

Groton Daily Independent

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There will be NO BOYS SOCCER MATCH this Saturday. The match will not be rescheduled at this time. The girls match will be played as scheduled. It will kickoff at 1pm in Groton.

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GDILIVE.COM



Football

6 p.m.

Friday, Sept, 18, 2020

Groton at Milbank

Sponsored by Kevin & Kara Pharis
Touchdown Sponsor: Frost Construction



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

THINKING ABOUT HEALTH

Don't Count on Lower Insurance Costs for Next Year

Trudy Lieberman, Community Health News Service

Steve Schneider owns a digital marketing agency in Indiana where he insures six people on the company's health insurance plan – two employees and their dependents – for about \$37,000 a year. He says it's an "ultra-high" deductible plan that requires each family to pay the first of the year's \$12,100 in medical costs out of their own pockets and charges totaling \$6,050 for each family member before the insurance plan pays.

That's hardly insurance, but that is the norm. "Every year," Schneider told me, "it's how much can we offer and how much can employees pay? How high can I push the deductible to lower the premium?"

Schneider is one of thousands of small business owners who are making that same calculation this fall. In Stowe, Vermont, Jen Kimmich runs a craft brewery and wonders how long she can continue to pay a large share of the costs to insure her 42 employees.

She provides full coverage for all her employees even if they work as few as 10 hours a week. "They deserve it," Kimmich says, "but it's expensive, and we don't know how much longer we can keep paying for it."

Why is insurance going to cost so much again this year? Keep in mind that the out-of-pocket costs consumers pay in the form of high deductibles, copays and coinsurance are just as important as the premiums in determining the total cost of your insurance.

Cost sharing is simply another way to make consumers pay more for their coverage.

But why is insurance still so expensive when the news media is full of stories about how Americans have stopped going to the doctor and avoiding medical services, either out of fear of contracting the coronavirus or fear of racking up high medical bills they would struggle to pay?

Don't fewer services mean less demand that would prompt doctors, hospitals, and other providers of medical care to reduce their prices as a way to attract patients? That's the way it works with other goods and services.

Don't bet on it, says Dr. David Blumenthal, president of The Commonwealth Fund, a philanthropic organization in New York City. "The reduction in insurers' costs from reduced use of routine services will be much greater than the cost increases associated with care of COVID-19 patients. That means companies have realized substantial short-term profits."

Blumenthal added, "Consumers shouldn't assume they will get the benefit of the doubt. If there's any doubt about how much the use of care will go up, insurance companies will assume the worst. That's what investors want."

The companies have market power. Although insurance actuaries, the ones who crunch the numbers, say there is plenty of pressure from employers to keep premiums low, insurers have enough clout to raise deductibles, copays, and coinsurance. That places the burden on those who get sick.

Hospitals, which account for about one-third of U.S. health care spending, also have market clout. Bob Herman, a journalist who covers the hospital industry for Axios, told me, "The public safety net and rural hospitals haven't been doing great and have been neglected for years. On the other hand, he says, "It's a different story with the big, urban hospital systems."

"They are sitting on large rainy-day funds, which were built up by high prices over the years," he explained. "COVID put a wrench into some of their plans to expand, and expansion is good for hospitals. They are crying poverty but are paying consultants and lawyers millions of dollars to complete acquisitions."

Many hospitals have begun costly advertising campaigns to drum up business. As that business returns, prices for hospital services are not likely to drop.

Dr. Sandeep Jauhar, a cardiologist at Northwell Health in New York, says hospitals in the state argue,

"We need to ramp up care." He added, "Some departments are being told to not only resume care at pre-pandemic levels but to boost volume of care to make up for financial losses." In other words, they are being told to drum up business, and in many cases they have enough market power to keep prices high.

While medical experts urge people not to delay needed care, it's important to remember that Americans often get too much care. "Hundreds of billions of dollars are spent unnecessarily on health care," Jauhar says, and maybe we should reboot in a different way. "Maybe patients don't need as much care as we've been providing."

Even if the number of services performed goes down, I'd wager, the price will continue to go up. What kind of insurance increases are you expecting? Write to Trudy at trudy.lieberman@gmail.com.

Custer State Park to Host Annual Buffalo Roundup and Arts Festival

Pierre, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem announced that the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) will host the 55th annual Buffalo Roundup and 27th annual Arts Festival in Custer State Park later this month. The Buffalo Roundup begins at 9:30 a.m. MDT on Friday, Sept. 25. The Arts Festival will run from Thursday, Sept. 24, through Saturday, Sept. 26.

"The Buffalo Roundup embodies the spirit of South Dakota and gives us an opportunity to show off Custer State Park to the world," said Governor Noem. "This event also helps us emphasize the importance of conservation, ensuring that we'll have bison thundering through the park for generations to come."

The parking areas for the Roundup, located near the corrals along the Wildlife Loop Road, open at 6:15 a.m. MDT and close at 9:30 a.m. MDT on Sept. 25. For safety reasons, spectators need to remain in the viewing areas until all the buffalo are corralled which typically occurs around noon.

The annual Arts Festival runs from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. MDT on Thursday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Friday, and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 26. The Arts Festival takes place near the State Game Lodge and features western and bluegrass entertainment along with numerous vendors.

"While the Buffalo Roundup serves as a critical management tool for Custer State Park, it is an event unlike any other in the world," said Scott Simpson, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation. "The West comes alive on Roundup morning and leaves guests with memories that last a lifetime."

A state park entrance license is required on Thursday and Saturday, but there is no cost to attend the Buffalo Roundup or Arts Festival on Friday. Share the experience by using #SDintheField and #BuffaloRoundup when posting images to Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

Next year's Buffalo Roundup will be held Friday, Sept. 24, 2021. To learn more about the event, visit custerstatepark.com, call 605.255.4515, or email CusterStatePark@state.sd.us.

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Mobridge-Pollock defeats Groton Area netters

Mobridge-Pollock defeated Groton Area in volleyball action Thursday in Mobridge, 25-19, 25-14 and 25-16. Groton Area had six ace serves with Allyssa Locke and Tricia Keith each having two. The Tigers had 18 kills with Madeline Flihs having six and Aspen Johnson and Grace Wambach each having four. Groton Area had 17 assists. Allyssa Locke had 10 of the team's 39 digs while Madeline Flihs had nine and Grace Wambach seven. Stella Meier had two of the team's three blocks. Mobridge-Pollock won the junior varsity match, 25-14 and 25-15.

Flihs places fifth at Tiospa Zina golf meet

Tiospa Zina hosted a golf tournament Thursday at Dakota Magic Golf Course, the host site of the regional this year. Brevin Flihs shot a 83 and placed 5th. Other golfers were Lucas Simon who shot a 105 and Logan Pearson who shot a 112.

#207 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

We had a substantial bump in cases today. Not sure what's happening there. We had 46,100 new cases today, a 0.7% increase to 6,696,200. The number of deaths is steady at 1137 today, a 0.6% increase. There have been 197,742 deaths in the US now.

Here's a fairly scary number: Worldwide, around one in seven Covid-19 cases are in health care workers. This is around five times their proportion in the population. We know why, don't we? I see three things: (1) They're tested more, so are more likely to be detected; (2) their work almost guarantees exposure at a fairly high level; and (3) they lack personal protective equipment (PPE). Even after taking differences in testing into account, their rate of infection stayed around three times the general population's, so this is a big deal. Interestingly, general medical and housekeeping staff have higher risks than ICU staff. This is likely due to more stringent protocols on intensive care units and may also be due to the fact that, by the time a patient is admitted to ICU, they typically are through the early, most infectious stages of disease. Non-medical staff, for example, housekeeping, on the other hand, frequently have no protection at all.

We've talked about the vaccine approval process, that is, the process for what's generally referred to as "full approval" for which the official name is a Biologics License Application. This requires a full set of safety and efficacy data from a completed phase 3 clinical trial. It typically takes years, but everything's been shifted into high gear around this pandemic; steps for which just the paperwork might usually take a few months are being processed pretty much overnight.

As we discussed recently, though, there is another route to getting a vaccine on the market, and that follows the manufacturer's request for and approval of an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). This is sort of a new thing in existence since just 2004 and was designed to speed up the process of getting a potentially beneficial medical product authorized for a specific use during a declared public health emergency like this pandemic without the usual rigorous testing and careful evaluation. The EUA ends when the public health emergency ends; it is not open-ended. It is not, however, just a free pass to put any old thing out there.

An EUA can apply to an unapproved use for an already approved product or to a new product that hasn't been approved for any use yet. The wording on the FDA's website says EUAs can "help make medical products available as quickly as possible by allowing unapproved medical products to reach patients in need when there are no adequate, FDA-approved and available alternatives." There does need to be some basis for believing this new product will be beneficial and safe, again in the FDA's words, if "the known and potential benefits of the product, when used to diagnose, prevent, or treat the identified disease or condition, outweigh the known and potential risks of the product." And there's the rub for a vaccine.

You see, it's one thing to offer a treatment to a seriously ill patient, one who might die without it, when

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nothing else will help and quite another to put a substance inside a completely healthy person in the hope of preventing a disease that may never come at all. There is a higher expectation for safety in that second scenario, which is why vaccines are so thoroughly scrutinized for even rare side effects by the use of large-scale trials. While an EUA presupposes all the phases of clinical trials have not been completed, there should still be substantial evidence of safety before one is issued.

Nonetheless, there are those experts who don't think an EUA is ever appropriate for a vaccine for the very reason that you are putting hundreds of thousands or millions of healthy people at risk. Dr Peter Hotez, professor and dean of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, tweeted, "EUAs involve substandard or lesser reviews. How can you justify a substandard or lesser review for something that would be injected in tens of millions, maybe hundreds of millions of Americans?" He also points out in the same string of tweets that the vaccines now in phase 3 testing in the US are new technologies we've never licensed before, which he cites as good cause to insist on a "full/comprehensive review."

We do know that some side effects are so rare that they're highly unlikely to turn up in smaller trials. This would mean granting authorization to a new vaccine, especially one of a type we've never licensed before, before phase 3 trials are complete is a risk that many folks will find unacceptable. We actually have some experience with that: In the run-up to an anticipated flu pandemic, the FDA granted EUA to a vaccine which was administered to some 40 million Americans. Not only did the pandemic never materialize, but the vaccine was linked to Guillain-Barré syndrome—all in all, not a winning day for the EUA. As a non-expert, I take no position on the scientific advisability of using an EUA for a Covid-19 vaccine, but I will point out that with the level of skepticism we're already facing on a vaccine, any step which might worsen public trust is likely not the best choice at this time.

And on the subject of vaccine trials, we should note that the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine trial, while it has resumed in the UK, is still on pause in the US. Each country has its own agency monitoring these trials, in our case the FDA, so agency in each country has to be satisfied before trials may resume in that country. During the pause, no more vaccine will be administered in the US.

The adverse condition seen in the UK patient that initiated the pause is reported, but not confirmed, to be a rare inflammation of the spinal cord, transverse myelitis, which causes pain, muscle weakness, and paralysis which may or may not be reversible in a given patient. The reported possible case of the same disorder during an earlier phase of trials was later determined to be multiple sclerosis (MS) which was unrelated to the vaccine; it is possible for a vaccine to unmask a previously unrecognized incipient condition like that, so it was important to determine the dynamics of the current case before things get too far down the road. Because we know that transverse myelitis can occur in association with a vaccine, this close scrutiny is entirely appropriate.

What seems likely is that the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the US will request tissue or blood samples from the British patient and also look at samples from other vaccine recipients in case there are signs of something developing in more than just this one person. I would also expect them to request their reasons for giving the go-ahead to resume the UK trial. All of this may take some weeks, so we're going to have to be patient while they do their work. I'll keep you updated as I hear more.

I don't think I've ever addressed a medical concern concomitant with this pandemic, the delay of routine medical care. NPR, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and Harvard's TH Chan School of Public Health have conducted a survey of households in the nation's four largest cities finds that one in every five have at least one member who was unable to get medical care or has delayed care for a serious medical problem during the pandemic. Some could not find a doctor to see them or found routine procedures were cancelled to focus resources on Covid-19, some were fearful of exposure to the virus while in a clinic or hospital, some no longer had insurance or money to pay for care due to job insecurity or loss. People have delayed for days going in when they were having heart attacks, strokes, diabetic crises. Reports from the Los Angeles County coroner's office show the number of people who have died at home in the last few months is much higher than before the pandemic. Similar reports surfaced from New York City last spring as well. About one-third of households in Chicago and Los Angeles and more than half in Houston

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and New York had a household member who couldn't have elective procedures done and in whom this resulted in negative health consequences. Cancer screenings were down, which could translate to more illness and deaths in upcoming months and years. Estimates are that the reduction in mammograms and colonoscopies alone will create an additional 10,000 deaths.

Let's have a word about temperature checks. Some stores, schools, workplaces, etc. are requiring temperature checks before you can enter. Now, I want to be clear that people with fevers absolutely should not be going places, so insofar as these checks screen out those with fevers, I guess that is helpful. I'll add, however, that most people with Covid-19 and a fever feel so terrible they're not trying to slip into the mall or school anyhow. I'll mention that those "guns" they use to do the temperature checks at a distance aren't particularly accurate. And this whole process does not account at all for the estimated 40% of cases which never develop symptoms. This is why temperature checks don't do much more than making us feel better about the measures taken. It may be time to divert scarce resources to measures showing themselves to be effective against Covid-19 instead of those that just look good.

As we're all aware, the pandemic is not the only disaster we're dealing with in this country these days. You have likely become aware the West is on fire, and fire crews are putting in long, difficult shifts battling those. The 20-person crew of the Grizzly Firefighters from The Dalles, Oregon, had been spending hours every day for 10 days on the Lionshead Fire. At the end of one 14-hour day "cutting line," that is, building a perimeter of soil to prevent the fire spreading, the members came back to town and sprawled in the street, exhausted, but not too exhausted to break into song. To the tune of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," they sang:

Take me out to the fire

Take me out to the line

Bring me some sawyers and hazel hoes [guys that saw down trees and trenching tools]

I don't care if I ever get home.

Root, root, root for the red crew

You know we want the most days.

For it's 1, 2, 3 tool types out at the old fire line.

Their crew boss's family had to evacuate while he was on the fireline. Still he showed up to work. And to sing. That's dedication. We need more people like this. We need to be more people like this. Please try. And be well. I'll be back tomorrow.

SPECTATOR RULES FOR GROTON VS. MILBANK FOOTBALL GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2020 Attention Groton Area Tiger Fans:

The following restrictions are in place for the Groton Area vs. Milbank football game scheduled for a 6:00 PM kickoff on Friday, September 18 at Milbank.

Attendance will be limited to six tickets per athlete. Each player will be issue six tickets for the contest to distribute at their discretion. Fans will not be allowed into the stadium without a ticket. Tickets will be paid for at the entrance to the game.

All Groton Area fans will sit in the bleachers on the visitors sideline.

Face masks are recommended, but not required.

No concessions will be available.

The game will be streamed online for free at GDILIVE.COM

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Sept. 9	Sept. 10	Sept. 11	Sept. 12	Sept. 13	Sept. 14	Sept. 15
Minnesota	81,608	81,868	82,249	82,659	83,588	84,311	84,949
Nebraska	36,477	36,917	37,373	37,841	38,108	38,188	38,642
Montana	8,381	8,468	8,663	8785	8925	9021	9,107
Colorado	59,674	59,920	60,185	60,492	60,907	61,324	61,699
Wyoming	3,483	3520	3559		3,635	3,679	3,723
North Dakota	13,872	14,110	14,443	14,684	15,151	15,577	15,831
South Dakota	15,403	15,571	15,834	16,117	16,437	16,638	16,801
United States	6,328,099	6,359,313	6,397,547	6,452,607	6,486,401	6,517,326	6,555,243
US Deaths	189,699	190,784	191,802	193,177	193,705	194,036	194,545

Minnesota	+383	+260	+381	+410	+929	+723	+638
Nebraska	+502	+440	+456	+468	+267	+80	+454
Montana	+65	+87	+195	+122	+140	+86	+86
Colorado	+187	+246	+265	+307	+415	+417	+375
Wyoming	+58	+37	+39		+76	+44	+44
North Dakota	+71	+238	+337	+244	+468	+431	+254
South Dakota	+105	+169	+263	+283	+320	+201	+163
United States	+28,930	+31,214	+38,234	+55,060	+33,794	+30,925	+37,917
US Deaths	+533	+1,085	+1,018	+1,375	+528	+331	+509

	Sept. 16	Sept. 17	Sept. 18
Minnesota	85,351	85,813	86,722
Nebraska	38,970	39,419	39,921
Montana	9,244	9,431	9,647
Colorado	62,099	62,686	63,145
Wyoming	3,762	3,866	3,936
North Dakota	16,066	16,333	16,723
South Dakota	16,994	17,291	17,686
United States	6,606,674	6,631,561	6,676,410
US Deaths	195,961	196,831	197,655

Minnesota	+402	+462	+909
Nebraska	+328	+449	+502
Montana	+137	+187	+216
Colorado	+400	+587	+459
Wyoming	+39	+104	+70
North Dakota	+ 235	+267	+390
South Dakota	+195	+297	+395
United States	+51,431	+24,887	+44,849
US Deaths	+1,416	+870	+824

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September 17th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent
from State Health Lab Reports

One female in her 60s from Pennington County. North Dakota had five deaths today. Sully County dropped off the fully recovered list. Hughes County has seen an explosion of cases as they have 89 of the state's 395 cases for today. Brown County had 20 positive cases, but also had 21 recovered cases for a net decrease of one. McPherson and Marshall each had two positive cases, and Spink County had nine positive and five recoveries for a net increase of four in active cases.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +20 (979) Positivity Rate: 16.9%
Total Tests: 118 (9,487)
Recovered: +21 (853)
Active Cases: -1 (123)
Ever Hospitalized: +0 (36)
Deaths: 0 (3)

Percent Recovered: 87.1% (+0.8)

South Dakota:

Positive: +395 (17,686 total) Positivity Rates: 13.5%
Total Tests: 2,917 (234,778 total)
Hospitalized: +20 (1,231 total). 138 currently hospitalized (-1)
Deaths: +1 (193 total)
Recovered: +221 (14,878 total)
Active Cases: +173 (2,615)
Percent Recovered: 84.1% -0.7
Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 6% Covid, 51% Non-Covid, 43% Available
ICU Bed Capacity: 7% Covid, 64% Non-Covid, 29% Available
Ventilator Capacity: 5% Covid, 16% Non-Covid, 79% Available

Fully recovered from positive cases (lost Sully):
Aurora 42-42, Mellette 25-25.

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): +5 positive, +2 recovered (31 active cases)
Bennett (1): 10 active cases
Bon Homme (1): +3 positive (18 active cases)
Brookings (2): +13 positive, +10 recovered (85

active cases)

Brown (3): +20 positive, +21 recovered (123 active cases)

Brule: +4 positive, +1 recovered (13 active cases)

Buffalo (3): +2 positive, +1 recovered (2 active cases)

Butte (1): +4 positive, +2 recovered (17 active cases)

Campbell: 3 active cases

Charles Mix: +1 positive (17 active cases)

Clark: 9 active cases

Clay (5) +4 positive, +5 recovered (65 active cases)

Codington (2): +26 positive, +15 recovered (179 active cases)

Corson (1): +1 positive, +2 recovered (11 active cases)

Custer (2): +3 positive, +3 recovered (57 active case)

Davison (2): +5 positive, +1 recovered (29 active cases)

Day: 9 active cases

Deuel: +6 positive, +2 recovered (14 active cases)

Dewey: 33 active cases

Douglas: +2 positive (18 active cases)

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

Fall River (2): +2 positive, +2 recovered (16 active cases)

Faulk (1): +6 positive, +1 recovered (14 active cases)

Grant (1): +3 positive, +3 recovered (24 active

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cases)

Gregory (1): +8 positive, +2 recovered (40 active cases)

Haakon: 6 active case

Hamlin: +1 recovered (8 active cases)

Hand: +1 recovered (5 active cases)

Hanson: +3 positive, (4 active cases)

Harding: Fully Recovered

Hughes (4): +89 positive, +2 recovered (116 active cases)

Hutchinson (1): +2 positive (14 active cases)

Hyde: +1 positive (4 active cases)

Jackson (1): +1 positive (6 active cases)

Jerauld (1): +4 positive (10 active cases)

Jones: +1 recovered (1 active case)

Kingsbury: +3 positive, +3 recovered (7 active cases)

Lake (7): +4 recovered (20 active cases)

Lawrence (4): +8 positive, +3 recovered (61 active cases)

Lincoln (2): +8 positive, +15 recovered (170 active cases)

Lyman (3): +2 positive, (3 active cases)

Marshall: +2 positive (13 active cases)

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

McPherson: +2 positive (6 active case)

Meade (3): +6 positive, +7 recovered (89 active cases)

Mellette: +2 positive (4 active cases)

Miner: +1 recovered (1 active case)

Minnehaha (76): +41 positive, +50 recovered (535 active cases)

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

Oglala Lakota (3): +2 positive, +2 recovered (24 active cases)

Pennington (34): +35 positive, +26 recovered (323 active cases)

Perkins: 6 active cases

Potter: +2 positive, +1 recovered (12 active cases)

Roberts (1): +8 positive, +2 recovered (34 active cases)

Sanborn: 4 active cases

Spink: +9 positive, +5 recovered (26 active cases)

Stanley: +1 positive (5 active cases)

Sully: +1 positive (1 active case)

Todd (5): +3 positive (8 active cases)

Tripp: +15 positive, +2 recovered (35 active cases)

Turner: +5 positive, +4 recovered (18 active cases)

Union (5): +6 positive, +4 recovered (51 active cases)

Walworth: +4 positive, +3 recovered (25 active cases)

Yankton (4): +8 positive, +3 recovered (66 active cases)

Ziebach: 15 active case

North Dakota Dept. of Health Report

COVID-19 Daily Report, September 17:

- 5.8% rolling 14-day positivity
 - 6.1% daily positivity
 - 394 new positives
 - 6,448 susceptible test encounters
 - 69 currently hospitalized (+7)
 - 2,713 active cases (+185)
- Total Deaths: +5 (182)

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	567	0
10-19 years	1914	0
20-29 years	4444	2
30-39 years	3099	7
40-49 years	2417	9
50-59 years	2361	20
60-69 years	1536	32
70-79 years	756	31
80+ years	592	92

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	9065	94
Male	8621	99

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread
Aurora	42	42	475	0	None
Beadle	679	639	2216	9	Substantial
Bennett	45	34	629	1	Substantial
Bon Homme	72	53	1068	1	Moderate
Brookings	622	535	4078	2	Substantial
Brown	979	853	6297	3	Substantial
Brule	86	73	956	0	Moderate
Buffalo	115	110	699	3	Minimal
Butte	73	55	1137	1	Moderate
Campbell	7	4	134	0	Minimal
Charles Mix	135	118	1959	0	Moderate
Clark	31	22	495	0	Moderate
Clay	526	456	2112	5	Substantial
Codington	638	457	4237	2	Substantial
Corson	78	66	683	1	Moderate
Custer	166	107	967	2	Substantial
Davison	186	155	3091	2	Moderate
Day	52	43	859	0	Moderate
Deuel	74	60	580	0	Substantial
Dewey	108	75	2678	0	Substantial
Douglas	50	33	509	0	Substantial
Edmunds	73	48	536	0	Substantial
Fall River	81	63	1255	2	Substantial
Faulk	57	42	273	1	Moderate
Grant	75	50	979	1	Substantial
Gregory	80	39	572	1	Substantial
Haakon	15	9	326	0	Moderate
Hamlin	77	69	895	0	Moderate
Hand	22	15	417	0	Moderate
Hanson	27	23	294	0	None
Harding	3	3	65	0	Minimal
Hughes	268	148	2466	4	Moderate
Hutchinson	67	52	1112	1	Moderate

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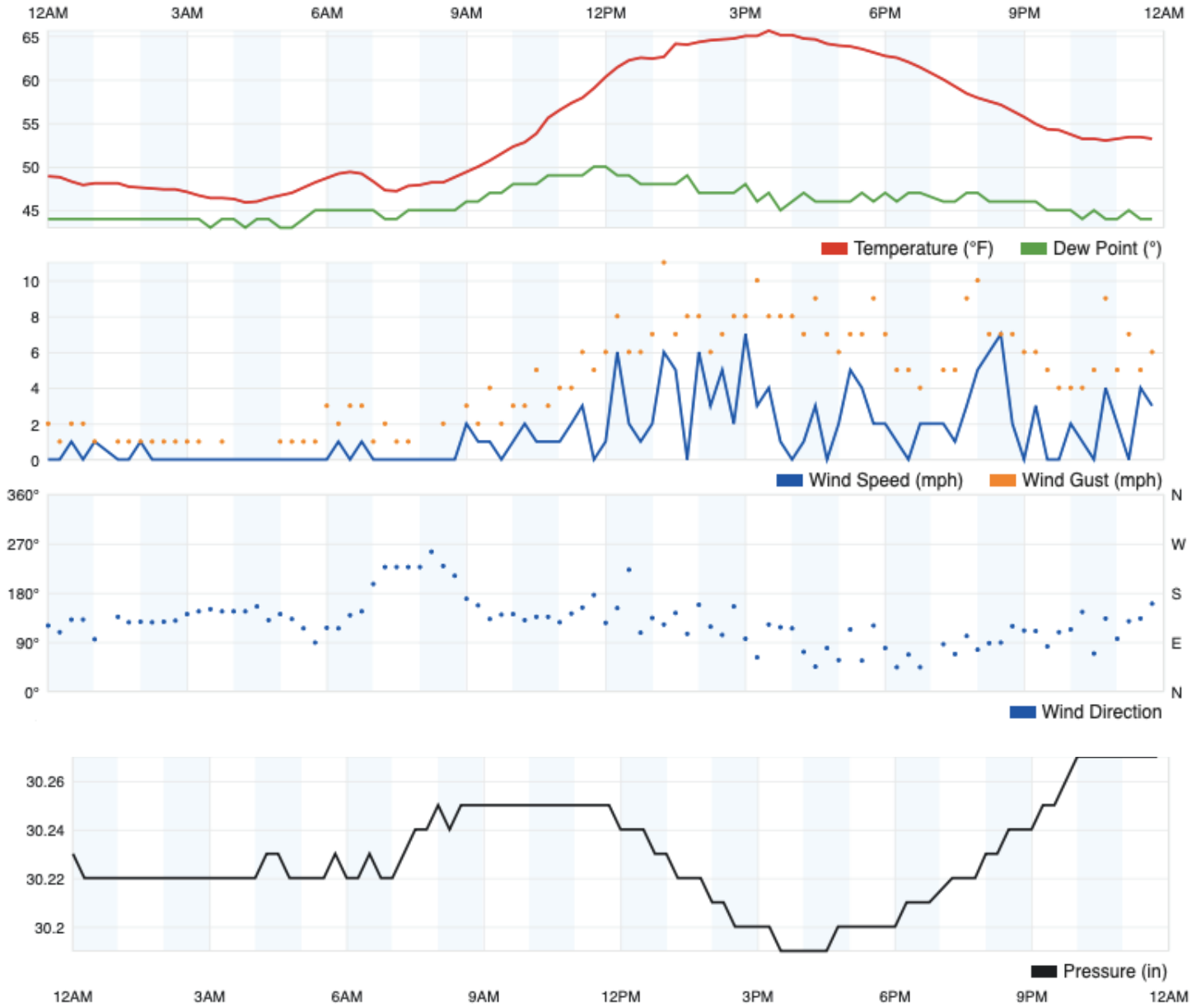
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Hyde	9	5	188	0	Minimal
Jackson	18	11	527	1	Minimal
Jerauld	58	47	308	1	Moderate
Jones	6	5	82	0	None
Kingsbury	36	29	724	0	Moderate
Lake	155	128	1173	7	Substantial
Lawrence	309	244	2924	4	Moderate
Lincoln	1150	978	9320	2	Substantial
Lyman	109	103	1146	3	Minimal
Marshall	31	18	589	0	Moderate
McCook	78	62	819	1	Substantial
McPherson	22	16	279	0	Moderate
Meade	422	330	2842	3	Substantial
Mellette	29	25	436	0	None
Miner	19	18	310	0	Minimal
Minnehaha	6033	5422	35753	76	Substantial
Moody	65	55	810	0	Moderate
Oglala Lakota	215	191	3259	3	Moderate
Pennington	1897	1540	14202	34	Substantial
Perkins	27	21	270	0	Minimal
Potter	33	21	399	0	Moderate
Roberts	139	104	2407	1	Substantial
Sanborn	17	15	292	0	Minimal
Spink	92	66	1397	0	Substantial
Stanley	28	23	361	0	Moderate
Sully	9	8	119	0	None
Todd	100	82	2622	5	Moderate
Tripp	63	30	753	0	Substantial
Turner	115	97	1185	0	Moderate
Union	335	285	2465	6	Substantial
Walworth	76	51	1015	0	Substantial
Yankton	323	253	3966	4	Substantial
Ziebach	59	44	481	0	Moderate
Unassigned	0	0	15365	0	

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Mostly Sunny

High: 68 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 48 °F

Saturday



Mostly Sunny

High: 77 °F

Saturday
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 62 °F

Sunday



Slight Chance
T-storms and
Breezy

High: 81 °F

The graphic features a background of a blue sky with light clouds and a golden field in the foreground. On the left, it displays 'Today's Forecast' for Sept 18, 2020, with a temperature range of 64-73°F and a sun icon behind a cloud. An arrow points to the right, where it displays 'Saturday's Forecast' for Sept 19, 2020, with a temperature range of 73-86°F and a sun icon behind a cloud. Below the Saturday forecast, it notes 'Dry. Skies may appear hazy due to smoke from western US wildfires. Southerly breezes.' The National Weather Service logo and 'Updated: 9/18/2020 4:52 AM Central' are in the bottom right corner.

