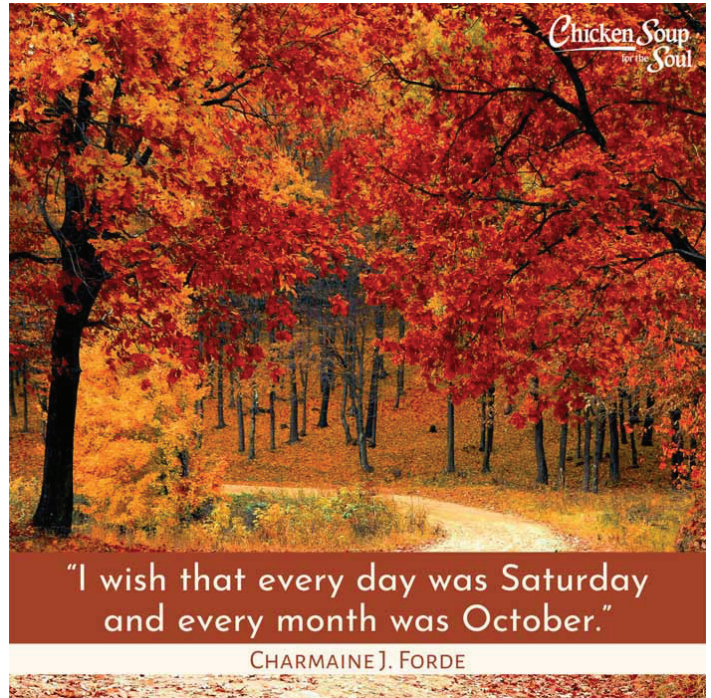


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GDILIVE.COM

Volleyball

Thurs., Oct., 01, 2020
Groton at
Hamlin

**C Match Sponsored by
White House Inn**



**Varsity Sponsored by
Bary Keith at Harr Motors
Hefty Seed
Larry & Kathy Harry
BaseKamp Lodge**

The junior varsity match will be broadcast on GDILIVE.COM. It will be available to GDI Subscribers (you) and to those that purchase a ticket on the GDILIVE.COM website. The link will appear on the horizontal black bar on the home page.



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Conde National League

Team standings

Sept. 14: Cubs 3, Braves 3, Giants 2, Pirates 2, Mets 1, Tigers 1.

Sept. 21: Cubs 6, Braves 6, Tigers 4.5, Giants 3, Pirates 2.5, Mets 2.

Sept. 28: Braves 9, Cubs 7, Mets 6, Pirates 6, Tigers 5, Giants 3

Men's High Games

Sept. 14: Troy Lindberg 209, 188, Lance Frohling 190, Butch Farmen 184.

Sept. 21: Butch Farmen 240, 183; Collin Cady 216; Larry Frohling 181.

Sept. 28: Lance Frohling 212, 211; Ryan Bethke 203, 200; Russ Bethke 188.

Men's High Series

Sept. 14: Troy Lindberg 553, Lance Frohling 520, Butch Farmen 510.

Sept. 21: Butch Farmen 583, Collin Cady 523, Larry Frohling 485

Sept. 28: Lance Frohling 602, Ryan Bethke 579, Russ Bethke 513

Women's High Games

Sept. 14: Nancy Radke 186, 151; Michelle Johnson 180, 175; Mary Larson 149.

Sept. 21: Michelle Johnson 181, Deb Fredrickson 170, Vickie Kramp 164.

Sept. 28: Joyce Walter 190; Nancy Radke 182, 179; Michelle Johnson 174

Women's High Series

Sept. 14: Michelle Johnson 490, Nancy Radke 466, Mary Larson 418

Sept. 21: Michelle Johnson 464, Vickie Kramp 456, Deb Fredrickson 441.

Sept. 28: Nancy Radke 489; Tanan Messevou 476; Joyce Walter 458



The finishing touches are being applied to the base of the new water tower. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

\$2,500 Graduate Scholarship Designed to Support Future of Agriculture

HURON, S.D. - Advancements in agriculture research and technology are essential to tomorrow's farmers and ranchers. To support the future of South Dakota's family farmers and ranchers, Travelor's Motor Club together with South Dakota Farmers Union (SDFU) Foundation, provides a \$2,500 scholarship annually to a South Dakota graduate student, pursuing an agriculture degree.

"Educating the next generation is something our organization supports and invests in," says Doug Sombke, SDFU President. "It's through research and education that our state's family farmers and ranchers are able to make informed decisions that lead to increased yields, better livestock genetics and help us in resource stewardship."

Chris Nelson, 38 was the 2019 recipient. An SDSU research assistant and father of two, Nelson said \$2,500 scholarship helped him and his family balance school expenses while supporting their young sons, Rhett and Liam. "Not having to figure out how to pay for school this semester is an enormous weight off my shoulders," said Nelson who is pursuing a Master of Plant Science degree with an emphasis in Plant Breeding.

Helping South Dakotans, like Nelson, advance their knowledge to help other South Dakotans, is the reason Travelor's Motor Club has sponsored this graduate scholarship for the last 36 years. "We believe in rural America and the farm community. Working with Farmers Union to sponsor this scholarship is one small way to help," explains Gene Hammond, President and principle owner of Travelor's Motor Club.

Scholarship Deadline is December 15, 2020

Eligible graduate students include on-campus and distance education students who are pursuing any agriculture master's or doctoral program, agriculture teacher certification program (CERT/FCSC) or graduate certificate program (GCERT).

To apply for the South Dakota Farmers Union (SDFU) Foundation scholarship, graduate students need to apply by December 15, 2020 by visiting www.sdfufoundation.org or call Karla Hofhenke, SDFU Executive Director at 605-352-6761 ext. 114.

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#220 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Things are very much as they've been for the past week or so, although new cases did slip below 40,000 again today to 39,600, a 0.5% increase. The total is now 7,259,400, over a quarter of the way through that next million. There is still serious trouble in the Midwest: Montana set a record for new cases today and has set a record for 7-day average every day for more than two weeks running; they also have record numbers of hospitalizations. Wisconsin had a record number of cases for the 19th straight day; some hospitals in the state are reporting they've exceeded capacity in their Covid-19 units and have been sending patients to other hospitals. North Dakota hospitals are adding additional beds due to concerns about capacity; the state leads the country for per capita new cases and has for a couple of weeks now. Iowa has experienced a spike in hospitalizations. In Oklahoma, the test positivity rate has been on the increase, 15% higher today than a week ago with the number of cases rising as well. Minnesota, Utah, and Puerto Rico had record seven-day new-case averages. The top states per capita over the past week are North Dakota (54 new cases daily per 100,000 residents), South Dakota (45 daily/100,000), Wisconsin (39 daily/100,000), Utah (32 daily/100,000), and Iowa (30 daily/100,000).

States and territories with more than 25 new cases reported per 100,000 residents, indicating unchecked community spread, are Montana, Utah, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Iowa, Arkansas, Wisconsin, and Puerto Rico. Those with 10-24 new cases per 100,000, indicating escalating community spread, are Guam, Alaska, Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming, Nebraska, Kansas, Texas, Minnesota, Missouri, Louisiana, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Rhode Island, Delaware, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Those reporting 1-9 new cases per 100,000, indicating potential community spread, are Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, California, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Michigan, Ohio, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, West Virginia, Maryland, District of Columbia, and Virginia. Those with fewer than 1 new case per 100,000, indicating they're close to containment, are the Northern Marianas, American Samoa, and Vermont.

There were 915 deaths reported today, a 0.4% increase. Reported deaths have been below 1000 for a solid week now; we can hope that continues. There were a record number of deaths reported in Wisconsin today.

We've known for a long time that obesity is a significant risk factor for severe Covid-19; in fact, it appears to be the single biggest risk factor in those under 40. People with obesity who become infected are more than twice as likely to be hospitalized and almost 50% more likely to die than people without obesity. A study which has not yet been peer reviewed found that more than 77% of 17,000 hospitalized Covid-19 patients had excess weight. Similar relationships have been seen with influenza. Exactly what's going on there turns out to be fairly complicated, and we haven't sorted it all out yet.

In animal experiments, we see that excess fat disrupts the immune system, so that may play a role; we have not demonstrated the effect in humans. There is evidence that people with obesity do not respond well to vaccines; they are more likely to get influenza after being vaccinated than those without excess weight.

We know that obesity is associated with other medical conditions like diabetes and hypertension (high blood pressure) which place people at risk—or maybe it is the obesity all by itself that places people at risk and diabetes and hypertension are just along for the ride—or maybe the conditions work together to create risk. See how complicated this gets?

There are social and cultural factors: Obesity disproportionately affects Black and Latino people. We know these groups have higher risk for severe disease and also higher risk of exposure in the workplace, limited access to medical care, and lower quality care when they do access it. Food insecurity plays a large role in obesity and can also play a large role in the lives of these groups, as do food deserts, long work hours, and poverty. People with obesity also are subject to stigma from health care professionals when can further interfere with receiving quality medical care.

Some of the issue is just mechanical; large amounts of fat compress the lower lungs, making it harder for

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them to expand, even in times of good health. Blood has more of a tendency to clot abnormally in those with obesity, which can lead to tissue damage, strokes, and heart attacks, all of which increase risk with Covid-19. Fat tissue produces hormones that influence other cells' activities in not-so-great ways, and we think one of those influences is to tamp down early immune responses to pathogens, which gives them time to reproduce unchallenged before the immune system kicks into gear. That's all a virus like this one needs. An added effect of this delayed response is that, when the response finally gets underway, there is a much stronger tendency to overreact, causing those surges of uncontrolled inflammation in various tissues throughout the body. Further, the uncontrolled inflammation can interfere with the body's ability to generate a long-lived population of memory cells that will be prepared to respond more rapidly and efficiently next time that virus shows up. There's a whole lot wrong in this scenario; it resembles the kind of response we generally see in the very elderly, those over 80 years.

This has implications for vaccination in those with obesity; they may need different dosages or administration schedules. Maybe some vaccines will not be suited for them at all. A problem is that not all trials are investigating these issues. When asked about testing the effects of body weight on efficacy of their vaccines, Novavax and AstraZeneca said they have no plans to do so. Moderna and Pfizer did not respond to questions on the subject. Johnson & Johnson is enrolling people with obesity and plans to "evaluate this question during development." So I guess there's that.

There is a real tendency to overlook the particular medical needs of those with obesity, and I think, a tendency in society to view the problem as "their own fault." There is mounting evidence things are not just that simple, that obesity is a medical condition, not just a lifestyle problem or an issue of poor self-control. This population, which is a whole lot of people in the US, is not being well served in their health care already; it appears this virus is just layering one more problem over those that already exist.

A study was published today in the journal Science; it involves 85,000 cases in India and nearly 600,000 of their contacts. It draws some conclusions applicable primarily to countries with health care systems and social structures very different from ours, but also addresses transmission to, among, and from children. The extensive contact tracing included in the study found that children of all ages can become infected and spread the virus to others. These findings are described by experts as "compelling." Lead investigator, Dr. Joseph Lewnard, epidemiologist at the University of California, Berkeley, said, "There's, granted, not an enormous number of kids in the contact tracing data, but those who are in it are certainly transmitting." I don't think we have a good handle yet on the role of children in transmission. Because this has serious implications for a number of societal decisions, it would be good to get this sorted out. This study also confirms something we've already been seeing, that a large share of infections are spread by a relatively small number of people, that some folks transmit the virus to many others while others transmit to no one at all. I wish we could figure out that puzzle.

There was another study published today by the Rand Corporation. I was unable to access the paper, so I'm relying on summaries here; the findings indicate adults in the US have sharply increased their alcohol consumption during the pandemic. Three out of four are drinking on more days of the month and drinking more heavily on days when they drink; this trend is particularly notable among women. There was also an increase in reported alcohol-related problems that are dependent on consumption level. Experts are concerned about the feedback loop between feelings of stress, depression, and isolation and drinking where each exacerbates the other. The WHO has warned of increased health risks attendant upon the increased alcohol consumption we are seeing during this period.

Family is really important to Madilyn and Mike Mazur—she even works with her dad, so after the couple discovered she was pregnant, they figured when she delivered the baby, she'd have hospital visits from their extended family—her parents and grandmother, his mom. She explains her family is her support system, so she would want them around her to greet the new arrival. At least, that was the plan. Then came the pandemic.

With the strict limits imposed by the infection on hospital visits, she was probably lucky to have her husband there with her. No worries: Where there's a will, there's a way. The family planned to be there

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anyhow; and when the day came last Friday, three weeks early, there they were in the hospital parking lot setting up a baby tailgate party—chairs, music, tent—and settling in for the long wait. They had something else with them, just for the new mother: signs with messages like “Team Mazur,” “Push Maddie,” and “Say yes to drugs.” They hung in there for 12 long hours, never deserting their post, much to the delight of the couple and hospital staff who could observe the party out the window throughout until little Mike, Junior, arrived at long last, all six pounds and 11 ounces of him, healthy and vigorous. All’s well that ends well in this nice family version of being together apart. I’ll remind us to continue to seek ways to be with the ones we love and wish this expanded family well.

And you too: Be well. We’ll talk again.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Sept. 23	Sept. 24	Sept. 25	Sept. 26	Sept. 27	Sept. 28	Sept. 29
Minnesota	91,422	92,100	93,012	94,189	95,659	96,734	97,638
Nebraska	41,785	42,278	42,731	43,162	43,596	44,063	44,578
Montana	10,700	10,912	11,242	11,564	11,907	12,107	12,413
Colorado	66,053	66,669	67,217	67,926	68,510	69,079	69,490
Wyoming	4,231	4,368	4,488	4,585	4,618	4,780	4,897
North Dakota	18,508	18,981	19,451	19,885	20,380	20,724	20,983
South Dakota	19,189	19,634	20,097	20,544	21,133	21,541	21,738
United States	6,897,495	6,935,415	6,978,874	7,034,824	7,079,689	7,113,666	7,150,117
US Deaths	200,818	201,920	202,819	203,789	204,499	204,750	205,091
Minnesota	+480	+678	+912	+1,177	+1,460	+1,075	+904
Nebraska	+397	+493	+453	+431	+434	+467	+515
Montana	+271	+212	+330	+323	+343	+200	+306
Colorado	+654	+616	+548	+709	+584	+569	+411
Wyoming	+42	+137	+120	+97	+33	+162	+117
North Dakota	+264	+473	+470	+434	+495	+344	+259
South Dakota	+320	+445	+463	+457	+579	+412	+198
United States	+39,357	37,920	+43,459	+55,950	+44,865	+33,977	+38,451
US Deaths	+928	+1,102	+899	+970	+710	+251	+341
	Sept. 30	Oct. 1					
Minnesota	98,447	99,134					
Nebraska	45,044	45,564					
Montana	12,724	13,071					
Colorado	70,025	70,536					
Wyoming	4,948	5,046					
North Dakota	21,401	21,846					
South Dakota	21,997	22,389					
United States	7,191,349	7,234,257					
US Deaths	206,005	206,963					
Minnesota	+809	+687					
Nebraska	+466	+520					
Montana	+311	+347					
Colorado	+535	+511					
Wyoming	+51	+98					
North Dakota	+418	+445					
South Dakota	+259	+392					
United States	+41,232	+42,909					
US Deaths	+914	+958					

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September 30th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

No deaths recorded in South Dakota while North Dakota recorded seven more. South Dakota's positivity rate remains around the 12 percent mark. There were 392 positive cases and 418 recovered leaving 26 fewer active cases.

Locally, Brown had 17 positive and 22 recovered. Day had 5 positive. Edmunds had 4 positive and 2 recovered. Marshall had 3 positive and 1 recovered. McPherson had 3 positive. Spink had 3 positive and 3 recovered.

