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**Homecoming Parade
1 p.m.**

**Football Game
7 p.m.
vs. Redfield**

Fliehs, Traphagen place at Sisseton Golf Tourney

The boys golf team went to Sisseton on Thursday where Brevin Fliehs took second place and Tristian Traphagen placed ninth.



“What we say is important... for in most cases the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”

-Jim Beggs



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Netters lose hard fought battle with Clark/Willow Lake

Groton Area's volleyball team's late rally ran out of steam as Clark/Willow Lake won the fourth game, scoring the last seven points to win, 25-18.

The varsity game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM/GDIRADIO 89.3 FM, sponsored by Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom T's & More, Groton Chiropractic Clinic, Hefty Seed and S & S Lumber/Hardware Hank.

The Cyclones won the first game, 25-13. Clark/Willow Lake had rallies of seven and six points to secure the win. Groton Area won the second game, 25-19. The game was tied three times before the Tigers scored six straight points to take a 15-9 lead. The Cyclones whirled out to a 10-1 lead in the third game en route to a 25-18 win. Clark/Willow lake took an 18-12 lead before the Tigers scored six straight points to tie the fourth game at 18, but then the Cyclones scored the final seven points for the win.

Madeline Flihs led the Tigers with seven kills, one solo and one assisted block. Maddie Bjerke had six kills, Sydney Leight had five kills, Stella Meier had four kills and two blocks, Aspen Johnson had three kills and Allyssa Locke had two kills. Trista Keith had two ace serves while Stella Meier and Brooklyn Gilbert each had one. Allyssa Locke had 19 of the team's 24 assists with Stella Meier having three. Allyssa Thaler had 25 of the team's 81 digs with Locke having 15.

Groton Area won the junior varsity match, 2-0. Game scores were 25-20 and 28-26. That match was broadcast live on GDLIVE.COM/GDIRADIO 89.3 FM, sponsored by Jerry and Kathy Bjerke.

The first game was tied three times. Groton Area outscored Clark/Willow Lake, 10-1, to go on to win the first game. The second game was tied a dozen times and there were eight lead changes. AT the end, the game was tied at 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26 before the Tigers scored the last two points for the win.

Megan Flihs led the Tigers with 12 kills and an ace serve, Emma Schinkel had five kills, Maddie Bjerke had three kills and two ace serves, Lydia Meier had three ace serves and two kills, Sydney Leicht had two kills, Anna Fjeldheim had one kill and Brooke Gengerke had one ace serve.

Groton Area won the C match, 13-25, 25-16 and 15-9.

- Paul Kosel



Alyssa Thaler
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Trista Keith
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Stella Meier
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

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Dragr Monson
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

James Valley Christian scores late to edge past Groton in soccer

James Valley Christian scored with 1:15 left in the game to edge past the Groton Area boys soccer team, 4-3.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM/GDIRADIO 89.3 FM, sponsored by the White House Inn.

Landon Wager scored all four goals for the Vikings and Brayden Hansen scored all three for Groton Area.

The Vikings scored first with 29:01 left in the first half on a Wager score. Hansen countered for Groton Area at the 16:08 mark to tie the game at one. About a minute later, Hansen followed with another goal to give Groton Area the lead, 2-1. Wager would score for the Vikings with 4:51 left in the first half and the half ended tied at two.

With 38:06 left in the third quarter, Braxton Imrie kicked to the goal and Hansen finished the play to give Groton Area a 3-2 lead. Wager broke free with 1:15 left and kicked in the winning goal for James Valley Christian.

The Tigers will host Tea Area on Saturday with the girls playing at 1 p.m. and the boys at 3 p.m.

- Paul Kosel



Brayden Hansen (1) and Quintyn Bedford (27).
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Isaac Smith in a battle with James Valley Christian's Landon Wager. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

#214 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

General trends continue, but it should be noted we have broken the seven-million-case mark—right on schedule—and now are at 7,002,500 cases in the US. There were 45,100 new cases reported today, a 0.6% increase. Our 14-day new-case average is now up by 14%, so that's still increasing. California hit the 800,000-case mark today as well; they're slowing down by a lot, but they were bound to hit it at some point with the big surge they had over the summer. If I had to guess, Texas will join them in that rarified territory next week. I see Florida hitting 700,000 cases later this week. Montana and Utah set single-day new-case records today.

There were 891 deaths reported today, a 0.4% increase to 202,672. The 14-day average for deaths is again up 1%, another bad trend. North Dakota set a record for seven-day average.

We need to talk about the CDC. For a third time during this pandemic, the CDC has posted information to its website only to retract it shortly afterward. This is a concern. The CDC has been for years the world's preeminent source of information on diseases of all kinds, and this sort of waffling is enormously damaging to its reputation. The first such incident was in the spring when it revised information about contact transmission of Covid-19 within days after posting it. Then in August, it published updated guidance stating asymptomatic people do not need testing, which was clearly in contradiction of the current scientific thinking on that subject, and again retracted that change a few weeks later. Now, just this week, it published information comporting with the consensus among scientists saying this infection is transmitted by the airborne, or aerosol, route, only to remove that within hours, saying it had been published in error. Not only is the agency publishing information that clearly does not accord with the science, it is flip-flopping in its pronouncements, which does not engender confidence. This is serious stuff from an agency we must rely on in times of public health crisis. Its stock-in-trade is public trust, and it is not doing well on that front. It is one thing when the science changes as we learn more; this is not what we are seeing here. We are seeing waffling on the facts when there has been no clear change in the evidence. I do not purport to know what is happening within the agency, but there is a great deal of concern in the scientific community, as there should be.

On the subject of federal agencies, the FDA looks to be ready to issue stricter guidelines soon for the emergency use authorization (EUA) of any new vaccine, adding a layer to the vetting process to ensure safe and effective products. These guidelines reportedly lay out more specific criteria for clinical trial data and recommend review by a committee of independent experts before any authorization takes place. Among the changes is a requirement to track any vaccine candidate for two months after at least half of the participants in a trial receive their final dose before an application for an EUA can be made. This would permit more confidence that the effect has staying power and give more time for rare adverse effects to show up. They also require more thorough safety follow-up with those who receive vaccines under an EUA.

And the guidelines expected to be proposed call for at least five cases of severe infection in the placebo group in the trial in order to assess the vaccine's effect on such severe cases. This addresses a concern we discussed just a couple of days ago, that the current trial design could lead to the approval of a vaccine that prevents only the mildest cases without having any effect on severe cases, which would not be a salutary outcome. The final item expected in these new guidelines is specific standards for manufacturing and testing vaccines seeking EUAs so that the FDA can be sure any vaccine manufactured under an EUA will be as safe and effective as the one tested in trials.

The expected guidance has reportedly already been circulated within agencies and the Department of Health and Human Services, so the final hurdle before publication will be White House Office of Management and Budget review. These changes appear to be aimed at restoring public confidence in any vaccine approved for use in advance of such approvals. They should go a long way toward that goal.

There is possibly good news—too soon to be sure, but reason for some hope. So far, we are not seeing evidence of significant spread from K-12 schools. (Universities are another matter entirely.) Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota,

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says, "Everyone had a fear there would be explosive outbreaks of transmission in the schools. In colleges, there have been. We have to say that, to date, we have not seen those in the younger kids, and that is a really important observation." The reason I present this information with some cautions attached is that reporting from schools has been poor and inconsistent in many places and schools have been open only a few weeks, so we do not yet have a full view of the data picture. We do not yet have sufficient data to draw conclusions about the benefits of things like face mask and distancing policies. Another factor is that many large districts are doing remote teaching at the moment so these data are mostly from small communities where risk and transmission patterns are different; but let's feel good about what we have so far. Sara Johnson, associate professor of pediatrics at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, says, "It's reasonable to say it looks promising at this point." She does add that schools should proceed with bringing students into classrooms "slowly and carefully" and with safeguards to protect employees. "These data are promising, but covid is still a very big threat to people." After all, 14 active teachers, principals, and counselors have died of Covid-19 since school started.

In another piece of good news, Novavax has announced it is ready to begin phase 3 clinical trials with its vaccine candidate in the UK now and the US within a month. This one has experts particularly pleased because it showed stronger immunogenicity than others in early-phase trials; antibody levels were "strikingly high." We should note that early clinical studies of different vaccines are not directly comparable, but experts are telling us this candidate's results are so much better that it's hard to dismiss. John Moore, virologist at Weill Cornell Medicine, said, "You just can't explain that away." So this one looks very promising indeed. Let's hope the trials get underway quickly and go well.

Two studies published today in the journal *Science* address differences in the severity of illness in different people. There are findings indicating that in about 14% of patients, these differences might be explained by differences in the body's inborn response to infection. The particular problem noted is more common in men than in women, which might also go some way toward explaining why men are more likely to experience severe disease and death from infection.

The key here appears to be Type I interferons (IFN), a topic we've discussed before. (For a refresher, see my Update #190 posted on August 31, linked here: <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3924767334206310>.) This group of chemicals produced in response to infection both directly attacks a viral infection in a nonspecific way as part of your innate immune response and activates second-line acquired, that is, specific, responses. When we talked about them before, we noted that the virus seems able to disable IFN and also that it appears some people may have a deficient IFN response in the first place. These studies address that second issue, the deficient response, and shed light on what might be going on in these folks.

It seems in some people the virus provokes the production of auto-antibodies, that is antibodies to "self" or antibodies that attack some element of the host, in this case type I IFNs. (The word-part, auto, means self; for example, an automatic device is one that works by itself.) This disabling of IFNs gives the virus time to establish itself and become too large a problem for the host's belated attempts to contain it.

One group of researchers found such auto-antibodies in 101 of 987 people with severe Covid-19, but in no one with mild or asymptomatic disease. They found them in only four of 1227 healthy control subjects. These are seen primarily in men; 95 of the 101 people with the antibodies were males. The other study looked at DNA from 659 severely ill patients and 534 with mild or no symptoms. Of the severely ill patients, 3.5% had mutations in eight genes that prevent the body from making Type I IFNs while none of the mildly-ill or asymptomatic people had them. These are two different causes for the same problem, and understanding them offers some potential to develop therapeutic responses that account for the deficiency. For the record, we'd probably like to screen the auto-antibody owners from donating convalescent plasma too, given those antibodies could cause trouble in a recipient too. Interesting stuff.

Jessica and Al Berrellez, who live in Maryland, have three children; so when schools went to remote learning, they were dealing with having them learn at home, just as millions of other parents were doing. With trying to work and supervise their kids' education, they experienced many of the stresses that are

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common to other parents, but they did not have an issue with providing school supplies. They thought about families who might find buying more materials a financial strain, and so Jessica spent the summer putting together learning kits for students who might need them.

That's when she realized what many didn't have was a place to work. "A lot of the students in our school who are low income may live in smaller spaces or in households that have multiple families. I started talking to families and it was pretty clear that kids were all working together at a table or working at their beds and it became clear there was a need." She scoured purveyors of second-hand furniture and discovered the demand for desks outpaced the supply, so she asked her husband to come up with a prototype for a desk that would be cheap and easy to make, something a weekend handyman might be able to put together.

Al spent some time on YouTube and came up with a set of plans by which one could build a desk in about an hour for \$40. Calling the project "Desks by Dads," they shared the plans on Facebook and with friends; and people started building desks to give to students in the district. So far, a couple of dozen have been delivered; more are under construction. Al says, "Each volunteer who builds a desk makes it better and that's been awesome to watch. Every time someone drops off a donated desk to our house, we get to share ideas and build connections. It's also an opportunity to highlight the strengths of Black and brown dads, and show what we can contribute."

The family say the hard work they've put into the project is rewarded every time a student gets a new desk. Jessica: "I think on a very basic level it's just about basic dignity and pride of learning."

The plan is to keep this going locally until the demand has been met, but they are hoping this inspires people to step up and help in whatever ways they can in their own communities. Jessica says, "We're just two, busy parents who saw there's a need and we care about the children and families in our community and we want to help in a very small way. I think that's how change happens. It requires everyday people doing small things and having that grow into something bigger."

I think that's how change happens too. And I think we need a whole helluva lot more of it.
Take care. We'll talk again.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Sept. 23	Sept. 24	Sept. 25
Minnesota	91,422	92,100	93,012
Nebraska	41,785	42,278	42,731
Montana	10,700	10,912	11,242
Colorado	66,053	66,669	67,217
Wyoming	4,231	4,368	4,488
North Dakota	18,508	18,981	19,451
South Dakota	19,189	19,634	20,097
United States	6,897,495	6,935,415	6,978,874
US Deaths	200,818	201,920	202,819

Minnesota	+480	+678	+912
Nebraska	+397	+493	+453
Montana	+271	+212	+330
Colorado	+654	+616	+548
Wyoming	+42	+137	+120
North Dakota	+264	+473	+470
South Dakota	+320	+445	+463
United States	+39,357	37,920	+43,459
US Deaths	+928	+1,102	+899

	Sept. 16	Sept. 17	Sept. 18	Sept. 19	Sept. 20	Sept. 21	Sept. 22
Minnesota	85,351	85,813	86,722	87,807	88,721	90,017	90,942
Nebraska	38,970	39,419	39,921	40,387	40,797	41,083	41,388
Montana	9,244	9,431	9,647	9,871	10,163	10,299	10,429
Colorado	62,099	62,686	63,145	63,750	64,356	64,857	65,399
Wyoming	3,762	3,866	3,936	4,009	4,039	4,124	4,189
North Dakota	16,066	16,333	16,723	17,230	17,607	17,958	18,244
South Dakota	16,994	17,291	17,686	18,075	18,444	18,696	18,869
United States	6,606,674	6,631,561	6,676,410	6,726,480	6,766,631	6,799,141	6,858,138
US Deaths	195,961	196,831	197,655	198,603	199,268	199,474	199,890

Minnesota	+402	+462	+909	+1,085	+914	1,296	+925
Nebraska	+328	+449	+502	+466	+410	+286	+305
Montana	+137	+187	+216	+224	+292	+136	+130
Colorado	+400	+587	+459	+605	+606	+501	+542
Wyoming	+39	+104	+70	+73	+30	+85	+65
North Dakota	+ 235	+267	+390	+507	+377	+351	+286
South Dakota	+195	+297	+395	+389	+369	+252	+173
United States	+51,431	+24,887	+44,849	+50,070	+40,151	+32,510	+58,997
US Deaths	+1,416	+870	+824	+948	+665	+206	+416

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September 24th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

There were 16 deaths recorded in the Dakotas, eight in each state. Here in South Dakota, Walworth County recorded its first death, Brown County registered a new death making four total. Meanwhile Butte and Pennington county each had one and Minnehaha and Union county each had two. There were three females and five males. One in the 70s and seven in the 80+ age group.

South Dakota recorded 463 positive cases and North Dakota recorded 471.

Locally, Brown had 35 positive and 19 recoveries, Day had 2 positive and 1 recovery, Edmunds had 2 recoveries, Marshall had 1 positive, McPherson had 1 recovery and Spink had 5 positive and 4 recoveries.

Those with double digit increases were Beadle 15, Brookings, 15, Brown 35, Davison 19, Hughes 16, Lawrence 11, Lincoln 13, Meade 13, Minnehaha 70, Pennington 51, Tripp 12 and Yankton 10.

Thanks for the positive comments for these reports. While no one likes doing these or reading these, right now, it's part of our life.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +35 (1,102) Positivity Rate: 32.1%

Total Tests: 109 (10,137)

Recovered: +19 (938)

Active Cases: +15 (160)

Ever Hospitalized: +2 (42)

Deaths: +1 (4)

Percent Recovered: 85.1%

South Dakota:

Positive: +463 (20,097 total) Positivity Rates: 9.5%

Total Tests: 4,854 (252,559 total)

Hospitalized: +8 (1,375 total). 194 currently hospitalized +2)

Deaths: +8 (210 total)

Recovered: +272 (16,596 total)

Active Cases: +183 (3,291)

Percent Recovered: 82.6%

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 8% Covid, 48% Non-Covid, 44% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 11% Covid, 62% Non-Covid, 27% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 5% Covid, 14% Non-Covid, 82% Available

Fully recovered from positive cases: Miner 19-19.

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

Aurora: +1 positive, +1 recovered (3 active cases)

Beadle (9): +15 positive, +8 recovered (67 active cases)

Bennett (1): +1 positive (24 active cases)

Bon Homme (1): +1 positive (17 active cases)

Brookings (2): +15 positive, +10 recovered (121 active cases)

Brown (4): +35 positive, +19 recovered (160 active cases)

Brule: +4 positive, +2 recovered (26 active cases)

Buffalo (3): +2 positive, +1 recovered (11 active cases)

Butte (2): +4 positive, +1 recovered (25 active cases)

Campbell: +5 positive, +1 recovered (14 active cases)

Charles Mix: +3 positive (30 active cases)

Clark: +3 positive, +2 recovered (7 active cases)

Clay (5) +8 positive, +5 recovered (44 active cases)

Codington (3): +23 positive, +17 recovered (200 active cases)

Corson (1): +5 positive, +1 recovered (18 active cases)

Custer (2): +3 recovered (38 active case)

Davison (2): +19 positive, +5 recovered (69 active cases)

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

Deuel: +1 positive, +2 recovered (13 active cases)

Dewey: +9 positive (50 active cases)

Douglas: +4 positive, +5 recovered (28 active cases)

Edmunds: +2 recovered (20 active cases)

Fall River (3): +3 positive, +3 recovered (18 active cases)

Faulk (1): 13 active cases

Grant (1): +8 positive, +4 recovered (38 active cases)

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cases)

Gregory (1): +2 positive, +3 recovered (57 active cases)

Haakon: +2 positive, +1 recovered (8 active case)

Hamlin: +6 positive (14 active cases)

Hand: +4 positive, +1 recovered (16 active cases)

Hanson: +2 positive, +2 recovered (6 active cases)

Harding: 2 active cases

Hughes (4): +16 positive, +8 recovered (174 active cases)

Hutchinson (2): +4 positive, +1 recovered (22 active cases)

Hyde: 10 active cases

Jackson (1): +2 positive, +3 recovered (10 active cases)

Jerauld (1): 20 active cases

Jones: 2 active cases

Kingsbury: +4 positive (16 active cases)

Lake (7): +8 positive, +3 recovered (26 active cases)

Lawrence (4): +11 positive, +6 recovered (91 active cases)

Lincoln (2): +13 positive, +20 recovered (171 ac-

tive cases)

Lyman (3): +7 positive, +0 recovered (19 active cases)

Marshall: +1 positive, +0 recovered (10 active cases)

McCook (1): +3 positive, +1 recovered (20 active cases)

McPherson: +1 recovery (7 active case)

Meade (4): +13 positive, +9 recovered (109 active cases)

Mellette: +1 recovery (3 active cases)

Miner: Fully Recovered

Minnehaha (80): +70 positive, +68 recovered (566 active cases)

Moody: +5 positive, +0 recovered (20 active cases)

Oglala Lakota (3): +8 positive, +1 recovered (40 active cases)

Pennington (36): +51 positive, +26 recovered (352 active cases)

Perkins: +0 positive, +1 recovered (9 active cases)

Potter: +2 positive, +0 recovered (15 active cases)

Roberts (1): +7 positive, +4 recovered (46 active cases)

Sanborn: +1 positive, +0 recovered (6 active cases)

Spink: +5 positive, +4 recovered (29 active cases)

Stanley: +2 positive, +1 recovery (8 active cases)

Sully: 1 active case

Todd (5): +6 positive, +1 recovered (22 active cases)

Tripp: +12 positive, +6 recovered (67 active cases)

Turner (2): +6 positive, +4 recovered (36 active cases)

Union (5): +8 positive, +6 recovered (50 active cases)

Walworth (1): +3 positive, +1 recovered (34 active cases)

Yankton (4): +10 positive, +6 recovered (85 active cases)

Ziebach: +0 recovered (14 active case)

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	630	0
10-19 years	2233	0
20-29 years	4828	2
30-39 years	3490	7
40-49 years	2752	10
50-59 years	2694	20
60-69 years	1828	32
70-79 years	938	36
80+ years	704	103

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	10357	99
Male	9740	111

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

- 6.2% rolling 14-day positivity
 - 7.1% daily positivity
 - 471 new positives
 - 6,643 susceptible test encounters
 - 89 currently hospitalized (0)
 - 3,482 active cases (+180)
- Total Deaths: +8 (211)

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread
Aurora	46	43	488	0	Minimal
Beadle	738	662	2399	9	Substantial
Bennett	63	40	639	1	Substantial
Bon Homme	80	62	1129	1	Moderate
Brookings	719	596	4362	2	Substantial
Brown	1102	938	6643	4	Substantial
Brule	108	82	1026	0	Moderate
Buffalo	125	109	763	3	Minimal
Butte	86	59	1246	2	Moderate
Campbell	21	7	142	0	Moderate
Charles Mix	159	126	2069	0	Moderate
Clark	37	30	522	0	Moderate
Clay	548	499	2272	5	Substantial
Codington	780	577	4581	3	Substantial
Corson	94	75	718	1	Moderate
Custer	179	139	1030	2	Substantial
Davison	249	177	3263	2	Substantial
Day	67	52	905	0	Moderate
Deuel	80	67	605	0	Substantial
Dewey	134	84	2749	0	Substantial
Douglas	76	43	536	0	Substantial
Edmunds	90	70	572	0	Substantial
Fall River	91	70	1310	3	Substantial
Faulk	65	51	296	1	Moderate
Grant	106	64	1063	1	Substantial
Gregory	112	54	607	1	Substantial
Haakon	21	13	333	0	Moderate
Hamlin	86	72	940	0	Moderate
Hand	36	20	440	0	Moderate
Hanson	34	28	319	0	Minimal
Harding	5	3	64	0	Minimal
Hughes	365	187	2659	5	Substantial
Hutchinson	82	58	1182	2	Moderate

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Hyde	18	8	205	0	Moderate
Jackson	31	20	546	1	Moderate
Jerauld	76	55	330	1	Substantial
Jones	7	5	86	0	Minimal
Kingsbury	51	35	763	0	Substantial
Lake	183	150	1260	7	Substantial
Lawrence	373	278	3172	4	Substantial
Lincoln	1264	1091	9841	2	Substantial
Lyman	127	105	1181	3	Moderate
Marshall	37	29	628	0	Moderate
McCook	91	70	863	1	Substantial
McPherson	29	22	293	0	Moderate
Meade	500	387	3071	4	Substantial
Mellette	30	27	455	0	Minimal
Miner	19	19	334	0	Minimal
Minnehaha	6453	5807	37972	80	Substantial
Moody	83	63	838	0	Moderate
Oglala Lakota	243	200	3543	3	Substantial
Pennington	2142	1754	14923	36	Substantial
Perkins	36	27	304	0	Moderate
Potter	42	27	458	0	Moderate
Roberts	174	127	2578	1	Substantial
Sanborn	24	18	307	0	Minimal
Spink	120	91	1468	0	Substantial
Stanley	36	28	396	0	Moderate
Sully	9	8	127	0	Minimal
Todd	118	92	2668	5	Moderate
Tripp	126	59	810	0	Substantial
Turner	149	111	1279	2	Substantial
Union	375	317	2599	7	Substantial
Walworth	105	70	1111	1	Substantial
Yankton	382	293	4295	4	Substantial
Ziebach	60	46	490	0	Minimal
Unassigned	0	0	14498	0	

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- ✓ 30 year law enforcement veteran with city and county government experience
- ✓ Progressive thinker/ Conservative spender
- ✓ Common sense approach to solving issues



I pledge

- ✓ to put taxpayers first by no wasteful spending
- ✓ to increase transparency to taxpayers
- ✓ to maintain roads and bridges
- ✓ to the creation of a criminal justice task force addressing Meth, Opioid and other drug addictions

Your vote will be much appreciated!



Absentee voting begins September 18th



Representation from eastern Brown County is long overdue! (35 years)

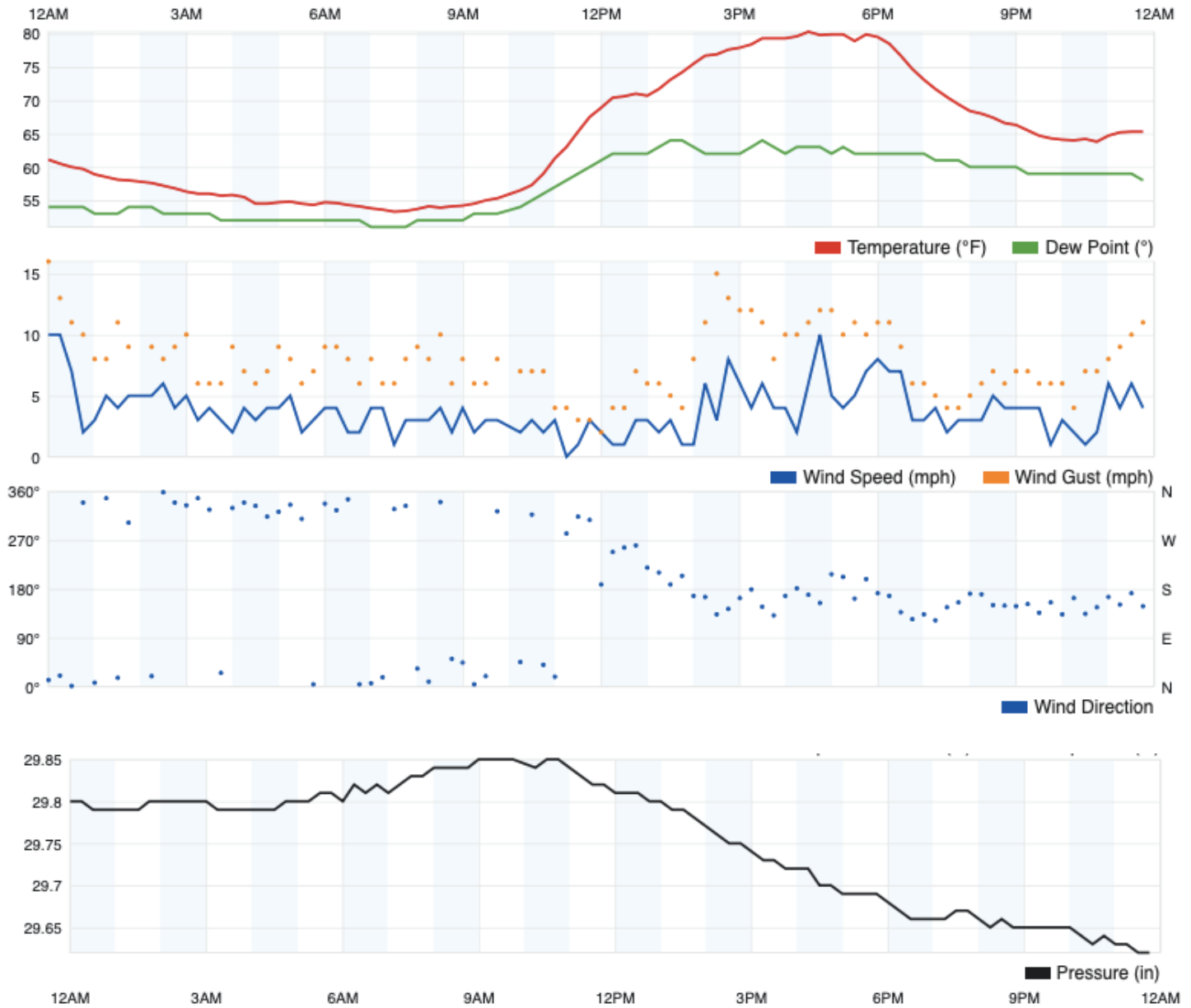
Vote for Michael Nehls for Brown County Commission (your vote **only for Mike could make a difference)**

Paid for by the committee to elect Mike Nehls to Brown County Commission

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Decreasing
Clouds

High: 78 °F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 51 °F

Saturday



Mostly Cloudy
then Partly
Sunny and
Breezy

High: 75 °F

Saturday
Night



Partly Cloudy
and Breezy
then Partly
Cloudy

Low: 49 °F

Sunday



Breezy.
Mostly Sunny
then Slight
Chance
Showers

High: 65 °F

Fire Concerns Next Few Days

Highs Today: 70s
Breezy with Low Humidity

Highs Saturday: 70s
Windy with Low Humidity

Highs Sunday: 60s
Cooler but still Windy



weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



[@NWSAberdeen](https://twitter.com/NWSAberdeen)

Updated: 9/25/2020 4:03 AM Central

Mild temperatures, low humidity and breezy to windy conditions will raise the threat of fires across mainly western and central South Dakota through the weekend. While it will get gradually cooler next week, it doesn't look like the area will see much for moisture.

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Today in Weather History

September 25, 1981: A late September tornado touched down briefly 14 miles west of Pierre during the early evening hours with no damage occurring.

September 25, 1996: An early fall storm over the Black Hills of northeast Wyoming and western South Dakota re-acquainted area residents with their winter driving techniques. Snow totals ranged from 4 to 8 inches. U.S. Highway 385, south of Deadwood South Dakota, was temporarily closed after a semi-truck jack-knifed on Strawberry Hill. Numerous minor accidents were reported in the Black Hills due to slick roads. Heavy wet snow closed the Needles Highway and Iron Mountain Road in the central/southern Black Hills until snowplows could clear the streets.

1848: The Great Gale of 1848 was the most severe hurricane to affect Tampa Bay, Florida and is one of two major hurricanes to make landfall in the area. This storm produced the highest storm tide ever experienced in Tampa Bay when the water rose 15 feet in six to eight hours.

1939 - A west coast hurricane moved onshore south of Los Angeles bringing unprecedented rains along the southern coast of California. Nearly five and a half inches of rain drenched Los Angeles during a 24 hour period. The hurricane caused two million dollars damage, mostly to structures along the coast and to crops, and claimed 45 lives at sea. "El Cordonazo" produced 5.66 inches of rain at Los Angeles and 11.6 inches of rain at Mount Wilson, both records for the month of September. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1942: From September 24th through the 26th, 1942, an early-season winter storm moved through the Northern Plains, Upper Mississippi River Valley, and Great Lakes, dropping measurable snow as it went. In many places across Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and northern Illinois, this was their earliest measurable snow on record.

1987 - Hurricane Emily crossed the island of Bermuda during the early morning. Emily, moving northeast at 45 mph, produced wind gusts to 115 mph at Kindley Field. The thirty-five million dollars damage inflicted by Emily made it the worst hurricane to strike Bermuda since 1948. Parts of Michigan and Wisconsin experienced their first freeze of the autumn. Snow and sleet were reported in the Sheffield and Sutton areas of northeastern Vermont at midday. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Low pressure off the Northern Pacific Coast brought rain and gale force winds to the coast of Washington State. Fair weather prevailed across most of the rest of the nation. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Twenty-three cities in the south central U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Topeka KS with a reading of 33 degrees, and Binghamton NY with a low of 25 degrees. Showers and thunderstorms in the southeastern U.S. drenched Atlanta GA with 4.87 inches of rain, their sixth highest total of record for any given day. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) 1998: Four hurricanes were spinning simultaneously in the Atlantic basin: Georges, Ivan, Jeanne, and Karl. That was the first time this had happened since 1893.

2015: Fairbanks, Alaska received 4–9 inches of snow. Another storm on September 27-30 produced 14.2 inches, including 11.2 inches on the 29th. September 2015 would end up being Fairbanks's second snowiest September on record with 20.9 inches.