Today's Forecast
Sept 18, 2020
64-73°

Dry. Skies to become increasingly hazy due to incoming smoke from western US wildfires. Lows of 43-53° F.

Saturday's Forecast
Sept 19, 2020
73-86°

Dry. Skies may appear hazy due to smoke from western US wildfires. Southerly breezes.

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
Updated: 9/18/2020 4:52 AM Central

A milder pattern with near to above average temperatures will begin Saturday, and precipitation will be hard to come by through the next 7 days as well. Be mindful that weather conditions will be more conducive than normal for fires over the coming days across portions of Central South Dakota.

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Today in Weather History

September 18, 2000:

Mid-September record to near record heat occurred across central and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota. Aberdeen, Kennebec, Pierre, and Wheaton all set record highs for the day. Aberdeen and Wheaton set record highs of 95 degrees. Kennebec rose to a record high of 99 degrees while Pierre rose to 104 degrees on this day in 2000. Some of the near record highs occurred at Timber Lake and Mobridge with 92 degrees and 97 degrees, respectively.

1926: The great "Miami Hurricane" produced winds of 138 mph that drove ocean waters into the Biscayne Bay drowning 135 persons. The eye of the hurricane passed over Miami, at which time the barometric pressure reached 27.61 inches. Tides up to twelve feet high accompanied the storm, which claimed a total of 372 lives.

1941: One of the greatest aurora borealis or northern lights ever observed in the central Atlantic and mid-central portions of the U.S. occurred on the night of September 18-19th. The displays continued from twilight until just before dawn and were observed as far south as Florida and southern California.

1987 - Early morning thunderstorms in northern Texas produced wind gusts to 65 mph at Sulphur Springs, and 2.50 inches of rain in one hour at Commerce, which caused widespread street flooding. Bonham TX received 4.50 inches of rain which also resulted in widespread street flooding as Pig Branch overflowed its banks. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A strong cold front produced severe thunderstorms in the north central U.S. High winds behind the cold front gusted to 92 mph at Fort Collins CO, and up to a foot of snow blanketed the mountains of Montana, with seven inches reported at Great Falls. High winds in Colorado caused three million dollars damage. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Hurricane Hugo hit Puerto Rico, producing wind gusts to 92 mph at San Juan, and wind gusts to 120 mph at Roosevelt Roads. Hugo produced a storm surge of four to six feet, and northeastern sections of the island were deluged with more than ten inches of rain. Hugo claimed the lives of a dozen persons in Puerto Rico, and caused a billion dollars damage, including 100 million dollars damage to crops. Thunderstorms representing what remained of Hurricane Octave continued to bring heavy rain to the valleys of northern California. Heavier 24 hour rainfall totals included 3.15 inches at Redding, and 2.66 inches at Red Bluff. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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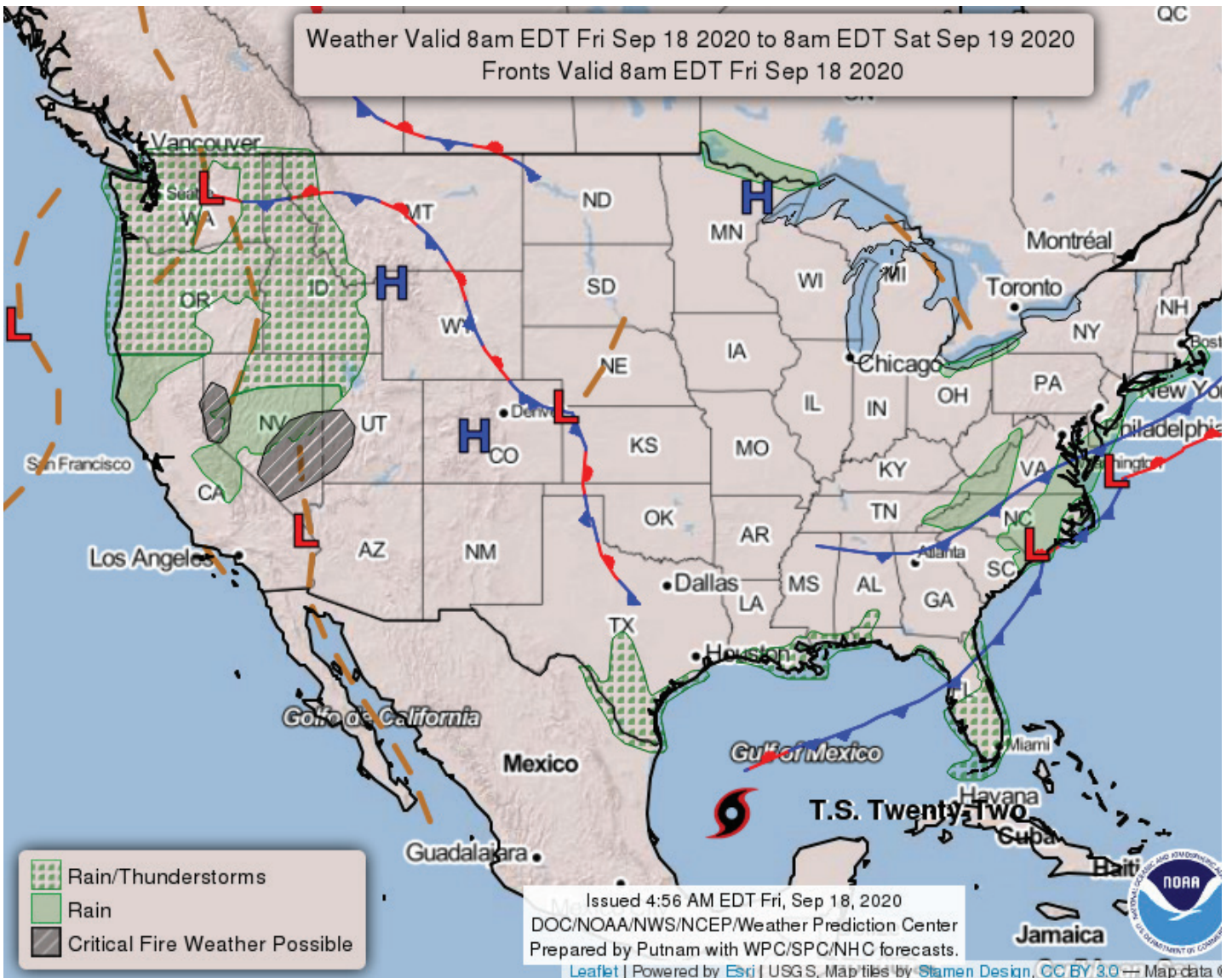
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 66 °F at 3:31 PM
Low Temp: 46 °F at 4:18 AM
Wind: 13 mph at 3:32 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 95° in 2000
Record Low: 22° in 1896
Average High: 71°F
Average Low: 45°F
Average Precip in Sept...: 1.27
Precip to date in Sept.: 1.52
Average Precip to date: 17.56
Precip Year to Date: 14.87
Sunset Tonight: 7:38 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:18 a.m.



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THE LIMITS OF PRAYER

Young Eddie was saying grace before the family had dinner in a local restaurant. Heads bowed and hands united around the table when he said, "Lord, thank You for the food that is coming. And, Lord, I'll really thank You a lot more if Mom would get us some ice cream!"

A woman sitting at the next table said, "Shame on that child. Kids just don't know how to pray anymore. Asking God for ice cream is a disgrace."

Someone sitting in a booth overheard the woman and said, "Asking God for ice cream is a great prayer. Ice cream is good for the soul."

When the ice cream was served, young Eddie took his bowl to the woman and said, "Here, ma'am. This is for you. Sometimes ice cream is good for the soul."

Paul said, "Pray about everything!" Nothing is beyond everything - not even ice cream. As believers, we need not worry about anything because we have a loving Heavenly Father Who knows about and cares for our every need and want. Each of them individually!

Here's a great reminder from Peter: "Give all your worries and wants to God, for He cares for you." If only we would accept the reality of God's power and His unlimited concern for us, our prayers would be vastly different and even include "ice cream" sometimes.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to look to You as a Father Who cares for everything about us. May we take You at Your word and pray and trust You completely. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. 1 Peter 5:7

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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
- **CANCELLED** 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=

Baltic def. Flandreau, 25-16, 25-23, 25-16

Belle Fourche def. Hot Springs, 19-25, 26-24, 30-28, 25-18

Bon Homme def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-22, 22-25, 25-21, 16-25, 15-12

Bridgewater-Emery def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-4, 25-5, 25-16

Castlewood def. Arlington, 25-22, 25-19, 25-23

Colman-Egan def. Lake Preston, 25-8, 25-7, 25-11

Corsica/Stickney def. Ethan, 26-24, 16-25, 25-23, 25-15

Dakota Valley def. Canton, 25-10, 25-17, 25-9

Deubrook def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 14-25, 25-13, 25-9, 25-22

Elkton-Lake Benton def. DeSmet, 25-16, 25-13, 25-17

Estelline/Hendricks def. Oldham-Ramona/Rutland, 25-15, 25-21, 23-25, 25-17

Freeman def. Tripp-Delmont/Armour, 25-21, 24-26, 25-14, 25-18

Hamlin def. Milbank, 25-19, 25-15, 25-16

Highmore-Harrod def. Hitchcock-Tulare, 25-19, 17-25, 25-23, 25-8

Howard def. Chester, 25-10, 25-9, 25-16

Huron def. Brookings, 25-13, 25-23, 25-13

Madison def. Vermillion, 25-8, 25-10, 25-14

McCook Central/Montrose def. Beresford, 25-19, 25-10, 25-21

Mobridge-Pollock def. Groton Area, 25-19, 25-14, 25-16

Newell def. Lemmon, 0-0

Northwestern def. Ipswich, 25-13, 25-12, 25-17

Parkston def. Lennox, 21-25, 25-21, 25-20, 18-25, 15-11

Rapid City Christian def. White River, 25-14, 25-14, 25-20

Sioux Falls Christian def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-19, 25-19, 25-27, 25-17

Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Mitchell, 13-25, 25-27, 25-18, 25-17, 15-10

Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Brandon Valley, 25-21, 25-10, 25-15

Sisseton def. Redfield, 12-25, 13-25, 26-24, 25-23, 15-11

Spearfish def. Douglas, 22-25, 25-22, 25-20, 25-17

St. Thomas More def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-18, 25-12, 25-13

Sully Buttes def. Lyman, 25-19, 25-13, 25-20

Tea Area def. Elk Point-Jefferson, 25-16, 25-13, 25-17

Tri-Valley def. Dell Rapids, 25-21, 25-16, 25-22

Webster def. Clark/Willow Lake, 19-25, 25-22, 25-19, 14-25, 15-6

West Central def. Chamberlain, 25-13, 25-14, 25-21

Winner def. Kimball/White Lake, 18-25, 25-13, 25-18, 20-25, 15-9

Freeman Academy/Marion Triangular=

Centerville def. Freeman Academy/Marion, 25-17, 16-25, 25-21, 25-17

Gayville-Volin def. Centerville, 25-16, 25-12, 25-23

Gayville-Volin def. Freeman Academy/Marion, 25-16, 25-12, 25-23

Gregory Triangular=

Boyd County, Neb. def. Gregory, 25-16, 20-25, 22-25, 25-20, 15-12

Stuart, Neb. def. Gregory, 25-16, 25-17, 25-22

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

COVID-19 outbreak reported at South Dakota women's prison

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — More than 100 inmates have tested positive at a minimum-security women's prison in Pierre, according to the Department of Corrections.

Mass testing of inmates resulted in the Department of Corrections found 102 active cases at a women's prison called the Pierre Community Work Center, according to an update released late Wednesday. There were 140 women held at the prison, according to an Aug. 31 count. Four staff members have also tested positive, with one fully recovered.

Michael Winder, a spokesman for the Department of Corrections, said in an emailed statement that the prison has placed people with infections into isolation. He said all inmates are required to wear masks and staff at the prison are taking extra precautions for hand washing and sanitizing.

Winder said in a statement sent later Thursday that the Department of Corrections has moved women who did not test positive for COVID-19 to a nearby prison, leaving only the 102 with active infections.

Inmates in Pierre are not allowed to leave the prison for work release or service projects, according to Winder. The prison has also shut down visitations, programs and contact with any volunteers. The prison does provide some access to tablets for phone calls and messaging.

The outbreak at the prison contributed to state health officials reporting one of the highest one-day tallies for new cases on Thursday, with 395 people testing positive statewide. Officials also reported the death of a woman in her 60s from COVID-19, bringing the state's toll to 193.

The rolling average number of daily new cases statewide has decreased over the last two weeks by nearly 102. But South Dakota still ranked second in the country for the most new cases per capita during that time with roughly 373 per 100,000 people, according to data from Johns Hopkins researchers.

The seven-day average positivity for tests is roughly 15%, an indicator that there could be more infections than tests are showing, according to the COVID Tracking Project.

The number of new unemployment filed in the state has significantly decreased, according to the latest information from the state's Department of Labor and Regulation. A total of 346 new claims for unemployment benefits were processed between Sept. 6 and 12. A total of 6,511 people in South Dakota were receiving unemployment when the U.S. Employment and Training Administration released the last count on Sept. 5.

Pierre High School cancels classes due to new COVID-19 cases

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — One of South Dakota's largest school high schools has called off classes for Friday and postponed activities because of an increase in COVID-19 cases.

Pierre High School Superintendent Kelly Glodt said Thursday there were an estimated 15 cases of the coronavirus among students and 150 students have been asked to quarantine for 14 days.

School officials sent an email alert to parents Thursday morning that said the rates of individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 has "greatly increased over the past few days." A special school board meeting has been scheduled Friday to discuss the virus numbers.

The school in South Dakota's capital city has about 850 students.

Glodt said there are no cases confirmed among staff members or students at other schools in the district. All elementary and middle schools are scheduled to operate regularly, he said.

South Dakota health officials confirmed nearly 400 new virus cases Thursday and one additional death. The state ranks second in the country in the number of cases per capita in the last two weeks, according to Wednesday's figures posted by The COVID Tracking Project.

Survey: Economy sees improvement in rural parts of 10 states

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The economy in rural parts of 10 Plains and Western states is seeing some im-

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provements but remains weak, according to a new monthly survey of bankers in the region.

The Rural Mainstreet Survey's overall index remained negative at 46.9 in September, even though it improved from August's 44.7 and marked several straight months of continued improvement since March, when the index bottomed out for the year at 35.5 as the coronavirus pandemic emerged. Any score below 50 suggests a shrinking economy, while a score above 50 suggests a growing economy.

More bankers showed optimism about the economy's outlook over the next six months, with the survey's confidence index rising to 50.0 from August's 44.6.

"Recent improvements in agriculture commodity prices, federal stimuli and Federal Reserve record low interest rates have underpinned the Rural Mainstreet Economy," said Creighton University economist Ernie Goss, who oversees the survey. "Bank CEOs estimated that farm income, including government support, was down only 1.5% from this time last year."

But fewer than 1 in 4 bankers reported that their local economies were back to levels before the outbreak. Bankers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming were surveyed.

Farmland prices declined to 45.0 in September from August's 50.0, while the farm equipment sales index slipped to 32.1 from 32.8 in August.

FBI investigating fatal stabbing on Yankton reservation

WAGNER, S.D. (AP) — The FBI said Thursday it's investigating a stabbing death on the Yankton Sioux Indian Reservation.

A suspect has been arrested in Tuesday evening's stabbing in Wagner, according to the agency. The victim is identified as 54-year-old Isaac Primeaux.

FBI agents continue to investigate the circumstances surrounding the stabbing with the assistance of state and tribal law enforcement officers, officials said.

Once the investigation is complete, the case will be presented to the US Attorney's Office in South Dakota for any charging decision.

Supreme Court: Yankton police sergeants ineligible for union

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Supreme Court has ruled that sergeants in the Yankton Police Department are ineligible for membership in a collective bargaining unit.

In reversing a circuit court decision, the high court agreed with labor officials who said that because sergeants had the authority to hire or make recommendations on hiring they could not belong to a union.

In an opinion filed Wednesday, the Supreme Court reversed a ruling from the First Judicial Circuit Court on an appeal from the City of Yankton. The circuit court ruled the sergeants did not have that authority and could join a union.

The City of Yankton asked for a clarification from labor officials in November 2017 because the union wanted those holding job titles of sergeant, detective or police officer to be eligible for membership.

The Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 19 and the Yankton Police Officers Association were respondents in the appeal.

South Dakota's Noem travels to Michigan for Trump campaign

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem traveled to Michigan Thursday to appear at a campaign event for President Donald Trump at a time when she is overseeing an investigation into a car crash in which the state's attorney general struck and killed a pedestrian.

The Republican governor has become a surrogate for Trump's campaign and developed a national profile within the GOP, but also received backlash from critics who say she is paying more attention to national politics than what is happening in the state. Her office has disputed that notion, saying she has leveraged her national profile for South Dakota's benefit.

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Noem is currently overseeing an investigation into a fatal car crash involving Republican Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg. Noem has promised a transparent investigation, but has not released a timeline for when the state will release details on the crash.

She was headlining a Thursday event sponsored by Workers for Trump, an arm of the campaign reaching out to people employed in the manufacturing sector. Corey Lewandowski, Trump's former campaign manager who now advises Noem, was also speaking at the event.

Noem has taken a "freedom-first" approach to many of her policy decisions, including during the pandemic. She did not issue orders to shutter businesses and avoided statewide lockdown orders.

In a recent column to commemorate Labor Day, a holiday that recognizes the labor movement within the United States, Noem emphasized a free-market and business-centered approach to policy.

"Thanks to America's free market, workers in this country are blessed with endless opportunity to find the right job to provide for themselves and their loved-ones," she wrote. "Businesses are free to grow and innovate, which creates more jobs and more opportunities for the workers that they employ."

Noem is also scheduled to speak at an October Republican event in New Hampshire. The state is considered a proving ground for presidential hopefuls, though Noem has insisted she has no interest in running for president.

Editorial Roundup: Excerpts from South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press undefined

Madison Daily Leader, Madison, Sept. 15

Madison should use research from South Dakota State University

Last year's September floods are fresh in our minds, and we should continue to work on mitigation efforts to prevent similar events in the future.

It's human nature to think one big solution will fix everything, but experts say flood control is most successful with many smaller steps. And that's been the path for Madison since the 1993 flood.

Consider the work that's been done in the past 27 years: a flood buyout program that removed the most vulnerable homes in the flood plain; replacement of a number of bridges over Memorial Creek to add capacity (including two more this summer); increased storm sewer capacity in parts of the city to allow more water to pass underground; and flood consideration in the design of new housing developments to allow for water detention in times of need.

There is plenty more work to be done, which leads us to consider what is happening in Brookings.

Four faculty members in the South Dakota State University School of Design have looked into green methods to manage stormwater that can reduce runoff, an idea that could work in Madison, as well.

"Green stormwater infrastructure uses soil and plants to capture water in a distributed, disconnected network of practices throughout the landscape," said landscape architecture instructor Jeremiah Bergstrom. That can mean adding native grasses, bushes and trees on the edge of a parking lot, installing a rain garden in the back yard or planting perennials in the boulevard to capture runoff in a residential area.

A grant from the California Landscape Architectural Student Scholarship Fund and matching funds from the East Dakota Water Development District are funding the research in Brookings. Presumably, the research would be available to other similar cities, like Madison.

"Because this approach utilizes lots of little fixes, engaging city officials and community members is integral to implementing these techniques -- and maintaining the structures," said associate professor Pat Crawford, director of the School of Design.

The good news for Madison is that the city controls much of the property abutting both Memorial Creek and Silver Creek. The properties could be reshaped and constructed without affecting nearby homeowners too much.

But controlling the land is only the first step. A comprehensive project would require a lot of study and decisions by engineers and landscape architects. Soil types, watershed characteristics, land uses and much more need to be considered.

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We'd love to see the City of Madison embrace the idea of managing stormwater runoff through green methods. And the Brookings project is the perfect starting point.

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, Sept. 10

Can Noem back Trump and South Dakota at the same time?

At a time when many Americans have curtailed their travel due to the ongoing global pandemic, Kristi Noem is seeing a lot of the country.

Last week, South Dakota's governor was the featured speaker at a fundraising event for the Ohio Republican Party at Muirfield Village Golf Club, where couples paid \$2,500 to attend a photo reception with Noem.

A few nights earlier, the governor was in Iowa, a traditional kickoff state for presidential hopefuls, speaking at the Pottawattamie County Lincoln-Reagan Dinner, also attended by former Donald Trump campaign manager and current Noem advisor Corey Lewandowski.

Noem's biggest star turn came Aug. 26 at the at the Republican National Convention, where her taped speech from Washington D.C. praised President Trump for defending the Constitution against "Democrats and their radical supporters" in cities "overrun by violent mobs," a message she also shared in visits to North Carolina and Pennsylvania.

Expect more travel from South Dakota's chief executive as she serves as a surrogate for the Trump campaign leading up to the Nov. 3 election. And while her office insists that no state funds have been used for the trips, it's fair to wonder whether Noem can be a barnstorming backer for Trump and an effective governor for South Dakota at the same time, especially during a public health crisis.

Of course, it must be noted that the trips are not just for Trump. Like the regular TV appearances on Fox News and other conservative outlets that have helped raise Noem's national profile, these battleground state junkets benefit the governor personally as she weighs a possible national run in 2024.

The line between what benefits the citizens of South Dakota and what boosts Noem politically is an increasingly blurry one, as evidenced by a 30-second TV spot featuring the governor that aired in conjunction with her convention speech, praising South Dakota as "a place to safely explore" even amidst the pandemic – and costing taxpayers \$819,000.

The scenery-laden commercial, which will get a broader rollout as part of a \$5 million tourism campaign using federal coronavirus relief funds, was unique in that it used Noem as narrator and targeted Fox News viewership, fertile ground for potential GOP primary votes. There will also be more interviews, many of them bashing the media, from the TV studio installed in the basement of the state capitol building last year at public expense.

Yankton Press & Dakotan, Yankton, Sept. 15

Wildfires could be sign of things to come

The west is in flames.

While that's a somewhat dramatic and overly broad description of what's happening right now on the West Coast, it's also a blunt appraisal of the wildfire disaster unfolding in California, Oregon and Washington, among other places.

Forests are burning. People are fleeing and dying. Smoke is compromising air quality while drifting across the nation. It has impacted the skies in this region the last few days.

Frankly, this is what the long-sounded threats of climate change look like: a magnification of disasters on an epic scale.

This is what our future may increasingly look like.

There are those who vigorously disagree, of course, and always will. But they fiddle while the world burns or drowns in ferocious tropical storms. They stand defiant as prairies and timberland bake or are washed away, depending on the meteorological mood of a given violent moment.

On Monday, President Donald Trump visited California, where nearly 2 million acres of land have burned this year already, a 2,000% increase from this time last year. He blamed the wildfires on poor forest man-

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agement, not the extreme weather patterns that have created tinderbox conditions.

To be sure, forest management HAS long been a contributing factor in wildfires. The zero-tolerance policy that this nation adopted toward fires back in the early 1900s smothered the fact that the burn-off of vegetation was a natural process for forests and prairies. This realization eventually led to the development of proactive practices to deal with the excess fuel.

"Experts, environmentalists and loggers largely agree that thinning trees and brush through prescribed burns and careful logging will help prevent forests that cover vast tracts of the American West from threatening cities with fire," The Associated Press noted.

But even these steps have occasionally confronted walls of opposition as humans have increasingly encroached into once-remote areas and, in the process, have placed themselves in harm's way.

However, there is more at work here than forests that, as the president has suggested, need "raking."

Climate change has generated extreme weather scenarios that have magnified the threats. For example, prolonged heat and dry weather, whipped by powerful winds often created by wildfires themselves, have made forested areas more prone to disaster.

This past weekend, the San Jose Mercury News cited a climate report by the U.S. Global Change Research Program noting global temperature changes since the early 20th century have led to more extreme weather events. (Incidentally, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported Monday that North America saw its warmest August on record last month.) According to the study, "daily tidal flooding is accelerating in more than 25 Atlantic and Gulf Coast cities. Heatwaves have become more frequent in the U.S. since the 1960s, while extreme cold temperatures and cold waves are less frequent. And large forest fires in the western United States have increased since the early 1980s and are projected to continue."

This report is one of many climate studies that have reached similar conclusions, which is why California Gov. Gavin Newsom told the president Monday, "We come from a perspective, humbly, where we submit the science is in — and observed evidence is self-evident — that climate change is real and that is exacerbating this."

Still, the arguments will continue as dry land burns, coastal areas flood and more lives and property are impacted. These exchanges will offer continued opportunities for discussion — but at some point, talk must give way to action. And that point is looming straight before us.

Virus clusters at French universities give Europe a lesson

By SYLVIE CORBET and TARYN SIEGEL Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Can mandatory masks offer enough protection in lecture halls so packed that late arrivals have to sit on the floor?

That's what worries many students at the centuries-old Sorbonne University in Paris as the coronavirus is on the rebound across France.

At least a dozen COVID-19 clusters have emerged since French campuses and classrooms opened this month. The clutches of cases are a warning sign for countries elsewhere in Europe, where most universities are readying to resume teaching and research in coming weeks.

"We go back to university in conditions that are a bit extreme, and we fear we might get COVID-19," Elise Gilbert, 20, who is studying literature at the Sorbonne, said of the overcrowding students encountered.

France's experience so far stands in contrast to what's happening in Britain, where virus-driven changes on campuses mean university life will look a lot different this term. Germany and Italy are also adapting their delivery of higher education in response to the pandemic.