Those with double digit increases were Beadle 11, Brown 17, Codington 12, Lawrence 10, Lincoln 23, Meade 12, Minnehaha 84, Pennington 40, and Yankton 15.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +17 (1,240) Positivity Rate: 15.9%

Total Tests: +107 (10,857)

Recovered: +22 (1036)

Active Cases: -5 (200)

Ever Hospitalized: +7 (54)

Deaths: +0 (4)

Percent Recovered: 83.5

South Dakota:

Positive: +392 (22,389 total) Positivity Rates: 12.7%

Total Tests: 3,247 (269,686 total)

Hospitalized: +38 (1,549 total). 212 currently hospitalized +1)

Deaths: +0 (223 total)

Recovered: +418 (18,508 total)

Active Cases: -26 (3,658)

Percent Recovered: 82.7%

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 9% Covid, 46% Non-Covid, 45% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 12% Covid, 60% Non-Covid, 28% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 5% Covid, 14% Non-Covid, 81% Available

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, +3 recovered (10 active cases)

Beadle (9): +11 positive, +8 recovered (107 active cases)

Bennett (1): +0 positive, +1 recovered (13 active cases)

Bon Homme (1): +6 positive, +1 recovered (20 active cases)

Brookings (2): +8 positive, +19 recovered (107 active cases)

Brown (4): +17 positive, +22 recovered (200 active cases)

Brule: +6 positive, +4 recovered (33 active cases)

Buffalo (3): +2 positive, +0 recovered (23 active cases)

Butte (3): +4 positive, +2 recovered (35 active cases)

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

Charles Mix: +7 positive, +3 recovered (49 active cases)

Clark: +0 positive, +1 recovered (11 active cases)

Clay (6): +4 positive, +9 recovered (38 active cases)

Codington (6): +12 positive, +29 recovered (185 active cases)

Corson (1): +0 positive, +2 recovered (8 active cases)

Custer (2): +3 positive, +2 recovered (27 active case)

Davison (2): +9 positive, +12 recovered (119 active cases)

Day: +5 positive, +0 recovered (22 active cases)

Deuel: +1 positive, +1 recovered (11 active cases)

Dewey: +5 positive, +10 recovered (59 active cases)

Douglas (1): +4 positive, +2 recovered (27 active cases)

Edmunds: +4 positive, +2 recovered (18 active cases)

Fall River (4): +1 positive, +3 recovered (11 active cases)

Faulk (1): +1 positive, +1 recovered (12 active cases)

Grant (1): +5 positive, +3 recovered (55 active cases)

Gregory (3): +6 positive, +11 recovered (39 active cases)

Haakon: +1 positive, +1 recovered (9 active case)

Hamlin: +1 positive, +1 recovered (21 active cases)

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Hand: +4 positive, +1 recovered (21 active cases)
 Hanson: +0 positive, +1 recovered (12 active cases)
 Harding: +0 positive (1 active case)
 Hughes (5): +6 positive, +12 recovered (120 active cases)
 Hutchinson (2): +4 positive, +3 recovered (33 active cases)
 Hyde: +1 positive, +0 recovered (5 active cases)
 Jackson (1): +1 positive, +2 recovered (10 active cases)
 Jerauld (1): +4 positive, +1 recovered (36 active cases)
 Jones: +1 positive, +0 recovered (7 active cases)
 Kingsbury: +2 positive, +1 recovered (13 active cases)
 Lake (7): +3 positive, +4 recovered (32 active cases)
 Lawrence (4): +10 positive, +13 recovered (101 active cases)
 Lincoln (2): +23 positive, +19 recovered (211 active cases)
 Lyman (3): +0 positive, +1 recovered (43 active

cases)
 Marshall: +3 positive, +1 recovered (10 active cases)
 McCook (1): +8 positive, +0 recovered (28 active cases)
 McPherson: +3 positive, +0 recovery (8 active case)
 Meade (5): +12 positive, +15 recovered (108 active cases)
 Mellette: +1 positive, +1 recovery (3 active cases)
 Miner: +1 positive (6 active cases)
 Minnehaha (81): +84 positive, +75 recovered (629 active cases)
 Moody: +2 positive, +4 recovered (29 active cases)
 Oglala Lakota (3): +5 positive, +4 recovered (59 active cases)
 Pennington (37): +40 positive, +42 recovered (414 active cases)
 Perkins: +1 positive, +0 recovered (9 active cases)
 Potter: +0 positive, +3 recovered (9 active cases)
 Roberts (1): +5 positive, +3 recovered (60 active cases)
 Sanborn: +2 positive, +0 recovered (12 active cases)
 Spink: +3 positive, +3 recovered (29 active cases)
 Stanley: +0 positive, +2 recovery (7 active cases)
 Sully: +1 positive, +0 recovered (4 active cases)
 Todd (5): +4 positive, +1 recovered (25 active cases)
 Tripp: +2 positive, +7 recovered (62 active cases)
 Turner (2): +1 positive, +7 recovered (32 active cases)
 Union (7): +4 positive, +5 recovered (58 active cases)
 Walworth (1): +5 positive, +8 recovered (36 active cases)
 Yankton (4): +15 positive, +11 recovered (89 active cases)
 Ziebach: +1 positive, +5 recovered (5 active case)

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	703	0
10-19 years	2503	0
20-29 years	5224	2
30-39 years	3881	7
40-49 years	3040	10
50-59 years	3038	22
60-69 years	2128	32
70-79 years	1073	40
80+ years	799	110

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	11621	101
Male	10768	122

North Dakota Dept. of Health Report
 COVID-19 Daily Report, September 30:

- 7.0% rolling 14-day positivity
 - 8.7% daily positivity
 - 447 new positives
 - 5,126 susceptible test encounters
 - 89 currently hospitalized (-16)
 - 3,662 active cases (+11)
- Total Deaths: +7 (246)

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread
Aurora	59	48	550	0	Moderate
Beadle	815	699	2744	9	Substantial
Bennett	67	53	753	1	Substantial
Bon Homme	91	70	1166	1	Moderate
Brookings	779	685	4781	2	Substantial
Brown	1240	1036	7046	4	Substantial
Brule	132	99	1143	0	Substantial
Buffalo	140	114	777	3	Substantial
Butte	110	72	1579	3	Substantial
Campbell	36	14	148	0	Substantial
Charles Mix	184	135	2276	0	Substantial
Clark	43	32	561	0	Moderate
Clay	568	524	2579	6	Substantial
Codington	894	703	5020	6	Substantial
Corson	92	83	729	1	Moderate
Custer	189	160	1311	2	Substantial
Davison	329	208	3546	2	Substantial
Day	84	62	948	0	Substantial
Deuel	87	74	632	0	Moderate
Dewey	158	111	2872	0	Substantial
Douglas	87	59	556	1	Substantial
Edmunds	98	80	608	0	Substantial
Fall River	96	81	1440	4	Moderate
Faulk	74	61	314	1	Substantial
Grant	144	88	1122	1	Substantial
Gregory	136	94	645	3	Substantial
Haakon	27	18	374	0	Moderate
Hamlin	101	80	1004	0	Substantial
Hand	47	26	476	0	Substantial
Hanson	42	30	344	0	Moderate
Harding	4	3	86	0	Minimal
Hughes	459	334	2941	5	Substantial
Hutchinson	105	70	1225	2	Substantial

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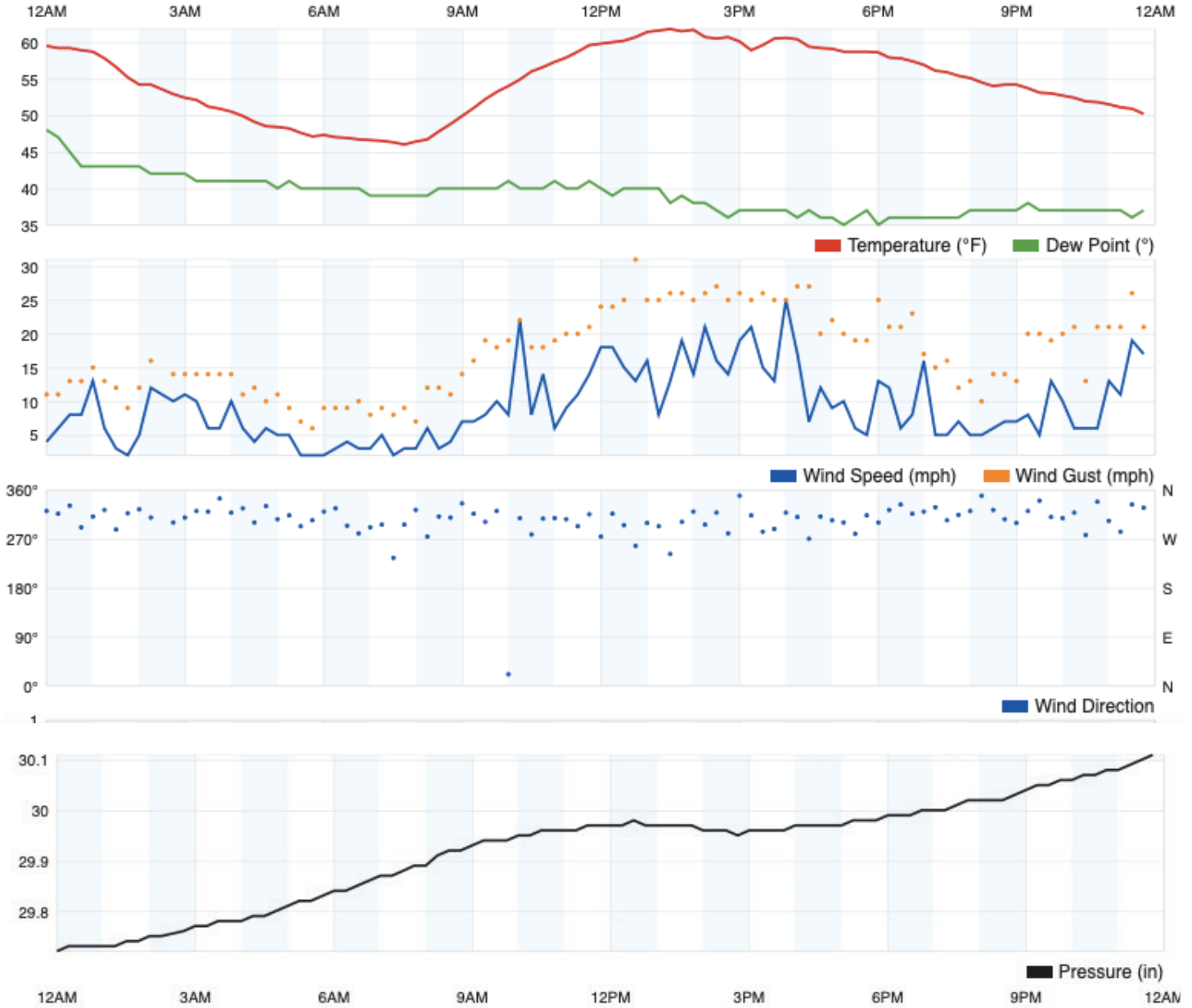
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Hyde	20	15	218	0	Moderate
Jackson	36	25	623	1	Moderate
Jerauld	96	59	334	1	Substantial
Jones	14	7	99	0	Minimal
Kingsbury	59	46	811	0	Substantial
Lake	201	162	1447	7	Substantial
Lawrence	428	323	4114	5	Substantial
Lincoln	1408	1195	10572	2	Substantial
Lyman	165	119	1255	3	Substantial
Marshall	43	33	658	0	Moderate
McCook	106	77	910	1	Substantial
McPherson	36	28	309	0	Moderate
Meade	560	452	3764	5	Substantial
Mellette	32	29	485	0	Minimal
Miner	25	19	349	0	Minimal
Minnehaha	6816	6106	41396	81	Substantial
Moody	98	69	877	0	Substantial
Oglala Lakota	295	213	4381	3	Substantial
Pennington	2405	1954	18223	37	Substantial
Perkins	41	32	366	0	Moderate
Potter	46	37	482	0	Moderate
Roberts	217	156	2706	1	Substantial
Sanborn	31	19	331	0	Moderate
Spink	140	112	1499	0	Substantial
Stanley	42	35	435	0	Moderate
Sully	13	9	136	0	Minimal
Todd	128	98	2839	5	Substantial
Tripp	164	102	916	0	Substantial
Turner	168	134	1380	2	Substantial
Union	408	343	3024	7	Substantial
Walworth	133	94	1139	1	Substantial
Yankton	435	342	4630	4	Substantial
Ziebach	63	58	509	0	Minimal
Unassigned	0	0	4867	0	

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Partly Sunny

High: 51 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy
then Areas
Frost

Low: 33 °F

Friday



Frost then
Mostly Cloudy

High: 55 °F

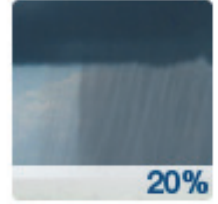
Friday
Night



Chance
Sprinkles

Low: 37 °F

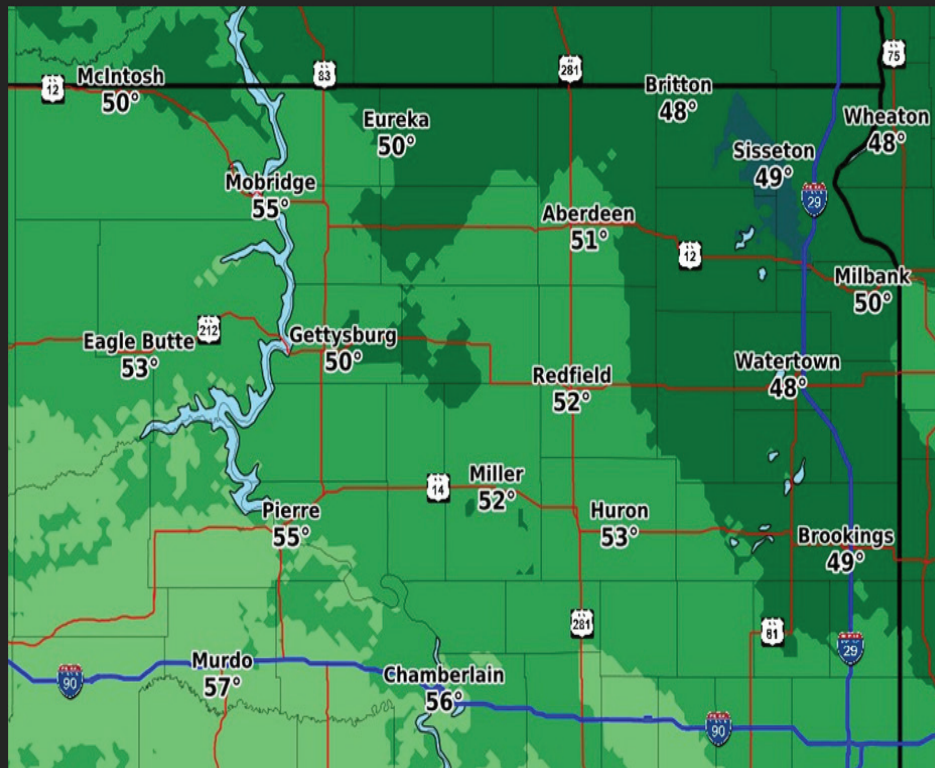
Saturday



Slight Chance
Showers

High: 52 °F

Cooler And Breezy Today



 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Updated: 10/1/2020 4:14 AM Central

Mild temperatures and breezy conditions are expected today with highs only getting into the 50s for most areas, and winds 20-25 mph.

Groton Daily Independent

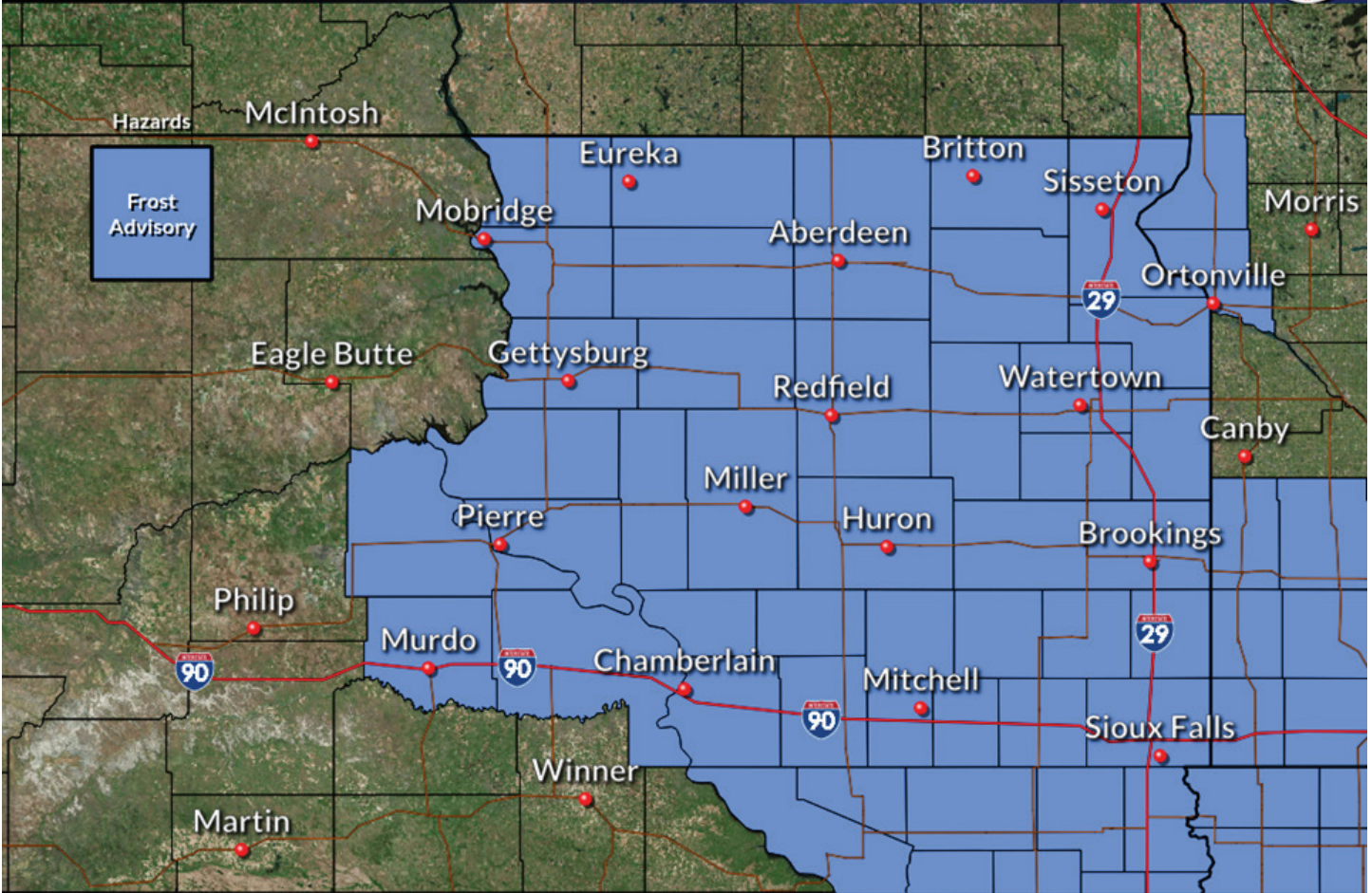
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Frost Advisory In Effect For Friday Morning

Valid 2am-9am CDT

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD

Issued Oct 01, 2020 5:37 AM CDT



NWSAberdeen

weather.gov/abr

A frost advisory is in effect for much of central and eastern SD for Friday morning, valid from 2am-9am CDT.

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Today in Weather History

October 1, 1971: A rare October tornado developed in Sully County during the evening hours. The brief tornado damaged a ranch home and large barn, 6 miles west-northwest of Onida.