2015: An EF2 tornado tracked nearly seven miles across Johns Island in South Carolina. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the NWS Office in Charleston, South Carolina.

2017: A large waterspout was seen over the Ionian Sea, off the coast of Gallipoli, Italy. Click [HERE](#) for a tweet from Severe-Weather.EU

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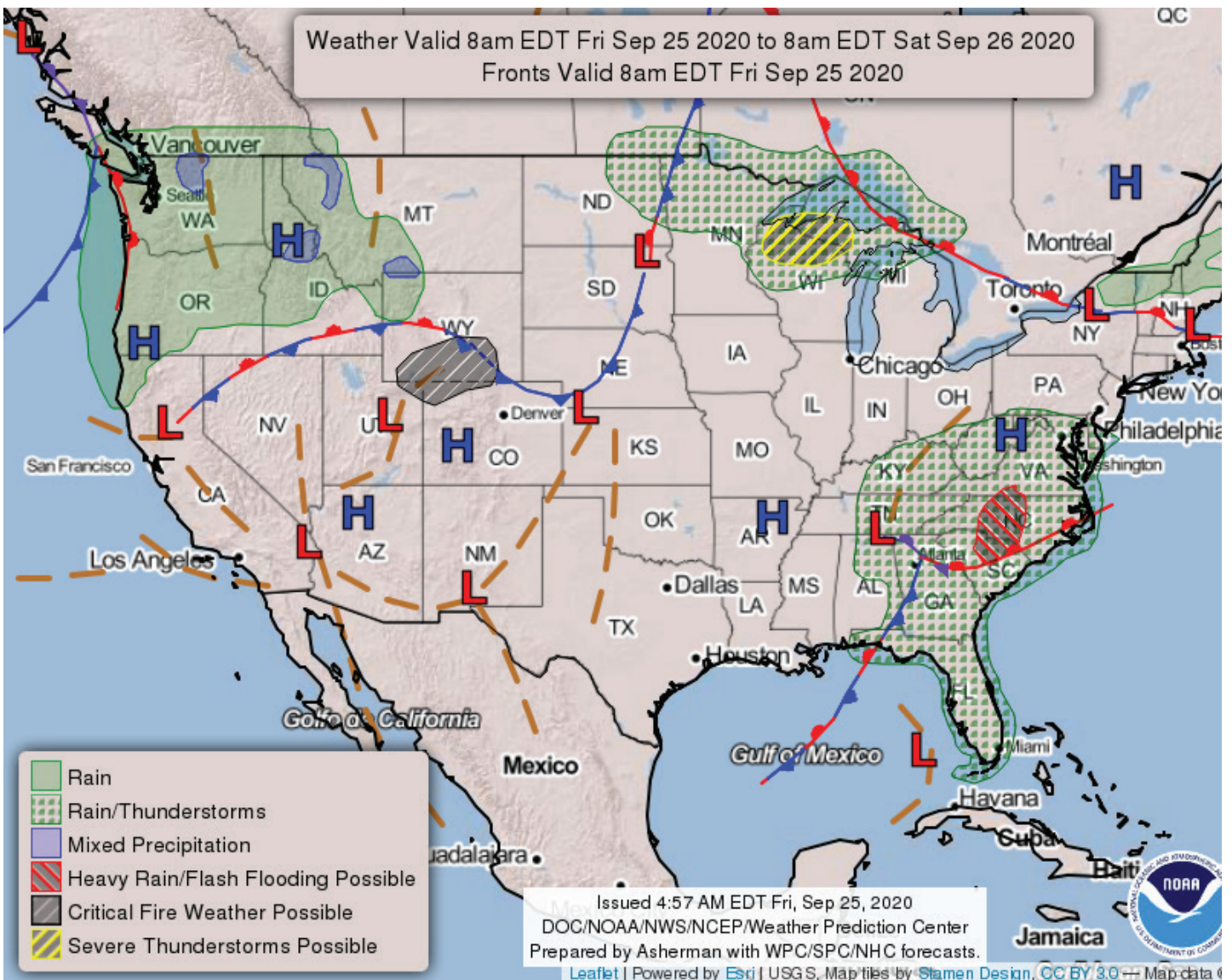
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 80 °F at 4:29 PM
Low Temp: 53 °F at 7:25 AM
Wind: 15 mph at 12:00 AM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 95° in 1938
Record Low: 19° in 1926
Average High: 68°F
Average Low: 42°F
Average Precip in Sept...: 1.76
Precip to date in Sept.: 1.52
Average Precip to date: 18.05
Precip Year to Date: 14.87
Sunset Tonight: 7:24 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:26 a.m.



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GETTING DIRTY TAKES TIME

Two neglected young children from a poor neighborhood were invited to a Salvation Army Christmas banquet. They were amazed at the lovely surroundings and were surprised to discover that the tables were covered with clean white tablecloths.

When they placed their hands next to their napkins, one boasted, "Look, my hands are dirtier than yours." "Yes," responded his friend, "but you are two years older than I am."

How like sin. Sin is subtle and moves silently but surely, quietly and quickly, until it invades every aspect of one's life. The longer one lives in sin, the more it expands and grows until it completely controls one's life. It is rarely recognized for what it is unless and until an individual comes to know and understand and accept God's Word and His message of salvation.

The only way to be redeemed and reclaimed from a sin-centered life is to accept Jesus Christ as Savior and exalt Him as Lord. Not only is He powerful enough to save us, but strong enough to strengthen us, to sustain us, and to keep us from sins that would destroy us.

Jesus offers us His salvation freely as a gift of His eternal love. There is nothing we can do to earn His salvation, but there is much to do once we accept it.

Prayer: Lord, we acknowledge our need for Your salvation if we want to be saved from our sins. Help us then to live lives that are free from sin and worth living. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Many sorrows come to the wicked, but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the Lord. So rejoice in the Lord and be glad, all you who obey him! Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are pure! Psalm 32

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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=

Arlington def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 25-20, 21-25, 14-25, 25-14, 15-12

Avon def. Colome, 25-18, 25-27, 25-13, 25-22

Burke def. Bon Homme, 26-24, 25-16, 23-25, 15-25, 15-13

Colman-Egan def. Elkton-Lake Benton, 25-23, 25-19, 25-20

Deubrook def. Estelline/Hendricks

Ellendale, N.D. def. Leola/Frederick, 25-17, 25-18, 22-25, 25-16

Florence/Henry def. Milbank, 25-17, 25-13, 25-15

Freeman def. Menno, 16-25, 25-21, 25-15, 25-18

Garretson def. Chester, 25-18, 23-25, 25-18, 25-18

Huron def. Harrisburg, 25-17, 24-26, 25-14, 25-16

Ipswich def. Langford, 25-13, 25-10, 26-24

Madison def. Tri-Valley, 25-18, 25-16, 16-25, 25-15

McCook Central/Montrose def. Parkston, 25-21, 27-25, 14-25, 25-14

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Canton, 26-24, 25-17, 25-19

Northwestern def. Waubay/Summit, 25-11, 25-7, 25-12

Parker def. Baltic, 25-20, 21-25, 25-11, 23-25, 15-10

Rapid City Christian def. St. Thomas More, 25-18, 25-15, 25-14

Sanborn Central/Woonsocket def. Iroquois, 25-13, 25-8, 25-11

Sioux Falls Christian def. Dakota Valley, 25-20, 25-18, 19-25, 25-20

Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Mitchell, 25-15, 25-17, 25-16

Spearfish def. Custer, 25-15, 25-22, 25-18

Sturgis Brown def. Douglas, 25-18, 25-15, 25-20

Sully Buttes def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-6, 25-11, 20-25, 25-16

Thunder Basin, Wyo. def. Rapid City Central, 25-11, 25-9, 25-20

Tripp-Delmont/Armour def. Mitchell Christian, 26-24, 25-9, 25-23

Viborg-Hurley def. Centerville, 21-25, 26-24, 25-18, 25-15

Elk Point-Jefferson Triangular=

Alcester-Hudson def. West Sioux, Iowa, 22-25, 26-24, 25-11, 25-11

Elk Point-Jefferson def. Alcester-Hudson, 25-18, 25-17, 25-18

Elk Point-Jefferson def. West Sioux, Iowa, 25-22, 25-15, 25-14

White River Triangular=

White River def. Jones County, 25-11, 25-14, 25-13

White River def. Lower Brule, 25-12, 25-16, 25-13

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

The Latest: \$14M more in virus funds for 3 Ariz universities

By The Associated Press undefined

PHOENIX — Arizona will provide the state's three public universities with \$14 million in additional funding to boost their efforts to test, track and respond to the coronavirus.

Gov. Doug Ducey said Thursday the money will help the universities build on their current efforts to track and contain the virus.

The funding comes as Arizona hospitals continue to get a break from the influx of coronavirus cases that

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nearly overwhelmed their ability to care for patients early in the summer. The state reported 566 new confirmed cases Thursday, bringing the total since the pandemic hit to 215,852. The state also announced 34 new deaths, bringing that total to 5,559.

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

- Russia reports highest daily cases since July
- India reports another 86,508 new coronavirus cases
- UK to subsidize wages of pandemic-idled workers
- The number of people seeking U.S. unemployment aid rose slightly last week to 870,000, a figure that shows the pandemic is still squeezing restaurants, airlines, hotels.
- Is it the flu? With cold weather coming to the Northern Hemisphere, people want to know how to distinguish symptoms
- Many at U.N. summit plead for a COVID-19 vaccine to be available and affordable to all, but their appeals are likely in vain

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

NEWARK, Del. — Officials at the University of Delaware say they are moving to cut personnel costs because of the financial effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

School President Dennis Assanis said Thursday that without cost cutting, the university would have a \$250 million gap between revenues and expenses this academic year. He says the school already has eliminated most discretionary expenses for this year and plans to draw \$100 million from its endowment, but personnel actions must now be taken.

The new effort includes a voluntary retirement incentive program and encouragement for employees to temporarily scale back their work hours. But Assanis says planning is also underway for non-voluntary layoffs as well.

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis says he will seek a "bill of rights" for college students in the wake of crackdowns on parties and other social gatherings that some people blame for a surge in coronavirus cases at campuses across the country.

DeSantis said Thursday that he understands university officials are trying to curb transmission of the virus, but added that he considers it "dramatically draconian that a student could get potentially expelled for going to a party."

The governor also says he will move to block local governments from again closing restaurants. He says there is little evidence such closures have slowed the spread of the coronavirus.

Florida reported 2,541 more confirmed cases Thursday, bringing the statewide total to more than 693,000. The state also reported 177 more deaths from COVID-19, raising the toll in Florida to at least 13,795.

ANCHORAGE, Alaska -- The Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race was one of the few major sporting events not canceled in March as the coronavirus began to take hold in the U.S. And now race officials now planning for every contingency possible as they make plans to hold the race again next March.

Iditarod CEO Rob Urbach says getting mushers from one checkpoint to another along the 1,000-mile trail in Alaska is the easy part.

He says the main focus for planners is protecting residents in Alaska villages that serve as checkpoints and the roughly 1,800 volunteers needed to stage the race. He says the goal is zero community transmission.

SALEM, Ore. -- Oregon officials have reported the state's highest one-day number of new coronavirus cases since mid-July.

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The Oregon Health Authority reported 382 newly confirmed cases Thursday, raising the total for the pandemic to 31,865. The death toll is 539.

Nearly 25% of the cases reported Thursday were in Multnomah County, Oregon's most populous county and home to Portland.

LANSING, Mich. — Leaders of Michigan's three biggest research universities say online teaching will likely last for the entire academic year, keeping many students out of classrooms until next fall.

The presidents of the University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Wayne State University voiced that prediction Thursday.

University of Michigan President Mark Schlissel says development of coronavirus vaccines will be important for any return to normal in-class instruction. Only about 20% of the university's classes now are in-person.

M. Roy Wilson of Wayne State says the winter semester will look like the current term because the pandemic "is going to be with us for a while."

Most classes at Michigan State have been online since March.

DES MOINES, Iowa — Iowa school districts have sent hundreds of students home for quarantine or isolation after coronavirus outbreaks, while a high school has switched to online classes after a fourth of students were absent amid a surge in cases.

State officials on Thursday reported 1,341 newly confirmed cases across the state in the previous 24 hours, along with six additional deaths.

One Iowa district has quarantined the entire kindergarten through sixth grade elementary building of about 130 students after a staff member tested positive. Another district has 201 students and staff in isolation or quarantine, with 18 students and eight staff members testing positive.

North Scott High School has gone to all online instruction because its absentee rate surged to 23% since school started Sept. 1.

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. — Hospitals in Missouri's third-largest city are approaching capacity due to a surge in coronavirus cases.

Officials at Springfield's two major hospital systems, CoxHealth and Mercy, told the city council they are running out of staff and capacity, according to a report in the Springfield News-Leader.

Missouri is dealing with a surge in new coronavirus cases, with 1,580 more confirmed cases reported Wednesday. That puts the state's total for the pandemic at 116,946. More than 100,000 of those cases have been reported since the state reopened for business in mid-June.

Among the new cases are Gov. Mike Parson and his wife, Teresa. Their positive tests were announced Wednesday.

PARIS — France's health agency announced Thursday evening that the country has had 52 new reported deaths and has over 16,000 new reported cases of coronavirus in 24 hours.

The number of new infections -- 16,096, up from 13,072 the day before -- is among highest recorded figures in France of coronavirus transmissions since widespread and large-scale COVID-19 tests in France began this summer, according to Public Health France.

Around 10 millions tests have so far been carried out.

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — South Dakota reported a record number of new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations for the second consecutive day as the state continued to see some of the nation's fastest spread of COVID-19.

The Department of Health reported 463 new cases and 194 people hospitalized with COVID-19. Health officials also reported eight deaths, one of the largest single-day death tallies during the pandemic.

The new records in coronavirus numbers come two days after Gov. Kristi Noem on Twitter described

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the spread of COVID-19 as having "peaked" in the state. Her administration plans to continue to rely on people making personal decisions to stop the spread.

Over the last two weeks, the state has reported the nation's second-highest number of new cases per capita. The rolling average number of daily new cases has increased by about 49% in that time.

But the surge in cases has not stopped Noem from pitching the state as a tourism destination. In a video posted on Twitter this week, she shoots at what appears to be a pheasant and says, "Less COVID, more hunting. That's the plan for the future."

BILLINGS, Mont. — Newly confirmed coronavirus cases in Montana have spiked to another record and health officials report that the number of infections tied to schools more than doubled in just a week.

State officials reported 333 new confirmed cases of the respiratory virus on Thursday, topping the previous single-day record set less than a week ago.

The number of schools with associated cases rose from 58 last week to 121. The overwhelming majority of those campuses reported new cases in the past two weeks.

Almost 500 infections in total have been tied to schools since classes widely resumed in late August. That includes about 200 cases at universities and about 200 in K-12 schools.

COVID-19 has killed 165 people and infected more than 11,000 people so far in Montana. The number of infections is thought to be far higher because studies suggest people can be infected with the virus without feeling sick.

LONDON — Britain has reported the highest number of coronavirus cases in a single day with 6,632 infections.

Public Health England Medical Director Yvonne Doyle says the figure is a "stark warning" as infections rise across all age groups.

She says citizens must follow the new restrictions announced by the government this week to control the spread of the virus. Doyle suggested downloading the National Health Service's new coronavirus contact tracing app.

Britain has the highest death toll in Europe, with nearly 42,000 confirmed dead. The rise in cases announced Thursday reflects both the spread of the virus and increased testing, which has more than doubled since the peak of the first wave in April and May.

PHOENIX — Arizona hospitals are getting a break from the influx of coronavirus cases that nearly overwhelmed their ability to care for patients early in the summer.

However, new case counts are edging up. The state Department of Health Services reported 566 new confirmed cases across the state, bringing the confirmed total to 215,852.

The state announced 34 new deaths, bringing the confirmed death toll to 5,559.

The seven-day rolling average of daily new cases in Arizona has risen over the past two weeks, likely because the state is now counting some "probable" cases.

The state reported 565 people hospitalized on Wednesday, down from the mid-July high of more than 3,500.

MADRID — Health authorities are asking residents in Madrid to brace for tough weeks as the Spain's cumulative caseload surpassed 700,000.

More than 10,600 new infections on Thursday pushed the confirmed tally to 704,209 cases. The 84 new deaths bring the confirmed toll to 31,118.

The extended region around Madrid, comprising a population of 6.6 million, is struggling to control outbreaks that have hit harder working-class areas with high-density.

More than 850,000 residents have been confined this week to their neighborhoods unless they have vital business.

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Hundreds of protests gathered Thursday evening at the gates of several health centers in those areas to demand more resources for primary care medical personnel, who are grappling to test and follow up those suspected of having the virus.

ROME — Residents of Naples and the surrounding Campania region must wear masks outdoors amid an increase in coronavirus.

Campania's governor, Vincenzo De Luca, signed an ordinance Thursday requiring the masks outside through Oct. 4. The mayor of Genoa also issued an outdoor mask mandate.

The ordinances come as Italy is trying to tamp down the same wave of new infections that are spiking elsewhere in western Europe.

On Thursday Italy added 1,786 cases based on a record 108,019 tests. Another 23 people died, bringing Italy's confirmed death toll to 35,781.

ATHENS, Greece — State hospital workers in Greece staged a protest Thursday outside the country's Health Ministry to demand increased hiring and staff support amid a surge in coronavirus infections.

A union representing the workers is calling on the government to hire hundreds of additional medical staff to the state-run health system and provide more administrative staff and translators to communicate with migrants.

Greece kept infection rates low before the summer but cases have risen in recent weeks. The total confirmed infections reached more than 16,000 since the start of the pandemic and the death toll to 357.

Public hospital managers say COVID-19 wards in greater Athens are near capacity and have staffing shortages.

The government says it is increasing intensive care spaces and vowed to step up policing health restrictions to ensure compliance by businesses and the public.

ST. CHARLES, Mo. -- Bars and nightclubs are limiting capacity and closing early in the St. Louis area due to the coronavirus pandemic, resulting in larger crowds in St. Charles.

So the city is taking a cue from the 1984 movie "Footloose" and will ban dancing after 11 p.m. on Friday. St. Charles leaders met Wednesday with restaurant, bar and club operators and announced a temporary ban on "music activities."

Mayor Dan Borgmeyer told KTVI-TV it feels "a little bit like the movie 'Footloose.'" The movie starred Kevin Bacon as a big-city teenager who moved to a small town that banned dancing, at least until he turned things around.

Man accused of threatening to shoot Trump at Rushmore event

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City man accused of threatening to climb to the top of Mount Rushmore and shoot President Donald Trump during an Independence Day celebration on July 3 has been charged in federal court.

Lucian Celestine, 29, has been indicted on charges of threats against the president and possession of a firearm by a prohibited person. He faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison.

Prosecutors said Celestine acquired a Browning bolt-action rifle, scope and ammunition in late June in Rapid City. He is prohibited from possessing firearms.

An affidavit shows that Celestine was committed to the South Dakota Human Services Center for a mental illness in October 2019.

Thomas Harmon, Celestine's federal public defender, declined to comment.

South Dakota hits new case, hospitalization high for 2nd day

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

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SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota reported a record number of new coronavirus cases and hospitalizations for the second consecutive day Thursday as the state continued to see some of the nation's fastest spread of the virus.

The Department of Health reported 463 new cases and 194 people hospitalized with the COVID-19 virus. Health officials also reported eight deaths, one of the largest single-day death tallies during the pandemic.

The new records come two days after Republican Gov. Kristi Noem on Twitter described the virus' spread as having "peaked" in the state.

But Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon on Thursday warned that the growth in cases would continue if people don't take steps to mitigate spreading infections.

"We need everyone working really hard to see any change in the numbers," she said.

The state has also seen some of the nation's highest positivity rates for the virus, which is a sign that many more people have infections than tests are catching. The seven-day positivity average was over 22%, according to the COVID Tracking Project, and Thursday's rate was even higher — over 30%.

Malsam-Rysdon said the Department of Health has received reports of people avoiding getting tested or not isolating after being exposed to people with the coronavirus. But she said there are no plans to issue orders to mitigate the spread of infections and the state will stick to a strategy that relies on people making personal decisions to take precautions.

Noem has said she is focused mainly on the number of hospitalizations from the virus. Even as the number of people hospitalized hit a new high, 44% of hospital beds remained open in the state, with 8% occupied by COVID-19 patients.

Malsam-Rysdon said there are currently 1,043 hospital beds available statewide.

Noem has carved out a reputation among conservatives nationwide for her hands-off approach to the pandemic. She has also aggressively marketed South Dakota as a tourist destination.

But the economic impact of the pandemic has continued to be felt in the state. The Department of Labor and Regulation reported that 504 people completed new unemployment claims between Sept. 13 and 19. That is an increase of 128 claims from the prior week's total.

Over the last two weeks, the state has reported the nation's second-highest number of new cases per capita. The rolling average number of daily new cases has increased by about 49% in that time.

But the surge in cases has not put a stop to Noem's tourism pitch. In a video posted on Twitter this week, she shoots at what appears to be a pheasant and says, "Less COVID, more hunting. That's the plan for the future."

Report: Pilot might have attempted maneuver before crash

GROTON, S.D. (AP) — A preliminary report from federal investigators into the plane crash that killed a couple in northern South Dakota indicates the pilot might have been attempting an aerobatic maneuver before it went down.

The report from the National Transportation Safety Board says witnesses saw the plane take off down the runway before it rolled right and inverted before exiting the roll maneuver just prior to hitting the ground.

The crash happened Sept. 13 at the Groton Municipal Airport in Brown County where a fly-in was underway. Witnesses said the maneuver appeared intentional, the Argus Leader reported.

The crash killed pilot Doug Hansen, 64, and his wife, Tina Hansen, 55. They were from Clark.

A family member of the pilot said Hansen routinely performed low-level aerobatics in the plane he was flying, according to the report.

3 slayings in Rapid City tied to one suspect

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Police in Rapid City have tied the slayings of three people in recent weeks to one suspect and say the case may be drug-related.

The latest victim was found Tuesday in near Sheridan Lake, about 25 miles from where two people were found fatally shot in a Rapid City park. Twenty-two-year-old Dakota Zaiser, of Rapid City, had been missing

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since the two were found dead in Thomson Park Aug. 24.

Detectives believe Zaiser was hanging out with the suspect and may have been in the area during the shooting at the park, according to police spokesman Brendyn Medina. Detectives wanted to talk to Zaiser to see if he had information about the shooting, he said.

Charles Red Willow, 26, of Rapid City, and Ashley Nagy, 29, from Greeley, Colorado, were found fatally shot inside a car at the park.

"It's a very unique series of homicides for Rapid City, technically this guy is involved in a triple homicide," Medina said of the suspect, a 37-year-old man who is in custody in New York and awaiting extradition to South Dakota.

Information gathered during the investigation into Zaiser's disappearance led law enforcement to search a forested area north of Sheridan Lake where they found his body, which had been covered up, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Medina said he can't comment on how Zaiser died because of the ongoing investigation. Based on decomposition, police believe Zaiser was killed hours or days after the double homicide, Medina added.

All three killings may be related to drugs, police said. Medina said he couldn't comment on what specific evidence leads police to believe that.

Terror probe opened after 2 wounded in Paris knife attack

By ANGELA CHARLTON and OLEG CETINIC Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France's counterterrorism prosecutor's office says it has opened an investigation into a knife attack Friday near the former offices of satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo that wounded at least two people.

The investigation was opened into "attempted murder in relation with a terrorist enterprise," according to an official at the prosecutor's office.

One suspect has been arrested.

It is unclear what motivated the attack or whether it was linked to Charlie Hebdo, whose offices were hit by a deadly Islamic extremist attack in 2015.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. AP's earlier story follows below.

PARIS (AP) — At least two people were wounded in a knife attack Friday near the former offices of the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris, police said Friday. A suspect has been arrested.

A Paris police official said that while authorities initially thought two attackers were involved, they now believe it was only one person, who was detained near the Bastille plaza in eastern Paris, a city police official said. The official said police are still searching the area while they question the arrested suspect.

Police initially announced that four people were wounded in the attack, but the official told The Associated Press that there are in fact only two confirmed wounded. Police could not explain the discrepancies.

It is unclear what motivated the attack Friday or whether it had any link to Charlie Hebdo, which moved offices after they were attacked by Islamic extremists in 2015, who killed 12 people inside.

AP reporters at the scene of Friday's police operation saw officers flooding into the neighborhood, near the Richard Lenoir subway station. Police cordoned off the area including the former Charlie Hebdo offices after a suspect package was noticed nearby, according to the police official.

Police did not release the identities of the attacker or the wounded, who are in "absolutely urgent" condition, the official said. The official was not authorized to be publicly named.

Prime Minister Jean Castex cut short a visit to a suburb north of Paris to head to the Interior Ministry to follow developments.

The trial in the Charlie Hebdo attacks is currently underway across town. Murmurs broke at the terrorism trial of 14 people, including 3 fugitives, accused of helping the attackers in the January 2015 killings, as the news filtered through. The widows of the Charlie Hebdo attackers are scheduled to testify Friday afternoon.

Election 2020 Today: Trump sows voting doubt; Biden lays low

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By The Associated Press undefined

Here's what's happening Friday in Election 2020, 39 days until Election Day:

HOW TO VOTE: AP's state-by-state interactive has details on how to vote in this election.

TODAY'S TOP STORIES:

RESPECTING ELECTION: President Donald Trump's refusal to commit to a peaceful transfer of power if he loses drew swift blowback from both parties in Congress, and lawmakers turned to unprecedented steps to ensure he can't ignore the vote of the people. Amid the uproar, Trump said anew he's not sure the election will be "honest."

BIDEN'S STYLE: Joe Biden has been laying low. Since he chose Kamala Harris as his running mate on Aug. 11, he has had 23 days where he either didn't make public appearances, held only virtual fundraisers or ventured from his Delaware home solely for church. He has made 11 out-of-state visits during that period. During the same time, President Donald Trump had 24 trips that took him to 17 different states.

TRUMP'S COURT: President Donald Trump is aiming to maximize the benefit of his Supreme Court choice before Nov. 3 and even secure an electoral backstop should the results be contested. "I think this will end up in the Supreme Court. And I think it's very important that we have nine justices."

MONTANA DUO: Steve Daines, who is seeking reelection to the U.S. Senate, and U.S. Rep. Greg Gianforte, who is running again for governor, are hoping to reshape Montana politics. Together they are pushing the state's Republican Party away from a Western brand of centrism and toward the hardline partisan agenda of President Donald Trump.

QUOTABLE: "The winner of the November 3rd election will be inaugurated on January 20th. There will be an orderly transition just as there has been every four years since 1792." — Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell on Twitter.

ICYMI:

Biden's Scranton vs. Park Ave. appeal targets working class

Post office defends on claims that cuts threaten election

Trump promotes health care 'vision' but gaps remain

Queen Elizabeth II to trim costs as COVID-19 hits income

LONDON (AP) — Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and her family are facing a 35 million pound (\$45 million) hit from the coronavirus pandemic, partly due to a shortage of tourists, the monarch's money-manager said Friday.

Releasing the royal household's annual accounts, Keeper of the Privy Purse Michael Stevens said a lack of income from visitors to royal buildings was likely to bring a general funding shortfall of 15 million pounds (\$19 million) over three years.

He said the impact of the pandemic is also likely to cause a 20 million-pound (\$25.4 million) shortfall in a 10-year, 369-million-pound program to replace antiquated heating, plumbing and wiring at Buckingham Palace, the queen's London home.

Officials have said the palace's aging infrastructure, which had its last major upgrade after World War II, is at risk of a catastrophic failure if it's not replaced.

Stevens said the royal household would not ask for more government money but would "look to manage the impact through our own efforts and efficiencies."

Buckingham Palace has already introduced a staff pay freeze and a halt to hiring.

The accounts show that the monarchy cost British taxpayers 69.4 million pounds (\$88.2 million) in the year to the end of March, an increase of 2.4 million (\$3.1 million) on the previous financial year.

The accounts also show that Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, paid an undisclosed sum to reimburse the public purse for rent and refurbishment of their Frogmore Cottage home near Windsor Castle. The exact sum will appear in next year's accounts. The renovation costs alone for the home were 2.4 million pounds (\$3.1 million.)

Harry, 36 and the former Meghan Markle, 39, married at Windsor Castle in May 2018. The couple an-

nounced early this year they were quitting royal duties and moving to North America, citing what they said was the unbearable intrusions and racist attitudes of the British media. They recently bought a house in Santa Barbara, California.

Harry and Meghan signed a lucrative deal this month to produce nature series, documentaries and children's programming for streaming service Netflix.

In despair, protesters take to streets for Breonna Taylor

By CLAIRE GALOFARO, DYLAN LOVAN and ANGIE WANG Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Some of them raised their fists and called out "Black lives matter!" Others tended to the letters, flowers and signs grouped together in a square in downtown Louisville. All of them said her name: Breonna Taylor.

People dismayed that the officers who shot the Black woman in her apartment during a drug raid last March wouldn't be charged with her death vowed to persist in their fight for justice. The big question for a town torn apart by Taylor's death and the larger issue of racism in America was how to move forward.

Many turned to the streets — as they did in several U.S. cities — to call for reforms to combat racist policing.

"We've got to take it lying down that the law won't protect us, that they can get away with killing us," said Lavel White, a regular protester in downtown Louisville who is Black. He was drawn to a march Thursday night because he was devastated by a grand jury's decision a day earlier not to charge the officers. "If we can't get justice for Breonna Taylor, can we get justice for anybody?"

He was angry that police in riot gear were out in force when protesters had been peaceful as they streamed through the streets of downtown Louisville past a nighttime curfew. Demonstrators also gathered in places like Los Angeles where a vehicle ran through a crowd of protesters, injuring one person. In Portland, Oregon — a city that has seen many protests since the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis — a fire was set at a police union building.

Taylor, a Black woman who was an emergency medical worker, was shot multiple times by white officers after Taylor's boyfriend fired at them, authorities said. He said he didn't know who was coming in and opened fire in self-defense, wounding one officer. Police entered on a warrant connected to a suspect who did not live there, and no drugs were found inside.

State Attorney General Daniel Cameron said Wednesday that the investigation showed officers acted in self-defense. One officer who has already been fired was charged with firing into a neighboring apartment.

The FBI is still investigating whether Taylor's civil rights were violated. But the burden of proof for such cases is very high, with prosecutors having to prove officers knew they were acting illegally and made a willful decision to cause someone's death.

While there was despair after the decision in Taylor's case, others saw reasons to hope.

Reginique Jones said she'll keep pressing for increased police accountability and for a statewide ban on "no knock" warrants — the kind issued in the Taylor case, though the state attorney general said the investigation showed police announced themselves before busting into her apartment.

"I believe that we are going to get past this," Jones said as she returned Thursday to the park in downtown Louisville that has been at the center of the protests. "We can still get some justice."

Taylor's family planned to speak Friday in the park that's become known as Injustice Square.

The case has exposed the divide in the U.S. over bringing justice for Black Americans killed by authorities and the laws that allow officers to be charged, which regularly favor police.

Since Taylor's killing, Louisville has taken some steps to address protesters' concerns. In addition to the officer who was fired and later charged, three others were put on desk duty. Officials have banned no-knock warrants and hired a Black woman as the permanent police chief — a first for the city.