The French government was determined to get people back to classrooms to bridge education inequities that the pandemic has exacerbated. The government also urged workers to return to offices and job sites to resuscitate the economy and to "learn to live with the virus."

At universities, the main change this year is mandatory mask-wearing at all times. But keeping physical distances appears impossible in many places.

Some students are raising their grievances on Twitter, using the hashtag #Balancetafac ("Squeal on your

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uni") to share pictures of packed classrooms and corridors.

They describe situations where there's no soap to wash their hands and where rooms, sometimes with no windows to provide fresh air, are not being disinfected between lectures.

"We are doing our best to respect social distancing, but sometimes we can't," Corentin Renault, a 20-year-old Sorbonne journalism student, said.

Nevertheless, the Sorbonne is maintaining in-person classes for the time being.

"It's quite hard at the moment because we haven't got any extra means," Franziska Heimburger, assistant director of the university's English department, said. "We don't have any more teachers, we don't have any more space, so we basically have to teach as best we can."

Heimburger said instructors won't penalize students for pandemic-related absences. "I've had students who live with their grandparents and they are worried of taking (the virus) back home with them," she said.

Many students also expressed anger when French authorities appeared to blame the country's recent virus outbreaks mostly on students attending parties.

One factor in the overcrowding is more students are attending French universities. The number of students enrolled jumped by 270,000 to 2.8 million after the exam which allows high school students access to universities was canceled due to the pandemic. Students were instead granted access based on school grades, and many more qualified than usual.

The safety precautions differ broadly among schools. Some have strict public health measures in place, with small class size limits and a mix of in-person and online classes.

But others have had to temporarily shut down after dozens of students tested positive in multiple sites, from engineering to medical and business schools. They moved teaching online, as when the country was locked down at the height of its epidemic which has killed some 31,000 people in France.

In the UK, most universities do not begin their fall terms until late September or early October, and are readying big changes.

At the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, where the fall semester began Monday, many classes are being taught online — other than laboratory sessions or other practical instruction where hands-on learning is essential. Student societies are barred from meeting in person, and many students arriving from overseas will have to quarantine for two weeks in line with government protocols.

At University College London, only a quarter of the buildings will be occupied at one time. Teaching spaces will incorporate social distancing and everyone must wear face-masks. The university created an app for students to alert authorities if they have symptoms and plans to test up to 1,000 students and staff a day to keep the campus safe.

"I've got a public health expert team that are advising me when it's appropriate to extend testing beyond those that are immediately symptomatic," Michael Arthur, the president and provost at UCL. "So I think we're reasonably confident if we do have an outbreak — and I'm sure we will have, we're just playing with statistics — that we can move in and contain it very rapidly."

Student housing has been adapted to allow those who test positive to self-isolate.

In Germany, most universities won't start lectures before next month, and they have introduced numerous rules to ensure distancing, increased hygiene and bans on students' parties. They are also expanding online teaching.

Student associations in the Dutch university city of Delft sent a letter this week calling on students to "take responsibility" for reining in infections that are spreading quickly, particularly in student housing.

"The initiative is with students to prevent a local lockdown," the associations said. "It's not too late, but time is pressing."

Many Italian universities are reopening with distance learning this fall. Priority for physical classrooms was being given to first-year students, to aid their transition.

In the United States, dozens of universities have emerged as virus hot spots. Although students are being spaced apart in classrooms and dining halls, the virus has continued to spread in cramped dorm halls and through off-campus parties that have been blamed for thousands of cases.

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The surge has prompted some universities to send students home and cancel in-person instruction for the rest of the term. U.S. officials are urging against that approach, saying it could spark outbreaks elsewhere. Instead, universities are being urged to keep students where they are and temporarily move classes online.

Danica Kirka in London, Jeff Schaeffer and Alex Turnbull in Paris, Frank Jordans in Berlin, Michael Corder in The Hague and Collin Binkley in Boston contributed.

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

Pope seeks to "liberate" Virgin Mary from the Mafia

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis is giving his blessing to a new Vatican think tank that is seeking to prevent the Mafia and organized crime groups from exploiting the image of the Virgin Mary for their own illicit ends.

The Vatican's Pontifical Marian Academy launched the think tank Friday at a conference entitled "Liberating Mary from the Mafia." It was a reference to the historic relationship between the Italian mob and the Catholic Church, and the popular displays of Marian devotion by mobsters in Italy and beyond.

In a message from the pope read out at the start of the conference, held at Rome's Museum of Civility, Francis said the religious and cultural image and patrimony of the Madonna "must be preserved in its original purity."

He said any popular displays of devotion to Mary must "conform to the message of the Gospel and the teachings of the church," and that people participating in them must be true Christians who look out for others, and especially the poor.

The Catholic Church in Italy has long been associated with the Mafia, thanks in part to their post-war common cause against communism. While some Catholic priests have courageously opposed the mob — and paid for it with their lives — others have been called to explain their celebration of funerals, weddings and other sacraments for mafia dons, acceptance of their donations and participation in their religious processions.

St. John Paul II in 1993 famously demanded Mafiosi convert, change their ways or face the wrath of God's final judgment as he made a historic visit to Sicily after the mob slayings of two leading anti-Mafia prosecutors.

Francis has followed in that tradition, declaring that mobsters were "excommunicated" and saying mobsters cannot live Christian lives because their lifestyle "blasphemes" God. Marian devotion is particularly important to Francis, history's first pope from Latin America, where displays of such popular piety are common.

Francis' message to the new think tank, which includes clergy as well as law enforcement experts involved in the fight against organized crime, was dated Aug. 15, a major Catholic feast day devoted to Mary.

Israel returns to virus lockdown as cases mount

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel went back into a full lockdown on Friday to try to contain a coronavirus outbreak that has steadily worsened for months as its government has been plagued by indecision and infighting.

The three-week lockdown, which began at 2 p.m. (1100 GMT), will require the closure of many businesses and set strict limits on movement and public gatherings. The closures coincide with the Jewish High Holidays, when people typically visit their families and gather for large prayer services.

In an address late Thursday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that even stricter measures may be needed to prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed. There are currently more than 46,000 active cases, with at least 577 hospitalized in serious condition.

"It could be that we will have no choice but to make the directives more stringent," Netanyahu said. "I will not impose a lockdown on the citizens of Israel for no reason, and I will not hesitate to add further

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restrictions if it is necessary.”

Under the new lockdown, nearly all businesses open to the public will be closed. People must remain within 1 kilometer (0.6 miles) of home, but there are several exceptions, including shopping for food or medicine, going to work in a business that's closed to the public, attending protests and even seeking essential pet care.

Israel has reported a total of more than 175,000 cases since the outbreak began, including at least 1,169 deaths. It is now reporting around 5,000 new cases a day, one of the highest per capita infection rates in the world.

Israel was among the first countries to impose sweeping lockdowns this spring, sealing its borders, forcing most businesses to close and largely confining people to their homes. That succeeded in bringing the number of new cases down to only a few dozen per day in May.

But then the economy abruptly reopened, and a new government was sworn in that was paralyzed by infighting. In recent months authorities have announced various restrictions only to see them ignored or reversed even as new cases soared to record levels.

The occupied West Bank has followed a similar trajectory, with a spring lockdown largely containing its outbreak followed by a rise of cases that forced the Palestinian Authority to impose a 10-day lockdown in July. The PA has reported more than 30,000 cases in the West Bank and around 240 deaths.

The Gaza Strip, which has been under an Israeli-Egyptian blockade since the Islamic militant group Hamas seized power from rival Palestinian forces in 2007, was initially insulated from the pandemic. But authorities detected community spread last month, and there are now more than 1,700 active cases in the impoverished territory of 2 million, straining its already fragile health system. At least 16 people have died.

In Israel, the government has come under withering criticism for its response to the virus and the economic crisis triggered by the earlier lockdown. Netanyahu, who is also on trial for corruption, has been the target of weekly protests outside his official residence. Israel's insular ultra-Orthodox community, which has a high rate of infection, has also been up in arms about the restrictions, especially those targeting religious gatherings.

In Tel Aviv, hundreds of people protested the renewed lockdown on Thursday, including doctors and scientists who said it would be ineffective.

Dr. Amir Shahar, head of an emergency department in the city of Netanya and one of the organizers of the demonstration, said the lockdown is “disastrous” and would do “more harm than good.”

At town hall, Biden blasts Trump's 'criminal' virus response

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

MOOSIC, Pa. (AP) — Joe Biden went after President Donald Trump again and again over his handling of COVID-19, calling Trump's downplaying of the pandemic “criminal” and his administration “totally irresponsible.”

“You've got to level with the American people — shoot from the shoulder. There's not been a time they've not been able to step up. The president should step down,” the Democratic presidential nominee said to applause from a CNN drive-in town hall crowd Thursday night in Moosic, outside his hometown of Scranton.

Speaking about Trump's admission that he publicly played down the impact of the virus while aware of its severity, Biden declared: “He knew it and did nothing. It's close to criminal.”

Biden decried Americans' loss of basic “freedoms” as the U.S. has struggled to contain the pandemic, like the ability to go to a ballgame or walk around their neighborhoods. “I never, ever thought I would see just such a thoroughly, totally irresponsible administration,” he said.

Biden faced a half-dozen questions about the coronavirus and a potential vaccine in the town hall from moderator Anderson Cooper and audience members. The pandemic was not just the main topic of the night — it was the cause of the unusual format of the event: a drive-in with 35 cars outside PNC Field.

The cars were parked around the stage, each with small groups of people standing outside them or leaning

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or sitting on the hoods to watch Cooper and Biden onstage. The network erected blue and red spotlights over the dirt and gravel parking lot to make it easier to see, and each parking space was marked off with white chalk in large rectangles to ensure that each group stayed more than 6 feet (1.8 meters) apart.

The town hall was the first time that Biden had faced live, unscripted questions from voters since winning the nomination. Trump participated in a town hall Tuesday in an auditorium in Philadelphia.

The appearances have been seen as tuneups before the three presidential debates, the first set for Sept. 29. Biden's uneven debate performances during the Democratic primary contributed to his initial struggles in polls and the early primary vote, and Trump has pushed unfounded conspiracy theories about Biden taking performance-enhancing drugs and has raised questions about Biden's mental acuity.

Biden, meanwhile, has promised to be a "fact-checker on the stage" with Trump but has said he doesn't want to get drawn into a "brawl" with the Republican.

On Thursday, Biden said he was beginning to prepare for the upcoming debate by reviewing Trump's remarks and preparing his own.

Biden was also pressed on his stance on the Green New Deal, the sweeping proposal from progressives in Congress that calls for achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions across the economy by 2030. Biden's proposal doesn't go as far, but it does aim to reduce emissions to zero by 2050 and has a goal of achieving an entirely carbon pollution-free power sector by 2035.

Biden interrupted a questioner who suggested his climate plan embraces the Green New Deal to insist, "No, it doesn't," but when asked by the moderator if he supports the proposal, he said, "I don't think it's too much."

Still, Biden added, "I have my own deal," which he noted the Democratic Party has incorporated as part of its platform.

Biden also weighed in on foreign policy issues, promising to reduce America's military footprint abroad and saying that any attempt to interfere with the election by a foreign power is a "violation of our sovereignty." He promised that if he's elected and it becomes clear post-election that Russia interfered in the election, "they'll pay a price for it, and it'll be an economic price."

Biden described Russia as an "opponent," but declined to use the same word when asked about China. He instead called the nation a "competitor" and pledging to improve trade policy with China.

Trump signaled he'd been watching the town hall before he took the stage for a rally in Misonee, Wisconsin, on Thursday night.

"I just see he's up there tonight getting softball questions from Anderson Cooper. They don't ask me questions like that," Trump told the crowd gathered at the airport. "They've got cars ... it's the weirdest thing I've ever seen."

Trump's ABC town hall was held inside a half-empty auditorium, with attendees socially distanced and wearing masks.

The format of Biden's event was a stark reminder of the issue that's been a central focus of Biden's campaign — that the pandemic rages on, affecting Americans' lives in ways large and small, and that stronger leadership in White House could have eased the crisis. More than 195,000 Americans have died of the coronavirus — by far the highest death toll in the world.

Earlier in the day, Biden joined Senate Democrats for a conference call lunch and told allies that he is taking nothing for granted in the race for the White House and the down-ballot effort to wrest the Senate's majority control from Republicans. He fielded questions, particularly from senators facing reelection, about his strategy win back the chamber and defeat Trump.

"He just said, 'You know what we're up against. You know why this is so important,'" said Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich.

West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin said he encouraged Biden to remind workers how much he has been on their side during his many years in government.

"I've said, 'Joe, people need to know that you recognize the dignity of the work, the people have built this country,'" Manchin told reporters. "They need to know that you fought for their pensions, you fought for their health care ... and you're not gonna leave them behind."

Biden's campaign team has come under scrutiny in recent days over its outreach efforts, particularly for what some see as short shrift with Latino voters. At the same time, Democrats have mixed views over the party's get-out-the-vote effort that largely bypasses traditional door-knocking to avoid health risks during the pandemic, instead relying on virtual outreach.

Jaffe reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro and Darlene Superville in Washington and Bill Barrow in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Trump heats up culture war in appeal to Wisconsin voters

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

MOSINEE, Wis. (AP) — President Donald Trump stepped up his rhetoric on cultural issues, aiming to boost enthusiasm among rural Wisconsin voters as he tries to repeat his path to victory four years ago.

Making his fifth visit to the pivotal battleground state this year, Trump views success in the state's less-populated counties as critical to another term. He held a rally Thursday evening in Mosinee, in central Wisconsin, an area of the state that shifted dramatically toward Republicans in 2016, enabling Trump to overcome even greater deficits in urban and suburban parts of the state.

Trump has increasingly used his public appearances to elevate cultural issues important to his generally whiter and older base, as he hinges his campaign on turning out his core supporters rather than focusing on winning over a narrow slice of undecided voters. In Mosinee, he called for a statute to ban burning the American flag in protest — a freedom protected by the Supreme Court — and criticized sports players and leagues for allowing demonstrations against racial inequality.

"We have enough politics, right," he said, joking that sometimes, "I can't watch me." He added of protests in sports, "People don't want to see it and the ratings are down."

Earlier Thursday, in a speech at the National Archives to commemorate Constitution Day, he derided The New York Times' "1619 Project," which aimed to recognize the often overlooked consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans.

"For many years now, the radicals have mistaken Americans' silence for weakness. But they are wrong," Trump said. "There is no more powerful force than a parent's love for their children — and patriotic moms and dads are going to demand that their children are no longer fed hateful lies about this country."

Trump told supporters in Wisconsin: "We're launching a new pro-American lesson plan for students called 1776 Commission. We're going to teach our children the truth about America."

Trump's last visit to Wisconsin came on Sept. 1, when he met with law enforcement and toured damage from protests in Kenosha that turned violent after the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man hit seven times in the back during an attempted arrest. Trump has sought to use the unrest after the August shooting of Blake and the May police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis to tout a "law and order" message and paint an apocalyptic vision of violence if Democrat Joe Biden wins on Nov. 3.

"I saved the suburbs," Trump said Thursday of his call for federal law enforcement and national guard troops to confront protesters. He added that police "did a great job in Kenosha."

Trump also previewed aid to the region's farmers, saying \$13 billion would begin flowing "starting next week" to help farmers. He provided no details.

Trump took another victory lap two days after he presided over Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates recognizing Israel in a White House ceremony.

"I got nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize. That's a big deal," Trump said, adding, "I should've gotten nominated seven times." His supporters chanted "Nobel Peace Prize" in response.

Trump won Marathon County, which includes Mosinee, by more than 12,000 votes in 2016 — over three times more than the margin by which 2012 GOP nominee Mitt Romney won the area. Trump's team is wagering the 2020 contest on a similar performance in the county and the dozens of others like it across battleground states.

Trump's path to 270 Electoral College votes may well hinge on Wisconsin, and his campaign is investing

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tens of millions of dollars on advertising and get-out-the-vote efforts in the state.

Trump's event took place largely outside an aircraft hangar at the Mosinee airport, his campaign's preferred format for mass rallies during the coronavirus pandemic, though Trump has been willing to host large events indoors as well, sometimes in violation of state and federal distancing guidelines.

Republican Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin was set to join Trump on Air Force One but ended up under quarantine Thursday after learning he was exposed to someone earlier in the week who subsequently tested positive for the virus. Johnson tested negative on Wednesday night, his office said.

Associated Press writers Darlene Superville and Lisa Mascaro contributed to this report from Washington.

Asia Today: India's coronavirus cases jump by another 96K

NEW DELHI (AP) — India's coronavirus cases jumped by another 96,424 in the past 24 hours, showing little sign of leveling.

The Health Ministry on Friday raised the nation's total cases to 5.21 million, or 0.37% of its nearly 1.4 billion people. It said 1,174 more people died in the past 24 hours, for a total of 84,372 fatalities. Experts say India's death toll may be a significant undercount.

India is expected to have the highest number of confirmed cases within weeks, surpassing the United States, where more than 6.67 million people have been infected.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his birthday Thursday made a fresh appeal to people to wear masks and maintain social distancing as his government prepared plans for handling big congregations expected during a major Hindu festival season beginning next month.

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said with a recovery rate of more than 78%, India has only 1 million active coronavirus cases.

Nearly 60% of the active cases are concentrated in five of India's 28 states — Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.

Worst-hit western Maharashtra state accounted for 474 of the 1,174 fatalities reported in the country in the past 24 hours.

Authorities extended until the end of September a ban on assemblies of four or more people in Mumbai, India's financial and entertainment capital. More than 178,000 people have been infected by the coronavirus in Mumbai, including 8,320 who died.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— New Zealand reported no new cases of the coronavirus on Friday for the first time in more than five weeks as hopes rise that an outbreak discovered in Auckland last month has been stamped out. Friday also marked the fourth consecutive day without any cases of community transmission, with all recent cases being found among quarantined passengers returning from abroad. Health authorities expect to continue finding such cases at the border. Authorities have still not pinpointed the origin of the August outbreak, which they believe was imported. New Zealand has reported a total of just over 1,800 cases and 25 deaths.

— An Australian state government will open the state border to the national capital after being criticized for refusing to allow a Canberra resident to attend her father's funeral because of pandemic restrictions. Health Minister Steven Miles said Canberra travelers would no longer have to spend time in Queensland hotel quarantine from Sept. 25. They'll have to fly rather than drive to Queensland, however, because Canberra is surrounded by New South Wales state, which remains subject to border restrictions.

— A senior governing party lawmaker who helped with new Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's election campaign has been hospitalized with COVID-19, becoming the first confirmed case in Japan's parliament. Shuichi Takatori, a member of the Liberal Democratic Party, developed a fever and tested positive for the coronavirus, according to parliament's lower house. Takatori attended a plenary session on Wednesday at which Suga was formally elected prime minister. He accompanied 81-year-old party Secretary General Toshihiro Nikai when they greeted former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe after the vote, Kyodo News agency

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reported. Health officials are investigating his close contacts for possible infection. Japan has 77,494 confirmed coronavirus cases including 1,482 deaths as of Friday, according to the health ministry.

— South Korea's daily coronavirus tally has stayed in the 100s for a 16th consecutive day as authorities struggle to contain small-scale local infections. The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said Friday that the 126 new cases in the past 24 hours took the country's total to 22,783 with 377 deaths. South Korea's caseload has been slowing recently, prompting authorities to relax elevated social distancing rules in the Seoul area. But the country's daily jump remains in triple digits as cluster transmissions linked to churches, schools and elsewhere and some untraceable cases continue to be detected.

— China on Friday reported that imported coronavirus cases surged to 32 over the previous 24 hours. Thirteen of those cases were reported in the northern province of Shaanxi, whose capital Xi'an is a major industrial center, while the eastern financial and business hub of Shanghai reported 12. China, where the virus was first reported late last year, has gone more than a month without reporting any cases of local transmission but remains highly vigilant to cases brought from outside. It has suspended issuing new visas and anyone arriving from abroad is required to undergo two weeks of quarantine. Schools, businesses, transport and public services have largely resumed normal operations under social distancing, mask wearing and location tracking requirements.

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. **HOW MINNESOTA IS SHAPING UP** Donald Trump almost won there in 2016 but the state has moved farther away from the president since, and polls suggest Joe Biden has built a consistent lead in the unlikely battleground.

2. **VIRUS CLUSTERS AT FRENCH UNIVERSITIES** Students have contracted COVID-19 at schools like the centuries-old Sorbonne University in Paris, an experience that is a warning to other European universities that are preparing to reopen.

3. **'NOBODY CAN GET TO US'** Rescuers across southern Alabama and the Florida Panhandle are using boats and high-water vehicles to reach people cut off by floodwaters in the aftermath of Hurricane Sally.

4. **'FORREST GUMP' AUTHOR DIES** Winston Groom's novel was turned into an Oscar-winning smash in 1994 and became a soaring pop cultural phenomenon.

5. **BROWNS WIN ON NFL'S 100TH BIRTHDAY** Baker Mayfield and Nick Chubb lead Cleveland to a 35-30 win over Cincinnati and rookie quarterback Joe Burrow, giving coach Kevin Stefanski his first NFL win.

Trump and Biden hit unlikely battleground state of Minnesota

By WILL WEISSERT and KATHLEEN HENNESSEY Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minnesota has backed Democratic presidential candidates for nearly half a century and rarely receives much attention during the final stages of the race, when campaigns typically focus their resources on more traditional swing states like Florida or Pennsylvania.

But Minnesota will feel like a genuine battleground on Friday when President Donald Trump and his Democratic challenger, Joe Biden, campaign here to mark the beginning of early voting.

They're expected to avoid the urban core of Minneapolis to focus on rural and working-class voters, some of whom shifted to Republicans for the first time in 2016. Trump will be in Bemidji, about 200 miles (320 kilometers) north of Minneapolis, while Biden will swing through Duluth, on the banks of Lake Superior and close to the Wisconsin border.

Since narrowly losing Minnesota in 2016, Trump has focused relentlessly on the state in hopes that a victory this year could offset losses in other states. He has visited regularly and kept a close eye on issues of particular importance to rural corners of the state, reversing an Obama administration policy prohibiting the development of copper-nickel mining and bailing out soybean, corn and other farmers who have been

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hurt by trade clashes with China.

More recently, he's embraced a "law and order" message aimed at white suburban and rural voters who may be concerned by protests that have sometimes become violent. That's especially true in Minnesota, where the May killing of George Floyd by a police officer sparked a national reckoning on systemic racism.

But for all the work Trump has put into the state, it may elude him again in November.

A series of polls over the past week show Biden has built a consistent lead over Trump. And in the 2018 midterms, Democratic turnout surged in suburbs, small cities and even on the Iron Range, across the blue-collar mining towns that were once labor strongholds but had been trending Republican.

David McIntosh, president of the conservative Club for Growth, which has produced anti-Biden ads, said Minnesota may help the Trump campaign build momentum.

"They're looking beyond the poll numbers and seeing the potential there," said McIntosh, a former congressman from Indiana. "It's always smart strategy to go on offense somewhere."

In 2018, Democrats flipped two suburban congressional districts, took back control of the state House by winning suburban Trump-voting areas and came within one seat of winning control of the state Senate. Democrats won every statewide race that year, even as they lost a rural congressional district.

Trump's path to Minnesota success likely depends on finding more votes in rural, conservative areas — running up the score beyond his 2016 tally. It's a strategy he's trying to pull off elsewhere and it depends on a robust field operation with the money and time to track down infrequent or first-time voters. That could be a tall order since Minnesota already has one of the nation's highest voter turnout rates.

"I don't think they're there," said Joe Radinovich, a Democrat who lost a bid for a northern Minnesota congressional district in 2018. Radinovich noted the major organizational challenge and expense in tracking new voters, making sure they're registered and getting them to vote — especially during a pandemic. "We have relatively high turnout already. Most people vote. I just don't think it's there. I think those people showed up in 2016," he said.

In 2016, Trump won that district, which includes the Democratic city of Duluth, by 15 percentage points. But in the midterms two years later, Radinovich lost by just under 6 percentage points.

Still, Trump has spent more than a year building a sizable Minnesota ground game. Republicans are out knocking on doors and interacting personally with voters in ways that Democrats mostly have not, preferring online operations because of the coronavirus.

The president's reelection campaign announced this week a \$10 million ad buy in a series of states, including Minnesota. It has spent nearly \$17 million on advertising in the state since last October, compared with almost \$6.3 million for Biden over the same period, according to a review of Kantar/CMAG data by The Associated Press.

Democrats warn that Biden still may have his work cut out for him. Duluth Mayor Emily Larson said the Trump campaign has far outpaced Biden in local yard signs — which indicates enthusiasm but may not ultimately affect the outcome.

"One of the things the Trump campaign has been very good about is visibility in Duluth, but also in areas around Duluth," Larson said.

Ken Martin, chairman of the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, said that while Biden isn't likely to carry the congressional district that includes Duluth, he might be able to pick up enough support there to deny Trump the votes he needs to win statewide.

"If your opponent is on the ropes or on the ground, you don't get up," Martin said.

Associated Press writer Steve Karnowski contributed to this report from Minneapolis.

The Latest: Global virus cases top 30 million, tally shows

By The Associated Press undefined

LONDON - Confirmed cases of the coronavirus have topped 30 million worldwide, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally.

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The worldwide count of known COVID-19 infections climbed past 30 million on Thursday, with more than half of them from just three countries: the U.S., India and Brazil, according to the tally kept by Johns Hopkins researchers.

The number increased by 10 million in just over a month; global cases passed 20 million on August 12. The United States leads the by-country count with at least 6,675,560 reported cases, followed by India with at least 5,214,677 and Brazil at 4,455,386, the numbers showed.

Individual numbers could vary as the university's tally sometimes lags behind country reports.

The U.S. also leads in the number of deaths at 197,643, followed by Brazil at 134,935 and India with a death toll of 84,372, the tally showed.

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

- At town hall, Biden blasts Trump's 'criminal' virus response
- Infection rates soar in U.S. college towns as students return
- Bars in and around Las Vegas will be allowed to reopen
- Lawmakers voted on mostly party lines to condemn racism against Asian Americans tied to the coronavirus outbreak. Republicans called the legislation "woke culture on steroids."

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

PRAGUE - Confirmed coronavirus cases in the Czech Republic have hit a new record high for the third straight day and surpassed 3,000 reported cases in 24 hours for the first time.

The Health Ministry said 3,130 people tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday, almost 1,000 more than the previous record set a day earlier.

That day-to-day increase was almost as high as the number of all cases the country reported in March, during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Czech capital of Prague was the hardest hit with 191 infections per 100,000 residents.

The Czech Republic has had a total of 44,155 confirmed COVID-19 cases with 489 deaths.

LONDON -- British Health Secretary Matt Hancock has hinted that fresh restrictions on social gatherings in England could be announced soon as part of efforts to suppress a sharp spike in confirmed coronavirus cases.

Following reports that the government was considering fresh curbs on the hospitality sector, such as pubs and restaurants, Hancock said this is a "big moment for the country."

He said that another national lockdown is the "last line of defense" and that most transmissions of the virus are taking place in social settings.

Hancock says the government's strategy over the coming weeks is to contain the virus as much as possible "whilst protecting education and the economy."

The government has come under sustained criticism in the past week following serious issues with its virus testing program.

There's widespread speculation that parts of northwest England will see further restrictions announced Friday.

NEW DELHI — India's coronavirus cases have jumped by another 96,424 infections in the past 24 hours, showing little signs of slowing down.

The Health Ministry on Friday raised the nation's confirmed total since the pandemic began to more than 5.21 million. It said 1,174 more people died in the past 24 hours, for a total of 84,372.