October 1, 1999: A narrow band of heavy snow fell across portions of South Dakota. Snowfall amounts of 4 to 8" were typical in the relatively narrow band, breaking many daily records.

October 1, 2012: Drought continued to intensify and expand across central and northeast South Dakota through October, resulting in severe to exceptional drought conditions. Many locations continued the trend of recording well below-average precipitation totals for the month. The exceptional drought conditions expanded into Stanley, Jones, and southern Lyman counties. Extreme drought conditions spread into southern Dewey, Sully, Hughes, Lyman, Jones, Southwest Hyde, Hamlin, Codington, Grant, and Deuel counties. Severe drought conditions spread into Corson, Dewey, northwest Hyde, Hand, Faulk, Edmunds, McPherson, Brown, eastern Clark, and southern Roberts Counties.

1890: The weather service is first identified as a civilian agency when Congress, at the request of President Benjamin Harrison, passes an act transferring the Signal Service's meteorological responsibilities to the newly-created U.S. Weather Bureau in the Department of Agriculture.

1893: On this day, the village of Caminadaville, Louisiana, was destroyed by a massive hurricane. Caminadaville was a vibrant fishing community in the late 19th century, located on Cheniere Caminada, adjacent to Grand Isle in coastal Jefferson Parish in Louisiana. It took five days for the news of this devastating hurricane to reach New Orleans.

1938: Grannis and Okay, Arkansas set an all-time high-temperature record for October for Arkansas with 105 degrees.

1945: While investigating a Category 1 typhoon over the South China Sea, the typhoon hunter plane was lost. This marks the first of only a few instances of the Hurricane/Typhoon plane was lost during their flight into the storm.

1958: NASA officially begins operations on October 1st, 1958.

1977: While an F3 tornado traveled less than one-mile through Montfort Heights or the greater Cincinnati area, it destroyed 12 homes and damaged 15 others. There were 17 injuries.

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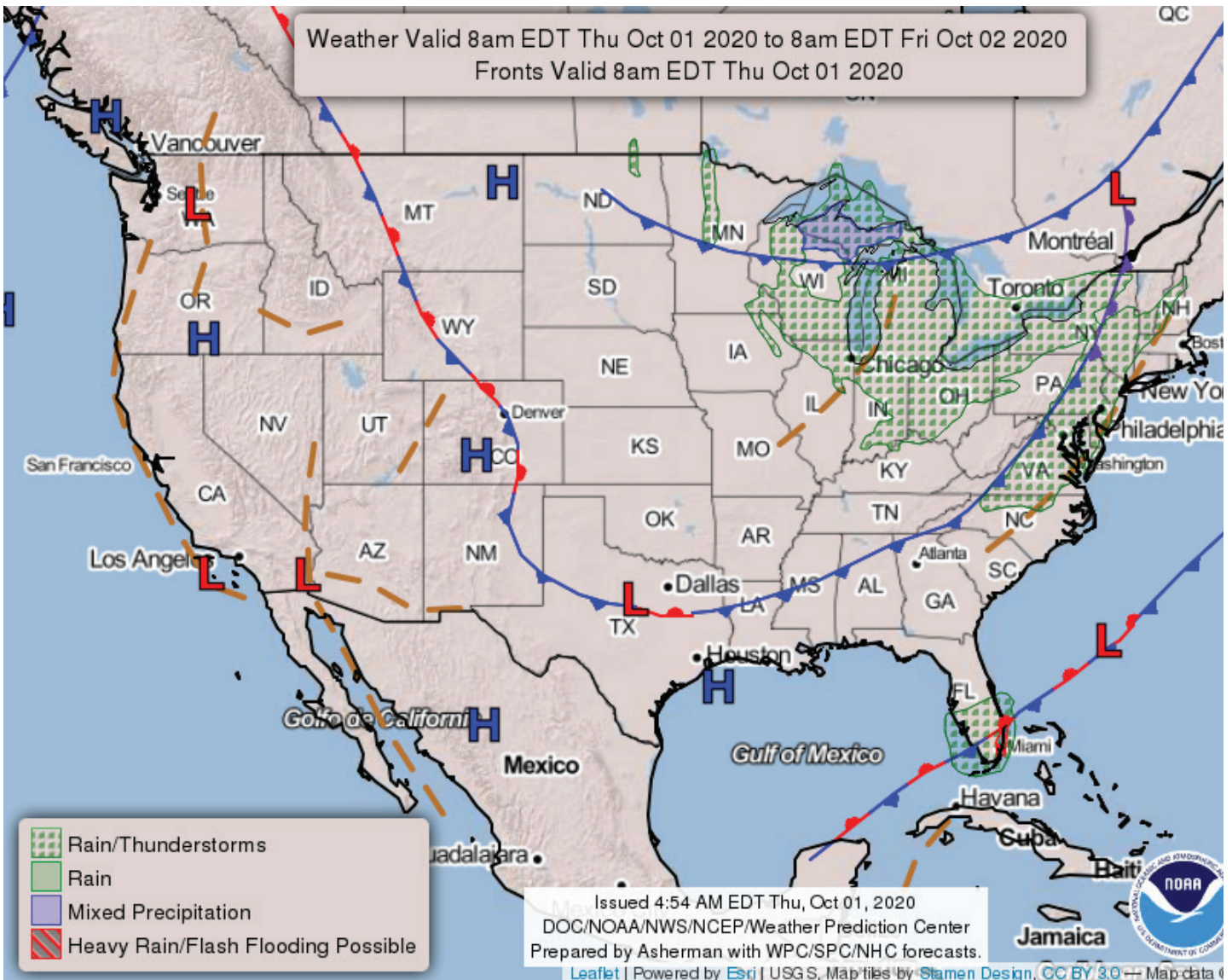
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 62 °F at 1:56 PM
Low Temp: 46 °F at 7:42 AM
Wind: 31 mph at 12:41 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 92° in 1922
Record Low: 21° in 1974
Average High: 65°F
Average Low: 39°F
Average Precip in Sept...: 2.19
Precip to date in Sept.: 1.80
Average Precip to date: 18.48
Precip Year to Date: 15.15
Sunset Tonight: 7:13 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:34 a.m.



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FROZEN IN FEAR

A young man from Kansas dreamed of becoming a crew member of a tall ship. Finally, his lifelong ambition was realized when he was offered an opportunity to set sail on one of the few remaining vessels. His enthusiasm was short-lived when, after a few days, the captain ordered him to climb to the "crow's nest" and search the horizon for approaching vessels.

The higher up he climbed on the rope ladder, the more frightened he became, and the slower his progress. Halfway up, he stopped, frozen in his tracks. He was unable to move. No amount of persuasion or encouragement from the sailors below inspired him to go higher. Finally, someone had to climb up behind him and slowly coax him down to safety.

Now and then, we all seem to get "stuck" when we are unable to overcome an old habit, when facing a new challenge or being forced to do something we have never done before. People all around us may provide insight and ideas to solve our problem and challenge us to move on. But nothing seems to make sense, and we "freeze" in our tracks.

However, God, in His Word, promises that "He gives His power to the faint and weary, and might to him who has no strength."

When life's obstacles "freeze" us with fear, we must claim the promises of God and move forward in faith!

Prayer: Lord, increase our faith. May our doubts disappear, and our trust in Your promises give us the confidence and assurance that You will always provide for our safety and security. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Isaiah 40:29-31

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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

News from the Associated Press

Military tag of North Dakota soldier returned to his widow

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The long-lost U.S. Army identification tag of a North Dakota soldier has been returned to his widow after it resurfaced in Russia.

Gov. Doug Burgum gave Ronald Hepper's military tag to his widow, Ruth Hepper of Bismarck, on Wednesday.

According to Burgum's office, Ronald Hepper had kept a set of his dog tags in his boots, and had been in Vietnam just a few months when a blast from a hand grenade blew his boots off his body in June 1969. Hepper woke up in the hospital with no boots and no dog tags.

He spent three months in an amputee ward, but doctors were able to save his legs, which were wounded by shrapnel. He received the Purple Heart for his injuries.

After his military service, Hepper returned to a ranch near Isabel, S.D. He and his wife moved to Bismarck to be closer to family a few months before his death in January 2007.

The military ID was found by an American citizen traveling in Russia. The American bought the ID from a street vendor in Moscow and brought it to the American Embassy. The tag was eventually returned to the North Dakota Governor's Office.

It's not clear how the ID ended up in Russia.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

02-09-12-14-20

(two, nine, twelve, fourteen, twenty)

Estimated jackpot: \$217,000

Lotto America

05-06-11-30-37, Star Ball: 3, ASB: 2

(five, six, eleven, thirty, thirty-seven; Star Ball: three; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.55 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$41 million

Powerball

14-18-36-49-67, Powerball: 18, Power Play: 2

(fourteen, eighteen, thirty-six, forty-nine, sixty-seven; Powerball: eighteen; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$34 million

South Dakota lawmakers finalize plans for coronavirus funds

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers on Wednesday worked to finalize their plan on how to spend more than \$1 billion in federal coronavirus relief funds ahead of a special legislative session tentatively scheduled for next week.

Lawmakers have been holding public input sessions in recent weeks as they discuss the best way to address the health and economic crises caused by the pandemic. But as the state looks to spend the bulk of the \$1.25 billion in federal funds it received in the spring, Gov. Kristi Noem and some lawmakers have tussled over spending the money.

Noem's office has maintained that the governor has the authority to spend federal funds without a vote

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from the Legislature. Her office has described the special session as a way for lawmakers to offer input into how the money is used.

Even as legislatures looked to finalize their plans, some were not certain whether the special session would happen. Noem has announced that she intends to call the Legislature to convene on Monday, but has yet to issue a proclamation to officially schedule it.

Noem's spokesman Ian Fury said the governor is still planning for the session to happen on Monday.

Speaker Steven Haugaard, a Sioux Falls Republican, said he is also working under that assumption, but he expected that she would have already issued the official proclamation.

The Republican governor has already laid out grant programs that would make \$400 million available to businesses affected by the pandemic and \$100 million for health care providers that provide services through Medicaid and other federal and state programs. She has also allocated another \$495 million, including for local governments, unemployment benefits and salaries for health officials and law enforcement officers.

The Legislature's Joint Committee on Appropriations, which shapes the state's budget, worked to finalize their adjustments to the governor's business grant plan on Wednesday. It also considered plans to send over \$100 million to programs like long-term care facilities, non-profit organizations and rent assistance.

Haugaard said the public input sessions have given lawmakers a chance to survey the impact of the pandemic and make sure the money goes to where it's needed the most.

"We hope that we find where the real hurt is across the state," he said.

Noem has cast her handling of the coronavirus as a boon for the state's economy as she eschewed lockdowns and encouraged tourism.

"We're in tremendous shape in our fight against this virus," she said in a statement announcing the special session.

But Haugaard pointed out that businesses have still had to close after facing local restrictions and downturns in business. House legislators, led by Haugaard, have pushed for the funds to be used quicker, as well as more legislative control on how the money is used. In August, he sent a letter, signed by 45 other House lawmakers, to the governor calling for the special session.

The \$1.25 billion that the state received is a record-breaking influx of federal cash, equivalent to roughly a quarter of the state's entire budget.

South Dakota ends deadliest month for COVID-19 as cases dip

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota reported a decrease in the number of active cases to 3,658 on Wednesday as the state marked the end of its deadliest month of the pandemic to date.

Health officials have recorded 56 death from COVID-19 during September, as well as new highs in cases. Over the past two weeks, the state reported the nation's second-highest number of new cases per capita, with 567 infections per 100,000 people.

The Department of Health reported 392 new cases, which was a dip after all-time highs recorded last week. But the state's test positivity rate has remained among the highest in the country, which is an indicator that many more people have infections than tests are showing. The average positivity rate in the last seven days has reached 26%, according to data from the COVID tracking project.

Hospitals across the state are also caring for one of the highest loads of COVID-19 patients since the pandemic began. A total of 212 people were in the hospital with the virus, occupying 9% of hospital beds and 14% of Intensive Care Units.

Over the course of the pandemic, 22,389 people have tested positive for the coronavirus. About 83% of them have recovered, but 223 people have died.

Second man pleads guilty in fatal drug robbery shooting

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — One of two men accused of fatally shooting a teenager during a drug robbery in Rapid City has changed his plea to guilty.

Andre Martinez, 20, entered the plea to first-degree manslaughter in Seventh Circuit Court Tuesday for

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his role in the shooting death of 17-year-old Emmanuel Hinton in February 2019, KOTA-TV reported.

Prosecutors said Martinez came up with a plan to rob the dealers who were selling marijuana and recruited Cole Waters, who earlier pleaded guilty to the same charge.

Court documents say Martinez and Waters met Hinton and another man in an alley before Waters shot the victim.

Waters contended his arm got caught in the door of the vehicle in which Hinton and the other man were seated and that accidentally discharged the gun he was holding.

The maximum penalty for first-degree manslaughter is life in prison and a \$50,000 fine. Both men have their sentencing date set for Dec. 16.

Plans for \$12.6 million rec center in Box Elder advance

BOX ELDER, S.D. (AP) — Plans for a \$12.6 million recreation center that would be used by both the Ellsworth Air Force Base and the community are moving forward in Box Elder.

The South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority approved the center at a meeting this week. A \$6.3 million Department of Defense grant will pay for half of the center, expected to be completed in 2022.

The 58,000-square-foot center will feature an indoor track. Authority Executive Director Scott Landguth says there will also be a multi-use activities infield that can be set up for indoor soccer and basketball courts, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Landguth said the goal is the center will be able to host youth tournaments as well as Air Force training.

"There's a movement to share some of these facilities when they can," Landguth said. "It serves everybody well. Instead of having the facility inside the fence, we can put it outside and increase the usage, and it benefits more people as well."

Landguth said the authority will seek additional funding from the state Legislature in the upcoming session.

The authority is exploring contracting with YMCA Rapid City to operate the center, Landguth said.

Election 2020 Today: Voters cringe after debate, race issue

By The Associated Press undefined

Here's what's happening Thursday in Election 2020, 33 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:

'IT WAS SAD': While President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden debated, Americans cringed. The country struggled for words to describe the display after one of the noisiest, most chaotic presidential debates in recent memory. In interviews with voters across key states, nearly all who watched recoiled from it. None said it would change their minds on how they planned to vote. Instead, voters on both sides said it only reaffirmed their positions.

PROUD BOYS: Trump tried to walk back his refusal to outright condemn the far right fascist group during the debate, but the inflammatory moment was far from the first time the president has failed to denounce white supremacists or has advanced racist ideas. It was an echo of the way he had blamed "both sides" for the 2017 violence between white supremacists and anti-racist protesters in Charlottesville, Virginia.

TRUMP MONEY: In recent days, Trump has promised millions of Medicare recipients that — thanks to him — they'll soon be getting an "incredible" \$200 card in the mail to help them pay for prescriptions. He's called himself "the best thing" that ever happened to Puerto Rico, while releasing long-stalled aid. Trump has also taken to showcasing the \$28 billion he "gave" to farmers hard hit by the trade war with China. As Trump talks up heaps of federal aid flowing to key constituency groups in the leadup to the November elections, he rarely mentions Congress' role in the appropriation of those dollars.

VOTING LAWSUITS: Democrats and Republicans are involved in hundreds of lawsuits across the country relating to the upcoming election. The lawsuits concern the core fundamentals of the American voting process, including how ballots are cast and counted. The litigation is all the more important because Trump has raised the prospect of the election winding up before a Supreme Court that could have a decidedly

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Republican tilt if his latest nominee is confirmed.

VISION 2020: What states vote early and when are these votes counted? All states allow some form of early voting, be it by casting votes in person at polling places early, voting by mail, or both. But each state has different rules and timelines on when this occurs. Some started in September. Some don't start until mid-October, or even closer to Election Day on Nov. 3. Just as there are 50 different timelines for early voting, there are 50 different ones for how the votes are counted.

ICYMI:

Debate commission says it will make changes to format

A lesson from Trump taxes: An underfunded IRS is outmatched

Biden, Trump snipe from road and rails after debate chaos

Trump Proud Boys remark echoes Charlottesville

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday tried to walk back his refusal to outright condemn a far right fascist group during his debate with Democrat Joe Biden, but the inflammatory moment was far from the first time the president has failed to denounce white supremacists or has advanced racist ideas.

Trump's initial refusal to criticize the Proud Boys — instead saying the group should "stand back and stand by" — drew fierce blowback before he altered his message in a day-later effort to quell the firestorm.

"I don't know who Proud Boys are. But whoever they are they have to stand down, let law enforcement do their work," Trump told reporters as he left the White House for a campaign stop in Minnesota.

The new flareup over Trump's messaging on race was playing out just weeks before the election, leaving the president to play defense on yet another issue when he's already facing criticism of his handling of the coronavirus pandemic and under new scrutiny over his taxes.

And even after saying the Proud Boys should "stand down," Trump went on to call out forces on the other end of the political spectrum and tried to attack Biden. It was an echo of the way he had blamed "both sides" for the 2017 violence between white supremacists and anti-racist protesters in Charlottesville, Virginia.

"Now antifa is a real problem," Trump said. "The problem is on the left. And Biden refuses to talk about it."

In fact, FBI Director Christopher Wray told a congressional panel last week that it was white supremacists and anti-government extremists who have been responsible for most of the recent deadly attacks by extremist groups in the U.S.

Proud Boys leaders and supporters took to social media to celebrate the president's comments at the debate, with more than 5,000 of the group's members posting "Stand Back" and "Stand By" above and below the group's logo.

And when Trump was directly asked Wednesday if he "would welcome white supremacist support," he ignored the question and again stressed the need for "law and order."

