip: .01

Today's Info

Record High: 100° in 1927
Record Low: 28° in 1940
Average High: 74°F
Average Low: 48°F
Average Precip in Sept...: 0.75
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.70
Average Precip to date: 17.04
Precip Year to Date: 14.05
Sunset Tonight: 7:51 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:09 a.m.



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COMMITMENT

A fascinating story of the Church in Russia has been passed on from one generation to the next. It occurred one Sunday as believers met in a house church. The small fellowship gathered together and began to sing their favorite hymns quietly but fervently. Suddenly, two soldiers walked into their midst with loaded weapons and began shouting. "If you wish to renounce your commitment to Christ and live, leave now!"

Two left. Then another. Finally, two more.

Closing the door, the officer snapped with the voice of a commanding officer, "Keep your hands up - but this time in praise to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We, too, are Christians."

The other officer then added, "We've learned by our experiences that unless people are willing to die for their faith, they cannot be fully trusted."

Nearing the end of his life, Paul often spoke of his loyalty and commitment to his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Through shipwrecks and imprisonments, disappointed by "best-friends and once fellow-servants," abandoned by his colleagues and followers when facing death, he remained committed. He had achieved high status in the Roman world, but one day realized that it offered nothing in comparison to what he discovered in Christ. He was willing to suffer and die for his Lord because he knew what mattered most: "For to me, living means Christ!"

Prayer: Our Father, we may never be called upon to suffer for You, and we may never need to sacrifice anything we value, but help us to be willing to do so if asked. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you.

2 Timothy 4:5-8

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

- **CANCELLED** Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- **CANCELLED** Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
- **CANCELLED** Fireman's Fun Night (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- **POSTPONED** Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
- **CANCELLED** Father/Daughter dance.
- **CANCELLED** Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
- **CANCELLED** Girls High School Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services
- 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
- 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
- 07/24/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ferney Open Golf Tourney
- 07/25/2020 City-Wide Rummage Sales
- **CANCELLED** State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
- 08/07/2020 Wine on Nine Event at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/12-13/2020 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In at the Groton Airport north of Groton
- 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
- 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
- 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/30/2020 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 Roncalli def. Tiospa Zina Tribal, 25-11, 25-17, 25-15
Avon def. Alcester-Hudson, 25-19, 25-23, 19-25, 25-22
Belle Fourche def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-14, 21-25, 25-13, 25-16
Brandon Valley def. Yankton, 25-18, 25-12, 19-25, 25-14
Bridgewater-Emery def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-20, 25-16, 25-15
Burke def. St. Mary's, Neb., 25-21, 25-16, 25-17
Clark/Willow Lake def. Milbank, 25-22, 27-25, 25-10
Colman-Egan def. Hamlin, 14-25, 25-16, 25-18, 23-25, 15-9
Corsica/Stickney def. James Valley Christian, 25-15, 25-21, 25-17
Custer def. Hot Springs, 25-20, 25-16, 25-19
Elk Point-Jefferson def. Canton, 25-23, 33-35, 26-24, 21-25, 15-13
Elkton-Lake Benton def. Howard, 25-16, 25-16, 25-20
Faulkton def. Potter County, 25-16, 25-20, 25-12
Florence/Henry def. Langford, 25-14, 25-11, 27-25
Gayville-Volin def. Freeman, 23-25, 22-25, 25-16, 25-23, 17-15
Great Plains Lutheran def. Wilmot, 25-17, 17-25, 25-22, 26-24
Hill City def. Spearfish, 25-19, 25-12, 25-20
Ipswich def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-18, 25-13, 25-18
Kadoka Area def. Wall, 25-19, 25-18, 25-15
Kimball/White Lake def. Tripp-Delmont/Armour, 25-21, 25-15, 25-19
Lemmon def. Dupree, 25-4, 25-14, 25-11
Madison def. Lennox, 25-19, 25-10, 25-15
Mobridge-Pollock def. Leola/Frederick, 25-21, 25-14, 25-15
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Hanson, 25-12, 25-19, 26-24
New Underwood def. Lyman, 25-10, 25-13, 25-7
North Central Co-Op def. McLaughlin, 25-9, 25-14, 25-4
Northwestern def. Warner, 25-21, 25-18, 25-12
Parkston def. Chamberlain, 26-24, 25-13, 25-18
Platte-Geddes def. Bon Homme, 25-17, 15-25, 17-25, 25-12, 15-7
Rapid City Christian def. Faith, 25-16, 25-19, 25-8
Rapid City Stevens def. Rapid City Central, 25-19, 25-20, 25-16
Redfield def. Deuel, 25-14, 25-16, 25-18
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket def. Mitchell Christian, 25-17, 25-11, 25-14
Scotland def. Freeman Academy/Marion, 25-9, 25-8, 25-16
Sioux Falls Christian def. West Central, 25-12, 25-13, 25-13
Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Harrisburg, 25-23, 24-26, 25-12, 25-11
Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Brookings, 25-18, 25-9, 25-13
Sioux Falls Washington def. Watertown, 25-16, 13-25, 23-25, 25-20, 16-14
Tea Area def. Dell Rapids, 25-19, 25-20, 17-25, 25-17
Tri-Valley def. Vermillion, 25-10, 25-16, 25-20
Wagner def. Gregory, 25-15, 25-23, 25-20
Waverly-South Shore def. Waubay/Summit, 17-25, 25-13, 25-22, 25-16
Webster def. Britton-Hecla, 25-18, 25-22, 25-15

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Wessington Springs def. Lower Brule, 25-18, 25-15, 25-17
White River def. Bennett County, 25-14, 25-8, 25-22
Winner def. Miller, 26-28, 25-6, 25-10, 25-20
Wolsey-Wessington def. Hitchcock-Tulare, 25-17, 25-20, 25-14
Wynot, Neb. def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-11, 25-8, 25-11
BEC Tournament=
First Round=
Chester def. Baltic, 25-18, 21-25, 23-25, 25-15, 15-7
Garretson def. Beresford, 25-7, 25-13, 25-6
McCook Central/Montrose def. Flandreau, 25-9, 25-17, 25-17
Parker def. Sioux Valley, 25-17, 25-19, 23-25, 25-17

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

The Latest: South Korea stays in downward infection trend

By The Associated Press undefined

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's daily count of new coronavirus cases is under 200 for a ninth straight day, continuing a downward trend in fresh infections for the country.

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Friday the 176 cases added in the previous 24 hours took the national tally to 21,919, with 350 deaths.

South Korea's daily caseload was above 400 in late August, with clusters of new infections in churches, schools, restaurants and other spots, mostly in the Seoul metropolitan area. The outbreak has gradually slowed after authorities imposed stronger social distancing rules.

Health official Yoon Taeho says the government believes the country's caseload is in general on a downward trajectory though he urges people to keep trying to reduce face-to-face contacts with others and follow social distancing guidelines.

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

- UN Secretary General appeals to donor countries for \$35B for WHO virus initiatives
- New York City to fine subway, bus riders \$50 for not wearing masks
- University of Wisconsin-Madison moves all classes online
- Drugmaker AstraZeneca says it halted a coronavirus vaccine study because woman who received the experimental shot developed severe neurological symptoms.
- The coronavirus pandemic is reshaping how the U.S. is observing the anniversary of 9/11. The terror attacks' 19th anniversary will be marked Friday by dueling ceremonies at the Sept. 11 memorial plaza and a corner nearby in New York.
- Football returns with the start of the NFL season, but many worry that attending games or get-togethers will lead to a new surge in coronavirus infections.

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

NEW ORLEANS — New Orleans will not follow the rest of Louisiana in easing up on public gathering restrictions aimed at preventing the spread of the coronavirus.

Mayor LaToya Cantrell staked out that position Thursday hours after Gov. John Bel Edwards announced that the state will ease restrictions starting Friday. The governor gave no details on what the new phase will look like, saying he would provide more information at a news conference Friday.

New Orleans city was the epicenter of a spring outbreak of COVID-19 that made Louisiana one of the

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nation's hot spots. The resulting shutdowns, including an off-again-on-again closure of bars, have damaged the city's tourism-dependent economy. Bars that don't serve food remain closed in the city under current guidelines.

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma officials say claims for unemployment benefits in the state are declining after reaching record levels during the coronavirus pandemic.

The state Employment Security Commission reported Thursday that first-time weekly claims for the week ending Sept. 5 totaled of 5,241 and continuing claims numbered 103,903. That was down from 6,019 initial claims and 119,571 continuing claims a week earlier.

A record 93,885 initial claims were filed in early May and there more than 182,000 continuing claims in late June as the state reopened after a shutdown of many businesses in an effort to stem the spread of the virus.

CONCORD, N.H. — The New Hampshire state health commissioner said Thursday that there have been no cases of the coronavirus linked to President Donald Trump's rally two weeks ago, and only one person who attended another large event - Motorcycle Week in Laconia - has since tested positive.

About 1,400 people attended the president's rally in an airport hangar in Londonderry Aug. 28. Many were not wearing masks, despite Gov. Chris Sununu's order making them mandatory for gatherings of more than 100 people.

Sununu was asked a few days later "what did it make you feel" to see people ignoring the mandate, and said he felt frustrated, just as he does when he sees someone grocery shopping without a mask.

On Thursday, Department of Health and Human Services Commissioner Lori Shibinette said officials aren't aware of any attendees testing positive after the rally. Asked if passing someone in a grocery store was equivalent to sitting shoulder-to-shoulder with others for several hours, she said, "Any time you're within six feet people of someone and not wearing a mask, you increase your risk of exposure to COVID-19."

The annual Motorcycle Week was held Aug. 22 to 30, and Shibinette said she knows of one attendee who has tested positive. In contrast, health officials across 12 states have found more than 300 people with infections who attended the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota in August.

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — Federal regulators said Thursday they have cited Smithfield Foods for failing to protect employees from exposure to the coronavirus at the company's Sioux Falls plant, an early hotspot for virus infections that hobbled American meatpacking plants.

The nature and timing of the violation wasn't immediately clear from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, but the announcement included the latest assessment of the virus' impact in Sioux Falls.

Four plant workers were killed by the virus during the spring and at least 1,294 workers were sickened. Only two deaths among employees had been previously known.

Smithfield Foods, which is based in Virginia, said it plans to contest the citation and \$13,494 fine.

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said Thursday he plans to soon ease restrictions imposed on the state's restaurants and has asked President Donald Trump to allow more travel from Europe and Brazil, saying he believes the current coronavirus restrictions are now too strict.

DeSantis told a meeting of restaurant industry executives in Fort Myers that the current limitation of 50% capacity for indoor dining and requiring that tables be kept 6-feet (2-meters) apart seems arbitrary.

DeSantis suggested eateries will know best how to govern their behavior as they don't want to scare off customers by becoming coronavirus hot spots.

DeSantis gave no specifics on when the restrictions would be eased, but said it will be soon.

DeSantis also said he supported the European and Brazilian travel restrictions, but they "have served their purpose."

"I have told the president we would like to see those lifted," said DeSantis, who is a strong Trump ally.

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He said he sees no difference if someone travels across the border from Georgia to visit Florida than if they arrive by plane from a foreign country. "I am comfortable with it."

WASHINGTON — U.S. health officials have started two new studies to test various blood thinners to try to prevent strokes, heart attacks, blood clots and other complications in COVID-19 patients.

Doctors increasingly are finding blood clots throughout the bodies of many people who died from COVID-19 along with signs of damage they do to kidneys, lungs, blood vessels, the heart and other organs.

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute Director Dr. Gary Gibbons says that hospitals have been giving seriously ill patients anti-clotting drugs to try to prevent this, but "quite frankly, we didn't know how best to treat it" in terms of which drugs or doses to use and at what stage of illness.

The National Institutes of Health will coordinate a study in hospitalized patients comparing low and regular doses of the blood thinner heparin. The study will involve more than 100 sites around the world participating in a research effort with various governments, drug companies, universities and others to speed coronavirus therapies.

A second study in COVID-19 patients not sick enough to need hospitalization will test various strategies against placebo pills: baby aspirin or low or regular doses of the anti-clotting drug apixaban, sold as Eliquis in the United States. The goal there is preventing blood clots or hospitalization.

A third study starting later will test blood thinners for people who have recovered and no longer test positive for the coronavirus. Evidence is building that they may remain at higher risk for blood clots.

UNITED NATIONS — The U.N. envoy for children in conflict says attacking schools and teachers seems to be an emerging tactic of war, particularly in Africa's Sahel region, and the COVID-19 pandemic "has made things worse."

Virginia Gamba told the U.N. Security Council on Thursday that in the Sahel, "schools are targeted precisely because they are schools, and even more if they cater to girls."

In Mali, for example, she said that in the last two years teachers were threatened and killed, education facilities demolished, and learning materials burned, leading to the closure of over 1,260 schools, "even before COVID-19."

Similarly, the last 12 months in Burkina Faso have seen increasing attacks including the burning of schools and kidnapping of teachers "forcing 2,500 schools to shut down, depriving hundreds of thousands of children from education," Gamba said.

Elsewhere in the world, especially in Asia and Latin America, she said, "we are also seeing an increase in attacks to education in indigenous communities."

JERUSALEM — Israel has reported more than 4,000 new coronavirus cases, setting a record as authorities consider imposing another full lockdown ahead of Jewish High Holidays.

The Health Ministry on Thursday reported at least 4,013 new cases. The number of patients in serious condition has risen to 488.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says the country's coronavirus czar and hospital directors have "waved a red flag" and warned that the situation could rapidly worsen, overwhelming hospitals and leading to "many severe cases and many deaths."

But he appeared hesitant to push for another lockdown, saying "we need to take action sagaciously and not recklessly."

Israel largely contained its initial outbreak after imposing sweeping closures last spring, bringing new daily cases down to double digits. But the number of cases has steadily risen since authorities abruptly reopened the economy in May.

The coalition government formed that month has been paralyzed by internal bickering, and political leaders are hesitant to take any action that could further harm the economy after the earlier lockdown caused a spike in unemployment.

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Israel has reported a total of more than 144,000 cases and 1,075 deaths since the start of the pandemic. The Israeli military has recently stepped in to assist civilian authorities, and said it carried out a record number of tests on Thursday, which could account for some of the rise in cases.

PARIS — French health authorities have reported on Thursday 9,843 infections from the coronavirus in 24 hours, the highest daily tally since the end of France's lockdown in April.

France has seen a sharp uptick in new cases in recent weeks and hospitalizations have started to increase steadily, reaching now over 5,000 including 615 people in ICU.

Increased testing could partially account for higher numbers in recent weeks. But relaxed social distancing measures since summer holidays and a return to work sites by many are also seen as contributors.

Over 30,800 people have died in French hospitals and nursing homes since the start of the pandemic, among the highest rates in Europe.

French President Emmanuel Macron is to hold a defense council focusing on the COVID-19 crisis on Friday that may lead to new measures to fight the spreading of the virus in the country.

NEW ORLEANS — Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards says he'll ease public gathering restrictions aimed at preventing the spread of coronavirus.

Details on Louisiana's version of "Phase Three" restrictions will come Friday. Edwards says a statewide mask mandate will remain in place.

Current regulations limit restaurants to 50% capacity for in-person dining, restrict bars to takeout and delivery only and place occupancy limits on gyms, salons and other businesses. Indoor gatherings above 50 people are banned.

Edwards has expressed concerns about another surge in cases following the return of students to school and college campuses and the recent Labor Day holiday weekend.

The percentage of positive tests dropped below 10%, a key threshold used by the state, on Aug. 10. It has declined steadily to just below 7% on Sept. 4, according to the state health department website.

Louisiana's health department reported 499 new confirmed cases Thursday, bringing the state's total to 155,419. Hospitalizations dropped to 762, the lowest since late June. The number of deaths rose by 21 to 4,991.

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York City commuters who refuse to wear a mask on subways, trains and buses could be fined \$50 starting Monday.

Metropolitan Transportation Authority Chairman Patrick Foye says the agency just needs to file emergency regulations with the secretary of state. Gov. Andrew Cuomo says he hopes the penalty will help encourage New Yorkers to return to public transit by lowering the possibility of getting infected while using transit.

New York City Transit interim President Sarah Feinberg says compliance with New York's mask requirement is "very high" on public transit at a time when ridership is picking up. But Feinberg says some passengers refuse to wear a mask even when offered one by a transit worker.

Officials say the penalty will be enforced by MTA police, but New York Police Department officers can also enforce it.

57 bison relocated from North Rim of Grand Canyon

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK, Ariz. (AP) — Dozens of bison have been relocated from the Grand Canyon's North Rim and sent to Native American tribes in the Great Plains.

A recent two-week roundup led to the transfer of 57 bison to the InterTribal Buffalo Council, Grand Canyon National Park officials said.

The bison then were transported to the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation in Kansas, the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, the Santee Sioux Tribe in Nebraska and the Modoc Nation in Oklahoma, park officials said.

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More than 30 bison were rounded up in a pilot program last year and sent to the Quapaw Tribe in Oklahoma.

The Grand Canyon bison are descendants of those introduced to northern Arizona in the early 1900s as part of a ranching operation to crossbreed them with cattle. They now roam almost exclusively in the far northern reaches of the Grand Canyon.

The park released a plan in 2017 to reduce the herd of about 400 to 600 bison to around 200. The plan calls for a mix of corralling the animals near the highway that leads to the Grand Canyon's North Rim, and for skilled volunteers to shoot a certain number of bison inside and outside the park.

Putting tracking devices on some of the animals allows biologists to track their migration patterns and better estimate the population.

The Grand Canyon plans to move forward with lethal options in 2021, but the details haven't been worked out, park spokeswoman Joelle Baird said Thursday. A handful of tribes have said they're interested in participating, she said.

Scott Poppenberger, a regional supervisor for the Arizona Game and Fish Department based in Flagstaff, said the goal is to do it in the fall season. The effort has been stymied over disagreements over who exactly gets to participate in legally killing the animals and what happens with the meat.

"We've made a lot of progress toward effective communication, and we appreciate the park's commitment to work with us and achieve some meaningful reduction, and that's a welcome change," Poppenberger said.

It's unclear if hunting the animals on state land outside the national park where it's allowed and the roundups have outpaced bison births over the past couple of years, he said.

This story has been corrected to show the number of relocated bison was 57, not 51.

Smithfield Foods pork plant faces OSHA fine from outbreak

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Federal regulators said Thursday they have cited Smithfield Foods for failing to protect employees from exposure to the coronavirus at the company's Sioux Falls plant, an early hot spot for virus infections that hobbled American meatpacking plants.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration found that employees were working closely together and exposed to the coronavirus. It also found that leading up to the first known infections at the plant on March 23, Smithfield did not do enough to space them out or provide other safety measures like face coverings or physical barriers.

The citation included the latest assessment of the virus' impact at the Sioux Falls plant, with four workers killed by COVID-19, at least 1,294 infected and 43 hospitalized. Only two deaths among employees had been previously known.

Smithfield Foods, which is based in Virginia, said it planned to contest the citation and \$13,494 fine. Keira Lombardo, a spokeswoman for the company, called the citation "wholly without merit" in a statement and argued the company had taken "extraordinary measures" to protect employees from infections.

OSHA conducted an investigation that spanned months as it conducted 60 interviews and reviewed over 20,000 pages of documents, according to Lombardo. She blamed coronavirus infections in Sioux Falls for causing the outbreak at the plant.

Employees at the plant have said Smithfield did not do enough to prevent inspections in the plant, where workers labored elbow-to-elbow as they processed nearly 5% of the country's pork. The union at the plant, the United Food and Commercial Workers, has said that it had been attempting to negotiate for more coronavirus protections leading up to the outbreak. After cases kept accumulating, Smithfield shuttered its plant for nearly three weeks.

But large outbreaks at meatpacking plants across the nation soon followed. The United Food and Commercial Workers, the largest union representing meatpacking employees, has counted 122 meatpacking worker deaths.

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Marc Perrone, the president of United Food and Commercial Workers, argued the fine did not go far enough to punish a company that makes billions of dollars in a year.

"This so-called 'fine' is a slap on the wrist for Smithfield, and a slap in the face of the thousands of American meatpacking workers who have been putting their lives on the line to help feed America since the beginning of this pandemic," he said.

Meatpacking companies have aggressively defended their role in providing the nation's food supply, warning that if plants closed because of the pandemic, grocery stores shelves would see shortages of meat. After President Donald Trump signed an executive order in April deeming meatpacking plants as critical infrastructure, they mostly stayed open.

The country's slaughterhouses rebounded, and commercial red meat and pork production for this year has even exceeded last year, according to the latest data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

OSHA began investigating Smithfield's Sioux Falls plant on April 20, shortly after a team from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention toured the facility to offer recommendations on how meatpacking plants could operate during the pandemic.

Smithfield CEO Kenneth Sullivan has defended how the company handled the virus outbreak, sending a blistering, 14-page letter to Senate Democrats Elizabeth Warren and Cory Booker after they inquired into how meatpackers have protected workers. Hundreds of employees signed on to Sullivan's response. The company has asked its employees to sign onto a statement saying it took "aggressive measures" to protect their health.

BJ Motley, the president of the union for Smithfield workers in Sioux Falls, said Smithfield has implemented most of the measures recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to prevent infections at meatpacking plants. But he said workers still gather closely together in the plant.

But with a rising demand for meat and a shortage of employees after the outbreak, Motley said, "They are pressing their workers a lot harder now."

Noem plans CARES Act spending, but lawmakers want oversight

By STEPHEN GROVES undefined

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem's administration on Thursday laid out a plan to spend the bulk of the \$1.25 billion in federal funds the state has received to address the coronavirus crisis, but some House lawmakers balked at allocating the money without more input from the legislature.

The Republican governor's administration has spent about \$114 million in federal funds so far and must expend the rest of the money by December 30 unless Congress extends the deadline. Noem this week laid out a plan to make \$400 million available to businesses hurt by the pandemic, and a legislative committee that handles the budget provided some feedback on it.

But as lawmakers debate how best to use over \$600 million of what's left to address the pandemic and its economic fallout, a divide has formed over calling a special session to approve the use of the funds. Lawmakers also plan to hold public input sessions this month to formulate suggestions on how to use the money.

"Where is the legislative oversight? Where is the legislative input?" Rep. Taffy Howard, a Republican from Rapid City, asked during the Thursday meeting.

Clark said that the governor would be taking input from the legislature as it holds committee meetings this month, but asserted that Noem has the authority to spend federal funds without a special legislative session. The federal money is a massive windfall for the state, equivalent to roughly 25% of its entire annual budget.

Speaker Steve Haugaard, a Sioux Falls Republican, has requested Noem call a special session, with dozens of House lawmakers signing onto a letter supporting that motion.

"This should not be just seen as an opportunity to stuff her hands in the cookie jar," Haugaard said of the governor's funding plans.

For the full legislature to reconvene in Pierre, either the governor must call for a special session or two-

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thirds of both the House and Senate must support it. But Senate Republicans, who hold a majority, appear less willing to get behind the idea.

Senate legislative leaders had previously preached patience on allocating the money, expecting that Congress would extend the end-of-year deadline to expend it. They had argued it would be best to allocate the funds during next year's legislative session. But with coronavirus aid negotiations stalled in Congress, Senate Republicans seemed to change tact, pushing to move the funds without a special session.

Sen. Brock Greenfield, a Republican from Doland, said, "We will continue to work with the administration to provide our legislative thumbprint, but it is very important that the dollars get out."

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press undefined

Madison Daily Leader, Madison, Sept. 10

Mail is too important to Madison and the nation

We didn't expect the Postal Service to be dragged into the political arena this year, but it was. Despite the rhetoric, it appears that mail-in ballots will be delivered promptly for this year's general election.

Beyond Nov. 4, however, it's worth considering how valuable the Postal Service is to the nation and every community in it, including Madison.

Despite extraordinary service since its founding in 1792 (Benjamin Franklin was appointed by the Continental Congress as Postmaster General in 1775), the Postal Service has endured challenging political winds. After being an agency of the U.S. Government for its first 178 years, it became an independent agency expected to operate financially on its own. Virtually all of its financial support by the U.S. Government has been eliminated.

Even so, it is still required to serve all Americans, regardless of geography, at uniform price and service. This is no small task ... from dangerous urban settings to the most remote residence in barely-inhabited areas, the Postal Service delivers.

This editorial is not propaganda, but a clear-eyed recognition of the importance of mail delivery in the United States and every community. While some naive observers believe email, texting, social media posts or UPS can serve every postal need, they aren't thinking it through.

Delivery services like UPS or FedEx have no requirement to serve all Americans at a uniform price. The cost of sending a letter today from Madison to arrive in Sioux Falls tomorrow through the Postal Service is 55 cents. To send the same letter through FedEx is \$8.50.

Here's another consideration we hadn't thought about before until we read an editorial in a national newspaper: At the moment, a letter delivered by the Postal Service is the only available, truly private communication the modern citizen has. Every electronic communication requires the identity of both parties, and many times the content of the communication, to be revealed to a third party.