India is expected within weeks to surpass the reported infections seen in the United States, where more

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than 6.67 million people have been reported infected, the most in the world.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday made a fresh appeal to people to use face masks and maintain social distance as his government chalked out plans to handle big congregations expected during a major Hindu festival season beginning next month.

UNITED NATIONS — U.N. World Food Program chief David Beasley is warning that 270 million people are "marching toward the brink of starvation" because of the toxic combination of conflict, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Beasley on Thursday urged donor nations and billionaires to contribute \$4.9 billion to feed the 30 million he said will die without U.N. assistance.

He reminded the U.N. Security Council of his warning five months ago that "the world stood on the brink of a hunger pandemic," and welcomed the response, which averted famine and led countries to fight back against the coronavirus.

Beasley said the U.N. food agency is keeping people alive "and avoiding a humanitarian catastrophe" but he said "the fight is far, far, far from over."

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — New Zealand has reported no new confirmed cases of the coronavirus for the first time in more than five weeks as hopes rise that an outbreak discovered in Auckland last month has been stamped out.

Friday's report also marked the fourth consecutive day without any cases of community transmission. All recent cases have been found among quarantined travelers returning from abroad.

Authorities have still not pinpointed the origin of the August outbreak, which they believe was imported. Auckland was temporarily placed into lockdown as the country continued its strategy of trying to completely eliminate community spread of the virus.

New Zealand has reported a total of just over 1,800 cases and 25 deaths.

BEIJING — China says imported coronavirus cases climbed to 32 over the previous 24 hours.

Thirteen of the cases reported Friday were in the northern province of Shaanxi, whose capital Xi'an is a major industrial center. The eastern financial and business hub of Shanghai reported 12.

China has gone more than a month without reporting any cases of locally transmitted coronavirus cases within its borders.

But it remains highly vigilant for cases brought in from outside the country. It has suspended issuing new visas and anyone arriving from abroad is required to undergo a two-week quarantine.

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's daily coronavirus tally has stayed in the 100s for a 16th consecutive day as authorities struggle to stop local infections.

The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said Friday that the 126 confirmed cases added in the past 24 hours took the country's reported total since the pandemic began to 22,783, with 377 deaths.

The agency says 82 of the newly reported cases were from the Seoul metropolitan area, which has been at the center of the viral resurgence since early last month.

South Korea's caseload has been slowing recently, prompting authorities to relax elevated social distancing rules in the Seoul area.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California companies must pay workers compensation benefits to any employees that become infected with the coronavirus and they must warn employees of any potential exposure to the virus under two laws that Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Thursday.

Business groups have criticized the measures as "unworkable."

The law on informing employees requires that businesses tell workers whenever they have been exposed to someone who has either tested positive, been ordered to isolate or died because of the virus.

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Companies must do so within one business day of learning of the exposures or they can face fines issued by the Division of Occupational Safety and Health.

LAS VEGAS — Bars in and around Las Vegas can reopen at midnight Sunday with limited capacity, while requiring customers to use facial coverings and obey social distance rules.

Nevada's coronavirus response task force decided Thursday that drinking establishments also can reopen in remote Elko County.

The moves relieved a hot-button issue and relaxed the last of the bar closure orders that Gov. Steve Sisolak re-imposed more than two months ago to limit gatherings where alcohol is served in the state's coronavirus pandemic hot spot areas.

Taverns, bars, breweries, distilleries and wineries were allowed to reopen earlier this week in the Reno area.

AP Interview: South Africa to know true virus toll in weeks

By ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — South Africa should know its true toll from the coronavirus pandemic within a few weeks, the government's chief medical adviser says, as the country prepares to almost fully reopen its economy after bringing the first surge in cases under control.

The official death toll from COVID-19 is more than 15,700 but the real number is likely more than 30,000 when deaths not recorded at hospitals are taken into account, Salim Abdool Karim, epidemiologist and chairman of the government's COVID-19 advisory committee, told The Associated Press in an interview.

He hopes that a nationwide survey for the presence of antibodies to the virus will show results soon. Similar surveys are beginning in other countries across Africa, which has seen far fewer confirmed cases and deaths in the pandemic than health experts once feared.

South Africa makes up roughly half the confirmed virus cases in Africa with more than 650,000. Abdool Karim said the concentration of cases in South Africa is not just because of a much higher level of testing. He, like other health experts in Africa, have pointed to the continent's younger population and early lockdowns that gave authorities more time to prepare.

"When this virus takes hold, you cannot ignore it or hide it," he said. "I have spoken to doctors at hospitals in Lagos and other cities and they are not seeing a massive influx of patients with respiratory illness. I don't fully understand why so many African countries have not had a bigger epidemic. I would have thought that Lagos (Africa's largest city) would have seen an explosion of cases."

South Africa reached its peak caseload in mid-July, Abdool Karim said. Now the country is seeing substantial declines in new confirmed cases, deaths and hospitalizations.

"We have a full cascade of indicators going consistently in the same downward direction. This gives me confidence that we are heading for a threshold of low transmission," Abdool Karim said. "We are now in a good position to relax restrictions while remaining vigilant to respond to any signs of a second surge."

President Cyril Ramaphosa has said the country will further relax lockdown restrictions at midnight Sunday, enabling the economy to return to about 95% activity, according to business experts.

South Africa also will reopen its borders to travelers after a nearly six-month closure, allowing a resumption of international tourism. Masks will remain mandatory in all public spaces.

"At our peak we were seeing an average of more than 12,000 new cases daily," Abdool Karim said. "Now we are averaging below 2,000 daily and dropping. We should soon reach 580 new cases daily, which for our population of 58 million is considered by the World Health Organization to be the threshold for low transmission."

South Africa is already on the lookout for any signs of a second surge, he said — something that Ramaphosa has said would be "devastating" for the country that once ranked fifth in the world in virus caseload.

"It is not inevitable that we have a second surge, but many countries have experienced that, and in some cases it is worse than the first," Abdool Karim said. "We are working to have early identification of any

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hotspots and we want to avoid events that can be a super spreader, such as large gatherings of people. We are making a new effort on testing and tracing. When we had 7,000 cases per day, our testing could not keep up but we are working to improve it."

South Africa recorded more overall deaths during its peak in cases than its historic average, but it still fared better than many. Abdool Karim said the country's early lockdown — one of the world's strictest — slowed the spread of the virus and allowed health officials to prepare adequate hospital beds and supplies of oxygen.

"We re-directed oxygen from industries to our hospitals. No hospitals reported running out of oxygen," he said.

Now South Africa is participating in three international clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccines. Abdool Karim said he is concerned about "the political interference, political pressure to get a vaccine within a set time frame," such as before the U.S. election.

"Science cannot be rushed," he said. "The efficacy of a vaccine is often overstated if you are only looking at test results for a three-month period or a short-term trial. Often the results are different over a six-month period. I like a full-year test, I think that gives better data."

US judge blocks Postal Service changes that slowed mail

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — A U.S. judge on Thursday blocked controversial Postal Service changes that have slowed mail nationwide, calling them "a politically motivated attack on the efficiency of the Postal Service" before the November election.

Judge Stanley Bastian in Yakima, Washington, said he was issuing a nationwide preliminary injunction sought by 14 states that sued the Trump administration and the U.S. Postal Service.

The states challenged the Postal Service's so-called "leave behind" policy, where trucks have been leaving postal facilities on time regardless of whether there is more mail to load. They also sought to force the Postal Service to treat election mail as first class mail.

The judge noted after a hearing that Trump had repeatedly attacked voting by mail by making unfounded claims that it is rife with fraud. Many more voters are expected to vote by mail this November because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the states have expressed concern that delays might result in voters not receiving ballots or registration forms in time.

"The states have demonstrated the defendants are involved in a politically motivated attack on the efficiency of the Postal Service," Bastian said.

He also said the changes created "a substantial possibility many voters will be disenfranchised."

Bastian, an appointee of former President Barack Obama, issued a written order later Thursday that closely tracked the relief sought by the states. It ordered the Postal Service to stop implementing the "leave behind" policy, to treat all election mail as first class mail rather than as slower-moving categories, to reinstall any mail processing machines needed to ensure the prompt handling of election mail, and to inform its employees about the requirements of his injunction.

Postal Service spokesman Dave Partenheimer said the organization is reviewing its legal options, but "there should be no doubt that the Postal Service is ready and committed to handle whatever volume of election mail it receives."

Lee Moak, a member of the USPS Board of Governors, called the notion any changes were politically motivated "completely and utterly without merit."

Following a national uproar, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, a major donor to President Donald Trump and the GOP, announced he was suspending some changes — including the removal of iconic blue mailboxes in many cities and the decommissioning of mail processing machines.

But other changes remained in place, and the states — including the battlegrounds of Michigan, Wisconsin and Nevada — asked the court to block them. Led by Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson, the states said the Postal Service made the changes without first bringing them to the Postal Regulatory

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Commission for public comment and an advisory opinion, as required by federal law. They also said the changes interfered with their constitutional authority to administer their elections.

At the hearing, Justice Department attorney Joseph Borson sought to assure the judge that the Postal Service would handle election mail promptly, noting that a surge of ballots in the mail would pale in comparison to increases from, say, holiday cards.

He also said slow-downs caused by the "leave behind" policy had gotten better since it was first implemented, and that the Postal Service in reality had made no changes with regard to how it classifies and processes election mail. DeJoy has repeatedly insisted that processing election mail remains the organization's top priority.

"There's been a lot of confusion in the briefing and in the press about what the Postal Service has done," Borson said. "The states are accusing us of making changes we have not in fact made."

Voters who are worried about their ballots being counted "can simply promptly drop their ballots in the mail," he said, and states can help by mailing registration form or absentee ballots early.

Borson also insisted that the states were required to bring their challenge not in court, but before the Postal Regulatory Commission itself — even though by law the commission has 90 days to respond. Bastian rejected that notion, saying there was no time for that with the election just seven weeks away.

The states conceded that mail delays have eased since the service cuts first created a national uproar in July, but they said on-time deliveries remain well below their prior levels, meaning millions of pieces of mail that would otherwise arrive on-time no longer are.

They also noted some of the effects the changes had already wrought: Michigan spent \$2 million earlier this year on envelopes that met election mail standards — only to learn that the Postal Service wouldn't treat them as first class mail. In Madison, Wisconsin, the number of ballots that weren't counted because they arrived late for the August primary doubled from the August 2018 primary.

Further, they cited research from information technology consultant Mynor Urizar-Hunter, who helped start a website tracking the USPS changes, noting that 78% of the machines slated for removal were in counties won by Democrat Hillary Clinton in 2016.

The states suing are Washington, Michigan, Wisconsin, Nevada, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Virginia — all led by Democratic attorneys general.

Pennsylvania is leading a separate multistate lawsuit over the changes, and New York and Montana have filed their own challenges.

At town hall, Biden blasts Trump's 'criminal' virus response

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

MOOSIC, Pa. (AP) — Joe Biden on Thursday went after President Donald Trump again and again over his handling of COVID-19, calling Trump's downplaying of the pandemic "criminal" and his administration "totally irresponsible."

"You've got to level with the American people — shoot from the shoulder. There's not been a time they've not been able to step up. The president should step down," the Democratic presidential nominee said to applause from a CNN drive-in town hall crowd in Moosic, outside his hometown of Scranton.

Speaking about Trump's admission that he publicly played down the impact of the virus while aware of its severity, Biden declared: "He knew it and did nothing. It's close to criminal."

Later, Biden decried Americans' loss of basic "freedoms" as the U.S. has struggled to contain the pandemic, like the ability to go to a ballgame or walk around their neighborhoods. "I never, ever thought I would see just such a thoroughly, totally irresponsible administration," he said.

Biden faced a half-dozen questions about the coronavirus and a potential vaccine in the town hall from moderator Anderson Cooper and audience members. The pandemic was not just the main topic of the night — it was the cause of the unusual format of the event: a drive-in with 35 cars outside PNC Field.

The cars were parked around the stage, each with small groups of people standing outside them or leaning

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or sitting on the hoods to watch Cooper and Biden onstage. The network erected blue and red spotlights over the dirt and gravel parking lot to make it easier to see, and each parking space was marked off with white chalk in large rectangles to ensure that each group stayed more than 6 feet (1.8 meters) apart.

The town hall marked the first time that Biden had faced live, unscripted questions from voters since winning the nomination. Trump participated in a town hall Tuesday in an auditorium in Philadelphia.

The appearances have been seen as tuneups before the three presidential debates, the first set for Sept. 29. Biden's uneven debate performances during the Democratic primary contributed to his initial struggles in polls and the early primary vote, and Trump has pushed unfounded conspiracy theories about Biden taking performance-enhancing drugs and has raised questions about Biden's mental acuity.

Biden, meanwhile, has promised to be a "fact-checker on the stage" with Trump but has said he doesn't want to get drawn into a "brawl" with the Republican.

On Thursday, Biden said he was beginning to prepare for the upcoming debate by reviewing Trump's remarks and preparing his own.

Biden was also pressed on his stance on the Green New Deal, the sweeping proposal from progressives in Congress that calls for achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions across the economy by 2030. Biden's proposal doesn't go as far, but it does aim to reduce emissions to zero by 2050 and has a goal of achieving an entirely carbon pollution-free power sector by 2035.

Biden interrupted a questioner who suggested his climate plan embraces the Green New Deal to insist, "No, it doesn't," but when asked by the moderator if he supports the proposal, he said, "I don't think it's too much."

Still, Biden added, "I have my own deal," which he noted the Democratic Party has incorporated as part of its platform.

Biden also weighed in on foreign policy issues, promising to reduce America's military footprint abroad and saying that any attempt to interfere with the election by a foreign power is a "violation of our sovereignty." He promised that if he's elected and it becomes clear post-election that Russia interfered in the election, "they'll pay a price for it, and it'll be an economic price."

Biden described Russia as an "opponent," but declined to use the same word when asked about China. He instead called the nation a "competitor" and pledging to improve trade policy with China.

Biden also criticized comments Attorney General William Barr made comparing lockdown orders during the coronavirus pandemic to slavery.

"I never, ever, ever thought I would see such a thoroughly, totally irresponsible administration," Biden said.

Trump signaled he'd been watching the town hall before he took the stage for a rally in Misonee, Wisconsin, on Thursday night.

"I just see he's up there tonight getting softball questions from Anderson Cooper. They don't ask me questions like that," Trump told the crowd gathered at the airport. "They've got cars ... it's the weirdest thing I've ever seen."

Trump's ABC town hall was held inside a half-empty auditorium, with attendees socially distanced and wearing masks.

The format of Biden's event was a stark reminder of the issue that's been a central focus of Biden's campaign — that the pandemic rages on, affecting Americans' lives in ways large and small, and that stronger leadership in White House could have eased the crisis. More than 195,000 Americans have died of the coronavirus — by far the highest death toll in the world.

Earlier in the day, Biden joined Senate Democrats for a conference call lunch and told allies that he is taking nothing for granted in the race for the White House and the down-ballot effort to wrest the Senate's majority control from Republicans. He fielded questions, particularly from senators facing reelection, about his strategy win back the chamber and defeat Trump.

"He just said, 'You know what we're up against. You know why this is so important,'" said Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich.

West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin said he encouraged Biden to remind workers how much he has been

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on their side during his many years in government.

"I've said, 'Joe, people need to know that you recognize the dignity of the work, the people have built this country,'" Manchin told reporters. "They need to know that you fought for their pensions, you fought for their health care ... and you're not gonna leave them behind."

Biden's campaign team has come under scrutiny in recent days over its outreach efforts, particularly for what some see as short shrift with Latino voters. At the same time, Democrats have mixed views over the party's get-out-the-vote effort that largely bypasses traditional door-knocking to avoid health risks during the pandemic, instead relying on virtual outreach.

Jaffe reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro and Bill Barrow in Atlanta and Darlene Superville in Washington contributed to this report.

Mayfield throws 2 TD passes, Browns hold off Burrow, Bengals

By TOM WITHERS AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Baker Mayfield found Odell Beckham Jr. and maybe some of his missing swagger. Mayfield threw two touchdown passes, Nick Chubb ran for two scores and 124 yards and the Cleveland Browns gave coach Kevin Stefanski his first NFL victory Thursday night by beating the Cincinnati Bengals 35-30 on the NFL's 100th birthday.

Mayfield connected with Odell Beckham Jr. on a 43-yard scoring pass in the first half as the Browns (1-1) rebounded from an atrocious performance last week in Baltimore, where they were roughed up 38-6 by the Ravens and looked mostly inept in Stefanski's debut.

"We're not going to ride the wave," Stefanski said. "We don't look behind or look ahead."

Things went much more smoothly for Mayfield and Cleveland's offense against the Bengals (0-2) and No. 1 overall pick Joe Burrow, who threw three TD passes and showed incredible poise in just his second game.

Burrow's third TD pass — a 9-yarder to Tyler Boyd with 43 seconds left — pulled the Bengals within five, but the Browns recovered the ensuing onside kick and ran out the clock.

Mayfield made it a priority to get the ball early to Beckham, who had only three catches for 22 yards in the opener. Beckham finished with four catches for 74 yards.

Mayfield completed 16 of 23 passes for 219 yards with one interception. But he spread the ball to eight different receivers, and the Browns racked up 215 yards rushing.

"You always want to get the ball in playmakers' hands early, so those guys are in it," Mayfield said. "I thought we made the most of our playmakers' abilities. I'm surrounded by talent. I want to get the ball in their hands."

Chubb and Kareem Hunt were a potent 1-2 punch Cleveland. Hunt had a TD catch, ran for a score and rushed for 86 yards.

"They're two talented backs that compliment each other and push each other," Stefanski said. "We're gonna look for ways to get those guys to rock."

Burrow finished 37 of 61 for 316 yards. He was sacked three times, and had an unfortunate moment when he tried to call timeout and had the ball snapped past him. But the reigning Heisman Trophy winner matched Mayfield pass for pass and showed why the Bengals believe he can turn them around.

"The hype is real with Joe," Mayfield said. "Obviously, that team loves him. They follow him and he leads them."

Burrow's attempts were the second-most in history for a rookie. Only Carolina's Chris Weinke (63) threw more in a game as a rookie.

"Losing isn't very fun," said Burrow, who led LSU to a national title last season. "This might be the only time I've lost two games in a row. It doesn't feel very good. ... Losing is unacceptable to me."

Fittingly, the matchup between Ohio's teams came as the NFL officially turned a century old. It was on Sept. 17, 1920, when an agreement during a meeting in Canton laid the groundwork for what became a multi-billion dollar business and America's most popular sport.

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There were 6,000 fans inside 68,000-seat FirstEnergy Stadium for Cleveland's home opener after the Browns were granted a variance by the state of Ohio to have a gathering larger COVID-19 regulations allow.

Fans stayed socially distanced, masked for the most part and brought needed energy after both teams played in empty stadiums in Baltimore and Cincinnati a week ago. Some of the loudest cheers came after Beckham's TD.

Mayfield's scoring strike to Beckham in the second quarter was the kind of play the Browns envisioned the pair making more often.

After faking a handoff, Mayfield rolled left to buy time before lofting a perfect throw down the sideline to Beckham, who beat Bengals cornerback William Jackson III to give the Browns a 14-3 lead.

Burrow kept the Bengals in it with a 23-yard TD to C.J. Uzomah in the second quarter, but Cincinnati's defense couldn't slow down the Browns and Mayfield tossed a 6-yard TD pass to a wide-open Hunt gave Cleveland a 21-10 lead.

The Browns pushed it to 28-13 in the third quarter on Chubb's second TD run, which came after Myles Garrett stripped Burrow near the goal line and Cleveland recovered.

100 CANDLES

The NFL traces its beginnings to a meeting in Canton, Ohio on Sept. 17, 1920. Commissioner Roger Goodell offered a toast to the league's big birthday.

"To the more than 25,000 players who've ever played in this league: Your talent and tenacity are forever etched in our memories," he said. "To the players of today: From the superstars adding to their legacies, to the dynamic young players blazing new trails – you are the backbone of the NFL. To the most loyal and passionate fans anywhere: The NFL would be nothing without you. "

STREAK STOPPED

Due to the coronavirus, Bengals owner and president Mike Brown didn't travel and missed his first regular-season game since 1968.

The 85-year-old Brown told the team's website that not going was "wrenching."

Brown had attended 824 consecutive games. The only one he had missed previously was in 1991, when he skipped a preseason game to be with his dying father, coaching great Paul Brown.

INJURIES:

Bengals: Uzomah was carted off with a right Achilles tendon injury after making a catch in the fourth.

Browns: DE Adrian Clayborn went out with a hip injury in the second quarter. He sacked Burrow before going out.

UP NEXT

Bengals: Visit the Philadelphia Eagles on Sept. 27.

Browns: Host the Washington Football Team on Sept. 27. Cleveland leads the series 33-12-1.

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

Rescuers reach people cut off by Gulf Coast hurricane

By JAY REEVES, ANGIE WANG and BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

PENSACOLA, Fla. (AP) — Rescuers on the Gulf Coast used boats and high-water vehicles Thursday to reach people cut off by floodwaters in the aftermath of Hurricane Sally, even as a second round of flooding took shape along rivers and creeks swollen by the storm's heavy rains.

Across southern Alabama and the Florida Panhandle, homeowners and businesses began cleaning up, and officials inspected bridges and highways for safety, a day after Sally rolled through with 105 mph (165 kph) winds, a surge of seawater and 1 to 2 1/2 feet (0.3 to 0.8 meters) of rain in many places before it began to break up.

Sally sped up late Thursday, moving at 15 mph compared to its previous crawl of 3 and 5 mph (5 and 8 kph), but was still dumping heavy rains in southeastern Virginia and eastern North Carolina, where forecasters also said there was a chance of tornadoes. The storm was expected to dump as much as 8 inches

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(20 centimeters) in parts of the Carolinas and southern Virginia, prompting warnings of flash flooding and moderate river flooding. As much as 8 inches of rain fell in central Georgia on Thursday.

In hard-hit Pensacola and surrounding Escambia County, where Sally's floodwaters had coursed through downtown streets and lapped at car door handles on Wednesday before receding, authorities went door-to-door to check on residents and warn them they were not out of danger.

"Please, please, we're not out of the woods even if we've got beautiful skies today," said Escambia County emergency manager Eric Gilmore.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis urged Panhandle residents not to let their guard down. "You're going to see the rivers continue to rise," DeSantis said after an aerial tour of the Panhandle.

Most rivers fed by the storm were cresting in Alabama and the Panhandle on Thursday, although the Shoal, in Florida was still rising, said Steve Miller of the National Weather Service in Mobile, Alabama. Near Crestview, Florida, portions of Interstate 10 and U.S. Highway 90 — the two main roadways running east to west through the Panhandle — were closed because of flooding from the Shoal, the Florida Highway Patrol said.

Crews carried out at least 400 rescues in Escambia County, Florida, by such means as high-water vehicles, boats and water scooters, authorities said. Rescuers focused their efforts Thursday on Innerarity Point, a narrow strip of land close to Pensacola that is home to waterfront homes and businesses. Floodwaters covered the only road out.

Richard Wittig and his family were among scores of people hemmed in by floodwaters on an island at the tip of the point. Two generators powered his house.

"If I didn't have a working generator, we'd be dead. Nobody can get to us," said Wittig, 77. He said he and his son rely on oxygen machines to stay alive.

The Florida National Guard said it had deployed about 500 soldiers and airmen to help local authorities evacuate 113 people, though it did not say when and where the rescues took place.

In Alabama, on both sides of Mobile Bay, National Guard soldiers from high-water evacuation teams used big trucks Thursday to rescue at least 35 people, authorities said.

A volunteer rescue group based on Marcos Island, Florida, known as the Marcos Patriots, received three calls for help, including from an 80-year-old woman in Gulf Shores, Alabama, whose roof had blown off.

When a rescue team arrived, "she was safe and sound with a neighbor but her house was destroyed," said group co-founder ErinMia Milchman.

About 35 miles (56 kilometers) inland, a swollen Murder Creek cut off access between the Alabama towns of Brewton and East Brewton, inundating a grocery store, a tobacco shop, a park and more. Residents behind a police roadblock gazed at the neighboring city across fast-moving water covering a bridge.

East Brewton resident Brenda Davenport said it took only four hours for the water to rise. "It could take two days for it to go down," she said.

In Orange Beach, Alabama, Janice Sullivan swore she would never ride out a hurricane again. She and her daughter huddled in a second-floor bathroom as Sally blew ashore.

"You could hear everything hitting the house," she said. "You could hear the house moving back and forth. It was literally moaning and cracking."

A few people cleaned up in Bristol Park, a creekside neighborhood where as much as 4 feet (1.2 meters) of water filled brick homes north of Pensacola.

Susan Cutts' parents fled rising water inside their home into the garage, where they desperately called for help on a dying cellphone until aid arrived.

"They were on top of their car when they got to them," Cutts said.

At least one death, in Alabama, was blamed on the hurricane. Nearly 400,000 homes and businesses were still without power Thursday night, mostly in Alabama and Florida.

A section of the main bridge between Pensacola and Pensacola Beach collapsed after it was hit by a barge that broke loose during the storm.

At a downtown marina, at least 30 sailboats, fishing boats and other vessels were clumped together in

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a mass of fiberglass hulls and broken docks. Some boats rested atop sunken ones.

Also on Thursday, the National Hurricane Center said a new tropical depression formed in the southwestern Gulf of Mexico. Forecasters said the depression could become a tropical storm as it moves slowly over the western Gulf during the next few days. Meanwhile, Hurricane Teddy strengthened to a powerful Category 4 storm in the Atlantic. The storm currently poses no threat to land.

An earlier version of this story was corrected to show that the top rainfall amount was about 2 1/2 feet, not 3 1/2 feet.

Calvan reported from Tallahassee, Florida; Wang from Mobile, Alabama. Associated Press reporters Russ Bynum in Savannah, Georgia; Jeff Martin in Marietta, Georgia; Kim Chandler in Montgomery, Alabama; Tamara Lush in St. Petersburg, Florida; Curt Anderson in Miami and Janet McConnaughey in New Orleans also contributed.

'Forrest Gump' author Winston Groom dead at 77

FAIRHOPE, Ala. (AP) — Winston Groom, the writer whose novel "Forrest Gump" was made into a six-Oscar winning 1994 movie that became a soaring pop cultural phenomenon, has died at age 77.

Mayor Karin Wilson of Fairhope, Alabama, said in a message on social media that Groom had died in that south Alabama town. A local funeral home also confirmed the death and said arrangements were pending.

"While he will be remembered for creating Forrest Gump, Winston Groom was a talented journalist & noted author of American history. Our hearts & prayers are extended to his family," Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey said in a statement.

"Forrest Gump" was the improbable tale of a slow-witted but mathematically gifted man who was a participant or witness to key points of 20th century history — from Alabama segregationist Gov. George Wallace's "stand at the schoolhouse door," to meetings with presidents.

It was the best known book by Groom, who grew up in Mobile, Alabama, and graduated from the University of Alabama in 1965, according to a biography posted by the university.

Groom served in the Army's Fourth Infantry Division from 1965 to 1969, the university said. His service included a tour in Vietnam — one of the settings for "Forrest Gump."

He wrote 16 books, fiction and nonfiction. One, "Conversations with the Enemy," about a American prisoner of war in Vietnam accused of collaboration, was a Pulitzer Prize finalist, according to the university.

It was "Forrest Gump" — and the success of the 1994 movie starring Tom Hanks in the iconic role of Gump, as well as Sally Field and Gary Sinise — that earned him widespread fame and some financial success.

The novel is considerably different from the film. Don Noble, University of Alabama professor emeritus of English, and a 40-year friend of Groom's told The Tuscaloosa News that the novel was "darker" and "richer" than the movie.