Trump built his political career on the back of the racist lie of birtherism — the false claim that Barack Obama was not born in the United States — and his business and political lives have long featured racial rhetoric and inflammatory actions. The president has rarely condemned white supremacists when not pressed to do so, and his refusal to criticize the fascist group was denounced by Democrats on Wednesday.

"My message to the Proud Boys and every other white supremacist group is cease and desist," Biden said during a post-debate train tour through Ohio and Pennsylvania. "That's not who we are. That's not who we are as Americans."

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer pressed his Republican colleagues: "How are you not embarrassed that President Trump represents your party? How can you possibly, possibly, support anyone who behaves this way?"

In an ugly debate marked by angry interruptions and bitter asides, Trump's remarks about the Proud Boys stood out. He was asked by moderator Chris Wallace of Fox News if he would "be willing tonight to

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condemn white supremacists and militia groups" and demand that they "stand down" and not add to the violence that has erupted in places like Portland, Oregon, and Kenosha, Wisconsin.

The president said "sure," but did not offer any actual words of condemnation, instead pivoting to blame the violence on left-wing radicals like antifa supporters. When pushed by Wallace, Trump asked for the name of a group to condemn — and Biden suggested Proud Boys.

"Proud Boys, stand back and stand by," Trump said.

Few Republicans publicly commented upon the president's remarks and fewer still criticized them.

GOP House leader Kevin McCarthy insisted Trump did agree when asked if he would condemn the groups, and the California Republican sought to equate the white nationalist groups and the KKK with extremists like antifa.

GOP Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., went only so far as to say, "I was hoping for more clarity."

Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, the only Black Republican in the Senate, said he believed Trump "mis-spoke."

"He should correct it," Scott added. "If he doesn't correct it I guess he didn't misspeak."

Biden called Trump a "racist" during the debate. It's a charge that has dogged Trump since his early days as a developer, when he called for the death penalty for the Central Park Five — a group of Black men accused of rape but later cleared — and when he fought charges of bias against Black people seeking to rent at his family-owned apartment complexes.

He became a star in the Republican field after promoting the racist idea that Obama wasn't born in the U.S. And earlier this year, he briefly wondered if Biden running mate Sen. Kamala Harris, whose mother was Indian and father is Jamaican, was eligible to serve as vice president.

There have been any number of other troublesome moments in recent years:

In his first moments as a presidential candidate, Trump suggested Mexicans were "rapists." He proposed temporarily banning Muslims from the United States. He retweeted posts from accounts that appeared to have ties to white nationalist groups. He was slow to reject the endorsement of former KKK leader David Duke. And, perhaps most notably, he blamed "both sides" for the violence in Charlottesville that left an anti-racist demonstrator dead.

The debate left some Black Americans dismayed.

"I think he has continued to embolden white supremacists," said Anne Susen, a 60-year-old out-of-work antiques dealer who lives just outside Charlottesville. "He just wants to sow the seeds of division in this country."

Tori Silver, 22, said there was "no excuse" for Trump not immediately disavowing white supremacist groups.

"It's kind of like, wow, what is that saying to me as a Black man?" Silver said outside the Albemarle County, Virginia, office where he voted early Wednesday for Biden.

Proud Boys members are ardent Trump supporters known for their violent confrontations with antifascists and other ideological opponents at protests, often drawing the largest crowds in the Pacific Northwest. Members have been spotted at various Trump rallies, including earlier this month in Nevada.

In 2018, police arrested several Proud Boys members and associates who brawled with antifascists after the group's founder, Gavin McInnes, delivered a speech at New York's Metropolitan Republican Club.

McInnes, who co-founded Vice Media, has described the group as a politically incorrect men's club for "Western chauvinists" and denies affiliations with far-right extremist groups that overtly espouse racist and anti-Semitic views. McInnes sued the Southern Poverty Law Center last year, claiming it defamed him when it designated the Proud Boys as a "hate group."

In response to the federal suit, which is still pending in Alabama, the law center said McInnes has acknowledged an "overlap" between the Proud Boys and white nationalist groups. "Indeed, Proud Boys members have posted social media pictures of themselves with prominent Holocaust deniers, white nationalists, and known neo-Nazis," law center lawyers wrote in a court filing.

Kunzelman reported from College Park, Md. Lemire reported from New York. Additional reporting by AP

writers Will Weissert in Alliance, Ohio, Gillian Flaccus in Portland, Ore., Sarah Rankin in Charlottesville, Va. and Lisa Mascaro and Darlene Superville in Washington.

Russia's Navalny accuses Putin of being behind poisoning

BERLIN (AP) — Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who is recovering in Germany after being poisoned in Russia by a nerve agent, accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of being behind the attack in comments released Thursday.

Navalny's supporters have frequently maintained that such an attack could have only been ordered at the top levels, although the Kremlin has repeatedly dismissed the accusations.

Navalny, politician and corruption investigator who is Putin's fiercest critic, was flown to Germany two days after falling ill on Aug. 20 on a domestic flight in Russia. He spent 32 days in the hospital, 24 of them in intensive care, before doctors deemed his condition had improved sufficiently for him to be discharged.

He has posted frequent comments online as his recovery has progressed, but in his first interview since the attack, he told Germany's Der Spiegel magazine that in his mind, "Putin was behind the attack," in a German translation of his comments.

"I don't have any other versions of how the crime was committed," he said in a brief excerpt of the interview conducted in Berlin on Wednesday and to be released in full online later Thursday.

The Kremlin on Thursday said that "such accusations against the Russian president are absolutely groundless and unacceptable."

"Some of these statements in the mentioned publication we consider offensive," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Peskov charged that there was information that "specialists" from the CIA were working with Navalny "these days" and giving him instructions.

"There is information that these instructors are working with him these days," Peskov said. "Instructions the patient is receiving are obvious. We have seen such lines of behavior more than once."

Earlier Thursday, Vyacheslav Volodin, speaker of the State Duma, Russia's lower parliament house, called Navalny "shameless" and "dishonorable" and accused the politician of working with "security services of Western countries."

"Putin saved his life," Volodin said in a statement released by the Duma. "Everyone, from pilots and doctors to the president, were genuinely saving him. Only a dishonorable person can make statements like this."

Navalny spent two days in a coma in a hospital in the Siberian city of Omsk, where Russian doctors said they found no trace of any poisoning, before being transported to Berlin for treatment. German chemical weapons experts determined that he was poisoned with the Soviet-era nerve agent Novichok — findings corroborated by labs in France and Sweden.

The nerve agent used in the attack was the same class of poison that Britain said was used on former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury, England, in 2018.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called the poisoning an attempted murder and she and other world leaders have demanded that Russia fully investigate the case.

Russia has bristled at the demands for an investigation, saying that Germany needs to share medical data in the case or compare notes with Russian doctors. Germany has noted that Russian doctors have their own samples from Navalny since he was in their care for 48 hours.

The Hague-based Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has collected independent samples from Navalny for testing, but results haven't yet been announced.

German doctors have said the 44-year-old Navalny could make a full recovery, though haven't ruled out the possibility of long-term damage from the nerve agent.

Spiegel said Navalny was joking and alert in the interview, although his hands shook so much it was difficult for him to drink from a bottle of water. He also reiterated what his team has previously said — that he planned on returning to Russia when he was able to do so.

"My job now is to remain the guy who isn't scared," he was quoted as saying. "And I'm not scared."

The Latest: Serbia data questioned; recount for virus deaths

By The Associated Press undefined

BELGRADE, Serbia — Serbia's president says the Balkan country will do a recount of COVID-19 deaths after a chief epidemiologist said more people have died of the disease than officially reported.

President Aleksandar Vucic said Thursday that "Serbia will do a complete revision for each death, for each person." Vucic insisted that the authorities did not hide the number of fatalities caused by the pandemic.

The comments came after epidemiologist Predrag Kon said three times more people died in Belgrade by June than officially registered. Kon wasn't clear over who's to blame for the discrepancy.

Serbian authorities have denied accusations they let the pandemic spin out of control ahead of the June 21 parliamentary election and altered the numbers of the infected at the time.

Tens of thousands of people attended a soccer game in early summer, while anti-virus rules were almost completely relaxed. Restrictions to counter the virus were reintroduced in July following days of violent protests over the government's handling of the crisis.

Vucic's populists won a landslide victory at the ballot that was boycotted by many opposition parties who insisted the vote was unfair.

Serbia has reported more than 30,000 infections and 749 deaths.

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

— An ambitious humanitarian project to deliver coronavirus vaccines to the world's poorest people is facing potential shortages of money, cargo planes, refrigeration and vaccines themselves

— Mild to severe: Immune system holds clues to virus reaction

— Study: Neanderthal genes may be liability for COVID patients

— British lawmakers have renewed the Conservative government's sweeping powers to impose emergency restrictions to curb the coronavirus but many criticized the way it has used the powers

— House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin have wrapped up an "extensive conversation" on a huge COVID-19 rescue package.

— NBA Commissioner Adam Silver reiterates the league's hope is to begin next season with teams in their home arenas and with fans, though cautioned that there are still numerous unknowns

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

JOHANNESBURG — Africa's top public health official says the continent is "watching in total dismay" as COVID-19 cases rise again in Europe.

Studies show that the virus largely entered Africa from Europe, and on Thursday one of the continent's busiest entryways, South Africa, reopened to international commercial flights.

Africa's rate of new virus cases continues to drop, down 7.6% from last week, Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director John Nkengasong says.

The 54-nation continent has over 1.4 million confirmed virus cases including over 36,000 deaths, nowhere near the 300,000 to 3 million deaths once projected.

Africa nations are trying to determine their true number of cases, with antibody surveys expanding to 15 countries. In a boost to testing — 15 million tests have been conducted — some 20 million antigen tests will be distributed.

LONDON — British scientists are reporting that the rate of coronavirus infection across England has jumped four-fold in the last month and even higher in regions like northwest England and London.

That's according to a large government-commissioned study that randomly tested tens of thousands

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of people in the community. But the researchers also said the epidemic does not appear to be growing exponentially at the moment.

"There is some evidence of a deceleration," said Paul Elliott, chair of epidemiology at Imperial College London, who led the study. Elliott said some of the recently imposed measures in the U.K., including banning gatherings of more than six people, may have helped slow the spread of COVID-19.

Elliott said about 1 in 200 people across England are infected with the coronavirus, an increase from about 1 in 800 people in early September.

"We need to get on top of this now so we don't have an exponential increase," he said.

Elliott and colleagues noted that the steep rise in cases began in August — when the U.K. government launched a month-long promotion offering people steep discounts to eat out at restaurants.

The study also noted that rates of infection are increasing among all age groups in England, with the highest prevalence among 18 to 24-year-olds. The scientists reported that Black people and those of Asian descent were twice as likely to have COVID-19 as white people.

MADRID — Madrid will carry out a national order restricting mobility in large Spanish cities with rapid virus spread but its regional president announced Thursday she will fight the Spanish government's resolution in the courts because she deems it arbitrary.

Spain's official gazette on Thursday published the Health Ministry order that gives the country's 19 regions two days to implement limits on social gatherings and shop opening hours and restricts trips in and out of any large cities that have recorded a 2-week infection rate of 500 cases per 100,000 residents.

Countrywide, only Madrid and nine of its suburban towns met the criteria as of Thursday.

Spain's central government and regional officials in Madrid have been at odds for weeks over how to respond to the pandemic while the spread of the virus in the Spanish capital surged to the highest level in Europe's second wave of infections.

The center-right Madrid government has resisted the stricter measures in the city of 3.3 million and its suburbs for fears of damaging the economy.

LONDON — An ambitious humanitarian project to deliver coronavirus vaccines to the world's poorest people is facing potential shortages of money, cargo planes, refrigeration and vaccines themselves — and running into skepticism even from some of those it's intended to help most.

In one of the biggest obstacles, rich countries have locked up most of the world's potential vaccine supply through 2021, and the U.S. and others have refused to join the project, called Covax.

"The supply of vaccines is not going to be there in the near term, and the money also isn't there," warned Rohit Malpani, a public health consultant who previously worked for Doctors Without Borders.

Covax was conceived as a way of giving countries access to coronavirus vaccines regardless of their wealth.

Yet Alicia Yamin, a global health expert at Harvard University, said she fears the "window is closing" for Covax to prove workable. She says that poor countries "probably will not get vaccinated until 2022 or 2023."

LISBON, Portugal -- Portuguese authorities say 17 Moroccan migrants being held at an army barracks broke out and fled after two other migrants there tested positive for COVID-19.

The national immigration service said the group broke out at dawn Thursday. Two were recaptured by mid-morning. Police across Portugal and in neighboring Spain were on the lookout for the fugitives.

A group of 24 Moroccan migrants who arrived last month in a wooden boat on Portugal's southern coast were being kept in quarantine at the barracks due to rules on stemming the spread of the new coronavirus.

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — The Dutch government's statistics office says the death toll from the peak of the coronavirus outbreak is significantly higher than the official figures published by the country's public health institute.

The Central Bureau for Statistics reported Thursday that just over 10,000 people died of COVID-19 in March through June this year as the first wave of the pandemic swept across the Netherlands.

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The official total for the entire outbreak stands at around 6,400 but the public health institute has always acknowledged that it includes only people who died after a positive coronavirus test and that many people died without being tested.

The statistics office says that based on doctors' cause of death declarations, 7,797 died of COVID-19 from March to the end of June. A further 2,270 people died of suspected COVID-19.

The official death toll for those months, as reported to the public health institute by local health authorities, was 6,115.

The statistics office says that the figures differ because in some cases doctors reported the cause of death as COVID-19 based on clinical observations but without carrying out a test. It added that some local health authorities may have reported COVID-19 deaths later.

LONDON — Rolls-Royce Holdings plans to raise 2 billion pounds (\$2.6 billion) by selling shares to existing investors after airlines around the world cut flights in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, slashing revenue for the jet-engine maker.

The London-based company said Thursday it also plans to raise at least 1 billion pounds by selling bonds, and it may increase borrowing by up to 2 billion pounds.

The financing package comes after the company earlier this year announced plans to cut at least 9,000 jobs and reduce costs by up to 1.3 billion pounds by the end of 2022. About 4,800 people had left the company by the end of August.

Chief Executive Warren East says, "the capital raise announced today improves our resilience to navigate the current uncertain operating environment."

The company, which sells and maintains jet engines, has contracts with more than 400 airlines and leasing customers, as well as armed forces and navies around the world.

JERUSALEM — The Israeli government has approved a measure to limit protests and worship to within a kilometer (mile) of a person's home, a controversial step to curb the spread of the coronavirus that critics say is aimed at quashing weekly protests against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Cabinet also approved late Wednesday a three-day extension of the country's nationwide lockdown, imposed Sept. 18, until Oct. 14.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz defended the protest measure, telling Israel Radio that there was "a need for a postponement" in the demonstrations to halt the spread of the disease. He said the lockdown would likely remain for several more weeks.

Israel has seen a major increase in the number of new confirmed COVID-19 cases in recent weeks, and reached a new daily high of nearly 9,000 on Thursday. The Health Ministry has reported at least 248,000 confirmed cases and over 1,500 deaths from the coronavirus.

BEIJING — Tens of millions of Chinese are traveling during the combined National Day and Mid-Autumn Festival holidays, amid continued masking and other safety requirements aimed at preventing new virus outbreaks in a country that has seen no cases of local transmission in more than a month.

Fewer trips are expected, however, out of concern restrictions could be reimposed if new outbreaks occurred.

In Beijing, students and teachers are advised not to leave the city to ensure classes resume smoothly after the break. Partly to compensate, movie theaters and tourist attractions in the capital are being allowed to operate at 75% capacity. China has the world's second-largest box office and movie-going is a major holiday activity.

Chinese usually travel abroad during the October holidays, but this year about 40% of the population is expected to make trips within the country.

NEW DELHI — India has reported 86,821 new coronavirus cases and another 1,181 fatalities, making

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September its worst month of the pandemic.

The Health Ministry's update raises India's total to more than 6.3 million and 98,678 dead. India added 41% of its confirmed cases and 34% of fatalities in September alone.

India is expected to become the pandemic's worst-hit country within weeks, surpassing the United States, where more than 7.2 million people have been infected.

The government announced further easing of restrictions Oct. 15. Cinemas, theaters and multiplexes can open with up to half of seating capacity, and swimming pools can also be used by athletes in training.

The government also said India's 28 states can decide on reopening of schools and coaching institutions gradually after Oct. 15. However, the students will have the option of attending online classes.

International commercial flights will remain suspended until Oct. 31. However, evacuation flights will continue to and from the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada, France, Japan and several other countries.

WASHINGTON — Federal health officials are extending the U.S. ban on cruise ships through the end of October amid reports of recent outbreaks of the new coronavirus on ships overseas.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced Wednesday that it was extending a no-sail order on cruise ships with the capacity to carry at least 250 passengers.

The CDC said surveillance data from March 1 through Sept. 29 shows at least 3,689 COVID-19 or COVID-like illnesses on cruise ships in U.S. waters, in addition to at least 41 reported deaths. It said these numbers are likely an underestimate.

It cited recent outbreaks as evidence that cruise ship travel continues to transmit and amplify the spread of the novel coronavirus, even when ships sail at reduced passenger capacities. It said it would likely spread the infection in the U.S. communities if operations were to resume prematurely.

SINGAPORE -- Singapore will allow entry to travelers from Vietnam and Australia, excluding its coronavirus hot spot Victoria state, beginning next week.

The tiny city-state last month welcomed visitors from Brunei and New Zealand, and is cautiously reopening its borders after a virus closure to help revive its airport, a key regional aviation hub.

The aviation authority has said there is a low risk of virus importation from the two countries. Travelers must undergo a virus swab test upon arrival, travel on direct flights without transit and download a mobile app for contact tracing.

The Vietnam and Australia changes start from Oct. 8.