We heartily support all efforts to preserve and enhance the Postal Service.

Yankton Press & Dakotan, Yankton, Sept. 8

Tower debate could be preview for other areas of country

A debate over a proposed cell phone tower near the Lewis & Clark Lake area west of Yankton may indeed be, as one person involved with the discussion said, a glimpse of the near future for Yankton County, as well as other counties and municipalities across the country.

The debate is over a conditional-use permit (CUP) request for a 199-foot tower, sought by Velocitel/AT&T, to be placed just north of the lake area. It has stirred some vocal opposition and may place the county in a difficult legal spot. (It was scheduled to be considered by the Planning and Zoning Commission Tuesday night.) Residents have questions about items ranging from the aesthetics to site access and the validity of its zoning status. Meanwhile, developers point to what the county's zoning ordinance allows — which is, of course, the guidance being used to formulate plans for the project.

But in a story published in Saturday's Press & Dakotan, one opponent of this project mentioned some-

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thing that extends beyond this particular issue and may well touch most everyone in the future.

In discussing the project, Andrea Maibaum noted that the coming of 5G technology means that tower issues are going to multiply greatly in the years to come.

"I just want everybody in the community to be aware that they want to place these towers with the 5G network anywhere from 2-5 miles apart," she said. "It might be their yard the next time around. People aren't worried until it's your neighborhood, but I kind of want people to be aware that this is something that is going to start popping up more and more as they start building more of these towers and bringing 5G across.

Indeed, 5G technology — which will bring unprecedented speed to data transmission and likely become a staple of online and digital business everywhere — will require many more towers to provide satisfactory coverage. Unlike current cell towers which can be several miles apart, 5G towers (which, to be fair, would be smaller) must be closer together because it operates on a higher electromagnetic frequency spectrum. Thus, it can transmit more data but at far less range, which is why there will be many more towers needed in many more places, which means there will likely be more flashpoints somewhat similar to what we are seeing with the county right now.

Many governmental entities have kept an eye on this development. The Yankton City Commission, for example, has taken some steps to regulate the anticipated development for these smaller towers, which will sprout like weeds as 5G become an increasingly sought-after mode of data transmission.

That's why having the proper controls in place to regulate this development will be essential to everyone everywhere. It probably won't neutralize the debates, but it will offer clear guidance as 5G becomes a high-speed fact in our lives.

Black Hills Pioneer, Spearfish, Sept. 8

100% cut too severe for Spearfish marketing group

2020 has been unlike any year we have experienced. Dealing with a global pandemic and its impact on our local community, have made for some difficult choices.

That's the case for private businesses and public entities like the city of Spearfish. We have made our own here at the Pioneer, so we understand the need for making tough calls.

At the same time, this year will not last forever. It just seems like it.

So you need to train an eye on the future, and that means keeping operations intact as much as possible. Transparent, calm communication within our operations and within the public is essential. Better days are ahead.

That's why we ask the Spearfish City Council to reconsider its plan to eliminate Community Grant funding for the Visit Spearfish marketing organization. While other organizations are slated to receive 10% reductions in funding from the city's third-penny hospitality tax fund, Visit Spearfish is facing a 100% cut.

That's too severe.

Visit Spearfish would be profoundly impacted by this cut. It would still receive monthly payments from the Hotel Business Improvement District board, which collects a \$2-per-night fee from every hotel room in participating businesses, but those dollars are in way too much flux when we are seeing such a huge disruption in our tourism numbers.

HBID board president Bill Collins said Visit Spearfish has relied on both.

"Either (funding source) on its own was not enough to have an impactful outcome, but combined together they make up enough of a fund for the operation of Visit Spearfish to be effective," Collins told us. "It was definitely a keen hit out of the blue. It was unexpected, and in a year where a community, which has long had jobs created by the visitor industry, is being choked. We're struggling, to say the least — down in the neighborhood of 36% for the year."

He compared Visit Spearfish's efforts to planting a crop. While it's tempting to invest in other areas, those humble seeds will bring forth a bountiful harvest.

Visit Spearfish plants those seeds. We don't see the wisdom in reducing the number it spreads across

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the nation to help bring people here on their vacation.

We understand it's been a difficult tourism season. Numbers are down and there is a natural tendency to pull back. In addition, the city is looking for revenue to cover the \$10 million bond on the Sky Ridge housing development, which will include a new sports complex.

We are excited to see that built. It will be a great addition to the community — and something worth promoting. With Visit Spearfish adding an events coordinator at the direction of the city, it can play a significant role in ensuring the sports complex is a busy place.

Visit Spearfish Executive Director Mistie Caldwell knows that. If city officials have suggestions on how to better market Spearfish, we are certain she would listen.

We encourage dialogue on all issues, and this should be no exception. On Wednesday, six local residents who own businesses spoke up at the city's Legal and Finance Committee meeting, saying they opposed such a drastic cut.

It's noteworthy that no one stepped forward to support it.

"I'm really a little bit disappointed that this couldn't be discussed far before we're at this point," she said. "I don't understand what the rub is, because you have two members of the council and a mayor who sit on (the Visit Spearfish) board and come to our meetings every month."

Councilman Darick Eisenbraun said there is nothing personal about this matter. He called it a "business decision," and we understand those have to be made.

The city claims it doesn't see enough return for its investment. The type of marketing Visit Spearfish is tasked with does not reap instant results. Destination focused marketing brings people here this winter and for the 2021 tourism season. It is poor timing to implement major funding cuts, as our local businesses are already struggling to make up for lost revenue.

We suggest weighing other options. Instead of 10% cuts for other organizations and a complete loss for Visit Spearfish, spread the sacrifice around more equitably. If it must absorb a larger cut, don't make it 100%.

We have heard there has been discussion about restoring some funding for Visit Spearfish. That is an encouraging note.

The 2021 city budget will be addressed again at the council's regular meeting at 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 8. While it's late in the game, there is still time to alter this cut.

We hope citizens who support Visit Spearfish and appreciate its efforts are in attendance. There are ways to revise this and move forward in a positive manner. Visit Spearfish is an investment in the long-term financial health of our community.

Scholarship Program Seeking South Dakota's Top Youth Volunteers

PIERRE, S.D., Sept. 10, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- In this time of disruption due to COVID-19, it's more important than ever to celebrate young people making a difference through volunteer service.

Today through November 10, Prudential Financial and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) are calling on South Dakota youth volunteers to apply for scholarships and national recognition through The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards.

South Dakota students in grades 5-12 are invited to apply for 2021 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards if they have made meaningful contributions to their communities through volunteering within the past 12 months — virtually or otherwise. The application is available at <http://spirit.prudential.com>.

"More than 25 years ago, we founded The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards to honor young volunteers working to meet the needs of our changing world — a mission that feels especially timely today," said Charles Lowrey, chairman and CEO of Prudential Financial. "As life evolves due to COVID-19, young Americans are continuing to address urgent issues facing their communities, and we celebrate their service in hopes that they'll inspire others to do the same."

"While this is one of the most unusual times in recent history for American students, we know that young volunteers have a long history of rising to the challenges of the moment," said JoAnn Bartoletti, executive

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director and CEO of NASSP. "Today through November 10, we call on parents, educators and local leaders to join us in celebrating the young volunteers who are innovating and adapting to serve their communities, and setting an important example for their peers in the process."

The top middle level and high school volunteer from each state and the District of Columbia will be named State Honorees in February. They will receive \$1,000 scholarships, engraved silver medallions and an invitation to the program's national recognition events in early May.

In May, the program will name America's top 10 youth volunteers of 2021. Those National Honorees will receive additional \$5,000 scholarships, gold medallions, crystal trophies for their nominating schools or organizations, and \$5,000 Prudential grants for nonprofit charitable organizations of their choice.

Local-level honorees in each state will receive awards ranging from bronze medallions to certificates. Qualifying local honorees also receive President's Volunteer Service Awards.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards was created in 1995 to recognize the exemplary volunteer work of middle level and high school students. Since then, awards have been granted to more than 140,000 middle and high school students across the country at the local, state and national level. Spirit of Community programs are also conducted in Japan, Ireland, India, China and Brazil, where Prudential has significant business operations.

For complete details on the 2021 program and the stories of South Dakota's top youth volunteers from years past, visit <http://spirit.prudential.com>.

[Editors: The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program logo and other multimedia resources are available at <http://spirit.prudential.com/resources/media>.]

View original content to download multimedia: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/scholarship-program-seeking-south-dakotas-top-youth-volunteers-301124894.html>

SOURCE Prudential Financial, Inc.

Rapid City man indicted for murder in fatal shooting

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A grand jury has indicted a Rapid City man on a first-degree murder charge in a shooting that investigators say was staged to look like a suicide.

Dion Bordeaux, 25, is accused of fatally shooting Jeanette Jumping Eagle, 22, in Rapid City last January. Police found the victim with a gunshot wound to the head on New Year's Day.

Bordeaux was one of two men in the room at the time of the shooting, investigators said. He was arrested on an unrelated warrant and has remained in custody.

Police say "multiple forensic avenues" led them to believe Bordeaux was responsible for the woman's death. The evidence was presented to the Pennington County States Attorney's Office and then submitted to a grand jury which issued the indictment.

Fewer initial claims for unemployment benefits in SD

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — There were fewer new claims for unemployment benefits in the past week in South Dakota, according to state labor officials.

There were 536 initial claims processed for the week of Aug. 30 to Sept. 5, the Department of Labor and Regulation said. That's a decrease of 94 claims compared to the previous week.

A total of \$1.4 million was paid in state benefits, in addition to about \$2 million in federal coronavirus pandemic compensation.

The number of continuing state claims for the same week is nearly 9,300, a decrease of about 1,500 from the previous week.

Total state unemployment benefits paid since mid-March is nearly \$79 million, officials said. The Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund has a balance of \$121.5 million.

The Latest: England, Wales set to launch virus tracing app

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By The Associated Press undefined

LONDON — An app to help to contain the spread of the coronavirus will finally be launched in England and Wales on Sept. 24, months later than the British government had hoped.

The Department of Health and Social Care said in a statement that trials in the London district of Newham and on the Isle of Wight, off the southern coast of England, had shown that the app is “highly effective when used alongside traditional contact tracing to identify contacts of those who have tested positive for coronavirus.”

Health Secretary Matt Hancock described the app’s launch as “a defining moment” and said it will help to contain the virus “at a critical time.”

Businesses including pubs, restaurants, hairdressers and cinemas are being urged to download and print a poster with the special scanning code. Customers can then scan the app on their smartphones on arrival at various venues.

The app was once touted as a game-changer, but it has been beset by problems partly linked to conflicting smartphone networks.

The other U.K. nations, Scotland and Northern Ireland, have launched their own separate apps.

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

- Schools that are mostly Black, Latino favor starting online, which could worsen inequalities in education
- Americans are commemorating 9/11 with tributes that have been altered by coronavirus precautions
- In Peru, where virus has been particularly deadly, Indigenous people turn to ancestral remedies
- Myanmar bans flights, travel from its largest city Yangon as virus spreads
- Kansas City Chiefs begin NFL title defense with victory over Houston Texans before socially distanced crowd
- Follow AP’s pandemic coverage at <http://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

HERE’S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

PESHAWAR, Pakistan — Pakistani authorities have announced the shutdown of a 250-bed COVID-19 hospital which was set up months ago in the country’s northwest amid increasing fatalities and infections from the coronavirus.

The medical facility for handling COVID-19 patients was set up at Lady Reading Hospital in the city of Peshawar after Pakistan reported its first confirmed case in February.

Hospital spokesman Mohammad Asim said Friday they recorded 270 deaths and handled thousands of patients since April.

He said currently they had only nine COVID-19 patients who will be moved to a new 25-bed ward at the hospital.

Other hospitals in Pakistan also plan to convert special COVID-19 wards of hospitals into other medical facilities.

The announcement comes hours after the government reported one of the fewest five fatalities from COVID-19 in the past 24 hours, raising hopes that Pakistan is on the right path to fully containing the new virus despite having a fragile health system.

PRAGUE — The number of people infected with the coronavirus is surging in the Czech Republic, setting a record for the second time this week.

The Health Ministry says the day-to-day increase in the COVID-19 cases reached 1,382 on Thursday.

In the two previous days, the number of infected in one day surpassed 1,160.

In reaction to the spike, the Czech Republic has returned to mandatory wearing of face masks in interior spaces.

The Czech Republic has had a total of 32,413 COVID-19 cases and 448 people have died, according to

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government figures on Friday.

BANGKOK — Myanmar on Friday reimposed tough measures to control the spread of the coronavirus, banning travel out of the country's biggest city, Yangon, and grounding all domestic flights. Both measures, announced just hours before taking effect, will be in place until Oct. 1.

An upsurge in coronavirus cases that began in August in the western state of Rakhine has since spread to other parts of the country. Health authorities had already ordered partial lockdowns in 29 of Yangon's 44 townships, and roadblocks were set up Friday closing some smaller streets in the city.

State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, the country's de facto leader, said in a televised speech Thursday night that while the new regulations might appear too restrictive, if they are strictly obeyed for two or three weeks, the outbreak would be under control.

The Health Ministry on Friday announced 115 new confirmed cases of COVID-19, bringing the total to 2,265, including 14 dead. Until the latest outbreak, Myanmar appeared to have largely been spared from the pandemic, having recorded just 353 virus cases as of the beginning of August.

LISBON, Portugal — Portugal's president says the United Kingdom's decision to require quarantines for people traveling from the southern European country is unfair and punishes tourism-dependent regions.

Portugal, which is seeing a steady increase in coronavirus infections, was put back on Britain's quarantine list on Thursday, three weeks after it had been taken off it.

British transport secretary Grant Shapps said the 14-day self-isolation rule only applies to those arriving from mainland Portugal, excluding the Azores or Madeira.

"We have a certain feeling of unfairness because we don't close our doors to entries," Portugal President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa said late Thursday, according to public broadcaster RTP. "There are other countries that have much more difficult and complicated situations."

He said the decision punished regions like Algarve, in the south, which is a magnet for tourists from Britain and where the spread of the virus is lower than in big cities.

Tourism, which accounts for 15% of Portugal's gross domestic product and roughly 9% of its jobs, has taken a big hit from border restrictions.

Portugal has reported more than 62,000 cases, including 1,852 deaths, from the virus.

NEW DELHI — India edged closer to recording nearly 100,000 coronavirus cases in 24 hours as it ordered retesting of many people whose first results were from a less reliable testing method that's being widely used.

According to the Health Ministry, India recorded another spike of 96,551 cases in the past 24 hours, taking its caseload to 4.56 million. It also reported on Friday another 1,209 deaths, taking total fatalities to 76,271.

It also said some negative rapid antigen tests should be redone through the more reliable RT-PCR method, the gold standard of coronavirus tests that looks for the genetic code of the virus. The retesting order applied to people who had negative results but had fever, coughing or breathlessness, or people who developed those COVID-19 symptoms within three days of their negative test results.

Using the rapid antigen, or viral protein, tests has allowed India to dramatically increase its testing capacity to more than 1.1 million a day, but the quicker, cheaper test is less reliable and retesting is often recommended.

The directive was meant to ensure infected people did not go undetected and to check the spread the disease among their contacts.

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's daily count of new coronavirus cases is under 200 for a ninth straight day, continuing a downward trend in fresh infections for the country.

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Friday the 176 cases added in the previous

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24 hours took the national tally to 21,919, with 350 deaths.

South Korea's daily caseload was above 400 in late August, with clusters of new infections in churches, schools, restaurants and other spots, mostly in the Seoul metropolitan area. The outbreak has gradually slowed after authorities imposed stronger social distancing rules.

Health official Yoon Taeho says the government believes the country's caseload is in general on a downward trajectory though he urges people to keep trying to reduce face-to-face contacts with others and follow social distancing guidelines.

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. WILDFIRES RAVAGE U.S. WEST Wildfires in heavily populated northwest Oregon were growing, with hundreds of thousands of people told to flee while the death toll in a Northern California wildfire rose to at least 10, making it the deadliest of the year.

2. AMERICA COMMEMORATES 9/11 In New York, a dispute over virus-safety precautions is leading to split-screen remembrances while both Donald Trump and Joe Biden will pay respects at the same memorial in Pennsylvania without crossing paths.

3. RACE A PREDICTOR OF SCHOOL REOPENINGS Districts with mostly white students are more likely than those with mostly Black or Latino ones to open their doors, an analysis by the AP and Chalkbeat reveals.

4. MACRON'S BLUEPRINT RAISES QUESTIONS The French president gave Lebanon's politicians a road map for policy changes and reform, leading residents of the tiny Mediterranean country to question whether Lebanese can rule themselves.

5. SPARSE CROWD SEES CHIEFS BEAT TEXANS Before just 17,000 fans, Patrick Mahomes throws three touchdown passes and Kansas City begins defense of its Super Bowl title by beating Houston 34-20 in the first NFL game since the pandemic began.

India, China agree to disengage thousands of border troops

By ASHOK SHARMA Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — The Indian and Chinese foreign ministers have agreed that their troops should disengage from a tense border standoff, maintain proper distance and ease tensions in the cold-desert Ladakh region where the two sides in June had their deadliest clash in decades.

India's S. Jaishankar and China's Wang Yi met in the Russian capital on Thursday night and concurred that "the current situation in the border areas is not in the interest of either side," according to a joint statement issued Friday.

Since last week, the Asian giants have accused one another of sending soldiers into the other's territory and firing warning shots for the first time in 45 years, threatening a full-scale military conflict.

The foreign ministers did not set any any timeline for the disengagement of tens of thousands of troops who have been locked in a standoff since May, but agreed that "both sides shall abide by all the existing agreements and protocol on China-India boundary affairs, maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas and avoid any action that could escalate matters."

The disputed 3,500-kilometer (2,175-mile) border separates Chinese and Indian held territories from Ladakh in the west to India's eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims in its entirety.

The latest standoff is over portions of a pristine landscape that boasts the world's highest landing strip and a glacier that feeds one of the largest irrigation systems in the world.

Both sides accuse the other of provocative behavior including crossing into each other's territory and both have vowed to protect their territorial integrity.

Earlier this week, Jaishankar described the situation along their shared boundary, known as the Line of Actual Control, as "very serious" and said the state of the border cannot be separated from the state of the relationship.

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On Thursday, the two countries agreed that as the situation eases, they should expedite work to conclude "new confidence building measures to maintain and enhance peace and tranquility in the border areas."

In a separate statement, Wang said "China-India relations have once again come to a crossroads."

That statement said Wang "outlined China's stern position on the situation in the border areas, emphasizing that the imperative is to immediately stop provocations such as firing and other dangerous actions that violate the commitments made by the two sides."

"It is also important to move back all personnel and equipment that have trespassed. The frontier troops must quickly disengage so that the situation may de-escalate," it quoted Wang as saying.

India did not release a statement of its own, but an official with the External Affairs Ministry said Jaishankar told Wang that India expected full adherence to all agreements on management of border areas and would not support any attempt to change the status quo unilaterally.

The official said Jaishankar said the immediate task was to ensure a comprehensive disengagement of troops at all flash points to prevent any untoward incident, with details of how that is to be done worked out by military commanders. The official spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak publicly.

The two ministers met in Moscow on the sidelines of a gathering of the foreign ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The body comprises China, India, Pakistan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Krgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Vinod Bhatia, a retired Indian army general, said it's going to be a long process to resolve the ongoing impasse.

"Disengagement is the first and the most important step that will guide the de-escalation process. The two armies will work out a mutually acceptable methodology for de-escalation," Bhatia said.

He said "there is a political will and direction now to resolve the crisis."

The two nations fought a border war in 1962 that spilled into Ladakh and ended in an uneasy truce. Since then, troops have guarded the undefined border area, occasionally brawling. They have agreed not to attack each other with firearms.

Rival soldiers brawled in May and June with clubs, stones and their fists. A clash on a high ridge on June 15 left 20 Indian soldiers dead. China reported no casualties.

After that clash, both sides disengaged from the site in Galwan valley and at least two other places, but the crisis continued.

Associated Press journalist Aijaz Hussain in Srinagar, India, contributed to this report.

Asia Today: India adds 96K virus cases, orders some retests

NEW DELHI (AP) — India edged closer to recording nearly 100,000 coronavirus cases in 24 hours as it ordered retesting of many people whose first results were from the less reliable rapid antigen tests being widely used.

There were a total of 96,551 confirmed cases, taking the tally to over 4.56 million. The Health Ministry on Friday also reported another 1,209 deaths for a total of 76,271.

India has the second-highest caseload behind the United States, where more than 6.39 million people have been confirmed as infected.

The Health Ministry has asked states to allow testing on demand without a doctor's prescription. It also said some negative rapid antigen tests should be redone through the more reliable RT-PCR method, the gold standard of coronavirus tests that looks for the genetic code of the virus.

The retesting order applied to people who had negative results but had fever, coughing or breathlessness, or those who developed the COVID-19 symptoms within three days of their negative test results.

The order was meant to ensure that infected people did not go undetected and to help check the spread of the disease among their contacts.

Using the rapid antigen, or viral protein, tests has allowed India to dramatically increase its testing ca-

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capacity to more than 1.1 million a day, but the quicker, cheaper test is less reliable and retesting is often recommended.

The directive came as 60% of India's cases have been reported from only five of the country's 28 states. However, experts caution that India's outbreak is entering a more dangerous phase as the virus spreads to smaller towns and villages.

With the economy contracting by a record 23.9% in the April-June quarter leaving millions jobless, the Indian government is continuing with relaxing lockdown restrictions that were imposed in late March.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— South Korea's new coronavirus cases stayed below 200 for a ninth consecutive day. South Korea's caseload once surpassed 400 in late August, but the outbreak has since gradually slowed after elevated social distancing rules in the Seoul area. The 176 new cases reported Friday are more than reported in the last few days. But health official Yoon Taeho told reporters that the government believes the caseload is in general on a downward trajectory though he urged citizens to keep trying to reduce face-to-face contacts with others and follow social distancing guidelines.

— Myanmar on Friday reimposed its toughest measures so far to control the spread of the coronavirus, banning travel out of the country's biggest city, Yangon, and grounding all domestic flights. Both measures, announced just hours before taking effect, will be in place until Oct. 1. An upsurge in coronavirus cases that began in August in the western state of Rakhine has since spread to other parts of the country. Until the latest outbreak, Myanmar appeared to have largely been spared from the pandemic. Health authorities had already ordered partial lockdowns in 29 of Yangon's 44 townships, including 20 on Thursday. New roadblocks were set up Friday in parts of the city, with some smaller streets closed while main roads remained open. The Health Ministry announced 115 new confirmed cases, bringing the total to 2,265, including 14 dead.

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

COVID beds fill up as virus pressure builds in Marseille

By DANIEL COLE Associated Press

MARSEILLE, France (AP) — All five intensive care beds dedicated to COVID patients are in use at the Laveran Military Training Hospital in Marseille, and its doctors are bracing for more.

It's a small ward in a mid-sized hospital, but what's happening here reflects growing pressure on medical facilities across France as infections resurge. The hospital's medical staff suit up to enter the COVID zone, hook patients up to monitors and tubes for hydration, nourishment and medicine, and meet frequently to discuss their prognosis.

While France's daily case count climbed back up as summer vacations brought relaxed virus vigilance, the number of infected patients in hospitals and intensive care units stayed low and stable for several weeks. Until now.

Doctors in Marseille — the country's latest virus hotspot — started sounding the alarm this week. The 70 ICU beds dedicated to virus patients in France's second-biggest city and the surrounding Bouches-du-Rhone region were all occupied by Tuesday. The number of ICU virus patients in the region has doubled in the past 10 days and now surpasses 100.

"The beginning of summer was relatively calm but in the past few weeks there is a new rise," said Laveran's chief doctor, Pierre-Yves. He can only be identified by his first name according to military policy. "What is going on here is just like what is going on in other hospitals of the region."

The region's hospitals are re-activating emergency measures put in place when the pandemic first hit, to ensure they're able to handle growing new cases. Since they've outgrown COVID-specific ICU wards, they're putting people in units meant for non-virus patients instead.

"In March, April and May we were able to absorb the epidemic wave by abandoning other hospital care

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activities, and today what is at stake is being able to continue treating every other patient while being able to face the epidemic," Pierre-Yves told The Associated Press on Thursday, describing it as a battle on two fronts.

On the whole, French authorities say they're better-prepared this time than in March, when infections quickly skyrocketed and the military intervened to transport patients and build France's first-ever peacetime field hospital. At least 30,700 people with the virus have died in hospitals or nursing homes in France, among the highest death tolls in the world.

At the Laveran hospital, the doctors and nurses appeared calm and studied as they approached the now-full COVID ward. They ditched their surgical masks for higher-protection masks, tied on plastic headgear and slid into disposable plastic gowns.

A team of nurses turned one ICU patient onto her stomach to ease pressure on her lungs, adjusting the tubes attached to her back and monitoring her vital signs.