Louisville also agreed to more police reforms as it settled a lawsuit that included \$12 million for Taylor's family. But many have expressed frustration that more has not been done.

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And so they took to the streets.

Louisville police in riot gear barricaded roads and cars honked as the crowd marched past a nighttime curfew. Officers blocked the exits of a church where protesters gathered to avoid arrest for violating the curfew.

Several people were detained, including state Rep. Attica Scott, a Louisville Democrat. Scott unveiled legislation recently that would ban the use of no-knock search warrants in Kentucky. The measure, called Breonna's Law in honor of Taylor, also would require drug and alcohol testing of officers involving in shootings and deadly incidents and require that body cameras be worn during the execution of all search warrants.

Police eventually pulled back late Thursday after negotiating with demonstrators to end the protest.

At least 24 people were arrested as of 1 a.m. Friday, police said. Authorities alleged the protesters broke windows at a restaurant, damaged city buses, tried to set a fire and threw a flare into the street.

Earlier, it got heated between some protesters and a group of 12 to 15 armed white people wearing military-style uniforms, but it didn't turn physical.

The curfew will last through the weekend, and Gov. Andy Beshear called up the National Guard for "limited missions."

Peaceful protests a night earlier gave way to some destruction and violence. Two officers were shot and were expected to recover.

Larynzo D. Johnson, 26, was charged and he's scheduled to be in court Friday. Court records did not list a lawyer for him.

In the Louisville square where protesters often gather, Rose Henderson has been looking after the flowers, signs and letters placed at a memorial for Taylor and hopes officials won't try to remove them.

"We're going to stay out here and hold this place," Henderson said.

Associated Press writers Rebecca Reynolds Yonker, Piper Hudspeth Blackburn, Bruce Schreiner and John Minchillo in Louisville, Kentucky; Kevin Freking and Michael Balsamo in Washington; Aaron Morrison in New York; and Haleluya Hadero in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, contributed.

N. Korea's Kim apologizes over shooting death of S. Korean

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un apologized Friday over the killing of a South Korea official who was apparently trying to defect near the rivals' disputed sea boundary, saying he's "very sorry" about the incident, South Korean officials said.

It's extremely unusual for a North Korean leader to apologize to South Korea on any issue. Kim's move will likely de-escalate tensions between the Koreas as it's expected to ease anti-North sentiments in South Korea as well as mounting criticism of its liberal President Moon Jae-in.

"Comrade Kim Jong Un, the State Affairs Commission chairman, feels very sorry to give big disappointment to President Moon Jae-in and South Korean citizens because an unexpected, unfortunate incident happened" at a time when South Korea grapples with the coronavirus pandemic, Moon adviser Suh Hoon cited the North Korean message as saying.

South Korea earlier accused North Korea of fatally shooting one of its public servants who was likely trying to defect and burning his body after finding him on a floating object in North Korean waters on Tuesday. South Korean officials condemned what they called an "atrocious act" and pressed North Korea to punish those responsible.

According to the North Korean message, North Korean troops first fired blanks after the man found in the North's waters refused to answer other than saying he's from South Korea a couple of times. Then, as he made moves to flee, the North Korean troops fired 10 rounds. When they came near the floating object, they only found lots of blood but no sign of him.

The troops determined he was dead and burned the floating object in line with anti-coronavirus rules, according to the North Korean message read by Suh.

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Senior South Korean military officer Ahn Young Ho told a parliamentary committee meeting Thursday that North Korea killed the man likely because of elevated anti-coronavirus measures that involve "indiscriminate shooting" at anyone approaching its borders illegally.

Defense Minister Suh Wook said at the same meeting that the official was believed to have tried to defect because he left his shoes on the ship, put on a life jacket and boarded a floating object. Suh also cited circumstantial evidence indicating the defection attempt. Some experts say there wasn't enough proof to conclude he tried to cross over to North Korea.

Kim's message said North Korea "cannot not help expressing big regrets" over the fact South Korea had used "blasphemous and confrontational words like atrocious act" to condemn the North before asking it to explain details of the incident. But it said North Korea is still sorry about such an incident happening on its territory and will take steps to prevent trust between the countries from collapsing.

The presidential Blue House said Friday that Moon and Kim had recently exchanged letters before the latest incident. In his letter, Kim expressed worries about coronavirus outbreaks and typhoon damage in South Korea and wished Moon a good health.

"Kim Jong Un's supposed apology reduces the risk of escalation between the two Koreas and keeps the Moon government's hopes for engagement alive," Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said. "The shooting incident was also turning South Korean public opinion against offering peace and humanitarian assistance to Pyongyang."

North Korea has previously expressed "regrets" when it wanted to lower tensions triggered by incidents involving South Korean casualties, such as the 2015 front-line mine blasts that maimed two South Korean soldiers and the 2008 shooting death of a South Korean tourist in North Korea. But it's rare for a North Korean leader to do so.

In 2002, Kim Jong Il, the late father of Kim Jong Un, said he felt "sorry" about a failed 1968 attempt to assassinate South Korean President Park Chung-hee. In 1974, Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Un's grandfather, also said he was "very sorry" when he met Park's spy chief in Pyongyang.

Before Kim's apology, Moon's government faced withering criticism by conservatives following its admission that officials already had acquired intelligence indicating the official's death right after it happened. Conservatives lambasted the government for allegedly deliberately withholding the information so as not to spoil the atmosphere ahead of Moon's speech at the virtual U.N. General Assembly on Wednesday, during which he repeated his calls for declaring an end of the Korean War in a bid to build a lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Kim Chong-in, a leader of the main conservative opposition People Power Party, called the official's killing "a national security disaster" that was caused by Moon's "rosy illusion about North Korea."

The Blue House said Moon's speech has nothing to do with the incident because it had been prerecorded and conveyed to the U.N. days before the man disappeared from a government ship on Monday. Suh, the defense minister, said authorities also needed time to analyze intelligence before formally holding North Korea responsible.

Since taking office in 2017, Moon has been pushing hard for warmer ties with North Korea and a negotiated settlement of the North's nuclear crisis. His engagement policy once helped produce a flurry of rare exchange programs with North Korea, but they were nearly stalled amid a deadlock in broader nuclear diplomacy between Pyongyang and Washington.

Little is known about the slain official, except that he was a 47-year-old father of two who left behind some debts, according to authorities. Maritime police said Friday they were checking the man's cellphone records, bank accounts and insurance programs.

The coast guard says it was searching waters near the boundary in case the official's body drifts back. The western sea boundary is where several bloody inter-Korean naval skirmishes and deadly attacks blamed on North Korea occurred in past years.

Biden's low-key campaign style worries some Democrats

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By WILL WEISSERT, ALEXANDRA JAFFE and ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — The final stretch of a presidential campaign is typically a nonstop mix of travel, caffeine and adrenaline. But as the worst pandemic in a century bears down on the United States, Joe Biden is taking a lower key approach.

Since his Aug. 11 selection of California Sen. Kamala Harris as his running mate, Biden has had 22 days where he either didn't make public appearances, held only virtual fundraisers or ventured from his Delaware home solely for church, according to an Associated Press analysis of his schedules. He made 12 visits outside of Delaware during that period, including a trip to Washington scheduled for Friday to pay respects to the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

During the same time, President Donald Trump had 24 trips that took him to 17 different states, not counting a personal visit to New York to see his ailing brother in the hospital or weekend golf outings.

Biden's aides insist his approach is intentional, showcasing his respect for public health guidelines aimed at preventing the spread of the coronavirus and presenting a responsible contrast with Trump, who has resumed large-scale campaign rallies — sometimes over the objections of local officials. Still, some Democrats say it's critical that Biden infuse his campaign with more energy.

Texas Democratic Party Chairman Gilberto Hinojosa said not traveling because of the pandemic was a "pretty lame excuse."

"I thought he had his own plane," Hinojosa said. "He doesn't have to sit with one space between another person on a commercial airline like I would."

Hinojosa argued that Biden prioritizing visits to Texas and Arizona could boost Latino turnout and potentially reduce the pressure on him to sweep Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania — where he has focused much of his travel so far.

"We are campaigning safely and effectively, and our message is reaching voters in battleground states and generating the enthusiasm and energy we need to beat Donald Trump," said Biden spokesman TJ Ducklo.

The race between Biden and Trump has been generally consistent for months. Biden has maintained a comfortable lead in most national polls and has an advantage, though narrower, in many of the battleground states that will decide the election.

But polls that showed competitive races or even Democratic advantages in traditionally Republican states proved to be false indicators for Democrats in 2016.

Four years later, Biden faces persistent questions about whether his campaign is organizing and connecting with voters. When he visited Charlotte, North Carolina, on Wednesday for a Black economic summit, Collette Alston, chairwoman of the local African American Caucus, said she only found out with one day's notice — when she saw it on TV.

Just 16 people attended the event and Alston warned that Biden wasn't reaching locals she thinks he needs to — "the people that are like, I don't care, I really don't want to vote."

"I do believe that he can win North Carolina," Alston said. "Can he win it based on what he's doing right now? No. That's not the way to win it."

Biden's swing state visits often seem tailor-made for a television package: A small, socially distanced roundtable or town hall, always with fewer than 25 people; occasionally a stop at a local business or a visit with first responders; and then hours of back-to-back local media interviews.

Beyond traveling more, Biden is being urged by some Democrats to expand his message. While he has given standalone speeches on issues like criminal justice reform, climate change and, last weekend, the Supreme Court vacancy, Biden largely ignores those issues during his campaign stops. When he appears before voters, he's generally laser-focused on the virus and the Trump administration's mismanaging of it.

When a grand jury decided Wednesday not to bring charges against police officers directly involved in the killing of Breonna Taylor, he offered condolences to her mother but declined to comment about the specifics of the case on camera. He later issued a more detailed written statement.

David Axelrod, Barack Obama's former strategist and adviser, said the Biden campaign is "wise" to

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concentrate on the pandemic because it's an "anchor around the President's neck." But he said it would be a "missed opportunity" for Biden if he didn't speak up more about the Supreme Court going forward, especially the impact it could have on healthcare.

"The future of the Affordable Care Act and particularly the future of protections for people with pre-existing conditions is a very close issue, and it's what drove Democrats to victory in 2018," Axelrod said.

Biden's aides say the relatively light schedule, small events and message discipline reflect the biggest issue still confronting most Americans today: the coronavirus pandemic. Biden also has sought to offer a responsible contrast to Trump and his rallies, where thousands forgo masks.

"Every time Trump shows up and has a mask-less rally and says this thing is overblown, Democrats are winning the COVID battle," said Jim Kessler, an executive vice president of the moderate Democratic group Third Way.

Biden maintains a vigorous schedule even when he's not traveling. His campaign has become a fundraising powerhouse through largely virtual events. He raised a record \$364 million in August that has allowed him to blanket the airwaves across the country and outspend Trump.

Still, Trump sees the contrast in travel as an opportunity to argue that his packed schedule shows he's outworking Biden. The president seized on the Biden campaign's announcement shortly before 9:30 a.m. Thursday that he wouldn't have any public events for the day.

Biden spent the day preparing for his first debate against Trump next week.

"Did you see he did a lid this morning again?" Trump said of Biden during a rally Thursday night at an airport hangar in Jacksonville, Florida. "A lid is when you put out word you're not going to be campaigning today. So he does a lid all the time. ... I'm in Texas. I'm in Ohio. I'm in North Carolina, South Carolina. I'm in Michigan. I'm all over the place."

Biden's aides counter that they see evidence in public and private polling that the virus remains top of mind for most voters, and that they have a compelling case to make that much of the crisis is Trump's fault. They also say their focus on small, high-impact events gets results.

Still, the cautious approach isn't shared by Biden's wife, Jill, who has already ventured as far away as Maine and spent Thursday making four stops in Virginia. She's going to Iowa, another state her husband has yet to visit in recent months, on Saturday.

Hillary Scholten, a Democrat seeking an open House seat in Michigan, spent a morning last week touring a food bank in Grand Rapids, the state's second-largest city, with Jill Biden. She's aware that Joe Biden may not follow suit.

"People would want to see him here," Scholten said. "That being said, there is a global pandemic."

Weissert and Fram reported from Washington.

Fitzpatrick handles Jaguars again, this time with Dolphins

By MARK LONG AP Pro Football Writer

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — Ryan Fitzpatrick handles the Jacksonville Jaguars as well as anyone in the NFL. It doesn't matter which uniform the journeyman quarterback is wearing, either.

Fitzpatrick accounted for three touchdowns and led Miami to a 31-13 victory Thursday night, becoming the first NFL quarterback to notch six wins over the same opponent with six teams.

"Fitz is out of his mind," tight end Mike Gesicki said. "He's (37) and playing like he's 23. You see the fun he has. After I scored, we came off the field chest bumping and screaming. It's so much fun to play with him."

The lopsided outcome also gave Miami (1-2) its first double-digit victory in 39 games, ending the longest drought in the league. It was the first time the Dolphins have won a game by more than eight points since Dec. 3, 2017, a 35-9 victory over Denver.

Fitzpatrick completed his first 12 passes — a career high — as Miami scored touchdowns on its first three drives for the first time since 2011. He ended the night celebrating another victory over the Jaguars (1-2).

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"It's why I still play," Fitzpatrick said. "I enjoy playing, especially when you're having success. I feel like the luckiest guy in the world sometimes getting to go outside and play football with my friends."

He improved to 6-2 as a starter versus Jacksonville, with wins coming with Cincinnati (2008), Buffalo (2012), Tennessee (2013), Houston (2014), the New York Jets (2015) and now Miami.

Fitzpatrick also ran for 39 yards and a score, his 37-year-old legs looking as fresh as any in Miami's backfield.

He completed 18 of 20 passes — the last one to himself — for 160 yards and two touchdowns in his latest successful outing against the Jags, who made countless mistakes while failing to consistently move the chains and get off the field on third down.

In short, they looked exactly like the team most outsiders expected them to be this season.

"As a group we just didn't get it done," said Jaguars quarterback Gardner Minshew, who completed 30 of 42 passes for 275 yards and two turnovers. "We had too many mistakes. That's plain and simple."

Jacksonville's most egregious errors:

—Chris Conley dropped two passes that would have been first downs and was flagged for offensive pass interference in the third quarter. Minshew fumbled on the next play, leading to Miami's fourth touchdown of the night.

"I let this offense down," Conley said. "Rough night."

—Minshew audibled to a pitch to the short side of the field on a third-and-5 play. He was sacked on the next play, ending a shot at making the game close at halftime.

—Left tackle Cam Robinson was disqualified for making contact with an official following Minshew's fumble.

—Rookie cornerback CJ Henderson was on the wrong end of one of four pass interference calls against Jacksonville. He also failed to touch receiver Jakeem Grant down after Grant made a diving catch. Grant jumped up and gained an extra 10 yards.

Adding injury to insult, the Jaguars may have lost linebacker Leon Jacobs for the season. Jacobs was carted off the field on the opening drive with a right knee injury.

Fitzpatrick was already in control by then. He scored a few plays later as Jacksonville allowed a touchdown on the game's opening drive for the third straight week.

"We've got to do a better job of executing early on," Jaguars coach Doug Marrone said.

Fitzpatrick had TD passes to Preston Williams and Gesicki — his best throw of the night — in the first half and ran for a score in the third.

Everything went so well for Fitzpatrick that even a pass batted down at the line of scrimmage in the fourth bounced right into his arms for a reception.

"You will rarely see me slide, and today I slid," he said. "That may not happen again all year. Throwing a block and getting hit, that helps me get into the game a little bit."

BRIGHT SPOT

Rookie running back James Robinson was one of Jacksonville's few bright spots. He ran 11 times for 46 yards and two touchdowns and had six receptions for 83 yards.

WRIGHT'S DEBUT

Jaguars rookie Brandon Wright made his NFL debut against Miami, joining a small list of Black place-kickers in league history. The group includes Gene Mingo, Cookie Gilchrist, Donald Igweibuike, Obed Ariari, Cedric Oglesby and Justin Medlock.

Wright missed one of his two extra point attempts. He also injured a groin in the fourth quarter.

KEY INJURIES

Jaguars safety Andrew Wingard was ruled out at halftime with a core muscle injury. He was filling in for starter Jarrod Wilson, who is on injured reserve. ... Jaguars receiver DJ Chark (chest/back) was ruled out about six hours before kickoff. He's expected back at practice next week. ... The Dolphins were without No. 1 cornerback Byron Jones (groin/Achilles tendon).

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Both teams remained in their locker room for the national anthem, continuing their push for social and racial justice.

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UP NEXT

Miami hosts Seattle on Oct. 4. The Dolphins have won five of the last seven meetings, including three straight in South Florida.

Jacksonville plays at Cincinnati on Oct. 4. The Jaguars have won two in a row against the Bengals, notching victories in 2017 and 2019.

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

Davis, Lakers beat Nuggets to take 3-1 lead in West finals

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — The Los Angeles Lakers are a victory away from returning to the NBA Finals — and only another comeback from 3-1 down by the Denver Nuggets can stop them.

Anthony Davis scored 34 points, LeBron James had 26 and the Lakers beat the Nuggets 114-108 on Thursday night in Game 4 of the Western Conference finals.

"We played great down the stretch, we played great overall," Davis said. "Still some things that we can fix if we want to put this thing away."

Davis got the Lakers off to a fast start with his scoring and James helped them finish it with his defense, forcing Jamal Murray into some late misses after the guard had kept the Nuggets in it with an array of high-difficulty baskets.

"I knew it was winning time and Jamal had it going," James said.

James added nine rebounds and eight assists, and the Lakers had 12 offensive rebounds for a whopping 25-6 advantage in second-chance points.

"This is the Western Conference finals, Game 4. If you can't help us on the defensive end, maybe you shouldn't be on the floor," Denver coach Michael Malone said. "We have to be able to lock in, finish with a rebound. We had too many empty possessions tonight."

Game 5 is Saturday night, when the Lakers can reach the NBA Finals for the first time in a decade. Davis said he expects to be fine for it after rolling his ankle in the fourth quarter.

The Nuggets will be facing elimination for the seventh time in the bubble. They were down 3-1 against Utah in the first round and climbed out of the same hole against the Los Angeles Clippers in the West semifinals.

But they couldn't come back in this game, getting within one point in the opening minute of the fourth quarter but constantly turned back from there by a key stop or rebound by the Lakers.

"We just had so many breakdowns throughout the game," Murray said. "We've just got to be better."

The Lakers have 16 championships, one behind Boston for the most in NBA history, but they haven't played for one since winning their most recent title in 2010.

The Lakers started Dwight Howard at center and he had 12 points and 11 rebounds, helping put Nikola Jokic into foul trouble.

Murray had 32 points and eight assists, but Jokic finished with just 16 points and seven rebounds.

Davis scored 27 points in Game 3 but the 6-foot-10 forward acknowledged that his two-rebound performance was "unacceptable." He came out much more aggressively Thursday after the Lakers played from behind much of the last game.

With an array of short jumpers, Davis made his first six shots before anyone else on the Lakers made a basket. Then Howard scored on consecutive follow shots before James followed with his first two field goals.

Murray kept the Lakers from getting too far away with a 7-for-8 start. He followed his acrobatic layup around James with 2 1/2 minutes remaining in the half with a pair of free throws that cut it to four, before the Lakers took a 60-55 edge to the locker room.

The Nuggets shot 59% in the first half but the Lakers had an 18-2 advantage in second-chance points.

The Lakers seemed to be taking control when Rajon Rondo and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope combined for a flurry that pushed the lead to 11 with under 4 minutes remaining in the third, but Michael Porter Jr. hit two 3-pointers late in the period that cut it to 87-84 going to the fourth.

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TIP-INS

Lakers: Howard hadn't started in any of his 10 postseason appearances and didn't play much at all in the last round, when the Lakers went small to match up against the Houston Rockets. He made two starts in the regular season. ... Caldwell-Pope scored 13 points and Rondo had 11.

Nuggets: Jerami Grant scored 17 points and Porter had 13.

THOUGHTS FOR TAYLOR

James had the words "We want justice" written next to Breonna Taylor's name on his sneaker. Lakers coach Frank Vogel said the news a day earlier that a Kentucky grand jury brought no charges against Louisville police for the Black woman's shooting death hit the players hard.

"It's heartbreaking, and you know, there's really no silver lining to it. It's a reminder of, it's not just — it's hard for Breonna Taylor, her family, and everybody that was invested in this," Vogel said.

"But it's just a reminder of all the other acquittals when unarmed black men are being killed, and it's just something that's hit us hard. Just a reminder that, you know, how important it is for all of us to vote and to be educated on all the potential police reform bills that are out there, and just play our part and do everything we can to help affect change."

MILLSAP'S VOTING LOCATION

The Nuggets announced a partnership between forward Paul Millsap and DeKalb County to make the CORE4 training facility in Chamblee, Georgia as a general election voting center. Millsap, wearing "Vote" on his jersey during the restart, is the founder of the facility that will be open for early voting from Oct. 12-30.

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

Canceled flights strand 25 Easter Islanders for 6 months

By NICK PERRY and EVA VERGARA Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — For people around the world, the coronavirus has caused distressing separations and delayed homecomings. But the situation for a group of 25 residents from remote Easter Island stands out.

For six months now the group has been stranded far across a vast stretch of ocean on Tahiti in French Polynesia. Children remain separated from their parents, husbands from their wives.

Mihinoa Terakauhau Pont, a 21-year-old mom who is among those stranded, is due to give birth to her second son any day now, but can't have her husband by her side because he's back home. Her grief has left her exhausted.

"I can't cry anymore," she said. "My heart is cold."

Usually considered a tropical paradise, Tahiti has become a kind of prison to them. Many arrived in March planning to stay for just a few weeks — they'd come for work, or a vacation, or for medical procedures. But they got stuck when the virus swept across the globe and their flights back home were canceled.

Each day they have been going to the authorities and begging for help in Spanish, in French, and in English. They've considered chartering a plane or trying to hitch a lift on a military ship to make the journey of some 4,200 kilometers (2,600 miles). But each time their hopes rise a little, their plans turn out to be too expensive or impractical.

Home to about 8,000 people, Easter Island is a tiny speck in the vast Pacific Ocean, located midway between Polynesia, in the South Pacific, and South America. Also named Rapa Nui, the Chilean territory is renowned for its imposing moai — giant heads carved from volcanic rock by inhabitants hundreds of years ago. For Easter Islanders, Tahiti has long been a stopping-off point, a connection to the rest of the world.

Until the virus struck, LATAM airlines ran a regular return route from Santiago, Chile, to Easter Island and on to Tahiti. LATAM said it suspended the route in March because of the virus and doesn't have a timeline for restarting it. No other airlines offer a similar service.

"The resumption of this flight is subject to the development of the pandemic and travel restrictions in place," the airline said in a statement.

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Terakauhau Pont arrived in Tahiti in January to visit her first son, who was staying on a nearby island with her parents. She was due to fly home in March. As the weeks trying to get a flight back slipped into months, she heard from afar that her husband had lost his job at a hotel because of the downturn in the tourism industry caused by the virus.

Now, Terakauhau Pont's mother has started a garden and her father is going fishing so they have enough food to eat each day.

"It's the only way to survive," she said.

She has pleaded with the authorities to help, and has even written to leaders in mainland Chile and on Easter Island, but without any success.

"It is so much grief for all of us," she said.

She said the person who has done the most to help is Kissy Baude, a 40-year-old administrative technician who has lived in Tahiti for years but was due to start a new job on her native Easter Island in April.

Because of her contacts on Tahiti, Baude has become the unofficial leader of the group — its social worker, psychologist and spokesperson. Baude said the group has survived thanks to the generosity of Tahitians, who have been providing them with food and accommodation long after many of them ran out of their own resources.

Baude said that before the virus struck, she was eagerly anticipating returning to Easter Island. She was looking forward to seeing her mother, who has a room prepared and waiting. But now, her mother's husband also remains stranded with her on Tahiti, after traveling there for colon surgery in March.

Baude said one option they've been exploring is to fly a circuitous route to Los Angeles and then to Santiago and hope they get repatriated from there. But even then their return isn't certain and many in the group can't afford the expense.

Among the 16 females and nine males stranded are seven children aged between 2 and 14. And the clan is expected to grow by one on about Oct. 3, the day Terakauhau Pont is due to give birth to a son that she and her husband plan to name Anuihere.

Some in the group have struggled to find enough money simply to eat, while others have found it tough going emotionally. Lately, they have been able to collect some money online after setting up two donation pages.

Baude gets emotional when talking about their situation. She said some of them fear speaking up in case they face repercussions back on Easter Island, but she isn't afraid.

"We just want to go back to our homeland," she said.

Vergara reported from Santiago, Chile.

Migrants accuse Greece of pushing them back out to sea

By MEHMET GUZEL, SUZAN FRASER and ZEYNEP BILGINSOY Associated Press

DIKILI, Turkey (AP) — Shortly after reaching the Greek island of Lesbos, a group of Afghan migrants say, their hopes for a new life in Europe were cut short when Greek authorities rounded them up, mistreated them, shoved them into life rafts and abandoned them at sea.

Associated Press journalists on a Turkish government-organized coast guard ride-along were aboard the patrol boat that picked up the 37 migrants, including 18 children, from two orange life rafts in the Aegean Sea on Sept. 12. Two other media organizations on similar government-organized trips in the same week witnessed similar scenes.

"They took our phones and said a bus will come and take you to the camp," Omid Hussain Nabizada said in Turkish. "But they took us and put us on a ship. They left us on the water in a very bad way on these boats."

Turkey, which hosts about 4 million refugees, accuses Greece of large-scale pushbacks — summary deportations without access to asylum procedures, in violation of international law. It also accuses the European Union of turning a blind eye to what it says is a blatant abuse of human rights.

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The Turkish coast guard says it rescued over 300 migrants "pushed back by Greek elements to Turkish waters" this month alone. Citing what they say are credible reports, international rights groups have called repeatedly for investigations.

Greece, which lies on the EU's southeastern border and has borne the brunt of migration flows from Turkey, denies the allegations and in turn accuses Ankara of weaponizing migrants.

In March, Turkey made good on threats to send migrants to Europe, declaring its borders with the EU open. In what appeared to be a government-organized campaign, thousands headed to the Greek border, leading to scenes of chaos and violence. Turkey's border with EU member Bulgaria was largely unaffected. Greece shut its frontier and controversially suspended asylum applications for a month.

Greece's coast guard says Turkey's coast guard frequently escorts migrant smuggling boats toward Greece, and has provided videos to back its claims. It says under a 2016 EU-Turkey deal to stem migration flows, Turkey has an obligation to stop people clandestinely entering Greece.

Greek coast guard spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Nikolaos Kokkalas said its patrols regularly detect boats and dinghies carrying migrants trying to enter Greece illegally, and "among them many times there are also inflatable rafts such as those described" by the AP.

The life rafts are standard safety equipment on recreational boats, designed to keep passengers safe if they must abandon ship. They generally have no means of propulsion or steering.

"It must be underlined that in most of the cases, the presence of the Turkish coast guard has been observed-ascertained near the dinghies incoming from the Turkish coast, but without it intervening, while in some cases the dinghies are clearly being accompanied by (Turkish coast guard) vessels," Kokkalas said in a written response to an AP query.

Uneasy neighbors Greece and Turkey have been at loggerheads for decades over several territorial issues, and asylum-seekers have found themselves caught up in the geopolitical conflict.

Tension between the two countries rose dramatically this summer over eastern Mediterranean maritime boundaries, leading to fears of war.

Both sides deployed warships as Turkish survey ships prospected for gas in waters where Greece and Cyprus claim exclusive economic rights. EU leaders are to discuss imposing sanctions on Turkey for its actions, in an Oct. 1-2 summit. Turkey has repeated its threat to send migrants into the EU if sanctions are imposed.

The persistent allegations of pushbacks of migrants are the latest manifestations of these tensions.

Human Rights Watch has accused Greece of summarily returning migrants across land and sea borders with Turkey, citing interviews with asylum-seekers.

Other rights groups and refugee organizations, including the U.N. refugee agency, have repeatedly called on Greece to investigate what they say are credible reports and testimony of such expulsions occurring.

"UNHCR is particularly concerned about the increasing reports, since March 2020, of alleged informal returns by sea of persons who, according to their own attestations or those of third persons, have disembarked on Greek shores and have thereafter been towed back to sea," the agency said in August.

UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection Gillian Triggs, reiterating the call for an investigation, said that "with our own eyes on Lesbos, it was quite clear no boats were coming through" recently.

Earlier this month, Greece's Shipping Minister Giannis Plakiotakis said Greek authorities prevented more than 10,000 people from entering Greece by sea this year. He would not elaborate on how.

Former Migration Minister Ioannis Mouzalas pressed for details from the current minister, Notis Mitarachi, in parliament Sept. 21, saying this appeared to violate Greek and international law. He asked directly whether the government carries out pushbacks.

The four Afghans on the life rafts seen by AP said they reached Lesbos from Turkey's western Canakkale province on the night of Sept. 11-12, and were caught by Greek law enforcement during daylight.

One of them, Nabizada, said police hit him while forcing him into the raft.

"They didn't say, 'there are children, there are families, there are women.' ... People don't do this to animals. The Greek police did it to us," said the 22-year-old. He said he left Kabul in 2017 and crossed to Turkey via Iran, aiming for Europe.

Zohra Alizada, 14, said police took their phones and money, put them in the rafts and left. She was traveling with her parents and two siblings after living in Kars, in eastern Turkey, for over four years. She said the migrants called the Turkish coast guard for help.

Her father, Mohammad Reza Alizada, said Greek authorities inflated the rafts "and they threw us like animals inside."

The AP was not able to independently verify their accounts.

The Turkish coast guard, clad in protective equipment against COVID-19, took them aboard after checking them for fever. Another Turkish coast guard vessel was already in the area when the patrol boat carrying the AP crew arrived.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu raised the allegations against Greece in an August news conference with his German counterpart.

He said Turkey has shown through government and media reports that Greece is pushing back refugees at sea, adding that "there have been numerous articles published."

"How do sinking boats in the middle of the Aegean Sea or sending them to Turkey by pushbacks fit international rights and universal values?" Cavusoglu said.

Greece denies sinking smuggling boats. Kokkalis noted the Greek coast guard had rescued 3,150 migrants in about 100 incidents this year.

An independent Norway-based watchdog says it has documented at least 50 cases since March of migrants being put into life rafts and left adrift.

"They are not going into these life rafts willingly. They are forced," said Tommy Olsen of the Aegean Boat Report, which monitors arrivals and rights abuses in the Aegean.

He said his group had no information about the rafts the AP saw, but that it was consistent with similar reports.

"Usually you save people from life rafts," Olsen said. "You don't put them on life rafts and leave them."

Fraser reported from Ankara and Bilginsoy from Istanbul. Ayse Wieting in Istanbul, Elena Becatoros in Athens and Nadine Achoui-Lessage in Geneva contributed.

AP Interview: Israeli virus czar fights outbreak, politics

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

AIRPORT CITY, Israel (AP) — When Dr. Ronni Gamzu, one of Israel's leading public health experts, was named the country's coronavirus czar in mid-July, he was hailed as Israel's best hope for halting a fast-growing number of cases.