Singapore's move is unilateral and not reciprocated by the other four countries.

Outage freezes Tokyo Stock Exchange, world's 3rd largest

By YURI KAGEYAMA and ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writers

TOKYO (AP) — Tokyo Stock Exchange plans to resume normal operations Friday after it halted trading for the day due to what they said was a malfunction in its computer systems — the worst such outage ever.

There was no indication that the outage at the world's third-largest exchange resulted from hacking or other cybersecurity breaches.

"We are extremely sorry for the troubles we have caused," exchange President and Chief Executive Koichiro Miyahara told reporters late Thursday.

Some time later, the exchange issued a statement saying it would open as usual on Friday. It said it foresaw no problems with resuming trading.

Miyahara and other exchange officials said a computer hardware device they called "machine one" failed and the backup "machine two" didn't kick in, so stock price information was not being relayed properly.

The officials characterized the problem as a memory malfunction.

They said that rebooting the system during a trading session would have caused confusion for investors and other market participants.

Perplexed passers-by studied quote-less electronic screens in Tokyo's financial district and newspapers'

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evening editions carried listed company's names, but blank prices.

Brokerages were fielding a flood of calls from frustrated investors.

"There should be a plan 'B,'" Norihiro Fujito, chief investment strategist at Mitsubishi UFJ Morgan Stanley Securities Co., told broadcaster NHK.

The Japan Exchange Group is the world's third largest bourse after the New York Stock Exchange and Nasdaq, with market capitalization of nearly \$6 trillion.

The outage Thursday also affected other, smaller stock exchanges in Japan.

Foreigners account for about 70% of all brokerage trading in the Tokyo exchange, both in terms of value and volume, so news of the outage left investors both in Japan and overseas wondering what happened.

The malfunction of basic hardware drew attention to vulnerabilities in the country's digital systems. Newly appointed Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has made upgrading such infrastructure a priority, viewing it as critical to Japan's competitiveness.

Previous outages occurred when the huge "Arrowhead" system created by Fujitsu to handle its electronic trading, which officials said involves some 350 servers, became overwhelmed with too many orders at one time.

That's what happened on Oct. 9, 2018, according to a release on the TSE's website. But during that disruption, some backup systems for trading continued to function as was the case in earlier outages.

The exchange promised to investigate, conduct malfunction tests and change the system to ensure that a flood of orders would not cause the entire system to stop working. Several top executives of the exchange were penalized.

Despite such occasional disruptions, Miyahara said the motto of the exchange was "never stop."

Asked about possible losses caused by the outage, he said the exchange was focusing for the time being on fixing the problem.

"I think it is very regrettable that investors are limited in their trading opportunities because they cannot trade on the exchanges," said Katsunobu Kato, the chief cabinet secretary.

He said the Financial Services Agency had instructed the Japan Exchange Group and Tokyo Stock Exchange to investigate the cause of the outage and fix it.

Kurtenbach reported from Mito, Japan.

Unemployment marches higher in Europe amid pandemic

By DAVID McHUGH AND HELENA ALVES Associated Press

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — Unemployment rose for a fifth straight month in Europe in August amid concern that extensive government support programs won't be able keep many businesses hit by coronavirus restrictions afloat forever.

The jobless rate increased to 8.1% in the 19 countries that use the euro currency, up from 7.9% in July, official statistics showed Thursday. Some 13.2 million people were unemployed and the number of those out of work rose by 251,000.

Economists expect a further rise in coming months as wage support programs expire, while a spike in infections in many countries has led to some new restrictions on businesses and public may that may have to be broadened.

European governments have spent trillions of euros (dollars) to help businesses and to set up programs to keep workers on payrolls. In the region's largest economy, Germany, some 3.7 million people are still on furlough support programs and with no clear end to the pandemic in sight, the government has extended that through the end of 2021. The program pays over 70% of the salaries for workers put on short hours or no hours. The European Central Bank has injecting 1.35 trillion euro (\$1.57 trillion) into the economy to keep loans cheap.

But while those measures have slowed the rise in unemployment, the loss of jobs is steady and expected to continue for months. Companies in the hardest hit industries such as airlines, tourism and restaurants

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expect a long period of weak business and are laying off workers.

The recession in some cases has also accelerated painful change that existed before the pandemic, such as technological shifts in the auto industry. Automakers Daimler and Renault, airline Lufthansa, oil company Royal Dutch Shell and travel concern TUI have announced sweeping cost-cutting and job reductions.

While industrial firms have made a stronger recovery from the severe lockdowns of March and April, services companies have done less well. Among the hardest hit are workers and small business owners in the restaurant sector, many of whom are struggling for survival.

Waiters and cooks in Lisbon's city center, where the pandemic has seen tourist numbers drop and not everyone has been covered by furlough support.

Restaurant workers Mary Lopes, 21, Anabela Santos, 48, and Carlos Silva, 69, are among those struggling. They saw their once-buzzing restaurant in Lisbon close down completely in March. When it reopened, only a few of the staff were kept on, under tougher conditions and the others were left out of work. Santos and Silva are at least getting unemployment benefit but that barely covers their bills, Lopes is not.

"I've been working since I was 16," said Lopes. "I was always complimented by the customers, so I can say I was a good waitress - I know I was a very good waitress. So I don't understand this situation we are going through."

Santos paid five months of overdue bills when she got her unemployment benefit, and sent resumes everywhere. "I haven't managed to find another job," she said.

"It's an overdose of stress because we haven't a penny in our pockets," says Silva. "We are left without any money after paying rent, water, energy and then we are suffering for those thirty days until the next 28th of the month or so."

While the jobless rate creeps up in Europe, it fell sharply in August in the United States by 1.8% to 8.4%, after a sharper increase during the spring. The U.S., which has less in the way of labor market support programs, saw the jobless rate spike as high as 14.7% in May, followed by a steep fall in unemployment as businesses and states reopened.

—
Alves reported from Lisbon.

Push to bring coronavirus vaccines to the poor faces trouble

By MARIA CHENG and LORI HINNANT Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — An ambitious humanitarian project to deliver coronavirus vaccines to the world's poorest people is facing potential shortages of money, cargo planes, refrigeration and vaccines themselves — and running into skepticism even from some of those it's intended to help most.

In one of the biggest obstacles, rich countries have locked up most of the world's potential vaccine supply through 2021, and the U.S. and others have refused to join the project, called Covax.

"The supply of vaccines is not going to be there in the near term, and the money also isn't there," warned Rohit Malpani, a public health consultant who previously worked for Doctors Without Borders.

Covax was conceived as a way of giving countries access to coronavirus vaccines regardless of their wealth.

It is being led by the World Health Organization, a U.N. agency; Gavi, a public-private alliance, funded in part by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which buys immunizations for 60% of the world's children; and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, or CEPI, another Gates-supported public-private collaboration.

Covax's aim is to buy 2 billion doses by the end of 2021, though it isn't yet clear whether the successful vaccine will require one dose or two for the world's 7.8 billion people. Countries taking part in the project can either buy vaccines from Covax or get them for free, if needed.

One early problem that emerged: Some of the world's wealthiest nations have negotiated their own deals directly with drug companies, meaning they don't need to participate in the endeavor at all. China, France, Germany, Russia and the U.S. don't intend to join.

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And so many rich countries bought vaccines from manufacturers — before the shots have even been approved — that they have already snapped up the majority of the vaccine supply for 2021.

“As a continent of 1.2 billion people, we still have concerns,” Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director John Nkengasong told reporters Thursday.

He praised COVAX for the solidarity it represents but said there were serious questions about allocation, saying African nation’s COVID-19 envoys are meeting directly with vaccine manufacturers to ask “if we came to the table with money, how would we get enough vaccines to cover the gap?”

African nations are preparing as if vaccines will arrive in January or February, he said, “and will roll out with speed.”

The European Union has contributed 400 million euros (\$469 million) to support Covax, but the 27-country bloc won’t use Covax to buy vaccines, in what some see as a vote of no-confidence in the project’s ability to deliver. Instead, the EU has signed its own deals to buy more than 1 billion doses, depriving Covax of the bulk negotiating power of buying shots for the continent.

Gavi, WHO and CEPI announced in September that countries representing two-thirds of the world’s population had joined Covax, but they acknowledged they still need about \$400 million more from governments or elsewhere. Without it, according to internal documents seen by The Associated Press before the organization’s board meeting this week, Gavi can’t sign agreements to buy vaccines.

Covax did reach a major agreement this week for 200 million doses from the Indian vaccine maker Serum Institute, though the company made clear that a large portion of those will go to people in India.

By the end of next year, Gavi estimates the project will need \$5 billion more.

Covax said negotiations to secure vaccines are moving forward despite the lack of funds.

“We are working with the governments who have expressed interest earlier to ensure we receive commitment agreements in the coming days,” Gavi’s Aurelia Nguyen, managing director of Covax, said. She added that nothing similar has ever been attempted in public health.

Covax “is a hugely ambitious project,” she said, “but it is the only plan on the table to end the pandemic across the world.”

Still, the project is facing doubts and questions from poor countries and activists over how it will operate and how effective it will be. Dr. Clemens Auer, who sits on WHO’s executive board and was the EU’s lead negotiator for its vaccine deals, said there is a troubling lack of transparency about how Covax will work.

“We would have no say over the vaccines, the price, the quality, the technical platform or the risks,” Auer said. “This is totally unacceptable.”

He said WHO never consulted countries about its proposed vaccine strategy and called the health agency’s goal of vaccinating the world’s most vulnerable people before anyone else a “noble notion” but politically naive.

As part of Covax, WHO and Gavi have asked countries to first prioritize front-line health workers, then the elderly, with the goal of vaccinating 20% of the world’s population.

One expensive hurdle is that many of the vaccine candidates need to be kept cold from factory to patient, according to internal documents from Gavi. Industry has signaled that “air freight for COVID vaccines will be a major constraint.”

Another obstacle: Many of the leading vaccine candidates require two doses. That will mean twice as many syringes, twice as much waste disposal, and the complications involved in ensuring patients in remote corners of the world receive the second dose on time and stay free of side effects.

“Because of the fact that we’re looking at trying to get vaccines out as quickly as possible, we’re looking at limited follow-up and efficacy data,” said Gian Gandhi, who runs logistics from UNICEF’s supply division in Copenhagen.

There is also concern that the fear of lawsuits could scuttle deals. According to the internal documents, Gavi told countries that drug companies will probably require assurances that they won’t face product liability claims over deaths or side effects from their vaccines.

Dr. Nakorn Premsi, director of Thailand’s National Vaccine Institute, said officials there are reviewing

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whether that condition is acceptable. Thailand so far has only signed a nonbinding agreement with Covax.

Some critics say, Gavi isn't ambitious enough. The pandemic won't end until there is herd immunity well beyond the rich nations that have secured their own doses, said Eric Friedman, a scholar of global health law at Georgetown University who is generally supportive of Covax.

"If we want to achieve herd immunity and get rid of this, 20% is not going to do it," he said. "What's the end game?"

Alicia Yamin, an adjunct lecturer on global health at Harvard University, said she fears the "window is closing" for Covax to prove workable. She said it is disappointing that Gavi, WHO and their partners haven't pushed pharmaceutical companies harder on issues like intellectual property or open licenses, which might make more vaccines available.

With little evidence of such fundamental change in the global health world, Yamin said it's likely that developing countries will have to rely on donated vaccines rather than any equitable allocation program.

"I would say that poor countries probably will not get vaccinated until 2022 or 2023," Yamin said.

Lori Hinnant reported from Paris. Cara Anna contributed from Johannesburg.

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

Biden, Trump snipe from road and rails after debate chaos

By STEVE PEOPLES, WILL WEISSERT and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden kept up their debate-stage sniping from the road and the rails, fighting for working-class voters in the Midwest while both parties — and the debate commission, too — sought to deal with the most chaotic presidential faceoff in memory.

The debate raised fresh questions about Trump's continued reluctance to condemn white supremacy, his questioning the legitimacy of the election and his unwillingness to respect debate ground rules his campaign had agreed to. Some Democrats called on Biden on Wednesday to skip the next two debates.

Biden's campaign confirmed he would participate in the subsequent meetings, as did Trump's. But the Commission on Presidential Debates promised "additional structure ... to ensure a more orderly discussion of the issues."

Less than 12 hours after the wild debate concluded, Biden called Trump's behavior in the prime-time confrontation a "a national embarrassment." The Democratic challenger launched his most aggressive day on the campaign trail all year, with eight stops on train tour that began mid-morning in Cleveland and ended 10 hours later in western Pennsylvania. Trump proclaimed his debate performance a smashing success during a Wednesday evening rally in Duluth, Minnesota.

"Last night I did what the corrupt media has refused to do," Trump said. "I held Joe Biden accountable for his 47 years of failure."

Biden balanced criticism of Trump with a call for national unity.

"If elected, I'm not going to be a Democratic president. I'm going to be an American president," Biden said at the Cleveland train station. As his tour moved into Pittsburgh, he accused Trump of never accepting responsibility for his mistakes and promised, "I'll always tell you the truth. And when I'm wrong, I'll say so."

While some Republicans feared that Trump's debate performance was too aggressive, he gave himself high marks as he left Washington. He had spent much of the day assailing Biden and debate moderator Chris Wallace on social media.

"If you ever became president you have to deal with some of the toughest people in the world," Trump said at his Duluth rally. "And Chris Wallace is very very easy by comparison."

The first of three scheduled debates between Trump and Biden deteriorated into bitter taunts and chaos Tuesday night as the Republican president repeatedly interrupted his Democratic rival with angry jabs that overshadowed any substantive discussion of the crises threatening the nation.

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Trump and Biden frequently talked over each other, with Trump interrupting, nearly shouting, so often that Biden eventually snapped at him, "Will you shut up, man?"

Trump refused anew to say whether he would accept the results of the election, calling on his supporters to scrutinize voting procedures at the polls — something that critics warned could easily cross into voter intimidation.

Trump also refused at the debate to condemn white supremacists who have supported him, telling one such group known as the Proud Boys to "stand back and stand by." Asked directly on Wednesday if he welcomed white supremacist support, he first said only that he favored law enforcement but when the questioner persisted, he said he had always denounced "any form of any of that."

On Capitol Hill, Republicans showed signs of debate hangover, with few willing to defend Trump's performance.

Utah Sen. Mitt Romney called the debate "an embarrassment" and said Trump "of course" should have condemned white supremacists.

"I think he misspoke," said South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, the only Black Republican senator. "I think he should correct it. If he doesn't correct it, I guess he didn't misspeak."

Trump did not say he misspoke when asked on Wednesday but claimed he did not know who the Proud Boys were.

"They have to stand down — everybody. Whatever group you're talking about, let law enforcement do the work," he said.

The president's brash debate posture may have appealed to his most passionate supporters, but it was unclear whether the embattled incumbent helped expand his coalition or won over any persuadable voters, particularly white educated women and independents who have been turned off in part by the same tone and tenor the president displayed on the debate stage.

With just five weeks until Election Day and voting already underway in several key states, Biden holds a lead in national polls and in many battlegrounds. Polling has been remarkably stable for months, despite the historic crises that have battered the country this year, including the coronavirus pandemic that has killed more than 200,000 Americans and a reckoning over race and police.

While Biden distanced himself from some of the priorities of his party's left wing — and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders — on Tuesday night, there was no sign that he had turned off his party's grassroots activists.

Sanders said Wednesday on ABC's "The View" that it was "terribly important" that Biden be elected, and campaign digital director Rob Flaherty said Biden had raised \$3.8 million at the debate's end in his best hour of online fundraising

Increasingly, the candidates have trained their attention on working-class voters in the Midwest, a group that helped give Trump his victory four years ago and will again play a critical role this fall.

Biden and his wife, Jill, traveled through Ohio and Pennsylvania aboard a nine-car train bearing a campaign logo, a throwback to Biden's days as a senator when he commuted most days via Amtrak from his family's home in Delaware to Capitol Hill.

He drew several hundred masked supporters to one afternoon stop in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, his largest crowd since suspending traditional events back in March, according to his campaign.

Biden wrapped up his train trip with a nighttime drive-in rally in Johnstown, Pennsylvania's poorest town. The campaign blocked off the surrounding street and erected a stage and giant screen. About 50 cars were arrayed around the area, with most attendees standing near their vehicles or sitting on the hoods and roofs. They stood close together in small groups, but nearly everyone wore masks.

Biden called Trump a "self-entitled, self-serving president who thinks everything is about him. He thinks if he just yells louder and louder, throws out lie after lie, he'll get his way."

Ohio Rep. Tim Ryan, a Democrat, said Trump's behavior in the debate was exactly why suburban voters across the Midwest and beyond have turned against him.

"I feel like he took an ax to one of the great American rituals we have in this country," Ryan said.

Trump, meanwhile, attended an afternoon fundraiser in Shorewood, Minnesota, a suburb to the west

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of Minneapolis, before appearing at an evening campaign rally in Duluth on the shores of Lake Superior. While Trump carried Ohio and Pennsylvania four years ago, he narrowly lost Minnesota, one of the few states he hopes to flip from blue to red this fall. That likely depends on finding more votes in rural, conservative areas and limiting his losses in the state's urban and suburban areas.

To that end, the White House announced shortly before Trump's rally in Duluth Wednesday evening that the president had signed an executive order declaring a national emergency in the mining industry, a move that could resonate with voters in northeast Minnesota's Iron Range.

The order notes U.S. manufacturing's "undue reliance" on China for critical minerals and calls for the Interior Department to use the Defense Production Act to fund mineral processing in order to protect U.S. national security.

"If Joe gets in, they'll shut down the Iron Range forever," Trump told rallygoers in Duluth. "I will always protect the state of Minnesota."