In the midst of it all, one nurse took a few minutes out to brush the patient's thick black hair, then several more minutes moisturizing her body — an example of how the medical staff not only keep patients alive but also care for them in mundane ways you don't expect to see when survival is at stake.

Among the new virus patients, Pierre-Yves said, "Some are older but not all. There are also adults of 50 to 60 years old with risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes and obesity, all factors that we saw already during the first wave."

Unlike in the spring, France is now testing massively, which is one reason the case count is rising so fast. Authorities reported 9,843 new cases Thursday — the country's biggest one-day jump since the pandemic began.

The number of people in intensive care with the virus is now at its highest level since June, but at 615 people nationwide, it's still a fraction of the more than 7,000 ICU virus patients in the spring.

Epidemiologist Laurent Toubiana, director of the Irsan research institute, argues that this suggests the virus is on the wane.

"The fact that there are no longer people who are gravely ill is explained by the dynamic of epidemic itself — in other words it has run its natural course, like all epidemics," he told the AP. "The entirety of the population is not susceptible to getting ill. Only a portion of the population can be gravely sick and even die."

French President Emmanuel Macron promised to unveil new virus restrictions Friday, but warned against "ceding to panic."

"The virus is circulating widely," he acknowledged, but added that the new measures would be aimed at allowing the French to "live with the virus" — including keeping children in school.

France reopened all its schools for in-person classes last week and many parents returned to work as the government tries to revive the economy without creating a new health crisis.

While the central government tries to avoid a new nationwide lockdown, officials are focusing on local action instead. Marseille regional authorities on Wednesday ordered bars and restaurants to close early, and banned any unauthorized gatherings of more than 10 people.

Other regions are watching Marseille closely, wary that they too could see a similar situation in the coming weeks.

Laveran's chief doctor says preparation and coordination is key: "We need to stay a step ahead."

Angela Charlton in Paris contributed.

France tries forcing change on Lebanon's politicians

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — During his visit this month, French President Emmanuel Macron gave Lebanon's politicians a road map for policy changes and reform, set deadlines for them to take action and told them he'd be back in December to check on progress.

It was a hands-on approach that angered some in Lebanon and was welcomed by others. And it revived

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a bitter question in the tiny Mediterranean country: Can Lebanese rule themselves?

Lebanon's ruling class, in power since the end of the civil war in 1990, has run the tiny country and its population into the ground. Heading a sectarian system that encourages corruption over governing, the elite have enriched themselves while investing little on infrastructure, failing to build a productive economy and pushing it to the verge of bankruptcy.

Anger over corruption and mismanagement has come to a peak after the giant Aug. 4 explosion at Beirut's port, caused by the detonation of nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate that politicians allowed to sit there for years. Nearly 200 people were killed and tens of thousands of homes were damaged. Another large fire erupted at the port on Thursday, only further traumatizing and frustrating Beirutis.

Poet and journalist Akl Awit wrote in An-Nahar newspaper that he strongly opposes outside interference, but the political elite brought it on themselves.

"This is a class that does not care about law, constitution, judiciary, morals, conscience, earthquakes or even about bankrupting people," he wrote. "This class only wants to stay in power ... (It) understands only the language of the rod."

Some worry that even outside pressure cannot force reform on politicians, for whom reform means an end to power and perhaps eventual accountability.

"They are known to give empty promises whether to their people or the international community," said Elias Hankash, a legislator from the right-wing Kataeb party who resigned from parliament following the port explosion. "Regrettably maybe President Macron does not know whom he is dealing with."

Resistance to reform can be startling. In 2018, a France-led conference pledged some \$11 billion in aid to Lebanon. But it came with conditions of reforms, including audits and accountability changes that could have hurt the factions' corrupt patronage engines. Politicians were unable to pass the reforms to unlock the desperately needed money.

Late last year, Lebanon's economic house of cards collapsed into its worst financial crisis in decades. The local currency has crashed, throwing more than half the country's 5 million people into poverty.

In his Sept. 2 visit, Macron came in with a strong push for change. He met with officials from the eight largest political groups. They were given a so-called "French Paper, which lay out what it called a "draft program for the new government" on everything from how to deal with the coronavirus, to investigating the port explosion, rebuilding the port, fixing the electricity sector and resuming talks with the International Monetary Fund.

It reminded many of the nearly three decades when Syria dominated Lebanon — particularly of Rustom Ghazaleh, the late Syrian intelligence general who ran day-to-day affairs in the country and would often summon its politicians to his headquarters in the border town of Anjar. Syria's domination ended in 2005 after nationwide protests broke out following the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

During those years, Syrian intelligence agents were known to drive around Beirut and Lebanon in French-made Peugeot cars. One meme that circulated on social media after Macron's visit showed photos of him and Ghazaleh grinning over a Peugeot. "This time, the owner of the car factory himself came. The big boss came to form a government," it read.

On Wednesday, authorities met one key demand by Macron, launching a forensic audit into Lebanon's central bank to know how billions of dollars were wasted.

The factions also quickly agreed to name Lebanese-French citizen Mustapha Adib, Lebanon's ambassador to Germany, as the new prime minister.

But already, there appear to be delays in negotiating a new Cabinet, despite a Monday deadline that Macron said Lebanese politicians agreed on to form the government. In the past it has taken months to form governments as factions bargain over who gets which ministries.

Joe Macaron, a fellow at the Arab Center in Washington, said France is not in the position Syria once had to dictate policies — there are other outside players to take into account.

"The French role largely depends on the cooperation of both the U.S. and Iran," he said.

Since 2005, Lebanon's politics have been divided between a U.S.-backed coalition and another supported

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by Iran and Syria led by the militant Hezbollah. Disagreements sometimes led to street clashes -- but they always managed to agree on splitting financial gains.

On Tuesday, the U.S. Treasury imposed sanctions on two former Lebanese ministers allied with Hezbollah for their links to the militant group. It also said both are involved in corruption.

While some Lebanese criticize Macron's interference, others yearn for the days when Lebanon was a French protectorate after World War I until independence in 1943. More than 60,000 signed a petition after the blast to return to French mandate for 10 years. Macron dismissed the idea.

Since the port blast, international officials, including Macron, Italy's prime minister and Canada's foreign minister have visited and called on the government to implement reforms to receive financial assistance. Many dignitaries toured the Beirut neighborhoods most damaged in the blast, something no senior Lebanese official has done, apparently fearing residents' fury.

"The only state that is not interfering in Lebanon's affairs is the Lebanese state," goes one joke making the rounds.

Hankash, the lawmaker who resigned, said the ruling class has "shown they cannot run the country on their own. (It) has proven to be an immature authority that needs guardianship."

In mid-October, tens of thousands of Lebanese joined nationwide protests that tried — but so far failed — to end their grip on power.

Macaron, of the Arab Center in Washington, said corruption will continue unless there is real reform.

"Preventing the oligarchy from running the show seems wishful thinking at this point unless the Lebanese people defy the odds by forcing a new reality."

Schools that are mostly Black, Latino favor starting online

By KALYN BELSHA, MICHAEL RUBINKAM, GABRIELLE LaMARR LeMEE and LARRY FENN Chalkbeat and Associated Press

Missi Magness wanted her children back in school.

The parent of a first-grader and a sixth-grader who attend schools on Indianapolis' southeast side struggled trying to oversee her children's schooling while working from home this spring.

"They need the structure, they need the socialization, they just need to go," said Magness. "I love you, but here's your backpack, here's your lunch ... have a good day!"

Many other local parents agreed. Now, their school district, Franklin Township — where two-thirds of the 10,000 students are white, as is Magness — has allowed younger children to return to school buildings full time.

But two districts over, it's a different story. In Indianapolis Public Schools, where nearly three-quarters of about 26,000 students in traditional public schools are Black and Hispanic, the school year started virtually — despite relying on the same local health guidance as Franklin Township.

That dynamic is playing out across the country: Districts where the vast majority of students are white are more than three times as likely as school districts that enroll mostly students of color to be open for some in-person learning, according to an analysis conducted by The Associated Press and Chalkbeat.

While that stark divide often reflects the preferences of parents, it's one that could further exacerbate inequities in education.

In every state, the AP and Chalkbeat surveyed the largest school districts in each of four categories set by the National Center for Education Statistics: urban, suburban, town and rural.

Survey responses from 677 school districts covering 13 million students found that most students will begin the school year online. That's the case for the vast majority of the nation's biggest districts, with the notable exception of New York City. But the survey shows that race is a strong predictor of which public schools are offering in-person instruction and which aren't.

The higher a district's share of white students, the more likely it is to offer in-person instruction — a pattern that generally holds across cities, towns, suburbs and rural areas.

Across the surveyed districts, 79% of Hispanic students, 75% of Black students, and 51% of white stu-

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dents won't have the option of in-person learning.

In Forrest County, Mississippi, two school districts separated by a river are going in opposite directions to start the year. In the Hattiesburg Public School District, where the student body is 90% Black, classes are starting online. But students are going back in person in the Petal School District, which is 73% white.

For some students, continued distance learning raises risks they will fall behind peers who are learning in person. Many districts say virtual instruction will be much improved from the spring, when projections show some students lost the equivalent of several months of learning. But teachers acknowledge that the experience still can't replicate in-person school, especially for young students.

Students learning from home also will lose reliable access to free or subsidized meals, special education services and other in-person support. While wealthy families may be able to pay private tutors or therapists to fill the gaps, others will go without.

"I do worry about that and the fact there are these correlations between what schools are doing and students' backgrounds," said Jon Valant, a senior fellow focused on education at the Brookings Institution. "Which is not to say necessarily that anyone is making the wrong decisions. It suggests that we need to be seriously thinking about major public investments to try to mitigate some of the harm from all of this."

There are a number of possible explanations for the racial divide. One is politics. Schools in areas that supported President Donald Trump in 2016 are more likely to open in person, the AP/Chalkbeat and other analyses show.

Another potential reason: School officials are responding to families. National and state polls show that Black and Latino parents are more likely to be wary of returning to school in person than white parents. That likely reflects the disparate toll of the pandemic, with people from those communities dying at higher rates from COVID-19.

"We believe they are taking our best interests at heart to keep everyone safe," said Maira Velazquez, a Hispanic parent who was interviewed in Spanish and whose children go to school in the Manor district in suburban Austin. The district — which is about 66% Hispanic, 20% Black and about 7% white — will teach students virtually through at least mid-October.

Other factors are also influencing reopening decisions, including the severity of local virus outbreaks, school districts' ability to pay for costly safety precautions, the willingness of teachers and their unions to return to buildings, and the guidelines set out by public health officials.

In the Norristown Area School District, outside Philadelphia, schools will teach students virtually until at least January. The school district serves around 7,700 students, of whom 42% are Hispanic, 33% are Black and 15% are white.

While the surrounding county's coronavirus test positivity rate is hovering around 3% — below the 5% level that federal officials have offered as a safety threshold — the rates in the district itself are more than three times higher.

School officials were "very cognizant" that the communities they serve have been disproportionately affected by the virus, according to superintendent Christopher Dormer, who also cited the district's funding shortfalls and older buildings as playing a role in the decision to stay online.

"I'm not going to be the superintendent that risks anyone's life on a what-if," Dormer said.

Tiffany Shelton, who has a high school senior and a second-grader, supported the district's decision to start virtually.

Although she wishes it could have brought back older students and she knows her daughter, Cydney, will be disappointed to miss out on traditions like homecoming, Shelton, who is Black, has a heart condition that makes her more vulnerable to the virus.

"I don't want to get sick because I won't make it," Shelton said.

Now, though, she must juggle the needs of her children while working for an equipment leasing firm from home. On a recent Thursday, Shelton took business calls while keeping a close eye on her 7-year-old, P.J., as he listened to his teacher talk about how to be kind online.

"I'm stressed, the kids are stressed," Shelton said. "It's tough."

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The route each school district has chosen has taken on political significance, particularly after the Trump administration strongly encouraged schools to fully reopen for in-person learning.

"It really looks like there is something about political ideology, and in particular support for Trump in 2016, that explains a lot about these decisions that districts are making," said Valant, who published an analysis showing that school districts in counties that voted for Trump were much more likely to reopen schools for in-person instruction.

That could help explain some of the overlapping relationship with race, as Black and Latino communities were much less likely to support Trump.

But some more liberal white communities are reopening schools, too.

For example, the North Shore school district — based in a wealthy, majority-white suburb of Chicago that the superintendent describes as "extremely" liberal — is returning on a hybrid model.

"We simply said: We're coming back, whether our neighbors do or not," superintendent Michael Lubelfeld said, "and here's how."

The "how" involved spending up to \$3.4 million on things like upgrading air filters, improving ventilation, renting 20 tents to allow for outdoor learning, and paying for asymptomatic testing for staff in the district, which serves 3,900 students in kindergarten to eighth grade.

Schools that are staying online are also investing large sums, in the hopes of reducing the risk their students fall behind.

In Norristown, the district has given a device to every student, and teachers are providing about three hours a day of live video instruction, unlike in the spring, when they prerecorded their lessons.

But much remains out of teachers' control. Last week, Norristown music teacher Jemma Malkasian stood in front of her laptop and waved her arms, exhorting her orchestra students to act out "presto," the musical notation meaning "very quickly."

"I don't see anyone moving," she said. Her connection was glitchy, and the students kept freezing on screen.

In Memphis, where 95,000 students in traditional public schools will be learning online until further notice, the school district is spending tens of millions of dollars on laptops and tablets. Officials in the district, where the vast majority of students are Black or Hispanic, have distributed more than 85,000 devices and will be offering several hours a day of live video classes — unlike in the spring, when schools relied heavily on paper packets and televised lessons.

Memphis parents like Iesha Wooten are trying to make it work, but it's a heavy burden. Wooten, who is Black, is overseeing virtual schooling for her three sons, a niece and two nephews.

She's turned a bedroom in her home into a classroom, complete with an alphabet chart, and set up a workstation for each child. Their first day of virtual school consisted of hours of questions — Is my teacher going to call me? Where's the link to my next class? — and troubleshooting issues like dead laptop batteries.

Wooten found it difficult. But one of her sons has asthma and another has sickle cell disease, putting them at higher risk for severe complications from the coronavirus.

It comes down to this, she said: "I wouldn't want them at risk."

For Chalkbeat, Belsha in Chicago, Matt Barnum in New Hampshire, LaMarr LeMee in Washington, Laura Faith Kebede in Memphis, and Stephanie Wang in Indianapolis contributed. For The Associated Press, Rubinkam in Norristown, Pennsylvania, Jim Vertuno and Acacia Coronado in Austin, Texas, and Fenn and Derek Karikari in New York contributed.

Young protesters force Nepal to better manage virus crisis

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — On a sunny June day in Nepal, hundreds of young people in face masks stood a meter apart behind the barbed-wire barricades and rows of riot police guarding the prime minister's residence, shouting slogans demanding a better government response to the coronavirus pandemic.

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In a rare show of young people humbling a powerful government to action in Asia, they got one. But not before hundreds of protesters were doused with water cannons, some beaten with police batons and others detained. A charismatic young leader nearly died on hunger strike.

"Governments have mishandled the coronavirus situation in many countries but it was unique for youths in Nepal to come together for non-political peaceful protests to point out the wrongdoings, make them admit it and then correct it," said Dinesh Prasain, sociologist at the prestigious Tribhuvan University.

Prime Minister Khaga Prasad Oli's government imposed a nationwide lockdown in March, sending tens of thousands of migrants workers, hungry and cashless, from the capital, Kathmandu, to their rural mountain villages, mirroring a similar exodus in neighboring India.

At the same time, thousands of Nepalese streamed back across the Indian border, but there were no quarantine centers or government assistance to help them reach home.

As Nepal's caseload grew daily, Oli was publicly embroiled in a power struggle within the ruling party and a feud with India over disputed borderlands.

Top officials were accused of corruption in local media over the government's purchases of medical equipment and supplies from abroad. Authorities failed to expand the country's hospital bed count and quarantine and isolation facilities. They also began relying on cheaper, and less accurate, tests to determine the disease's spread across the Himalayan nation.

"For months we stayed home and gave our support to the government obeying the orders, but during the lockdown we realized the incompetence of the government to handle the coronavirus situation," said Robic Upadhayay, a 29-year-old filmmaker.

Upadhayay joined friends locked at home in a social media campaign that quickly organized street protests under the banner "Enough is Enough," attracting hundreds of thousands of online followers — a significant feat in a country of 30 million.

A social media post from Iih, a 29-year-old high school dropout who previously had campaigned for the rights of ethnic minorities, gathered 400 demonstrators at the first protest. He was detained by police.

"After weeks of lockdown, we thought that just protest in virtual space was not enough. It was an issue of life and death, so I asked on Instagram if anyone was ready to come out. There were 400 people who responded," Iih, who goes by one name, said.

But response from the government did not come easy at first. Iih went on hunger strike, initially for 12 days in June and then again for 23 days in July, when he had to be taken to a hospital because his health deteriorated.

The government finally gave in to the pressure of the growing campaign and signed an agreement with Iih on Aug. 9 to scrap the use of rapid diagnostic tests for coronavirus, and instead rely entirely on the gold-standard PCR tests.

The government also agreed to provide better personal protective equipment to front-line health workers treating COVID-19 patients and regular consultations with health experts. It promised better access to medicines, which previously had not reached all the hospitals, and committed to free treatment of COVID-19 patients.

Other points included protection by local authorities of patients and their families from harassment by nervous neighbors, and making public the spending on anti-coronavirus measures and expenses.

"The peaceful protests in the country were successful in putting pressure on the government," Iih said. "It also showed that the government, if willing, can actually work to better manage the situation, increase the number of tests and testing facilities, emphasize on preventative measures, and isolate the area and people where there is infection."

The government has increased testing to more than 10,000 daily and has allowed private hospital to do tests. It has also given authority to local district administrations to impose lockdowns and isolate areas of infection.

"The government has taken the demands by the youth positively and has agreed to the demands that are we are able to address. We assure to work together with the youths to combat the disease in the country," Health Ministry official Sameer Shrestha said.

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However, the number of cases has been rising in Nepal — from 1,798 and eight deaths on June 1 to 48,138 and 306 deaths on Sept. 8 — and restrictions have been reimposed in many parts of the country. The protesters say they will return to the streets if the government falls back on its promises.

10 dead as California fire becomes deadliest of year

By ADAM BEAM and BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

GRIDLEY, Calif. (AP) — A Northern California wildfire that destroyed a foothill hamlet has become the state's deadliest blaze of the year with 10 people confirmed dead — and the toll could climb as searchers look for 16 missing people.

The North Complex fire that exploded in wind-driven flames earlier in the week was advancing more slowly Friday after the winds eased and smoke from the blaze shaded the area and lowered the temperature, allowing firefighters to make progress, authorities said.

However, the smoke made for poor visibility and fire helicopters couldn't fly Thursday.

In most parts of the state, red flag warnings of extreme fire danger because of hot, dry weather or gusty winds were lifted.

Only a day or two earlier, the North Complex fire tore through Sierra Nevada foothills so quickly that fire crews were nearly engulfed, locals fled for their lives to a pond, and the town of Berry Creek, population 525, was gutted.

On Thursday, Butte County sheriff's Capt. Derek Bell said seven bodies were discovered, bringing the total to 10 in two days. At least four people with critical burns were hospitalized.

Deputies and detectives were searching for human remains as they made their way into devastated areas with a team of anthropologists from Chico State University, Bell said.

Burned-out and overturned cars, downed power lines and the ruins of buildings littered Berry Creek and nearby areas, the Sacramento Bee reported. One hatchback found on a dirt road had three dead dogs in it, while a pickup truck had the remnants of a guitar case and melted CDs in the bed.

More than 2,000 homes and other buildings had burned in the fire, which began several weeks ago as a lightning-sparked collection of blazes northeast of San Francisco. The final toll is expected to be much higher. Damage assessment teams planned to begin a methodical search of the burned areas on Friday.

Among those unaccounted for were Sandy Butler and her husband, who had called their son to say they were going to try to escape the flames by finding shelter in a pond.

"We're still hoping and praying for good news," said Jessica Fallon, who has two children with the Butler's grandson and considers them her own grandparents. "Everything is replaceable, but not my grandparents' lives. I'd rather lose everything than those two. They kind of held the family together."

Fallon said she'd been peppering hospitals with phone calls in search of her grandparents. There was no word of them late Thursday night.

The speed and ferocity of the fire astonished observers, even those who remembered a blaze only two years earlier that killed some 85 people and devastated the town of Paradise, a few miles away from the current blaze.

Residents jammed the main road out of town on Wednesday amid falling ash and red skies. Authorities lifted an evacuation warning for Paradise on Thursday but authorities urged people to remain alert.

A crew fighting the fire was overrun by flames Wednesday when winds shifted and its members escaped with only minor injuries after deploying emergency shelters. It was the second time in two days that firefighters in California had to take the rare last-ditch effort to save their lives.

The blaze is among 29 major wildfires burning from the Oregon border to just north of Mexico. More than 4,800 square miles (12,500 square kilometers) have burned so far this year — more land than Rhode Island, Delaware and Washington, D.C., combined — and fall is typically the worst season for fires. Nineteen people have been killed and at least 4,000 structures have burned across California.

"It's a historic season on top of a historic season that replaced a historic season. We just keep setting new precedents, and then we keep destroying them," said Sean Norman, a battalion chief with the Cali-

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California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Smoke blew into vineyards in wine country north of San Francisco, and rose above scenic Big Sur on the Central Coast and in the foothills and mountains of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and San Diego counties in the southern part of the state.

President Donald Trump spoke with Gov. Gavin Newsom "to express his condolences for the loss of life and reiterate the administration's full support to help those on the front lines of the fires," according to White House spokesman Judd Deere.

Neighboring Oregon and Washington also have been besieged.

More than 1,400 square miles (3,625 square kilometers) have burned this week in Oregon, where hot, windy conditions continued. Authorities said more than 500,000 people — more than 10% of the state's population — have been forced to evacuate.

Wildfires have scorched nearly 937 square miles (2,426 kilometers) in Washington.

Melley reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers John Antczak in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

US remembers 9/11 as pandemic changes tribute traditions

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Americans are commemorating 9/11 with tributes that have been altered by coronavirus precautions and woven into the presidential campaign, drawing both President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden to pay respects at the same memorial without crossing paths.

In New York, a dispute over coronavirus-safety precautions is leading to split-screen remembrances Friday, one at the Sept. 11 memorial plaza at the World Trade Center and another on a nearby corner. The Pentagon's observance will be so restricted that not even victims' families can attend, though small groups can visit the memorial there later in the day.

Trump and Biden are both headed — at different times — to the Flight 93 National Memorial near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

Trump is speaking at the morning ceremony, the White House said. Biden plans to pay respects there in the afternoon after attending the observance at the 9/11 memorial in New York.

Meanwhile, Vice President Mike Pence is also due at ground zero — and then at the alternate ceremony a few blocks away.

In short, the anniversary of 9/11 is a complicated occasion in a maelstrom of a year, as the U.S. grapples with a health crisis, searches its soul over racial injustice and prepares to choose a leader to chart a path forward.

Still, 9/11 families say it's important for the nation to pause and remember the hijacked-plane attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people at the trade center, at the Pentagon and near Shanksville on Sept. 11, 2001, shaping American policy, perceptions of safety and daily life in places from airports to office buildings.

"I know that the heart of America beats on 9/11 and, of course, thinks about that tragic day. I don't think that people forget," says Anthoula Katsimatides, who lost her brother John and is now on the board of the National Sept. 11 Memorial & Museum.

Friday will mark Trump's second time observing the 9/11 anniversary at the Flight 93 memorial, where he made remarks in 2018. Biden spoke at the memorial's dedication in 2011, when he was vice president.

The ground zero ceremony in New York has a longstanding custom of not allowing politicians to speak, though they can attend. Biden did so as vice president in 2010, and Trump as a candidate in 2016.

Though the candidates will be focused on the commemorations, the political significance of their focus on Shanksville is hard to ignore: Pennsylvania is a must-win state for both. Trump won it by less than a percentage point in 2016.

Around the country, some communities have canceled 9/11 commemorations because of the pandemic, while others are going ahead, sometimes with modifications.

The New York memorial is changing one of its ceremony's central traditions: having relatives read the

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names of the dead, often adding poignant tributes.

Thousands of family members are still invited. But they'll hear a recording of the names from speakers spread around the vast plaza, a plan that memorial leaders felt would avoid close contact at a stage but still allow families to remember their loved ones at the place where they died.

But some victims' relatives felt the change robbed the observance of its emotional impact. A different 9/11-related group, the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation, set up its own, simultaneous ceremony a few blocks away, saying there's no reason that people can't recite names while keeping a safe distance.