Two months later, Israel is suffering from one of the world's worst outbreaks and heading into a tough new lockdown. Sleeping just four hours a night, Gamzu has faced withering criticism from opponents, pushback from Israel's notoriously fractious political leadership and the stark fact that the number of new cases shows no sign of declining.

In a wide-ranging interview, Gamzu acknowledged the public's frustration, accepting some of the blame, while also saying that the Israeli public's nonchalance and government mismanagement had contributed to the chaos. Ultimately, he took responsibility for decisions that can affect lives and livelihoods.

"There are many uncertainties," he told The Associated Press. "And you have to make decisions that affect people's life, people's habits, social life and living — wages and earnings, businesses. Any kind of a decision that you take, it's not a medical decision. It's a social economic decision."

Gamzu is managing the virus crisis at a bleak time, with the world rapidly approaching 1 million COVID-19 deaths globally.

Israel now has nearly 7,000 cases a day, one of the highest levels in the world on a per capita basis. With 9 million people, it has had nearly 215,000 cases since the start of the outbreak, with 60,000 of those active at the moment. Nearly 1,400 have died.

Friday's tightening of a nationwide lockdown has deepened the sense of frustration among citizens disil-

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lusioned by the government's often confusing decisions and hit hard by an economic downturn.

But Gamzu is taking it in stride, drawing on a personal battle with cancer just two years ago for inspiration.

"I had my personal crisis with the eye cancer. It was a hard time, really, a crisis, personal one. You see almost death coming," he said. "But going through a personal experience like I went through, it gives you proportion. And you can handle such hardships and criticism."

A gynecologist by training, the 54-year-old has served as the director of the Sourasky Medical Center, Tel Aviv's main hospital, since 2015. Gamzu was appointed coronavirus czar in July, just as Israel was seeing a dramatic uptick in new cases.

The country had just emerged from what appeared to be a successful first-wave battle against the virus, decisively sealing borders and imposing a lockdown. At the time, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu boasted that other world leaders were calling him for advice. He famously urged Israelis to go out and "have fun."

Still, the economy was hit hard and unemployment shot up. In an attempt to revive the flagging economy, schools and businesses were reopened swiftly — and virus numbers began to creep up.

Netanyahu became sidetracked by other issues, including an unfulfilled pledge to annex parts of the West Bank, his corruption trial and large protests calling on him to resign. A new emergency government, cobbled together by rival parties to focus on the virus, was plagued by infighting.

Even after the country's health minister announced he was appointing a new coronavirus "project manager," it took weeks to fill the post as potential candidates dropped out, fearing they would not have enough authority to set policy.

Gamzu, however, said at the time he was confident he could do the job within its confines. Reality has turned out somewhat differently.

While he is well-versed in Israeli bureaucracy and politics following a four-year stint as director of the country's Health Ministry, Gamzu has met relentless pushback from government ministers over his strategy.

He cited a three-week "nightmare" he endured over school reopening this fall. Education Minister Yoav Gallant wanted all schools to reopen on Sept. 1. Gamzu pushed to close schools in areas with worrying outbreaks and ultimately prevailed.

He has endured similar wrangling with the country's ultra-Orthodox politicians. They have fought furiously to allow prayers in synagogues, which are believed to be centers of infections, and a mass pilgrimage to the grave of a revered rabbi in Ukraine.

A powerful ultra-Orthodox Cabinet minister at the time, Yaakov Litzman, accused Gamzu of trying to topple the government and called for him to resign. Litzman himself later resigned to protest restrictions on prayer.

Gamzu has pushed for targeted responses in hard-hit individual communities, instead of a one-size-fits-all approach. He said he opposed Friday's tightened nationwide lockdown because of the tough economic blow it will cause, but also respected the politicians' decision.

Gamzu works out of a bare-walled office near Israel's main international airport, bouncing between Zoom calls, media appearances and government meetings. On Thursday, he was up until 5 a.m. taking part in an overnight Cabinet meeting that approved the tightened lockdown. He was back at his office three hours later; by 10:30 he was off to east Jerusalem to meet members of the city's Palestinian community.

He gives a number of reasons for Israel's current predicament. After little damage during the first wave, he said Israelis didn't take the virus seriously as it crept back amid mass gatherings and flouting of social distancing rules. He says allowing older students to return to high schools this month, setting off a groundswell of infections, was a "failure" under his watch. He said there was "bad conducting" by the government, but remained diplomatic when asked about Netanyahu.

"I believe that he as many others didn't realize that getting out of the lockdown must be very careful and gradual," said Gamzu. "No real professional within the ministry or within the government raised the red flag. Sometimes a prime minister needs that."

Netanyahu's approval ratings have plummeted as the virus has worsened. According to a survey this

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week by the Israel Democracy Institute, only 27% of Israelis trust Netanyahu's handling of the outbreak. Faith in Gamzu, meanwhile, is at 51%.

Gamzu expects the current lockdown to bring cases down to a "comfortable" level within the next month. Barring any major developments, he plans to return to his job managing the hospital in November and urged his replacement to view the crisis as a long-term battle with no quick fixes.

"It's hard work," he said, adjusting his mask. "Do not declare victory. Do not declare failure. Go ahead and still fight."

Pandemic-proof: Fall college football revived on West Coast

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

A major college football season that was in peril six weeks ago as conferences succumbed to concerns about COVID-19 is reconstituting.

The West Coast got back in the game Thursday night, The Pac-12 set Nov. 6 to start a seven-game season, joining the Big Ten in overturning August decisions to punt on fall football. The Mountain West followed up a few hours later by announcing it is aiming to kick off Oct. 24.

Nine of the 10 FBS conferences are now ready to have their seasons completed by Dec. 20, the day the College Football Playoff selection committee is scheduled to pick teams to play for the national championship and in the most lucrative bowls.

As soon as Friday, the Mid-American Conference, the first FBS league to postpone, could make it 10 out of 10.

All that talk about playing football in the winter and spring, about whether it was a good idea to play during a pandemic at all? Out the window. Not even a pandemic could stop college football at the schools that play it at the highest level.

"The discussion among the presidents and chancellors was largely about the benefits as well as the cons of starting in the fall versus starting in January," said University of Oregon President Michael Schill, the head of the Pac-12's CEO Group. "The consensus opinion was the benefits of starting in the fall were much greater than the benefits of starting in the ... winter."

With the Pac-12 having secured daily COVID-19 testing for its athletes and been given the green light from state and local health officials, the CEOs voted unanimously to lift a Jan. 1 moratorium on athletic competition.

"Things changed from the first time we addressed this issue," Schill said.

The Pac-12's men's and women's basketball seasons can start Nov. 25, in line with the NCAA's recently announced opening date. The football championship game is set for Dec. 18, putting the conference back in play for the biggest postseason games — and the multimillion dollar payouts that come with them.

It was Aug. 11 when the Big Ten and Pac-12 announced they were postponing their football seasons, a dark day in college sports that came six months after the pandemic canceled March Madness.

Six leagues forged ahead, including the powerful Southeastern Conference, which begins play this weekend. The Big 12, Atlantic Coast Conference and three others have been up and running since Labor Day weekend.

This every-conference-for-itself college football season looks like it will have five different start dates.

Some teams could play as many as 12 games while others get in only six. And that's not even counting what seems like the inevitable disruptions still to come. There have already been 21 games postponed or canceled since Aug. 26 because of teams battling various levels of COVID-19-related issues, including four this week that were wiped off Saturday's schedule.

As for the bowl season, it could conceivably start before the conference champions are crowned. The NCAA football oversight committee on Thursday recommended that bowl games can be played as soon as Dec. 1 and minimum requirements for bowl eligibility (.500 record against FBS opposition) should be waived for 2020.

The Pac-12 will try squeeze seven games into seven weeks, borrowing an idea from the Big Ten and

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allowing all its teams to play an extra cross-division game on championship weekend.

"We want to be in the best position, quite frankly, to get ourselves in the CFP conversation, but also bowl game consideration at the very highest level," Arizona State athletic director Ray Anderson said. "We want to play."

The turning point for the return of sports in the Pac-12 came Sept. 3 when it entered an agreement with diagnostic testing company Quidel that will give each school the capacity to conduct daily antigen tests on their athletes.

Still, it took three weeks for the conference to reverse course on fall football, leaving it starting later and scheduled to play fewer games than its Power Five peers.

"I don't think we're behind," Schill said. "I think that we are acting deliberately. We are acting in the students' best interest. We waited until we were able to, if not ensure, protect their health and safety."

Schill said state and local restrictions in California and Oregon to stem the spread of the virus made it impossible for six Pac-12 teams to practice football and slowed the conference's return-to-play decision

"Those barriers came down once the daily antigen test was available," Schill said.

There is still work to be done for schools in the Pac-12 and Mountain West to get the approval of local officials in Northern California and now in Colorado. Due to a recent spike in COVID-19 cases, Boulder County, Colorado, officials Thursday halted gatherings for college-aged residents for two weeks. That includes athletic events.

"We'll continue to work with our public health officials to comply with the public health order and be a part of the community solution," Colorado athletic director Rick George said. "The one thing I've learned in this pandemic, is don't get too high and don't get too low."

No fans will be permitted at Pac-12 sporting events taking place on campus. The loss of ticket revenue and decreased number of games will cost Pac-12 schools tens of millions of dollars, but it could have been even worse with no football at all.

The CFP's annual payout to the Power Five conferences has been \$66 million. Conferences receive \$6 million for every team they have selected to the national semifinals and \$4 million for each team they get in the other four New Year's Six bowls.

"This has nothing to do with money," Schill said. "It was never once mentioned as a consideration. The losses that our schools are encountering, in particular our athletic departments, are huge. The amount of money that will be saved as a result of going back to play is tiny in comparison with the losses."

AP Sports Writer Pat Graham contributed to this report.

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For Arab newlyweds, the party goes on until police bust in

By ISABEL DEBRE and MOHAMMED DARAGHMEH Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The party was going strong: traditional music blared, families cheered, throngs of revelers danced. Then, police burst in. Officers kicked out guests, slapped hefty fines — even locked up the tuxedoed groom and singers.

In recent weeks, such unhappy endings to long-awaited weddings have become a common story in the Arab world, as resurgent coronavirus caseloads trigger tough police action.

Still, in a region where marriage is the cornerstone of society — the gateway to independence and the only culturally acceptable context for a sex life — couples are plowing ahead, despite the deadly risks. From the Palestinian territories to the United Arab Emirates, officials attribute a spike in virus cases to traditional, large-scale weddings that flout public health measures.

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In Jenin, in the northern West Bank, Mustafa Khatib and six of his band members spent two nights in jail for serenading a crowded wedding party this month. Police fined the group \$11,000.

"This is not fair," said Khatib. "People will never stop getting married and will never stop holding parties."

Mohammed Abu al-Naji, another singer, was released from detention only after pledging to stop singing until the pandemic ends.

"There were some 500 people at the party, with no protection whatsoever," al-Naji recalled. "I wasn't happy to be at such a wedding, but I had to," to make ends meet, he said.

Palestinian authorities have shut down dozens of ceremonies, said police spokesman Loaie Irzekat. Yet the wave of fines, detentions and infections hasn't stopped determined couples from getting hitched — surrounded by hundreds of their friends.

"You plan to have a small wedding but then all your relatives and friends show up," explained Qasim Najjar, whose wedding party last weekend in the northern West Bank village of Deir Sharaf was dispersed by police. "This is our custom."

For Arab families, large and lavish weddings mark social status. For newlyweds, the custom of accepting cash-filled envelopes helps them set up homes. For Palestinians, the ritual may run even deeper.

"It's an existential thing," said Randa Serhan, a political sociologist at the American University of Beirut, referring to Palestinians living under Israeli occupation or in exile. "If Palestinians stop marrying and pro-creating, they'll cease to exist. They don't have a nation, but they have family."

The celebrations of life carry potentially fatal consequences. Palestinian Health Ministry official Ali Abed Rabu linked over 80% of new coronavirus infections to large gatherings at weddings and funerals. Indoor wedding halls in conservative towns like Hebron have become vectors of contagion, he said. Coronavirus cases are now surging to new heights. The Palestinian Authority has reported over 34,500 cases in the West Bank and 270 deaths.

In Israel, which is grappling with one of the world's worst coronavirus outbreaks on a per capita basis, authorities point to large weddings in Arab towns as a leading cause of the virus' spread. Along with ultra-Orthodox enclaves, known for large weddings and group prayers, Arab communities are among the hardest hit by the virus.

Arab-Israeli lawmaker Ahmad Tibi told The Associated Press that the infection rate in Arab areas has soared from roughly 3% to 30% during the summer wedding season. Israeli citizens, disillusioned after a failed first lockdown, are starting to "disregard government instructions," he added.

When Egypt's wedding halls shut down this spring as infections swelled, the wealthy moved their extravagant celebrations to private villas. Working-class Egyptians took their raucous parties to village streets, prompting local police to break up the festivities. But restrictions have relaxed as virus cases waned. Although Egyptian officials still warn of a possible "second wave," the government announced last week that weddings could resume outdoors and in certified hotels.

In the UAE, daily infection rates reached a four-month peak, prompting a top health official to scold the public for "complacency and negligence." Dr. Farida al-Hosani, a health ministry spokeswoman, said close to 90% of new cases stemmed from crowds at weddings, funerals and other events.

The Emirati government has intensified its crackdown on illicit bashes. Last weekend, authorities ordered the detention of eight people across the country who had thrown massive, maskless parties. They remain in custody, facing prison terms of up to six months and minimum fines of \$27,226 each. In the capital of Abu Dhabi, a groom, his father and father-in-law face prosecution after police broke up their tent wedding and issued \$2,700 fines to the guests.

The sleepy northernmost emirate of Ras al-Khaimah has never been a match for Dubai, the glittering city-state known for its Champagne-soaked nightclubs. Yet the coronavirus has transformed the dusty town into a freewheeling party haven. Early in the pandemic, expatriate party-goers also packed the emirate's hotels to drink and dance. While Dubai now tightly regulates banquets and bans wedding parties, Ras al-Khaimah has reopened wedding halls and loosened restrictions.

Many Dubai event organizers who have seen their incomes vanish are flocking to the little-known emirate.

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"Planners are leaving, vendors and suppliers are leaving, musicians are leaving," said Stefanie Heller, a Dubai-based wedding planner at Jam Events & Entertainers.

At Jawaher Wedding Hall in Ras al-Khaimah, workers check guests' temperatures, serve drinks in plastic cups and encourage social distancing at tables. Twice a week, the hall fills up with some 250 revelers. "These look like normal weddings," said Lovely Bartolata, an employee. Security guards struggle to prevent guests from dancing.

It's unclear how many Ras al-Khaimah weddings have been linked to COVID-19 because the UAE does not make public information about disease clusters. The emirate's Department of Economic Development, which enforces anti-virus rules, said the emirate is "one of the first destinations in the world to be certified as safe." Still, residents fear the gatherings are precisely what health officials warned them about at the start of the pandemic.

"These halls are a problem. This is how the virus spreads," said Rahmat Allah, manager at Tahani Al Khaleej, a wedding services company in Ras al-Khaimah.

Some Arab couples are defying cultural tradition to follow health guidance. During the Palestinian Authority's mandated shut-down earlier this year, Baraa Amarneh and Imad Sharaf, desperate to start living together, tied the knot near the southern West Bank city of Hebron, holding hands through latex gloves.

A mask covered up 25-year-old Amarneh's professionally done makeup. Just a few close relatives came. While her friends now risk jail time to throw parties post-lockdown, she says she'd do the same thing again.

"Without all the neighbors and friends, you're left with what a marriage is," she said. "Two people."

Daraghmeh reported from Ramallah, West Bank. Associated Press writer Samy Magdy in Cairo contributed to this report.

Ginsburg is first woman to lie in state at US Capitol

WASHINGTON (AP) — Capping days of commemorations of her extraordinary life, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg becomes the first woman in American history to lie in state in the U.S. Capitol.

Ginsburg, who died last week at age 87, also will be the first Jewish-American to lie in state and just the second Supreme Court justice. The first, Chief Justice William Howard Taft, also had been president.

Ginsburg's casket will be brought to the Capitol Friday morning for a private ceremony in Statuary Hall attended by her family and lawmakers, and with musical selections from one of Ginsburg's favorite opera singers, mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves. Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, planned to attend.

Members of the House and Senate who are not invited to the ceremony because of space limitations imposed by the coronavirus pandemic will be able to pay their respects before a motorcade carrying Ginsburg's casket departs the Capitol early afternoon.

The honor of lying in state has been accorded fewer than three dozen times, mostly to presidents, vice presidents and members of Congress. Rep. John Lewis, the civil rights icon, was the last person to lie in state following his death in July. Henry Clay, the Kentucky lawmaker who served as Speaker of the House and also was a senator, was the first in 1852. Rosa Parks — a private citizen, not a government official — is the only woman who has lain in honor at the Capitol.

Ginsburg has lain in repose for two days at the Supreme Court, where thousands of people paid their respects, including President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump on Thursday. Spectators booed and chanted "vote him out" as the president, who wore a mask, stood silently near Ginsburg's casket at the top of the court's front steps.

Trump plans to announce his nomination Saturday of a woman to take Ginsburg's place on the high court, where she served for 27 years and was the leader of the liberal justices.

Ginsburg, the second woman to serve on the Supreme Court, will be buried next week in Arlington National Cemetery beside her husband, Martin, who died in 2010.

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In despair, protesters take to streets for Breonna Taylor

By CLAIRE GALOFARO, DYLAN LOVAN and ANGIE WANG Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Some of them raised their fists and called out “Black lives matter!” Others tended to the letters, flowers and signs grouped together in a square in downtown Louisville. All of them said her name: Breonna Taylor.

People dismayed that the officers who shot the Black woman in her apartment during a drug raid last March wouldn’t be charged with her death vowed to persist in their fight for justice. The big question for a town torn apart by Taylor’s death and the larger issue of racism in America was how to move forward.

Many turned to the streets — as they did in several U.S. cities — to call for reforms to combat racist policing.

“We’ve got to take it lying down that the law won’t protect us, that they can get away with killing us,” said Lavel White, a regular protester in downtown Louisville who is Black. He was drawn to a march Thursday night because he was devastated by a grand jury’s decision a day earlier not to charge the officers. “If we can’t get justice for Breonna Taylor, can we get justice for anybody?”

He was angry that police in riot gear were out in force when protesters had been peaceful as they streamed through the streets of downtown Louisville past a nighttime curfew. Demonstrators also gathered in places like Philadelphia and New York, a day after violence marred some protests, including a shooting that wounded two Louisville officers.

Taylor, a Black woman who was an emergency medical worker, was shot multiple times by white officers after Taylor’s boyfriend fired at them, authorities said. He said he didn’t know who was coming in and opened fire in self-defense, wounding one officer. Police entered on a warrant connected to a suspect who did not live there, and no drugs were found inside.

State Attorney General Daniel Cameron said Wednesday that the investigation showed officers acted in self-defense. One officer who has already been fired was charged with firing into a neighboring apartment.

The FBI is still investigating whether Taylor’s civil rights were violated. But the burden of proof for such cases is very high, with prosecutors having to prove officers knew they were acting illegally and made a willful decision to cause someone’s death.

While there was despair after the decision in Taylor’s case, others saw reasons to hope.

Reginique Jones said she’ll keep pressing for increased police accountability and for a statewide ban on “no knock” warrants — the kind issued in the Taylor case, though the state attorney general said the investigation showed police announced themselves before busting into her apartment.

“I believe that we are going to get past this,” Jones said as she returned Thursday to the park in downtown Louisville that has been at the center of the protests. “We can still get some justice.”

Taylor’s family planned to speak Friday in the park that’s become known as Injustice Square.

The case has exposed the divide in the U.S. over bringing justice for Black Americans killed by authorities and the laws that allow officers to be charged, which regularly favor police.

Since Taylor’s killing, Louisville has taken some steps to address protesters’ concerns. In addition to the officer who was eventually charged being fired, three others were put on desk duty. Officials have banned no-knock warrants and hired a Black woman as the permanent police chief — a first for the city.

Louisville also agreed to more police reforms as it settled a lawsuit that included \$12 million for Taylor’s family. But many have expressed frustration that more has not been done.

And so they took to the streets.

Louisville police in riot gear barricaded roads and cars honked as the crowd marched past a nighttime curfew. Officers blocked the exits of a church where protesters gathered to avoid arrest for violating the curfew. Several people were detained, including state Rep. Attica Scott, a Louisville Democrat. Police eventually pulled back and the demonstrators left.

Earlier, it got heated between some protesters and a group of 12 to 15 armed white people wearing military-style uniforms, but it didn’t turn physical.

The curfew will last through the weekend, and Gov. Andy Beshear called up the National Guard for “limited missions.”

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Peaceful protests a night earlier gave way to some destruction and violence. Two officers were shot and were expected to recover.

Larynzo D. Johnson, 26, was charged and he's scheduled to be in court Friday. Court records did not list a lawyer for him.

In the Louisville square where protesters often gather, Rose Henderson has been looking after the flowers, signs and letters placed at a memorial for Taylor and hopes officials won't try to remove them.

"We're going to stay out here and hold this place," Henderson said.

Associated Press writers Rebecca Reynolds Yonker, Piper Hudspeth Blackburn, Bruce Schreiner and John Minchillo in Louisville, Kentucky; Kevin Freking and Michael Balsamo in Washington; Aaron Morrison in New York; and Haleluya Hadero in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, contributed.

GOP duo reshapes Montana politics to match Trump's vision

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

BOZEMAN, Mont. (AP) — Steve Daines is the affable one, the smiler, a consummate salesman who parlayed his corporate success into a meteoric rise through Montana politics and a seat in the U.S. Senate.

His former boss, Greg Gianforte, is more brusque, sometimes even harsh, a self-made technology mogul whose political career has proved rockier and included a stinging defeat for governor and unwanted notoriety when he assaulted a reporter during a successful run for U.S. House.

Together they form a powerful political alliance on the cusp of dominating Montana politics for years to come, pushing the state's Republican Party away from a Western brand of centrism and toward the hard-line partisan agenda of President Donald Trump.

Daines, 58, is seeking a second six-year term while Gianforte, 59, is pouring millions of dollars from his private fortune into another run at the governor's mansion.

Dual victories would mark the latest achievement for men who first bonded on family camping trips in Montana's Beartooth Mountains more than two decades ago. They worked in tandem to attain huge riches in the corporate world before leveraging that success into a political juggernaut that has reshaped the state's Republican Party.

It's a shift Montana Democrats argue is out of step with the state's independent-minded electorate. Democrats have their own power duo hoping to hold the line in November: Gov. Steve Bullock, challenging Daines, is one of the Democrats' best hopes to tilt the balance of power in the closely divided Senate. His lieutenant governor for the past five years, Mike Cooney, faces Gianforte.

But Democrats are handicapped by Gianforte's willingness to spend his own money on the race — \$3.5 million so far, after spending more than \$6 million in 2016 — and a strong push for both by Trump, who carried Montana by 20 percentage points in 2016.

Daines has long benefited from his ties to Gianforte, who hired Daines into his Bozeman-based software firm, RightNow Technologies, that was later sold to Oracle for almost \$2 billion.

Years later, when Daines was in the U.S. Senate, he would use Gianforte's private plane, including to shuttle back and forth to Washington for key votes — at least 11 trips since 2017, according to financial disclosure reports.

Gianforte, one of the wealthiest members of the U.S. House, has been boosted in his run for Montana governor by Daines' clout. A strong turnout for Gianforte could now help Daines fend off the challenge from Bullock, a two-term governor whose handling of the coronavirus has put him in the limelight.

The similarities between the two Republicans were on display during a recent joint interview after they toured a high tech manufacturing facility under construction in their hometown of Bozeman.

Sitting across from each other at a picnic table near the same office park that houses Oracle, Daines and Gianforte played off one another's jokes and finished each other's stories. Both men linked their political careers to their Christian faith. Daines is Presbyterian. Gianforte belongs to the fundamentalist Grace Bible Church.

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"We're here to serve and not be served," Daines said.

"Service above expectations," Gianforte added. "It's the same theme."

They cast the upcoming election as a stark choice pitting "socialist" policies of Democrats against the free enterprise system that Daines and Gianforte say has propelled the economy and their own careers.

"This system we have in this country has lifted more people out of poverty than any system in the history of the world," Gianforte said.

Asked if they had any political disagreements, they looked stumped. Daines finally shriveled his face and said Gianforte likes to eat the meat from black bears that he shoots.

"I'll still take a good piece of beef," Daines said with a laugh.

Democrats paint a more nefarious picture of the friendship, contending Daines and Gianforte rose to riches on the backs of American workers and that their claim to be job creators belies RightNow Technologies' role helping companies outsource jobs overseas.

Corporate interests still dominate their agenda, said Montana Democratic Party spokeswoman Christina Wilkes, who described Daines and Gianforte as being in lockstep on corporate tax cuts and repealing provisions of the Affordable Care Act.

"They're mega-wealthy, and they are out for people like themselves," Wilkes said.

One area where the two Republicans differ is personality, said Amy Wiening, who worked for Daines and Gianforte on the sales team at RightNow.

Both were supportive of each other and their workers, she said. But where Daines was easygoing and always made time to talk about family or matters outside work, Gianforte was more driven and could be harsh in his delivery, she said.

"He reminds me of a doctor you would totally want to be your doctor because he would know what to do. But he would not want to console you if it's bad news," Wiening said.

Daines was first to enter politics, running for lieutenant governor in 2008 while still at RightNow. He lost, then left the company in 2012 for a successful campaign for the state's sole U.S. House seat. He ran for Senate two years later, cruising to victory after the recently-installed Democratic incumbent, John Walsh, a former lieutenant governor under Bullock, quit amid plagiarism allegations.

Daines had been encouraging Gianforte to join him in politics. In 2016 Gianforte ran for governor, losing to Bullock in a tight race. He won the House seat once held by Daines in a special election months later.

To say the pair now represent the face of the Montana Republican Party would ignore the role of Trump, who has loomed at least as large on the state's political scene and demands loyalty from Republicans.

Gianforte and Daines were initially lukewarm to Trump. When Trump headlined a rally in Billings as he neared victory in the 2016 primary, Gianforte skipped the event and issued a press release welcoming "another visit by a 2016 presidential candidate" without mentioning Trump. Daines told a Montana newspaper in the primary that Trump was "not my first choice, or even my second for president."

They have since become ardent Trump loyalists. Gianforte caught the president's attention when he body-slammed a reporter for The Guardian on the eve of his election to the House. "My kind of guy," Trump said about Gianforte, who pleaded guilty to misdemeanor assault after initially misleading investigators about what happened.

The fruits of the pair's loyalty to Trump are now on display: The President tweeted his support for Gianforte on Wednesday and Vice President Mike Pence headlined a rally last week near Bozeman where Gianforte and Daines spoke back-to-back and then enjoyed a lengthy shout-out from Pence.

Democrats as recently as 2014 held both Montana U.S. Senate seats, the governor's mansion and a bevy of other statewide offices. The GOP has been in ascendance as the state has trended more conservative. The party now controls both chambers of the Legislature and every statewide post except governor and Democrat Jon Tester's seat in the U.S. Senate.

Daines and Gianforte "fit the party like a glove right now," University of Montana political analyst Rob Saldin said. If they sweep the November election, "that's a real vindication of going in this much sharper, Trump-y direction for the party," he said.

Follow Matthew Brown on twitter: @MatthewBrownAP

Trump infuses politics into his choice for the Supreme Court

By ZEKE MILLER and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is infusing deliberations over his coming nomination of a new Supreme Court justice with political meaning as he aims to maximize the benefit before Nov. 3 and even secure an electoral backstop should the result be contested.

Even before Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death last week, the president had tried to use likelihood of more Supreme Court vacancies to his political advantage. Now, as he closes in on a decision on her likely replacement, Trump has used the vacancy to appeal to battleground-state voters and as a rallying cry for his conservative base.

He also is increasingly embracing the high court — which he will have had an outsized hand in reshaping — as an insurance policy in a close election.

Increases in mail, absentee and early voting brought about by the pandemic have already brought about a flurry of election litigation, and both Trump and Democratic nominee Joe Biden have assembled armies of lawyers to continue the fight once vote-counting begins. Trump has been open about tying his push to name a third justice to the court to a potentially drawn-out court fight to determine who will be sworn in on Jan. 20, 2021.

"I think this will end up in the Supreme Court," Trump said Wednesday of the election, adding, "And I think it's very important that we have nine justices."

It's a line echoed by Trump allies, including Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, who said Thursday, "I think that threat to challenge the election is one of the real reasons why it is so important that we confirm the Supreme Court nominees, so that there's a full Supreme Court on the bench to resolve any election challenge."

Barely six weeks from Election Day, and as millions of Americans are already voting, Trump and his advisers have tried to use the court vacancy to help deliver Trump another term in office.

Supreme Court nominations are never entirely devoid of political considerations, but Trump's decision has been particularly wrapped up in a charged political moment.

Within hours of Ginsburg's death, Trump made clear his intention to nominate a woman in her stead, after previously putting two men on the court and as he struggles to mitigate an erosion in support among suburban women.

In discussing his five-person short list, he's been sure to highlight some from election battlegrounds that he's aiming to win this fall as much as their jurisprudence.

"I've heard incredible things about her," he said of Florida's Barbara Lagoa, a day after Ginsburg's death. "I don't know her. She's Hispanic and highly respected. Miami. Highly respected."

In an interview with a Detroit television station, he volunteered that hometown Justice Joan Larsen is "very talented."

Trump was even considering a meeting with Lagoa this week in Florida, where he plans campaign events. The appellate court judge was confirmed last year by the Senate in a bipartisan vote and has been promoted for the court by GOP Gov. Ron DeSantis and others as a nominee with more across-the-board appeal.

Trump and his aides, though, appear to have set their sights on nominating Judge Amy Coney Barrett of Indiana, who was at the White House twice this week, including for a Monday meeting with Trump.

The staunch conservative's 2017 confirmation on a party-line vote included allegations that Democrats were attacking her Catholic faith. Trump allies see that as a political windfall for them should Democrats attempt to do so once again. Catholic voters in Pennsylvania, in particular, are viewed as a pivotal demographic in the swing state that Democratic nominee Joe Biden is trying to recapture.

On Wednesday, Vice President Mike Pence defended Barrett when asked whether her affiliation with People of Praise, a charismatic Christian community, would complicate her ability to serve on the high court.

"I must tell you the intolerance expressed during her last confirmation about her Catholic faith I really

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think was a disservice to the process and a disappointment to millions of Americans," he told ABC News.

Trump played up the power to make judicial nominations with conservative voters in 2016, when Republicans senators kept open the seat vacated by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia rather than let President Barack Obama fill the opening. Trump's decision to release lists of accomplished conservative jurists for potential elevation to the high court was rewarded by increased enthusiasm among white evangelical voters, many of whom had been resistant to supporting the candidacy of the one-time New York Democrat.

Even before Ginsburg's death, Trump had done the same in 2020, releasing an additional 20 names he would consider for the court, and encouraging Democrat Joe Biden to do the same.

Biden has resisted that pressure so far, but that hasn't stopped Trump from trying to sow fear among conservatives about whom the Democrat might nominate.

"So they don't want to show the judges because the only ones that he can put in are far-left radicals," Trump said this week.