Peoples reported from New York and Freking from Duluth, Minnesota. Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro, Brian Slodysko, Laurie Kellman, Darlene Superville and Alexandra Jaffe in Washington contributed to this report.

AP's Advance Voting guide brings you the facts about voting early, by mail or absentee from each state: <https://interactives.ap.org/advance-voting-2020>

France fears that Turkey is sending mercenaries to Caucasus

PARIS (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron has expressed concern about Turkey allegedly sending Syrian mercenaries to support Azerbaijan in its re-ignited conflict with Armenia over the mountain region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Macron's office said in a statement Thursday that he and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the issue in a phone call Wednesday night, and both "share concern about the sending of Syrian mercenaries by Turkey to Nagorno-Karabakh." Macron's office did not provide further information about the mercenaries.

Turkey has publicly supported Azerbaijan in the conflict and said it would provide assistance if requested, but denied sending foreign mercenaries or arms to the region.

The renewed fighting in the Caucasus Mountains, at the crossroads between Russia, Turkey and Iran, has killed dozens of people since Sunday and raised concerns of a broader conflict. Heavy fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces continued for a fourth straight day on Wednesday in a flare-up of a decades-old conflict.

The Russian Foreign Ministry on Wednesday expressed concerns over reports about "militants from illegal armed groups, in particular from Syria, Libya" being sent to the conflict zone in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The ministry didn't clarify which country may have sent the fighters or which country the fighters may have arrived in, but in a statement urged "leadership of the states concerned to take effective measures to prevent the use of foreign terrorists and mercenaries in the conflict."

Macron said he and Putin called for restraint and agreed upon the need for a joint effort toward a cease-fire, as part of international mediation efforts for Nagorno-Karabakh led by Russia, France and the U.S. since a 1994 truce ended a war there.

The president of Azerbaijan said Armenia's withdrawal from Nagorno-Karabakh was the sole condition to end fighting over the separatist territory. Armenian officials alleged Turkey's involvement in the renewed conflict, which Turkey has denied.

EU takes legal action against UK over planned Brexit bill

By RAF CASERT and JILL LAWLESS undefined

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union took legal action against Britain on Thursday over its plans to

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pass legislation that would breach parts of the legally binding divorce agreement the two sides reached late last year.

The EU action underscored the worsening relations with Britain, which was a member of the bloc until Jan. 31. Both sides are trying to forge a rudimentary free trade agreement before the end of the year, but the fight over the controversial U.K. Internal Market bill has soured relations this month.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that the British plan "by its very nature is a breach of the obligation of good faith laid down in the Withdrawal Agreement."

"If adopted as is, it will be in full contradiction to the protocol of Ireland-Northern Ireland" in the withdrawal agreement," she said.

EU leaders fear that if the U.K. bill becomes law, it could lead to the reimposition of a hard land border between Northern Ireland, which is part of Britain, and EU member Ireland, and erode the stability that has underpinned peace since the 1998 Good Friday accord.

The EU had given London until Wednesday to withdraw the bill, but U.K. lawmakers voted 340-256 Tuesday to push the legislation past its last major hurdle in the House of Commons.

Von der Leyen said "the deadline lapsed yesterday. The problematic provisions haven't been removed. Therefore this morning, the commission has decided to send a letter of formal notice to the U.K. government," which augurs the start of a protracted legal battle.

"The commission will continue to work hard towards a full and timely implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement," she said. "We stand by our commitment."

The bill must also be approved by the U.K.'s House of Lords, where it is sure to meet strong opposition because it breaches international law.

The British government stood its ground in an immediate reaction, saying "we need to create a legal safety net to protect the integrity of the U.K.'s internal market, ensure ministers can always deliver on their obligations to Northern Ireland and protect the gains from the peace process."

If the Internal Market Bill becomes law, it will give Britain the power to disregard part of the Brexit withdrawal treaty dealing with trade to and from Northern Ireland, which shares a 300-mile (500-kilometer) border with the Republic of Ireland.

The U.K. government says it respects the Good Friday peace accord and the Brexit withdrawal agreement, but wants the law in case the EU makes unreasonable demands after Brexit that could impede trade between Northern Ireland and the rest of the U.K.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's large parliamentary majority ensured the bill passed its final House of Commons vote on Tuesday night, despite resistance from opposition parties and even some members of the governing Conservative Party.

At the same time, EU and U.K. officials were continuing talks on a trade deal, going into detailed negotiations over everything from fisheries rights, state aid rules and legal oversight in case of disputes.

Time is short for the U.K. and the EU to mend fences. A transition period that followed Britain's Brexit departure ends in less than 100 days, on Dec. 31.

The EU-U.K. trade negotiating session is supposed to wrap up Friday but expectations are that negotiations will continue right up to an Oct. 15-16 EU summit, which British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has set as a deadline for a deal. The EU said talks could continue right up to the end of the month.

Britain says it wants a free trade deal along the lines of the one the EU has with Canada, allowing for goods to be traded with no tariffs or quotas.

The EU says if the U.K. wants access to EU markets it must respect standards that EU companies have to live by since Britain is just too close to allow for undercutting rules that would allow for so-called "dumping" of U.K. merchandise at prices lower than in the EU.

Jill Lawless reported from London.

Police in Ukraine investigate death of US Embassy employee

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KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Police in Ukraine are investigating the death of an American woman who worked for the United States Embassy in Kyiv.

The woman was found unconscious with a head injury near the railway tracks in a park not far from the embassy on Wednesday, according to a police statement. She died in a hospital later in the day. A U.S. Embassy ID was found in her belongings.

The Embassy confirmed the woman was a U.S. citizen in a statement and said they were “heartbroken” to report her death. Embassy officials were “working with authorities to determine the circumstances of the death.”

Police said the woman may have been assaulted by a dark-haired, 30-to-40-year-old man wearing black shorts, dark-blue sneakers and a T-shirt.

Artyom Shevchenko, the spokesman for Ukraine’s Interior Ministry, said on Facebook that police were investigating the death as a murder but at the same time had not ruled out an accident.

The woman was wearing sports clothes and headphones, he said.

“The death of such reckless pedestrians as a result of injuries (caused by a) train is not uncommon on the railways,” Shevchenko wrote.

Can the coronavirus travel more than 6 feet in the air?

By The Associated Press undefined

Can the coronavirus travel more than 6 feet in the air?

Research indicates it can, but it’s not clear how much of the pandemic is caused by such cases.

People spray liquid droplets of various sizes when they cough, sneeze, talk, sing, shout and even just breathe. The coronavirus can hitchhike on these particles.

The advice about staying at least 6 feet apart is based on the idea that the larger particles drop to the ground before getting very far.

But some scientists have also focused on tinier particles called aerosols. These can linger in the air for minutes to hours, and spread through a room and build up in concentration if ventilation is poor, posing a potential risk of infection if inhaled.

For aerosols, “6 feet is not a magic distance” and keeping even farther apart is better, says Linsey Marr, who researches airborne transmission of infectious diseases at Virginia Tech.

Some scientists say there’s enough evidence about aerosols and the virus to take protective measures. In addition to the usual advice, they stress the need for ventilation and air-purifying systems when indoors. Even better, they say, is to stay outdoors when interacting with others.

The AP is answering your questions about the coronavirus in this series. Submit them at: FactCheck@AP.org. Read more here:

Can I use a face shield instead of a mask?

What are the rules on masks in schools?

How can I tell the difference between the flu and COVID-19?

Malaysia palm oil producer vows to clear name after U.S. ban

By EILEEN NG Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysian palm oil producer FGV Holdings Berhad vowed Thursday to “clear its name” after the U.S. banned imports of its palm oil over allegations of forced labor and other abuses.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Office of Trade issued the ban order against FGV on Wednesday, saying it found indicators of forced labor, including concerns about children, along with other abuses such as physical and sexual violence.

The action, announced a week after The Associated Press exposed major labor abuses in Malaysia’s palm oil industry, was triggered by a petition filed last year by nonprofit organizations.

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FGV said all the issues raised "have been the subject of public discourse since 2015 and FGV has taken several steps to correct the situation".

"FGV is disappointed that such decision has been made when FGV has been taking concrete steps over the past several years in demonstrating its commitment to respect human rights and to uphold labor standards," it said in a statement.

Malaysia is the world's second largest producer of palm oil. Together with Indonesia, the two countries dominate the global market, producing 85 percent of the \$65 billion supply.

Palm oil and its derivatives from FGV, and closely connected Malaysian-owned Felde, make their way into the supply chains of major multinationals. They include Nestle, L'Oreal, and Unilever, according to the companies' most recently published supplier and palm oil mill lists. Several huge Western banks and financial institutions not only pour money directly or indirectly into the palm oil industry, but also hold shares in FGV.

AP reporters interviewed more than 130 former and current workers from eight countries at two dozen palm oil companies — including Felde, which owns about a third of the shares in FGV. They found everything from unpaid wages to outright slavery and allegations of rape, sometimes involving minors. They also found stateless Rohingya Muslims, one of the world's most persecuted minorities, had been trafficked onto plantations and forced to work.

Many of the problems detailed by the U.S. CBP office mirrored those found by The AP. This included restriction of movement, isolation, physical and sexual violence, intimidation and threats, retention of identity documents, withholding of wages, debt bondage, abusive working and living conditions, excessive overtime, and concerns about potential forced child labor.

FGV said Thursday it wasn't involved in any recruitment or employment of refugees. It said it doesn't hire contract workers. Migrant workers are recruited mainly from India and Indonesia through legal channels, it said. It said it ensures workers are not forced to pay any fees.

As of August, FGV had 11,286 Indonesian workers and 4,683 Indian workers, who combined form the majority of its plantation workforce.

The company said it is introducing the use of an electronic wallet cashless payroll system for its workers. It doesn't retain workers' passports and has safety boxes throughout all its 68 housing complexes for them to keep their passports safely.

FGV said it has invested 350 million ringgit (\$84 million) over the past three years in upgrading worker housing and provides medical benefits. Suppliers and vendors are required to comply with the company's code of conduct, it said.

"FGV does not tolerate any form of human rights infringements or criminal offense in its operations," it said, adding it will act on any allegation of physical or sexual violence or intimidation.

FGV said it has submitted evidence of compliance with labor standards to the U.S. CBP office since last year. It said it will continue its engagement "to clear FGV's name, and is determined to see through its commitment to respect human rights and uphold labor standards."

In Appalachia, people watch COVID-19, race issues from afar

By TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

BUCHTEL, Ohio (AP) — The water, so cold that it nearly hurts, spills relentlessly into a concrete trough from three pipes driven into a hillside near the edge of town.

People have been coming to the trough for at least a century, since horses were watered here and coal miners stopped by to wash off the grime. People still come - because they think the water is healthier, or makes better coffee, or because their utilities were turned off when they couldn't pay the bills. Or maybe just because it's what they've always done.

For years, Tarah Nogrady has filled plastic jugs here and lugged them back to a town so small it rarely appears on maps. As she collects water for her four Pekinese dogs waiting in the car, she doesn't wear a mask, like so many around here. Nogrady doubts that the coronavirus is a real threat - it's "maybe a

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flu-type deal," she says.

It's a common view in the little towns that speckle the Appalachian foothills of southeast Ohio, where the pandemic has barely been felt. Coronavirus deaths and protests for racial justice — events that have defined 2020 nationwide — are mostly just images on TV from a distant America.

For many here, it's an increasingly foreign America that they explain with suspicion, anger and occasionally conspiracy theories. The result: At a time when the country is bitterly torn and crises are piling up faster than ever, the feeling of isolation in this corner of Ohio is more profound than ever.

This story is part of the Looking For America project, produced with the support of the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

It's easy to dismiss COVID-19 in these sparsely populated rural counties, some of which can still count their deaths from the virus on one hand. Local politicians hint that even the small death tolls might be inflated.

Many of Nogrady's neighbors think the pandemic is being used by Democrats to weaken President Donald Trump ahead of the election. Some share darker theories: Face mask rules are paving the way for population control, they say, and a vaccine could be used as a tool of government control.

"I think they want to take our freedoms," Nogrady says, a baseball hat turned backward on her head. "I believe the government wants to get us all microchipped."

These fears reflect a desolate worldview: People who a generation ago believed in the president's promises to change their region forever now have a deep distrust of Washington - and a defiant sense that they are on their own.

We came to this part of Ohio because it's where President Lyndon Johnson decades ago first mentioned the Great Society, perhaps the most audacious federal push to remake America since World War II.

It seemed a good place to start a road trip across the country, as the most divisive election in decades is looming.

We wanted to look at the issues that exploded onto the national consciousness this year — COVID-19, economic meltdown, race-related protests — through the eyes of different regions, myriad Americans. Three of us from The Associated Press planned to go to Ohio and Illinois, to Kentucky and Georgia and Mississippi, and then out West, looking for windows into a country that can seem so contradictory, so confusing.

When Johnson gave his speech in 1964 at Ohio University, the hills of Appalachian Ohio were some of the most fiercely Democratic places in America.

"We must abolish human poverty," Johnson proclaimed, foreshadowing a torrent of federal programs that would eventually include Medicare, Head Start preschool, environmental laws and a push for equal justice.

These hills were then a patchwork of closed coal mines, undernourished children and houses without indoor plumbing. But applause surged through the thousands of people in the audience. They believed.

Not anymore.

Now, except for the county of Athens, where Ohio University nurtures a more liberal electorate, the region is fiercely Republican. And the idea that Washington can solve America's problems is blasphemy.

"It's impossible!" said Phil Stevens, a deeply conservative Republican who speaks in exclamation points, then apologizes for doing so. "Ridiculous!"

Stevens, 56, runs a small auto repair business and used car lot in a narrow valley where his family has lived for generations. He talks about the anger and suspicion that thread through the hills, about a deep distrust of the government, about friends stocking up on weapons and ammunition. A former Democrat, he now derides the party as a rabble of left-wing extremists who won't even stand up for police officers during riots.

"I fear our country's not far from collapse," he said. "We've taken it and taken it. And there's going to

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be a lot of people that just ain't taking it no more."

Like so many other Americans, Stevens is trying to make sense of the chaos of 2020.

"You're just sitting here minding your own business, and things start crumbling all around you," he said, shaking his head. Only God knows, he said, when America will return to normal: "And I sometimes think we've got Him scratching His head because this is a bunch of craziness."

The political ground of southeast Ohio began to shift decades ago, and the region was largely Republican by the 2012 elections. But in 2016, counties where Democrats once had sizable minorities swung hard to the right — part of a broader national wave of working-class regions that helped Trump take the White House.

Trump was unlike any candidate they'd seen before. He didn't offer the Great Society, or a War on Poverty. Instead, he said he was as sick as they were of Washington and the political elite. He was the perfect candidate for a region that not only expects little from the government, but also mistrusts it deeply.

In many counties Trump took more than twice as many votes as Hillary Clinton.

"I think he's one of the best presidents we've had," said Nogrady, 38, who makes a living buying and selling goods online and takes care of her elderly mother. "He's got a mouth on him. I mean, he tells it how it is."

Rural Appalachians have long bristled at the way outsiders have portrayed them, replacing their complicated reality with stereotypes about poor and ignorant mountain people. Chris Chmiel, a small farmer and Democratic commissioner for Athens County, believes deeply in the benefits of Appalachian life — the fierce tenacity of its people, the beauty of the hills, the ties to hometowns and families in ways that are increasingly rare in America.

"We have a lot of things that other people don't have," Chmiel said on a recent Saturday morning at a weekly farmers' market. "That is priceless in my opinion."

Yet it's impossible to paint a picture of this swath of Appalachia without describing its deep and pervasive poverty. While COVID-19 itself hasn't hit hard yet, its economic impact is further squeezing a region that can barely afford it.

Unemployment skyrocketed to highs of nearly 18 percent amid early virus shutdowns, doubling in some counties from March to April. While those rates have come down since, nearly every county in the region is still worse off than at the start of the year. Six months into the pandemic, businesses from used car lots to barbershops to organic farmers are battered.

"We'll tough it out," said Stevens, who has seen business plunge by 30 percent or more. "We don't make a lot of money here. But we learned to live on just a little."

Appalachia is certainly far better off than when Johnson gave his speech.

Even if it didn't completely win the War on Poverty, the Great Society brought everything from near-universal electricity and indoor plumbing to more preschools and greatly expanded medical coverage. There's a sizable middle class now in the hills of southeast Ohio, even though many people have to commute a couple of hours a day to Columbus or other cities for decent-paying work. They are teachers and factory workers, nurses and janitors, who have carefully tended homes and yards and who save to send their children to college.

But after a history of outside exploitation by coal barons and later pharmaceutical companies selling opioids, Appalachian Ohio also still has some of the state's poorest counties, with child poverty rates higher than 30 percent. I'd seen poverty in much poorer countries, and had reported on families from rural Pennsylvania to Texas who would have gone hungry without local food pantries. Even there, the child poverty rates were less than half what they are here.

The poverty is visible in the houses near collapse, the trailer homes fixed with duct tape, the buildings consumed by vines. These not-quite ghost towns were once thriving coal communities, now slowly dying decade after decade, leaving behind streams that still run a putrid orange from the drainage of old mines.

We saw empty schools and boarded-up churches. Main Street in Shawnee, an old coal town that once boasted an opera house, a vaudeville theater, dozens of stores and plenty of taverns, is now one aban-

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doned building after another.

In the riverside town of Corning, many homes looked empty, with paint that had been peeling for years, maybe decades, warped wooden porches and roofs with shingles flaking off. Yet when nightfall came, lamps were switched on inside those homes, and dim light began leaking through so many timeworn curtains.

People talk endlessly about the lack of opportunity.

"Mostly gas stations," said Nogrady. "That's all there is around here."

Often, the most crowded parking lots are at the ubiquitous Dollar General and Family Dollar stores, signposts of financial hardship as common here as Starbucks in well-heeled suburbs. Shoppers walk aisles spilling over with \$5 ceramic pumpkins and 10-cent freezer pops.