The two organizations also tussled over the Tribute in Light, a pair of powerful beams that shine into the night sky near the trade center and evoke its fallen twin towers. The 9/11 memorial initially canceled the display, citing virus-safety concerns for the installation crew. After the Tunnel to Towers Foundation vowed to put up the lights instead, the memorial changed course with help from its chairman, former Mayor Mike Bloomberg, and Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

Tunnel to Towers, meanwhile, arranged to display single beams for the first time at the Shanksville memorial and the Pentagon.

Over the years, the anniversary also has become a day for volunteering. Because of the pandemic, the 9/11 National Day of Service and Remembrance organization is encouraging people this year to make donations or take other actions that can be accomplished at home.

Associated Press writers Alexandra Jaffe in Wilmington, Delaware, and Darlene Superville in Washington contributed.

Charges, sanctions revive specter of Russian interference

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration has charged a Russian national in a sweeping plot to sow distrust in the American political process and imposed sanctions against a Russia-linked Ukrainian lawmaker accused of interfering in the U.S. presidential election.

Those actions on Thursday, combined with a Microsoft announcement on hacking attempts targeting U.S. political campaigns, parties and consultants, underscore the extent to which the same cyber intrusions and foreign influence operations that defined the 2016 White House race remain a persistent concern today.

They also reflect a dichotomy in the administration, with officials taking aim at Russian interference in the political process even as President Donald Trump expresses doubt about Russian meddling. In the case of the sanctions, officials denounced audio recordings that had been released by the Ukrainian parliamentarian and promoted by Trump on Twitter.

The criminal charges accuse Artem Mikhaylovich Lifshits of serving as a translation manager in a Russian effort that since at least 2014 has tried to disrupt the political system in the United States and other countries and spread distrust about candidates. Members of the initiative, known as Project Lakhta, traveled to the United States to collect intelligence and operated bogus social media accounts that could pump out messaging to millions of Americans on divisive social issues.

The group operated through entities including the Internet Research Agency, the Russian troll farm charged by special counsel Robert Mueller with stirring up discord before the 2016 election, according to a criminal complaint charging Lifshits with using stolen identities to open fake accounts at banks and digital currency exchanges.

The goal of the department where Lifshits worked was to sow discord, incite civil unrest and polarize Americans with social media posts that touched on hot-button topics including gun rights, immigration, the Confederate flag and race relations, prosecutors say.

"Project Lakhta members did not exclusively adopt one ideological viewpoint; rather, they wrote on topics from varied and sometimes opposing perspectives," a Secret Service agent wrote in an affidavit supporting the complaint. "Project Lakhta members also developed strategies and guidance to target audiences with conservative and liberal viewpoints, as well as particular social groups."

The Justice Department complaint does not accuse Lifshits or other Project Lakhta members of promot-

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ing a particular presidential candidate in the 2020 race. Many of the social media posts that are referenced were early in Trump's first term, well before Democrat Joe Biden had emerged as his party's presidential nominee.

Those include a March 2018 tweet, written by a Project Lakhta member using a bogus account, that said, "Just a friendly reminder to get involved in the 2018 Midterms. They are motivated They hate you They hate your morals They hate your 1A and 2A rights They hate the Police They hate the Military They hate YOUR President."

But the complaint makes clear that the influence operations have persisted and even seized on contentious current issues like race relations.

Lifshits was one of four people cited on Thursday by the Treasury Department, including Andrii Derkach, a Ukrainian lawmaker who was characterized by the U.S. government as "an active Russian agent" for over a decade. Officials say he has interfered in the 2020 election by releasing edited audio recordings designed to denigrate Biden.

The Treasury Department action is the second time in as many months that the administration has called out Derkach by name. U.S. intelligence officials said in a statement last month that Derkach's disclosure of the recordings, which capture conversations between Biden and Ukraine's then-president, were part of a broader Russian effort to disparage Biden before the Nov. 3 election.

The administration's move was especially notable because the statement announcing it said Derkach's recordings advance anti-Biden claims that rely on "false and unsubstantiated narratives." Trump has promoted those recordings by retweeting posts that include or reference them.

"Derkach almost certainly targeted the U.S. voting populace, prominent U.S. persons, and members of the U.S. government, based on his reliance on U.S. platforms, English-language documents and videos, and pro-Russian lobbyists in the United States used to propagate his claims," the Treasury Department said in designating Derkach and three other Russia-linked individuals under an executive order designed to target election interference.

Derkach is a graduate of a Russian spy academy who, the Treasury Department says, maintains close ties to Russian intelligence services.

"Andrii Derkach and other Russian agents employ manipulation and deceit to attempt to influence elections in the United States and elsewhere around the world," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a statement. "The United States will continue to use all the tools at its disposal to counter these Russian disinformation campaigns and uphold the integrity of our election system."

In May, Derkach released audio recordings of purported conversations between Biden, while vice president, and Ukraine's former president, Petro Poroshenko. The release was intended to promote a baseless narrative that Biden had demanded the firing of Ukraine's top prosecutor because the prosecutor was investigating a gas company in Ukraine where Biden's son Hunter held a board seat.

Biden was representing the official position of the Obama administration and many Western allies in seeking the removal of the prosecutor who was perceived as soft on corruption.

The other three people who were sanctioned are connected to the IRA.

Also on Thursday, Microsoft said that the same Russian military intelligence outfit that hacked the Democrats in 2016 has attempted similar intrusions into the computer systems of more than 200 organizations, including political parties and consultants. Most of the infiltration attempts by Russian, Chinese and Iranian agents were halted by Microsoft security software and the targets notified.

Associated Press writer Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

'Evacuate now:' Wildfires grow in Oregon as 500K flee

By GILLIAN FLACCUS and ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

PHOENIX, Ore. (AP) — Deadly wildfires in heavily populated northwest Oregon were growing, with hundreds of thousands of people told to flee encroaching flames while residents to the south tearfully

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assessed their losses.

People evacuated statewide because of fires had climbed to an estimated 500,000 — more than 10 percent of the 4.2 million people in the state, the Oregon Office of Emergency Management reported late Thursday.

One fire approached Molalla, triggering a mandatory evacuation order for the community of about 9,000 people located 30 miles (48 kilometers) south of Portland. A police car rolled through the streets with a loudspeaker blaring “evacuate now.”

Inmates were being moved from a women’s prison less than a mile from Interstate 5 in Portland’s southern suburbs “out of an abundance of caution,” the Oregon Department of Corrections said.

With two large fires threatening to merge, some firefighters in Clackamas County, which includes Molalla, were told to disengage temporarily because of the danger. Officials tried to reassure residents who abandoned their homes, and law enforcement said patrols would be stepped up to prevent looting.

The local fire department said on Twitter: “To be clear, your firefighters are still working hard on the wildfires in Clackamas County. They are taking a ‘tactical pause’ to allow firefighters to reposition, get accountability & evaluate extreme fire conditions.”

“We haven’t abandoned you,” the fire officials said.

Meanwhile residents of the small Oregon town of Phoenix, near the California state line along Interstate 5, walked through a scene of devastation after one of the state’s many wildfires wiped out much of their community. A mobile home park, houses and businesses were burned, leaving twisted remains on charred ground.

Many of the residents were immigrants, with few resources to draw on.

Artemio Guterrez stood helplessly next to his pick-up, surveying the rubble of his mobile home. His children sat quietly in the truck bed and waited for him to salvage what he could. He was able to find a ceramic pot with a smiley face on it, some charred miniature houses from a Christmas-themed village and a cross that formed when two pieces of glass melted together.

Guterrez, a single father of four, had been at work at a vineyard nearby when he saw thick smoke spreading through Rogue River Valley. He raced home just in time to snatch his kids from the trailer park where they live alongside dozens of other Mexican families. They got out with just the clothes on their back.

“I’m going to start all over again. It’s not easy but it’s not impossible either. You have to be a little tough in situations like this,” said Guterrez, who had just returned from his mother’s funeral in Mexico. Entire mobile home parks with many units occupied by Mexican immigrants who worked in nearby vineyards or doing construction were reduced to ash in Phoenix and nearby Talent.

“We’re kind of like a family. We’ve known each other for years, since we came here or even before then,” Guterrez said of his neighbors at Talent Mobile Estates. “We’re living day by day.”

As the fire approached Phoenix, Jonathan Weir defied evacuation orders, even as flames 30 feet (9 meters) high shot from trees. Fearing for his life, he drove his car to the entrance of a nearby mobile home park, where his tires began melting. His home was destroyed as the fire hopscotched through the town of 4,000 residents.

“There were flames across the street from me, flames to the right of me, flames to the left of me. I just watched everything burn,” Weir told a reporter.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency estimated that 600 homes were burned by the fire that started in Ashland and tore through Phoenix, the Mail Tribune of Medford reported.

Oregon officials haven’t released an exact death count for the wildfires but at least four fatalities have been reported in the state. One person was killed in wildfires in Washington.

Oregon officials were shocked by the number of simultaneous fires, which stood at 37 Thursday, according to the state Office of Emergency Management.

Gov. Kate Brown said more than 900,000 acres (364,000 hectares) — greater than the size of Rhode Island — have burned in Oregon in the past three days — nearly double the territory that burns in a typical year.

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Back in Phoenix, Marty Curtis considered herself lucky. Her house was spared and she escaped with her cat, Louie.

"You could see the flames. You could hear things popping — gas tanks and propane tanks exploding," she said. "I have my house. I have my life. I have my cat and I have my job — and right now, that's all I need."

Selsky reported from Salem, Oregon. Associated Press writers Sara Cline in Salem; Nick Geranios in Spokane, Washington; and Lisa Baumann in Seattle contributed to this report. AP freelance photographer Paula Bronstein also contributed to this report from Talent and Phoenix, Oregon.

Media access to wildfires, disasters varies widely by state

By JANIE HAR and FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Journalists have captured searing, intimate images of active and dangerous wildfires burning in California, due in large part to a decades-old state law that guarantees press virtually unfettered access to disaster sites in evacuated areas that are off-limits to the public.

That's not the case everywhere as rules about media access vary by state, and even by government agency.

Wildfires are raging in several states in the western U.S., scorching an unprecedented amount of land, forcing tens of thousands of people from their homes and killing at least 23 people across Oregon, Washington and California. But the images and words the public sees vary greatly because of the level of access granted journalists.

Daniel Berlant, an assistant deputy director with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, said beyond the law, California journalists are given free reign because fire officials want the public to understand and see what is at stake.

"During a natural disaster and during a wildfire, people are making decisions about their family and their own safety, and in many cases, people are going to follow our request for evacuations if they're actually able to see how destructive the disaster is," he said.

Some other states only allow journalists behind fire lines with escorts, while others rarely grant permission for reporters to get anywhere near an active wildfire, saying that safety is paramount.

New Mexico prohibits journalists from going into areas where wildfires actively are burning, said Wendy Mason, a former television journalist who is now spokeswoman for the New Mexico State Forestry Division. She said journalists could face penalties from local sheriffs offices.

"You certainly would get a good talking to and immediately moved out of the area," she said.

Scott Stoddard, editor of the Daily Courier in Grants Pass, Oregon, has been arguing for years for that state to match California's law. Journalists there can't go past roadblocks without an escort, weakening the coverage that's critical to the community, he said.

It's particularly ridiculous when residents and even campers with reservations are allowed access, but not the people whose job is to inform the public, he said.

"There were no photojournalists to witness those flames," he said of the fire that wiped out much of small Oregon town of Phoenix. "It's either photos provided by an agency or residents, and that seems out of balance when the professional storytellers aren't there on the scene."

In Washington state, media can't go behind fire lines without an escort, protective gear and advance training. Even then, photographers and reporters may be denied access if conditions are too dangerous, said Bobbi Cussins, spokeswoman for the Department of Natural Resources.

State, federal and tribal agencies in Arizona consider fire behavior and weather air operations among other things before deciding whether to escort journalists in protective gear to the fire line, said Tiffany Davila, a spokeswoman for the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management.

"We try to provide as much access as possible and get the reporter as close to the fire without jeopardizing the safety of the journalist and the fire personnel," she said.

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News media access to wildfires is severely limited in Colorado and in neighboring Utah. Reporters cannot enter areas that have been evacuated or declared part of a firefighting zone, often leaving journalists miles from the flames and dependent on media briefings by fire officers and local authorities.

County sheriffs decide whether to allow access — and rarely, if ever, grant it during an active fire — under Colorado statute. Utah journalists face similar restrictions.

Because of a 1986 court ruling that enshrined media access, the same California law that allows officials to cordon off areas to the public following a natural disaster specifically allows the media to access them, said Berlant. But he's also had to remind law enforcement tasked with patrolling evacuated areas to let reporters through.

"My job is to make sure the media is communicating to the public what is happening," he said.

The law does not apply to wildfires on federal land, and law enforcement is still permitted to cordon off any area that may be a crime scene.

Jim Cross, a longtime radio reporter in Arizona, said the difficulty in covering wildfires in Arizona is the vastness of the state. Media staging areas often are far from the wildfires themselves with evacuees sent to the closest community.

"Access has always been hard in Arizona," he said. "It's way more difficult than California, but I will tell you there are some fires going in California and Oregon now that I don't even want to be close to. Honestly, I don't know if I've ever seen a wildfire season like this."

Mickey H. Osterreicher, general counsel for the National Press Photographers Association, said variety of rules "really kind of boggles the mind," but speedy access to photos, video and first-hand accounts is critical to keeping the public informed.

"The First Amendment is there to protect the right of the public to receive information, and part of receiving information is getting visual images of what's going on," he said.

Fonseca reported from Flagstaff, Arizona. Associated Press writers Rachel La Corte in Olympia, Washington, Jim Anderson in Denver and Sara Cline in Salem, Oregon contributed to this report.

Chiefs begin title defense with 34-20 victory over Texans

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Just about the only thing that looked familiar about the NFL's long-awaited return Thursday night was the sight of Patrick Mahomes effortlessly leading the Kansas City Chiefs up and down the field.

The Super Bowl MVP threw for 211 yards and three touchdowns, Clyde Edwards-Helaire ran through the rain for 138 yards and another score, and the Chiefs began defense of their first championship in 50 years by beating the Houston Texans 34-20 on Thursday night before a socially distanced crowd of about 17,000 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Travis Kelce, Sammy Watkins and Tyreek Hill each caught TD passes for the Chiefs. They have won 10 straight dating to last season. That run includes a come-from-behind 51-31 victory over the Texans in the divisional round of the playoffs.

"I'm proud of our players but I'm also proud of our fans. They came out there. They were loud," said Chiefs coach Andy Reid, who claimed he didn't notice some booing from fans during a pregame moment of unity involving both teams.

"Obviously, our players, both sides of the ball and special teams, I thought they were solid," Reid continued. "For the first game there were some good things that were done, some great individual performances."

The Texans' Deshaun Watson threw a touchdown pass and ran for another score, but he also was under relentless pressure and was intercepted once. David Johnson provided the biggest bright spot for Houston, running for 77 yards and a score.

"There's a lot to fix," Texans coach Bill O'Brien said. "It's only one game. We have to improve pretty quickly. But it's only one game. We have to get back to work pretty soon and fix these things."

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The world has changed dramatically in the seven months since the Chiefs hoisted the Lombardi Trophy in Miami.

Within six weeks, the term COVID-19 had become a part of everyday life, the disease killing more than 900,000 people around the globe. The death of George Floyd at the knee of a white Minneapolis police officer in May touched off the Black Lives Matter movement, which in turn has led to a summer of social unrest that has gripped the country.

Against that backdrop came an NFL opener unlike any other: masks worn by everyone from fans to the coaching staffs; a series of videos raising awareness of social justice initiatives and encouraging the public to vote; and ultimately both teams locking arms in a display of unity prior to the coin toss.

To the relief of many, kickoff finally brought 4 hours of normalcy.

The Texans, who blew a 24-point lead against Kansas City in the the playoffs, struck first when they marched 80 yards for a touchdown. The elusive Johnson finished it off by scampering 19 yards to the end zone for a 7-0 lead.

But just like that cold January day, the red-hot Chiefs quickly overcame their slow start.

They tied it moments later when Mahomes threw a short touchdown pass to Kelce, then took the lead when they forced a quick punt and Mahomes found Watkins in the end zone. Harrison Butker capped the first half by kicking a chip-shot field goal that sent the Chiefs to the locker room with a 17-7 lead.

Edwards-Helaire, their first-round pick, padded the lead in the third quarter. After ripping off an 11-yard gain early in the drive, the pint-sized dynamo out of LSU unleashed a wicked stutter-step before running 27 yards for another score.

"H'es just another weapon I have in this offense," Mahomes said.

The Chiefs put the game away when rookie L'Jarius Sneed picked off Watson's jump ball in the closing seconds of the third quarter. Mahomes was bailed out of a fourth-down interception by pass interference in the end zone, then he zipped a dart to Hill streaking across the field for a 31-7 lead early in the fourth quarter.

"We just trust whatever Coach Reid is dialing up," said Kelce, who finished with six catches for 50 yards. "They do an unbelievable job preparing us and scheming up defenses and we just trust what they're doing."

Watson threw a touchdown pass and ran for a TD later in the quarter to make the final score a bit more respectable.

"It was a little different but the fans did what they did for their home team and that was pretty much it," Watson said. "We just got to continue to do our job, find the rhythm, get guys on the same page and that's pretty much it."

UPON FURTHER REVIEW

The Chiefs had a touchdown on their opening series brought back when the officials determined Demarcus Robinson failed to control a 36-yard pass from Mahomes in the end zone. They had another overturned when Watkins caught a 9-yard pass in the second quarter, though he wound up catching a screen pass for a TD two plays later.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Chiefs lined up along the goal line about 30 minutes before kickoff and watched Alicia Keyes perform "Lift Every Voice and Sing," which is often considered the Black national anthem, in a video designed to address racial inequality.

The Texans had already left the field when the demonstration occurred. They remained there until R&B duo Chloe x Halle finished a virtual performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner," then ran onto the field to a chorus of boos from fans.

Some fans were still booing when the teams met at midfield and shook hands. The teams then stood together in a line that stretched from one end zone to the other for a moment of silence before the coin toss.

"Listen, I didn't really notice it," Reid said of the booing. "I thought that was kind of a neat deal, both sides coming together for a cause. The story was told there. Whether it was the national anthems and

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how those were presented, the singers — Alicia Keyes was phenomenal — and then guys joining hands together for a cause. Really just to make us all better and a stronger country than we all are. We have a chance to be unstoppable when we all come together.”

SUPER CELEBRATION

In a relatively muted celebration, the Chiefs unveiled their Super Bowl banner and presented the Lombardi Trophy to their fans — along with a 20-foot replica that was wheeled onto the field — about 15 minutes before the game began.

INJURIES

Chiefs: DT Khalen Saunders (elbow) left in the first quarter with an elbow injury. DE Alex Okafor hurt his hamstring in the third and did not return. CB Charvarius Ward left in the fourth quarter with a hand injury.

Texans: RB Duke Johnson left in the fourth quarter with a leg injury. He did not return.

UP NEXT

The Texans play their home opener against the Ravens on Sept. 20. The Chiefs visit the Chargers the same day.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

Trump, struggling to define Biden, steps up Harris attacks

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Donald Trump barely mentioned Tim Kaine when he was the Democratic vice presidential nominee in 2016. But four years later, the president has plenty to say about Kamala Harris.

Trump said this week that “nobody likes” Harris, feeding into a standard of likability that is applied to women in leadership far more often than men. He told voters in North Carolina it would be “an insult to our country” if Harris became the first female president. And Trump and his allies repeatedly mispronounce Harris’ first name, a pattern her supporters say amounts to a deliberate effort to portray the daughter of immigrants as someone who does not belong at the top ranks of politics.

Trump is focusing on Harris as he has sometimes struggled to land on a consistent, coherent attack against Biden, who has built a reputation as a bipartisan deal maker rather than a progressive ideologue. And the racism and sexism underlying Trump’s critique of the first Black woman and person of Asian descent on a major party ticket are part of an aggressive strategy to appeal to white suburban voters.

“It’s hard to see that as not somehow tied to what you view as ‘our country,’” said Kelly Dittmar, director of research and scholar at the Center for American Women and Politics at the Eagleton Institute of Politics.

For her part, Harris has been sharp in her criticism of Trump, but has largely limited her comments to the president’s job performance. Campaigning in Miami on Thursday, she called Trump “reckless” for downplaying the potential toll of the coronavirus while privately describing it as “deadly stuff.”

Tim Murtaugh, communications director for the Trump campaign, made clear that Biden, not Harris, would remain their main focus. But he leaned into the argument that Harris was one of the radical forces now steering the nominee.

“Kamala Harris and her voting record helps make the case against Joe Biden,” Murtaugh said.

The strategy could be risky for Trump. Black voters already overwhelmingly support Biden and sustained criticism of Harris could fuel their enthusiasm to show up in November, potentially swaying the election in states such as North Carolina, Florida, Pennsylvania and Michigan. A Harris spokeswoman declined to comment on Trump’s latest attacks.

It’s also unusual for an incumbent president to attack their opponent’s running mate. Doing so would typically be seen as punching down.

More fundamentally, the effort to characterize Harris as a radical liberal doesn’t fit her record.

Harris has never been embraced by some elements of the progressive left due to her background as a California prosecutor and attorney general. When she joined the ticket in August, Republicans called her both an overzealous prosecutor trying to hide her crime-fighting past and someone who was soft on crime.

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Like Biden, Harris has staked out relatively moderate stances over the course of her career on issues such as health care and law enforcement. She co-sponsored Sen. Bernie Sanders' Medicare for All proposal in the Senate, which the Trump campaign points to as evidence of her liberal voting record, but moderated her stance during her own presidential bid.

And without a clear message, Trump has reverted to his usual playbook, resorting to sexist and racist attacks.

"You know who's further left than Crazy Bernie? Kamala. Kamala. Kamala," Trump said, mispronouncing and stretching out each syllable of her name each time he said it in North Carolina.

The repeated mispronunciation of Harris' first name, which several Trump allies have mimicked, seemed deliberately racist and akin to the president's former habit of referring to his predecessor as "Barack Hussein Obama" and recalling Trump's false claim that Obama was ineligible to serve office.

Trump has long relied on similar smears against female foes, particularly women of color, demeaning them, questioning their patriotism or calling them "nasty" or "angry."

In an excerpt released Wednesday from Bob Woodward's new book, Trump, while reviewing coverage of his State of the Union address, pointed to calm or otherwise expressionless shots of Harris and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez during his speech, reportedly exclaiming: "Hate! See the hate! See the hate!"

He's also called Harris "nasty" for her questioning of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh during his confirmation hearings.

Though Harris isn't at the top of the ticket, running mates can help shape how voters perceive the presidential candidate, said Christopher Devine, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Dayton (Ohio), who has written a book on presidential running mates. By elevating and trying to define Harris, the Trump campaign is trying to change how voters view Biden.

"Clearly (Trump) doesn't feel like he can demonize Joe Biden very effectively," Devine said. "So they've been making this argument that he's going to be a Trojan horse, a vehicle for elements of the far left to take over and so they're trying to fit Kamala Harris into this slot."

Lemire reported from New York.

Peru's Indigenous turn to ancestral remedies to fight virus

By RODRIGO ABD Associated Press

PUCALLPA, Peru (AP) — As COVID-19 spread quickly through Peru's Amazon, the Indigenous Shipibo community decided to turn to the wisdom of their ancestors.

Hospitals were far away, short on doctors and running out of beds. Even if they could get in, many of the ill were too fearful to go, convinced that stepping foot in a hospital would only lead to death.

So Mery Fasabi gathered herbs, steeped them in boiling water and instructed her loved ones to breathe in the vapors. She also made syrups of onion and ginger to help clear congested airways.

"We had knowledge about these plants, but we didn't know if they'd really help treat COVID," the teacher said. "With the pandemic we are discovering new things."

The coronavirus pandemic's ruthless march through Peru — the country with the world's highest per-population confirmed COVID-19 mortality rate — has compelled many Indigenous groups to find their own remedies. Decades of under-investment in public health care, combined with skepticism of modern medicine, mean many are not getting standard treatments like oxygen therapy to treat severe virus cases.

In the Ucayali region, government rapid response teams deployed to a handful of Indigenous communities have found infection rates as high as 80% through antibody testing. Food and medicine donations have reached only a fraction of the population. Many say the only state presence they have seen is from a group responsible for collecting bodies of the dead.

At a spot known as "Kilometer 20" near the city of Pucallpa, a new cemetery has sprung to life with the remains of about 400 people.

"We've always been forgotten," said Roberto Wikleff, 49, a Shipibo man who turned to Fasabi's treat-

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ments to help treat his COVID-19. "We don't exist for them."

Peru is home to one of Latin America's largest Indigenous populations, whose ancestors lived in the Andean country before the arrival of Spanish colonists. Entire tribes were wiped out by infectious diseases introduced by the Europeans. Today many live and work in urban areas, but others reside in remote parts of the Amazon that have few doctors, let alone the capacity to do complex molecular testing or treatment for the virus.