"If Joe Biden and the Democrats take power, they will pack the Supreme Court with far-left radicals who will unilaterally transform American society far beyond recognition," Trump said at a rally outside Toledo on Monday. "They will mutilate the law, disfigure the Constitution and impose a socialist vision from the bench that could never pass at the ballot box."

Virus disrupting Rio's Carnival for first time in a century

By MARCELO DE SOUSA Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — A cloud of uncertainty that has hung over Rio de Janeiro throughout the coronavirus pandemic has been lifted, but gloom remains — the annual Carnival parade of flamboyant samba schools won't be held in February.

And while the decision is being characterized as a postponement of the event, no new date has been set.

Rio's League of Samba Schools, LIESA, announced Thursday night that the spread of the coronavirus has made it impossible to safely hold the traditional parades that are a cultural mainstay and, for many, a source of livelihood.

"Carnival is a party upon which many humble workers depend. The samba schools are community institutions, and the parades are just one detail of all that," Luiz Antonio Simas, a historian who specializes in Rio's Carnival, said in an interview. "An entire cultural and productive chain was disrupted by COVID."

Rio's City Hall has yet to announce a decision about the Carnival street parties that also take place across the city. But its tourism promotion agency said in a statement to The Associated Press on Sept. 17 that without a coronavirus vaccine, it is uncertain when large public events can resume.

Brazil's first confirmed coronavirus case was Feb. 26, one day after this year's Carnival ended. As the number of infections grew, the samba schools that participate in the glitzy annual parade halted preparations for the 2021 event.

Nearly all of Rio's samba schools are closely linked to working class communities. Their processions include elaborate floats accompanied by tireless drummers and costumed dancers who sing at the top of their lungs to impress a panel of judges. Tens of thousands of spectators pack the bleachers of the arena, known as the Sambadrome, while tens of millions watch on television.

Before the schools began competing in the 1930s, Carnival was celebrated in dance halls and haphazardly on the streets, Simas said. The parades entered the Sambadrome in the 1980s, and have become Rio's quintessential Carnival display.

The immense labor required for each show was already stymied by restrictions on gatherings that Rio's governor imposed in March. Even with those measures, Rio's metropolitan region, home to 13 million people, so far has recorded more than 15,000 deaths from COVID-19.

Beneath the Sambadrome's bleachers, the city created a homeless shelter for the vulnerable population during the pandemic.

Samba schools suspended float construction, costume sewing, dance rehearsals, and also social projects. The Mangueira school's program in the favela near downtown Rio that teaches music to children — keeping

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them away from crime, and cultivating the school's future drummers — hasn't held classes since March. The pulse of entire suburban Rio cities like Nilopolis, whose population of 160,000 cheers the Beija-Flor samba school, has faded, Simas said.

Some performers resorted to odd jobs and gigs. Diogo Jesús, the lead dancer referred to as "master of ceremonies" in the Mocidade school, couldn't make rent without his income from private events. He started driving for Uber and sewing facemasks to sell at a fair.

"It was a blow. We live Carnival all year round, and many people when they realized everything would stop wound up getting sick or depressed," Jesus said in an interview inside his house in Madureira, a neighborhood in northern Rio. "Carnival is our life."

The last year Rio's Carnival was suspended was 1912, following the death of the foreign relations minister. The mayor of Rio, at the time Brazil's capital, postponed by two months all licenses for the popular dance associations' Carnival parties, according to Luís Cláudio Villafañe, a diplomat and author of the book "The Day They Delayed Carnival." The mayor also voiced opposition to unregulated celebrations, but many Rio residents partied in the streets anyway.

Revelers were undeterred during World War II. And they poured into the street every year during more than two decades of military dictatorship, until 1985, with government censors reviewing costumes, floats and song lyrics.

Then came coronavirus.

"We must await the coming months for definition about if there will be a vaccine or not, and when there will be immunization," LIESA's president, Jorge Castanheira, told reporters in Rio on Thursday. "We don't have the safety conditions to set a date."

The 2020 coronavirus already forced Rio's City Hall to scrap traditional plans for its second-biggest party, New Year's Eve, which draws millions of people to Copacabana beach for dazzling fireworks. Earlier this month, the city's tourism promotion agency Riotur announced that main tourist spots will instead display light and music shows to be broadcast over the internet.

Delay of the Carnival parade will deprive Rio state of much needed tourism revenue. In 2020, Carnival drew 2.1 million visitors and generated 4 billion reais (\$725 million) in economic activity, according to Riotur. A statement from the agency Thursday provided no further clarity on the fate of the Carnival street parties.

Some parties are small — for example one including a few dozen dog owners exhibiting their pets wearing wigs or funny hats. But most feature amps blasting music to throngs of thousands who dance, kiss and swill booze in a crush of celebration. The biggest one boasts more than two million partygoers.

Rita Fernandes, president of Os Blocos da Sebastiana, said her association already canceled its 11 street parties that together draw 1.5 million revelers. Most others groups will follow, she said.

"We cannot be irresponsible and bring the multitudes to the street," she said, pointing to Europe's second wave of contagion.

After several weeks of declining daily infections, Rio authorities have begun expressing concern about an uptick. Public spaces such as beaches have been crowded in violation of pandemic restrictions.

A drummer in Mangueira's samba school, Laudo Braz Neto, said the children he instructed before the pandemic are listless, and he knows there is no way to put on Carnival without being able to safely gather.

"Carnival will only really happen when the whole world can travel. It's a spectacle the world watches, brings income and movement here," he said. "I have no hope for 2021."

Associated Press videojournalist Diarlei Rodrigues contributed to this report.

'No easy answer': Many ask what next in Breonna Taylor case

By CLAIRE GALOFARO, DYLAN LOVAN and ANGIE WANG Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — In the wake of the decision not to prosecute Kentucky police officers for killing Breonna Taylor, authorities and activists alike wrestled Thursday with the question of what comes next amid continued demands for justice in the Black woman's death.

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"The question obviously is: What do we do with this pain?" Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer said during a news conference. "There is no one answer, no easy answer to that question."

Fischer pleaded for calm a day after peaceful protests in Louisville turned violent, and a gunman shot and wounded two police officers. Activists, who were back out chanting Taylor's name and marching for a second night as police in riot gear blocked roads, vowed to press on after a grand jury Wednesday didn't bring homicide charges against the officers who burst into her apartment during a drug investigation in March.

Taylor, an emergency medical worker, was shot multiple times by white officers after Taylor's boyfriend fired at them, authorities said. He said he didn't know who was coming in and opened fire in self-defense. Police entered on a warrant connected to a suspect who did not live there, and no drugs were found inside.

State Attorney General Daniel Cameron said the investigation showed officers acted in self-defense; one was wounded. A single officer was charged with wanton endangerment for firing into neighboring apartments.

The FBI is still investigating whether Taylor's civil rights were violated. But the burden of proof for such cases is very high, with prosecutors having to prove officers knew they were acting illegally and made a willful decision to cause someone's death.

Returning Thursday to the park in downtown Louisville that has been the hub for protesters, Reginique Jones said she'll keep pressing for increased police accountability and for a statewide ban on "no knock" warrants — the kind issued in the Taylor case, though Cameron said the investigation showed police did announce themselves before entering.

"I believe that we are going to get past this," Jones said. "We can still get some justice."

Taylor's family planned to weigh in at a news conference scheduled for Friday in the park that's become known as Injustice Square.

Demonstrators kept gathering there Thursday, while others marched through downtown, where police in riot gear turned out in force as the nighttime curfew passed and crowds blocked some roads.

Officers blocked the exits of a church where protesters gathered to avoid arrest for violating the curfew. Several people were detained, including state Rep. Attica Scott, a Louisville Democrat. Police eventually pulled back and the demonstrators left.

Kenyatta Hicks said he's encouraged by increasingly diverse crowds that have turned out to protest.

"Nobody should give up," Hicks said.

Activists, celebrities and everyday Americans have called for charges against police since Taylor's death. Along with George Floyd, a Black man killed by police in Minneapolis, Taylor's name became a rallying cry during nationwide protests this summer that called out entrenched racism and demanded police reform.

The grand jury's decision set off a new wave of protests nationwide, with people marching in cities like Philadelphia and Rochester, New York, on Thursday, a night after violence marred some demonstrations in cities like Seattle and Portland, Oregon.

Louisville's mayor has instituted a curfew through the weekend, and Gov. Andy Beshear called up the National Guard for "limited missions." Protesters streamed through the streets, where stopped cars honked and one man leaned out a sunroof, his fist in the air and shouted, "Black lives matter."

Earlier, it got heated between some protesters and a group of 12 to 15 armed white people wearing military-style uniforms, but it didn't turn physical.

Peaceful protests a night earlier gave way to fires set in garbage cans, damage to several vehicles and thefts at stores. Then, two officers were shot.

Larynzo D. Johnson, 26, was charged, and an arrest citation said police had video of him opening fire. Court records did not list a lawyer for Johnson, who was scheduled to be in court Friday.

The two officers were "doing well and will survive their injuries," interim Police Chief Robert Schroeder said.

Maj. Aubrey Gregory was shot in the hip and has been released from the hospital. Officer Robinson Desroches was shot in the abdomen and underwent surgery.

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Taylor's case has exposed the wide gulf between public opinion on justice for those who kill Black Americans and the laws under which those officers are charged, which regularly favor police.

Since Taylor's killing, Louisville has taken some steps to address protesters' concerns. The officer who was eventually charged has been fired, and three others were put on desk duty. Officials have banned no-knock warrants and hired its first Black woman as the new permanent police chief.

Last week, the city agreed to more police reforms as part of a settlement that included a \$12 million payment to Taylor's family. But many have expressed frustration that more has not been done.

A grand jury returned three charges of wanton endangerment against Officer Brett Hankison that each carries a sentence of up to five years. The other officers involved weren't charged.

Hankison's attorney, David Lightty, did not return calls requesting comment. He previously said Hankison's firing in June was a "cowardly political act."

Trump told reporters Thursday that the case was a "sad thing."

"I give my regards to the family of Breonna. I also think it's so sad what's happening with everything about that case, including law enforcement," he said.

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden and his running mate, Kamala Harris, called for policing reform.

In the Louisville square where protesters have repeatedly gathered, Rose Henderson has been looking after the flowers, signs and letters placed at a memorial there for Taylor and hopes officials won't try to remove them.

"We're going to stay out here and hold this place," Henderson said.

Associated Press writers Rebecca Reynolds Yonker, Piper Hudspeth Blackburn, Bruce Schreiner and John Minchillo in Louisville, Kentucky; Kevin Freking and Michael Balsamo in Washington; Aaron Morrison in New York; and Haleluya Hadero in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, contributed.

Hudsbeth Blackburn 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.

Virus delays Rio's Carnival for first time in a century

By MARCELO DE SOUSA Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Rio de Janeiro delayed its annual Carnival parade, saying Thursday night that the global spectacle cannot go ahead in February because of Brazil's continued vulnerability to the pandemic.

Rio's League of Samba Schools, LIESA, announced that the spread of the coronavirus has made it impossible to safely hold the traditional parades that are a cultural mainstay and, for many, a source of livelihood.

"Carnival is a party upon which many humble workers depend. The samba schools are community institutions, and the parades are just one detail of all that," Luiz Antonio Simas, a historian who specializes in Rio's Carnival, said in an interview. "An entire cultural and productive chain was disrupted by COVID."

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Brazil's first confirmed coronavirus case was Feb. 26, one day after this year's Carnival ended. As the number of infections grew, the samba schools that participate in the glitzy annual parade halted preparations for the 2021 event. Thursday's announcement removed the cloud of uncertainty that has hung over the city — one of worst hit by the pandemic in Brazil.

Nearly all of Rio's samba schools are closely linked to working class communities. Their processions include elaborate floats accompanied by tireless drummers and costumed dancers who sing at the top of their lungs to impress a panel of judges. Tens of thousands of spectators pack the bleachers of the arena, known as the Sambadrome, while tens of millions watch on television.

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Some parties are small — for example one including a few dozen dog owners exhibiting their pets wearing wigs or funny hats. But most feature amps blasting music to throngs of thousands who dance, kiss and swill booze in a crush of celebration. The biggest one boasts more than two million partygoers.

Rita Fernandes, president of Os Blocos da Sebastiana, said her association already canceled its 11 street parties that together draw 1.5 million revelers. Most others groups will follow, she said.

"We cannot be irresponsible and bring the multitudes to the street," she said, pointing to Europe's second wave of contagion.

After several weeks of declining daily infections, Rio authorities have begun expressing concern about an uptick. Public spaces such as beaches have been crowded in violation of pandemic restrictions.

A drummer in Mangueira's samba school, Laudo Braz Neto, said the children he instructed before the pandemic are listless, and he knows there is no way to put on Carnival without being able to safely gather.

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"Carnival will only really happen when the whole world can travel. It's a spectacle the world watches, brings income and movement here," he said. "I have no hope for 2021."

Associated Press videojournalist Diarlei Rodrigues contributed to this report.

Feds put first Black inmate to death since execution restart

BY MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

TERRE HAUTE, Ind. (AP) — A man who killed a religious couple visiting Texas from Iowa was executed Thursday, the first Black inmate put to death as part of the Trump administration's resumption of federal executions after a nearly 20-year pause.

Christopher Vialva, 40, was pronounced dead shortly before 7 p.m. EDT after receiving a lethal injection at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana.

In a last statement, Vialva asked God to comfort the families of the couple he had killed in 1999, saying, "Father ... heal their hearts with grace and love."

After robbing and locking Todd and Stacie Bagley in the trunk of their car, the then-19-year-old Vialva shot them in the head and burned their bodies in the car.

Vialva's final words were: "I'm ready, Father."

Vialva turned toward his mother behind a glass window in a witness room as the lethal injections began.

"He was looking at me when he died," his mother, Lisa Brown, told The Associated Press in a text message, confirming she attended the execution.

The execution comes during demonstrations, disappointment, violence and sadness in Louisville, Kentucky, after a grand jury did not charge the officers who shot Breonna Taylor with her death, rather filing lower level felonies for shooting into neighboring homes.

Questions about racial bias in the criminal justice system have been front and center since May — following the death of George Floyd after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee on the handcuffed Black man's neck for several minutes.

A report this month by the Washington, D.C.-based Death Penalty Information Center said Black people remain overrepresented on death rows and that Black people who kill white people are far more likely to be sentenced to death than white people who kill Black people.

Of the 56 inmates currently on federal death row, 26 — or nearly 50% — are Black, according to center data updated Wednesday; 22, or nearly 40%, are white and seven, around 12% were Latino. There is one Asian on federal death row. Black people make up only about 13% of the population.

Wearing black glasses with especially thick lenses, Vialva opened his eyes wide as officials started administering the fatal dose of pentobarbital. He scanned the ceiling lights in the pale green room, furrowed his brows, yawned and then turned his head toward a witness room where his mother was. Within minutes, he no longer moved at all, his head fixed in a tilt toward the witness room, his mouth agape.

White blotches emerged on Vialva's hands, as his arms, lips and nose turned a purple hue then whitened. After 20 minutes, an official walked into the chamber, listened to Vialva's chest with a stethoscope and walked out. Seconds later, a voice over an intercom declared Vialva dead at "6:42 p.m." Later, officials corrected the time to 6:46 p.m. No explanation was given.

Vialva's lawyer, Susan Otto, has said race played a role in landing her client on death row for killing the white couple.

Vialva was the seventh federal execution since July and the second this week. Five of the first six were white, a move critics argue was a political calculation to avoid uproar. The sixth was Navajo.

Seconds before Vialva shot the Bagleys, Stacie Bagley said to him: "Jesus loves you," according to court filings.

"I believe when someone deliberately takes the life of another, they suffer the consequences for their actions," Todd Bagley's mother, Georgia, wrote in a statement released after the execution.

"Christopher's mother had the opportunity to visit him for the past 21 years," she wrote. "We have had

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to wait for 21 years for justice and closure. We cannot be with our children for visits or to see them on holidays," Bagley's mother wrote.

In a video statement released by his lawyers earlier, Vialva expressed regret for what he'd done.

"I committed a grave wrong when I was a lost kid and took two precious lives from this world," he said. "Every day, I wish I could right this wrong."

Vialva's mother also spoke at an anti-death penalty rally Thursday morning across from the prison where her son was later put to death.

"This is the first venue I've had in which I could say to Todd and Stacie's family, 'I am so sorry for your loss,'" she said.

She also said her son converted to what she described as Messianic Judaism while behind bars. His spiritual adviser was inside the death chamber during the execution.

Federal authorities executed just three prisoners in the previous 56 years. Death penalty foes accuse President Donald Trump of restarting them to help stake a claim as the law-and-order candidate.

Otto said one Black juror and 11 white jurors recommended the death sentence in 2000 after prosecutors told them Vialva led a Black gang faction in Killeen, Texas, and killed to boost his gang status. That claim, Otto said, was false and only served to conjure up menacing stereotypes.

"It played right into the narrative that he was a dangerous Black thug who killed these lovely white people. And they were lovely," Otto said in a recent phone interview.

According to court filings, the Bagleys were on their way home from a Sunday worship service during a visit to Texas when Vialva and his teenage accomplices asked them for a lift after they stopped at a convenience store — planning all along to rob the couple. After the Bagleys agreed and began driving away, Vialva pulled out a gun and told the couple: "Plans have changed."

After stealing their money, jewelry and ATM card, the teens locked the Bagleys in the trunk of their car as they drove around for hours trying to withdraw money from ATMs and seeking to pawn Stacie Bagley's wedding ring. The Bagleys, who worked as youth ministers, pleaded for their lives from the trunk and urged their kidnapers to accept Jesus.

The teens eventually pulled to the side of the road and poured lighter fluid inside the car. As they did, the Bagleys sang "Jesus loves us" in the trunk. Vialva, the oldest of the group, donned a ski mask, opened the trunk and shot the Bagleys in the head. Stacie Bagley, prosecutors said at trial, was still alive as flames engulfed the car.

Otto said Vialva's lawyers during the trial, the sentencing phase and in an initial appeal didn't appear to raise objections about the racial composition of the jury or the characterization of Vialva as a Black gang leader. That effectively barred subsequent lawyers from raising the issue of racial bias in higher court appeals.

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Palm oil labor abuses linked to world's top brands, banks

By MARGIE MASON and ROBIN McDOWELL Associated Press

PENINSULAR MALAYSIA (AP) — Jum's words tumble out over the phone, his voice growing ever more frantic.

Between sobs, he says he's trapped on a Malaysian plantation run by government-owned Felदा, one of the world's largest palm oil companies. His boss confiscated and then lost his Indonesian passport, he says, leaving him vulnerable to arrest. Night after night, he has been forced to hide from authorities, sleeping on the jungle floor, exposed to the wind and the rain. His biggest fear: the roaming tigers.

All the while, Jum says his supervisor demanded he keep working, tending the heavy reddish-orange palm oil fruit that has made its way into the supply chains of the planet's most iconic food and cosmetics companies like Unilever, L'Oreal, Nestle and Procter & Gamble.

"I am not a free man anymore," he says, his voice cracking. "I desperately want to see my mom and

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dad. I want to go home!"

An Associated Press investigation found many like Jum in Malaysia and neighboring Indonesia – an invisible workforce consisting of millions of laborers from some of the poorest corners of Asia, many of them enduring various forms of exploitation, with the most serious abuses including child labor, outright slavery and allegations of rape. Together, the two countries produce about 85% of the world's estimated \$65 billion palm oil supply.

Palm oil is virtually impossible to avoid. Often disguised on labels as an ingredient listed by more than 200 names, it can be found in roughly half the products on supermarket shelves and in most cosmetic brands. It's in paints, plywood, pesticides and pills. It's also present in animal feed, biofuels and even hand sanitizer.

The AP interviewed more than 130 current and former workers from two dozen palm oil companies who came from eight countries and labored on plantations across wide swaths of Malaysia and Indonesia. Almost all had complaints about their treatment, with some saying they were cheated, threatened, held against their will or forced to work off unsurmountable debts. Others said they were regularly harassed by authorities, swept up in raids and detained in government facilities.

They included members of Myanmar's long-persecuted Rohingya minority, who fled ethnic cleansing in their homeland only to be sold into the palm oil industry. Fishermen who escaped years of slavery on boats also described coming ashore in search of help, but instead ending up being trafficked onto plantations -- sometimes with police involvement.

The AP used the most recently published data from producers, traders and buyers of the world's most-consumed vegetable oil, as well as U.S. Customs records, to link the laborers' palm oil and its derivatives from the mills that process it to the supply chains of top Western companies like the makers of Oreo cookies, Lysol cleaners and Hershey's chocolate treats.

Reporters witnessed some abuses firsthand and reviewed police reports, complaints made to labor unions, videos and photos smuggled out of plantations and local media stories to corroborate accounts wherever possible. In some cases, reporters tracked down people who helped enslaved workers escape. More than a hundred rights advocates, academics, clergy members, activists and government officials also were interviewed.

This story was funded in part by the McGraw Center for Business Journalism at CUNY's Newmark Graduate School of Journalism

Though labor issues have largely been ignored, the punishing effects of palm oil on the environment have been decried for years. Still, giant Western financial institutions like Deutsche Bank, BNY Mellon, Citigroup, HSBC and the Vanguard Group have continued to help fuel a crop that has exploded globally, soaring from just 5 million tons in 1999 to 72 million today, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The U.S. alone has seen a 900 percent spike in demand during that same time.

Sometimes they invest directly but, increasingly, third parties are used like Malaysia-based Maybank, one of the world's biggest palm oil financiers, which not only provides capital to growers but, in some cases, processes the plantations' payrolls. Financial crime experts say that in an industry rife with a history of problems, banks should flag arbitrary and inconsistent wage deductions as potential indicators of forced labor.

"This has been the industry's hidden secret for decades," said Gemma Tillack of the U.S.-based Rainforest Action Network, which has exposed labor abuses on palm oil plantations. "The buck stops with the banks. It is their funding that makes this system of exploitation possible."

As global demand for palm oil surges, plantations are struggling to find enough laborers, frequently relying on brokers who prey on the most at-risk people. Many foreign workers end up fleeced by a syndicate of recruiters and corrupt officials and often are unable to speak the local language, rendering them especially susceptible to trafficking and other abuses.

They sometimes pay up to \$5,000 just to get their jobs, an amount that could take years to earn in their

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home countries, often showing up for work already crushed by debt. Many have their passports seized by company officials to keep them from running away, which the United Nations recognizes as a potential flag of forced labor.

Countless others remain off the books and are especially scared of speaking out. They include migrants working without documentation and children who AP reporters witnessed squatting in the fields like crabs, picking up loose fruit alongside their parents. Many women also work for free or on a day-to-day basis, earning the equivalent of as little as \$2 a day, sometimes for decades.

The AP is not identifying most of the workers or their specific plantations to protect their safety, based on previous instances of retaliation. Many of the interviews took place secretly in homes or coffeeshops in towns and villages near the plantations, sometimes late at night.

The Malaysian government was contacted by the AP repeatedly over the course of a week, but issued no comment. Feluda also did not respond, but its commercial arm, FGV Holdings Berhad, said it had been working to address workers' complaints on its own plantations, including making improvements in recruitment practices and ensuring that foreign laborers have access to their passports.

Indonesians such as Jum make up the vast majority of palm oil workers worldwide, including in Malaysia, where most locals shun the dirty, low-paying jobs. The two nations share a similar language and a porous border, but their close ties do not guarantee safe employment.

Unable to find a job at home, Jum says he went to Malaysia in 2013, signing a contract through an agent to work on a Feluda plantation for three years. He endured the harsh conditions because his family needed the money, but says he asked to leave as soon as his time was up. Instead, he says, his contract was extended twice against his will.

He says he initially was housed with other Indonesians in a crude metal shipping container, sweltering in the tropical heat. Later, his bed consisted of a bamboo mat next to a campfire, with no protection from the elements and the snakes and other deadly animals foraging in the jungle.

"Sometimes I sleep under thousands of stars, but other nights it is totally dark. The wind is very cold, like thousands of razors piercing my skin, especially during a downpour," he says. "I feel that I was deliberately abandoned by the company. Now, my hope is only one: Get back home."

He has lived this way too long, he tells the AP over the phone -- scared to stay, and scared to leave.

"Please help me!" he begs.

A half-century ago, palm oil was just another commodity that thrived in the tropics. Many Western countries relied on their own crops like soybean and corn for cooking, until major retailers discovered the cheap oil from Southeast Asia had almost magical qualities. It had a long shelf life, remained nearly solid at room temperature and didn't smoke up kitchens, even when used for deep-frying.

When researchers started warning that trans fats like those found in margarine posed serious health risks, demand for palm oil soared even higher.

Just about every part of the fruit is used in manufacturing, from the outer flesh to the inner kernel, and the versatility of the oil itself and its derivatives seem endless.

It helps keep oily substances from separating and turns instant noodles into steaming cups of soup, just by adding hot water. It's used in baby formula, non-dairy creamers and supplements and is listed on the labels of everything from Jif Natural peanut butter to Kit Kat candy bars.

Often hidden amid a list of scientific names on labels, it's equally useful in a host of cleansers and makeup products. It bubbles in shampoo, foams in Colgate toothpaste, moisturizes Dove soap and helps keep lipstick from melting.

But the convenience comes with a cost: For workers, harvesting the fruit can be brutal.

The uneven jungle terrain is rough and sometimes flooded. The palms themselves serve as a wind barrier, creating sauna-like conditions, and harvesters need incredible strength to hoist long poles with sickles into the towering trees.

Each day, they must balance the tool while carefully slicing down spiky fruit bunches heavy enough to maim or kill, tending hundreds of trees over expanses that can stretch beyond 10 football fields. Those who fail to meet impossibly high quotas can see their wages reduced, sometimes forcing entire families

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into the fields to make the daily number.

"I work as a helper with my husband to pick up loose fruit. I do not get paid," said Yuliana, who labors on a plantation owned by London Sumatra, which has a history of labor issues and is owned by one of the world's largest instant-noodle makers.

Muhamad Waras, head of sustainability at London Sumatra, responded that wage issues and daily harvesting quotes are regularly discussed and that workers without documents are prohibited.

The AP talked to some female workers from other companies who said they were sexually harassed and even raped in the fields, including some minors.

Workers also complained about a lack of access to medical care or clean water, sometimes collecting rain runoff to wash the residue from their bodies after spraying dangerous pesticides or scattering fertilizer.

While previous media reports have mostly focused on a single company or plantation, the AP investigation is the most comprehensive dive into labor abuses industrywide.

It found widespread problems on plantations big and small, including some that meet certification standards set by the global Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, an association that promotes ethical production -- including the treatment of workers -- and whose members include growers, buyers, traders and environmental watchdogs.

Some of the same companies that display the RSPO's green palm logo signifying its seal of approval are accused of continuing to grab land from indigenous people and destroying virgin rainforests that are home to orangutans and other critically endangered species. They contribute to climate change by cutting down trees, draining carbon-rich peatlands and using illegal slash-and-burn clearing that routinely blankets parts of Southeast Asia in a thick haze.

When asked for comment, some product manufacturers acknowledged the industry's history of labor and environmental problems, and all said they do not tolerate any human rights abuses, including unpaid wages and forced labor. Most stressed they were working toward obtaining only ethically sourced palm oil, pushing governments to make systemic changes, and taking immediate steps to investigate when alerted to troubling issues and suspending relationships with palm oil producers that fail to address grievances.

Nestle, Unilever and L'Oréal were among the companies that noted they had stopped purchasing directly from Felda or its commercial affiliate, FGV. Eliminating tainted palm oil is difficult, however, because labor problems are so endemic and most big buyers are dependent on a tangled network of third-party suppliers.

While some companies, such as Ikea, Colgate-Palmolive and Unilever, directly confirmed the use of palm oil or its derivatives in their products, others refused to say or provided minimal information, sometimes even when "palm oil" was clearly listed on labels. Others said it was difficult to know if their products contained the ingredient because, in items such as cosmetics and cleaning supplies, some names listed on labels could instead be derived from coconut oil or a synthetic form.

"I understand why companies are struggling because palm oil has such a bad reputation," said Didier Bergeret, director of social sustainability at the Consumer Goods Forum, a global industry group. "Even if it's sustainable, they don't feel like talking about it whatsoever."

In response to the criticism, Malaysia and Indonesia have long touted the golden crop as vital to alleviating poverty, saying small-time farmers are able to grow their own palm oil and large industrial estates provide much-needed jobs to workers from poor areas.

Nageeb Wahab, head of the Malaysian Palm oil Association, a government-supported umbrella group, called the allegations against the industry unwarranted. He noted that all the companies in his association, which are most of the country's mid- and larger operations, must meet certification standards.

"I am surprised with all the allegations made. All of them are not true," he said. "There may be violations by some, but definitely it is isolated and not from our members' plantations."

But Soes Hindharno, spokesman for the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration, told the AP that many Indonesian workers who cross over to Malaysia illegally to work on plantations "are easily intimidated, their wages are cut or they are threatened with reporting and deportation." Some have their passports seized by their employers, he said.

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He added that many of the concerns raised by AP about labor conditions in Indonesia had not been brought to his level, but said any company found not following government rules and regulations could face sanctions, including having their operations shut down.

The AP traveled to Jum's Felda plantation in Malaysia earlier this year to meet with him, but calls to his cell phone went unanswered. Fellow workers confirmed he no longer slept in the barracks and instead, vulnerable with no identity papers, had to hide from the police.

Jum's co-workers at least had a roof covering their heads, but their shelter resembled a barn. The filthy kitchen had a hotplate and just a few pots and pans. Only two outdoor squat toilets were functional, forcing many men to share, and a mold-covered cement trough served as a communal basin for washing. Pesticide sprayers were stacked along the metal walls, just feet from their bunks.

The men said they were forced to work unpaid overtime every day. One complained of abdominal pain, saying he was too sick to go to the fields and had been asking the company to give him back his passport so he could return home. He said he was told he must pay more than \$700 to leave – money he did not have.

"We work until we are dying," said a worker sitting in a room with two other colleagues. Their eyes filled with tears after learning Felda was one of the world's largest palm oil producers.

"They use this palm oil to make all these products," he said. "It makes us very sad."

And the global pandemic has only complicated matters, limiting the flow of workers and contributing to even greater labor shortages in Malaysia.

The workers AP interviewed came from Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, the Philippines and Cambodia, along with Myanmar, which represents the newest army of exploited laborers.

Among the latter are stateless Rohingya Muslims such as Sayed.

Decades of oppression and outbreaks of violence have sent nearly a million Rohingya fleeing Myanmar in the last five years. Sayed was among those who escaped by boat -- only to be held hostage, he said, and tortured by human traffickers in a jungle camp in Thailand.

After his relatives paid a ransom, Sayed said he was sent to Muslim-majority Malaysia, where thousands of Rohingya have sought refuge. He heard about a job paying workers without permits the equivalent of \$14 a day, so he jumped into the back of a truck with eight other men and watched for hours as the busy highways narrowed to a dirt mountain track surrounded by an endless green carpet of palm oil trees.

Once on the plantation, Sayed said he lived in an isolated lean-to, dependent on his boss to bring what little rice and dried fish he was given to eat. He said he escaped after working a month and was later arrested, spending a year and a half in an immigration detention center, where guards beat him.