"You can make a lot of money as a comic writer, but you can't get no respect," Noble said. "But 'Forrest Gump' is really actually quite a fine novel. It's more subtle and more complicated ... richer than the movie."

The movie, which also starred Robin Wright and Mykelti Williamson, became deeply embedded in the American psyche and has remained an enduring television staple and huge cultural phenomenon since.

"It touched a nerve," Groom told the Tuscaloosa News in 2014.

The film dominated the 1995 Academy Awards, winning six Oscars including best picture, best director for Robert Zemeckis and best actor for Hanks.

It was 1994's No. 2 grossing film at the box office, second only to "The Lion King."

The basic outlines of Gump's life are the same as they are in the book: Gump plays football under Paul "Bear" Bryant at the University of Alabama, serves in Vietnam and starts a major shrimp business.

But the film made major departures. Gump was not a math savant as he was in the book, and was a more saintly soul. The film took away Gump's size -- Groom said he envisioned John Goodman playing him -- along with his profanity, and most of his sex life.

They "took some of the rough edges off," Groom told the New York Times in 1994.

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Groom also wrote nonfiction on diverse subjects including the Civil War, World War I and Alabama's Crimson Tide football.

In 2005, Groom released "1942: The Year That Tried Men's Souls," which chronicled the first year of U.S. involvement in World War II.

In 2009 he released "Vicksburg 1863," an account of the Union siege that brought a novelist's touch to historical figures like Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman and Jefferson Davis, president of the confederacy.

His most recent novel, *El Paso*, was published in 2016.

Groom got \$350,000 for the rights to "Forrest Gump" plus 3% of the net profit of the movie. But he got into a serious dispute with Paramount Pictures when they told him a film that had earned over \$600 million was in the red after expenses.

But years later he wasn't bitter.

"They did an excellent job," he told the Tuscaloosa News. "I would have probably preferred my version of it, but that thing never would have opened."

The book became a major bestseller in the wake of the film, and Groom got a much better deal for the follow-up novel, 1995's "Gump and Co."

"I'm happy as a pig in sunshine," he told the Mobile Register.

Nonetheless, sequel-addicted Hollywood somehow never made the new movie.

Photos fuel concerns over in-custody death of La. Black man

By JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

Graphic photos that surfaced online this week appear to show deep bruises on the face of a Black man who died following a police chase in Louisiana last year, raising new questions about whether his injuries were caused by the crash that ended the chase or an ensuing struggle with state troopers.

The family of 49-year-old Ronald Greene also released images of the SUV involved in the May 2019 crash — showing that the vehicle appeared to have sustained only minor damage to its driver's side.

The juxtaposition fueled calls for State Police to release body-camera footage of the chase and what the agency recently acknowledged was a "struggle" to take Greene into custody after he drove off the road in rural northern Louisiana near Monroe. State Police have declined to release the video or comment on the photos due to ongoing investigations of Greene's death.

"These photos are atrocious," said Eugene W. Collins, president of the Baton Rouge branch of the NAACP, who posted images of Greene's body on his Facebook page. "We have to believe that, from Day One, the Louisiana State Police were not honest with the public."

The two graphic photos — which appear to have been taken in a medical setting and show apparent bruises and cuts to Greene's face and scalp — were provided by his family and had previously been shared on their social media. Attorneys for Greene's family said the images were consistent with the injuries identified in an independent autopsy they commissioned. Portions of it provided to The Associated Press describe "blunt force injuries to the head/face; facial lacerations, abrasions, contusions" and multiple "scalp lacerations."

Greene's death, which the AP reported this week is now under federal investigation, has drawn new attention in recent months amid a national reckoning about racial inequality and police misconduct. Greene's family filed a federal wrongful-death lawsuit in May alleging troopers "brutalized" Greene, used a stun gun on him three times and "left him beaten, bloodied and in cardiac arrest" before covering up his actual cause of death.

While more than a year has passed since the crash, the State Police have offered no public accounting of what caused Greene's death. A single-page police report released by the agency says the May 10, 2019, police pursuit ended when Greene crashed his vehicle.

"Greene was taken into custody after resisting arrest and a struggle with Troopers," the report says, adding Greene "became unresponsive" and died on the way to a local hospital.

A crash report obtained by the AP says Greene failed to stop for an unspecified traffic violation and later drove off the road and into a ditch, striking a mailbox and a culvert. The vehicle later "struck a shrub/tree

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next to a private drive," the report says.

The crash report — which State Police say is now itself part of a criminal investigation — says Greene was not wearing a seat belt and does not mention any use of force by troopers.

Greene's family has said the authorities initially told them Greene died in the crash, but they began questioning that narrative after examining his body and the relatively minor damage to the vehicle.

"We were told that he died in a high-speed chase of head injuries after crashing into a tree," Greene's mother, Mona Hardin, told the AP. "There was no major damage to the car."

The family's lawsuit says that Greene was taken to a nearby hospital and quotes an emergency room doctor who says law enforcement told him that Greene had been "involved in a fight" after the chase.

Greene's death was ruled accidental and attributed to cardiac arrest, said Renee Smith, the Union Parish coroner who was not in office when that determination was made. Smith said her office's file on Greene attributed his death to a car crash and makes no mention of a struggle with State Police.

Local prosecutors in Union Parish decided not to bring any charges against the responding troopers but referred the case to the U.S. Justice Department. The U.S. Attorney's Office in Shreveport confirmed the ongoing federal investigation but hasn't commented on its status.

Late Thursday, the FBI's New Orleans field office issued a statement confirming it has opened a civil rights probe into Greene's death "and will ensure that the investigation is conducted in a fair, thorough and impartial manner."

The State Police, in an unusual move, opened an internal investigation into Greene's death on Aug. 25 — 474 days after the crash.

The agency also recently placed on paid leave Master Trooper Chris Hollingsworth, one of six troopers who responded to the crash site. That action was taken Sept. 9 — the same day the AP submitted a public records request for State Police documents related to the case. It was not clear whether Hollingsworth had an attorney who could comment on his behalf.

Comeback Heat do it again, rally past Celtics for 2-0 lead

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — Down by 14 in Game 1, the Miami Heat found a way.

Down by 17 in Game 2, they did it again Thursday night. And after making the Boston Celtics lose another big lead on the court — as well as their cool in the postgame locker room — the unheralded Heat are two wins away from the NBA Finals.

Goran Dragic scored 25 points, Bam Adebayo led a big third-quarter rally to finish with 21, and the Heat pulled off another comeback to beat the Celtics 106-101 and take a 2-0 lead in the Eastern Conference finals.

"We got grit," Adebayo said. "That's about all I can tell you. We got grit, man."

Duncan Robinson scored 18 points, Jimmy Butler had 14, Jae Crowder 12 and Tyler Herro 11. The Heat were down by 17 in the second quarter and trailed by 13 at halftime.

They had been 0-21 in playoff games when trailing by at least that many at intermission. They're 1-21 now, and two wins away from their first NBA Finals since 2014 — and the team said the 17-point comeback matched the biggest in Heat postseason history.

"We like to make it hard on ourselves," Butler said. "We like being down double-digits and being the comeback kids."

Kemba Walker had 23 points for Boston, which got 21 apiece from Jaylen Brown and Jayson Tatum. Brown missed a corner 3 that would have tied it with 15 seconds left, and Butler sealed it with two free throws with 7.4 seconds remaining.

The Celtics had a loud, animated conversation in their locker room postgame, the walls unable to hold in the sound. They tried to downplay whatever was happening afterward.

"It was nothing," Walker said. "It was nothing."

Added Tatum: "We're frustrated. But that's team sports. Not supposed to be happy we're down 0-2. But

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that's nothing out of the ordinary. Just talking about the game. It's cool."

Dragic — playing on the third anniversary of his fondest basketball moment, that being when he led Slovenia to the EuroBasket Championship — scored nine points in the fourth quarter.

"Feels exactly the same," Dragic said, when asked to compare Slovenia's golden moment to the Heat win Thursday. "A great day."

The Heat took a 2-0 series lead for the 11th time in coach Erik Spoelstra's tenure. They've won all previous 10 instances.

Game 3 is Saturday.

The Heat got in big trouble in the series opener by scoring 18 points in the first quarter and 16 points in the third. In Game 2, another 18-point quarter — the second — sent Boston into the half up comfortably, 60-47.

And then it all changed.

Miami outscored Boston 37-17 in the third quarter, with Adebayo — the defensive hero of Game 1 — outshooting and nearly outscoring the Celtics by himself. Boston went 4 for 12 from the floor in the quarter, Adebayo went 7 for 8 on his way to a 15-point period and the Heat led 84-77 when it was over.

"We pulled apart and we didn't play well," Celtics coach Brad Stevens said. "And they did a good job. We're not beating this team if we're not completely connected on both ends of the court. So, got to get back to being that, which we've been at times. But right now, they're a better team. We're going to have to fight to get back in this series."

They showed some fight in the fourth. The Celtics went on a 15-2 run, silencing the Heat for nearly seven minutes and going up 94-89 on a 3-pointer by Walker with 4:25 left.

That only set the stage for another Heat rally: Miami finished the game on a 17-7 run.

"Team effort," Butler said.

TIP-INS

Heat: Spoelstra's 81st career playoff win ties him for eighth all-time with K.C. Jones. ... Miami's 20-point differential in the third quarter was a Heat record for that quarter in the playoffs, and the sixth time in Heat playoff history they outscored an opponent by at least 20 in any quarter. ... Robinson, who had been 2 for 9 on 3's in his last two games, made four in the first quarter and six in the game. ... Andre Iguodala couldn't play after halftime with back tightness.

Celtics: Gordon Hayward (ankle) remained out. ... Enes Kanter and Romeo Langford got first-quarter minutes after not playing in Game 1, but Langford left after about a minute with an adductor strain. Kanter had nine points and six rebounds in eight first-half minutes. ... Walker came in in a 5-for-35 slump from 3-point land, and went 4 for 11 Thursday.

3'S ARE WILD

Crowder's 3-pointer with 5:43 left in the third quarter was — fittingly — the 33,333rd in NBA playoff history.

SCHEDULE UPDATE

There will be a break between Games 3 and 4. Game 3 is Saturday; Game 4 won't be until Wednesday.

HBCU NIGHT

Roughly 100 students and alumni from more than 60 historically black colleges and universities got to watch (through the video screens) as part of the NBA's HBCU Virtual Fan Night. They also held a question-and-answer session with Philadelphia forward and Norfolk State University alumnus Kyle O'Quinn at halftime.

More AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/NBA> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Asia slightly higher despite Wall Street slump, virus fears

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares were slightly higher Friday despite some investor attention shifting again to the uncertainties in global economies amid the coronavirus pandemic, as reflected in the overnight fall on Wall Street.

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Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 was little changed but inched up less than 0.1% in morning trading to 23,326.00. South Korea's Kospi added 0.3% to 2,412.37. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 was little changed at 5,887.30. Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 0.2% to 24,398.87, while the Shanghai Composite edged up 0.5% to 3,286.68.

Another slide in technology companies helped pull stocks lower on Wall Street Thursday, extending losses from the day before.

The S&P 500 lost 0.8% after having been down 1.7% earlier. The selling was widespread, with eight of the 11 sectors that make up the benchmark index ending the day lower. The sectors that include Amazon, Facebook and Apple took the heaviest losses.

The selling came a day after the Federal Reserve said it will keep interest rates at nearly zero for years to support the wheezing economy. The statement failed to encourage Wall Street and the S&P 500 recorded its first loss in four days Wednesday.

"Hesitations as to whether the U.S. economy can sustain the current pace of recovery amid the lack of additional fiscal policy support and the Fed standing put on stimulus had the market reeling once again," said Jingy Pan, senior market analyst at IG.

"The Fed hangover had seen to a conundrum for Asia markets with muted moves noted going into Friday between the Wall Street decline and the greenback weakness post Fed meeting."

Low interest rates are usually a boon for investors, sending stocks soaring. So why the sell-off? Analysts gave varying reasons for the market's weakness. Among them: the gloomy outlook Fed Chair Jerome Powell gave for the economy's prospects and built-up expectations by some that the Fed would be even more generous with its stimulus. It isn't the first hangover stocks have suffered following a rate announcement by the Fed.

While the market took more losses Thursday, they selling eased toward the end of the day. The S&P 500 fell 28.48 points to 3,357.01. The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 130.40 points, or 0.5%, to 27,901.98. It had been down 384 points.

The Nasdaq composite, which is heavily weighted with technology stocks, slid 140.19 points, or 1.3%, to 10,910.28. The Russell 2000 index of small company stocks gave up 9.73 points, or 0.6%, to 1,542.60.

The number of U.S. workers applying for jobless benefits has been coming down slowly, but it remains historically high. Such signs of a weaker recovery and a potential second wave of the virus are weighing on investors.

Another possibility for the downward turn the U.S. market has taken the past two days is the diminishing odds that Congress will deliver more aid for the economy anytime soon after benefits for unemployed workers and other stimulus expired recently. Investors say such aid is crucial for the recovery, and Powell talked about the importance of it in a press conference Wednesday.

In energy trading, benchmark U.S. crude gained 4 cents to \$41.01 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, added 7 cents to \$43.37 a barrel.

The dollar cost 104.83 Japanese yen, down from 104.63 yen Thursday. The euro stood at \$1.1848, down from \$1.1804.

Apprehensive Thais await major political rally in Bangkok

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A two-day rally planned this weekend is jangling nerves in Bangkok, with apprehension about how far student demonstrators will go in pushing demands for reform of Thailand's monarchy and how the authorities might react.

At least 10,000 people were estimated to have attended a major protest rally on Aug. 16, and a bigger turnout is expected this time. In an escalation of tactics, organizers plan to march to Government House, the prime minister's offices, to hand over petitions.

The initial demands of the alliance of groups behind a series of anti-government demonstrations were for a dissolution of Parliament with fresh elections, a new constitution and an end to intimidation of politi-

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cal activists.

But the main organizers behind this weekend's rally have been promoting an additional point. They want restraints on the power of the monarchy, an institution long presented as the nation's cornerstone and untouchable.

This open challenge to the palace has dramatically raised the political temperature.

These dissidents view the monarchy in its current form as opaque and unaccountable. At a rally last month outside Bangkok, they launched a 10-point manifesto for its reform.

Underlining their challenge, they plan to make a symbolic point this weekend by leading their supporters to occupy a field adjacent to the planned rally site.

The field, Sanam Luang, was until recently an open space. It was once Thailand's equivalent of England's Hyde Park, where politics could be openly debated. But now it's classified as a royal site and permanently fenced off.

"We've destroyed the glass ceiling and blown the roof off," one protest leader, Parit Chiwarak, better known as Penguin, said last week. "Birds are now flying freely into the sky. How far can we fly during this rally? We have to wait and see."

It's hard to overstate the gravity of what they're doing.

For generations the state has relentlessly promoted the monarchy, presenting it as the sacrosanct soul of the nation. Its position is protected by a military that swears it personal allegiance. Many Thais love it unconditionally; others are constrained from criticizing it by a lese majeste law that mandates three to 15 years in prison for defaming the institution.

So far the authorities have stayed calm. Asked this week about the coming rally, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha's response was carefully measured.

"I would like to express my concern," he said. "I care about my children and you care about yours. As prime minister, I care about your children too. It's my duty to take care of them. I urge everyone to help resolve the situation."

On Thursday night, he suggested in a speech about the coronavirus that the gathering should not be held because of a risk of spreading the disease.

"When you gather in mobs you are creating an enormous risk of new infections," Prayuth said. "And with that, you also create enormous risk to the livelihoods of tens of millions of fellow Thais."

What visible backlash there's been has come mainly from older Thais to whom the students' agenda, where it touches on the monarchy, is tantamount to treason. Royalists have fiercely denounced the students, but their efforts at organizing have been feeble, drawing mere dozens to events this week.

There is some fear, however, that the state may feel forced to crack down hard if the weekend's rally pushes the monarchy issue too strenuously.

Whether now or later, one academic believes the yawning gap between the two sides makes trouble all but inevitable.

"There were several groups of reformist elites (who) try to compromise, try to convince the authorities in order to understand the students, but I haven't seen any signs of compromise," said Kanokrat Lertchoosakul, an assistant professor at Chulalongkorn University.

"So without this sign I still don't know how we can avoid physical violence."

There is plenty of precedent for that in Thailand. The military used lethal force to quash mass political demonstrations in 1992 and 2010. In 1976, security forces and right-wing vigilantes savagely put down a student rally at Thammasat University, the planned location for this weekend's demonstration.

Trump heats up culture war in appeal to Wisconsin voters

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

MOSINEE, Wis. (AP) — President Donald Trump stepped up his rhetoric Thursday on cultural issues, aiming to boost enthusiasm among rural Wisconsin voters as he tries to repeat his path to victory four years ago.

Making his fifth visit to the pivotal battleground state this year, Trump views success in the state's less-

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populated counties as critical to another term. He held a rally Thursday evening in Mosinee, in central Wisconsin, an area of the state that shifted dramatically toward Republicans in 2016, enabling Trump to overcome even greater deficits in urban and suburban parts of the state.

Trump has increasingly used his public appearances to elevate cultural issues important to his generally whiter and older base, as he hinges his campaign on turning out his core supporters rather than focusing on winning over a narrow slice of undecided voters. In Mosinee, he called for a statute to ban burning the American flag in protest — a freedom protected by the Supreme Court — and criticized sports players and leagues for allowing demonstrations against racial inequality.

"We have enough politics, right," he said, joking that sometimes, "I can't watch me." He added of protests in sports, "People don't want to see it and the ratings are down."

Earlier Thursday, in a speech at the National Archives to commemorate Constitution Day, he derided The New York Times' "1619 Project," which aimed to recognize the often overlooked consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans.

"For many years now, the radicals have mistaken Americans' silence for weakness. But they are wrong," Trump said. "There is no more powerful force than a parent's love for their children — and patriotic moms and dads are going to demand that their children are no longer fed hateful lies about this country."

Trump told supporters in Wisconsin: "We're launching a new pro-American lesson plan for students called 1776 Commission. We're going to teach our children the truth about America."

Trump's last visit to Wisconsin came on Sept. 1, when he met with law enforcement and toured damage from protests in Kenosha that turned violent after the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man hit seven times in the back during an attempted arrest. Trump has sought to use the unrest after the August shooting of Blake and the May police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis to tout a "law and order" message and paint an apocalyptic vision of violence if Democrat Joe Biden wins on Nov. 3.

"I saved the suburbs," Trump said Thursday of his call for federal law enforcement and national guard troops to confront protesters. He added that police "did a great job in Kenosha."

Trump also previewed aid to the region's farmers, saying \$13 billion would begin flowing "starting next week" to help farmers. He provided no details.

Trump took another victory lap two days after he presided over Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates recognizing Israel in a White House ceremony.

"I got nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize. That's a big deal," Trump said, adding, "I should've gotten nominated seven times." His supporters chanted "Nobel Peace Prize" in response.

Trump won Marathon County, which includes Mosinee, by more than 12,000 votes in 2016 — over three times more than the margin by which 2012 GOP nominee Mitt Romney won the area. Trump's team is wagering the 2020 contest on a similar performance in the county and the dozens of others like it across battleground states.

Trump's path to 270 Electoral College votes may well hinge on Wisconsin, and his campaign is investing tens of millions of dollars on advertising and get-out-the-vote efforts in the state.

Trump's event took place largely outside an aircraft hangar at the Mosinee airport, his campaign's preferred format for mass rallies amid the coronavirus, though Trump has been willing to host large events indoors as well, sometimes in violation of state and federal distancing guidelines.

Republican Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin was set to join Trump on Air Force One but ended up under quarantine Thursday after learning he was exposed to someone earlier in the week who subsequently tested positive for the virus. Johnson tested negative on Wednesday night, his office said.

Associated Press writers Darlene Superville and Lisa Mascaro contributed to this report from Washington.

FBI director says antifa is an ideology, not an organization

By ERIC TUCKER and BEN FOX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — FBI Director Chris Wray told lawmakers Thursday that antifa is an ideology, not

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an organization, delivering testimony that puts him at odds with President Donald Trump, who has said he would designate it a terror group.

Hours after the hearing, Trump took to Twitter to chastise his FBI director for his statements on antifa and on Russian election interference, two themes that dominated a congressional hearing on threats to the American homeland.

Referring to antifa, the president wrote: "And I look at them as a bunch of well funded ANARCHISTS & THUGS who are protected because the Comey/Mueller inspired FBI is simply unable, or unwilling, to find their funding source, and allows them to get away with "murder". LAW & ORDER!"

The Twitter barbs thrust Wray again into a spotlight that he has spent three years trying to avoid after his predecessor, James Comey, became entangled in politics before being ultimately fired. Though Wray said as recently as Thursday that the FBI made unacceptable mistakes during its investigation into ties between the Trump campaign and Russia, Trump nonetheless has intermittently lashed out at Wray over the pace of fixing those problems and continues to regard his intelligence community with suspicion because of the Russia probe.

Wray did not dispute in his testimony Thursday that antifa activists were a serious concern, saying that antifa was a "real thing" and that the FBI had undertaken "any number of properly predicated investigations into what we would describe as violent anarchist extremists," including into individuals who identify with antifa.

But, he said, "It's not a group or an organization. It's a movement or an ideology."

That characterization contradicts the depiction from Trump, who in June singled out antifa — short for "anti-fascists" and an umbrella term for far-left-leaning militant groups — as responsible for the violence that followed George Floyd's death. Trump tweeted that the U.S. would be designating antifa as a terrorist organization, even though such designations are historically reserved for foreign groups and antifa lacks the hierarchical structure of formal organizations.

The hearing before the House Homeland Security Committee — established after the Sept. 11 attacks to confront the threat of international terrorism — focused almost entirely on domestic matters, including violence by white supremacists as well as anti-government extremists. The topics underscored the shift of attention by law enforcement at a time of intense divisions and polarization inside the country.

But one area where foreign threats were addressed was in the presidential election and Russia's attempts to interfere in the campaign.

Wray sought to make clear the scope of the threats the country faces while resisting lawmakers' attempts to steer him into politically charged statements. When asked whether extremists on the left or the right posed the bigger threat, he pivoted instead to an answer about how solo actors, or so-called "lone wolves," with easy access to weapons were a primary concern.

"We don't really think of threats in terms of left, right, at the FBI. We're focused on the violence, not the ideology," he said later.

The FBI director said racially motivated violent extremists, such as white supremacists, have been responsible for the most lethal attacks in the U.S. in recent years. But this year the most lethal violence has come from anti-government activists, such as anarchists and militia-types, Wray said.

Wray also affirmed the intelligence community's assessment of Russian interference in the November election, which he said was taking the form of foreign influence campaigns aimed at sowing discord and swaying public opinion as well as efforts to denigrate Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden.

He said that the U.S. had not yet seen targeting of election infrastructure like in 2016, but efforts to sow doubt about the election's integrity are a serious concern, he said.

"What concerns me the most is the steady drumbeat of misinformation and sort of amplification of smaller cyber intrusions," Wray said. "I worry that they will contribute over time to a lack of confidence of American voters and citizens in the validity of their vote."

"I think that would be a perception," Wray added, "not a reality. I think Americans can and should have confidence in our election system and certainly in our democracy. But I worry that people will take on a

feeling of futility because of all of the noise and confusion that's generated."

Trump has resisted the idea of Russian interference aimed at benefiting his campaign and has been eager, along with other administration officials, to talk about intelligence officials' assessment that China prefers that Trump lose to Biden.

He responded on that front Thursday evening, tweeting: "But Chris, you don't see any activity from China, even though it is a FAR greater threat than Russia, Russia, Russia. They will both, plus others, be able to interfere in our 2020 Election with our totally vulnerable Unsolicited (Counterfeit?) Ballot Scam. Check it out!"

Though intelligence officials said in a statement last month that China prefers that Trump lose, they appeared to stop short of accusing Beijing of directly interfering in the election in hopes of swaying the outcome.

Gulf between White House's words, Trump's actions on masks

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — White House officials insist that President Donald Trump strongly supports face masks to prevent the spread of coronavirus and always has. But the president's own words and actions tell a very different — and sometimes puzzling — story.

That's created a gulf between Trump and public health officials that keeps widening six months after the virus took root in the U.S., with the president undercutting medical experts who say consistent face covering is one of the best tools to fight the pandemic.

Trump initially dismissed mask wearing for himself, then allowed himself to be seen wearing one while visiting a military hospital. He has called it "patriotic" to wear a mask but seldom passes up an opportunity to mock Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden for his routine mask wearing.

On Wednesday, after the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention told Congress that his mask might even be a better guarantee than a vaccine against the virus, Trump publicly undercut Dr. Robert Redfield.

"As far as the mask is concerned, he made a mistake," said Trump.

Dr. Tom Inglesby, director of the Center for Health Security at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, said he's "bewildered" by Trump's ambiguity about masks. He said widespread use would also help restore economic vitality faster, a prime Trump goal.

"I don't think that there's any controversy about masks anywhere in the world," Inglesby said. "Why we continue to have this debate about it is a mystery."

Lawrence Gostin, a public health expert at Georgetown University's law school, said Trump's vacillation between portraying masks as an infringement on personal rights and touting them as crucial to stemming the virus has left Americans "absolutely dazed and confused."

"One could forgive the American public for not trusting anyone," Gostin said.

But Gostin also faulted Redfield for asserting that masks are more important than an eventual vaccine, at least until one is approved. Suggesting that being vaccinated is less important as long as people are wearing masks has further clouded the public message, Gostin said.

Public health experts largely agree that COVID-19, the disease the virus causes, will be brought under control through a combination of social distancing, mask wearing and a vaccine.

"One of those three is not enough, you need all three," Gostin said. "It's such a simple message. It's just befuddling that the White House doesn't consistently state that message."

Trump has very seldom worn a mask for the world to see, though he is regularly tested for COVID-19 and says he does wear one when he can't practice social distancing. At one point, he suggested that the reason some people wear masks is to make a political statement against him.

The CDC recommended in April that people wear cloth face coverings in public when it's difficult to be socially distant. But Trump immediately undercut the guidance, declaring he wouldn't follow it and suggesting it would be unseemly to be masked in a meeting with a head of state.

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The first image of a masked Trump surfaced on social media in May after he donned one for a behind-the-scenes tour of a Ford facility in Michigan. Reporters were not allowed on the tour, and afterward Trump told them he'd worn a mask in a "back area" because "I didn't want to give the press the pleasure of seeing it."

In June, as he prepared to hold his first indoor political rally of the COVID era, Trump complained to The Wall Street Journal that people can't help but fidget with the coverings, similar to assertions he made on national television this week.

"They put their finger on the mask, and they take them off, and then they start touching their eyes and touching their nose and their mouth," Trump said in his Journal interview. "And then they don't know how they caught it?"

But weeks later he offered a much different take, sounding like a mask evangelist and going as far as saying he resembled the Lone Ranger when he wears one. Still, Trump framed the issue as one of personal choice:

"If people feel good about it, they should do it."

In July, Trump tweeted a photo of himself wearing a mask and wrote that "many people say that it is Patriotic to wear a face mask when you can't socially distance."

"There is nobody more Patriotic than me, your favorite President!" he said.

Then, this week, Trump returned to his old ways.

At a candidate forum televised by ABC News on Tuesday night, Trump praised a woman who removed her face covering to ask him a question.

"I love, I love what you just did," Trump told her. On several occasions, he has become visibly irked by reporters who refuse his requests to remove their masks to ask him questions.

Trump also assailed Biden during the broadcast, faulting the former vice president for not acting to put in place a national mask requirement he has talked about doing if elected. Biden countered on Wednesday by reminding Trump he is not the president.