Wikleff said the 10 doctors, nurses and aides who usually staff a nearby clinic abandoned their posts when the coronavirus arrived. The Shipibo had tried to prevent COVID-19's entrance by blocking roads and isolating themselves. But in May, he and others nonetheless came down with fevers, coughs, difficulty breathing and headaches.

A month later, he was still feeling ill and turned to Fasabi, who along with 15 other volunteers had set up a makeshift treatment center.

"I was taken there in agony," he recalled.

The Shipibo highlight the use of a plant known locally as "matico." The *buddleja globosa* plant has green leaves and a tangerine-colored flower. Fasabi said that by no means are the remedies a cure, but their holistic approach is proving effective. Unlike in hospitals, volunteers equipped in masks get close to patients, giving them words of encouragement and touching them through massage.

"We are giving tranquility to our patients," she said.

Juan Carlos Salas, director of Ucayali's regional health agency, said efforts to expand hospital capacity have proven only marginally successful. The region of about a half million people located along a winding river had just 18 ICU beds at the start of the pandemic and today has around 28. A shortage of specialists means they have not been able to staff all the beds.

At the peak of the outbreak in May and June, around 15 people were dying a day, he said. Overall, about 14,000 cases have been diagnosed, likely a vast undercount.

"We didn't have a way of tending to patients," he said. "We couldn't accept more."

He said transportation is one of the biggest hurdles in treating Indigenous groups, some of which can only be reached by helicopter or an eight-hour boat ride. Pucallpa's bustling port where wood, bananas and other fruit are loaded onto ships for export is believed to be one main source of contagion.

Of about 59,000 rapid antibody tests, some 2,500 were administered to Indigenous groups.

"We were surprised," Salas said. "The majority had been infected."

Lizardo Cauper, president of the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest, said that of about 500,000 Indigenous people living in the Amazon, his group estimates that 147,000 have been infected by the virus and 3,000 have died.

While the lucky recover with ancestral remedies, the less fortunate often die at home. A government team travels from one spartan, thatch-roofed home to the next, plucking the dead from the beds and chairs where they took their last breaths. The poor are taken to the COVID-19 cemetery and interred in the burnt-orange dirt.

Rider Sol Sol, 48, said he and a crew of gravediggers buried up to 30 people a day at the height of the pandemic. The father of four had been out of work before getting this gravedigger's job.

"I give thanks to God that I have a job," he said.

These days, with the death count lower, he is the only man working most days. Alone amidst rows of white crosses, he tries not to let his mind drift toward the what ifs. The bodies come with a name and a number and he does not ponder their stories.

He keeps his mask on, digs into the earth and drinks from a bottle with matico.

Associated Press writer Christine Armario in Bogota, Colombia, contributed to this report.

Trump revels in packed Michigan crowd amid book fallout

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

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FREELAND, Mich. (AP) — Reeling from another crisis of his own making, President Donald Trump tried to refocus attention on his Democratic rival at a rally in battleground Michigan Thursday as he pushed to move past revelations that he purposefully played down the danger of the coronavirus last winter.

But the virus controversy followed him as he faced new pushback from local officials worried about the growing size of his rallies and his campaign's repeated flouting of public health guidelines intended to halt the COVID-19 spread. That includes Michigan's Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who raised alarms about Thursday's event, warning it would make recovery harder.

Trump, however, reveled in the crowd of several thousand, packed shoulder-to-shoulder in a cavernous airport hangar, mostly without masks — with Air Force One on display as his backdrop.

"This is not the crowd of a person who comes in second place," Trump declared to cheers as he railed against Whitmer for current state restrictions.

"Tell your governor to open up your state!" he demanded, saying Michigan would be better if it "had a governor who knew what the hell she was doing."

Before departing the White House, Trump denied he had lied to the nation as he continued to grapple with fallout from a new book by Washington Post journalist Bob Woodward. In a series of interviews with Woodward, the president spoke frankly about the dangers posed by the virus — even as he downplayed them publicly — and admitted he had tried to mislead the public.

"Donald Trump knew all along just how deadly this virus is," Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden said in a virtual fundraiser. "He knew and purposefully played it down because all he was concerned about was his reelection, didn't want to affect economic growth."

Trump, answering questions at the White House, insisted "there was no lie" in his often dismissive public comments and said he was only trying to project calm. He offered a similar explanation to his Michigan supporters while taking a potshot at Woodward and even comparing himself to Prime Minister Winston Churchill leading the British through Nazi bombings in World War II.

"This wack job that wrote the book, he said, 'well Trump knew a little bit,'" Trump told the crowd. "They wanted me to come out and scream, 'people are dying, we're dying.' No, no. We did it just the right way. We have to be calm. We don't want to be crazed lunatics."

But Trump seemed to have no issue leaning into fear at the rally. He lobbed several unsubstantiated accusations at Biden and Democrats, including charging that they want to shut down auto plants — despite the Obama administration's work to save the industry — and "delay" the production of a coronavirus vaccine. Biden, he claimed, would terminate travel bans Trump has implemented, overwhelming the state "with poorly vetted migrants from jihadist regions" and refugees "from terrorist hot spots around the world."

And he continued his racially charged appeal to suburban voters who turned to Democrats during the 2018 midterms, warning that under a Biden administration, "far left lunatics" would be placed in charge of the federal government and courts and American suburbs would be destroyed.

"Does anyone want to have a member of antifa as a resident of your suburb? I don't think so," Trump declared, telling his supporters, "Your vote will save America."

Trump has resumed an aggressive campaign schedule, despite the ongoing pandemic and amid growing resistance from local leaders who have expressed alarm at his insistence on holding large-scale rallies as Americans continue to get sick and die.

While the rallies so far have been held in open-air airport hangars, they have been drawing thousands of supporters despite local restrictions. And the majority of attendees, including in Michigan, have refused to wear masks, even when mandates are in place. Trump has characterized the rallies as "peaceful protests."

This week, the state of Nevada became the first to scuttle his plans for rallies initially set for Las Vegas and Reno, after the Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority warned a company that planned to host 5,000 people at a private hangar it would be in violation of the governor's restrictions banning gatherings of more than 50 people and the terms of the company's lease for the hangar.

"Outrageous!" tweeted Adam Laxalt, Trump's Nevada campaign co-chair, in response.

In Michigan, Gov. Whitmer did not try to stop the rally, but warned that such events "threaten all that sacrifice that we've made."

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"If the rallies are like those he's held in recent days in other states, with lots of people close together without masks on projecting their voices, I'm concerned about it," she said Thursday morning.

Michigan currently caps outdoor events at 100 people and mandates that attendees wear masks if they cannot consistently stay 6 feet away from people who are not part of their households. There is an exception, though, for outdoor expressive activities protected by the First Amendment. The governor's office said people still must maintain distance.

Michigan is a vital Electoral College battleground, which Trump won by only 10,704 votes in 2016, helping him breach the Democrats' "blue wall." While Trump aides had all but written off the state earlier this summer, they now say they have seen a tightening. Democrats see optimism, too, having made major gains there in the 2018 midterms, winning every major statewide office and a handful of congressional seats as well.

Both candidates have been paying frequent visits, with Biden traveling to suburban Detroit on Wednesday to make a direct appeal to blue-collar workers who might have voted Republican four years ago but now regret it.

Trump on Thursday pushed back, accusing Biden of supporting trade deals and policies that led to U.S. job losses.

"Joe Biden devoted his career to offshoring Michigan's jobs," Trump said, drawing boos from the crowd. "Biden supported every disastrous globalist sellout for over a half a century."

Michigan's unemployment rate spiked at 24% in April, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. It has since recovered to 8.7%, but Michigan has nearly 414,500 fewer jobs than it did when Trump was inaugurated.

Associated Press writers David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan, Brian Slodysko in Washington, Bill Barrow in Atlanta, and Jonathan Lemire in New York contributed to this report.

10 now dead in massive Northern California wildfire

By ADAM BEAM and BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

GRIDLEY, Calif. (AP) — A Northern California wildfire became the state's deadliest of the year Thursday when authorities announced seven more deaths, bringing the total to 10 and there was the unnerving prospect the toll would climb as searchers looked for 16 missing people.

Butte County sheriff's deputies and detectives found seven bodies on Thursday, a day after three other victims were discovered. Among those unaccounted for are Sandy Butler and her husband, who called their son to say they were going to try to escape the flames by finding shelter in a pond.

"We're still hoping and praying for good news," said Jessica Fallon, who has two children with the Butler's grandson and considers them her own grandparents. "Everything is replaceable, but not my grandparents' lives. I'd rather lose everything than those two. They kind of held the family together."

More bodies could be found as crews manage to make their way into devastated areas. A team of anthropologists from Chico State University were helping in the search, sheriff's Capt. Derek Bell said.

The weeks-old fire was about 50% contained when winds thrashed it into explosive growth on Tuesday, driving it through rugged Sierra Nevada foothills and destroying much of the town of Berry Creek.

More than 2,000 homes and other buildings had burned in the lightning-sparked collection of fires now known as the North Complex burning about 125 miles (200 kilometers) northeast of San Francisco.

Forecasters said there was some good news on the weather front: winds were expected to remain lighter this week in the fire area, while dense smoke actually knocked down the temperature slightly and was expected to kept the humidity somewhat higher.

The fire is among five this year that have set records for the most land ever burned, including a blaze that broke the mark Thursday as the largest ever.

More than 4,800 square miles (12,500 square kilometers) have burned so far this year — more land than Rhode Island, Delaware and Washington, D.C., combined — and fall is typically the worst season for fires.

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Nineteen people have been killed and nearly 4,000 structures have burned across the state.

The fires, fed by drought-sapped vegetation amid warming temperatures attributed to climate change, have spread at an alarming rate and given people less time to flee.

Hundreds of campers, hikers, and people spending Labor Day weekend at mountainside reservoirs and retreats had to be evacuated by military helicopter when they got stranded by a fast-moving fire that broke out in the Sierra National Forest in the center of the state during record-setting high temperatures.

President Donald Trump spoke with Gov. Gavin Newsom on Thursday "to express his condolences for the loss of life and reiterate the administration's full support to help those on the front lines of the fires," according to White House spokesman Judd Deere.

The North Complex fire is the 10th largest in the record books and growing as firefighters try to prevent it from advancing toward the town of Paradise, where the most destructive fire in state history two years ago killed 85 people and destroyed 19,000 buildings.

Authorities lifted an evacuation warning for Paradise on Thursday, the day after residents awoke to similar skies as the 2018 morning when a wind-whipped inferno reduced the town to rubble. Under red skies and falling ash Wednesday, many chose to flee again, jamming the main road out of town in another replay of the catastrophe two years ago.

About 20,000 people were under evacuation orders or warnings in three counties from the fire.

Some 14,000 firefighters continued to try to corral 29 major wildfires from the Oregon border to just north of Mexico, though California was almost entirely free of critical fire weather warnings after days of hot, dry conditions and the threat of strong winds.

Smoke blew into vineyards in wine country north of San Francisco, and rose above scenic Big Sur on the Central Coast and in the foothills and mountains of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and San Diego counties in the southern part of the state.

Numerous fires continued to burn in Washington and Oregon, as well, and dense smoke blanketed much of the West Coast on Thursday morning, darkening skies with hazardous air pollution.

A fire raging along the Oregon border destroyed 150 homes near the community of Happy Camp and one person was confirmed dead, the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office said. About 400 more homes were threatened.

The fire that roared into the hamlet of Berry Creek, with a population of 525, incinerated countless homes and largely destroyed Camp Okizu, a summer getaway for children with cancer.

A crew fighting the fire was overrun by flames when winds shifted and its members escaped with only minor injuries after deploying emergency shelters. It was the second time in two days that firefighters in California had to take the rare last-ditch effort to save their lives.

Fallon, who had driven from the San Francisco Bay Area after hearing the Butlers were missing Wednesday morning, waited with her toddler son and 2-year-old daughter with dozens of evacuees gathered at a fairgrounds in the small city of Gridley, trembling in morning cold.

Among them was Douglas Johnsrude, who packed up his eight dogs and fled his home in the community of Feather Falls on Tuesday.

Johnsrude said he assumed his house trailer burned, which would be the second time he's lost his home in a fire. He inherited his mother's house after her death, but it was destroyed in a 2017 fire.

"The reason I haven't rebuilt up there is because I knew it was going to happen again. And guess what? It happened again," he said. "Seeing the smoke and the flames and everything else, it's unreal. It's like an apocalypse or something."

Butte County spokeswoman Amy Travis described the evacuation center as a staging area while officials line up hotel rooms for families displaced by the fire amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"COVID has changed the way we do sheltering," she said. "We don't have a lot of hotel rooms here in Butte County, and a lot of them are definitely busy with people that have already made their own hotel arrangements for evacuations."

Fallon said she'd been peppering hospitals with phone calls in search of her grandparents.

Her daughter, Ava, doesn't understand what's going on. She thinks they're camping. The girl typically

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speaks with her great-grandmother two to three times a day.

"I'm tossing and turning. I have just such bad anxiety. I'm just really worried about my grandparents," Fallon said. "I'm hoping that they're up there sitting in some water waiting to be rescued."

Melley reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers John Antczak in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Charges, sanctions revive specter of Russian interference

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration on Thursday charged a Russian national in a sweeping plot to sow distrust in the American political process and imposed sanctions against a Russia-linked Ukrainian lawmaker accused of interfering in the U.S. presidential election.

Those actions, combined with a Microsoft announcement on hacking attempts targeting U.S. political campaigns, parties and consultants, underscore the extent to which the same cyber intrusions and foreign influence operations that defined the 2016 White House race remain a persistent concern today.

They also reflect a dichotomy in the administration, with officials taking aim at Russian interference in the political process even as President Donald Trump expresses doubt about the meddling. In the case of the sanctions, officials denounced as advancing a false narrative audio recordings that had been released by the Ukrainian parliamentarian and promoted by Trump on Twitter.

The criminal charges accuse Artem Mikhaylovich Lifshits of serving as a translation manager in a Russian effort that since at least 2014 has tried to disrupt the political system in the United States and other countries and spread distrust about candidates. Members of the initiative, known as Project Lakhta, traveled to the U.S to collect intelligence and operated fictitious social media accounts that could pump out messaging to millions of Americans on divisive social issues.

The group operated through entities including the Internet Research Agency, the Russian troll farm charged by special counsel Robert Mueller with stirring up discord before the 2016 election, according to a criminal complaint charging Lifshits with using stolen identities to open fake accounts at banks and digital currency exchanges.

The goal of the department where Lifshits worked was to sow discord, incite civil unrest and polarize Americans with social media posts that touched on hot-button topics including gun rights, immigration, the Confederate flag and race relations, authorities say.

"Project Lakhta members did not exclusively adopt one ideological viewpoint; rather, they wrote on topics from varied and sometimes opposing perspectives," a Secret Service agent wrote in an affidavit supporting the complaint. "Project Lakhta members also developed strategies and guidance to target audiences with conservative and liberal viewpoints, as well as particular social groups."

The Justice Department complaint does not accuse Lifshits or other Project Lakhta members of promoting a particular presidential candidate in the 2020 race. Many of the messages and social media posts referenced in the complaint were early in Trump's first term, well before Democrat Joe Biden emerged as his party's presidential nominee.

Those include a March 2018 tweet, written by a Project Lakhta member using a bogus account, that said, "Just a friendly reminder to get involved in the 2018 Midterms. They are motivated They hate you They hate your morals They hate your 1A and 2A rights They hate the Police They hate the Military They hate YOUR President."

But the complaint makes clear that the influence operations have persisted and even seized on contentious issues of 2020 like race relations.

Lifshits was one of four people cited on Thursday by the Treasury Department, including Andrii Derkach, a Ukrainian lawmaker who was characterized by the U.S. government as "an active Russian agent" for over a decade.

The sanctions announcement said Derkach had interfered in the 2020 election by releasing edited audio recordings earlier this year. Though the announcement did not mention Biden by name, the description

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matched Derkach's disclosure of recordings of conversations between Biden and Ukraine's former president.

The action is the second time in as many months that the administration has called out Derkach by name. U.S. intelligence officials said in a statement last month that Derkach's release of the recordings was part of a broader Russian effort to disparage Biden before the Nov. 3 election.

The administration's move was especially notable because the statement announcing it said Derkach's recordings advance anti-Biden claims that rely on "false and unsubstantiated narratives." Trump has promoted those recordings by retweeting posts that include or reference them.

"Derkach almost certainly targeted the U.S. voting populace, prominent U.S. persons, and members of the U.S. government, based on his reliance on U.S. platforms, English-language documents and videos, and pro-Russian lobbyists in the United States used to propagate his claims," the Treasury Department said in a statement.

Derkach is a graduate of a Russian spy academy who, the Treasury Department says, maintains close ties to Russian intelligence services.

"Andrii Derkach and other Russian agents employ manipulation and deceit to attempt to influence elections in the United States and elsewhere around the world," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a statement. "The United States will continue to use all the tools at its disposal to counter these Russian disinformation campaigns and uphold the integrity of our election system."

Rep. Adam Schiff of California, the Democratic chairman of the House intelligence committee, called the sanctions "appropriate and welcome."

Derkach released at a May news conference audio of purported conversations between Biden, while vice president, and Ukraine's former president, Petro Poroshenko.

The release was intended to promote a baseless narrative that Biden had demanded the firing of Ukraine's top prosecutor because the prosecutor was investigating a gas company in Ukraine where Biden's son Hunter held a board seat. Biden was representing the official position of the Obama administration and many Western allies in seeking the removal of the prosecutor who was perceived as soft on corruption.

The other three people who were sanctioned are connected to the IRA.

Also on Thursday, Microsoft said that the same Russian military intelligence outfit that hacked the Democrats in 2016 has attempted similar intrusions into the computer systems of more than 200 organizations, including political parties and consultants. Most of the infiltration attempts by Russian, Chinese and Iranian agents were halted by Microsoft security software and the targets notified.

Associated Press writer Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

Climate change largely missing from campaign as fires rage

By AAMER MADHANI, KATHLEEN RONAYNE and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Historic fires are raging across the western United States ahead of what scientists say is the typical peak of wildfire season. Hurricane Laura devastated parts of the Gulf Coast last month, while swaths of Iowa are recovering from a derecho that brought hurricane force winds to the Midwest.

The streak of disasters has left millions of Americans reeling. But it's barely had an impact on the campaign for the White House, in part because of the vulnerabilities it highlights for President Donald Trump and his Democratic challenger, Joe Biden.

The president is already facing multiple challenges, including the pandemic, joblessness and social unrest, and can ill afford another one. When he talks about California, where fires have killed at least a dozen people and threatened thousands of homes, it's mostly to blast the state's Democratic leaders.

And for Biden, the spreading fires are a reminder to the party's progressive base that he doesn't embrace some of the most liberal elements of the Green New Deal, the grand plan for tackling climate change.

"The Biden campaign understands that a full embrace of an aggressive climate change agenda could create problems for them in Upper Midwest," said Dan Schnur, who served as an adviser to former Califor-

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nia Gov. Pete Wilson and Arizona Sen. John McCain. "Trump has shown no desire to talk about California beyond using it as a liberal punching bag to make his case to his conservative base."

Still, climate activists say the moment underscores the need for Washington to support the Green New Deal, an ambitious — and likely costly — plan to wean the U.S. from fossil fuels and drastically cut greenhouse gas emissions.

"It's no surprise that Trump isn't talking about the fact that America is literally in flames on his watch — but why isn't Biden?" said Rebecca Katz, a political strategist who has worked with Democratic congressional candidates supporting the measure. "For Democrats to not connect what's happening on the West Coast to Trump's failure on climate change is just political malpractice."

The Biden campaign's response to the fires is especially notable since his running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris, represents California in the Senate. She was campaigning in Miami on Thursday, but her spokesperson, Sabrina Singh, said Biden and Harris "have been closely monitoring the wildfires raging across the state and highlighting the urgent need to address the threat of climate change."

Biden tweeted that climate change "is already here — and we're witnessing its devastating effects every single day."

"We have to get President Trump out of the White House and treat this crisis like the existential threat that it is," he said.

While Biden hasn't embraced the full Green New Deal, he has promised to make creating new green jobs and drastically reducing U.S. carbon emissions part of a larger recovery plan designed to revive the economy after the coronavirus abates. Biden's top advisers note that many of his proposals will move the country toward the Green New Deal, but some activists worry it is not ambitious enough.

"I'm looking outside my window right now. Literally the world looks like it's on fire. For young people across the board, but especially young Latinos, we also care very deeply about climate change, not just like immigration," said Christian Arana, policy director for the California-based Latino Community Foundation. "This is a perfect moment to get on TikTok or do an interview with Teen Vogue or whoever to talk about these issues."

Trump spoke with California Gov. Gavin Newsom on Thursday "to express his condolences for the loss of life and reiterate the administration's full support to help those on the frontlines of the fires," according to White House spokesman Judd Deere.

But the president has a history of criticizing California's response to wildfires and threatening to withhold federal funding.

In 2019, months after the deadliest wildfire in California history tore through the town of Paradise in Northern California, Trump said the Federal Emergency Management Agency should stop giving the state money and blamed the fires on poor forest management. Fire scientists say climate change, not forest management, is a driving factor behind the state's fires becoming worse and more deadly.

Still, Trump has always approved California's request for major disaster declarations, as he did Aug. 22 as the state battled blazes across Northern California.

That approval came a day after he again blamed California for mismanagement and Newsom hit back in a video that aired during the Democratic National Convention in which he highlighted Trump's threats.

"Just today the president of the United States threatened the state of California, 40 million Americans who happen to live in the state of California, to defund our efforts on wildfire suppression because he said we hadn't raked enough leaves. You can't make that up," Newsom said.

Trump visited Iowa last month to meet with officials there about the derecho, and he surveyed damage on the Louisiana-Texas border following Hurricane Laura.

Trump visited California in November 2018 after Paradise was ravaged by the most deadly wildfire in state history. But he currently has no plans to visit areas on the West Coast impacted by the fires, according to a senior administration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The official, who was not authorized to speak about the president's travel plans, said it would be unwise for Trump to visit while the fires are still active as it would divert key first responder resources away from

the fire fight.

Madhani reported from Chicago and Weissert reported from Washington.

Stunned residents tour Oregon town devastated by wildfires

By GILLIAN FLACCUS and ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

PHOENIX, Ore. (AP) — Stunned residents of the small Oregon town of Phoenix walked through a scene of devastation Thursday after one of the state's many wildfires wiped out much of their community, including a mobile home park, houses and businesses.

But even as residents in southern Oregon near the California border were assessing their losses, other wildfires in the northwest part of the state were growing, with more people told to flee for their lives.

By Thursday evening, the number of people evacuated statewide because of fires had climbed to an estimated 500,000, the Oregon Office of Emergency Management reported. That's more than 10% of the state's 4.2 million population.

A fire approaching Molalla triggered a mandatory evacuation order for the community of about 9,000 people 30 miles (48 kilometers) south of Portland. A women's prison less than a mile from Interstate 5 in Portland's southern suburbs was being evacuated "out of an abundance of caution," the Oregon Department of Corrections said.

Some firefighters in Clackamas County, which includes Molalla, had been told to disengage because of dangerous fire activity as two large fires in the area were believed to be merging, according to the state fire marshal's office.

After spending the night in their cars in a Home Depot parking lot on the outskirts of Phoenix, a stream of people walked into what was left of the town that hugs Interstate 5. They hauled wagons and carried backpacks and bags to salvage whatever they could.

Jonathan Weir defied evacuation orders as flames 30 feet (9 meters) high shot from the trees. He drove his car to the entrance of a nearby mobile home park, where his tires began melting. His home was destroyed as the fire hopscotched through the town of 4,000 residents.

"There were flames across the street from me, flames to the right of me, flames to the left of me. I just watched everything burn," Weir told a reporter.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency estimated that 600 homes were burned by the fire that started in Ashland and tore through Phoenix, the Mail Tribune of Medford, Oregon, reported.

At least 16 people have died in the wildfires across Oregon, Washington state and California, where hot, dry and windy weather combined to create near-perfect conditions for flames.

The small farming town of Malden in eastern Washington was mostly destroyed, losing its fire station, post office, city hall and library. In California, thousands of homes were threatened Thursday after winds whipped a blaze into a monster that incinerated houses in a small mountain community and killed at least three people. Experts say the California fires are growing bigger and moving faster than ever before.

Oregon officials were shocked by the number of simultaneous fires, which stood at 39 on Thursday morning, according to the state Office of Emergency Management.

Gov. Kate Brown said more than 900,000 acres (364,000 hectares) — greater than the size of Rhode Island — have burned across the state in the past three days — nearly double the territory that burns in a typical year. She told a news conference that the exact number of fatalities was not yet known. More than 80,000 people have fled their homes, Brown tweeted.

"We have never seen this amount of uncontained fire across the state," Brown said.

Back in Phoenix, Jerry Walker fled in his pajamas and only had time to grab some cash. He did not know if his apartment complex survived.