"There is no justice," he said. "People here say, 'This is not your country, we will do whatever we want.'"

Shamshu, who also is Rohingya, said he, too, made a run from his plantation after realizing he would never get paid. But that didn't end his troubles.

Shamshu had a U.N.-issued refugee card, which can provide some protection even though Malaysia does not recognize it as a legal document, but he and others said it's common for authorities to tear them up. He said he was stopped by police and spent four months in prison and then six months in an immigration detention center, where he was flogged.

During one beating, he described how a guard smashed his face against a wall, while two others pinned his arms and legs. Similar stories were repeated to the AP by several other migrant workers, including Vannak Anan Prum, a Cambodian who published a graphic novel in 2018 depicting his abuse.

"There is still a scar ... and I still have pain," Shamshu said of his caning. "I think it was connected to electricity because I passed out."

In some of the worst cases of abuse, migrant workers said they fled one kind of servitude for another, detailing how they were trafficked, sold and enslaved not once, but twice.

Five men from Cambodia and Myanmar told the AP strikingly similar stories about being forced to work on Thai fishing boats for years at different times. They said they managed to break free while docking in Sarawak, Malaysia, before being scooped up by police and quickly sold again onto plantations.

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"In Cambodia, I often heard my parents talking about the hardship of their lives under the Khmer Rouge regime, but I myself have met this hardship, too, when I worked at the Thai fishing boat and at the Malaysian palm oil plantation," said Sren Brohim, 48, who escaped by offering to fish for free in exchange for a boat ride home. "Working at these two places was like working in hell."

Rights groups confirmed being double-trafficked is not uncommon, especially five to 10 years ago, when recruiters and human traffickers would wait along the coast for runaway fishermen.

Last year in Malaysia, another Cambodian man who said he spent five years enslaved at sea and four more on plantations was among those who surfaced. Instead of being repatriated as a victim of human trafficking, rights groups said he was jailed for months for being in the country illegally.

A Burmese man, Zin Ko Ko Htwe, said he also was brought to a plantation after escaping from a boat in 2008 and spent several months working there, without being paid. He decided to run one day, but said his supervisors chased him down, pulled out a gun and surrounded him.

"Come out!" he recalled them yelling. "If you don't, we will kill you!"

Ko Htwe was taken back to the plantation, where he said his bosses tied his hands together and, at gunpoint, told him to kneel before the other workers as a warning. He eventually managed to escape, but didn't make it home until 2016 -- nearly a decade after he left.

"We gave our sweat and blood for palm oil," Ko Htwe said. "We were forced to work and were abused."

When Americans and Europeans see palm oil is listed as an ingredient in their snacks, he said, they should know "it's the same as consuming our sweat and blood."

The palm industry's dominance is perhaps best grasped by viewing its footprint from 35,000 feet in the air. Trees planted in neat rows stretch across miles of flatlands in both countries, straddling coffee-colored rivers and eventually ringing terraced mountains for as far as the eye can see, creating a patchwork of green nearly the size of Kansas.

It's easy to understand the allure, considering that crops like rapeseed, sesame and corn require a lot more land while producing far less oil.

Malaysia and Indonesia started ramping up commercial production in the 1960s and '70s, supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which saw palm oil as an engine for economic growth in the developing world. Today, following advances in transportation and capabilities in refining, the two countries have a near-monopoly on the global supply, even as production expands across Africa and Latin America, where a litany of labor abuses also have been reported.

China and India have become major customers, and the crop now is being eyed as a potential energy source for power plants, ships and airplanes, which would create even more demand.

"If the whole Western world would stop using palm oil, I don't think that would make any difference," said Gerrit van Duijn, a former refineries manager at Unilever, one of the world's largest palm oil buyers for food and personal care products.

The trees take only three or four years to mature and then bear fruit year-round for up to three decades. But most companies can't maintain the pace of expansion without outside funding. Every 10,000 acres of new planting requires up to \$50 million, van Duijn estimates.

Asian banks are by far the most robust financiers of the plantations, but Western lenders and investment companies have poured almost \$12 billion into palm oil plantations in the last five years alone, allowing for the razing and replanting of ever-expanding tracts of land, according to Forest and Finance, a database run by six nonprofit organizations that track money flowing to palm oil companies. The U.S. institutions BNY Mellon, Charles Schwab Corp., Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase & Co., and Citigroup Inc., along with Europe's HSBC, Standard Chartered, Deutsche Bank, Credit Suisse and Prudential, together account for \$3.5 billion of that, according to the data.

Other contributors include U.S. state pensions and teachers' unions, including CalPERS, California's massive public employees fund, and insurance companies such as State Farm, meaning that even conscientious consumers many unwittingly be supporting the industry just by visiting ATMs, mortgaging homes, insuring cars or investing in 401K retirement accounts.

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Bank of America, HSBC, Standard Chartered, Deutsche Bank, Credit Suisse, CalPERS and State Farm responded by noting their policies vowing to support sustainability practices in the palm oil industry, with many also incorporating human rights into their guidelines. JPMorgan Chase declined comment, and BNY Mellon, Citigroup and Prudential did not respond. Charles Schwab called its investment "small."

Some, including Norway's government pension -- the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, worth about \$1 trillion -- have divested or distanced themselves from palm oil companies in recent years.

But Norway and many big-name banks and financial institutions around the globe continue to maintain ties with Malaysia's biggest bank, Malayan Banking Berhad. More commonly known as Maybank, it has provided almost \$4 billion in financing to Southeast Asia's palm oil industry between 2015 and 2020, or about 10 percent of all loans and underwriting services, according to Forests and Finance.

Though the group accuses Maybank of having some of the loosest social and environmental assessment policies in the industry, its shareholders include institutions such as the Vanguard Group, BlackRock and State Street Corp.

The biggest gains for banks affiliated with palm oil come from big-ticket financial services, such as corporate loans. But some of the same institutions also offer banking services for workers, handling payrolls and installing ATM machines inside plantations.

"And this is where banks, such as Maybank, may find themselves at the heart of a forced-labor problem," said Duncan Jepson, managing director of the global anti-trafficking nonprofit group Liberty Shared. "Financial institutions have ethical and contractual obligations to all their clients, as set out in the customer charters. In this case, that means both the palm oil company and its workers."

Jepson said abnormal paycheck deductions are commonplace industry-wide, which should trigger investigations by the banks' risk management teams into possible money-laundering.

In a statement, Maybank expressed surprise at the criticism of its standards, saying that "we reject any insinuation that Maybank may be involved in any unethical behavior." The bank said it had not received any complaints about worker paychecks and "does not arbitrarily make deductions to client accounts unless instructed or authorized to do so by the account holder." It said it would immediately investigate any complaints brought forward. It also pushed back against allegations that it has loose social governance standards.

Asked for comment on their investments, BlackRock reiterated its commitment to sustainable practices, Vanguard said it monitors companies in its portfolio for human rights abuses, and State Street did not respond.

Jepson's organization filed a petition with the U.S. government earlier this year, citing allegations of child and forced labor, and seeking a ban on all palm oil imports from Sime Darby Plantation. The giant Malaysian-based producer told the AP that it has taken several steps to address labor concerns, including setting up a multilingual worker helpline. Two similar petitions were filed last year by other groups against FGV Holding, Felda's commercial arm.

FGV Holdings, which employs nearly 30,000 foreign workers and manages about 1 million acres, has a 50/50 joint-venture with American consumer goods giant Procter & Gamble Company. FGV Holdings has been under fire for labor abuses and was sanctioned by the RSPO certification group two years ago.

Nurul Hasanah Ahamed Hassain Malim, FGV's head of sustainability, noted that while the company is striving to make improvements, the issues raised stretch beyond just FGV and that the government also should play a role in protecting migrant workers.

"It is an industry issue. And I would say that it's not only specific to plantations -- you would see that in other sectors as well," she said.

Several workers at different companies, including Jum's plantation, showed the AP their pay stubs and ledgers documenting daily wages. Some noted they were regularly docked for not meeting quotas or shorted on their salaries every month, sometimes for years, to pay off the brokers who recruited them. In one case, more than 40 percent was subtracted from a Malaysian employee's earnings, including a deduction for electricity.

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Some months, Jum and the others said they made as little as \$10 a day. Most labored the same hours, doing identical jobs, but said they never knew what amount to expect until checking the Maybank accounts where their salaries were deposited each month.

Karim, a Bangladeshi worker who arrived in Malaysia legally 12 years ago after being promised a position in an electronics company, said he wound up working for a subcontractor on many large plantations owned by the biggest companies.

"I have been cheated five times in six years," he said, adding that once when he asked for his unpaid wages, his boss "threatened to run me over with his car."

Many of these conditions should not be a surprise to companies buying palm oil and those helping finance the plantations.

The U.S. State Department has long linked the palm oil industry in Malaysia and Indonesia to exploitation and trafficking. And a 2018 report released by the Consumer Goods Forum found indicators of forced labor on estates in both countries -- essentially putting the network's 400 CEOs on alert. Its members include palm oil customers like Nestle, General Mills Inc., PepsiCo Inc., Colgate-Palmolive Company and Johnson & Johnson.

Many large suppliers have pledged to root out labor abuses after pressure from buyers who have denounced it. But some workers said they are told to hide or coached on what to say during auditors' scheduled visits when only the best conditions are often showcased for sustainability certification.

It's a system that keeps those like Jum from ever being seen.

Soon after his phone call with the AP pleading for help, Jum decides to slip away from his plantation, without even telling his friends goodbye. Instead, he sends them an abrupt text saying he's had enough and will try to find an illegal boat home to Indonesia.

It's a dangerous plan. The risk of getting caught or dying at sea is all too real. He could simply disappear.

Days pass with no word. But finally, Jum emerges: He has reached the Malaysian coast, but doesn't have enough money to pay smugglers for the trip home. He is huddled in a small metal hut to avoid being spotted, wiping away tears and running his hands through thick tangles of black hair.

"If I get caught," he tells the AP on a video call, "I'm afraid that I will not be able to see my mother again."

Jum is hiding in a popular corridor for migrants without papers, and authorities are aggressively patrolling the area. Smooth-talking brokers also are on the hunt, waiting to pounce on vulnerable workers and promising safe passage for a price that often climbs once a trip begins.

Jum has always shielded his family from his troubles and the thought of turning to them for help fills him with shame. But as the days continue, he has no choice: He makes the call and they borrow the money needed to finally bring him home.

When it's time to go, Jum spends the night in the forest with a group of fellow Indonesians also nervous about the risky crossing. He readies himself to plunge into the disorienting blackness of the South China Sea before dawn to swim to the waiting boat, one of the most treacherous legs of the journey.

Once Jum climbs aboard, totally spent, he quickly realizes to his horror that the man who extracted \$600 in exchange for transport all the way to his village has disappeared. He tries to ask what happened, but is silenced and told to hand over his phone unless he wants it tossed into the water.

"No questions!" the captain screams at him. "Do you want to live or die?"

Jum spends the journey relentlessly scanning the water for lights from border patrol vessels that could catch them as the boat is slammed by waves powerful enough to capsize it. He doesn't relax until he touches Indonesian sand.

He is safe. But he also is broke, and his family remains thousands of miles away. He looks for work, but no one will hire him without proper identification papers -- his Indonesian ID card, which says he is 32, expired years ago -- so he relies on strangers for food and shelter.

After a stretch of silence, Jum finally reaches out to the AP again -- crying, wracked with hunger. The AP asks if he wants to be put in touch with the local International Organization for Migration office, which takes him to a shelter and designates him as a victim of trafficking. He is quarantined due to a mounting

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number of coronavirus cases until at last -- three months after fleeing his plantation -- he is placed on a plane home.

His excitement at seeing his family is muted by the humiliation he feels returning empty-handed after working on the plantation for seven years. But it doesn't matter to them.

"For my parents, the most important thing was that I came back home safe and healthy," he says. "I felt so relieved when my feet stepped back in my home village. It's a great relief, like someone who just escaped punishment. ... I feel like a free man!"

With just an elementary school education, Jum's only job now is tending a neighbor's rice fields for almost no money. It's a problem many migrant workers face: Are their families better off when they're away? At least then there's one less mouth to feed, and they're able to send a little cash home.

Brokers often jump on those who have returned home to such little opportunity, trying to lure them away again with renewed promises of riches.

So it's no surprise when the phone call comes from an agent in Malaysia who already has obtained Jum's new number.

Come back, the agent assures him. Things will be better this time. Just come back.

Associated Press reporters Sopheng Cheang and Gemunu Amarasinghe contributed to this report.

Trump promotes health care 'vision' but gaps remain

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — More than three-and-a-half years into his presidency and 40 days from an election, President Donald Trump on Thursday launched what aides termed a "vision" for health care heavy on unfulfilled aspirations.

"This is affirmed, signed, and done, so we can put that to rest," Trump said. He signed an executive order on a range of issues, including protecting people with preexisting medical conditions from insurance discrimination.

But that right is already guaranteed in the Obama-era health law his administration is asking the Supreme Court to overturn.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi dismissively said Trump's "bogus executive order on pre-existing conditions isn't worth the paper it's signed on." Democrats are betting heavily that they have the edge on health care this election season.

Trump spoke at an airport hangar in swing-state North Carolina to a crowd that included white-coated, mask-wearing health care workers. He stood on a podium in front of a blue background emblazoned with "America First Healthcare Plan." His latest health care pitch won accolades from administration officials and political supporters but failed to impress others.

"Executive orders issued close to elections are not the same thing as actual policies," said Katherine Hempstead, a senior policy adviser with the nonpartisan Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which works on a range of health care issues, from coverage to quality.

Trump's speech served up a clear political attack, as he accused Democrats of wanting to unleash a "socialist nightmare" on the U.S. health care system, complete with rationing. But Democratic nominee Joe Biden has rejected calls from his party's left for a government-run plan for all. Instead, the former vice president wants to expand the Affordable Care Act, and add a new public program as an option.

Trump returned to health care amid disapproval of his administration's handling of the coronavirus pandemic and growing uncertainty about the future of the Obama-era law.

In a rambling speech, he promised quality health care at affordable prices, lower prescription drug costs, more consumer choice and greater transparency. His executive order would also try to end surprise medical bills.

"If we win we will have a better and less expensive plan that will always protect individuals with pre-existing conditions," Trump declared.

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But while his administration has made some progress on its health care goals, the sweeping changes Trump promised as a candidate in 2016 have eluded him.

The clock has all but run out in Congress for major legislation on lowering drug costs or ending surprise bills, much less replacing the Affordable Care Act, or "Obamacare."

Pre-election bill signing ceremonies on prescription drugs and surprise medical charges were once seen as achievable — if challenging — goals for the president. No longer.

Trump's speech Thursday conflated some of his administration's achievements with policies that are in stages of implementation and ones that remain aspirational.

Democrats are warning Trump would turn back the clock if given another four years in the White House, and they're promising coverage for all and lower drug prices.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said Trump's executive order would declare it the policy of the U.S. government to protect people with preexisting conditions, even if the ACA is declared unconstitutional. However, such protections are already the law, and Trump would have to go to Congress to cement a new policy.

On surprise billing, Azar said the president's order will direct him to work with Congress on legislation, and if there's no progress, move ahead with regulatory action. However, despite widespread support among lawmakers for ending surprise bills, the White House has been unable to forge a compromise that steers around determined lobbying by interest groups affected.

Health care consultant and commentator Robert Laszewski said he's particularly puzzled by Trump's order on preexisting conditions.

"So, after 20 years of national public policy debate and hard-fought congressional and presidential approval, how does Trump conclude he can restore these protections, should the Republican Supreme Court suit overturn them, with a simple executive order?" asked Laszewski.

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network said the president's order is not the equivalent of Obama's law. "Should the administration succeed in its case to throw out the law, the executive order will offer no guaranteed patient protections in its place," said Lisa Lacasse, the group's president.

For Trump, health care represents a major piece of unfinished business.

Prescription drug inflation has stabilized when generics are factored in, but the dramatic price rollbacks he once teased have not materialized. In his speech the president highlighted another executive order directing Medicare to pay no more than what other nations pay for medications, but it remains yet to be seen how that policy will work in practice, if it can overcome fierce opposition from the drug industry.

Trump said millions of Medicare recipients will soon receive a card in the mail containing \$200 that they can use to help pay for prescription medications. "I will always take care of our wonderful senior citizens," he promised. No detail was immediately available on when seniors would get such a card or how the cost of the assistance would be paid for.

More broadly, the number of uninsured Americans started edging up under Trump even before job losses in the economic shutdown to try to contain the coronavirus pandemic. Various studies have tried to estimate the additional coverage losses this year, but the most authoritative government statistics have a long time lag. Larry Levitt of the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation says his best guess is "several million."

Meanwhile, Trump is pressing the Supreme Court to invalidate the entire Obama health law, which provides coverage to more than 20 million people and protects Americans with medical problems from insurance discrimination. That case will be argued a week after Election Day.

The death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has added another layer of uncertainty. Without Ginsburg, there's no longer a majority of five justices who previously had voted to uphold the ACA.

Democrats, unable to slow the Republican march to Senate confirmation of a replacement for Ginsburg, are ramping up their election-year health care messaging. It's a strategy that helped them win the House in 2018.

A recent Kaiser Foundation poll found Biden had an edge over Trump among registered voters as the candidate with the better approach on making sure everyone has access to health care and insurance, 52% to 40%. The gap narrowed for lowering costs of health care: 48% named Biden, while 42% picked Trump.

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Trump unveiled his agenda at the start of a two-day swing to several battleground states, including the all-important Florida. There, he held a rally in Jacksonville and was to court Latino voters at an event in Doral on Friday. From there, Trump will court black voters in Atlanta and attend a fundraiser at his Washington hotel before ending Friday with another rally in Newport News, Virginia.

The scramble to show concrete accomplishments on health care comes as Trump is chafing under criticism that he never delivered a Republican alternative to Obamacare.

"We've really become the healthcare party — the Republican Party — and nobody knows that," he said Thursday. "The news doesn't talk about it."

Despite Trump attacks, both parties vow orderly election

By LISA MASCARO, AAMER MADHANI and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's refusal to commit to a peaceful transfer of power if he loses drew swift blowback Thursday from both parties in Congress, and lawmakers turned to unprecedented steps to ensure he can't ignore the vote of the people. Amid the uproar, Trump said anew he's not sure the election will be "honest."

Congressional leaders, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, rejected Trump's assertion that he'll "see what happens" before agreeing to any election outcome.

Many other lawmakers -- including from Trump's own Republican Party -- vowed to make sure voters' wishes are followed ahead of Inauguration Day in January. And some Democrats were taking action, including formally asking Trump's defense secretary, homeland security adviser and attorney general to declare they'll support the Nov. 3 results, whoever wins.

Asked as he departed the White House for a campaign rally if the election is only legitimate if he is the winner, Trump said, "We'll see."

The president said he wants to "make sure the election is honest, and I'm not sure that it can be."

Trump's attacks on the upcoming vote -- almost without modern precedent in the U.S. -- are hitting amid the tumult of the campaign, as partisan tensions rage and more Americans than ever are planning to vote by mail because of the coronavirus pandemic.

It's not the first time he has sowed doubts about the voting process. But his increased questioning before any result is setting off alarms ahead of an Election Day like no other. Even without signs of illegality, results could be delayed because of the pandemic, leaving the nation exposed to groups or foreign countries seeking to provoke discord.

McConnell, the GOP Senate leader, said in a tweet, "The winner of the November 3rd election will be inaugurated on January 20th." He said, "There will be an orderly transition just as there has been every four years since 1792."

Said Pelosi, "Calm down, Mr. President."

"You are in the United States of America. It is a democracy," she said, reminding Trump this is not North Korea, Russia or other countries with strongman leaders he admires. "So why don't you just try for a moment to honor our oath of office to the Constitution of the United States."

Trump is fanning the uncertainty as he floats theories the election may be "rigged" if he loses, echoing warnings he made ahead of the 2016 voting — even though past elections have not shown substantial evidence of fraud from mail-in voting.

During a Wednesday news conference, Trump said, "We're going to have to see what happens," responding to a question about committing to the results. "You know that I've been complaining very strongly about the ballots, and the ballots are a disaster."

Reaction to his comment was strong from Capitol Hill — from both parties.

Lindsey Graham, a Trump ally and the GOP chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, told "Fox & Friends" on Thursday: "If Republicans lose we will accept the result. If the Supreme Court rules in favor of Joe Biden, I will accept that result."

Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, a member of the House GOP leadership, tweeted: "The peaceful transfer of power is enshrined in our Constitution and fundamental to the survival of our Republic. America's lead-

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ers swear an oath to the Constitution. We will uphold that oath.”

Joe Biden, the Democratic presidential nominee, was incredulous, “What country are we in?” he said late Wednesday of Trump’s comment. “Look, he says the most irrational things. I don’t know what to say about it. But it doesn’t surprise me.”

On Capitol Hill, Trump’s possible refusal to accept the election results has been discussed privately for weeks as lawmakers consider options. One senator said recently it was the biggest topic of private discussions.

Two House Democrats, Reps. Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey and Elissa Slotkin of Michigan — both members of the Armed Services Committee — are formally asking members of Trump’s Cabinet to go on record and commit to upholding the Constitution and peaceful transition.

Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, responded in a letter to the lawmakers last month that he sees “no role” for the military to intervene in a disputed election.

But Defense Secretary Mark Esper declined to respond to the lawmakers’ questions. Similar queries have been sent to Attorney General William Barr and acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf. They have yet to respond.

“The president can’t successfully refuse to accept the results of the election without a number of very senior officials aiding him,” said Slotkin, a former CIA analyst.

Sherill, a former Navy pilot, said peaceful transition “really relies a lot on the Cabinet officers turning over their departments to the next administration.” She told The Associated Press recently she wants to hear from “all of them.”

Meanwhile, Republicans are rushing to fill the vacancy on the Supreme Court created by Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s death, partly to ensure a Trump-friendly court majority to resolve any post-election lawsuits by their party or Trump himself.

Texas Sen. Ted Cruz is among leading Republicans pushing the importance of the court’s role. And Graham suggested on Fox that the Supreme Court could end up all but declaring the winner.

Democrats object strongly.

“He wants to be named president for life?” Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., exclaimed at the Capitol. That’s how a “dictator” operates, she said. “That’s not how a democracy works.”

Earlier Thursday, the White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany sought to clarify Trump’s words, saying he “will accept the results of a free and fair election.”

But the press secretary added that Trump wants to “get rid of mass, mail-out voting.”

The president, who uses mail-in voting himself, has tried to distinguish between states that automatically send ballots to all registered voters and those, like Florida, that send only to voters who request them. Five states that routinely send mail ballots to all voters have seen no significant fraud.

Of the nine states with universal ballots this year, only Nevada is a battleground, and likely pivotal only in a total national presidential deadlock.

Before the 2016 election, much as now, Trump refused to commit to accepting the results during the summer.

“I have to see,” Trump said two months ago on “Fox News Sunday.” “No, I’m not going to just say yes. I’m not going to say no, and I didn’t last time either.”

Madhani reported from Chicago. Associated Press writers Andrew Taylor and Laurie Kellman in Washington, Alexandra Jaffe in Wilmington, Del. and Jonathan Lemire in New York contributed to this report.

Stuck at sea: Nations urged to help virus-stranded mariners

By ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Another COVID-19 problem that the U.N. is trying to solve: how to help more than 300,000 merchant mariners who are trapped at sea because of coronavirus restrictions.

Describing the mounting desperation of seafarers who have been afloat for a year or more, Captain Hedi

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Marzougui pleaded their case Thursday at a meeting with shipping executives and government officials on the sidelines of this week's U.N. General Assembly.

As the pandemic washed over the world and made shipping crews unwelcome in many ports, he said, "We received very limited information, and it became increasingly difficult to get vital supplies and technical support. Nations changed regulations on a daily, if not hourly, basis."

Several months later, many borders remain closed and flights are rare, complicating efforts to bring in replacement crews for those stuck at sea and forcing their employers to keep extending their contracts.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres joined shipping companies, trade unions and maritime organizations in urging governments to recognize merchant crews as essential workers and allow them to travel more freely. With more than 80% of global trade by volume transported by sea, the world's 2 million merchant seafarers play a vital role.

Merchant ship crews are used to long stretches away from home, but as virus infections and restrictions spread early this year, anxiety mounted along with the uncertainty, Marzougui said.

"Not knowing when or if we would be returning home put severe mental strain on my crew and myself," he said. "We felt like second-class citizens with no input or control over our lives."

The Tunisian-born captain spent an extra three months at sea and finally made it home to his family in Florida in late May. But more than 300,000 mariners are still stranded, waiting for replacement crews; about as many are waiting on shore, trying to get back to work.

Maritime officials from Panama, the Philippines, Canada, France and Kenya defended steps they have taken individually to allow safe crew changes or otherwise ease the crisis.

But officials lamented a lack of international coordination among nations and shipping companies, calling for new rules to protect countries from the virus while respecting the rights of stranded crews.

No figures were released for how many merchant mariners have contracted the virus, but Guy Platten of the International Chamber of Shipping said the virus risk is "relatively low" because shipping companies have strict protection measures and "have no wish whatsoever to bring infections on our ships."

He blamed "red tape and bureaucracy" for crew change delays and said border guards and local port officials in some countries are being overzealous in blocking them from coming ashore. One way goods are still able to get ashore despite restrictions is by dock workers fetching them from the ships.

France proposed compiling a global U.N. list of ports that can be secured to accommodate crew changes. Kenya called for sharing costs globally for a rapid testing plan for major ports.

Crews often work 12-hour shifts with no weekends, and Marzougui warned that extending stints without a break risks physical and mental strain — potentially putting ships and oceans in danger.

The captain compared it to telling a marathon runner at the end of the race that they had to "do it again, right away, with no rest."

At UN, China, Russia and US clash over pandemic responses

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United States butted heads with China and Russia at the United Nations on Thursday over responsibility for the pandemic that has interrupted the world, trading allegations about who mishandled and politicized the virus in one of the few real-time exchanges among top officials at this year's COVID-distanced U.N. General Assembly meeting.

The remarks at the U.N. Security Council's ministerial meeting on the assembly's sidelines came just after U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres decried the lack of international cooperation in tackling the still "out-of-control" coronavirus.

The sharp exchanges, at the end of a virtual meeting on "Post COVID-19 Global Governance," reflected the deep divisions among the three veto-wielding council members that have escalated since the virus first emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan in January. They also crackled with an energy and action that the prerecorded set pieces of leader speeches at the virtual meeting have thus far lacked.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, speaking first, stressed the importance of U.N.-centered multilateralism and alluded to countries — including the U.S. — opting out of making a COVID-19 vaccine a global

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public good available to people everywhere.

"In such a challenging moment, major countries are even more duty-bound to put the future of humankind first, discard Cold War mentality and ideological bias and come together in the spirit of partnership to tide over the difficulties," Wang said.

And in a jab at U.S. and European Union sanctions including on Russia, Syria and others, he said: "Unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction needs to be opposed in order to safeguard the authority and sanctity of international law."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said the pandemic and its "common misfortune did not iron out interstate differences, but to the contrary deepened them."

"In a whole number of countries there is a temptation to look abroad for those who are responsible for their own internal problems," he said. "And we see attempts on the part of individual countries to use the current situation in order to move forward their narrow interests of the moment in order to settle the score with the undesirable governments or geopolitical competitors."

All that was too much for the United States' U.N. ambassador, Kelly Craft, who opened her remarks late in the meeting with a blunt rejoinder.

"Shame on each of you. I am astonished and disgusted by the content of today's discussion," Craft said. She said some representatives were "squandering this opportunity for political purposes."

"President Trump has made it very clear: We will do whatever is right, even if it's unpopular, because, let me tell you what, this is not a popularity contest," Craft said.

She quoted Trump's speech Tuesday to the virtual opening of the General Assembly's leaders meeting in which he said that to chart a better future, "we must hold accountable the nation which unleashed this plague onto the world: China."

"The Chinese Communist Party's decision to hide the origins of this virus, minimize its danger, and suppress scientific cooperation (that) transformed a local epidemic into a global pandemic," Craft said, adding that these actions "prove that not all member states are equally committed to public health, transparency, and their international obligations."

But she ended her remarks saying one lesson from the pandemic is the need for "unity, not division," and calling for council members "to work together in transparency and in good faith."

Chinese U.N. Ambassador Zhang Jun asked for the floor at the end of the meeting and delivered a lengthy retort, saying "China resolutely opposes and rejects the baseless accusations by the United States."

"Abusing the platform of the U.N. and its Security Council, the U.S. has been spreading political virus and disinformation, and creating confrontation and division," Zhang said.

Zhang said: "The U.S. should understand that its failure in handling COVID-19 is totally its fault."

Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia expressed regret that Craft used Thursday's meeting "to make unfounded accusations" against one council member. and quoting Lavrov saying the crisis has shown the need for "the interdependence, interconnectedness of all states without exception in all walks of life."

Responding to Craft's call for unity, he said, "It's hard to disagree with that. But unfortunately, the crux of her statement, its form and its tone, do not correspond to that appeal at all."

The United Nations chief said in opening the Security Council meeting that the world failed to cooperate in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. Guterres said that if the world responds to even more catastrophic challenges with the same disunity and disarray, "I fear the worst."

He said the international community's failure "was the result of a lack of global preparedness, cooperation, unity and solidarity."

Guterres pointed to the nearly 1 million people around the world that the coronavirus has killed, the more than 30 million who have been infected.

He said the global response is more and more fragmented, and "as countries go in different directions, the virus goes in every direction."

What is needed more, Guterres said, is a cooperation that not only involves nations but includes global and regional organizations, international financial institutions, trade alliances and others including the business community, civil society, cities and regions, academia and young people.

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Lavrov also praised the World Health Organization for acting professionally and providing "effective preventive steps" to minimize the pandemic's effect. U.S. President Donald Trump pulled out of the WHO, accusing the U.N. agency of being under Chinese influence.

Edith M. Lederer, chief U.N. correspondent for The Associated Press, has been covering world affairs for nearly a half-century. Follow her on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/EdithLedererAP>

Powerful Vatican Cardinal Becciu resigns amid scandal

By NICOLE WINFIELD Assciated Press

ROME (AP) — The powerful head of the Vatican's saint-making office, Cardinal Angelo Becciu, resigned suddenly Thursday from the post and renounced his rights as a cardinal amid a financial scandal that has reportedly implicated him indirectly.

The Vatican provided no details on why Pope Francis accepted Becciu's resignation in a statement late Thursday. In the one-sentence announcement, the Holy See said only that Francis had accepted Becciu's resignation as prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints "and his rights connected to the cardinalate."

Becciu, the former No. 2 in the Vatican's secretariat of state, has been reportedly implicated in a financial scandal involving the Vatican's investment in a London real estate deal that has lost the Holy See millions of euros in fees paid to middlemen.

The Vatican prosecutor has placed several Vatican officials under investigation, as well as the middlemen, but not Becciu. Becciu has defended the soundness of the original investment and denied any wrongdoing, and it's not clear whether the scandal itself was behind his resignation or possibly sparked a separate line of inquiry.

But the late-breaking news of his resignation, the severity of his apparent sanction, the Vatican's tight-lipped release and the unexpected downfall of one of the most powerful Vatican officials all suggested a shocking new chapter in the scandal, which has convulsed the Vatican for the past year.