"Low prices on milk and eggs!" promises a plastic banner in front of the Nelsonville Dollar General.

"It sucks being poor," said Tasha Lamm, a 30-year-old raising two sons on public assistance in the town of Bidwell. She's a skinny, talkative high-school dropout who is sure the government is using the pandemic to take more power, and who has been promising herself for years that she'd get her equivalency degree. Her work history jumps from gas stations to fast food outlets to one of those Dollar Generals.

"I've had this problem with jobs - like authority," said Lamm, who has been largely on her own since 14 and saw her father, brother and the father of her children succumb to heroin addiction.

She shares a small subsidized condominium with the boys and her girlfriend. They were homeless for most of last year, living in a car, before a local social service agency found them the home they've crowded with decorations, from a poster of a stained-glass Jesus rescued from the garbage to a Winnie the Pooh snow globe.

The refrigerator holds little more than a package of eggs, a half-eaten apple and dozens of single-serve TruMoo chocolate milk containers donated by a local school. "Belief thy lord" is spelled out in colored stickers on the wall above the dining table.

In her diary, Lamm dreams of taking her family and leaving Ohio, the scene of so much personal pain: "I'm ready to leave this place and everyone in it, because I know there's something better waiting for me."

Although the coronavirus has not killed many people here, its shadow has fallen over the region's fight against another scourge: The opioid epidemic.

A 2019 study done across Appalachia found that the death rate in 2017 for opioid overdoses was 72 percent higher in Appalachian counties compared those outside the region. Ohio, meanwhile, had the country's fifth-highest rate of drug overdoses in the country in 2018.

Experts say that the stresses of COVID — unemployment, schooling issues and especially isolation — can be especially hard on drug users.

"Loneliness is taking its toll," said Diane Pfaff, deputy director of the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board that serves three regional counties. She noted that frontline workers are seeing a spike in the number of relapses.

People addicted to heroin— "zombies" they're often called derisively around here — survive on the fringes, living under bridges, or moving from relative to relative, friend to friend. As we made our way through the region, person after person brought up drugs in conversation.

In the town of Nelsonville, a homeless young woman named Brittany Cunningham waved cheerfully to her former neighbors as she waited on a residential street corner for her heroin dealer.

"I'll take anything," she said, scanning the street for the dealer, who was late. She spoke faster as she grew more anxious, topics shifting from one to the next: how many songs she knows by heart, her mother's drug habit, small town life, a pet cat named Dusty.

"My mind goes so fast that (heroin) slows me down," she said.

Her jumbled stories range from a life steeped in addiction and badly chosen boyfriends to a deep love for music. She sings in a beautiful raspy voice filled with pain.

Hard life stories, many of them tied to addiction, are repeated here in town after town: the living room snapshot of a baby in her coffin; the young woman in prison for child abuse; the rape; the endless overdoses; the children living with their grandmother because something bad happened, though no one will

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say what.

At one point, Cunningham showed off two of her many tattoos.

"LOVE FAITH," it says in curly green letters on the right forearm. "LOVE YOURSELF," it says on the left.

"Those are to hide the suicide scars," she said simply.

Like COVID-19, the other great story of today's America – racial tensions and protests - is notable here for its absence. Black life is something most people simply don't see in southeastern Ohio, where the 2010 census showed a Black population of less than 1 percent in many counties.

Around here, talk of protests against police brutality and Confederate statues immediately shift to criticism of the violence at some protests. While there have been a handful of protests in the area, and most people will concede that America has racial problems, many also believe they are wildly exaggerated.

But things look very different in that small Black community.

Geoffrey West, 34, runs The Court Barbershop in Athens, cutting hair on the third floor of an old downtown office building. He's a quiet-spoken man in a New York Yankees baseball hat who likes Athens, and said he's faced little direct racism since moving here three years ago.

But he still believes there's plenty of racial misunderstanding, among both Black and white people, and he joined one of the handful of protests in the region against police violence over the past few months. He's frustrated by white people who don't see the reasons behind the protests.

"We need the police," he said. But white people "don't have a fear of walking out your front door and getting killed."

As we traveled across the region, views about race sometimes took unexpected twists — like the confederate flag hanging in a ground-floor window of a battered home.

Confederate flags have become a symbol of a certain America: white, often rural, sometimes southern, normally very conservative. This time, though, it turned out to be a young Black woman who was flying it. She sat on the front porch and angrily said it was her way of "giving the finger" to everyone, including white Southerners who believe they control the flag and its symbolism.

And here, as elsewhere, race and religion are complicated.

In Phil Stevens' little office, crowded with desks piled with paperwork, the occasional car part and the sweet smell of engine oil, he derided the idea that everyone can just get along.

"I'm not going to have a Muslim best bud, you know, because there's a line that you can't cross," he said. "But by the same token, the Muslims don't want nothing to do with me. And I'm okay with that because they've got their reasons for it."

Yet, it turned out, he'd fallen in love with a woman who is part native American. They've been happily married for nearly 44 years.

This is still not the Appalachia that Johnson promised so many years ago.

John Sullivan, who is almost 92, sometimes looks around and wonders how much the Great Society really accomplished. Sullivan, who could pass for 70, is one of the rare small-town Democrats around here, a Korean War veteran and former police chief who detests Trump. He lives up the road from the Buchtel water trough in a neat, double-wide trailer home.

There's not much business left in Buchtel except for a gas station and gunshop.

"This used to be a thriving little village. It had four bars in it, and two nice big grocery stores, two service stations," he said. "Not anymore."

Yet if life in these hills is weighed down for many by poverty and addiction, it's also marked by a powerful resilience, a pride, a knowledge that they will make it through the pandemic, economic collapse, protests and anything else that gets thrown at them.

To outsiders, ambition means escaping places like Shawnee or Buchtel or Nelsonville, to leave the poverty in the rearview mirror. But to those who want to stay, bound to the hills and hollows where their families have lived for generations, ambition means finding a way to remain behind.

Before leaving town we talked to Larry Steele, a quiet man with a gravelly voice and armfuls of tattoos. A bout with COVID-19, including three weeks in the hospital, has left him rail thin, and his belt is wound around his waist.

He and his partner, Penny Hudnall, survive by supplementing her disability payments with foraging in the woods for wild foods — walnuts, hickory nuts, paw paws, persimmons, spiceberries — and selling them to local farmers.

One of his daughters is in jail. A son died this summer of a heroin overdose. He and Penny struggle to get by.

But he wants to stay, and foraging lets him to do that.

"You don't have a boss," he said, standing in the shade of a maple tree outside his elderly mother's mobile home.

"What can I say?" he said. "It's just peaceful."

Tarah Nogrady has spent her life in True Town, a speck of a hamlet just over the Sunday Creek. This part of Appalachia is achingly beautiful, with its rolling hills, quiet back roads, air that smells of thick forests and towns where everyone knows nearly everyone else. She's not going anywhere.

"It's like heaven, basically," she said. "I'll be there until I die."

In NYC and LA, returning pupils face battery of virus tests

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

The two largest school districts in the U.S. are rolling out ambitious and costly plans to test students and staff for the coronavirus, bidding to help keep school buildings open amid a rise in infections among the nation's school-age children.

New York City is set to begin testing 10% to 20% of students and staff in every building monthly beginning Thursday, the same day the final wave of the district's more than 1 million students returns to brick-and-mortar classrooms for the first time in six months.

"Every single school will have testing. It will be done every single month. It will be rigorous," New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said in announcing the plan as part of an agreement with the teachers union to avert a strike. At least 79 Department of Education employees have died from the virus.

With an estimated 100,000-120,000 tests expected each month, each costing between \$78 and \$90, New York City's school-based testing plan goes well beyond safety protocols seen in most other districts.

Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Unified School District, has launched a similarly comprehensive, \$150 million, testing program to help determine when it will be safe to resume in-person instruction. The district began the school year remotely in August for all 600,000 students. The New York and Los Angeles systems are respectively the nation's largest and 2nd-largest school districts.

Leaders in both cities say regular testing is needed in districts of their size and in areas of the country that previously witnessed unnerving surges of the virus.

The coronavirus struck hard at the elderly early in the pandemic and is now increasingly infecting American children and teens in a trend authorities say appears to be fueled by school reopenings and other activities. Children of all ages now make up 10% of all U.S. cases, up from 2% in April, the American Academy of Pediatrics reported Tuesday.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said this week that the incidence of COVID-19 in school-age children began rising in early September as many returned to classrooms. Its recommendations emphasize distancing, cleaning and face coverings for most reopening plans — though no requirement for universal testing of students and staff.

As part of the LAUSD plan announced this month, all students and staff will get an initial baseline test in coming weeks to ensure the incidence of COVID-19 is low, and then another test immediately before returning to school, Superintendent Austin Beutner said Monday.

Periodic testing will continue throughout the school year under a collaboration chaired by Beutner and former U.S. Education Arne Duncan that also includes the University of California, Los Angeles, Johns Hopkins and Stanford universities, Microsoft and several health providers.

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"Pulling off something like this is almost a miraculous undertaking in and of itself because there are so many things that could go wrong," said Arlene Inouye, secretary of United Teachers Los Angeles, which negotiated conditions for school nurses tasked with testing, "but what's really encouraging is that there are a lot of partners in this venture."

The number of districts relying on some level of testing to keep the virus in check is likely to increase after President Donald Trump this week encouraged governors to prioritize schools when distributing millions of rapid coronavirus tests provided by the federal government.

In western New York, the Niagara Falls City School District did not initially include school-based testing in its reopening plans, reasoning that was the job of hospitals and doctors. But on Wednesday, Superintendent Mark Laurrie was in the process of buying five rapid testing machines for his district, each about \$2,500, after shutting down a middle school where three staff members tested positive.

"When you see the impact that has on academics — that's what we're here for — then I think there's a higher calling to do more testing," Laurrie said. "That way we don't have to rely on anybody else. We can rely on ourselves."

There is little if any available data to show how many districts nationwide have adopted in-school virus testing, said Gigi Gronvall, an immunologist and senior scholar at Johns Hopkins University's Center for Health Security.

Boston Public Schools will offer random virus testing to 5% of teachers weekly, under an agreement with the teachers union. In Rhode Island, a K-12 testing hotline has been set up to field calls and arrange rapid testing for staff and students showing symptoms. In Florida, the Pasco County school district and health department announced three school sites to test people referred by school nurses.

"There's so many patchwork plans," said Gronvall, noting there has been no national model for districts to follow.

Gronvall praised the plans to test even those people in school who don't appear to be sick.

As many as 40% of people infected with COVID-19 exhibit no symptoms.

Los Angeles County Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer cautioned that testing alone does not control infection unless conducted almost daily.

"Testing has a role but testing is not a substitute for the infection control and the distancing and the mask wearing requirements that have to happen at every school building," Ferrer said.

Positive cases found in New York City schools will trigger set responses, beginning with tracing teams dispatched to the school to figure out who else may have been exposed. A single case will push that student or teacher's entire class to remote learning until contact tracing is complete. More than one case will mean an entire school will temporarily halt in-person instruction.

"The response might seem really severe to people and it might seem like an extreme response," said epidemiologist Nadia Abuelezam, an assistant professor at Boston College. "But based on what we've seen at other types of schools and specifically colleges and universities now, we know that there is the potential for very rapid transmission in student clusters."

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>.

Police departments seeing modest cuts, but not 'defunding'

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

DAVENPORT, Iowa (AP) — The racial justice protests following the death of George Floyd earlier this year prompted calls to "defund the police" in cities across the country, a priority for activists that has now become a central point in the presidential contest.

A review by The Associated Press finds that while local governments have trimmed police budgets over the past four months, the cuts have been mostly modest. They have been driven as much by shrinking government revenue related to the coronavirus pandemic as from the calls to rethink public safety.

Advocates want to overhaul a policing system that has repeatedly been linked to brutality against Black

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people, including the death of Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police in May.

Those calling for defunding generally mean shifting money from law enforcement agencies to other efforts. They want social workers rather than police to respond to non-crime emergency calls and more money sent to community programs aimed at preventing crime. They want to take police officers out of schools and military gear away from departments.

"Police don't really solve or prevent most of what is classified as criminal activity," said Ash-Lee Woodard Henderson, a lead activist at the Movement for Black Lives.

A narrative that has often overwhelmed local debates over police reforms and funding is that activists want to strip entire budgets from local law enforcement and replace the departments with something else. President Donald Trump has repeatedly said his Democratic rival, former Vice President Joe Biden, supports defunding police, even though Biden has stated clearly that he does not. Democratic mayors across the U.S. also have pumped the brakes on major changes.

In Minneapolis, Seattle and Portland, Oregon, all hotspots for protests and counter protests, the calls for deep police cuts have been answered with modest ones, at least for now. Even in liberal enclaves such as Austin, Texas, and Berkeley, California, where officials have embraced sweeping changes to policing, implementation is slow-going and uncertain.

Some of the boldest proposals came in Minneapolis, where Floyd died after being pinned to the ground by a white officer who pressed his knee into Floyd's neck for nearly eight minutes. The officer and three other officers were fired and have been charged in Floyd's death.

Soon after Floyd was killed, the majority of the City Council pledged to dismantle the police department. But it's far from happening: Some council members have backtracked on their pledges, and a ballot measure on the topic won't go before voters this year.

In Seattle, activists have called for cutting police funding in half. The City Council approved something much more modest — cuts equal to less than 1% of the police budget and shifts of some money to community programs.

Mayor Jenny Durkan vetoed even that before the council overrode her in late September, with some calling the measure a down payment on future reductions. In a statement, Durkan said the calls for budget cuts don't come with solutions about how to offer many of the services police perform, including dealing with homeless encampments.

"Part of my overwhelming concern about council's approach on the 2020 budget was a lack of a plan," said Durkan, who like most big-city mayors, is a Democrat.

In Portland, this year's police budget is nearly \$10 million less than last year's, but that was far less than the \$50 million cut activists had sought. It represents less than 4% of the police budget.

Austin has plans to reduce its police budget by one-third, but it's not certain that will happen. The city transferred about \$21.5 million of its \$450 million police budget to areas such as homeless services.

The city is exploring bigger changes, including moving civilian duties such as forensic science and victim services out of the department. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, has said he would consider having the state take over policing in the capital city in response.

In Berkeley, the council agreed in July to create a new traffic enforcement agency with the intent of eliminating racial profiling in traffic stops. But the switch will take time.

Some smaller left-leaning cities also are considering cuts to police. Burlington, Vermont, adopted a plan to reduce the number of officers by 30% through attrition. In North Carolina, the Asheville City Council this past summer gave police and other city departments only one-fourth of their annual funding. But in September, the council adopted a budget that repurposes only about 3% of the police budget.

Larger cities, including San Francisco and Los Angeles, have settled on relatively small police budget reductions and boosts to other programs. Philadelphia rolled back planned funding increases.

New York City announced a police budget cut, but a piece of that was moving school officers from the police department to the education department.

Some activists have been underwhelmed at the scope of the changes so far.

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"It's a positive that we were able to prevent increases in budgets," said Scott Roberts, who leads criminal justice efforts for the racial justice group Color of Change. "But it's not what we were looking for."

Patrick Yoes, president of the Fraternal Order of Police, which has endorsed Trump, told the AP that the defunding talk is demoralizing officers and pushing good candidates away from police careers.

Even without massive policing overhauls, it's significant that cities are including law enforcement budgets in the spending cuts they are being forced to make as tax revenue has shriveled during the coronavirus pandemic, said Insha Rahman, a vice president at the Vera Institute of Justice.

Police spending accounts for one-fourth to half of government spending in most big cities and has sometimes been considered untouchable.

"We are seeing in big city councils, like in New York City, the budget conversation has been dominated by what actually delivers public safety," Rahman said.

Some departments got a one-time boost this year from an \$850 million law enforcement package approved by Congress to deal with coronavirus-related expenses.

While there have been no massive defunding actions, policing changes are being considered in cities across the U.S.

In Davenport, Iowa, the Civil Rights Commission is asking the City Council to consider a list of initiatives on public safety, including reallocating money from police to social services and community programs.

Henry Karp, the commission vice chairman, said he is hopeful the measures will be adopted, though he expects resistance.

He cited the August shooting by police of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin, which left the Black man paralyzed. Like Kenosha, Davenport is a Midwestern city of about 100,000 people.

"That hasn't happened here yet," Karp said. "And that's what we want to prevent."

Follow Mulvihill at <http://www.twitter.com/geoffmulvihill>

Trump plans to slash refugee admissions to US to record low

JULIE WATSON and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The Trump administration has proposed further slashing the number of refugees the United States accepts to a new record low in the coming year.

In a notice sent to Congress late Wednesday, just 34 minutes before a statutory deadline to do so, the administration said it intended to admit a maximum of 15,000 refugees in fiscal year 2021. That's 3,000 fewer than the 18,000 ceiling the administration had set for fiscal year 2020, which expired at midnight Wednesday.

The proposal will now be reviewed by Congress, where there are strong objections to the cuts, but lawmakers will be largely powerless to force changes.

The more than 16.5% reduction was announced shortly after President Donald Trump vilified refugees as an unwanted burden at a campaign rally in Duluth, Minnesota, where he assailed his opponent, former Vice President Joe Biden. He claimed Biden wants to flood the state with foreigners.

"Biden will turn Minnesota into a refugee camp, and he said that — overwhelming public resources, overcrowding schools and inundating hospitals. You know that. It's already there. It's a disgrace what they've done to your state," Trump told supporters.

Trump froze refugee admissions in March amid the coronavirus pandemic, citing a need to protect American jobs as fallout from the coronavirus crashed the economy.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the administration is committed to the country's history of leading the world in providing a safe place for refugees.