"By the way, a lot of people don't want to wear masks," Trump said. "A lot of people think that masks are not good." Pressed on who those people are, Trump replied, "Waiters."

Trump often brings up the very early medical guidance for the public to not wear masks and leave scarce medical-grade versions for doctors and nurses. But experts soon began encouraging people to wear face coverings after learning that the virus is primarily transmitted through the air.

White House chief of staff Mark Meadows on Thursday cast doubt on the science as he sidestepped questions about who is influencing Trump's opinions about masks. Meadows insisted that the president and administration officials have been consistent.

"If masks truly were the answer where everybody can go back to work, and that they actually work as the best protocol for keeping people safe I think everyone would be more than happy to wear their mask and return to work," Meadows said. "I don't think the science backs that up. I think it's an extra precaution and it's good."

Report: Much needs doing to shield nursing homes from virus

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is claiming "resounding vindication" from an independent commission's report on the coronavirus crisis in nursing homes, but some panel members say that's a misinterpretation of their conclusion that much remains to be done to safeguard vulnerable residents.

People in long-term care facilities represent less than 1% of the U.S. population but more than 40% of the coronavirus deaths, according to the COVID Tracking Project, which has tallied 77,000 deaths among residents and staff. Those harsh numbers are a sensitive political issue for President Donald Trump, who is trying to hang on to support from older voters.

Vice President Mike Pence met with some of the commission members Thursday and called their report "a significant contribution to our ongoing effort to ensure the health and well-being of our seniors in nurs-

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ing homes and long-term care facilities around the country.”

The commission was set up by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, or CMS. Agency administrator Seema Verma called its findings “an invaluable action plan for the future and a resounding vindication of our overall approach to date.”

But with 27 major recommendations in the commission report, it’s not time for officials to take a bow, several members noted.

“There’s an enormous to-do list in front of us,” said Terry Fulmer, a commission member and president of the John A. Hartford Foundation, which works to improve care for older adults.

The administration says it has already acted, or made progress, on most issues flagged.

It hasn’t gone far enough, said Fulmer.

“We need to get the real data that will tell us where we’re still lacking testing, (protective equipment), and appropriate staffing,” she said. “We need to really watch the autumn flu season and really keep an close eye on any uptick with the virus — that’s what I’m most worried about. We don’t have a national policy that we are following so we can ensure we have quality across our entire nation, so we are looking for progress there.”

Harvard professor David Grabowski, another member, said “there’s a sense of ‘mission accomplished’” coming from the administration and “that’s just not the case.”

“We were charged with providing a road map out of the crisis,” Grabowski said. “We weren’t asked to evaluate the CMS response or provide any kind of valuation as to how they have handled the pandemic.”

Among the top recommendations in the 186-page report:

—establish a national testing strategy. After a stumbling start in which the White House tried to delegate testing in nursing homes to the states, the administration has been shipping fast-test machines to facilities. But there’s concern about ongoing supplies, staff training, and other issues.

—guarantee supplies of PPE, or personal protective equipment. Earlier this summer, as COVID-19 rebounded across the South and West, 1 in 5 nursing homes faced PPE shortages. The commission called on the government to take responsibility, guaranteeing a three-month supply of high-quality gear for facilities. The administration says it has provided money for PPE and in August began shipping N95 masks to nursing homes that reported shortages.

—safely resume family visits. Nursing homes have been in lockdown since mid-March, and that has taken a toll on the well-being of residents. Some facilities have started to allow visits again. The commission recommended a detailed template for how nursing homes can safely resume visitation. The administration says it has already provided guidance.

—more help with infection control. Moving residents within a facility to separate those infected with COVID-19 is one of the main ways to contain outbreaks. But that can involve added costs and challenges. The commission said clearer government guidance is needed.

The ravages of the coronavirus in nursing homes have surprised and shocked many people. Experts such as Grabowski say their research indicates the virus gets into facilities from the surrounding communities, unwittingly carried by staff and visitors who may not yet have symptoms.

The commission concluded that the pandemic has exposed basic flaws in the nation’s oversight of nursing homes, which divides responsibilities among federal, state and local authorities.

That “resulted in a patchwork approach to infection prevention and control that many believe has contributed to our nation’s inability to contain the spread of the virus,” the report said.

University of Chicago professor Tamara Konetzka, an expert on long-term care who reviewed the commission’s report, said the recommendations “follow the growing consensus over the past six months about what needs to be done to stem the cases and deaths in nursing homes.”

But she also took issue with the administration’s claims it has met the moment.

“I would classify the CMS actions to date as a move in the right direction and better late than never,” she said. “But, as we get close to 80,000 nursing home deaths and counting, it’s difficult to think of the federal response as unprecedented and successful.”

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Emmys, live and virtual: 'What could possibly go wrong?'

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Emmy host Jimmy Kimmel and an alpaca sharing the spotlight. Winners accepting at home in designer pajamas or maybe yoga pants. More than 100 chances for a balky internet connection to bring Sunday's ceremony to a crashing halt.

Come for the awards, stay for the suspense of the first big Hollywood ceremony to attempt a live — but socially distanced — broadcast amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"What could possibly go wrong?" Ian Stewart said drolly as he and fellow executive producer Reginald Hudlin detailed their efforts to celebrate TV's best without a theater audience or red-carpet glamour and with daunting technical challenges.

Fortunately, the quick-witted Kimmel "loves live TV and loves chaos," Stewart said. "I think he's actually hoping things do go wrong, to tell you the truth."

The comedian will hold court at the Staples Center for ABC's 8 p.m. EDT telecast, joined by a handful of yet-to-be-revealed celebrities. Morgan Freeman, Lin-Manuel Miranda, D-Nice, Patrick Stewart and Oprah Winfrey are among those with undisclosed roles in Sunday's show, along with Isabella the alpaca.

H.E.R. will perform during the "In Memoriam" segment.

The HBO limited series "Watchmen" is the leading nominee, with star Regina King up for honors. Top comedy and drama series contenders including "Schitt's Creek," "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel," "Succession" and "Ozark," while Jennifer Aniston and Steve Carell ("The Morning Show") and Catherine O'Hara and Eugene Levy ("Schitt's Creek") are among those vying for acting trophies.

The ceremony continues to highlight the TV turf battle, with cable, streaming and, to a far lesser extent, traditional broadcast networks jockeying for recognition and viewers in an increasingly crowded landscape. The arrival of newcomers including Apple TV+ (with its flagship series "The Morning Show") has upped the competition.

Nominees will be ensconced at their location of choice, whether home, hotel or otherwise, with formal wear definitely optional. There are custom Emmy PJs being made, while some may have the courage to wear what Hudlin called the "freakiest, funkier" outfit in their closet or decide on the comfort of athleisure wear.

When the winners' names are revealed they'll deliver their speeches in the form of a very glorified Zoom call, which could make for spontaneous moments unavailable in a theater.

"If someone's kid suddenly takes control of the mic and, suddenly, they are the star of the show, we are going to let that happen," Hudlin said. One nominee reveled in the possibility of including their dog, and the producers are being open-minded.

"What we've tried to do is to make it into a fun thing to do. It's not stuffy. It's not staged," Stewart said.

To make the long-distance participation work and be broadcast worthy, 130 units that include a high-end camera, lighting and boom mic are being deployed to nominees scattered in 10 countries and 20 cities, including Los Angeles, New York, Toronto, Tel Aviv, London and Berlin.

The downtown LA Staples Center, where teams including the Lakers and Clippers play, replaced the planned venue because it has the resources to handle the night's extensive number of feeds, Hudlin said. How smoothly they flow will depend on the nominees' internet connections.

The process, including COVID-19 precautions, makes it "sort of a logistic nightmare," Stewart said. "It's just going to be great," a cheerful Hudlin parried.

"To quote the great (filmmaker) Melvin Van Peebles, sometimes trouble is opportunity in work clothes. Because the fact is, people have been hankering for a reinvention of the award show. ... and I think COVID has forced us to do that," the producer said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Other recent awards shows, including the BET Awards and this week's Academy of Country Music Awards, bowed to the coronavirus with a mix of pre-taped and live segments. It's incumbent on the prime-time Emmys to do more, producers said.

"One of the great things about television is its immediacy and its ability to meet the moment, so we

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want to do that same thing with the show," Hudlin said. "We want people to have fun, and we want to celebrate achievement."

But the ceremony also has to acknowledge "where we are as a culture," he said.

With the pandemic, the fight for social justice and fires ravaging the western U.S., it would be "a failure if we didn't address all of those things in a show about television," Hudlin said. "That doesn't mean we want to be preachy. We don't want to lecture people."

In the rush of hearing their name called, winners may be more likely to blurt out a laundry list of thanks to agents, publicists and others, Stewart said, which "may well feel a little tone-deaf."

"We are not going to tell anyone what to say. They can say what they'd like, and they should celebrate it," he said. "But there are other things happening in the world that they might want to reference as well. It's a balance that we have to strike It's a balance that nominees and winners have to strike as well."

Online: <https://www.emmys.com/>

Trump downplays legacy of slavery in appeal to white voters

By AAMER MADHANI and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump intensified efforts to appeal to his core base of white voters on Thursday by downplaying the historical legacy of slavery in the United States and blasting efforts to address systemic racism as divisive.

The president's comments marking the 233rd anniversary of the signing of the Constitution amounted to a defense of white culture and a denunciation of Democrats, the media and others who he accused of trying to indoctrinate school children and shame their parents' "whiteness."

He also argued that America's founding "set in motion the unstoppable chain of events that abolished slavery, secured civil rights, defeated communism and fascism and built the most fair, equal and prosperous nation in human history." But he did not mention the 246 years of slavery in America, including the 89 years it was allowed to continue after the colonies declared independence from England. Nor did the president acknowledge the ongoing fight against racial injustice and police brutality, which has prompted months of protests this year.

Trump has long fanned the nation's culture wars, including defending the display of the Confederate battle flag and monuments of Civil War rebels from protesters seeking their removal. His speech Thursday suggested his rhetoric could become even more pointed in the final weeks before the election, given that his path to a second term relies largely on energizing culturally conservative white voters.

"For many years now, the radicals have mistaken Americans' silence for weakness. But they are wrong," Trump said. "There is no more powerful force than a parent's love for their children — and patriotic moms and dads are going to demand that their children are no longer fed hateful lies about this country."

Trump has already cracked down on anti-racism training sessions in federal agencies. He said Thursday he will soon sign an order to establish a commission to promote patriotic education dubbed the 1776 Commission. The panel, he said, would be tasked with encouraging educators to teach students "about the miracle of American history" and plan for the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The move is a response to The New York Times' "1619 Project," which highlights the long-term consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans.

The project began after The New York Times Magazine published a series on the 400th anniversary of slavery in the United States. Nikole Hannah-Jones won a Pulitzer Prize for her piece in the magazine. Her essay was titled "The 1619 Project," because in late August of that year, a ship arrived in America with some 20 to 30 enslaved Africans, marking the first arrival of slaves.

The project evolved from the essay and, with help from the Pulitzer Center, educational materials were developed to enhance the knowledge about slavery, not rewrite history, according to the Times.

"American parents are not going to accept indoctrination in our schools, cancel culture at work, or the

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repression of traditional faith, culture and values in the public square," Trump said. "Not anymore."

In response to Trump's remarks, Hannah-Jones said the First Amendment to the Constitution abhors government attempts to censor speech and guarantees a free press.

"The efforts by the president of the United States to use his powers to censor a work of American journalism by dictating what schools can and cannot teach and what American children should and should not learn should be deeply alarming to all Americans who value free speech," she said.

Justice Dept.: Sedition charge may apply to protest violence

By MICHAEL BALSAMO, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a memo to U.S. attorneys Thursday obtained by The Associated Press, the Justice Department emphasized that federal prosecutors should aggressively go after demonstrators who cause violence — and even sedition charges could potentially apply.

The sedition statute doesn't require proof of a plot to overthrow the government, the memo read. It instead could be used when a defendant tries to oppose the government's authority by force.

Attorney General William Barr has been pushing his U.S. attorneys to bring federal charges in protest-related violence whenever they can, keeping a grip on cases even if a defendant could be tried instead in state court. Federal convictions often result in longer prison sentences; sedition alone could lead to up to 20 years behind bars.

The memo cited as a hypothetical example "a group has conspired to take a federal courthouse or other federal property by force," but the real thing took place in Portland, Oregon, during clashes that erupted night after night between law enforcement and demonstrators.

Justice officials also explored whether it could pursue either criminal or civil rights charges against city officials there, spokeswoman Kerri Kupec told The AP. She would not say whether charges were still being considered.

The Trump administration's crackdown on protest violence has already led to more than 300 arrests on federal crimes in the protests since the death of George Floyd. An AP analysis of the data shows that while many people are accused of violent crimes such as arson for hurling Molotov cocktails and burning police cars and assault for injuring law enforcement, others are not. That's led to criticism that at least some arrests are a politically motivated effort to stymie demonstrations.

"The speed at which this whole thing was moved from state court to federal court is stunning and unbelievable," said Charles Sunwabe, who represents an Erie, Pennsylvania, man accused of lighting a fire at a coffee shop after a May 30 protest. "It's an attempt to intimidate these demonstrators and to silence them," he said.

Some cases are viewed as trumped-up and should not be in federal court, lawyers say, including a teenager accused of civil disorder for claiming online "we are not each other's enemy, only enemy is 12," a reference to law enforcement.

The administration has seized on the demonstrations and an aggressive federal response to showcase what President Donald Trump says is his law-and-order prowess, claiming he is countering rising crime in cities run by Democrats. Trump has derided protesters and played up the violence around protests, though the majority of them are peaceful.

Pockets of violence have indeed popped up in Rochester, New York; Minneapolis, Washington, D.C., and Chicago. Federal officials were called to Kenosha, Wisconsin, after large protests and unrest following the shooting of Jacob Blake and the gunning down of two protesters and later arrest of a 17-year-old in their deaths. Notably, that teenager has not been charged with any federal crimes. Neither was a man accused of shooting and killing a demonstrator in Louisville following the death of Breonna Taylor.

While Barr has gone after protest-related violence targeted at law enforcement, he has argued there is seldom a reason to open sweeping investigations into the practices of police departments. The Justice Department, however, has initiated a number of civil rights investigations into individual cases. Barr has said he does not believe there is systemic racism in police departments, even though Black people are disproportionately more likely to be killed by police, and public attitudes over police reforms have shifted.

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Federal involvement in local cases is nothing new. Officials across the country turn to the Justice Department for violent crime and gang cases where offenders could face much stiffer federal penalties and there is no parole.

Police chiefs in several cities have pointed to the importance of their relationships with federal prosecutors to bring charges that can result in long prison sentences to drive down violent crime.

Even before the unrest earlier this year, the Justice Department was stepping in to bring charges in states where the government believes justice is not being fully pursued by local prosecutors. In January, for example, the department brought federal hate crime charges against a woman accused of slapping three Orthodox Jewish women in one of several apparently anti-Semitic attacks reported throughout New York during Hanukkah.

It is not clear whether protest-related arrests will continue apace. Demonstrations have slowed, though not necessarily because of the federal charges. Wildfires in the West and hurricanes in the South have lessened some of the conflict.

While many local prosecutors have dismissed dozens of low-level protest arrests, some are still coming down hard. A Pennsylvania judge set bail at \$1 million for about a dozen people in a protest that followed the death of a knife-wielding man by police.

Even some Democrats, including District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser, have called for the Justice Department to pursue federal charges against violent demonstrators, going as far as accusing the administration of declining to prosecute rioters. Washington's Metropolitan Police Department had arrested 42 people one August weekend after a protest left a trail of vandalism. But prosecutors said the arrest paperwork did not identify specific crimes tied to each suspect.

The federal confrontation with Bowser seemed counterintuitive, though Trump has a history of squaring off against the mayor.

About one-third of the federal protest-related cases are in Portland, for crimes such as assaulting a deputy U.S. marshal with a baseball bat, setting fires and setting off explosives at the federal courthouse and throwing rocks at officers.

Three purported "Boogaloo" members, who use the loose movement's name as a slang term for a second civil war or collapse of civilization, were charged with possessing a homemade bomb and inciting a riot in Las Vegas.

An El Paso, Texas, man was accused of promoting hate speech, posting a video online with a racist epithet and making threatening comments to Black Lives Matter protesters while holding a military-style rifle at his feet. A Minnesota man was accused of helping burn down a police precinct headquarters there after Floyd's death.

But other cases simply do not belong in federal court, lawyers say.

In Seattle, 35-year-old Isaiah Willoughby, who's accused of setting fire to the outside of a police precinct, faces a mandatory minimum of five years in prison if convicted of arson in federal court. He could be looking at about a year behind bars in state court, where his lawyer said the case belongs.

"This is city property that has been destroyed and you have a local prosecutors office that is ready and willing and able to charge these cases in state court, but the federal government is attempting to emphasize these protest-related crimes for whatever agenda they are seeking to pursue," said assistant federal public defender Dennis Carroll.

Carroll accused federal authorities of using the cases to try to make the protests seem more violent and disruptive than they really were.

Federal prosecutors this month agreed to dismiss the charge against a man who authorities said was found with a Molotov cocktail in his backpack after he and other protesters were arrested in May for blocking traffic in Jacksonville, Florida. Video showed that 27-year-old Ivan Zecher was wrongfully arrested because he was actually on the sidewalk — not in the street — meaning prosecutors could not pursue their case, Zecher's attorney, Marcus Barnett said.

"There is absolutely an agenda here to blow these out of proportion, make these look more serious or

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more sinister than it is," Barnett said of the pursuit of federal charges. "This is the Justice Department, from the top, furthering an agenda that has nothing to do with justice," he said.

Richer reported from Boston.

Whitmer: Mask order applies to Big Ten, but may be changed

By DAVID EGGERT Associated Press

LANSING, Mich (AP) — Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's office said Thursday her requirement that athletes wear masks applies to Big Ten football in Michigan, but a face shield will suffice for players and the administration is open to potentially changing the order.

Her office said it will talk to the conference about the mandate, which covers organized sports in which athletes cannot keep distance "except for occasional and fleeting moments." The state measure exempts professional sports and amateur sports like tennis, golf, cross country, baseball and softball.

The Big Ten announced Wednesday it plans to open its football season the weekend of Oct. 23-24, reversing a decision to push fall sports to the spring in the name of player safety during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Democratic governor's order covers both training and competition.

Mark Totten, Whitmer's chief legal counsel, said pro athletes do not face the mask requirement because of their sports' "very rigorous protocols."

Asked if the order could be revised before Big Ten football starts, he told The Associated Press: "This development just came yesterday from the Big Ten. I think we're certainly open to having conversations."

Whitmer spokeswoman Tiffany Brown later said the state reached out to the conference "to discuss further as it may be fitting to treat the Big Ten more like professional sports — as they are very stringent and there are clear rules and guidance in place."

The Big Ten is banking on daily testing to mitigate the risk of outbreaks. The Big Ten will begin daily antigen testing of all fall sports athletes, coaches and staff Sept. 30.

University of Michigan athletics spokesman Dave Ablauf said the Wolverines have been following the order.

"We have players that wear both face shields, the upper and new lower shield, as well as masks/neck gators during practice," he said. "All of our coaches, staff and practice personnel wear masks/gators during practice."

AP Sports Writer Noah Trister in Ann Arbor contributed to this report.

Follow David Eggert at <https://twitter.com/DavidEggert00>

'IN ATTIC HELP': Couple is rescued from storm Sally by water

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

CANTONMENT, Fla. (AP) — The firetrucks and rescue vehicles kept passing her house even after Elaine Hulan, 76, wrote "IN ATTIC HELP" on the front door. So Hulan's 84-year-old husband resorted to his best emergency signal: an ear-splitting whistle.

The noise rose above the din, and a firefighter on a Jet Ski soon rescued the couple and their two dogs off the front stoop of their brick home.

The Florida couple was trapped in their home after Hurricane Sally lumbered ashore Wednesday morning near Gulf Shores, Alabama, with 105 mph (165 kph) winds. At least one death has been attributed to the storm.

Now comes the tough part for Elaine and Jack Hulan — filing insurance claims, dealing with two flooded cars, finding temporary housing and waiting to get home.

"I wouldn't wish it on anyone," Elaine Hulan said.

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Residents of a flood-prone neighborhood north of Pensacola since 1993, the Hulgans know what to do during a big storm. They've been flooded twice before and forced into the attic once.

As others tuned out forecasts about Sally because it was initially projected to hit far west in Louisiana and then Mississippi, Elaine Hulgan started moving books and photos out of low cabinets in their den, just in case. Her husband put the lawn mower atop a table on the back porch.

The rain from Sally started out light but soon changed into torrents. Water began rising from 11 Mile Creek across the street.

The muddy water first got to the road and then their driveway before entering the yard. It crept up to the entrance and was soon seeping under the front door.

As a mix of water from the rain, the creek and sewage overflows began filling the one-story house with the first of 20 inches (0.5 meters) of fetid water, the couple knew they had to do something.

Walking into the garage, past a new Toyota with just 35 miles (56 kilometers) on it, they climbed up the pull-down stairs to the attic overhead. The dogs were there, too. They all felt relatively safe.

Soon they could hear trucks rumbling into their neighborhood, down the street and past their house.

"When they kept going by and not seeing us, I told Jack, 'Jack, are the four of us going to die in this house?'" Elaine said.

She used a can of spray paint to scrawl the message on the door, but things felt dire.

"We were just scared. And Jack said, 'We'll just go back in the attic and stay there.' I said, 'Jack, I don't want to die in the attic. And he said, 'We aren't going to die,'" Elaine said.

A firefighter finally heard the man's whistling from the front door, and the Jet Ski was soon in the yard. Rescuers used a small raft to remove them and the dogs.

While Jack is "pretty laid-back," Elaine said she was worried horribly until they were rescued early Wednesday. They first went to a community center and then the home of a friend.

Elaine Hulgan said they're not sure where they might live while their home is being repaired, but they're also thankful to be alive.

Jack "said everything was going to be OK, and it was," she said.

Lightning storm, easterly wind: How the wildfires got so bad

By ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — It began as a stunning light show on a mid-August weekend — lightning bolts crackling in the skies over Northern and Central California, touching down in grasslands and vineyards.

The National Weather Service warned that the dry lightning striking a parched landscape "could lead to new wildfire."

It turned out to be a huge understatement. Thousands of bolts ignited hundreds of fires in California and at least one in Oregon, setting the stage for some of the most destructive wildfires the West Coast states have seen in modern times.

One month later, firefighters are still battling them, and at least 34 people have died in California, Oregon and Washington.

"What really was jaw dropping for people was the fact that this really changed the paradigm that people have in terms of their sense of security," said Oregon Department of Forestry spokesman Jim Gersbach. "These burned so close to populated areas, driven by this wind — basically unstoppable."

The massive wildfires renewed a longstanding debate over whether climate change or a lack of aggressive forest management played the bigger role this time around. Numerous studies have found that a warming Earth, which leads to higher temperatures and drier landscape, increases the likelihood of extreme events and contributes to their severity. But many experts have also argued that more needs to be done to thin forests and reduce debris so that flames have less fuel.

Before the cluster of lightning strikes, the West's fire season had been slightly more severe than normal. In Oregon, officials had decided to not let fires grow, ordering that even small blazes be smothered quickly by aircraft, so throngs of firefighters wouldn't be needed and potentially spread the coronavirus,

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Gersbach said.

But then came the weekend of Aug. 15-16.

"It's been a pretty insane 12 hours across the Bay Area," the National Weather Service forecasters reported, after the lightning storm during which white-hot bolts licked at the span of San Francisco's landmark Bay Bridge.

But that was just Act I.

Act II came three weeks later, when another freak weather phenomenon occurred.

A vast high-pressure zone stretching from Alaska to the desert in the Southwest gave Denver a summer snowfall while pushing warm, dry winds toward the Pacific coast, said Greg Jones, a professor and research climatologist at Linfield University in McMinnville, Oregon. Normally, the winds that time of year go in the opposite direction.

Those gusts pushed the fires through trees and brush that had been drying out all summer, causing the blazes to explode in size and sending them rushing into towns and rural homes. Many residents barely had time to flee with just the clothes on their back.

Jones called the weather conditions "likely a once in a generation event."

For the first time ever, five megafires — defined as covering at least 100,000 acres (405 square kilometers) — were ablaze simultaneously in Oregon last week.

Smoke covered the West Coast states, creating some of the most hazardous air quality in the world. Seattle's iconic Space Needle was all but hidden in brown haze, topped with an American flag that drooped as if in surrender. The smoke stretched clear across the continent and even blew over parts of Europe.

Armies of firefighters responded. Clad in orange fire-resistant suits and helmets and carrying Pulaski hand tools, they trudged across blackened earth toward the flames. National Guard troops joined the effort. Even local residents tried to save homes by gouging firelines by hand and with excavators and bulldozers.

"You gotta pull together in times like this because it's like a war zone out here," Kerry Kuenzi, an area resident who with several dozen others fought a monster fire in the community of Scotts Mills, Oregon, told The Oregonian/OregonLive.

The Beachie Creek Fire he faced covered less than a square mile (2 square kilometers) on Sept. 7. Overnight, driven by high winds and extremely dry fuels, it grew to 205 square miles (530 square kilometers), fire managers said.

New fires continued to ignite in California and Oregon. One burned near Interstate 5 in Oregon not far from the California state line, turning most of the towns of Phoenix and Talent into a blackened landscape littered with the twisted remains of mobile homes and other structures.

The flames were so intense that firefighters sometimes had to retreat, including those facing a blaze threatening Portland's southeastern suburbs.

"You can't really stand there with a hose when you've got 30-mile-an-hour winds and dry fuels," Gersbach said.

Firefighters from across the nation and Canada have descended on the region to help fight the blazes: There are more than 17,000 in California fighting over two dozen major fires, and more than 6,000 facing about a dozen blazes in Oregon.

About 5,300 square miles (13,700 square kilometers) have burned this year in California — more than ever before, Cal Fire said. In Oregon, the figure is about 1,560 square miles (4,000 square kilometers), nearly double the 10-year average.

Residents are desperately hoping for rain to wash away the choking wildfire smoke. Predicted rains in fire-hit parts of Oregon haven't arrived yet. California remains dry, though calming winds and lower temperatures — caused in part by the smoke blotting out the sun — have aided firefighters. Small amounts of rain are in the forecast for far northern California and the Sierra Nevada.

More than 38,000 people are still not able to return home in California, Gov. Gavin Newsom said Wednesday. Some 4,000 people remain in shelters in Oregon, according to the American Red Cross.

Some no longer have homes to return to. About 1,600 homes were destroyed in Oregon, the state Office

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of Emergency Management said, and 4,200 structures burned in California.

For some of those whose homes have survived, it's too dangerous to return.

With the fire season not yet over, residents are praying for a respite before the next batch of large wildfires.

Associated Press writers John Antczak in Los Angeles; Sara Cline in Salem, Oregon; and Gillian Flaccus in Portland contributed.

Follow Andrew Selsky on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/andrewselsky>

Under lockdown, Israel faces bitter start of Jewish New Year

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Eating apples dipped in honey on Rosh Hashana is a Jewish tradition to symbolize a sweet start of the New Year. But in Israel, bitterness prevails on the eve of the holiday as the country faces a second nationwide lockdown to stem a raging coronavirus outbreak.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government has imposed a three-week lockdown, beginning on Friday afternoon — just hours before Rosh Hashana starts. Israel's first lockdown, in March and April, put a damper on Passover, the Jewish spring holiday marking the deliverance of the ancient Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.

Now, the Jewish High Holidays look to be similarly subdued.