The last time a cardinal's rights were removed was when American Theodore McCarrick renounced his rights and privileges as a cardinal in July 2018 amid a sexual abuse investigation. He was subsequently defrocked altogether by Francis last year for sexually abusing adults as well as minors.

Before him, the late Scottish Cardinal Keith O'Brien in 2015 relinquished the rights and privileges of being a cardinal after unidentified priests alleged sexual misconduct. O'Brien was, however, allowed to retain the cardinal's title and he died a member of the College of Cardinals, the elite group of churchmen whose main job is to elect a pope.

In the Vatican statement, the Holy See identified Becciu as "His Eminence Cardinal Angelo Becciu," making clear he remained a cardinal but without any rights.

At 72, Becciu would have been able to participate in a possible future conclave to elect Francis' successor. Cardinals over age 80 can't vote. But by renouncing his rights as a cardinal, Becciu has relinquished his rights to take part.

Becciu was the "substitute," or top deputy in the secretariat of state from 2011-2018, when Francis made him a cardinal and moved him into the Vatican's saint-making office. He straddled two pontificates, having been named by Pope Benedict XVI and entrusted with essentially running the Curia, or Vatican bureaucracy, a position that gave him enormous influence and power.

The financial problems date from 2014, when the Vatican entered into a real estate venture by investing over \$200 million in a fund run by an Italian businessman. The deal gave the Holy See 45% of the luxury building at 60 Sloane Ave. in London's Chelsea neighborhood.

The money came from the secretariat of state's asset portfolio, which is funded in large part by the Peter's Pence donations of Catholics around the world for the pope to use for charity and Vatican expenses.

The Holy See decided in November 2018, after Becciu had left the secretariat of state, to exit the fund, end its relationship with the businessman and buy out the remainder of the building. It did so after Becciu's

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successor determined that the mortgage was too onerous and that the businessman was losing money for the Vatican in some of the fund's other investments.

The buyout deal, however, cost the Holy See tens of millions of euros more and sparked the Vatican investigation that has so far implicated a half-dozen Vatican employees.

Becciu has insisted he wasn't in power during the 2018 buyout deal and always acted in the sole interests of the Holy See. In the Vatican prosecutor's initial warrant, Becciu is not named, and it remains unclear if his role in managing the secretariat of state's vast asset portfolio was connected with the resignation.

His former boss, Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, has said the whole matter was "opaque" and needed to be clarified. Francis, for his part, has vowed to get to the bottom of what he has said was evidence of corruption in the Holy See.

Francis would meet regularly with Becciu in the Italian's role as prefect of the saint-making office, since every month or two he would present lists of candidates for possible beatification or canonization for Francis to approve.

In addition, since the beginning of his pontificate, Francis had an annual luncheon date at Becciu's apartment along with 10 priests on the Thursday of Holy Week leading up to Easter. The Vatican always reported the get-togethers were a chance for the pope to chat informally with Becciu and priests of his diocese on the day the church celebrates the institution of the priesthood.

The luncheon didn't happen this year amid the Vatican's coronavirus lockdown.

Politics mixes with law as Trump closes in on court pick

By ZEKE MILLER and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is infusing deliberations over his coming nomination of a new Supreme Court justice with political meaning as he aims to maximize the benefit before Nov. 3 and even secure an electoral backstop should the result be contested.

Even before Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death last week, the president had tried to use likelihood of more Supreme Court vacancies to his political advantage. Now, as he closes in on a decision on her likely replacement, Trump has used the vacancy to appeal to battleground-state voters and as a rallying cry for his conservative base.

He also is increasingly embracing the high court — which he will have had an outsized hand in reshaping — as an insurance policy in a close election.

Increases in mail, absentee and early voting brought about by the pandemic have already brought about a flurry of election litigation, and both Trump and Democratic nominee Joe Biden have assembled armies of lawyers to continue the fight once vote-counting begins. Trump has been open about tying his push to name a third justice to the court to a potentially drawn-out court fight to determine who will be sworn in on Jan. 20, 2021.

"I think this will end up in the Supreme Court," Trump said Wednesday of the election, adding, "And I think it's very important that we have nine justices."

It's a line echoed by Trump allies, including Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, who said Thursday, "I think that threat to challenge the election is one of the real reasons why it is so important that we confirm the Supreme Court nominees, so that there's a full Supreme Court on the bench to resolve any election challenge."

Barely six weeks from Election Day, and as millions of Americans are already voting, Trump and his advisers have tried to use the court vacancy to help deliver Trump another term in office.

Supreme Court nominations are never entirely devoid of political considerations, but Trump's decision has been particularly wrapped up in a charged political moment.

Within hours of Ginsburg's death, Trump made clear his intention to nominate a woman in her stead, after previously putting two men on the court and as he struggles to mitigate an erosion in support among suburban women.

In discussing his five-person short list, he's been sure to highlight some from election battlegrounds that he's aiming to win this fall as much as their jurisprudence.

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"I've heard incredible things about her," he said of Florida's Barbara Lagoa, a day after Ginsburg's death. "I don't know her. She's Hispanic and highly respected. Miami. Highly respected."

In an interview with a Detroit television station, he volunteered that hometown Justice Joan Larsen is "very talented."

Trump was even considering a meeting with Lagoa this week in Florida, where he plans campaign events. The appellate court judge was confirmed last year by the Senate in a bipartisan vote and has been promoted for the court by GOP Gov. Ron DeSantis and others as a nominee with more across-the-board appeal.

Trump and his aides, though, appear to have set their sights on nominating Judge Amy Coney Barrett of Indiana, who was at the White House twice this week, including for a Monday meeting with Trump.

The staunch conservative's 2017 confirmation on a party-line vote included allegations that Democrats were attacking her Catholic faith. Trump allies see that as a political windfall for them should Democrats attempt to do so once again. Catholic voters in Pennsylvania, in particular, are viewed as a pivotal demographic in the swing state that Democratic nominee Joe Biden is trying to recapture.

On Wednesday, Vice President Mike Pence defended Barrett when asked whether her affiliation with People of Praise, a charismatic Christian community, would complicate her ability to serve on the high court.

"I must tell you the intolerance expressed during her last confirmation about her Catholic faith I really think was a disservice to the process and a disappointment to millions of Americans," he told ABC News.

Trump played up the power to make judicial nominations with conservative voters in 2016, when Republicans senators kept open the seat vacated by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia rather than let President Barack Obama fill the opening. Trump's decision to release lists of accomplished conservative jurists for potential elevation to the high court was rewarded by increased enthusiasm among white evangelical voters, many of whom had been resistant to supporting the candidacy of the one-time New York Democrat.

Even before Ginsburg's death, Trump had done the same in 2020, releasing an additional 20 names he would consider for the court, and encouraging Democrat Joe Biden to do the same.

Biden has resisted that pressure so far, but that hasn't stopped Trump from trying to sow fear among conservatives about whom the Democrat might nominate.

"So they don't want to show the judges because the only ones that he can put in are far-left radicals," Trump said this week.

"If Joe Biden and the Democrats take power, they will pack the Supreme Court with far-left radicals who will unilaterally transform American society far beyond recognition," Trump said at a rally outside Toledo on Monday. "They will mutilate the law, disfigure the Constitution and impose a socialist vision from the bench that could never pass at the ballot box."

Fraud, backlogs disrupt US unemployment benefit payments

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Many American workers applying for unemployment benefits after being thrown out of a job by the coronavirus face a new complication: States' efforts to prevent fraud have delayed or disrupted their payments.

California has said it will stop processing new applications for two weeks as it seeks to reduce backlogs and stop phony claims. Pennsylvania has found that up to 10,000 inmates improperly applied for aid.

The biggest threat is posed by sophisticated international fraud rings that often use stolen identities to apply for benefits, filling out the forms with a wealth of accurate information that enables their applications to "sail through the system," said Michele Evermore, an expert on jobless aid at the National Employment Law Project.

The bogus applications have combined with large backlogs and miscounts to make unemployment benefit data, a key economic indicator, a less-reliable measure of the nation's job market.

On Thursday, the Labor Department said the number of people applying for unemployment rose slightly last week to 870,000, a historically high figure that shows the outbreak is still forcing many companies to cut jobs, six months into the crisis that has killed more than 200,000 people in the U.S.

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The overall number of people collecting jobless aid in the U.S. fell slightly to 12.6 million. The steady decline in recent weeks indicates some of the unemployed are getting re-hired. Yet it also means others have exhausted their benefits, which last six months in most states.

About 105,000 people who have used up their regular aid were added to an extended jobless benefit program, created in the economic relief package approved by Congress this spring. That program is now paying benefits to 1.6 million people.

Applications for jobless aid soared in March after the outbreak suddenly shut down businesses across the U.S., throwing tens of millions out of work and triggering a deep recession. Since then, as states have slowly reopened their economies, about half the jobs that were initially lost have been recovered.

Yet job growth has been slowing, and unemployment remains elevated at 8.4%. Many employers appear reluctant to hire in the face of deep uncertainty about the course of the virus.

Most economists say it will be hard for the job market or the economy to sustain a recovery unless Congress enacts another rescue package. The economy may not fully recover until a vaccine becomes available.

The concerns about fraud have focused mainly on a new program, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, which made self-employed people, gig workers and contractors eligible for jobless aid for the first time.

The program has been targeted for fraud in many states and has also double-counted beneficiaries. Last week, California cut nearly in half the number of people receiving benefits under PUA, apparently after purging double-counts. It now says 3.4 million people are collecting the aid.

Sharon Hilliard, director of California's Employment Development Department, said her agency has stopped accepting applications for aid for two weeks while it adopts reforms. The department will try to clear a backlog of nearly 600,000 first-time applications and review about 1 million people who have received benefits but whose cases have come under scrutiny.

Kimberly Maldonado, a 31-year-old out-of-work music instructor, is among the thousands of Californians whose benefits are tied up by bureaucratic snags and the suspension.

Maldonado applied four weeks ago. She said she calls daily to check on the status yet reaches only a recording that says the department is overwhelmed. For her, the wait is growing critical.

"It's literally the difference between food on my table or not," says Maldonado, who lives in Placentia. "I've got a 2-year-old, and I'm not really sure how I pay for anything in the coming weeks."

Christopher Thornberg, a founder of Beacon Economics, an economic consulting firm, said all the new programs have taxed most states' unemployment agencies and made the economic data less reliable.

"It's kind of the Wild West," Thornberg said. "I have just largely dismissed this data."

Other state unemployment agencies have been bedeviled by fraud during the crisis.

Washington was the first state to be hit as an international fraud ring based in Nigeria managed to steal up to \$650 million in benefit payments, though at least half that money has been recovered. Texas, Florida and Oklahoma have also been affected.

On Wednesday, Pennsylvania officials announced that 18 inmates and two girlfriends on the outside were charged in a scheme to fraudulently obtain jobless benefits. The 20 defendants were accused of seeking a combined \$300,00 from PUA.

It's not clear how many other applications involving inmates were approved, but officials believe the losses could be steep.

Pennsylvania this summer began requiring applicants to upload two forms of identification, a challenge for poor people and immigrants who may not have a driver's license or passport.

"Any time you try to do fraud prevention or fraud detection, it is often over-inclusive, and the people who are hurt are often the most vulnerable workers," said Julia Simon-Mishel, supervising attorney at Philadelphia Legal Assistance. "I don't have a single client who hasn't had a benefit interrupted at some point."

The new requirements have halted benefit payments for Angela Grimley, 38, who lives in Voorhees, New Jersey, but worked in Pennsylvania as a hotel events planner. She hasn't received money for nearly six weeks, despite regular calls and emails to Pennsylvania's unemployment agency.

"It's a hot mess," she said.

This story has been corrected to show that up to 10,000 Pennsylvania inmates applied for aid, not received it.

Dale reported from Philadelphia. AP Writer Jake Coyle in New York contributed to this report.

AP-NORC poll: Support for racial injustice protests declines

By AARON MORRISON and KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — As the decision in Kentucky to bring charges against only one of three police officers involved in the raid that killed Breonna Taylor sparks renewed protests nationwide, a new survey finds support has fallen for demonstrations against systemic racism.

The poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that 44% of Americans disapprove of protests in response to police violence against Black Americans, while 39% approve. In June, 54% approved. The new survey was conducted Sept. 11-14, before Wednesday's announcement that a lone Louisville police officer would be charged in the Taylor case, but not for her actual death.

Overnight, demonstrators in cities from New York to Las Vegas marched through streets and chanted Taylor's name. Two officers were wounded by gunfire at protests in Louisville, where authorities made close to 100 arrests on charges of damaging businesses, refusing to disperse after curfew and unlawful assembly.

The poll finds the percentage of Americans who believe police violence unequally targets Black Americans and that greater consequences for police brutality are necessary have also fallen from June, when an AP-NORC survey found sweeping changes in how Americans view these issues.

The June survey followed the late May killing of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, which renewed focus on Taylor's earlier death, in March. On Wednesday, a Kentucky grand jury declined to charge any officers for their role in Taylor's killing; she was shot multiple times after officers entered her home using a no-knock warrant during a narcotics investigation. Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron said an investigation of the case yielded evidence that officers announced themselves before entering.

It was Floyd's death in Minneapolis — captured on video by witnesses — that sparked several months of nationwide unrest in which hundreds of thousands of Americans protested against systemic racism and police brutality, while others, including President Donald Trump, expressed solidarity with police and law enforcement officers.

The new poll finds the recent shift in opinion is pronounced among white Americans and Republicans, whose views on police violence and racial inequity in policing look closer to the way they did in 2015 after the high-profile police killings of several Black men. Just 35% of white Americans approve of the protests now, while 50% disapprove. In June, 53% approved, while 34% disapproved.

Among Latinos, 31% approve, compared with 44% in June; 63% of Black Americans support the protests, down from 81%, with more now saying they neither approve nor disapprove.

"I was supportive back in June, but after seeing everything up until now, I'm almost dead against them," said Dave Hipelious, 63, of New Lenox, Illinois, who is a retired pipe fitter in the energy industry.

Hipelious, who is white, said his support for the protests soured when he saw violent unrest, arson and looting that marred the largely peaceful demonstrations following Floyd's death.

"I was a pretty wild young man," Hipelious said. "Every time the police stopped me, and every issue I had with them, I was completely in the wrong. I do believe they are doing their job right."

Eighty-four percent of Black Americans, but just 42% of white Americans and 50% of Latinos, say police more often use deadly force against a Black person than a white person. While 74% of Black Americans say the criminal justice system is too lenient when officers cause injury or death, 47% of white Americans and 50% of Latinos say the same.

University of Michigan political scientist Christian Davenport said the nation has historically seen public support wane among white Americans for social justice movements — what he calls "compassion fatigue."

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"When this was all about the video and the visceral response to seeing someone's life get squeezed out of them, that's fine," Davenport said. "But from the moment that topic is raised to awareness, the clock starts ticking with regards to, 'How quickly can we resolve this so I can get back to my normal life?'"

The change also comes after months of political sparring between Democrats and Republicans, including Trump. Both sides hope to use the protests to their advantage in the upcoming general election.

Among Republicans, 75% say they disapprove of the protests, up from 56% in June. Just 9% approve, down from 29% then. And more Republicans now describe protests as mostly or all violent, 52% vs. 36%. Among Democrats, 70% approve, and close to half describe them as mostly or all peaceful. Still, roughly as many describe them as a mix of both.

BriAndia Andrews, 21, of Bloomington, Illinois, who is Black, said she believes most of the protests have been done "correctly." Still, she feels "our voices are not going to be heard once you have people looting and stuff like that."

Given how race in America has become a key focus of politics this year, Andrews said she believes opinions about the protests among white Americans and Republicans only changed because of Trump's rhetoric.

"If you're a Trump supporter and you were also protesting, that could have influenced your opinion of the protests," she said.

Overall, Americans are less likely than they were in June to say deadly force is more commonly used against a Black person than a white person, 50% vs. 61%. And fewer now say that officers who cause injury or death on the job are treated too leniently by the justice system, 52% vs. 65%.

The poll reflects a reality that, despite an unprecedented show of support for the movement over the summer, a majority have not participated, said the Rev. Starsky Wilson, the incoming president of the Children's Defense Fund.

"We have malformed memory about what peaceful assembly and public protest has always looked like," said Wilson, who served as co-chair of the Ferguson Commission, a group that recommended reforms after the 2014 police shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

"Many of the things that we remember fondly now are things that were reviled in the moment," he said.

Stafford reported from Detroit.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,108 adults was conducted 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/>

Crowd jeers as Trump pays respects at court to Ginsburg

KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump was booed Thursday as he paid respects to late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. He plans to nominate a replacement this weekend for the liberal justice, best known for her advancement of women's rights.

The president and first lady Melania Trump — both wearing masks — stood silently at the top of the steps of the court and looked down at Ginsburg's flag-draped coffin, which was surrounded by white flowers. Ginsburg's death has sparked a controversy over the political balance of the court just weeks before the November presidential election.

Moments after Trump arrived, booing could be heard from spectators about a block away from the court building. They chanted "vote him out" as the president stood near the coffin. Trump walked back into the court as the chants grew louder.

As his motorcade returned to the White House, there were also chants of "Breonna Taylor" from some

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spectators standing on the sidewalk. Their calls came one day after it was announced that a Kentucky grand jury had brought no charges against Louisville police for her killing during a drug raid connected to a suspect who did not live at Taylor's home.

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said people have First Amendment rights, but she found the jeers "an appalling and disrespectful thing to do as the president honored Justice Ginsburg."

"The chants were appalling but certainly to be expected when you're in the heart of the swamp," McEnany said.

Trump acknowledged hearing the chant, but dismissed it as not very strong. "We could hardly hear it from where we were," he told reporters on the South Lawn later Thursday.

Trump has called Ginsburg an "amazing woman." Her body will lie in state at the Capitol on Friday, the first time a woman receives that distinction, and only the second time it will be bestowed on a Supreme Court justice. William Howard Taft, who had also served as president, was also recognized in such a manner. The body of Rosa Parks, a private citizen and not a government official, previously has lain in honor at the Capitol.

Ginsburg will be buried alongside her husband, Martin, in a private ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery next week. Martin Ginsburg died in 2010.

Meanwhile, the president is expected to announce his nominee to replace Ginsburg on Saturday. He has said he will select from a list of five women. Republicans are working to move quickly to a confirmation vote, possibly even before the Nov. 3 election.

A steady stream of mourners stood outside the high court Thursday. They packed the streets and hundreds waited in line to pay their respects to Ginsburg. The crowd was hushed and respectful, except for when the president arrived.

Attorney Laura French traveled to Washington from Athens, Georgia, to pay her respects. She said she owes her success to trailblazers like Ginsburg. She also said that GOP senators set precedence four years ago when they refused to meet with potential nominee Merrick Garland, and she questioned whether they now had the right to rush through a nominee. She said it was right for Trump to come pay respects, though she doesn't agree with him politically.

"He should, he's the president and she gave her life and service to this country and to these beliefs that are in our Constitution," French said.

Rocky Twyman, who lives in nearby Rockville, Maryland, said Ginsburg's death was a great loss for the country.

"She believed in equality for all people," he said.

He said it was right for Trump to come, but questioned his motives.

"I thought it was good, but a lot of people said it was insincere because he's going to go around and nominate someone for her seat," he said.

Ginsburg's granddaughter has said it was Ginsburg's wish that a replacement justice be chosen by the winner of the November presidential election.

Associated Press videographer Dan Huff contributed to this report.

Kenosha shooter's defense portrays him as 'American patriot'

By BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

The way lawyers for Kyle Rittenhouse tell it, he wasn't just a scared teenager acting in self-defense when he shot to death two Kenosha, Wisconsin, protesters. He was a courageous defender of liberty, a patriot exercising his right to bear arms amid rioting in the streets.

"A 17-year-old citizen is being sacrificed by politicians, but it's not Kyle Rittenhouse they are after. Their end game is to strip away the constitutional right of all citizens to defend our communities," says the voice-over at the end of a video released this week by a group tied to Rittenhouse's legal team.

"Kyle Rittenhouse will go down in American history alongside that brave unknown patriot ... who fired

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'The Shot Heard Round the World,'" lead attorney John Pierce wrote this month in a tweet he later deleted. "A Second American Revolution against Tyranny has begun."

But such dramatic rhetoric that has helped raise nearly \$2 million for Rittenhouse's defense may not work with a jury considering charges that could put the teen in prison for life. Legal experts say there could be big risks in turning a fairly straightforward self-defense case into a fight for freedom that mirrors the law-and-order reelection theme President Donald Trump has struck amid a wave of protests over racial injustice.

"They're playing to his most negative characteristics and stereotypes, what his critics want to perceive him as — a crazy militia member out to cause harm and start a revolution," said Robert Barnes, a prominent Los Angeles defense attorney.

Rittenhouse's high-profile defense and fund-raising teams, led by Los Angeles-based Pierce and Atlanta attorney Lin Wood, respectively, refused to speak to The Associated Press about their strategy ahead of the teen's next court appearance Friday, a hearing in Illinois on whether to return him to Wisconsin.

But in a TV appearance and a blizzard of social media posts, they doubled down on the hero theme, describing Kenosha as a "war zone" and the young shooter as an "American patriot" and a "shining symbol of the American fighting spirit."

"This is the sacred ground in Kenosha where a 17-year old child became a Minuteman and said 'Not on My Watch,'" Pierce tweeted above a photo of the city where rioters burned and looted just days before.

Eric Creizman, a former partner at Pierce's firm, said the heated language in the tweets is not surprising because of his former boss' tendency toward hyperbole, though he wonders if it will backfire.

"The question really should focus on whether this guy is guilty of what they're charging him with," he said, "instead of making it into a political issue."

One politically charged tactic critics have attacked as a longshot is Pierce's promise to fight a charge of underage firearm possession, a misdemeanor, by arguing U.S. law allows for an "unorganized militia." Rittenhouse wielded a semi-automatic rifle.

Some experts have even questioned whether the teenager's team of four attorneys will feel pressure to hold back from making a plea bargain out of fear of disrupting the patriotic narrative and disappointing donors.

There is a temptation to shape court arguments to "keep the money flowing while the battle is ongoing," said Richard Cayo, a Milwaukee attorney who helps other lawyers in ethics cases. "It puts lawyers at risk of trying to serve two masters."

Both Pierce and Wood have ties to Trump's orbit and his brand of GOP politics, though it's not clear if that played any role in their involvement in Rittenhouse's case and how it is being handled. For his part, Trump has made statements appearing to support Rittenhouse's claim of self-defense, saying the young man "probably would have been killed."

Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani hired Pierce's firm late last year when he was reportedly under investigation for possibly breaking lobbying laws for his work in Ukraine for the president, as did Carter Page and George Papadopoulos, former Trump advisers caught up in the Russia investigation.

Wood, a defamation lawyer who represented falsely accused security guard Richard Jewell in the 1996 Olympic Park bombing in Atlanta, is also a lawyer for Sean Hannity, the Fox News host with close ties to Trump.

And Wood made headlines recently representing Nicholas Sandmann, the Kentucky teen in the "Make America Great Again" hat, in his lawsuits against news organizations over their coverage of his encounter with an American Indian protester in Washington last year.

Both attorneys moved quickly after Rittenhouse was arrested in his hometown of Antioch, Illinois, a day after the Aug. 25 shootings that came amid raucous protests in Kenosha over the police shooting that paralyzed a Black man, Jacob Blake. Rittenhouse, who is white, was charged with first-degree intentional homicide in the killing of two white protesters and attempted intentional homicide in the wounding of a third.

Pierce flew to Illinois to meet Rittenhouse and his family that next day, according to his tweets, which

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included appeals for donations to the #FightBack Foundation that was started with Wood a few weeks earlier to fund lawsuits aimed at the "lies" of the "radical left."

In Pierce's telling on a Fox News appearance and an 11-minute #FightBack Foundation documentary, the real Rittenhouse is not the wild-eyed vigilante critics have painted him. He is instead portrayed as a model citizen who had just gotten off his shift as lifeguard and was cleaning graffiti from a vandalized high school before he received word from a business owner seeking help to protect what was left of his property after rioters had burned two of his other buildings.

According to prosecutors, Rittenhouse shot and killed Joseph Rosenbaum, 36, after the protester threw a plastic bag at the teenager, missing him.

But to Pierce, the situation was far more dire. Rosenbaum was the head of a "mob that had become enraged" at the sight of Rittenhouse trying to put out a fire set by arsonists and decided to chase after him, "relentlessly hunting him as prey." Rittenhouse, in Pierce's telling, fired only after Rosenbaum began to "assault him from behind" and attempted to take his rifle away.

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

What happened next, as Pierce put it in a statement, were a series of clear signs captured on cellphone video that Rittenhouse was in possible mortal danger.

A man strikes Rittenhouse as he runs down the street, chased by several people trying to stop him. Rittenhouse falls to the ground and another protester kicks him. Back on his feet and a bit farther down the street, he is struck by a skateboard. He shoots, killing the man with the skateboard, Anthony Huber, 26, and wounding a third person holding a handgun, Gaige Grosskreutz, 26.

George Washington University law professor Jonathan Turley said he wouldn't be surprised if the patriotic language that has wooed online donors were eventually abandoned for the most obvious defense, that "Rittenhouse was a confused kid who got in over his head."

Still, Turley said, those who give the most tend to gravitate to the extremes of the political spectrum. "There is danger that social media campaigns can alter your narrative," he said.

This story has been corrected to show that Rittenhouse was arrested the day after the shootings.

Condon reported from New York.

Israel tightens second lockdown as coronavirus cases soar

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel on Thursday moved to further tighten its second countrywide lockdown as coronavirus cases continued to soar, ordering all nonessential businesses to close and requiring people to stay within 1,000 meters (yards) of their homes.

Prayers during the ongoing Jewish High Holidays, as well as political demonstrations, would be limited to open spaces and no more than 20 people, and participants would have to remain within the restricted distance from home.

The measures are set to go into force on Friday afternoon, as the country shuts down for the weekly Sabbath ahead of the solemn holy day of Yom Kippur on Sunday and Monday. Even during normal times, Israel completely shuts down for Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, with businesses and airports closed, roads empty, and even radio and television stations going silent.

In a televised address Thursday night, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu acknowledged the pain caused by the closure, but said the holiday season, when many businesses slow down in any case, was the best time to take action.

Comparing the situation to a war, he said the measures would save lives. "Wake up. Enough is enough. We are in a new reality," he said.

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The limits on both prayers and protests could spark a backlash.

Israel's politically influential ultra-Orthodox community has objected to limits on public prayer during the ongoing Jewish High Holidays, and Netanyahu opponents have accused him of using the lockdown as a cover to end weekly demonstrations against his handling of the crisis.

Netanyahu dismissed such allegations as "absurd," saying all of the restrictions were for public safety.

In a separate address, Netanyahu's former rival and now governing partner, Benny Gantz, called for national unity.

"We cannot allow anyone to exploit and deepen polarization and make us lose this battle," he said, vowing that protesters could take to the streets and worshippers could fill synagogues once the situation is brought under control.

"Saving lives comes before anything else. Anything at all," Gantz said in a speech outside his home. Hecklers could be heard shouting at him in the distance.

The government ordered synagogues to close for the lockdown, which is expected to last for at least two weeks, but said they could open with limitations for prayers on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar.

Hagai Levine, a professor of epidemiology and a member of an expert panel advising the government, warned that allowing Yom Kippur prayers in synagogues could lead to mass transmission.

He went so far as to compare it to the 1973 war, when Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel during Yom Kippur. "Now, it's no surprise. We are going to have a massive problem and massive transmission on Yom Kippur in a few days," he said.

He said the government should instead impose a complete lockdown for a short period to underscore the seriousness of the situation, followed by the gradual easing of restrictions on essential but low-risk activities.

Israel is currently reporting nearly 7,000 new daily cases, making the outbreak in the country of 9 million people among the worst in the world on a per capita basis.

Israel won praise this spring when it swiftly moved to seal its borders and shut down most businesses. By May, its daily rate of new cases had dropped into the double-digits. But then it reopened the economy too quickly, leading to a surge of new infections over the summer.

In recent months, a national unity government that was formed to address the pandemic has been mired in infighting, with authorities issuing unclear and sometimes contradictory guidelines, leading much of the public to disregard the risk.

Many businesses, meanwhile, have yet to recover from the earlier lockdown, and the new restrictions are expected to take a heavy toll on the economy even though they are being imposed during the holidays, when many businesses would ordinarily scale back hours.

Israel has reported a total of more than 200,000 cases since the pandemic began, including 1,335 deaths. It has more than 50,000 active cases.

The Health Ministry says at least 667 people are hospitalized in serious condition, and in recent days health officials have warned that hospitals are rapidly approaching full capacity.

The government last week imposed a nationwide lockdown that closed schools, shopping malls, hotels and restaurants, making Israel the first developed country to impose a second closure. But the restrictions included numerous exceptions, including allowing people to leave their homes for work, exercise, prayers and public demonstrations.

The new lockdown is expected to eliminate most of those loopholes.

AP Explains: Powerful grand juries stay shrouded in secrecy

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

The announcement that no police officers would be charged in the death of Breonna Taylor threw a spotlight on the role of grand juries, which are shrouded in secrecy yet wield enormous power in courthouses across the U.S.

Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron said Wednesday that two officers who shot at 26-year-old

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Taylor after barging into her apartment on a warrant were justified because Taylor's boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, had fired one shot at them.

The grand jury did charge another officer, Brett Hankison, with three counts of wanton endangerment for firing shots that went into another home with people inside. But protesters who called attention to the case say the outcome falls far short of justice.

Here's a look at how grand juries work:

WHAT IS A GRAND JURY?

A grand jury is composed of people drawn randomly from the community, similar to a trial jury. Together they must decide whether there is enough evidence to bring an indictment, or a formal criminal charge.

In proceedings closed to the public and members of the media, grand jurors listen to evidence presented by prosecutors and hear from witnesses. There is no judge present nor anyone representing the accused, and prosecutors do not have to offer any evidence favorable to the defense.

A single grand jury can sit for months and will typically be tasked with several cases. Grand juries exist in the federal court system and in nearly every state. In some states, prosecutors must go to grand juries to bring felony charges. In other states, prosecutors are free to file those charges themselves.

WHAT IS THE STANDARD TO BRING CHARGES?

Unlike juries that hear a trial, grand juries don't decide whether someone is guilty or innocent. They only decide whether there is sufficient evidence for someone to be charged. In Kentucky, nine of the 12 jurors must agree there is enough evidence for the panel to issue an indictment. In the federal court system, grand juries are made of 16 to 23 people, and at least 12 jurors must find there is probable cause to indict someone.

WHY ARE THEY SECRET?

In Taylor's case, the public may never know who sat on the grand jury, what evidence they heard or who testified. It's not even clear whether the grand jury was asked to consider charges against officers Myles Cosgrove and Jonathan Mattingly — who the attorney general said were justified in firing their weapons — or whether the grand jury only heard evidence against Hankison.

Centuries-old rules have kept grand juries under wraps to protect the reputations of people who end up not being charged and to encourage reluctant witnesses to testify. The U.S. Supreme Court has also said that making grand jury proceedings public would carry the risk that "those about to be indicted would flee, or would try to influence individual grand jurors to vote against indictment." In California, while grand juries are secret, the public can later get a transcript of the proceedings unless they are sealed by a court order.