"I've never seen devastation like this ever in my life," Walker said. "I don't know how we're going on to recover."

Phoenix City Councilman Al Muelhoefer said the north end of the town was gone but he had heard of

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no fatalities.

At least three people in Oregon were reported killed, including a boy and his grandmother, and several others critically burned. Deaths in Washington included a 1-year-old boy.

Elsewhere, wildfires damaged towns in a canyon and the foothills of the Cascade Range, where the remains of a boy and his dog were found. Flames also hit the coastal town of Lincoln City and Estacada, 30 miles (48 kilometers) southeast of Portland.

Fires also erupted along I-5, forcing a shutdown Wednesday of the main freeway along the West Coast. U.S. Highway 101, the main coastal highway running through California, Oregon and Washington, was affected too.

Evacuees poured into the state fairgrounds in Salem, many bringing their animals.

Assisted by neighbors and strangers, Catherine Shields evacuated her home in Silverton with a menagerie of animals. As smoke obscured the sun and ash fell from the sky, the group helped load three horses, a donkey, two llamas, a dozen sheep, geese, ducks, turkeys and dogs into trailers and vehicles.

She marveled at how people were pulling together despite the nation's political divisiveness.

"In the last 24 hours, we just felt people are doing their best," Shields said Wednesday as she walked one of the horses at the fairgrounds.

The Jackson County sheriff confirmed at least one death and a criminal investigation at the origin point of a wildfire that started near Ashland, according to the Mail Tribune in Medford.

Lloyd Dean Holland, a Vietnam veteran, barely escaped his home in Estacada on Tuesday night. He left his rental house as flames exploded in cedar trees around him. He said his sole remaining possessions — his dog, rifles, dentures and some clothing — were all in the truck he used to flee.

"I've been through hell and high water but nothing like this. I've been shot down and shot at but this — last night — I'm still not over it," Holland said.

Back in Phoenix, Marty Curtis was luckier. Her house was spared. She escaped with her cat, Louie.

"You could see the flames. You could hear things popping — gas tanks and propane tanks exploding," she said. "I have my house. I have my life. I have my cat and I have my job — and right now, that's all I need."

Selsky reported from Salem, Oregon. Associated Press writers Sara Cline in Salem; Rachel La Corte in Sumner, Washington; Nick Geranios in Spokane, Washington; and Lisa Baumann in Seattle contributed to this report.

Judges: Trump can't exclude people from district drawings

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Saying the president had exceeded his authority, a panel of three federal judges on Thursday blocked an order from President Donald Trump that tried to exclude people in the country illegally from being counted when congressional districts are redrawn.

The federal judges in New York, in granting an injunction, said the presidential order issued in late July was unlawful. The judges prohibited Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, whose agency oversees the U.S. Census Bureau, from excluding people in the country illegally when handing in 2020 census figures used to calculate how many congressional seats each state gets.

According to the judges, the presidential order violated laws governing the execution of the once-a-decade census and also the process for redrawing congressional districts known as apportionment by requiring that two sets of numbers be presented — one with the total count and the other minus people living in the country illegally.

The judges said that those in the country illegally qualify as people to be counted in the states they reside. They declined to say whether the order violated the Constitution.

"Throughout the Nation's history, the figures used to determine the apportionment of Congress — in the language of the current statutes, the 'total population' and the 'whole number of persons' in each State — have included every person residing in the United States at the time of the census, whether citizen or

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non-citizen and whether living here with legal status or without," the judges wrote.

Opponents of the order said it was an effort to suppress the growing political power of Latinos in the U.S. and to discriminate against immigrant communities of color. They also said undocumented residents use the nation's roads, parks and other public amenities and should be taken into account for any distribution of federal resources.

The lawsuits challenging the presidential order in New York were brought by a coalition of cities, civil rights groups and states led by New York. Because the lawsuits dealt with questions about apportionment, it was heard by a three-judge panel that allows the decision to be appealed directly to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The judges agreed with the coalition that the order created confusion among undocumented residents over whether they should participate in the 2020 census, deterring participation and jeopardizing the quality of the census data. That harm to the census was a sufficient basis for their ruling and they didn't need to rely on the speculation that a state would be hurt by possibly losing a congressional seat if people in the country illegally were excluded from apportionment, the judges said.

The head count of every U.S. resident, which which helps determine the distribution of \$1.5 trillion in federal funding as well as apportionment, is set to wrap up at the end of September.

"This is the most blatantly unconstitutional act I've ever encountered in years litigating the federal government," Dale Ho, director of the ACLU's Voting Rights Project, one of the group's that challenged the order, said in an interview.

New York Attorney General Letitia James noted that the federal court in New York also had ruled against the Trump administration in its failed attempt to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census. That case went to the Supreme Court which blocked the citizenship question from being added.

"The courts have ruled in our favor on every census matter in the last two years and continually rejected President Trump's unlawful efforts to manipulate the census for political purposes," James said.

After Trump issued the order in July, around a half dozen lawsuits around the U.S. were filed by states, cities, immigrant advocates and civil rights groups challenging its legality and constitutionality.

The New York case is the first to get a ruling, but there are other issues the New York judges didn't address that could be addressed in the other court cases. Those include whether the order violated governmental administrative procedures and whether the Census Bureau will have to use a statistical method to calculate who is in the country illegally. The Supreme Court has ruled that method, sampling, can't be done for apportionment numbers.

The lawsuits said there was no reliable method for counting people in the U.S. illegally and the order would have diminished the accuracy of the census.

An analysis by Pew Research Center showed that California, Florida and Texas would end up with one less congressional seat if people in the country illegally were excluded from apportionment. Alabama, Minnesota and Ohio would each keep a congressional seat they most likely would have lost if the presidential order were enforced, according to the Pew analysis.

The Commerce Department didn't respond to an emailed inquiry.

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

Dem report: Medicare chief used fed money to bolster image

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Private consultants to the federal official who oversees Medicare billed taxpayers almost \$6 million in less than two years to bolster her personal image, including efforts to win awards, place her on lists of powerful women and arrange meetings with influential people, a report by congressional Democrats said Thursday.

The consultants, many with Republican Party ties, billed taxpayers up to \$380 per hour on work largely aimed at polishing the profile of Medicare administrator Seema Verma, the investigators wrote.

One contractor, Pam Stevens, who's done extensive work for the GOP, charged up to \$330 hourly to

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pursue ideas like asking publications including "Oprah Magazine" and "Garden and Gun" to write articles about Verma. Stevens also seemed to bill at least \$1,117 to arrange an interview that resulted in a Verma profile in AARP The Magazine, the report said.

The contractors were "handpicked" by Verma's aides, the report said, creating "a shadow operation" that sidelined the communications staff of the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The consultants' work often had nothing to do with running Medicare, Medicaid and other massive health programs that the agency operates, said the 56-page report, which was backed by over 1,700 pages of documents. Verma has run the agency since 2017.

"Congress did not intend for Administrator Verma or other senior CMS officials to use taxpayer dollars to stockpile CMS with handpicked consultants or promote Administrator Verma's public profile and personal brand," the report said.

"Given the reckless disregard she has shown for the public's trust, Administrator Verma should reimburse the taxpayers for these inappropriate expenditures," it said.

A Health and Human Services Department official called the report a "political smear" by "far left politicians." The statement by Michael Caputo, the department's assistant secretary for public affairs, did not deny any of the report's specific findings.

"This is just another reckless, politically timed, drive-by hit job on a reform-driven Trump Administration official and, by extension, on President Trump himself," Caputo said. He said Verma "will continue the Administration's unprecedented success transforming the American healthcare system."

The report released Thursday was prepared by the Democratic staffs of two Senate and two House committees. The inspector general of the Department of Health and Human Services, of which Verma's agency is a part, issued similar findings in July.

Thursday's report said that besides burnishing Verma's image, the consultants took the lead fashioning agency communications strategies and had access to sensitive internal information that could affect financial markets.

Marcus Barlow, a consultant who'd previously worked for Verma at a firm in Indiana, billed the Medicare agency for hours comparable to those of full-time workers and had decision-making powers over some federal workers, the report said.

Consultants arranged for private meetings between Verma and hosts of conservative Fox News and editors of Woman's Day and Women's Health Magazine, the investigators wrote.

One memo suggested seeking to land Verma on Washingtonian magazine's list of Washington's most powerful women.

Another document indicated contractors billed at least \$13,000 to offer Verma's name for awards and to participate in other events.

There was also an entry for nearly \$3,000 for a "Girl's Night to honor the Administrator," held at the home of Susan Page, USA Today's Washington bureau chief.

Page wasn't aware that Verma's agency was billed for the event, and personally paid more than \$4,000 for its costs without reimbursement, USA Today said in a statement. The news organization said the Girl's Night events have been held for years, with journalists honoring politicians of both parties.

The report said Verma brought consultants with her on official travel, even when government aides were there, driving up taxpayers's costs. In one instance, Verma took a three-day trip to California, accompanied by three agency aides plus four consultants who charged up to \$310 hourly for some of that time.

Verma worked on health issues under Vice President Mike Pence when he was Indiana governor. She clashed with Democrats as part of President Donald Trump's team when he unsuccessfully tried repealing former President Barack Obama's health care law.

Russian hackers targeting U.S. campaigns, Microsoft says

By FRANK BAJAK AP Technology Writer

BOSTON (AP) — The same Russian military intelligence outfit that hacked the Democrats in 2016 has

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renewed vigorous U.S. election-related targeting, trying to breach computers at more than 200 organizations including political campaigns and their consultants, Microsoft said Thursday.

The intrusion attempts reflect a stepped up effort to infiltrate the U.S. political establishment, the company said. "What we've seen is consistent with previous attack patterns that not only target candidates and campaign staffers but also those who they consult on key issues," Tom Burt, a Microsoft vice president, said in a blog post. U.K. and European political groups were also probed, he added.

Most of the hacking attempts by Russian, Chinese and Iranian agents were halted by Microsoft security software and the targets notified, he said. The company would not comment on who may have been successfully hacked or the impact.

Although U.S. intelligence officials said last month that the Russians favor President Donald Trump and the Chinese prefer his Democratic challenger, former Vice President Joe Biden, Microsoft noted Thursday that Chinese state-backed hackers have targeted "high profile individuals associated with the election," including people associated with the Biden campaign.

China's hackers largely gather intelligence for economic and political advantage, while Russia tends to weaponize stolen data to destabilize other governments.

Microsoft did not assess which foreign adversary poses the greater threat to the integrity of the November presidential election. The consensus among cybersecurity experts is that Russian interference is the gravest. Senior Trump administration officials have disputed that, although without offering any evidence.

"This is the actor from 2016, potentially conducting business as usual," said John Hultquist, director of intelligence analysis at the cybersecurity firm FireEye. "We believe that Russian military intelligence continues to pose the greatest threat to the democratic process."

The Microsoft post shows that Russian military intelligence continues to pursue election-related targets undeterred by U.S. indictments, sanctions and other countermeasures, Hultquist said. It interfered in the 2016 campaign seeking to benefit the Trump campaign by hacking the Democratic National Committee and emails of John Podesta, the campaign manager of Hillary Clinton, and dumping embarrassing material online, congressional and FBI investigators have found.

The same GRU military intelligence unit, known as Fancy Bear, that Microsoft identifies as being behind the current election-related activity also broke into voter registration databases in at least three states in 2016, though there is no evidence it tried to interfere with voting.

Microsoft, which has visibility into these efforts because its software is both ubiquitous and highly rated for security, did not address whether U.S. officials who manage elections or operate voting systems have been targeted by state-backed hackers this year. U.S. intelligence officials say they have so far not seen no evidence of infiltrations.

Thomas Rid, a Johns Hopkins geopolitics expert, said he was disappointed by Microsoft's refusal to differentiate threat level by state actor. "They're lumping in actors that operate in a very different fashion, probably to make this sound more bipartisan," he said. "I just don't understand why."

Microsoft said in the past year it has observed attempts by Fancy Bear to break into the accounts of people directly and indirectly affiliated with the U.S. election, including consultants serving Republican and Democratic campaigns and national and state party organizations — more than 200 groups in all.

Also targeted was the center-right European People's Party, the largest grouping in the European Parliament. A party spokesperson said the hacking attempts were unsuccessful. The German Marshall Fund of the United States, a think tank, was another target. A spokesperson said there was no evidence of intrusion.

Microsoft did not say whether Russian hackers had attempted to break into the Biden campaign but did say that Chinese hackers from the state-backed group known as Hurricane Panda "appears to have indirectly and unsuccessfully" targeted the Biden campaign through non-campaign email accounts belonging to people affiliated with it.

The Biden campaign did not confirm the attempt, although it said in a statement that it was aware of the Microsoft report.

Iranian state-backed hackers have unsuccessfully tried to log into accounts of Trump campaign and administration officials between May and June of this year, the blog said. "We are a large target, so it is

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not surprising to see malicious activity directed at the campaign or our staff," Trump campaign deputy press secretary Thea McDonald said. She declined further comment.

Tim Murtaugh, the campaign's communications director, said: "President Trump will beat Joe Biden fair and square and we don't need or want any foreign interference."

In June, Google disclosed that Hurricane Panda had targeted Trump campaign staffers while Iranian hackers tried to breach accounts of Biden campaign workers. Such phishing attempts typically involve forged emails with links designed to harvest passwords or infect devices with malware.

Although both Attorney General William Barr and National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien have said China represents the greatest threat to U.S. elections, Microsoft's only mention of a Trump administration official targeted by Chinese hackers is "at least one prominent individual formerly associated" with the administration.

Graham Brookie, director of digital forensic research at The Atlantic Council, disputes Barr and O'Brien's claim that China poses the greater threat to this year's election. His lab is at the forefront of unearthing and publicizing Russian disinformation campaigns.

Brookie confirmed that his employer was among targets of Hurricane Panda but said there was no evidence the hacking attempts, which he said were unsuccessful, had anything to do with the 2020 election.

"We have every indication that this was an instance of cyber-espionage, information gathering, as opposed to electoral interference," he said.

By contrast, Brookie said, "it's pretty evident that the Russian attempts (Microsoft disclosed) were focused on electoral processes and groups working on that."

Microsoft noted a shift toward greater automation in Fancy Bear methods for trying to steal people's log-in credentials, which previously largely relied on phishing. In recent months, the group has employed so-called brute-force attacks that barrage an account login with short rapid bursts of potential passwords. It has also used a different method that makes only intermittent login attempts to avoid detection.

Fancy Bear has also stepped up its use of the Tor anonymizing service to hide its hacking, Microsoft said.

—
AP writers Matt O'Brien in Providence, Rhode Island, Jonathan Lemire in Washington and Lorne Cook in Brussels contributed to this report.

Pentagon rescinding order to shutter Stars and Stripes paper

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Defense Department is rescinding its order to shut down the military's independent newspaper, Stars and Stripes, in the wake of a tweet late last week by President Donald Trump vowing to continue funding the paper.

In an email to Stripes' publisher Max Lederer, Army Col. Paul Haverstick said the paper does not have to submit a plan to close. Haverstick, acting director of the Pentagon's Defense Media Activity, said a formal memo is being drafted that will rescind the order to halt publication by Sept. 30, and dissolve the organization by the end of January. The email was obtained by The Associated Press.

"The memo will be provided once it is completed and properly vetted and approved within the Department," said Haverstick's email. "We are trying to get this completed by the weekend, but this timeline may shift based on vetting."

The Defense Department had ordered the paper to shut down following the Pentagon's move earlier this year to cut the \$15.5 million in funding for Stars and Stripes from the budget. Last Friday, as news of the shutdown order trickled out, Trump abruptly tweeted his opposition to the plan.

"The United States of America will NOT be cutting funding to @starsandstripes magazine under my watch," Trump tweeted. "It will continue to be a wonderful source of information to our Great Military!"

Trump's tweet came as he fought off accusations that he called service members killed in World War I "losers" and "suckers" during an event in France in 2018. The comments, first reported by The Atlantic and confirmed by The Associated Press, shined a fresh light on Trump's previous public disparaging of American troops and military families and they delivered a new campaign issue to his Democratic rival

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Joe Biden, less than two months from Election Day.

Trump was alleged to have made the comments about the war dead as he was set to visit the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery during a trip to France in November 2018.

The Trump White House hadn't spoken out against the Pentagon plan to close the paper before last Friday, even though it's been in the works and publicly written about for months and was in the president's budget request. Friday afternoon, however, Trump worked to shore up his reputation as a staunch supporter of the nation's armed services.

Members of Congress have objected to the defunding move for months. And senators sent a letter to Defense Secretary Mark Esper last week urging him to reinstate the money. The letter, signed by 15 senators — including Republicans and Democrats — also warned Esper that the department is legally prohibited from canceling a budget program while a temporary continuing resolution to fund the federal government is in effect.

The House-passed version of the Pentagon's 2021 budget contains funding for the paper's publication, but the Senate has not yet finalized a defense funding bill.

"Stars and Stripes is an essential part of our nation's freedom of the press that serves the very population charged with defending that freedom," the senators said in the letter.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., in a separate letter to Esper in late August, also voiced opposition to the move, calling Stripes "a valued 'hometown newspaper' for the members of the Armed Forces, their families, and civilian employees across the globe." He added that "as a veteran who has served overseas, I know the value that the Stars and Stripes brings to its readers."

Haverstick, in his new email, also said the department is looking into how it will fund Stripes for the next year, since it was not budgeted. And he said the paper will be required to submit a budget plan for the next year.

The first newspaper called Stars and Stripes was very briefly produced in 1861 during the Civil War, but the paper began consistent publication during World War I. When the war was over, publication ended, only to restart in 1942 during World War II, providing wartime news written by troops specifically for troops in battle.

Although the paper gets funding from the Defense Department, it is editorially independent and is delivered in print and digitally to troops all over the world.

Virus bill blocked in Senate as prospects dim for new relief

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democrats scuttled a scaled-back GOP coronavirus rescue package on Thursday as the parties argued to a standstill over the size and scope of the aid, likely ending hopes for coronavirus relief before the November election.

The mostly party-line vote capped weeks of wrangling that gave way to election-season political combat and name-calling over a fifth relief bill that all sides say they want but are unable to deliver. The bipartisan spirit that powered earlier aid measures is all but gone.

Democrats said the measure shortchanged too many pressing needs. Republicans argued it was targeted to areas of widespread agreement, but the 52-47 vote fell well short of what was needed to overcome a filibuster. All the present Democrats opposed it, while conservative Rand Paul, R-Ky., cast the only GOP "nay" vote. The Democratic vice presidential nominee, Kamala Harris, was campaigning in Miami and missed the vote.

"It's a sort of a dead end street, and very unfortunate," said Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kan. "But it is what it is."

The \$650 billion measure is significantly smaller than legislation promoted by Republican leaders this summer. But that version was too big for most conservatives, so the GOP bill was instead stripped back to focus on school aid, jobless benefits and help for small businesses. That maximized Republican support even as it alienated Democrats, who say such a piecemeal approach would leave out far too many vulnerable people.

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The result was a predictable impasse and partisan tit-for-tat as the congressional session limps to its pre-election close. The panicked atmosphere that drove passage of the \$2 trillion landmark CARES Act in March has dissipated as the nation powers through the pandemic with partial reopenings of businesses and schools, though the economy lags and the virus continues to badly disrupt life in the U.S.

It's becoming plain that all Congress will do before the Nov. 3 election is pass legislation to avert a government shutdown. The outcome of the election promises to have an outsize impact on what might be possible in a postelection lame-duck session, with Democrats sure to press for a better deal if Democrat Joe Biden unseats President Donald Trump.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., predicted that Thursday's GOP defeat would prompt Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., back to the negotiating table, as an earlier filibuster in March helped make the \$2 trillion rescue bill more generous.

"But (Thursday's) bill is not going to happen because it is so emaciated, so filled with poison pills, so partisanly designed," Schumer said.

McConnell crafted the measure to permit his GOP colleagues to go on record in favor of popular provisions such as another round of "paycheck protection" help for smaller businesses, help for schools to reopen and supplemental jobless benefits. He again blasted Democrats on Thursday, saying they are still pushing a liberal wish list and are willing to scuttle provisions with widespread backing to deny Trump a victory.

"Today every senator will either say they want to send families the relief we can agree to or they can send families nothing," McConnell said.

There's no indication yet that bipartisan talks that crumbled last month will restart. Top lawmakers and aides offered glum assessments both publicly and privately.

Veteran Iowa Republican Chuck Grassley said it's "sad" there will be no virus aid deal, though he also said the outlook for the economy may not be as bleak as he once thought.

"If you'd asked me, two or three weeks ago I'd say very, very negative," Grassley said. But with the job market improving and "the whole world kind of getting out of this pandemic, depression, we're in" Grassley said, there's "a lot less of an impact than I would have thought two weeks ago."

The stalemate is politically risky for all sides heading into the fall election, and both sides accused the other of acting primarily with political calculations in mind. Democrats said GOP senators need to "check a box" and vote on any kind of relief bill before exiting Washington to campaign while Republicans said Democrats were intent on denying Republicans a political win.

"What is of overwhelming importance to Democrats is keeping coronavirus alive as a political issue," said Sen. John Thune, R-S.D. "They'd rather have no bill, zero funding and a political weapon than have a bill and allow Republicans to say that we helped Americans."

All that's left — barring a breakthrough that looks unlikely now — is to pass a government-wide short-term spending measure that would avert a shutdown at month's end and set up a postelection lame-duck session to deal with any unfinished Capitol Hill legislation, which could include coronavirus relief.

The scaled-back GOP virus plan is roughly one-seventh the size of a whopping Democratic package that passed the house in May and about one-fourth of the \$2.2 trillion set by Pelosi last month. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin mentioned a \$1.5 trillion figure in testimony last week.

The failed measure would have provide \$105 billion to help schools reopen, created a scaled-back \$300-per-week supplemental jobless benefit, and devoted \$258 billion for a second round of paycheck protection subsidies for smaller businesses. Lesser amounts would have furthered vaccine research and development and funded the Postal Service, farmers, and child care.

It did not contain a new round of \$1,200 direct payments to Americans, and the new \$300 weekly jobless benefit would expire just after Christmas, on Dec. 27. The GOP bill also lacked money for election costs that lawmakers from both parties have supported to accommodate a huge influx of mail-in ballots.

Official estimates of the measure's cost were unavailable, but a GOP legislative aide said the cost is about \$650 billion, with about half of the price tag offset by repurposing prior COVID funds.

'Avengers' and 'Game of Thrones' star Diana Rigg dies at 82

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By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Diana Rigg, a commanding British actress whose career stretched from iconic 1960s spy series "The Avengers" to fantasy juggernaut "Game of Thrones," has died. She was 82.

Rigg's agent, Simon Beresford, said she died Thursday morning at home with her family. Daughter Rachael Stirling said she died of cancer that was diagnosed in March.

Rigg "spent her last months joyfully reflecting on her extraordinary life, full of love, laughter and a deep pride in her profession. I will miss her beyond words," Stirling said.

Rigg starred in "The Avengers" as secret agent Emma Peel alongside Patrick Macnee's bowler-hatted John Steed. The pair were an impeccably dressed duo who fought villains and traded quips in a show whose mix of adventure and humor was enduringly influential.

Rigg also starred in 1969 James Bond thriller "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" as Tracy di Vincenzo, the only woman ever to marry, albeit briefly, Agent 007. Bond producers Michael G Wilson and Barbara Broccoli said Rigg was "much beloved by Bond fans for her memorable performance."

George Lazenby, who made his only appearance as Bond in the film, said on Instagram that he was "so sad to hear of the death of Diana Rigg. She undoubtedly raised my acting game when we made On Her Majesty's Secret Service together in 1968-9."

In later life, she played Olenna Tyrell — the formidable "Queen of Thorns" — in "Game of Thrones," receiving an Emmy Award nomination for the role.

Other television roles included the Duchess of Buccleuch in period drama "Victoria," and Rigg starred alongside her daughter in the gentle British sitcom "Detectorists."

Rigg spent several years in the 1960s as a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company, and combined screen work with a major stage career, in plays including William Shakespeare's "Macbeth," Bertolt Brecht's "Mother Courage" and Tom Stoppard's "Jumpers" at the National Theatre in London.

She had several acclaimed roles in the 1990s at London's Almeida Theatre, including Martha in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and the title role in Greek tragedy "Medea."

Rigg won a Tony Award for "Medea" on Broadway, and was nominated on three other occasions — most recently in 2018 for playing Mrs. Higgins in "My Fair Lady."

Jonathan Kent, who directed Rigg in some of her great stage roles, said her "combination of force of personality, beauty, courage and sheer emotional power made her a great classical actress — one of an astonishing generation of British stage performers."

She never retired. One of Rigg's final television roles was in rural veterinary drama "All Creatures Great and Small," which is currently running on British television.

Stoppard said Rigg was "the most beautiful woman in the room, but she was what used to be called a Trouper."

"She went to work with her sleeves rolled up and a smile for everyone. Her talent was luminous."