Israel has seen new daily cases of COVID-19 skyrocket in recent weeks, climbing to more than 5,000 on Wednesday — one of the highest per capita infection rates in the world. Since the pandemic began this year, it has recorded more than 169,000 cases, including 1,163 deaths, as of Wednesday, according to Health Ministry figures.

Religious and secular Israelis alike mark Rosh Hashana with festive holiday feasts with family and friends. They pack synagogues, often spending hours in prayer, especially during the fast of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which falls later this month.

But this year, traditional family gatherings will be muted, synagogue prayers will be limited to small groups and travel restrictions will leave many roads deserted. Some of the liberal streams of Judaism, particularly in the United States, are turning to technology to help connect people.

In Israel, movement during the lockdown will be restricted to within 500 meters (yards) of one's home. Gatherings are limited to 10 people indoors, and 20 outside, restricting the number of faithful who can attend synagogue services. Bars, restaurants, and cultural venues will be shut, but many ritual baths and other religious facilities will remain open.

Israelis have been frustrated since the gains made with the first lockdown — when the virus seemed to have been brought under control — were erased within weeks, with authorities unable to stem the spike that followed. Weekly protests have drawn thousands to Netanyahu's Jerusalem residence, with demonstrators demanding his resignation over his handling of the virus, the pandemic's fallout and his corruption trials.

The lockdown rules have also deepened the rift between secular and religious Jews in Israel. A proposal to lock down only on communities with high outbreaks — mainly ultra-Orthodox areas where initial restrictions were ignored, allowing infections to surge — was scrapped, apparently following pressure from ultra-Orthodox leaders, before Netanyahu announced the nationwide lockdown.

Many Jewish worshippers elsewhere in the world will have to forgo synagogue services due to social distancing rules, hold prayers and hear the traditional sounding of the shofar — a ceremonial ram's horn — on street corners or at home.

The Chabad-Lubavitch movement of Hasidic Judaism has recruited thousands of volunteers to blow the shofar at public squares and street corners worldwide.

"The unique circumstances that leave millions outside the synagogue doors this year contain also the silver lining of helping them rediscover, reintegrate and celebrate the holiness of the true center of Jewish life — the Jewish home," said Rabbi Zalman Shmotkin, spokesman for Chabad-Lubavitch.

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An Israeli online application is helping pair shofar blowers with those who want to hear the horn in their neighborhoods.

In the U.S., more liberal Jewish streams have produced alternatives for congregants who use Zoom, Facebook and other digital platforms during the High Holidays.

The Union for Reform Judaism, North America's biggest Jewish group, created the Reflection Project, a virtual experience designed to help people connect with spirituality through a series of activities.

"For non-Orthodox Jews, we have incredible opportunities through virtual prayer, gathering, learning and spiritual practice to be with others, and to learn and draw strength from being together," Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, told The Associated Press in New York.

With gatherings in synagogues across Israel limited to 10 worshipers, some Israelis are organizing services in courtyards and gardens. At Jerusalem's Western Wall, the holiest site where Jews can worship, the plaza is crisscrossed with dividers to allow small groups to pray.

Jerusalem's Great Synagogue, an Orthodox congregation that has hosted many Israeli dignitaries over the decades, announced earlier this week that because of the pandemic, it would not hold High Holiday services for the first time since it opened in 1958.

"It's heartbreaking," said Zalli Jaffe, president of Jerusalem's Great Synagogue. "We believe that safety comes first. Sometimes we have to protect the congregation against the congregation."

Addressing the country on Thursday, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin offered a message of sympathy over the lockdown.

The lockdown hampers "our ability to be together, to celebrate together, to mourn together, to pray together," Rivlin said. "I want us to raise our heads and believe."

Israeli police are sending out thousands of officers in a bid to enforce the regulations, with lockdown violators facing hundreds of dollars in fines. Still, officials are concerned many Israelis — skeptical of the government's erratic and confusing regulations — may defy the lockdown.

Health Ministry Director Hezi Levi urged Israelis against defying travel restrictions by visiting family and relatives for Friday night's traditional holiday meal.

"If someone travels before the holiday to relatives, they will apparently need to stay there for two weeks," he told Israel's Ynet news site.

For Moises Sandler, 26, this Rosh Hashana was meant to be the first family reunion around the holiday table in years. He immigrated from Mexico in 2018, joining two brothers already living in Israel. His parents followed suit this past year.

"It's a bummer because we were planning to have this big dinner, have friends over," said Sandler, who lives in Tel Aviv. His parents live in the suburb of Herzliya, several miles away.

"We don't know even if we're going to be able to do it all together."

Associated Press writer Luis Andres Henao in New York contributed to this report.

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AP-NORC poll: Trump faces deep pessimism as election nears

By JULIE PACE and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Less than seven weeks before Election Day, most Americans are deeply pessimistic about the direction of the country and skeptical of President Donald Trump's handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Roughly 7 in 10 Americans think the nation is on the wrong track, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. It's an assessment that poses a challenge for Trump as he urges voters to stay the course and reward him with four more years in office instead of handing the reins of government to Democrat Joe Biden.

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Trump's argument to voters hinges in part on persuading Americans that the pandemic, which has killed nearly 200,000 people in the U.S., is receding. Yet just 39% of Americans approve of how Trump is handling the outbreak.

"Clearly it has been mishandled," said Don Smith, 77, of Kannapolis, North Carolina. Smith, an independent who plans to vote for Biden in November, said he's been particularly troubled by what he sees as Trump's efforts to sideline public health experts and scientists.

Most Americans have more favorable views of health officials than of the Republican president as they have throughout the pandemic. Seventy-eight percent say they have some or great confidence in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the agency at the forefront of crafting recommendations for how Americans can best protect themselves from the highly contagious coronavirus.

Yet the White House has repeatedly sought to assert more control over the CDC. And on Wednesday, Trump publicly undercut CDC Director Robert Redfield on two crucial matters: the likely timeline for vaccine availability and the effectiveness of wearing face masks.

Redfield told lawmakers that a vaccine — if approved, and none has been to this point — would likely not be widely available to Americans until at least the middle of next year. Trump disputed that, saying a vaccine could begin to be rolled out as soon as next month — just ahead of the presidential election — and be broadly available soon after.

Trump was also at odds with Redfield over masks, which the president says he supports but rarely wears. Redfield told lawmakers that wearing a mask is "more guaranteed to protect me against COVID than when I take a COVID vaccine." No way, the president said, declaring the opposite was true.

Following the public rebuke and a private phone call with Trump, Redfield tried to backtrack from some of his statements, saying the questions in the congressional hearing were unclear.

Through his words and actions, Trump has increasingly been trying to convey the impression that the nation is moving past the pandemic. He's regularly traveling around the country for campaign events, speaking to tightly packed crowds. Though he largely held outdoor events through the summer, he headlined two large indoor events over the weekend. Public health officials say transmission rates are higher indoors versus outdoors.

Trump says of the pandemic: "I really believe we're rounding the corner, and I believe that strongly."

Overall, Trump's approval rating sits at 43%, well within the narrow range it has been throughout his first term, and slightly higher than it was earlier in the summer. The president is propped up by support from 86% of Republicans, though a somewhat lower percentage of GOP voters — 75% — back his handling of the pandemic.

Despite Trump's unfailingly optimistic words about the pandemic, the majority of Americans — 69% — say they are still at least somewhat worried about themselves or their family members being infected with the virus. That number is lower than it was in July, when infection rates in several states were spiking.

Assessments of the state of the pandemic are sharply split along partisan lines, reflecting the ways that it has become tied up in the nation's deep partisan divisions. Eighty-three percent of Democrats say they are at least somewhat concerned about the virus, compared with 55% of Republicans.

Still, those findings show the risks for Trump in downplaying the virus in the campaign's final weeks, given how many Americans — including many in his own party — still view COVID-19 as a threat.

Biden has vowed to prioritize the views of public health officials if he wins, going so far as to say he would be willing to effectively shut down states again if that were the recommendation from medical advisers. The former vice president also regularly wears a mask and has largely limited his campaign travel to small, socially distanced events.

During an event on Wednesday, Biden warned Americans that the country could be heading for a "very dangerous autumn," citing models showing cases could spike again later this year.

As Americans also weigh their options in upcoming congressional elections, few have high praise for the legislative branch. Just 5% say they are highly confident in Congress, while 47% have some confidence; 48% say they are not confident.

Lawmakers have spent months wrangling over how to proceed over another coronavirus relief package

that could help small businesses, schools and state and local governments. But Democrats and Republicans remain far apart on the specifics and the overall price tag, and it appears likely they could depart Washington for a preelection recess without authorizing any more money.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,108 adults was conducted Sept. 11-14 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points.

Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>.

Navalny team alleges Novichok found in hotel water bottle

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Colleagues of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny said Thursday that a water bottle with a trace of the Novichok nerve agent was found in his hotel room in the Siberian city of Tomsk after he fell ill on a flight from there to Moscow last month.

Navalny later was flown to Germany, where he was kept in an induced coma for more than two weeks as he was treated with an antidote at Berlin's Charite hospital. Members of his team accused the Kremlin of involvement in the poisoning, charges that Russian officials have vehemently denied.

The Kremlin has bristled at calls from German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other leaders to answer questions about the poisoning, urging Germany to provide its evidence.

On Tuesday, Navalny posted a picture of himself from his hospital bed, hugged by his wife and children. "I still can't do almost anything on my own, but yesterday I managed to breathe on my own for the entire day," he added in the post.

A video posted on Navalny's Instagram account on Thursday showed members of his team in plastic gloves inspecting his hotel room in Tomsk shortly after he left the city on Aug. 20 and collapsed on a flight home. The plane made an emergency landing in Omsk, where he was hospitalized before being taken to Berlin two days later on a medevac plane.

Navalny's Instagram post said they went to the room an hour after learning that he had fallen ill, accompanied by a lawyer, and packed half-empty plastic water bottles and unspecified other items for further inspection. In the video post, someone who appears to be a hotel employee could be heard telling members of the Navalny team that they need to ask police before taking any items from the room, and one of them refuses to do that.

"Two weeks later, a German laboratory found a trace of Novichok on a bottle from the Tomsk hotel room," they said. "And then another three labs that took Alexei's samples proved that he was poisoned with it. Now we understand: It was done before he left his room to go to the airport."

The founder of the Berlin-based organization Cinema for Peace, which helped organize the medevac flight for Navalny, said that some bottles were brought to Germany last month.

"I made sure that we flew some of Navalny's water bottles with us on our plane with Navalny," Jaka Bizilj told The Associated Press in a text message.

There had been previous speculation that Navalny was poisoned at the airport, where he drank a cup of tea before boarding the flight.

"We didn't have much hope of finding something," members of Navalny's team said on Instagram. "But as it was absolutely clear to us that Navalny wasn't just 'slightly unwell' or 'under the weather' and candy wouldn't help, we decided to take everything that could hypothetically be of use and hand it over to doctors in Germany."

They noted that they did so because they were aware that Russian authorities would be reluctant to launch a probe.

"It was quite obvious that they wouldn't investigate the case in Russia," they said. "And so it happened: Nearly a month after Russia hasn't recognized that Alexei was poisoned."

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Navalny's spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh tweeted that "Navalny had been poisoned with Novichok at the hotel before he went to the airport."

But Lyubov Sobol, a top Navalny associate, later tweeted that while "traces of Novichok were found on a bottle from the hotel, it doesn't mean that Navalny was poisoned specifically with the bottle."

Georgy Alburov, a close colleague of Navalny who inspected his hotel room in Tomsk along with other associates, said in a live broadcast on YouTube that German experts said the bottle wasn't the source of the Novichok and only had a trace amount of the nerve agent, probably left by Navalny when he drank from it after he had already been poisoned.

Alburov alleged that Navalny probably was poisoned in the hotel, adding that its management had refused to show them recordings from surveillance cameras. He said police in Tomsk later seized computer servers containing the recordings.

A German military lab determined that Navalny was poisoned with Novichok, the same class of Soviet-era agent that Britain said was used on former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury, England, in 2018.

Chancellor Angela Merkel has said the German lab conducted tests on "various samples from Mr. Navalny," but neither she nor other German officials have elaborated.

On Monday, the German government said independent tests by labs in France and Sweden backed up its findings. The Hague-based Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is also taking steps to have samples from Navalny tested at its designated labs.

The Kremlin has said that Russian doctors who treated him in Omsk found no sign that Navalny was poisoned. Russia has repeatedly prodded Germany to share Navalny's analyses and other medical data and compare notes with the Russian doctors.

German officials have responded to Moscow's request for evidence by saying that Russian authorities must have the samples already since Navalny spent two days in the Omsk hospital.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who canceled a scheduled trip Tuesday to Berlin, said in a TV interview earlier this week that Russian authorities have conducted a preliminary inquiry and documented the meetings Navalny had before falling ill, but he emphasized that investigators need to see evidence of poisoning to launch a full criminal probe.

Lavrov accused the West of trying to smear Russia and use the incident as a pretext for new sanctions against Moscow. He argued that Navalny's life was saved by the pilots of the plane who quickly landed in Omsk after he collapsed on board and by the rapid action of doctors there — something he said Western officials have failed to recognize.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova criticized the European Union's plan to name a prospective sanctions mechanism for punishing human rights violators in honor of Navalny. "We hope that the EU will regain common sense, and our partners will abandon the practice of finger-pointing and will make conclusions only on the basis of real and confirmed facts," she said.

Associated Press writer Frank Jordans in Berlin contributed.

Twisted Sister singer to anti-maskers: Don't use our song

Associated Press undefined

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Twisted Sister singer Dee Snider took to social media to condemn anti-maskers who went into a Florida Target store blaring the group's hit "We're Not Gonna Take It" while ripping off their masks.

In a tweet Wednesday, Snider called the stunt "moronic," and shared a video that was recorded by an upset customer inside the Target at Coral Ridge Mall in Fort Lauderdale. The video had more than 30 million views.

Snider said the group doesn't have his "permission or blessing to use my song for their moronic cause."

The stunt drew quick action from Broward County officials. Target was fined for not enforcing the county's

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mask law and citations were mailed to the protesters, the South Florida Sun Sentinel reported.

Fort Lauderdale resident Chris Nelson told the newspaper that his group, ReOpen South Florida, organized the "flash mob." He also posted a YouTube video of it from their vantage point on Tuesday.

"In celebration of Burn Your Mask Day we decided to spread some freedom dust over the shoppers and employees of Target!" the YouTube caption said.

The small group of anti-maskers approached customers inside the store.

"We're Americans, breathe," a woman yelled. "It's all a lie!"

Another woman screamed that a customer should take the mask off. "You don't need it," she said.

If a guest complied, the group cheered.

Federal health officials have said masks could effectively halt the spread of COVID-19 and have begged the public to embrace them. Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told a committee of U.S. senators on Wednesday that a simple face covering could be more effective than a vaccine in protecting people from the virus.

Nelson has been involved with previous protests related to the coronavirus pandemic. He staged a protest against beach closures on the Fourth of July. He shouted about restrictions being intrusions on citizens' Fourth Amendment rights during a Broward County news conference. Police asked him to leave, saying he was causing a disturbance. He initially resisted but complied after an officer ordered him to place his hands behind his back.

Three people were identified on video and the county mailed them \$100 citations for failing to wear facial coverings in public spaces to help curb the spread of COVID-19, Broward County spokeswoman Margaret Stapleton told the newspaper.

"Any additional participants from the video that are able to be identified will also receive \$100 citations in the mail," she said.

Interim Assistant Police Chief Frank Sousa said the group was gone when officers arrived. But he told the newspaper the protesters had entered the store with their masks on.

Danielle Schumann, a Target corporate spokeswoman, said Target requires shoppers to wear masks inside stores. The protesters were asked to leave "after they removed their masks and became disruptive and rude to other shoppers," she said.

Nelson told the Sun Sentinel he will continue to use the Twisted Sister song, despite Snider's criticism.

"It's sad," Nelson said. "It's a great anthem about freedom and overcoming oppression."

Comey to testify before Senate panel weeks before election

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former FBI Director James Comey will testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Sept. 30, appearing just a month before the presidential election as Republicans have tried to make the case that he and his agency conspired against Donald Trump in 2016.

Comey, whom Trump fired in May 2017, will be a featured witness in Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham's investigation into the origins of the Justice Department's Russia probe. The president has long tried to discredit that investigation, which concluded with a 2018 report by special counsel Robert Mueller, calling it a "hoax." Graham said he also invited Mueller to testify but that Mueller had declined.

Mueller's probe found multiple contacts between the campaign and Russia but said there was not enough evidence to establish a criminal conspiracy between the two. His report also examined several instances in which Trump tried to obstruct his investigation but said he could not come to a conclusion on whether Trump obstructed justice.

Republicans have turned their attention to a report by the Justice Department's inspector general last year that found multiple errors and omissions in the applications the FBI submitted to conduct surveillance on a former Trump campaign aide early in that investigation. Republicans, and Trump himself, have repeatedly said they believe the department was conspiring against the president before and after the election.

Democrats have argued that the errors in the surveillance do not invalidate the Russia investigation, as the internal Justice Department report said the FBI was justified in opening the investigation and found

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no evidence that it acted with political bias. They have also slammed Graham's investigation, along with a separate probe by the GOP-led Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, as an election-year attempt to bolster Trump.

Separate inspector general reports related to Comey's leadership of the Trump-Russia investigation and the Hillary Clinton email probe identified significant errors in judgment but did not allege evidence of political bias on Comey's part. One report described him as "insubordinate" during the Clinton investigation while another found that he broke FBI rules in his handling of memos documenting conversations with Trump. The Justice Department declined to prosecute him.

Graham, a close ally of Trump, said Thursday that "the day of reckoning is upon us" when it comes to the beginning of the Russia probe. He said Comey would be "respectfully treated, but asked hard questions."

The South Carolina Republican, who is also up for reelection, said he is also hoping to hear testimony from former acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe and former agent Peter Strzok, who was removed from the Russia investigation and eventually fired after it was discovered he had sent derogatory text messages about Trump.

Infection rates soar in college towns as students return

By CASEY SMITH, IRENA HWANG and COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

MUNCIE, Ind. (AP) — Just two weeks after students started returning to Ball State University last month, the surrounding county had become Indiana's coronavirus epicenter.

Out of nearly 600 students tested for the virus, more than half have been positive. Dozens of infections have been blamed on off-campus parties, prompting university officials to admonish students.

University President Geoffrey Mearns wrote that the cases apparently were tied not to classrooms or dormitories but to "poor personal choices some students are making, primarily off campus."

"The actions of these students are putting our planned on-campus instruction and activities at risk," he said.

Similar examples abound in other college towns across the nation. Among the 50 U.S. counties with the highest concentrations of students and overall populations of at least 50,000, 20 have consistently reported higher rates of new virus cases than their states have since Sept. 1, according to an Associated Press analysis.

On average, infection rates in those 20 counties have been more than three times higher than their states' overall rates.

At James Madison University in Virginia, which recently sent students home through September amid a surge in cases, the county is averaging a weekly infection rate of nearly 90 cases per 100,000 people, or more than eight times the statewide average.

Health officials fear that surges among college students will spread to more vulnerable people — older ones and those with underlying health problems — and trigger a new wave of cases and hospitalizations. Some worry that colleges could overwhelm hospitals already bracing for increasing cases of COVID-19 and flu this fall and winter.

"There's this waiting game. Does it stay on college campuses or will it escape?" said Dr. Jeff Pothof, chief quality officer at the University of Wisconsin medical center in Madison, where cases among college students have been climbing.

While universities have emerged as hot spots in nearly every state, many of the worst outbreaks have been scattered across the South and Midwest. Of the 50 college counties analyzed by the AP, James Madison's had the highest infection rate, followed by counties that are home to the University of Georgia, Florida State and Indiana University in Bloomington.

In the 10 counties with the highest infection rates, colleges have reported at least 15,000 cases among students and employees in recent weeks, though testing and reporting practices vary significantly and the actual number is probably much higher.

For many colleges, the return to campus was a carefully orchestrated process that took months to plan

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and millions of dollars to pull off. But as safe as they've made their campuses, many colleges have struggled to curb off-campus gatherings that have been tied to thousands of infections.

Parties were blamed for dozens of cases at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which brought students back in early August only to send them home weeks later.

Other schools have cracked down on parties and disciplined students. The University of Missouri in Columbia announced this week that it expelled two students and suspended three others for violating rules meant to slow the virus's spread.

The outbreaks are increasingly straining relations between universities and their towns.

Amid a spike in cases at the University of Colorado at Boulder, county health authorities Tuesday urged all students to quarantine for two weeks. Students and others at the university have accounted for 76% of the county's 663 positive cases over the past two weeks, officials said.

"More stringent and mandatory restrictions will be imposed if students do not comply and break the transmission cycle," Jeffrey Zayach, executive director of Boulder County Public Health, warned in a letter to students.

In a letter to students, the school's chancellor, Philip DiStefano, warned that the quarantine will be strictly enforced and that students who violate it could face suspension or other discipline. Already, DiStefano said, more than 400 students face university discipline for violating public health orders.

At Miami University in Ohio, county health authorities ordered all of the school's athletes to isolate for 14 days last month after 27 tested positive for the virus. Last week, local police cited six men at an off-campus house party that included several students who had recently tested positive.

As cases increase at Boston College and the campus runs out of quarantine space, the mayor of nearby Newton is asking the school not to use any of the town's hotels or other property to isolate students.

Some cities have tightened rules at bars to discourage students from gathering. As cases surged at Illinois State, the town's mayor issued an order requiring all bar customers to be seated to be served. He also limited gatherings near campus to no more than 10 people.

Still, residents and officials in many college towns are rooting for universities to work through outbreaks and avoid campus closings that could further hurt the local economy.

Fred Pryce, who manages a series of stores in a strip mall near Ball State, said sending students home would hurt the area's businesses "big time."

"That's 20,000-plus potential patrons that will vanish," Pryce said. "There are ways to keep students in Muncie safely while they do their classes."

Ball State, roughly 60 miles from Indianapolis, has about 22,000 students on a campus of red brick buildings and sleek, modern dorms in Muncie, where the university is the city's second-largest employer after Ball Memorial Hospital.

On campus last week, sophomore La'Tricia Williams, wearing a mask, said she was glad to be back instead of sitting on the couch with her laptop at her family's home, taking online classes.

"But I get that it comes with some risk," she said. "You can give students a whole bunch of rules for what they should and shouldn't do while they're back at the school, but they're not going to stop doing certain things here or going out into the community."

Caleb Henry, a Ball State junior who lives off campus, said that he and other students have been frequenting local bars and meeting at friends' houses but that he and most others are behaving responsibly, with masks and social distancing. He said students are being vilified unfairly.

"Everyone seems to be getting upset at college kids right now, accusing us of spreading the virus and making us out to be these highly infectious creatures that need to be sent home," Henry said. "What about all the other people around town going to bars ... having parties, weddings, whatever? We're only doing the same things they are."

As cases mounted at Ball State last month, the school tried to ban students from visiting dorms other than their own, but officials reversed the rule after a backlash from students. Even so, officials say infection rates have started to subside, and the school has no plans to suspend campus instruction.

While some colleges have sent students home amid outbreaks, many others are digging in. Some have

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moved classes online but urged students to stay where they are until cases drop. Among them is the University of Notre Dame, which paused in-person classes Aug. 18 and moved them online amid a surge that saw as many as 89 new cases per day. Weeks later, after a sharp decrease in infections, classes have started to resume on campus.

Other schools are hoping to replicate that success, including the University of Illinois, the University of Wisconsin and West Virginia University, which recently shifted classes online as the virus spread.

In a recent call with governors, Dr. Deborah Birx, coordinator of the White House coronavirus task force, cautioned against sending students home, saying that could spark outbreaks elsewhere.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos has also endorsed Notre Dame's approach, saying colleges that "work through it" and find ways to isolate infected students are more likely to "end up in the best place."

In a letter to students at Ball State this week, the university president thanked students for helping reduce virus rates. Still, he warned: "This data is not a cause for celebration. Rather, this data is a call for continued action."

Casey Smith is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

Hwang reported from Atlanta and Binkley reported from Boston.

Correction: Virus Outbreak-Mexico City story

MEXICO CITY (AP) — In a story Sept. 16, 2020, about coronavirus deaths in Mexico City, The Associated Press erroneously stated the first name of the head of the city's Digital Innovation Agency; he is José Merino, not David Merino.

COVID-19 danger continues to drive joblessness in US

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits fell last week to 860,000, a historically high number of people that illustrates the broad economic damage still taking place nine months after the first case of COVID-19 was detected in the U.S.

The Labor Department said Thursday that U.S. jobless claims fell by 33,000 from the previous week and that 12.6 million are collecting traditional unemployment benefits, compared with just 1.7 million a year ago.

The pandemic has delivered a colossal shock to the economy. Until the pandemic upended the operations of American companies, from factories to family diners, weekly jobless aid applications had never exceeded 700,000 in the U.S. They've topped 700,000 for 26 consecutive weeks.

The overall economy, as measured by the gross domestic product, collapsed at an annual rate of 31.7% from April through June, by far the worst three months on record, as millions of jobs disappeared.

The economy and job market have recovered somewhat from the initial shock. Employers added 10.6 million jobs from May through August, but that's still less than half the jobs lost in March and April.

The recovery remains fragile, imperiled by continuing COVID-19 infections as schools begin to reopen, and the failure to deliver another economic rescue package in Washington. And companies continue to lay off workers as they absorb sales lost to the pandemic.

Raytheon Technologies Corp. this week said it plans to slash more than 15,000 jobs this year at its corporate offices, at jet engine-maker Pratt & Whitney and at its aviation and military equipment manufacturer Collins Aerospace.

A sharp drop in travel has left the airlines with tens of thousands more employees than they need to operate the vastly reduced number of flights. This spring, the airlines began receiving \$25 billion in federal grants and loans to keep workers on their payrolls for six months. With that money ending Sept. 30, the three biggest U.S. carriers are expected to furlough or lay off about 40,000 workers starting Oct. 1.

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An extra \$600 in weekly unemployment benefits ran out July 31, squeezing households that had depended on the beefed-up payments. President Donald Trump issued an executive order Aug. 8 providing a scaled-back version of the expanded jobless aid. Most states signed up for federal grants that let them increase weekly benefits by \$300 or \$400.

That program is expiring.

"Layoffs remain widespread and a historically high number of individuals are still receiving some type of jobless benefits," Nancy Vanden Houten, lead U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, wrote in a research report. "Failure on the part of policymakers to enact another fiscal relief package poses significant downside risks to the economy and labor market as the recovery appears to be losing momentum."

Charissa Ward, 37, was furloughed in April from her job as a server at a restaurant in Disney's Hollywood Studios resort near Orlando, Florida. Since then, she's been helping at her partner's online retail business, applying for jobs and waiting to see what Disney will do. "We have no idea when we're going to get called back," she said.

The extra \$600 in weekly jobless benefits didn't replace all her lost income but helped. The reduced \$300 she received briefly from Trump's program made life "a little less stressful." But Ward said Congress needs to agree to another financial rescue and do "what's best for working people."

Last week, nearly 659,000 people applied for jobless aid under a new program that extends eligibility for the first time to self-employed and gig workers, down from 868,000 the previous week. The figure for those seeking Pandemic Employment Assistance isn't adjusted for seasonal trends, so it's reported separately.

Altogether, the Labor Department said that 29.8 million people are receiving some form of unemployment benefits, though the figure may be inflated by double-counting by states. Analysts also worry about evidence that the number of people collecting special pandemic aid has been swollen by cases of fraud in California.

A summertime resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the South and West forced many businesses to close again in July -- though the data firm Womply finds that closings have mostly stabilized over the last few weeks. Womply did find a sharp increase in spending at bars in southern and western states, including South Carolina, Tennessee and Alabama, as college students returned to campus.