In Taylor's case, the typical reasons for secrecy don't apply.

"Everybody knows who the people are. Everyone knows what the issue is, and so there is a mismatch here between the reasons for secrecy and the secrecy itself. So that makes it particularly frustrating," said Andrew Leipold, a professor at the University of Illinois College of Law.

Kentucky's Democratic governor has called for the release of more information that led the grand jury's decision. Gov. Andy Beshear urged Cameron to post online all the evidence and facts that can be released without affecting the case against Hankison.

"Everyone can and should be informed," Beshear said. "And those that are currently feeling frustration, feeling hurt, they deserve to know more," he said.

WHAT DO CRITICS SAY?

Grand juries have long been criticized by some lawyers as little more than a rubber stamp for prosecutors. If a prosecutor is seeking an indictment, it's unusual for jurors not to return one. Former New York Judge Sol Wachtler once famously said that prosecutors could convince a grand jury to "indict a ham sandwich."

Defenders say the process is a crucial safeguard against politically motivated prosecutions. In Florida, for example, the legal philosophy among most prosecutors is that first-degree murder cases and shootings involving police officers should go before a grand jury to allow representatives of the community to have some input and to provide a buffer against prosecutorial overreach.

But critics say the secrecy makes it impossible for the public to scrutinize the work of the prosecutors

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and hold them accountable and creates the impression that the process is unfair. Some argue that grand juries should not be used in cases involving police, who traditionally have cozy relationships with prosecutors' offices.

HAVE ANY CHANGES BEEN MADE?

After grand juries in New York and Missouri declined to indict officers who fatally shot unarmed black suspects, California in 2015 banned grand juries from determining whether police officers involved in fatal shootings should face criminal charges. The law was later tossed by a California appeals court, which said allowing the Legislature "to restrict this constitutional role in part would be to concede the power to restrict it in its entirety."

In Minneapolis, Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman announced in 2016 that he would no longer use grand juries to investigate police shootings, saying "the accountability and transparency limitations of a grand jury are too high a hurdle to overcome." Before that, grand juries had been used to consider police shooting cases in the county for more than 40 years, resulting in no indictments of officers.

Associated Press writers Anthony McCartney in Los Angeles, Curt Anderson in St. Petersburg, Florida, and Amy Forliti in Minneapolis contributed to this report.

US parents delaying preschool and kindergarten amid pandemic

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

MISSION, Kan. (AP) — Claire Reagan was feeling overwhelmed as her oldest child's first day of kindergarten approached and with a baby on the way. The 5-year-old boy has autism, and she worried he would struggle with juggling in-person and virtual learning, and that she wouldn't have enough time to give him the help he needs.

So she decided to wait a year before sending him to school.

"I was stressed about everything and then thought 'Why does he need to start kindergarten?' And it was like a weight was lifted," said Reagan, a 36-year-old high school teacher in the Kansas City suburb of Olathe, Kansas.

Thousands of parents around the U.S. have made similar decisions, having their children delay or skip kindergarten because of the coronavirus pandemic. The opt outs, combined with huge declines in preschool enrollment, are raising worries about the long-term effects of so much lost early education.

"If there is a group for which you would be particularly concerned, it is these very young students who are not having these foundational experiences," said Nate Schwartz, a professor at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

Kindergarten isn't required in most states, and in normal times parents sometimes "red-shirt" children who would be young for their kindergarten class to give them an extra year of developmental readiness. But enrollment numbers have plunged in many places this fall as parents weigh health concerns and the prospect of helping young children to navigate distance learning while also holding onto their jobs.

In Los Angeles' public schools, kindergarten enrollment is down about 6,000 students, or 14%. In Nashville, Tennessee, public kindergarten enrollment is down about 1,800 students, or 37%, from last year.

According to a University of Oregon survey conducted in early September with 1,000 parents from around the U.S., including 242 with a child who was supposed to start kindergarten this fall, 17% of respondents said they were delaying their children's schooling. Among those, the most frequent reason cited was safety concerns, followed by concerns about managing virtual schooling and other responsibilities, according to Philip Fisher, a psychology professor at the university who is leading an effort to measure the effect of the pandemic on young children and their families.

Fisher said the vast majority of parents reported that they were making sure their kids were attending all of their virtual lessons and completing their coursework without the assistance of hired help or other adults, making juggling their own work a challenge. He said that parents are overwhelmed, particularly those in low-income communities where schools are more likely to be offering only remote instruction.

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"We think young kids are likely getting lost in the shuffle," he said.

Reagan, who is also keeping her 3-year-old daughter home from preschool, said she held off with kindergarten for many reasons, including her own pregnancy and instructions to quarantine for two weeks before she delivers in the fall. She said her job allows her to work from home and her family has insurance that will continue to pay for some of her son's therapy.

For many young students, the delayed start of primary school follows a disrupted preschool experience. Among preschool-age children, participation rates plummeted in the spring, as programs closed and children stopped attending, according to a report from the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University. The group is planning a follow-up report, but all indications are that enrollment hasn't fully rebounded, said Steven Barnett, senior co-director of the institute.

He said public preschool programs such as Head Start have been "substantial equalizers" for low-income families.

"When that falls apart, parents are not going to be able to fill the gap," he said. "The people who are dependent on free public education as equalizers can't make up the difference when left on their own."

Some parents feel their children may be ready for in-person school but not for virtual school, said Anna Markowitz, an assistant professor of education at the University of California, Los Angeles.

"They are thinking I can't work and monitor my child's Zoom schooling. Parents are really in an impossible situation," she said.

Only 17 states and Washington, D.C., require children to attend kindergarten, Markowitz said. Parents elsewhere can bypass kindergarten and just send their children to first grade next fall. In a typical year, only about 4% of children who are eligible to begin kindergarten are held back by their families, said Chloe Gibbs, a Notre Dame economist.

The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine released a report in July focused on younger children. Its advice was to prioritize the reopening of schools for children in kindergarten through fifth grade with well-funded safety measures in place. But since the report was released, high rates of community spread have made in-person learning more risky in many communities, turning young learners into virtual learning guinea pigs.

"When you look at the distance learning research, very little has been carried out on young students, even below middle school," said Brown University's Schwartz, who is a member of the committee that wrote the report and is also running a project that provides research to school leaders who are trying to make decisions during the pandemic. "Few people were even considering that it could be considered with kids this young."

South Africa lifts spirits with Jerusalema dance amid virus

By ANDREW MELDRUM and NQOBILE NTSHANGASE Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — South Africans of all walks of life are dancing to "Jerusalema," a rousing anthem to lift their spirits amid the battle against COVID-19.

In response to a call from President Cyril Ramaphosa to mark the country's Heritage Day holiday Thursday, people from townships to posh suburbs are doing line dances to the tune.

In the upbeat song in the Zulu language, the singer implores to be taken away from the troubles of the world to go to Jerusalem, effectively heaven. The song, by popular DJ Master KG with vocals by Nomcebo Zikode, was a hit in South Africa last year and became even more popular this year as people saw its message as a way to cope with the tragedies of the coronavirus pandemic.

It was picked up in Angola, where a video showed a group of people interrupting their meal to do a line dance to the song. Soon it became a dance craze across southern Africa and beyond with Youtube featuring scores of videos of various groups doing the line dance.

Health care workers in South Africa dance to the song as they suit up in protective gear, lawyers in Zimbabwe put aside their cases to dance, workers at a South African supermarket, students and teachers at numerous schools and many other groups have posted videos, most showing dancers in face masks

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and keeping a distance from each other.

The popularity of the Jerusalema dance has been praised by South Africa's president as a sign of the country's positive spirit.

"We are the nation that is taking the world by storm with the #JerusalemaChallenge, as young and old in France, the UK, Jamaica, Angola and even in Palestinian East Jerusalem itself are getting in on the craze," wrote Ramaphosa on Thursday to mark Heritage Day, the country's public holiday celebrating the country's racial and ethnic diversity. South Africans mark the holiday by wearing traditional ethnic outfits, having barbeques and dancing.

In its battle against COVID-19, South Africa has weathered its first peak, registering more than 665,000 cases, including 16,206 deaths, nearly half of the total of all Africa's 54 countries. The continent of 1.3 billion has recorded just over 1.4 million cases, including 34,800 deaths, according to figures released Thursday by the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The country will reopen to international tourism on Oct. 1.

At an event of line dancers taking up the challenge Thursday, Master KG said he is overwhelmed by the international popularity of his song.

"The success has been amazing bro ... Big records are being broken. God is great. Things are just amazing," he said, pointing out that his song has been posted on social media by international soccer star Cristiano Ronaldo and by U.S. pop star Janet Jackson. "So many others showing love to the song has been amazing."

Singer Zikode said she is thrilled to see so many people around the world dancing to the song.

"When I saw the president (Cyril Ramaphosa) announcing that everyone should celebrate today's Heritage Day by dancing to Jerusalema, I quickly jumped up, raised my hands and shouted!" said Zikode in Zulu.

"I was so happy," she said. "God has lifted me up because of the success of this song and everyone is dancing to my voice."

As virus surges, critics say UK hasn't learned from mistakes

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain bungled its response to the coronavirus the first time around. Now many scientists fear it's about to do it again.

The virus is on the rise once more in the U.K., which has recorded almost 42,000 COVID-19 deaths, with confirmed daily infections hitting a record-high 6,634 on Thursday, though deaths remain far below their April peak.

The surge has brought new restrictions on daily life, the prospect of a grim winter of mounting deaths — and a feeling of *deja vu*.

"We didn't react quick enough in March," epidemiologist John Edmunds, a member of the government's scientific advisory committee, told the BBC. "I think we haven't learnt from our mistake back then and we're, unfortunately, about to repeat it."

The U.K. is not alone in seeing a second wave of COVID-19. European countries including France, Spain and the Netherlands are struggling to suppress rising outbreaks while limiting the economic damage.

But Britain's pandemic response has revealed a roster of weaknesses, including unwieldy government structures, a fraying public health system, poor communication by Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government and a reluctance to learn from other countries.

"We have to ask why a country with such reputed health and intelligence institutions has been so incapable of combating the COVID pandemic," Gus O'Donnell, the former head of Britain's civil service, said Thursday. He said British politicians had "over-promised and under-delivered."

Like many other countries, apart from Asian nations hit by past outbreaks of the SARS and MERS coronavirus illnesses, Britain was unprepared for the pandemic.

Britain quickly approved a test for COVID-19, but lacked the lab capacity to process those tests. That meant attempts to locate, test and isolate the contacts of every infected person soon foundered.

By the time the government ordered a nationwide lockdown on March 23, the virus was out of control.

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Supplies of protective equipment to hospitals and nursing homes soon ran dangerously short.

Luca Richeldi, an adviser to the Italian government on COVID-19, told a committee of British lawmakers this week that he was “shocked” at the slow U.K. response while Italy was “living a collective tragedy.”

“I had the impression that in general what was happening in Italy was not really perceived as something that could happen in the U.K.,” he said.

Critics say the government’s insistence on going its own way — epitomized and exacerbated by the U.K.’s departure from the European Union in January — has hobbled its response.

The U.K. spent months trying to develop a contact-tracing smartphone app from scratch before abandoning it and adopting an Apple- and Google-developed system already used in many other countries. The app was launched in England on Thursday — four months late.

There were some successes. Britain’s state-funded health-care system coped; its hospitals weren’t overwhelmed. But that was achieved at the high cost of postponing routine surgeries, appointments and screening for cancer and other diseases.

Like some other countries, the U.K. released elderly patients from hospitals back to nursing homes without testing them for the virus. Thousands died as a result.

Summer brought a respite as the tide of cases receded. It also brought a push to revive the battered economy. Johnson’s Conservative government urged workers to return to offices to prevent city centers becoming ghost towns and tempted people back to restaurants with discounts. It worked economically, but it may also have helped the virus to return.

Given Johnson’s back-to-normal boosterism, there was inevitable confusion when he reversed course this week and announced that people should continue to work from home after all. That came alongside new restrictions including a 10 p.m. curfew in bars and restaurants and expanded face-mask requirements.

Critics say the government was slow to advise wide use of face masks, just as it was slow to require quarantines for people arriving from abroad.

But the key failing, many believe, is in the coronavirus testing system.

Britain has rapidly expanded testing capacity, to some 250,000 a day, and set up a test-and-trace system with thousands of staff.

But when millions of U.K. children went back to school this month — and some came home with coughs and fevers — demand for tests surged to around 1 million a day. Many people found they could not book a test, or were sent hundreds of miles away.

“I don’t think anybody was expecting to see the real sizable increase in demand that we’ve seen over the last few weeks,” Dido Harding, who heads the program, told lawmakers this week — although many scientists and officials had predicted exactly that.

Headed by Harding, a former telecoms executive married to a Conservative lawmaker, the test-and-trace program is largely run by private companies including outsourcing firm Serco, using a call-center model to reach contacts and tell them to self-isolate. The system is only reaching about 60% of infected people’s contacts, and research suggests many people who are asked to self-isolate don’t comply.

“The whole thing is hopelessly inefficient,” said Martin McKee, professor of European public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, who said good contact tracing is like detective work.

“It’s as if we decided to put (fictional detectives) Miss Marple or Father Brown in a hotel room with a single telephone line and told them to solve the murder,” he told The Associated Press.

Some of Britain’s troubles aren’t unique. Dutch local health authorities are struggling to keep up with demand for contact tracing, and in some hard-hit regions infected people are being asked to inform their own contacts. In Madrid, site of one of Europe’s fastest-growing outbreaks, it can take more than a week to get test results. In France, confirmed new cases have topped 13,000 a day and the virus is resurgent in nursing homes.

An apparent exception is Italy, the first Western country hammered by the virus, where a strict 10-week lockdown largely tamed the outbreak. Even now, Italians’ compliance with mask-wearing and social distancing is strong, and cases average around 1,500 a day.

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In Britain, criticism of Johnson's leadership is growing.

Johnson is all too aware of the danger of the coronavirus — it put him in intensive care in April. But he is an instinctively laissez-faire politician who likes broad brushstrokes, simple slogans and optimistic messages.

In March, Johnson said Britain could "send the virus packing" in 12 weeks. Earlier this month, he said he hoped things would be back to normal by Christmas. This week he acknowledged that new restrictions will be in place for six months.

He said he was "deeply, spiritually reluctant to make any of these impositions" — but many scientists believe stronger measures will inevitably be needed, especially if the test-and-trace system doesn't improve.

Meanwhile, polls suggest support for the government's handling of the crisis is falling, and authorities worry compliance is fraying.

Unease is growing among formerly loyal allies of the prime minister.

The Spectator, a conservative newsmagazine that Johnson used to edit, summarized the past six months as "disorder, debacle, rebellion, U-turn and confusion."

"Where's Boris?" the magazine asked on its cover.

—
Aritz Parra in Madrid, Michael Corder in Amsterdam, Thomas Adamson in Paris and Nicole Winfield in Rome contributed to this story.

Trump pays respects to late Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg

KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump paid respects to late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on Thursday morning, just two days before he announces his nominee to replace her on the high court.

The president and first lady Melania Trump — both wearing masks — stood silently at the top of the steps of the court and looked down at Ginsburg's flag-draped coffin, surrounded by white flowers. The death of the liberal-leaning justice has sparked a controversy over the balance of the court just weeks before the November presidential election.

Trump has called Ginsburg an "amazing woman," but some spectators were not happy that he came. Moments after he arrived, booing could be heard from those holding about a block away from the building. The spectators chanted "vote him out" as the president stood near the coffin. He walked back into the court as the chants grew louder. As the motorcade returned to the White House, there were also chants of "Breonna Taylor" from some spectators standing on the sidewalk.

Records: Mail delivery lags behind targets as election nears

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE and PIA DESHPANDE Associated Press

The slice of Michigan that covers Detroit, its suburbs and towns dependent on the auto industry is coveted political terrain in one of this year's most important presidential swing states. It also has another distinction as home to one of the worst-performing U.S. Postal Service districts in the country.

In Michigan and beyond, states are seeing record-breaking interest in mail-in voting during the coronavirus pandemic. But controversial changes at the Postal Service have compounded long-standing delivery delays nationwide and sparked concerns among election officials and voters alike over the agency's ability to deliver this fall.

Data obtained by The Associated Press shows postal districts across the country are missing by wide margins the agency's own goals for on-time delivery, raising the possibility that scores of mailed ballots could miss deadlines for reaching local election offices if voters wait too long. Missing a deadline is a key reason mail-in ballots get rejected.

Several postal districts serving urban regions in battleground states have a history of delivering mail at below the national targets and saw sharp drop-offs in performance over the summer. The message to voters is clear: Mail those ballots early.

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"As soon as possible," said Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, a Democrat.

The Postal Service, long an afterthought in the political process, has been drawn into the fray after its new leader, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, implemented a series of cost-cutting measures that delayed deliveries nationwide. The changes have sparked a flurry of legal challenges and caused concerns over the agency's ability to handle the anticipated crush of election mail this year, although DeJoy has said it will be the Postal Service's top priority.

DeJoy, a GOP megadonor with no previous experience at the Postal Service, postponed the removal of mail sorting machines and collection boxes last month. He said it was "to avoid even the appearance of impact on election mail."

Despite pausing some policies, DeJoy left in place rules restricting when mail can leave warehouses, which several postal workers have said is a main culprit behind the delays. Federal judges have since ordered the Postal Service to halt all changes, although the agency said it is exploring its legal options.

On-time delivery across the country dipped substantially in the weeks after DeJoy took office in mid-June, according to internal weekly performance data obtained by The Associated Press through a Freedom of Information Act request. While service began rebounding toward the end of summer, no Postal Service region is meeting the agency's target of delivering more than 95% of first-class mail within five days.

"One of the most frustrating aspects about the changes that have happened at the Postal Service over the past several months is that it's created uncertainty and chaos where none existed prior, and now you do have so many citizens asking, 'Is my vote going to get there on time?'" Benson said.

Even as DeJoy took over, many of the Postal Service districts serving regions that are in important presidential swing states delivered mail at well below the national average. Quarterly data covering April through June shows that 17.5% of first-class mail took longer than three or five days to arrive at its destination in many parts of the country.

Mail arrived within three to five days less than 90% of the time in Milwaukee, Miami, Orlando, the Ohio valley and in the North Carolina cities of Raleigh, Durham and Charlotte, according to the agency's quarterly data.

Delivery times worsened after DeJoy started and remained below the agency's targets at the end of August. On-time delivery in northern Ohio, which includes Cleveland, dipped to as low as 63% in July before rising to 88% by the end of August.

The trend in Pennsylvania was similar. On-time delivery declined to as low as 79% for the Philadelphia area and to 67% for the central part of the state. Earlier this year, the Philadelphia district averaged 84.5% on-time delivery, according to the quarterly data.

Nick Custodio, deputy city commissioner in Philadelphia, urged mail-in voters to move quickly to obtain an absentee ballot and send it back to avoid any delivery delays.

"People should apply early," he said. "Apply now, in fact."

The Michigan secretary of state is mailing every registered voter a ballot application and is encouraging residents to make a plan for voting. That could include circumventing the Postal Service altogether through early voting or by placing ballots in drop boxes.

The postal district covering the eastern part of the state includes Detroit and other places that could determine how Michigan votes in the presidential race, including Dearborn, Flint and Macomb County. On-time mail deliveries there fell to as low as 61% at the beginning of last month and rose to around 80% by the end of August. The greater Michigan area, which covers a part of the state that leans more Republican overall, performed at just over 90%.

"We're encouraging voters to make a plan to vote now," said Merissa Kovach, a policy strategist at the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan, adding that voters should use ballot drop boxes if Election Day is nearing and they haven't yet mailed their ballot.

A judge last week said Michigan must count mailed absentee ballots that arrive within 14 days after Election Day if postmarked by Nov. 2. Republicans are trying to appeal.

Postal Service spokesman Dave Partenheimer said the agency is committed to improving service and pointed to a nearly 89% national on-time rate for first-class mail at the start of September.

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On the ground, the public turmoil surrounding the Postal Service has at least some voters wondering if the mail-in system will work.

"Lots of customers have asked me if their ballots will get there on time," said Laura Hogg, a letter carrier in Minneapolis, Minnesota. "Some people have said they're going to go vote in person just because of the gravity of the election. They just want to make sure their vote is counted."

Izaguirre reported from Lindenhurst, New York. Deshpande reported from Chicago.

The Associated Press produced this coverage with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

For North Korea, UN membership is a key link to larger world

By FOSTER KLUG Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Hermit Kingdom? Not quite.

To pay close attention to North Korean diplomacy is to notice the many ways it upends the stereotype of the isolated, nuclear-armed wildcard of Northeast Asia.

Yes, the country's propaganda services are prone to rhetoric meant to convey a sense of towering fury, mostly for domestic consumption. But before the coronavirus outbreak sealed its borders, North Korea's state media reported on a steady stream of select foreign diplomats, academics, journalists and delegations trooping up to the capital, Pyongyang.

Along with scattered embassies throughout the world, the North also has a permanent mission at the United Nations in New York, where one of its diplomats will dutifully, if virtually, join other world leaders speaking at the annual U.N. General Assembly.

The United Nations makes a point of welcoming all nations, regardless of political persuasion. But in many ways, there's a love-hate relationship between the North and the U.N. And it raises a lingering question: What, exactly, does North Korea get out of membership in the United Nations?

On the one hand, the world body, with its jumble of nations — big and small, rich and poor, powerful and weak — gives North Korea, which is formally known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK, a rare and highly visible platform from which to respond to the criticism it faces. Most of that comes from what it considers the world's leading bully — the United States — and its allies.

But the United Nations also generates a fair share of that criticism. It puts the North's diplomats regularly on the defensive as they battle a stream of official reports, investigations and motions that point out the North's abysmal human rights record, its decades-long, coffers-draining pursuit of nuclear-tipped long-range missiles and other charges of infamy.

One important thing the North gets from the U.N.: a direct point of contact with the 192 other member nations, including a host of countries that would be loath to send their diplomats to pay homage in Pyongyang — the United States pre-eminent among them. The two nations don't have formal diplomatic ties, and Washington relies on Sweden as its consular proxy in Pyongyang.

This means the North's U.N. mission in New York is something of a substitute for an official embassy in Washington. When one side needs quick contact with the other, they often use the so-called "New York channel" at the United Nations.

A good example of the importance of the "New York channel" came as the two sides were working out details of the three extraordinary summits between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un in 2018 and 2019.

With the United Nations, "North Korea gets an excellent venue to work bilateral conversations with every country in the world without having to deploy diplomats in member capitals (at great expense), or have them travel to Pyongyang," said John Bolton, who has served as both the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations under George W. Bush and as National Security Adviser under Donald Trump.

"The criticisms of North Korea will come anyway, and having a U.N. mission gives the DPRK proximity to media markets and universities in order to respond," Bolton said in an email. He added: "The opportunities for DPRK intell gathering go without saying."

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The usefulness of the United Nations for the North is perhaps most obvious during times of high tension. In 2017, for instance, when animosity and back-and-forth threats between Trump and Kim had many fearing the possibility of war, North Korean officials used the media at the U.N. to repeatedly respond to Trump, holding several press conferences and reaching out directly to reporters with statements.

It's true that quite a lot of what comes out of the U.N. is not to the North's liking, and its diplomats have stormed out of gatherings critical of the country's human rights, considered among the world's worst. But then they've also used the body to amplify their side of things.

Of course, North Korea would have more vibrant and substantial diplomacy with other U.N. member states if it abandoned its pursuit of a banned nuclear weapons program, according to analyst Chung Eun-sook at the private Sejong Institute near Seoul.

"When North Korea becomes a non-nuclear state and opens itself up, it can better engage in multilateral diplomacy as a genuine member of the international community," Chung said.

Part of the North's approach to diplomacy is the result of its turbulent history, and the outsized role the United States and the United Nations play in it.

North Korea was born when the Korean Peninsula was liberated from Japanese colonialism at the end of World War II, only to be forcibly divided into a Soviet-backed north and U.S.-supported south. Three years later, North Korea and South Korea became nations. Two years after that, in 1950, North Korea sneak-attacked the South to start the bloody three-year Korean War. That drew in China on the North's side and the United States and a host of other nations fighting under the U.N. flag on the South's.

That war has never technically ended, and the line between the North and South is the most heavily armed border in the world.

These days, aside from the North's operations at the U.N., there's little reason to expect the kind of diplomacy that came in 2018, with Kim Jong Un meeting with leaders from the United States, Russia, China, Vietnam and South Korea.

Kim is facing domestic crises on several fronts: a crumbling economy battered by unrelenting sanctions; a ragged infrastructure that's been pummeled by a string of typhoons; and the COVID pandemic, which has caused North Korea to seal its borders even with China, its economic lifeline.

Still, the U.N. speech at the General Assembly next week will be an opportunity for the North to take to the world stage and express its own vision of nationhood — the storyline of a proud, beset people who have been forced to embrace nuclear weapons to survive against unrelenting hostility from the United States, South Korea and their allies.

More generally, the speech will be "an attempt to win favorable international opinion," said Choi Kang, vice president of Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies. And that ability to reach out and be heard by global hearts and minds — in a way as rare as it is direct — may, when it comes to North Korea's U.N. membership, be the biggest benefit of all.

Associated Press correspondents Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations and Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul contributed to this story. Foster Klug, AP's news director for the Koreas, Japan, Australia and the South Pacific, has covered Asia at the annual UNGA meetings since 2005. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/APKlug>

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Sept. 25, the 269th day of 2020. There are 97 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 25, 1957, nine Black students who'd been forced to withdraw from Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, because of unruly white crowds were escorted to class by members of the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division.

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On this date:

In 1789, the first United States Congress adopted 12 amendments to the Constitution and sent them to the states for ratification. (Ten of the amendments became the Bill of Rights.)

In 1904, a New York City police officer ordered a female automobile passenger on Fifth Avenue to stop smoking a cigarette. (A male companion was arrested and later fined \$2 for "abusing" the officer.)

In 1911, ground was broken for Boston's Fenway Park.

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson collapsed after a speech in Pueblo, Colo., during a national speaking tour in support of the Treaty of Versailles (vehr-SY').

In 1956, the first trans-Atlantic telephone cable officially went into service with a three-way ceremonial call between New York, Ottawa and London.

In 1962, Sonny Liston knocked out Floyd Patterson in round one to win the world heavyweight title at Comiskey Park in Chicago.

In 1974, Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Tommy John underwent an experimental graft reconstruction of the ulnar collateral ligament in the elbow of his throwing arm to repair a career-ending injury; the procedure, which proved successful, is now referred to as "Tommy John surgery."

In 1978, 144 people were killed when a Pacific Southwest Airlines Boeing 727 and a private plane collided over San Diego.

In 1981, Sandra Day O'Connor was sworn in as the first female justice on the Supreme Court.

In 1992, NASA's Mars Observer blasted off on a \$980 million mission to the red planet (the probe disappeared just before entering Martian orbit in August 1993).

In 2016, golf legend Arnold Palmer, 87, died in Pittsburgh. Jose Fernandez, 24, ace right-hander for the Miami Marlins, was killed in a boating accident with two friends off Miami Beach.

In 2018, Bill Cosby was sentenced to three to 10 years in state prison for drugging and molesting a woman at his suburban Philadelphia home. President Donald Trump denounced the "ideology of globalism" and praised his own administration's achievements in a speech to the U.N. General Assembly that drew headshakes and even laughter from fellow world leaders.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama, in his weekly radio and Internet address, said the Republicans' plan to slash taxes and cut spending if the GOP were to retake the House in November was no more than "an echo of a disastrous decade we can't afford to relive." Three crew members, including American astronaut Tracy Caldwell-Dyson, touched down safely, although a day late, in Kazakhstan aboard their Soyuz capsule following a six-month stay aboard the International Space Station.

Five years ago: House Speaker John Boehner abruptly announced his resignation. President Barack Obama laid out a fresh threat of sanctions for economic espionage emanating from China, even as he and President Xi Jinping pledged their countries would not conduct or support such hacking. During a visit to New York City, Pope Francis offered comfort to 9/11 victims' families at ground zero, warnings to world leaders at the United Nations and encouragement to schoolchildren in Harlem. International leaders at the United Nations approved an ambitious 15-year plan to tackle the world's biggest problems, from eradicating poverty to preserving the planet.

One year ago: The White House released a rough transcript of President Donald Trump's July 25 call with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, confirming that Trump had pushed Ukraine's leader to work with Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani and Attorney General William Barr to investigate Joe Biden and his son. Members of Congress were able for the first time to review the secret whistleblower complaint involving Trump that had triggered an impeachment effort in the House.

Today's Birthdays: Broadcast journalist Barbara Walters is 91. Folk singer Ian Tyson is 87. Polka bandleader Jimmy Sturr is 79. Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates is 77. Actor Josh Taylor is 77. Actor Robert Walden is 77. Actor-producer Michael Douglas is 76. Model Cheryl Tiegs is 73. Actor Mimi Kennedy is 72. Movie director Pedro Almodovar is 71. Actor-director Anson Williams is 71. Actor Mark Hamill is 69. Basketball Hall of Famer Bob McAdoo is 69. Actor Colin Friels is 68. Actor Michael Madsen is 62. Actor Heather Locklear is 59. Actor Aida Turturro is 58. Actor Tate Donovan is 57. TV personality Keely Shaye Smith is 57.

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Actor Maria Doyle Kennedy is 56. Basketball Hall of Famer Scottie Pippen is 55. Actor Jason Flemyng is 54. Actor Will Smith is 52. Actor Hal Sparks is 51. Actor Catherine Zeta-Jones is 51. Rock musician Mike Luce (Drowning Pool) is 49. Actor Bridgette Wilson-Sampras is 47. Actor Clea DuVall is 43. Actor Robbie Jones is 43. Actor Joel David Moore is 43. Actor Chris Owen is 40. Rapper T. I. is 40. Actor Van Hansis is 39. Actor Lee Norris is 39. Actor/rapper Donald Glover (AKA Childish Gambino) is 37. Actor Zach Woods is 36. Actor Jordan Gavaris is 31. Olympic silver medal figure skater Mao Asada is 30. Actor Emmy Clarke is 29.

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GROTON



TIGERS

GAME DAY

HOMEcoming 2020

WHO: Groton Area Vs. Redfield

WHEN: Friday Sept. 25th, 7:00 PM

WHERE: Doney Field, Groton, SD

OFFICIALS:

Joe Frederiksen Referee

Jeff Morehouse Umpire

Alex Kenkel Backline Judge

James Benning Line Judge

Matt Schmidt Head Linesman

VISITING TEAM INFORMATION

ARRIVAL: 5:00PM

LOCKERROOM: Old Gym/JH Girls

Locker-room

**BUS PARKING: South Door On West Side
of the High School**

**MISC. INFO: Homecoming 2020, this
should not effect Redfield.**

GAME WORKERS:

CLOCK OPERATOR: MATT LOCKE

PA ANNOUNCER: MIKE IMRIE

**ATHLETIC TRAINERS: LINDSEY SWENSON AND
BRITTANY HUBBART**

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR: BRIAN DOLAN

**GAME ADMINISTRATORS: MIKE WEBER, BRETT
SCHWAN, KIERSTEN SOMBKE, AND JOE SCHWAN**

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS CONTACT BRIAN DOLAN 605 824 4161