Rigg is survived by her daughter, son-in-law Guy Garvey — lead singer of the band Elbow — and a grandson.

This story has been corrected to show that the last name of "The Avengers" actor is Macnee, not McNee.

Taliban say peace talks with Afghan team to start Saturday

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The long-awaited peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government's negotiating team are to begin on Saturday in the Gulf Arab state of Qatar, the Taliban and Qatar's foreign ministry said Thursday.

The talks — known as intra-Afghan negotiations — were laid out in a peace deal that Washington brokered with the Taliban and signed in February, also in Qatar, where the Taliban maintain a political office. At the time, the deal was seen as Afghanistan's best chance at ending more than four decades of relentless war.

Shortly after the announcement, President Donald Trump said U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo would

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travel to Qatar, to attend the start of the negotiations. Sediq Sediqqi, spokesman for Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, confirmed in a tweet that their delegation will be in Qatar's capital of Doha for the talks and said the president wished the negotiating team success.

Pompeo issued a statement welcoming the start of negotiations and saying they will mark "a historic opportunity for Afghanistan to bring an end to four decades of war and bloodshed."

"The people of Afghanistan have carried the burden of war for too long," Pompeo said.

That deal Washington signed with the Taliban aims to end Afghanistan's protracted war and bring American troops home while the intra-Afghan talks are to set a road map for a post-war society in Afghanistan.

The negotiations are expected to be a difficult process as the two sides struggle to end the fighting and debate ways of protecting the rights of women and minorities. The Taliban have promised women could attend school, work and participate in politics but stressed that would all be allowed in keeping with Islamic principles — without saying what that might mean.

The Taliban have also said they would not support a woman becoming president of Afghanistan and that while they would allow for women to judges, a woman could not serve as a chief justice.

Meanwhile, Kabul's reconciliation council has an array of disparate figures, including hard-liners such as Abdul Rasool Sayyaf, a former warlord who served as the inspiration for the Philippine's Abu Sayyaf militant group, and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a one-time U.N.-listed terrorist. Both espouse deeply restrictive interpretations of Islam.

Hekmatyar in an earlier interview with The Associated Press also rejected women serving as chief justice. Afghanistan's Parliament has so far been unable to ratify a Violence Against Women's bill because it is feared that hard-line lawmakers would defeat any such legislation.

The government's negotiation team includes several women who will carry a heavy burden to defend and protect rights for their gender, analysts say. The Taliban have no women on their team.

The fate of the tens of thousands of armed Taliban, as well as militias loyal to government-allied warlords, will also be on the agenda, along with constitutional changes for Afghanistan.

There's also the issue of power sharing. While the Taliban have said they do not want to monopolize power, the suggestion of an interim administration has largely been rejected by Kabul. Deep mistrust also exists on both sides

Washington's peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, who negotiated the U.S.-Taliban deal signed on Feb. 29, has been in Doha for the past week, trying to push the talks forward.

The withdrawal of U.S. troops are not dependent on the success of the upcoming negotiations but rather on commitments taken by the Taliban under the deal with the U.S. to fight other militant groups, most specifically the Islamic State group, and to ensure that Afghanistan is not used as a staging ground for attacks on the United States or its allies.

Washington and NATO have already begun withdrawing troops and by November America expects to have less than 5,000 troops still in Afghanistan.

The start of negotiations had been plagued by delays as the two sides squabbled for months over the release of prisoners until the exchange was complete earlier this month — 5,000 Taliban freed by the Afghan government and 1,000 government and military personnel who were released by the Taliban. The prisoner release was also set in the U.S.-Taliban deal as a prerequisite for the start of the intra-Afghan negotiations.

However, the negotiations will begin under difficult circumstances, marred by stepped up attacks on Afghan forces by the Taliban, target killings and attempted assassinations. Scores of civilians have died in the crossfire. There have also been attacks on released Taliban prisoners returning to their homes and accusations by the insurgents of being attacked inside their homes with their families.

Abdullah Abdullah, the head of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation, the body that is overseeing the negotiations on behalf of the government, will attend the opening of the talks but the day-to-day negotiations will be carried out by a team headed by Mohammed Masoom Stanikzai, a former intelligence chief.

Abdullah was appointed head the council as part of a power-sharing agreement with Ghani to end a

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political standoff between the two following last year's controversial presidential elections. The country's election commission declared Ghani the winner while Abdullah claimed he had won and went on to self-declare himself president.

The impasse lasted for months — also delaying the start of the intra-Afghan negotiations — before the U.S. negotiated a power-sharing deal under which Abdullah joined the government.

The Taliban's 21-member negotiation team is headed by their chief justice Abdul Hakim and includes 13 members of the insurgent's leadership council.

Pompeo in his statement warned both sides against squandering this opportunity to hammer out a negotiated end to the fighting.

"This opportunity must not be squandered," Pompeo said. "Immense sacrifice and investment by the United States, our partners, and the people of Afghanistan have made this moment of hope possible. I urge the negotiators to demonstrate the pragmatism, restraint, and flexibility this process will require to succeed. The people of Afghanistan and the international community will be watching closely."

Also Thursday, Trump, who promised in the 2016 presidential campaign to bring U.S. troops home from Afghanistan, announced he has picked William Ruger, vice president for research and policy at the Arlington, Virginia-based Charles Koch Institute, as the next ambassador to Kabul.

Picking Ruger, a veteran of the war who advocates withdrawing U.S. forces from the country, is seen as a way for Trump to underscore his desire to do just that.

"There are those who would like to see us remain at war in Afghanistan long into the future," Ruger has said. "But the president should not allow a withdrawal deal to be bogged down by conditions that aren't necessary for America's safety."

Trump has a narrow window to get Ruger confirmed by the Senate, which is set to recess in mid-October before the U.S. presidential election in early November.

Associated Press writers Matthew Lee and Deb Riechmann in Washington and Tameem Akhgar in Kabul, Afghanistan, contributed to this report

Huge fire at Beirut port sows panic after last month's blast

By ZEINA KARAM and HASSAN AMMAR Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A huge fire broke out at Beirut's port Thursday, raising new panic among residents still struggling with the traumatic effects of the catastrophic explosion at the same site last month.

Some sought safety in closed bathrooms or threw open their windows to guard against shattering glass in case of another blast; others piled into cars to flee the capital. No injuries were reported.

Dark smoke and the smell of toxic fumes enveloped Beirut in the evening as army helicopters circled and sprayed water over the orange flames, helping firefighters on the ground.

It was unclear what caused the blaze at the port, which was decimated by the Aug. 4 explosion when nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate blew up, sending out a shock wave that killed nearly 200 people and caused widespread damage.

The Lebanese army said the fire started in the port's duty free zone amid containers of tires, oil and other flammable materials.

Fabrizio Carboni, regional director for the International Red Cross, tweeted that the warehouse on fire is where his organization stores thousands of food parcels and oil, risking the serious disruption of humanitarian operations.

Port director Bassem al-Qaisi told Voice of Lebanon radio that the fire started in a warehouse containing barrels of cooking oil and later spread to where tires were piled. He added it was too early to say if it began as "the result of heat or some other mistake."

In a sign of the ever-widening gulf of distrust after the explosion, many Lebanese accused politicians of deliberately trying to destroy evidence at the port that led to the blast. Thursday's fire was the second mysterious blaze there this week, following a small fire on Tuesday that also caused some panic but was

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quickly extinguished.

Lebanon is gripped by an unprecedented economic crisis and financial collapse, blamed on decades of mismanagement and corruption by an entrenched political class. Last month's blast is seen as the culmination of leaders unable to manage the country's affairs or protect its people. So far, authorities have been unable to provide answers about the explosion, and there has been no accountability for it.

For Dana Awad, a mother of two girls, the fire brought back memories of the tremor that shook her Beirut neighborhood before the explosion.

"We opened all windows and are in the corridor right now," Awad said as they sought safety in a hallway. "I am still feeling the earth shake. Living a flashback."

Jennifer Moorehead, Save the Children's country director in Lebanon, said the fire will inevitably bring back distressing memories to many Lebanese children who are still trying to recover from last month's blast.

"Children in Beirut have experienced a terrible shock and they need time to recover; today's fire and panic will only make things worse," she said.

Najat Saliba, a professor specializing in atmospheric chemistry at the American University of Beirut, tweeted warnings for the elderly and children to protect themselves or even to leave the city if possible until the smoke cleared.

The raging fire and column of smoke was eerily similar to the one that preceded the devastating explosion. Back then, curious residents stood on balconies or behind windows in offices and homes to photograph the fire, compounding the injuries from flying glass when the gigantic fireball mushroomed across the city.

On Thursday, panicked residents cracked open windows and called or texted warnings to each other. Local TV stations said companies with offices near the port asked employees to leave the area. Some hid in bathrooms, while others dropped what they were doing and rushed home.

A video on social media showed port employees running from the fire, a chilling reminder of the dozens of workers and 10 firefighters who were killed in the blast. Lebanese troops closed the major road near the port and rerouted traffic.

A highway that runs parallel to the port was blocked with cars, some with terrified-looking women and children trying to flee. "Get out of my way!" one woman screamed at others blocking her path. A woman sitting in the car next to her covered her ears with her hands, looking traumatized by it all.

The panic was compounded by the fear that more chemicals could be in the wreckage of the port. Earlier this month, the army said it found more than 4 tons of ammonium nitrate in four containers stored near the port that it said were "dealt with."

French and Italian chemical experts working in the remains of the port identified more than 20 containers of dangerous chemicals. The army later said these containers were moved away from the port and stored safely.

The Aug. 4 explosion, the single most destructive blast in Lebanon's history, killed 191 people, injured about 6,500 and damaged thousands of buildings.

—
Associated Press writers Hussein Malla and Bassem Mroue contributed.

Q&A: La Nina may bring more Atlantic storms, western drought

BY SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

La Nina — which often means a busier Atlantic hurricane season, a drier Southwest and perhaps a more fire-prone California — has popped up in the Pacific Ocean.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced Thursday that a La Nina, the cooler flip side of the better known El Nino, has formed. Meteorologists had been watching it brewing for months.

A natural cooling of certain parts of the equatorial Pacific, La Nina sets in motion a series of changes to the world's weather that can last months, even years. This one so far is fairly weak and is projected to last through at least February but may not be the two-to-three-year type sometimes seen in the past, NOAA Climate Prediction Center Deputy Director Mike Halpert said.

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The changes that happen during La Ninas and El Ninos — which along with neutral conditions are called El Nino Southern Oscillation or ENSO — aren't sure things, meteorologists say. Different sizes and types trigger varying effects and some years the usual impacts just don't show up. It's more an increased tendency than an environmental edict.

Still, when it comes to seasonal forecasts in places like California, if meteorologists can get only one piece of information, they would want the ENSO status, Stanford University climate scientist Noah Diffenbaugh said.

WHAT DOES LA NINA MEAN FOR THE ATLANTIC HURRICANE SEASON?

This is one of the clearest connections that meteorologists follow. A La Nina usually means a more active season with more and perhaps stronger storms. An El Nino means fewer, weaker storms.

That's because one of the key ingredients for storm formation and strengthening is what's happening to the winds near the tops of storms, University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy said. An El Nino means more strong crosswinds that can decapitate storms, but a La Nina means fewer, allowing storms to grow.

Thursday is the historical peak of hurricane season and the Atlantic is incredibly active. In addition to Tropical Storms Paulette and Rene, which set records for the earliest 16th and 17th named storms, forecasters are monitoring four other disturbances — two near the United States — that could develop into named storms in the next five days.

HOW DOES LA NINA AFFECT U.S. WEATHER IN GENERAL?

The jet stream that steers daily weather shifts a bit in the winter. That generally means a drier winter in the South and Southwest from coast to coast. It usually means a bit warmer in the South, too. It gets wetter in the Pacific Northwest and the Ohio Valley in the winter and colder in the Northern tier in the winter.

WHAT ABOUT THE DROUGHT IN THE WEST?

Drought's already pretty bad in west Texas, Arizona, Utah and Colorado, Halpert said. This could make things worse. And California has "a tendency to have dry conditions in La Nina years," Diffenbaugh said.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR WILDFIRES?

"La Nina is not a good sign for the wildfire outlook," Diffenbaugh said. But he added that it's mostly a potential bad sign for next year's wildfire season because it makes California's winter wet season drier, setting the stage for dry conditions when fires start in 2021.

Meteorologists don't quite know enough about what La Nina does in the fall to say what it means for the current record bad California wildfire season, according to Diffenbaugh. He said that, for the next few months, what matters most is when the fall rains begin and offshore winds, not La Nina.

WHAT ABOUT WINTER SNOW POSSIBILITIES?

La Nina has a tendency to shift snow storms more northerly in winter, Halpert said. Places like the mid-Atlantic often do not get blockbuster snowstorms in La Nina winters.

Overall, winter should be cooler than last year, but "last winter was so warm it would be hard not to be cooler than last winter," Halpert said.

WHICH IS WORSE, LA NINA OR EL NINO?

That really depends on where you are. Some areas do better in La Nina, some places do better in El Nino, and others do best in a neutral ENSO, said Texas A&M University agricultural economist Bruce McCarl, who studies ENSO effects. Places like Texas and the Southwest do much worse in La Ninas, McCarl said, pointing to a 2011 La Nina when 40% of the cotton crop in the high plains was too small to be harvested.

A 1999 study by McCarl said that, in general, La Ninas cause \$2.2 billion to \$6.5 billion in agricultural damage, far more than El Nino. A neutral ENSO is best for agriculture, the study found.

WHAT ABOUT LA NINA IMPACTS OUTSIDE THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES?

Western Canada, southern Alaska, Japan, the Korean Peninsula, southeastern Brazil and western Africa tend to be cooler. East central Africa and southeastern China tend to be drier. Northern Australia and much of Southeast Asia tends to be wetter, along with northeastern South America. And southeast Africa tends to be wetter and cooler.

WHEN WERE THE LAST LA NINA AND EL NINO?

The last La Nina went from fall 2017 to early spring 2018. Before that there was a brief La Nina at the end of 2016, coming on the heels of a super-sized El Nino. This year started with a brief, weak El Nino.

WHAT DOES LA NINA MEAN?

It is Spanish for "little girl" and El Nino means "little boy," at times referring to the Christ child. The name comes from the first El Nino being characterized and identified around Christmas by fishermen in South America.

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter: @borenbears

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Scarcity of key material squeezes medical mask manufacturing

By MARTHA MENDOZA, JULIET LINDERMAN, THOMAS PEIPERT and IRENA HWANG Associated Press FRESNO, Calif. (AP) — Rachel Spray is still grieving the loss of her fellow nurse who died after being exposed to the novel coronavirus at Kaiser Permanente Fresno Medical Center in California. Now, as she stands in front of the gleaming glass and concrete hospital, she says she "dreads going in there" and fears she'll be next.

That's because like those in many U.S. hospitals, management is rationing supplies, she says, keeping medical-grade masks under lock and key.

White House officials say U.S. hospitals have all the medical supplies needed to battle the deadly virus, but front-line health care workers, hospital officials and even the Food and Drug Administration say shortages persist. Critical shortfalls of medical N95 respirators, commonly referred to as N95 masks, and other protective gear started in March, when the pandemic hit New York. Pressure on the medical supply chain continues today, and in "many ways things have only gotten worse," the American Medical Association's president, Dr. Susan Bailey, said in a recent statement.

"N95s are still in a shortage," said Mike Schiller, the American Hospital Association's senior director for supply chains. "It's certainly not anywhere near pre-COVID levels."

Early in the pandemic the White House failed to heed stark warnings, specifically about N95s, from high-level administration officials. The Associated Press has found the administration took months to sign contracts with companies that make the crucial component inside these masks: meltblown textile. Meltblowing is the manufacturing process that turns plastic into the dense mesh that makes N95 masks effective at blocking vanishingly small particles, including viruses.

Even today, manufacturers say the Trump administration hasn't made the long-term investments they need in order to ramp up to full capacity. Meanwhile, the administration allowed meltblown exports to slip out of the country as the pandemic, and the demand for masks, soared.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story is part of an ongoing investigation by The Associated Press, the PBS series "FRONTLINE" and the Global Reporting Centre that examines the deadly consequences of the fragmented worldwide medical supply chain.

Full Coverage: Deadly Shortages

Manufacturers say they risk significant losses if they invest millions in machinery, raw materials, new employees and factory space to churn out a product projected to have a short-lived demand, without assurances that the government will continue to buy their meltblown textile after the need for N95s recedes post-pandemic.

"I'm not going to sit here and tell you that we're going to guarantee purchases in 2021 or whatever date you pick," said Rear Adm. John Polowczyk, who heads the Federal Emergency Management Agency's

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Supply Chain Stabilization Task Force. He denies there are shortages.

Meltblown textiles are used in everything from diapers to air conditioners. Electrostatically charging meltblown gives it the ability to capture particles too tiny to be filtered by regular masks.

A study published this summer in the medical journal *The Lancet* found that front-line workers without N95 masks who cared for COVID-19 patients have the highest risk of infection.

"The initial lack of personal protective equipment in nursing homes, and lack of infection control practices in general, contributed to a general community spread across the country," said Harvard Medical School's Dr. Andrew T. Chan, one of the authors.

But that personal protective equipment just wasn't available early in the pandemic when demand for the disposable masks and gowns exploded. It still isn't.

Before COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, the government estimated that the U.S. would need more than 5 billion N95 respirators per year in a pandemic. In March, the Department of Health and Human Services said the demand would be about 3.5 billion.

Those estimates were based on N95 manufacturer recommendations and hospital best practices that dictated health care workers use one mask per patient visit, so a single nurse could go through perhaps a dozen a day. But due to shortages, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention instructed health care providers to reuse them.

Because of this shift in usage, it's hard to accurately estimate the severity of the shortages of medical-grade masks and gowns.

But today, hospital administrators — some of whom are facing new state orders to stockpile supplies — say they can't get as many masks as they want, and the FDA included N95s on its most recent medical supply shortage list.

In Fresno, nurse Rachel Spray typically gets one N95 per shift.

Kaiser spokesman Marc Brown didn't dispute this claim, but said the change in the way masks are used still allows the clinical staff to safely care for patients. The hospital is just carefully managing supplies, he said.

"We continue to prudently manage PPE supplies to ensure they are readily available to protect our health care workforce for the duration of this pandemic," he said.

White House trade adviser Peter Navarro disputes reports of shortages. In an August interview, he said his office responds daily to news stories of ill-equipped medical providers, sending supplies as needed.

"We have what we need to get to people what they need," he said.

In 2019, the U.S. produced 15% of meltblown in the world while China accounted for 45%. Navarro has long advocated moving manufacturing back to the United States, and during the Republican National Convention President Donald Trump pledged to do just that with crucial medical supplies.

"We are taking our business out of China. We are bringing it home," he said.

But the meltblown example illustrates the failure of this administration to take necessary steps to fulfill this promise.

Meltblown is spun out of plastic pellets made from oil, typically polypropylene or polyethylene. The pellets are fed into a heated metal extruder, and jets of hot air force the liquefied plastic through an array of extremely small holes, producing fine plastic fibers. As the fibers cool, they overlap and stick together, forming a dense mesh.

This year, American meltblown makers have been ramping up supply. But some say they need more government support to meet the demand.

Mike Clark, a division president at Hollingsworth and Vose, a meltblown maker based in East Walpole, Massachusetts, said his company has tripled production of meltblown for masks by ramping up and exiting other markets. But he and other makers have reservations about investing significant amounts of their own money.

After the H1N1 epidemic in 2009, Hollingsworth and Vose purchased a new meltblown machine, but the demand for N95s plummeted when the virus dissipated, Clark said.

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"We're now confronted with the same thing," he said. "No one will guarantee volumes past 2021. And the issue is, the lead time for one of these machines is a year, so just as we get that machine set up and installed, that demand might go away."

The company received a government contract for \$1.9 million to produce an additional 27.5 million N95 masks, but it doesn't include long-term purchase guarantees.

"It's half the problem solved," Clark said. "If the government bought you a machine that's 100% paid for, it still wouldn't make sense to waste space in your plant, just collecting dust."

Lydall Inc., headquartered in Manchester, Connecticut, began the pandemic with one manufacturing line pumping out rolls of meltblown. A second should be online by the end of this year, and a third by May.

"We have one of the most highly sought-after products the world over," Lydall CEO Sara Greenstein said.

To increase production, Greenstein said the company invested more than \$25 million, which she hopes will be offset by a \$13.5 million government contract for meltblown materials.

Dan Reese, president of Prestige Ameritech, the largest domestic maker of medical N95 respirators, said he emptied his own savings during the H1N1 flu outbreak to expand operations and boost his output, only to end up near-bankrupt and laying off workers when demand dried up.

He currently buys meltblown fabric from wherever he can get it, and estimates it would cost \$15 million and take a year to start producing his own. A machine alone costs \$5 million.

"I don't have the cash," he said. "If we continue to ramp up our production like we plan, we're going to run out of meltblown." Reese said. Meltblown shortages are "restricting our ability to do what we need to do for the country."

Under the Defense Production Act, a mechanism that allows the U.S. government to compel companies to prioritize federal orders and help manufacturers increase production capacity, some mask and meltblown makers have gotten a boost.

Between mid-April and early May, four N95 manufacturers — O&M Halyard, Honeywell, 3M and Hollingsworth and Vose — received a total of \$134.5 million to increase production, including expanding existing operations and setting up new production lines. The federal government also approved smaller contracts this summer with NPS Corp. and Lydall to bolster meltblown production.

But the administration has not specifically restricted exports of meltblown material, a power it can use under the act. In the face of shortages, U.S. meltblown makers have continued exporting their goods overseas.

They've sent more than 40 shipping containers of meltblown material and related supplies offshore, with about 40% of it going to Pakistan, according to an AP analysis of data from Panjiva, the supply-chain research unit at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

That compares with only six shipping containers during the same period in 2019.

The DPA gives the U.S. government the authority to block exports of crucial products and materials.

Shifting manufacturing overseas made the U.S. medical supply chains vulnerable.

Greenstein of Lydall says if the U.S. wants a stable supply of medical equipment, it will have to produce all of its own meltblown.

"You can't rely on this long-distance supply chain to provide the mission-critical elements that are a matter of life or death," Greenstein said. "When it's affecting everybody, the countries that have the domestic supply will prioritize their use over others."

Moving production back to the U.S. has been a central goal of Navarro, who has warned for years about U.S. dependence on China for manufacturing. This year's pandemic shortages, he said, "is the type of scenario I was worried about on steroids."

But Navarro's dream of "re-shoring" is tricky, in part because the costs of end products often rise.

U.S. health care providers are calling for significantly more government investment in domestic medical supply manufacturing, even if it raises costs.

"There's been a big push for years to lower the costs of health care, and one of the ways to do that is to lower the costs of the products, and one of the ways to do that is to manufacture them in a place where

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labor and materials are cheaper," said Teresa Dail, chief supply chain officer for Vanderbilt University Medical Center, which includes four hospitals and more than 200 clinics.

"I'm willing to bear the cost," she said, "to ensure that we have access to products and have our pipeline more stable than what we've seen in a global failure like this."

Pre-pandemic, five U.S. producers were making about 42 million N95 masks a month. By October, that is projected to have increased to 11 U.S. producers making 168 million a month, which could amount to 2 billion a year, according to the Association of the Nonwoven Fabrics Industry's analysis of the impact COVID-19 has had on meltblown markets.

Also pre-pandemic, 24 U.S. companies were making meltblown, with 79 machine lines in operation, according to the association's Brad Kalil. But only a fraction of that was going into medical respirators, Kalil said. By the end of 2021, he said, there will be 28 new lines in the U.S., representing a 35% increase, with almost all of the newly produced textile going into medical supplies.

The Trump administration has helped pay for seven of those lines, Kalil said. But mostly they're being built through private investment, which he says may not pay off.

"If every single country and region decides they're going to make their own to be self-sufficient, we'll have way too much meltblown probably within the end of next year," Kalil said.

Still, some U.S. companies are rolling the dice.

As Seattle became a major coronavirus hot spot this spring, the clothing and sportswear company Outdoor Research also switched gears. It had the money, two U.S. factories and highly skilled employees, so it set out to make masks, said Jason Duncan, a company vice president.

The company makes cloth masks for the general public and pursued making medical-grade masks, investing millions to convert an entire floor of its downtown headquarters into an FDA-approved facility.

Outdoor Research used its deep ties in the industry to secure meltblown material and, this summer, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health approved its N95 masks.

Where is it getting its meltblown?

"That's a closely guarded secret," Duncan said.

Linderman reported from Washington, Peipert from Denver and Hwang from Atlanta.

This story has been corrected to reflect that Outdoor Research's N95 masks were approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, not the Food and Drug Administration.

Jane Fraser to become Citi CEO; 1st woman to lead major bank

By KEN SWEET AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Citigroup's Jane Fraser will become the first woman to ever lead a Wall Street bank when she succeeds CEO Michael Corbat in February.