But small businesses, particularly in restaurants and retail, continue to close their doors and lay off workers, according to consumer review site Yelp. The number of small companies that have temporarily or permanently shut down has increased since mid-July, Yelp said Wednesday, to more than 160,000, reversing a steady decline from the spring.

And permanent closures are still rising, Yelp said, with nearly 100,000 businesses closed for good as of the end of August. Particularly hard-hit have been restaurants and bars, including dessert shops, burger joints and sandwich shops. Restaurants that are more likely to deliver, such as pizza restaurants, have fared better.

Unemployment claims "remain high even as economic activity is resuming more fully," Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics, wrote Thursday. "The risk going forward continues to come from virus outbreaks and intermittent interruptions to activity. Overall, the labor market is less weak compared to April but remains at risk of permanent damage from repeated closures."

AP Economics Writer Christopher Rugaber contributed to this story.

First volume of Barack Obama's memoir coming Nov. 17

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The first volume of former President Barack Obama's memoir is coming out Nov. 17, two weeks after Election Day. It's called "A Promised Land" and will cover his swift and historic rise to the White House and his first term in office.

The publication date for the second volume has not yet been determined.

"I've spent the last few years reflecting on my presidency, and in 'A Promised Land' I've tried to provide

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an honest accounting of my presidential campaign and my time in office: the key events and people who shaped it; my take on what I got right and the mistakes I made; and the political, economic, and cultural forces that my team and I had to confront then — and that as a nation we are grappling with still,” Obama said in a statement Thursday.

“In the book, I’ve also tried to give readers a sense of the personal journey that Michelle and I went through during those years, with all the incredible highs and lows. And finally, at a time when America is going through such enormous upheaval, the book offers some of my broader thoughts on how we can heal the divisions in our country going forward and make our democracy work for everybody — a task that won’t depend on any single president, but on all of us as engaged citizens.”

Obama’s book, like his previous ones, will be released by Crown, a division of Penguin Random House.

The 768-page book is the most anticipated presidential memoir in memory, as much or more because of the quality of the writing than for any possible revelations. He has been called the most literary president since Abraham Lincoln and has already written two highly praised, million-selling books: “Dreams from My Father” and “The Audacity of Hope,” both of which have been cited as aiding his campaign in 2008 and making him the country’s first Black president.

Even with a substantial list price of \$45, “A Promised Land” is virtually guaranteed to sell millions of copies, and has an announced first printing of 3 million. Barnes & Noble CEO James Daunt likened the enthusiasm for Obama’s book, which seems well positioned to become the best-selling presidential memoir in history, to the final volume of J.K. Rowling’s “Harry Potter” series.

“This will be a book of rare consequence,” Daunt said in a statement. “That it will sell as no other book has done since July 21, 2007 is immensely cheering to booksellers.”

“Dreams from My Father” introduced us to a little known US Senator and to a writer of poetic grace. The Audacity of Hope gave thrilling vision to his ambitions for political office. A Promised Land now offers us a grand, lyrical narrative of his Presidency. This will be a book of rare consequence.

But “A Promised Land” will face challenges far different from most presidential memoirs, and even from former first lady Michelle Obama’s blockbuster book, “Becoming,” which came out two years ago and has sold more than 10 million copies. Because of the pandemic, the former president will likely be unable to match Michelle Obama’s spectacular, all-star arena tour. Barack Obama also may find his memoir coming out at a time when the Nov. 3 election is still undecided and the country far more preoccupied with who the next president will be than with events of the past.

Obama has taken longer than most recent presidents to complete his memoir, with the first volume coming nearly four years after the end of his second term. (George W. Bush’s “Decision Points,” a single volume, arrived within two years). He has been writing during unusual times, even before the pandemic spread earlier this year. His successor in the White House, Donald Trump, has attacked and upended achievements of the Obama administration ranging from the Iran nuclear treaty to “Obamacare.” Whether Trump or Obama’s vice president, Joe Biden, wins the election may well determine Obama’s legacy and will shape how the book is read.

Obama is not the first president to publish more than one volume of memoirs; Dwight Eisenhower also wrote two. But he had been expected to write just one when Penguin Random House first announced, in February 2017, a multimillion joint publication deal with Barack and Michelle Obama. On Thursday, Crown Publisher David Drake cited the scale of Obama’s ambition to write a book that captures the experiences of being president and offers an inspiring story for young people.

“As his writing progressed and the scope of the memoirs continued to grow, he ultimately decided to write two volumes,” Drake said.

The November release will be welcomed not only by Obama readers, but by booksellers and fellow publishers who anticipate that the massive demand for “A Promised Land” will raise sales for everyone during the holiday season. Its popularity may also present another complication: The publishing industry has struggled with chronic printing shortages in the U.S. over the past two years, leading to frequent delays. Drake said that Crown had taken several measures to minimize disruption, from printing one-third of the

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copies in Germany to arranging for a U.S. plant that had been scheduled to close in October to remain open for two additional months.

"The president's book should not impact the U.S. print market more significantly than other major best-sellers of late," Drake said.

'Nothing left in the bucket': Wildfire resources run thin

By JAMES ANDERSON and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

Justin Silvera came off the fire lines in Northern California after a grueling 36 straight days battling wildfires and evacuating residents ahead of the flames. Before that, he and his crew had worked for 20 days, followed by a three-day break.

Silvera, a 43-year-old battalion chief with Cal Fire, California's state firefighting agency, said he's lost track of the blazes he's fought this year. He and his crew have sometimes been on duty for 64 hours at a stretch, their only rest coming in 20-minute catnaps.

"I've been at this 23 years, and by far this is the worst I've seen," Silvera said before bunking down at a motel for 24 hours. After working in Santa Cruz County, his next assignment was to head north to attack wildfires near the Oregon border.

His exhaustion reflects the situation on the West Coast fire lines: This year's blazes have taxed the human, mechanical and financial resources of the nation's wildfire-fighting forces to an extraordinary degree. And half of the fire season is yet to come. Heat, drought and a strategic decision to attack the flames early combined with the coronavirus to put a historically heavy burden on fire teams.

"There's never enough resources," said Silvera, one of nearly 17,000 firefighters battling the California blazes. "Typically with Cal Fire, we're able to attack — air tankers, choppers, dozers. We're good at doing that. But these conditions in the field, the drought, the wind, this stuff is just taking off. We can't contain one before another erupts."

Washington State Forester George Geissler says there are hundreds of unfulfilled requests for help throughout the West. Agencies are constantly seeking firefighters, aircraft, engines and support personnel.

Fire crews have been summoned from at least nine states and other countries, including Canada and Israel. Hundreds of agreements for agencies to offer mutual assistance have been maxed out at the federal, state and local levels, he said.

"We know that there's really nothing left in the bucket," Geissler said. "Our sister agencies to the south in California and Oregon are really struggling."

Demand for firefighting resources has been high since mid-August, when fire officials bumped the national preparedness level to critical, meaning at least 80% of crews were already committed to fighting fires, and there were few personnel and little equipment to spare.

Because of the extreme fire behavior, "you can't say for sure having more resources would make a difference," said Carrie Bilbao, a spokesperson for the National Interagency Fire Center. Officials at the U.S. government operation in Boise, Idaho help decide which fires get priority when equipment and firefighters run scarce nationwide.

Government spending on fighting wildfires has more than tripled since the 1990s, to an average of \$1.8 billion annually. That's failed to reduce the problem as climate change, drought and millions of trees killed by pests led to more fires in the Western U.S. over the same period, particularly dangerous "megafires" that burn 100,000 acres (404 square kilometers) or more.

The growing severity has spurred federal lawmakers to push prevention efforts, including controlled burns, faster approval of logging projects and upgrading homes to make them more fire resistant.

"We are at a critical time: The West is burning. People are dying. The smoke is literally starting to cover our country, and our way of life as we know it is in danger," Republican U.S. Sen. Steve Daines of Montana said Wednesday during testimony in support of an emergency wildfire bill, co-sponsored by Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, that would direct more resources to prevention.

Andy Stahl, a forester who runs Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, an advocacy group

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in Oregon, said it would have been impossible to stop some of the most destructive blazes, a task he compared to “dropping a bucket of water on an atomic bomb.”

Yet Stahl contends the damage could have been less if government agencies were not so keen to put out every blaze. Extinguishing smaller fires and those that ignite during wetter months allows fuel to build up, setting the stage for bigger fires during times of drought and hot, windy weather, he said.

That’s been exacerbated this year by the pandemic, which led U.S. Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen to issue a directive in June to fight all fires aggressively, reversing a decadeslong trend of allowing some to burn. The idea was to minimize large concentrations of firefighters by extinguishing blazes quickly.

Fighting the flames from the air was key to the strategy, with 35 air tankers and 200 helicopters used, Forest Service spokesperson Kaari Carpenter said.

Yet by Aug. 30, following the deaths of firefighters, including four aviators, fire officials in Boise warned that long-term fatigue was setting in. They called for a “tactical pause” to reinforce safe practices.

With no end in sight to the pandemic, some worry the focus on aggressively attacking every fire could last. Allowing instead for more fires to burn if they are not threatening life or property would free up firefighters for the most dangerous blazes, said Tim Ingalsbee with the advocacy group Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics and Ecology.

Cal Fire’s roughly 8,000 personnel have been fighting blazes from the Oregon border to the Mexico border, bouncing from fire to fire, said Tim Edwards, president of the union for Cal Fire, the nation’s second largest firefighting agency.

“We’re battle-hardened, but it seems year after year, it gets tougher, and at some point in time, we won’t be able to cope. We’ll reach a breaking point,” said Edwards, a 25-year veteran.

The immediate dangers are compounded by worries about COVID-19 in camp and at home.

Firefighters “see all this destruction and the fatigue, and then they’re getting those calls from home, where their families are dealing with school and child care because of COVID. It’s stressing them out, and we have to keep their heads in the game,” he said.

The pandemic also has limited the state’s use of inmate fire crews — either because of early releases to prevent outbreaks in prisons or because many are under quarantine in those prisons, officials said.

Aside from the human toll, the conflagrations in Colorado, Montana, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, and now California and the Pacific Northwest have cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

California alone has spent \$529 million since July 1 on wildfires, said Daniel Berlant, assistant deputy director of Cal Fire. By comparison, the state spent \$691 million the entire fiscal year that ended June 30. The U.S. government will reimburse most state costs for the biggest disasters.

Back in the field, Silvera and his crew saved two people at the beginning of their 26-day tour. Two hikers encountered the crew after the firefighters themselves were briefly trapped while trying to save the headquarters building at Big Basin Redwoods State Park.

“We got in a bad spot, and there were a few hours there we didn’t know if we’d make it,” Silvera said. “Those people found us, and we wouldn’t have been in there.”

“That’s what you sign up for.”

Anderson reported from Denver and Brown reported from Billings, Montana.

Western wildfire smoke causes East Coast haze, vivid sunsets

By SUSAN MONTROYA BRYAN Associated Press

The smoke from dozens of wildfires in the western United States is stretching clear across the country — and even pushing into Mexico, Canada and Europe. While the dangerous plumes are forcing people inside along the West Coast, residents thousands of miles away in the East are seeing unusually hazy skies and remarkable sunsets.

The wildfires racing across tinder-dry landscape in California, Idaho, Oregon and Washington are extraordinary, but the long reach of their smoke isn’t unprecedented. While there are only small pockets in

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the southeastern U.S. that are haze free, experts say the smoke poses less of a health concern for those who are farther away.

The sun was transformed into a perfect orange orb as it set over New York City on Tuesday. Photographs of it sinking behind the skyline and glinting through tree leaves flooded social media. On Wednesday, New Jersey residents described a yellow tinge to the overcast skies, and weather forecasters were kept busy explaining the phenomenon and making predictions as to how long the conditions would last.

On the opposite coast, air quality conditions were among some of the worst ever recorded. Smoke cloaked the Golden Gate Bridge and left Portland and Seattle in an ashy fog, as crews have exhausted themselves trying to keep the flames from consuming more homes and even wider swaths of forest.

Satellite images showed that smoke from the wildfires has traveled almost 5,000 miles (8,000 kilometers) to Britain and other parts of northern Europe, scientists said Wednesday.

The current weather system, which favors a westerly wind across the higher levels of the atmosphere, is to blame for the reach of the smoke, experts explained.

"We always seem, at times, to get the right combination of enough smoke and the upper level jet stream to line up to bring that across the country, so we're just seeing this again," said Matt Solum with the National Weather Service's regional operations center in Salt Lake City, Utah. "It's definitely not the first time this has happened."

There could be some easing of the haze this weekend as a storm system is expected to move into the Pacific Northwest and could affect the conditions that helped the smoke travel across the country. But Solum said there's always a chance for more smoke and haze to shift around.

"Just due to all the wildfires that are going on, this is likely going to continue for a while," he said. "You might have ebbs and flows of that smoke just depending on how the upper level winds set up."

Kim Knowlton, a senior scientist with the Natural Resources Defense Council in New York City, said she woke up Wednesday to a red sunrise and more haze.

She said millions of people who live beyond the flames can end up dealing with diminished air quality as it's not uncommon for wildfire smoke to travel hundreds of miles.

Although the health impacts are reduced the farther and higher into the atmosphere the smoke travels, Knowlton and her colleagues said the resulting haze can exacerbate existing problems like asthma and add to ozone pollution.

Petalo, not Charmin: Virus brings Mexican toilet paper to US

By JOSEPH PISANI AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Toilet paper is back on store shelves. But you may not recognize some of the brands.

Demand for toilet paper has been so high during the pandemic that in order to keep their shelves stocked, retailers are buying up foreign toilet paper brands, mostly from Mexico. Major chains, across the country, including CVS, Piggly Wiggly, Safeway, 7-Eleven and others, are carrying the international brands.

In recent weeks, a CVS in New York has been selling three Mexican brands: Regio, Hoteles Elite and Daisy Soft. Mexico's Petalo was on the shelves of a Piggly Wiggly in Sister Bay, Wisconsin. And a Safeway supermarket in Fremont, California, had those same brands, plus Vogue, whose label says in Spanish that it smells like chamomile.

The stores said they needed to get creative during the pandemic and started working with new suppliers to get shoppers what they needed. But don't worry about popular U.S. brands like Charmin — they aren't going to disappear. Supply chain experts expect the Mexican and other foreign-made rolls to be on store shelves only temporarily, until U.S. manufacturers catch up with demand.

Americans use much more toilet paper than other countries, according to Patrick Penfield, a supply chain professor at the Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University — which is why Mexico can handle shipping more rolls to the United States. Stores have done this with other products during the pandemic, he said, bringing Mexican-made hand sanitizer to the U.S. when there was a shortage.

Americans, of course, buy products that are made all over the world, but most of the toilet paper they

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use is made in the U.S. Toilet paper is inexpensive and takes up a lot of space in trucks and ships, making it not worth the cost of importing from other countries. That's left the toilet paper aisle with the same familiar brands, causing some shoppers to do a double take when they see the unfamiliar stuff.

Oliver Olsen wasn't even in the market for toilet paper, but he had to stop and take a closer look at what he saw in the aisles last month at a Hannaford supermarket in Londonderry, Vermont.

Instead of Charmin and Cottonelle, there was Vogue and Delsey from Mexico. Next to them were rolls of Cashmere from Canada and King Blue from Trinidad and Tobago.

"It really just jumped out at me," said Olsen, who works in the software industry and is a former state representative. "I didn't know any of these."

Ericka Dodge, a spokeswoman for Hannaford, a chain owned by supermarket operator Ahold Delhaize, said the grocer worked with new suppliers to get toilet paper on the shelf faster.

Some U.S. manufacturers also stopped making the many varieties of toilet paper they usually make, like sheets that are stronger or infused with aloe, so they could focus on the basics and get it to stores quicker. But Dodge said those varieties are starting to return to retailers' shelves.

Penfield, the Syracuse University professor, expects American manufacturers to struggle to keep up with demand for the next three to five months.

Part of the reason: People are doing more of their bathroom business at home instead of at work or school. Bathroom tissue sales are up 22% so far this year, according to research firm Nielsen.

The companies that make the Mexican toilet paper were surprised their rolls were spotted north of the border.

"It's unexpected that it would be found in any U.S. retailers," said Amy Bellcourt, a spokeswoman for Essity, a Swedish tissue company that makes Regio in Mexico.

Petal, Vogue and Delsey are made in Mexico by Kimberly-Clark, the same company that makes Cottonelle and Scott. But Kimberly-Clark said it had no role in importing its Mexican brands to the U.S.

Selling unknown toilet paper brands in a pandemic is not hard, even though they're not as fluffy as Charmin or Cottonelle.

"American consumers, in times of plenty, are very picky," said Erika Marsillac, an associate professor of supply chain management at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. "If the shelves are running low or empty you'll grab whatever you can grab."

Some don't have a choice.

Jennifer Jackson ordered aloe-infused Cottonelle from the website of Texas supermarket chain H-E-B, but it was out of stock, and she realized it was swapped out for Vogue when she picked up her order at the store.

She thought the flowery scent was "kind of fun," but it was missing some heft.

"Vogue is so thin, it kind of falls apart," said Jackson, a lawyer in Austin, Texas. "And that's a dicey situation in the bathroom."

This story was corrected to say Essity is a Swedish company, not a Swiss company.

Follow Joseph Pisani at <http://twitter.com/josephpisani>

Carrie Underwood, Thomas Rhett tie for top prize at ACMs

By KRISTIN M. HALL AP Entertainment Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — In surprise twist that fit an unexpected year of firsts, Carrie Underwood and Thomas Rhett tied for entertainer of the year at the Academy of Country Music Awards, the first time the top prize has been split between two artists.

Underwood and Rhett seemed equally taken aback after host Keith Urban announced the tie at the awards show held at the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, Tennessee, on Wednesday.

"Keith, what is happening right now?" Rhett asked, astounded, before thanking his family. Underwood

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appeared right after him remarking, "2020, man?" before adding, "I am more than happy to share this with Thomas Rhett."

The show on CBS had been delayed for months because of the pandemic, moved from Las Vegas to Nashville for the first time and held without audiences in empty venues. There was a lot of anticipation for the show, which featured Taylor Swift making her first appearance at the ACMs in seven years.

Underwood's win is her third total in that category and Rhett's first win. They beat out other nominees Eric Church, Luke Bryan and Luke Combs. Coincidentally, a woman hasn't won that award since 2011 when Swift last won it. Swift delivered a simple acoustic performance of "betty" from her new album "Folklore," on a darkened Opry House stage.

Combs still went home a winner by picking up album of the year and male artist of the year. After amassing tremendous streaming numbers and nine consecutive No. 1 country radio hits, Combs thanked fans for their support from the Bluebird Cafe.

"This is a lot to process right now, I just can't believe this," Combs said. "I just want to thank everybody in my life, my team, my beautiful wife and the fans. You guys have done everything for me."

Country group Old Dominion won song of the year and group of the year, and band members Matthew Ramsey, Trevor Rosen and Brad Tursi earned additional individual awards as songwriters for "One Man Band."

The awards show aired from empty venues in Nashville with no fans and no applause, even when winners got up live to accept their awards. Ramsey, the lead singer of Old Dominion, said the empty venue and quiet made him think of friends and family they had lost.

"I can feel them all," Ramsey said. "They are so proud, and it's such an honor to receive this in their presence."

Urban noted all the changes this year for the show and for the country in general, saying 2020 has been an "unpredictable and unsettling year." After noting wildfires on the West Coast, hurricanes in the South, Urban said the country is battling two pandemics: COVID-19 and social injustice.

"Far too many lives have been lost to both," he said. "But the examples set by essential workers, our first responders, along with the voices crying out for equality in all walks of life, have echoed around the world and right here in our country community."

Maren Morris, who was a leading nominee, won two awards, including female artist of the year and music event of the year, for a collaboration with Miranda Lambert, Caylee Hammack, Tenille Townes, Elle King and Ashley McBryde.

"This is so weird talking to no one, but I have so many people to thank. This is an award that I never expected to win," said Morris, who thanked her husband and baby boy, Hayes, before blurting out "Oh my God, I have to pee!"

Blake Shelton and Gwen Stefani, weren't in Nashville, but turned a green screen room into a virtual replica of the Bluebird Cafe for their duet "Happy Anywhere." Shelton won single of the year for his song, "God's Country."

Lambert performed a stripped-down version of her No. 1 song "Bluebird," at the Bluebird Cafe in a blue fringed shirt and a sparkly belt. Lambert's vocals seemed to fill up the space in the tiny songwriters' club surrounded by tables and chairs, but no fans.

In awards announced before the show aired, Rhett also won music video of the year, while Townes won new female artist of the year. Riley Green won new male artist. Duo Dan + Shay won vocal duo of the year, their second win in that category in a row.

Underwood sang a tribute to iconic female Opry members, including Patsy Cline, Reba McEntire, Martina McBride, Barbara Mandrell, Loretta Lynn and Dolly Parton. She effortlessly breezed through snippets of classics like "Crazy," "You Ain't Woman Enough," "Why'd You Come in Here Lookin' Like That," and "Fancy."

"They are some of my heroes and I am so honored to stand alongside them as a fellow member of the Opry," said Underwood, who sang her heart out to a venue that flickered with lights where people should have been.

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Austrian minister to Trump: No, we do not live in forests

BERLIN (AP) — The Austrian government has spoken up to correct U.S. President Donald Trump's claim that people in its country live in "forest cities."

Trump recently cited Austria and other European countries as models of good forest management that U.S. states like California, which has seen devastating wildfires lately, should learn from.

Calling in to Fox News on Tuesday, Trump said, "You look at countries, Austria, you look at so many countries. They live in the forest, they're considered forest cities. So many of them. And they don't have fires like this. And they have more explosive trees."

In an article Thursday for the London-based Independent, Austria's agriculture minister sought to set the record straight.

"There have been both serious and humorous conversations on social media about the 'exploding trees' (Trump) mentioned, as well as the fact that he claimed we live within 'forest cities' which never catch fire," Elisabeth Koestinger wrote. "As Austrians, fortunately blessed with a healthy sense of humour, we normally take such clichés about our country in our stride."

"However, the gravity of current events make Trump's words much more worrying — after all, right at this moment, thousands of people are fighting horrendous wildfires in life-or-death situations," she said.

"In reality, Austria is a country situated in the heart of Europe, where people do not live in the forest, but rather with the forest and in a close, sustainable relationship with the natural environment," Koestinger wrote.

Sustainable management of forests, which cover almost half the nation's territory, is important, she added, but not because they're more combustible.

"To clarify: No, we don't have any exploding trees in Austria," Koestinger said, though she did confirm Trump's assertion that "we have found a way to give our trees the space they need."

"This does not make us 'forest people,' but shows how important understanding our environment and our natural resources is," she said, adding that "taking climate change seriously and mitigating its effects is a huge part of this."

Trump caused mirth in Finland two years ago, when he claimed the Nordic nation spends "a lot of time on raking and cleaning and doing things" to clear forest floors to prevent fires.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Sept. 18, the 262nd day of 2020. There are 104 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 18, 1850, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act, which created a force of federal commissioners charged with returning escaped slaves to their owners.

On this date:

In 1759, the French formally surrendered Quebec to the British.

In 1793, President George Washington laid the cornerstone of the U.S. Capitol.

In 1927, the Columbia Phonograph Broadcasting System (later CBS) made its on-air debut with a basic network of 16 radio stations.

In 1947, the National Security Act, which created a National Military Establishment and the position of Secretary of Defense, went into effect.

In 1959, during his U.S. tour, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev visited Wall Street, the Empire State Building and the grave of President Franklin D. Roosevelt; in a speech to the U.N. General Assembly, Khrushchev called on all countries to disarm.

In 1961, United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld (dahg HAWM'-ahr-shoold) was killed in a plane crash in northern Rhodesia.

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In 1965, the situation comedies "I Dream of Jeannie" and "Get Smart" premiered on NBC.

In 1970, rock star Jimi Hendrix died in London at age 27.

In 1975, newspaper heiress Patricia Hearst was captured by the FBI in San Francisco, 19 months after being kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army.

In 2001, a week after the Sept. 11 attack, President George W. Bush said he hoped to "rally the world" in the battle against terrorism and predicted that all "people who love freedom" would join. Letters postmarked Trenton, N.J., that later tested positive for anthrax were sent to the New York Post and NBC anchorman Tom Brokaw.

In 2007, O.J. Simpson was charged with seven felonies, including kidnapping, in the alleged armed robbery of sports memorabilia collectors in a Las Vegas casino-hotel room. (Simpson, sentenced to nine to 33 years in prison, was released on parole in October 2017.)

In 2014, voters in Scotland rejected independence, opting to remain part of the United Kingdom in a historic referendum. The Royal and Ancient Golf Club at St. Andrews, Scotland, ended years of male-only exclusivity as its members voted overwhelmingly in favor of inviting women to join.

Ten years ago: Despite Taliban rocket strikes and bombings, Afghans voted for a new parliament in the first election since a fraud-marred ballot cast doubt on the legitimacy of the embattled government. During his visit to Britain, Pope Benedict XVI apologized to five people who'd been molested by priests as children in his latest effort to defuse the sex abuse crisis shaking the Roman Catholic Church.

Five years ago: The Environmental Protection Agency said Volkswagen had intentionally skirted clean air laws by using software that enabled about 500,000 of its diesel cars to emit fewer smog-causing pollutants during testing than in real-world driving conditions; the EPA ordered VW to fix the cars at its own expense. President Barack Obama announced he would nominate longtime Pentagon official Eric Fanning to be the Army's new secretary; Fanning became the nation's first openly gay leader of a military service.

One year ago: President Donald Trump named Robert O'Brien, his chief hostage negotiator, as his new national security adviser; O'Brien became the fourth person in two years to hold the job. President Donald Trump said his administration was revoking California's authority to set auto mileage standards stricter than those issued by federal regulators; the state challenged the decision in court. Figures released by the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights, showed that the number and rate of abortions across the United States had plunged to their lowest levels since the procedure became legal nationwide in 1973.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Jimmie Rodgers is 87. Actor Robert Blake is 87. Gospel singer Bobby Jones is 82. Singer Frankie Avalon is 80. Actor Beth Grant is 71. Rock musician Kerry Livgren is 71. Actor Anna Deavere Smith is 70. The U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Ben Carson, is 69. Basketball Hall of Fame coach Rick Pitino is 68. College Football Hall of Famer and retired NFL player Billy Sims is 65. Movie director Mark Romanek is 61. Baseball Hall of Famer Ryne Sandberg is 61. Alt-country-rock musician Mark Olson is 59. Singer Joanne Catherall (Human League) is 58. Actor Holly Robinson Peete is 56. Rhythm-and-blues singer Ricky Bell (Bell Biv DeVoe and New Edition) is 53. Actor Aisha Tyler is 50. Former racing cyclist Lance Armstrong is 49. Opera singer Anna Netrebko is 49. Actor Jada Pinkett Smith is 49. Actor James Marsden is 47. Actor Emily Rutherford is 46. Actor Travis Schuldt is 46. Rapper Xzibit is 46. Comedian-actor Jason Sudeikis is 45. Actor Sophina Brown is 44. Actor Barrett Foa is 43. Talk show host Sara Haines (TV: "GMA3: Strahan, Sara & Keke") is 43. Actor/comedian Billy Eichner is 42. Actor Alison Lohman is 41. Designer Brandon Maxwell is 36. Congressman and former NFL player Anthony Gonzalez, R-Ohio, is 36. Actors Brandon and Taylor Porter are 27. Actor Patrick Schwarzenegger is 27. Country singer Tae Dye (Maddie and Tae) is 25. Actor C.J. Sanders is 24.