The New York bank announced the succession Thursday.

Fraser is currently head of Citi's global consumer banking division, a major part of the bank that oversees checking and savings accounts but also Citi's massive credit card business. She's been with Citi for 16 years and had recently been tasked with leading the clean up of the bank's troubled Latin American banking business.

Fraser will be the first woman to lead one of Wall Street's big six banks, a major accomplishment in an industry long dominated by men. JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon has had two women as his second-in-command for years — Marianne Lake and Jennifer Piepszak — but shows no signs of stepping down.

In a congressional hearing last year, the CEOs of the Wall Street banks were asked whether they expected to be succeeded by a woman in their roles, and no man raised his hand at the time. Fraser will be one of only 32 female CEOs running a company in the S&P 500, according to Equilar.

When Fraser does take over for Corbat in February, it's almost certain the U.S. and global economies will still be dealing with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

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Since early this year, banks have set aside billions to cover potential loan losses as businesses and customers alike have fallen behind on payments. With a vaccine still months away at least, and the U.S. economy in a deep recession, the problems for borrowers are expected only to get worse as the country heads into the fall and winter.

Corbat led Citigroup for eight years, rebuilding the bank after it nearly collapsed during the Great Recession and 2008 financial crisis. The federal government had to step in to buy a stake in Citi to keep it afloat, and the bank had some of the most toxic assets on its books of all the major banks during this time.

Corbat turned Citi into a much smaller and stable entity, focusing on its credit card businesses and its international banking franchise. It was able to pass the Federal Reserve's "stress tests," which test a bank's resiliency, and is considered a much healthier institution now than it ever was before the financial crisis.

Citi declined to make Fraser available for interviews. In a prepared statement, Fraser said, "Citi is an incredible institution with a proud history and a bright future. I am excited to join with my colleagues in writing the next chapter."

Twitter to label or remove misleading claims on vote results

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Twitter said Thursday that starting next week it will label or remove misleading claims that try to undermine public confidence in elections.

The policy will apply to tweets that attempt to undermine people's faith in the electoral process itself, such as false claims about election rigging or ballot tampering, or about the outcome of the vote, Twitter said.

The policy goes into effect Sept. 17, a few weeks before the Nov. 3 U.S. presidential election. Many Americans are expected to vote by mail due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is likely to delay election results. Social media companies have been working to strengthen their policies to prevent misinformation, but it's not clear if their efforts will be enough.

Facebook said last week 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 to official results to posts by candidates and campaigns that prematurely declare victory.

Twitter has had more aggressive policies than Facebook. It has banned political ads altogether and began labeling President Donald Trump's tweets with fact checks in May, earning his ire.

San Francisco-based Twitter said its policy of labeling, rather than removing violating tweets from world leaders, will still apply with its newest rules. This means even if a candidate posts misleading claims about the election outcome, the post would likely stay up because Twitter deems it in the "public interest." That said, the post's visibility would be reduced and people won't be able to retweet it.

"We will not permit our service to be abused around civic processes, most importantly elections," Twitter said in a blog post Thursday. "Any attempt to do so — both foreign and domestic — will be met with strict enforcement of our rules, which are applied equally and judiciously for everyone."

Though the policy comes weeks before the U.S. election, more than 80% of Twitter's users are outside of the U.S. and it will apply globally.

Letters reveal public distaste for booze in JFK White House

By WILLIAM J. KOLE Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — It was a tempest in a teapot — or, more accurately, a whiskey tumbler.

Presidential transitions are always at least a little tricky. Case in point: Researchers at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum have found a cache of letters from Americans objecting to JFK's embrace of cocktails at White House events.

The letters shed new insight into President Dwight D. Eisenhower's handoff to Kennedy early in 1961, and the strikingly different attitudes that people held about alcohol at official functions.

"Liquor dulls the brain and loosens the tongue," one disappointed citizen, Kenneth P. Kennedy of Sparta,

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Illinois — no relation to JFK — wrote to the nation's newly minted 35th president. "Can we risk our national and international security on such potential incompetence?"

Eisenhower was no teetotaler, but historians say he presided over a largely cocktail-free White House. Enter Kennedy, who had already raised some eyebrows as the first Roman Catholic to be elected president.

JFK Library archivists say the letters of protest began arriving after newspapers reported on Kennedy's first official event: a January 1961 reception honoring the new president's appointees.

"For the first time, there was a bar in the State Dining Room, with waiters to stir up martinis or pour vodka, Scotch, bourbon, or champagne," The Washington Post reported.

What followed was a sort of low-key Liguorgate. Letters — some typed, others handwritten — expressed shock and worry that the U.S. would lose its dignity and standing in the world.

"Dear Mr. President, I think many feel humiliation and disgrace over our nation today when we learn of our White House turned into shameful drunken all-night carousal and dancing," reads one from Edith Fritz, of Idaho. "Dignity previously engendered — gone. May God have pity upon your poor soul."

"Our nation was founded by men of Christian ideals. Let's keep it that way," reads another from Ruby Turner, of Dunkerton, Iowa.

Another, scribbled by a writer from Louisiana whose name and hometown are illegible, reads: "The White House is a national shrine to us — all those who love America — and we would like to have it presented to other nations as a dignified, respectable home, not 'a well-stocked bar, with scotch, gin and vodka flowing freely.'"

The letters were buried deep in the vast White House Public Opinion Mail collection, the presidential library said, noting the dispute "could easily have been lost to history."

At the time, scholars say, the Kennedy administration played down the public's reaction to the change, noting it received far more letters about civil rights unrest and the Cuban missile crisis.

In a JFK Library blog post Wednesday, archivists Dana Bronson and Stacey Chandler noted that transitions from one president to another are closely watched for shifts in both style and substance.

And presidents have held wide-ranging attitudes toward alcohol. George Washington, the nation's first, is said to have enjoyed whiskey; President Donald Trump, its 45th, doesn't drink at all, though he has had wine served at state dinners and other functions.

Joe Biden, Trump's Democratic opponent in November, doesn't drink, either. Like Trump, the former vice president has pointed to alcoholism in his family in explaining why he abstains.

Follow AP New England editor Bill Kole on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/billkole>.

California wildfires growing bigger, moving faster than ever

By DON THOMPSON Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — When it comes to California wildfires, it now takes days, not decades, to produce what had been seen as a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence.

Last weekend, a fire burning in California's Sierra National Forest exploded in size, trapping hundreds of Labor Day holiday campers who could only be rescued by helicopters that made a series of white-knuckle flights into the smoke. Fire officials said they'd never seen a fire move so fast in forestland — 15 miles (24 kilometers) in a day.

On Wednesday, a wildfire in Plumas National Forest northeast of San Francisco spread 25 miles (40 kilometers) in a day and devoured an estimated 400 square miles (1,036 square kilometers),

In between those events, a massive fire in Monterey County doubled in size overnight, trapping 14 firefighters who had to deploy their emergency shelters; one was critically injured.

They are only the latest examples of what a half-dozen fire experts agreed is more extreme fire behavior driven by drought and warming temperatures they attribute to climate change. Among the most concerning developments is that fast-moving wildfires leave less time for warnings or evacuations.

Recently "we have seen multiple fires expand by tens of thousands of acres in a matter of hours, and 30

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years or more ago that just wasn't fire behavior that we saw," said Jacob Bendix, a professor of geography and the environment at Syracuse University who studies wildfires.

Hotter temperatures, longer fire seasons and an estimated 140 million dead trees from a five-year drought mean that "fires in California are moving faster and growing larger," said University of Utah fire expert Philip Dennison.

Mike Flannigan, who directs the Western Partnership for Wildland Fire Science at Canada's University of Alberta, remembers the first report of a fire-created thunderstorm in 1986.

"They were rare events, and now they've become commonplace," he said. "It's because these fires are higher intensity."

A prime example is the so-called Creek Fire in Sierra National Forest near Yosemite National Park, which exploded through miles of drought- and beetle-killed timber, moving so fast that it trapped hundreds of campers.

"When you have a fire run 15 miles in one day, in one afternoon, there's no model that can predict that," U.S. Forest Service forester Steve Lohr said. "'The fires are behaving in such a way that we've not seen.'"

The phenomenon isn't restricted to California. Doug Grafe, chief of Fire Protection at the Oregon Department of Forestry, said it was unprecedented in his state for fires this week to spread from the crest of the Cascade Mountains into the valleys below, and so quickly, "carrying tens of miles in one period of an afternoon and not slowing down in the evening — (there is) absolutely no context for that in this environment."

California already has seen a record 3,900 square miles (10,100 square kilometers) burn and it's only now is entering what traditionally is the most dangerous time for fires. Labor Day weekend brought record-breaking temperatures across the state that exacerbated what already are drought conditions in a large swath of the state.

On Thursday, a Northern California wildfire was threatening thousands of homes after winds whipped it into a monster that incinerated houses in a small mountain community and killed at least three people.

University of Colorado-Boulder professor Jennifer Balch said measurements of how quickly the hot, dry air is sucking moisture out of fuels are "the highest seen in at least four decades" across major parts of the West.

The abundant dry tinder produces more heat energy, which in turn super-heats the air so it becomes more buoyant and creates a strong updraft that condenses with the smoke plume, "creating its own wind to feed that thunderstorm," Flannigan said.

The cloud itself is called a pyro-cumulonimbus, which may or may not produce lightning, and strong winds that can pick up burning embers and ignite new fires far in front of the initial blaze.

An extreme example in July 2018 spun off what was then only the second documented "firenado," killing a firefighter as he helped evacuate residents from a fire in the Northern California city of Redding.

Yet just this month a fire north of Lake Tahoe spun off at least two and as many as four firenadoes, while the Plumas National Forest fire appears to have produced "a handful" overnight Tuesday, said Neil Lareau, a professor of atmospheric science at the University of Nevada, Reno.

The Creek Fire produced at least two firenadoes that appeared to touch down Saturday, he said, one straddling an access road to a popular campground at Mammoth Pool Reservoir where 214 people became trapped.

"It's really kind of a testament to the remarkable extremes that we're seeing right now," Lareau said. "It really is kind of this vicious cycle that it gets into, and that's when the fire really takes off and becomes these unstoppable infernos."

Two California National Guard helicopters called in to rescue the trapped campers Saturday night found visibility deteriorating so swiftly that the crews opted to load their aircraft "to the absolute maximum" and well beyond normal safety limits in an unprecedented mission.

On one trip, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Joseph Rosamond and his three-member crew took on 102 desperate campers in a CH-47 Chinook twin-rotor helicopter designed for 30 passengers. A UH-60 Black Hawk ferried 22 evacuees in a helicopter with a normal operating capacity of 11 or 12 passengers.

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The overloaded Chinook slowly climbed to 8,000 feet (2,440 meters) to clear surrounding mountains and dense smoke.

"It was an absolute emergency and people's lives were at stake," Rosamond recalled. "It was pretty dicey. The charts don't go that high."

Such harrowing escapes are only likely to become more common, the experts said.

Columbia University's Williams said California's record heat and record acreage burned already this year are part of a trend that has been accelerating for 50 years due to global warming.

"So, while the magnitudes of the current heat wave and the resultant wildfires have been shocking, they're consistent with what scientists have been predicting for decades," Williams said in an email.

This story has been corrected to say Sierra National Forest, not Sequoia National Forest.

'Deadly stuff': Trump's own words bring focus back to virus

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Try as he might to change the subject, President Donald Trump can't escape the coronavirus.

In April, the president tried to shift the public's focus to the economy. In July, to defending the country's "heritage." In September, to enforcing "law and order." But all along the way, the death toll from the coronavirus continued to mount.

And now, Trump's own words are redirecting attention to his handling of the pandemic when he can least afford it — less than two months before Election Day.

"I wanted to always play it down," Trump said of the threat from the virus. That was in a private conversation with journalist Bob Woodward last March that became public on Wednesday with the publication of excerpts from Woodward's upcoming book "Rage."

In taped conversations released along with the excerpts, Trump insisted he didn't want to create "panic." But his comments also raised fresh questions about how he has managed the defining crisis of his presidency, one that has killed more than 190,000 Americans so far, with no end in sight.

Trump's team would much rather center the November vote around the economy, cracking down on protests spawned by racial injustice, and the president's promise that he could appoint more conservative justices to the Supreme Court.

Trump released a list of 20 potential nominees for the high court, part of an effort to animate conservative and evangelical voters. But his announcement was overshadowed by a cascade of unwelcome developments, including Woodward's revelations, a move by Nevada officials to cancel upcoming Trump rallies in the state because of the virus, and a whistleblower's charge that Trump aides had pressured him to cover up intelligence reports about Russian election interference on the president's behalf.

The president unleashed a barrage of tweets Thursday morning, some in an effort to change the subject, and others taking on the Woodward book head-on, defending his comments and charging the media with conspiring against him.

"Bob Woodward had my quotes for many months," Trump wrote. "If he thought they were so bad or dangerous, why didn't he immediately report them in an effort to save lives? Didn't he have an obligation to do so? No, because he knew they were good and proper answers. Calm, no panic!"

Woodward has defended his decision to hold off by saying he needed time to make sure Trump's private comments were true.

Revelations from the Woodward book emerged just as Trump's campaign was beginning to feel that the virus was receding from public view. The president himself has been thumbing his nose at public health experts' warning against the sort of large gatherings — with few people wearing masks — that his campaign has been staging around the country.

For all of that, Trump has faced devastating revelations of his own creation before and survived them. They stretch back to his 2015 comments questioning the heroism of Sen. John McCain, a decorated Viet-

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nam prisoner of war, or the notorious "Access Hollywood" tape that emerged just before the 2016 election in which Trump described sexually assaulting women.

On Wednesday, Trump didn't deny his remarks playing down the virus, he sought to justify them.

"The fact is I'm a cheerleader for this country. I love our country and I don't want people to be frightened. I don't want to create panic," Trump told reporters. "Certainly, I'm not going to drive this country or the world into a frenzy. We want to show confidence. We want to show strength."

Yet Trump's own explanation suggested he was steering people away from the reality of the coming storm. Woodward's account details dire warnings from top Trump national security officials to the president in late January that the virus that causes COVID-19 could be as bad as the devastating influenza pandemic of 1918.

On Feb. 25, just weeks before much of the country was forced to shut down because of the pandemic, Trump declared the virus "very well under control in our country."

Democratic nominee Joe Biden pounced on the Woodward revelations, declaring that Trump "lied to the American people. He knowingly and willingly lied about the threat it posed to the country for months."

"While a deadly disease ripped through our nation, he failed to do his job — on purpose. It was a life or death betrayal of the American people," Biden said.

By evening, Trump's own words, captured on the Woodward tapes, had popped up in a Biden campaign ad. The ad includes audio of Trump privately acknowledging to Woodward the severity of COVID-19, and ends with a narrator pronouncing: "Trump knew it all along."

In a taped Feb. 7 call with Woodward, Trump said of the virus, "You just breathe the air and that's how it's passed. And so that's a very tricky one. That's a very delicate one. It's also more deadly than even your strenuous flus," Trump said.

"This is deadly stuff," the president repeated for emphasis.

Just three days later, Trump struck a far rosier tone in public, in an interview with Fox Business: "I think the virus is going to be — it's going to be fine."

The Washington Post, where Woodward serves as associate editor, reported excerpts of the book on Wednesday, as did CNN. The book also covers race relations, diplomacy with North Korea and a range of other issues that have arisen during the past two years.

The book is based in part on 18 interviews that Woodward conducted with Trump between December and July.

"Trump never did seem willing to fully mobilize the federal government and continually seemed to push problems off on the states," Woodward writes of the pandemic. "There was no real management theory of the case or how to organize a massive enterprise to deal with one of the most complex emergencies the United States had ever faced."

Asia Today: India has record spike of 95K new virus cases

NEW DELHI (AP) — India reported another record spike of 95,735 new coronavirus infections in the past 24 hours as the virus spreads beyond its major cities.

According to the Health Ministry, the number of people known to be infected in India reached 4,465,863 on Thursday. It has the second-highest caseload in the world behind the United States, where more than 6.3 million people are known to be infected.

The Health Ministry also reported 1,172 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking total fatalities up to 75,062. Its death toll is third-highest in the world behind the U.S. and Brazil.

The ministry said the surge in new infections is due to ramping of daily testing that exceeds 1 million now. However, experts caution that India's outbreak is entering a more dangerous phase as the virus spreads to smaller towns and villages.

The Indian capital saw a record surge of 4,618 new cases in the past 24 hours with 19 deaths. New Delhi, Pune, Mumbai and Chennai are the worst-hit cities in the country.

With the economy contracting by a record 23.9% in the April-June quarter, leaving millions jobless, Indian

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authorities have said they have little choice but to continue reopening the economy.

Meanwhile, the Serum Institute of India maintained that the temporary halt to late-stage studies of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine candidate would not impact the timeline for vaccine trials in India. The studies in multiple countries were halted because of "potentially unexplained" illness in a British recipient.

Indian authorities said they would review the illness report and assess the information from the initial human clinical trials in India.

Serum, the world's largest maker of vaccines by volume, is mass-producing the vaccine for low and middle-income countries.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— South Korea's new coronavirus cases have come below 200 for an eight straight day, suggesting a viral resurgence is slowing amid stringent social distancing rules. The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Thursday it has reported 155 additional cases over the past 24 hours, taking the national tally to 21,743 with 346 deaths. New infections spiked in South Korea, mostly in the greater Seoul area, since early August. Authorities in the Seoul area subsequently ordered the shutdown of churches, night-spots and fitness centers and restricted dining at restaurants. Those enhanced rules expire on Sunday, and the government is to announce whether to extend them.

— Clinical trials for AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine candidate have been halted in India, the Serum Institute of India said Thursday. The institute is the world's largest manufacturer of vaccines by volume and has said it will mass-produce the vaccine candidate developed by the University of Oxford. On Tuesday, AstraZeneca said an unexplained illness in a test recipient had triggered a "standard review process" and that late-stage studies had been put temporarily on hold. Serum Institute of India, though, had said trials in India were continuing. But after a communication from Indian regulators, the company paused their trials on Thursday. "We are reviewing the situation and pausing India trials until AstraZeneca restarts the trials," the company said.

— Tokyo is lowering its COVID-19 alert by one notch from the highest "red" category to "orange" on its four-level scale following a decline in the number of new cases, though Gov. Yuriko Koike urged residents to continue taking preventive measures. Koike said Thursday that the decision is based on findings that the average number of new cases per day in the past week fell to 149 from 183 the week before. Koike said the Tokyo government will lift requests for bars and restaurants serving alcohol to close at 10 p.m., allowing them to return to their usual hours next Wednesday. "We still need to use caution," she said at a news conference. "We have to continue to take appropriate measures to keep a balance between prevention of the spread of infections and social and economic activity." Some experts are warning of a resurgence because the slowing of infections is still modest. Tokyo confirmed 276 new cases on Thursday for a total of 22,444, including 379 deaths. Nationwide, Japan has reported 73,221 cases and 1,406 deaths as of Thursday.

— A Singapore court has sentenced a Taiwanese woman to 11 weeks in jail for intentionally sneezing at a security guard who barred her from entering a Singapore shopping mall. The court issued the sentence Thursday after Sun Szu-Yen pleaded guilty in June to performing a rash act and an unrelated harassment charge, Singapore media reported. Sun and her son were stopped at a mall entrance on April 12 for not wearing masks amid the coronavirus pandemic, local media said. She tried to use her scarf as a mask but when the guard refused to let her in, she sneezed in the guard's direction and reportedly told the guard to "shut up." She also took her passport out of her bag and said "I am China, I am Taiwan," local media said. She was also charged with harassment for throwing several items, including a vacuum cleaner and a plastic chair, out of her condominium window in June last year, local media said. Prosecutors told the court that she is not mentally ill but has a mood disorder.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined
Today in History

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Today is Friday, Sept. 11, the 255th day of 2020. There are 111 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On September 11, 2001, nearly 3,000 people were killed as 19 al-Qaida hijackers seized control of four jetliners, sending two of the planes into New York's World Trade Center, one into the Pentagon and the fourth into a field in western Pennsylvania.

On this date:

In 1777, during the American Revolution, forces under Gen. George Washington were defeated by the British in the Battle of Brandywine.

In 1789, Alexander Hamilton was appointed the first U.S. Secretary of the Treasury.

In 1814, an American fleet scored a decisive victory over the British in the Battle of Lake Champlain in the War of 1812.

In 1885, author D.H. Lawrence was born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, England.

In 1936, Boulder Dam (now Hoover Dam) began operation as President Franklin D. Roosevelt pressed a key in Washington to signal the startup of the dam's first hydroelectric generator.

In 1941, groundbreaking took place for the Pentagon. In a speech that drew accusations of anti-Semitism, Charles A. Lindbergh told an America First rally in Des Moines, Iowa, that "the British, the Jewish and the Roosevelt administration" were pushing the United States toward war.

In 1972, the troubled Munich Summer Olympics ended. Northern California's Bay Area Rapid Transit system began operations.

In 1973, Chilean President Salvador Allende (ah-YEN'-day) died during a violent military coup.

In 2006, in a prime-time address, President George W. Bush invoked the memory of the victims of the 9/11 attacks as he staunchly defended the war in Iraq, though he acknowledged that Saddam Hussein was not responsible for the attacks.

In 2007, a new Osama bin Laden videotape was released on the sixth anniversary of 9/11; in it, the al-Qaida leader's voice is heard commemorating one of the suicide hijackers and calling on young Muslims to follow his example by martyring themselves in attacks.

In 2008, presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama put aside politics as they visited ground zero together on the anniversary of 9/11 to honor its victims.

In 2012, a mob armed with guns and grenades launched a fiery nightlong attack on a U.S. diplomatic outpost and a CIA annex in Benghazi, Libya, killing U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans.

Ten years ago: Speaking at the Pentagon, President Barack Obama appealed to the nation to honor the memory of the September 11 victims by hewing to the values of diversity and tolerance. In New York, a morning ceremony of remembrance gave way to an afternoon of protests and counter-protests over a proposed Islamic center near ground zero. A gunman in rural eastern Kentucky killed five people before turning the shotgun on himself. Kim Clijsters won a second consecutive U.S. Open championship and third overall, easily beating Vera Zvonareva (zvahn-uh-RAY'-vuh) 6-2, 6-1. Actor Kevin McCarthy, 96, died in Hyannis, Massachusetts.

Five years ago: A crane collapsed onto the Grand Mosque in Mecca, killing 111 people ahead of the annual hajj pilgrimage. Former Texas Gov. Rick Perry ended his second bid for the Republican presidential nomination, becoming the first major candidate of the 2016 campaign to give up on the White House. Roberta Vinci stunned Serena Williams to end her Grand Slam bid in one of the greatest upsets in tennis history; the 43rd-ranked Italian won 2-6, 6-4, 6-4 in the U.S. Open semifinals.

One year ago: The Supreme Court allowed nationwide enforcement of a new Trump administration rule preventing most Central American migrants from seeking asylum in the United States; the policy was meant to deny asylum to anyone who passed through another country on the way to the U.S. without seeking protection there. Oil tycoon T. Boone Pickens died at his Dallas home; he was 91.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Earl Holliman is 92. Comedian Tom Dreesen is 81. Movie director Brian De Palma is 80. Singer-actor-dancer Lola Falana is 78. Rock musician Mickey Hart (The Dead) is 77. Guitarist Leo Kottke is 75. Actor Phillip Alford is 72. Actor Amy Madigan is 70. Rock singer-musician Tommy Shaw (Styx)

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is 67. Sports reporter Lesley Visser is 67. Actor Reed Birney is 66. Former Homeland Security Secretary Jeh (jay) Johnson is 63. Musician Jon Moss (Culture Club) is 63. Actor Scott Patterson is 62. Rock musician Mick Talbot (The Style Council) is 62. Actor/director Roxann Dawson is 62. Actor John Hawkes is 61. Actor Anne Ramsay is 60. Actor Virginia Madsen is 59. Actor Kristy McNichol is 58. Musician-composer Moby is 55. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is 55. Business reporter Maria Bartiromo is 53. Singer Harry Connick Jr. is 53. Rock musician Bart Van Der Zeeuw is 52. Actor Taraji (tuh-RAH'-jee) P. Henson is 50. Actor Laura Wright is 50. Rock musician Jeremy Popoff (Lit) is 49. Blogger Markos Moulitsas is 49. Singer Brad Fischetti (LFO) is 45. Rapper Mr. Black is 43. Rock musician Jon Buckland (Coldplay) is 43. Rapper Ludacris is 43. Rock singer Ben Lee is 42. Actor Ryan Slattery is 42. Actor Ariana Richards is 41. Country singer Charles Kelley (Lady Antebellum) is 39. Actor Elizabeth Henstridge is 33. Actor Tyler Hoechlin (HEK'-lihn) is 33. Actor Mackenzie Aladjem is 19.