"We continue to be the single greatest contributor to the relief of humanitarian crisis all around the world, and we will continue to do so," Pompeo told reporters in Rome on the sidelines of a conference on religious freedom organized by the U.S. Embassy. "Certainly so long as President Trump is in office, I can promise you this administration is deeply committed to that."

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But advocates say the government's actions do not show that. Since taking office, Trump has slashed the number of refugees allowed into the country by more than 80%, reflecting his broader efforts to drastically reduce both legal and illegal immigration.

The U.S. allowed in just over 10,800 refugees — a little more than half of the 18,000 cap set by Trump for 2020 — before the State Department suspended the program because of the coronavirus.

The 18,000 cap was already the lowest in the history of the program. In addition, the State Department announced last week that it would no longer provide some statistical information on refugee resettlement, sparking more concerns.

Advocates say the Trump administration is dismantling a program that has long enjoyed bipartisan support and has been considered a model for protecting the world's most vulnerable people.

Scores of resettlement offices have closed because of the drop in federal funding, which is tied to the number of refugees placed in the U.S.

And the damage is reverberating beyond American borders as other countries close their doors to refugees as well.

"We're talking about tens of millions of desperate families with no place to go and having no hope for protection in the near term," said Krish Vignarajah, president of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, a federally funded agency charged with resettling refugees in the United States.

Bisrat Sibhatu, an Eritrean refugee, does not want to think about the possibility of another year passing without reuniting with his wife.

For the past 2 1/2 years, he has called the caseworker who helped him resettle in Milwaukee every two weeks to inquire about the status of his wife's refugee case.

The answer is always the same — nothing to report.

"My wife is always asking me: 'Is there news?'" said Sibhatu, who talks to her daily over a messaging app. "It's very tough. How would you feel if you were separated from your husband? It's not easy. I don't know what to say to her."

He said the couple fled Eritrea's authoritarian government and went to neighboring Ethiopia, which hosts more than 170,000 Eritrean refugees and asylum-seekers. Between 2017 and 2019, his wife, Ruta, was interviewed, vetted and approved to be admitted to the United States as a refugee. Then everything came to a halt.

Sibhatu, who works as a machine operator at a spa factory, sends her about \$500 every month to cover her living expenses in Ethiopia.

"I worry about her, about her life," Sibhatu said, noting Ethiopia's spiraling violence and the pandemic. "But there is nothing we can do."

He hopes his wife will be among the refugees who make it to the United States in 2021.

Lee reported from Washington.

Lakers, LeBron roll in Game 1 of finals, top Heat 116-98

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — LeBron James finally got an easy Game 1 in the NBA Finals.

A very easy one, at that.

Anthony Davis scored 34 points, James had 25 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists and the Los Angeles Lakers rolled past the Miami Heat 116-98 on Wednesday night.

"The bigger the moment, he's just raising his play," Lakers coach Frank Vogel said about Davis, who was making his finals debut and made it look easy.

The Heat left beaten and battered. Point guard Goran Dragic left in the second quarter and, a person with knowledge of the situation, said he was diagnosed with a torn plantar fascia in his left foot — which obviously jeopardizes his availability for the rest of the finals. And All-Star center Bam Adebayo left in the third quarter after apparently aggravating a left shoulder strain.

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"We're much better than we showed tonight," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "You have to credit the Lakers, and we'll get to work for the next one."

Game 2 is Friday night.

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 13 points, Danny Green had 11 and Alex Caruso finished with 10 for the Lakers. They returned to the finals for the first time in a decade and sent a very clear message. James' teams had been 1-8 in Game 1 of past finals, with losses in each of the last seven openers.

Not this one.

"We kind of picked it up on both ends of the floor," Davis said.

Jimmy Butler fought through a twisted left ankle to score 23 points for Miami. Kendrick Nunn scored 18 points for the Heat, Tyler Herro had 14 and Jae Crowder 12.

"I, and we, are here for him," Butler said about Dragic. "We know how much he wants to win, how much he wants to go to war and battle with us. And obviously, we love him for that and we want him out there with us. But whatever the docs tell him to do, that's what he's got to do. ... He's got to take care of himself first."

Adebayo was held to eight points in 21 minutes, and Miami went with subs for a fourth-quarter burst that turned a total rout into something only slightly more palatable in terms of final margin.

The Lakers did whatever they wanted. They outrebounded Miami 54-36, led by as many as 32 points, and made 15 3-pointers — a big number for a team that doesn't necessarily count on piling up that many points from beyond the arc. They're 21-3 this season when making at least 14 3s.

The only stretch that provided hope for Miami came in the first six minutes. The Heat scored on six consecutive possessions in what became a 13-0 run to take a 23-10 lead midway through the opening period.

So, the first six minutes were fine for Miami.

Everything else was all Lakers.

"You have to get a feel for how hard Miami plays," James said. "They smacked us in the mouth and we got a sense of that. ... From that moment when it was 23-10, we started to play to our capabilities."

The simplest way to sum up what happened over the rest of the opening half is this: Lakers 55, Heat 25. The Lakers came into Game 1 ranked 21st out of the 22 teams that spent time in the bubble from 3-point range, making only 33.6% of their tries from deep at Disney. They were the only team in the postseason to have two games shooting less than 25% on 3s.

Perhaps they were due. The Lakers went 9-for-11 on 3's in the final 16 minutes of the first half. Of the nine Lakers who played in the first two quarters, eight tried a 3-pointer — and all eight made at least one.

They closed the first quarter on a 19-3 run. Herro banked in a 3 from a sharp angle for a 43-41 Miami lead with 7:33 left in the half, and then the Lakers took off again, this time on a 24-5 burst to go into the break with a 65-48 lead.

The Lakers started the third on another run, this one 18-3, and the rout was officially underway.

"You can learn so much more from a win than you can in a loss," James said. "I can't wait for tomorrow for us to get back together and watch the film and see ways we can be better."

TIP-INS

Heat: Butler turned his left ankle in the final seconds of the first half, remained in the game and started the second half. ... It was the 19th time that Miami lost a game this season after leading by double digits at some point.

Lakers: The Lakers improved to 17-15 in Game 1s of title series. ... Davis was 10 for 10 from the foul line, plus added nine rebounds, five assists and three blocks.

JAMES' RECORDS

The NBA Finals record book is basically a James scrapbook of career achievements, and he raised his spot on some of those lists Wednesday. He became the seventh player to appear in 50 NBA Finals games (he could climb all the way to a tie for third on that list if this series goes seven games) and passed Michael Jordan and George Mikan for fifth in finals free throws made.

FAMILIAR SPOT

The Heat fell to 1-5 in Game 1 of title series. All three of Miami's championships have come after dropping the opener.

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

25 years after UN women's meeting, equality remains distant

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Twenty-five years ago, the world's nations came together to make sure that half of Earth's population gained the rights, power and status of the other half. It hasn't happened yet. And it won't anytime soon.

In today's more divided, conservative and still very male-dominated world, top U.N. officials say the hope of achieving equality for women remains a distant goal.

"Gender inequality is the overwhelming injustice of our age and the biggest human rights challenge we face," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said. Last week, in his address at the virtual meeting of world leaders at the General Assembly, he said the COVID-19 pandemic has hit women and girls the hardest.

"Unless we act now," he said, "gender equality could be set back by decades."

Ahead of Thursday's high-level meeting to commemorate the landmark 1995 U.N. women's conference in Beijing, the head of the U.N. agency charged with promoting gender equality lamented the "slow, terribly uneven" progress, "pushback" and even regression in reaching the goals in the 150-page platform adopted by the 189 nations that met in China's capital.

While there has been progress since Beijing, U.N. Women's Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka told The Associated Press on Tuesday that gains have been modest. What's more, she says, "there is also sometimes an exaggeration and an illusion of much bigger progress than there has been."

She pointed to the number of women in parliaments, which moved from about 11% in 1995 to a global average of 25% today. Now, women hold just 23% of managerial positions in the private sector. And among the 193 U.N. member nations, there are 21 female presidents and prime ministers worldwide, about twice as many as in 1995.

This means that men still hold about 75 percent of the power positions in the world, Mlambo-Ngcuka said. They "make decisions for us all, and that is what we have to crack."

Guterres has stressed the uphill struggle, which he attributes to "centuries of discrimination, deep-rooted patriarchy and misogyny."

The landmark Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing was crucial because it adopted a road map to gender equality. It was the largest-ever formal gathering of women, though hundreds of men were among the 17,000 participants at the official meeting that adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Some 30,000 people, the vast majority women, attended a parallel NGO forum outside the capital.

"The Beijing Declaration is still the equivalent of the United Nations Charter for women," Mlambo-Ngcuka said. "It's the one thing we have that was adopted by the largest number of member states."

The platform called for bold action in 12 areas for women and girls, including combating poverty and gender-based violence, ensuring all girls get an education and putting women at top levels of business and government, as well as at peacemaking tables.

It also said, for the first time in a U.N. document, that women's human rights include the right to control and decide "on matters relating to their sexuality, including their sexual and reproductive health, free of discrimination, coercion and violence."

Mlambo-Ngcuka said there has been significant "pushback" on reproductive rights, explaining that groups once on the fringes are now in the mainstream, and developed countries from the "global north" are also being part of pushback, including the United States.

"When the U.S. regresses, it is a big deal, not just for the U.S. but for many people who are influenced by trends in the U.S.," she said.

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She expressed deep concern at the possible replacement of the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, "who was the pillar of the feminist agenda," with a conservative jurist like Trump administration nominee Amy Coney Barrett.

In the European Union, Mlambo-Ngcuka said, there are countries that want to pull out of The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women or are refusing to ratify it. "You would not have expected that to happen within the EU," she said. And in Africa and Asia, she said, there are governments "that have not felt any pressure" to move forward.

"So our energy has had to go to stop this pushback, not to work for the advancement of women," Mlambo-Ngcuka said. "And then came COVID, and that has made the situation worse."

She said Thursday's meeting is important to generate fresh support from world leaders for the Beijing platform and for the U.N. goal to achieve gender equality by 2030, and "to reaffirm multilateralism as indispensable."

At the meeting, 170 nations are expected to speak including over 50 world leaders, among them French President Emmanuel Macron and Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, who had been scheduled to host "Generation Equality" forums this year for thousands of civil society representatives and activists. Those were postponed until 2021 because of the pandemic.

The summit will not be adopting any document. That happened in March when the Commission on the Status of Women, the main U.N. body promoting women's rights, reaffirmed the 1995 Beijing declaration and platform and pledged to step up implementation.

Mlambo-Ngcuka did point to some advances in the last 10 years including 131 countries that enacted legislation to advance gender equality. The U.N. has also helped change and amend 25 constitutions in 25 years to entrench gender equality and "that is a big deal," she said.

At the 1995 Beijing conference, then U.S. first lady Hillary Clinton galvanized participants with a rousing speech featuring words that have become a mantra for the global women's movement: "Human rights are women's rights — and women's rights are human rights."

"I think we have a lot of work to do," Clinton said in a virtual discussion on the 25th anniversary of the Beijing conference at the Georgetown Institute For Women, Peace and Security.

"Am I discouraged? No. I'm disappointed we haven't gone even farther in 25 years. I'm worried about the pushback and the backlash that we see from authoritarian leaders, in particular, who are trying to turn the clock back," she said.

"But that just energizes me more to speak out, to work with others, to defend those who are on the front lines," Clinton said. "My thinking has also evolved. I'm certainly going to continue to call for women's rights. But more important to me now is enabling women to have the power to claim their rights."

Edith M. Lederer, chief U.N. correspondent for The Associated Press, has been reporting internationally for nearly a half century, including at the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995. Follow her on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/EdithLedererAP>

US says it will block palm oil from large Malaysian producer

By MARGIE MASON AND ROBIN MCDOWELL Associated Press

The United States will block shipments of palm oil from a major Malaysian producer that feeds into the supply chains of iconic U.S. food and cosmetic brands. It found indicators of forced labor, including concerns about child workers, along with other abuses such as physical and sexual violence.

The order against FGV Holdings Berhad, one of Malaysia's largest palm oil companies and a joint-venture partner with American consumer goods giant Procter & Gamble, went into effect Wednesday, said Brenda Smith, executive assistant commissioner at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Office of Trade.

The action, announced a week after The Associated Press exposed major labor abuses in Malaysia's palm oil industry, was triggered by a petition filed last year by nonprofit organizations.

"We would urge the U.S. importing community again to do their due diligence," Smith said, adding

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companies should look at their palm oil supply chains. "We would also encourage U.S. consumers to ask questions about where their products come from."

Malaysia is the world's second largest producer of palm oil. Together with Indonesia, the two countries dominate the global market, producing 85 percent of the \$65 billion supply.

Palm oil and its derivatives from FGV, and closely connected Malaysian state-owned Felda, makes its way into the supply chains of major multinationals. They include Nestle, L'Oreal, and Unilever, according to the companies' most recently published supplier and palm oil mill lists. Several huge Western banks and financial institutions not only pour money directly or indirectly into the palm oil industry, but they hold shares in FGV.

Smith said the agency carried out its own year-long probe and combed through reports from nonprofits and the media, including the AP's investigation.

AP reporters interviewed more than 130 former and current workers from eight countries at two dozen palm oil companies — including Felda, which owns about a third of the shares in FGV. They found everything from unpaid wages to outright slavery and allegations of rape, sometimes involving minors. They also found stateless Rohingya Muslims, one of the world's most persecuted minorities, had been trafficked onto Malaysian plantations and forced to work.

Many of the problems detailed by Smith mirrored those found by The AP. She said the Customs agency found indicators of restriction of movement on plantations, isolation, physical and sexual violence, intimidation and threats, retention of identity documents, withholding of wages, debt bondage, abusive working and living conditions, excessive overtime, and concerns about potential forced child labor.

After the U.S. ban, Malaysian palm oil producer FGV Holdings Berhad vowed to "clear its name." FGV said all the issues raised "have been the subject of public discourse since 2015 and FGV has taken several steps to correct the situation."

"FGV is disappointed that such decision has been made when FGV has been taking concrete steps over the past several years in demonstrating its commitment to respect human rights and to uphold labor standards," it said in a statement.

FGV said it wasn't involved in any recruitment or employment of refugees and doesn't hire contract workers. Migrant workers are recruited through legal channels, and it said it ensured they are not charged fees.

As of August, FGV's 11,286 Indonesian workers and 4,683 Indian workers formed the majority of its plantation workforce.

FGV said it is introducing the use of electronic wallet cashless payroll system for its workers. It doesn't retain workers' passports and has safety boxes throughout all its 68 housing complexes for them to keep their passports.

It said it had invested 350 million ringgit (\$84 million) over the past three years to upgrade housing facilities, and provides medical benefits. It said it has a code of conduct that its suppliers and vendors are required to comply with, adding that any allegation of physical or sexual violence as well as intimidation or threats will be acted upon.

FGV said it has submitted evidence of compliance of labor standards to the U.S. CBP office since last year.

Felma and the Malaysian government did not respond to questions from AP about the findings of its investigation.

FGV Holdings has been under fire for labor abuses in the past and was sanctioned by the global Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil certification group two years ago. The association promotes ethical production -- including the treatment of workers -- with members that include growers, buyers, traders, and environmental watchdogs.

Though Asian banks are by far the most robust financiers of the plantations, Western lenders and investment companies have poured billions of dollars into the industry in recent years, allowing for the razing and replanting of ever-expanding tracts of land. Some hold shares in FGV itself — including Vanguard Group, BlackRock, Charles Schwab, State Street Global Advisors, HSBC, and even the California Public Employees' Retirement System — according to the financial data analysis firm, Eikon.

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The AP did not receive comment from any of those financial institutions on Wednesday, but when asked more broadly about their ties to the palm oil industry last week, most responded by noting their policies vowing to support sustainability practices, with many also incorporating human rights into their guidelines.

Multinational food and cosmetic companies responded in a similar way last week, saying they do not tolerate labor and human rights abuses and will immediately investigate complaints they receive and take action, including suspension of a supplier, if necessary.

This is the first time Customs has issued an order related to palm oil, though shipments from other sectors have been detained after similar investigations into forced labor were conducted. They include seafood, cotton and human hair pieces believed to have been made by persecuted Uighur Muslims inside Chinese labor camps.

Under Wednesday's order, palm oil products or derivatives traceable to FGV will be detained at U.S. ports. If the company is unable to prove that the goods were not produced with forced labor, it can be exported.

"For all these years these companies have refused to pay for remediation or publicly cut ties with FGV, so now the U.S. government has acted for them," said Robin Averbeck of the San Francisco-based Rainforest Action Network, which was among a group of nonprofits that filed one of two petitions against FGV last year. "Procter & Gamble and other brands must stop paying lip service to human rights and address forced labor and other labor abuses once and for all."

World leaders, virtual meeting 1.0: Was anybody listening?

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

In the space of a few minutes, on a prerecorded video filmed thousands of miles from where it was shown, the tech-savvy president of El Salvador captured the two strikingly different sides of this year's unprecedented — and virtual — "gathering" of world leaders "at" the U.N. General Assembly in 2020.

On one hand, Nayib Bukele said, humanity holds in its smartphone-clutching hands a 21st-century miracle: "In a world which is almost completely connected, I can say a few words here and be heard in the farthest corners of the world."

Yet in the same speech Tuesday, he raised this ever-present doubt: When the people who govern the world were delivering sequestered addresses to the United Nations this past week, was anybody actually listening? "If you don't believe me," he said, "ask the first person you see."

So goes the planet. And so too, it seems, goes the United Nations.

The same dissonance that technology hands us in our daily lives — closer but farther apart, more intimate yet somehow colder — revealed to a COVID-era world over the past week that even the people who collectively govern all of us can't necessarily transcend the pixels and bits of data that have become foundational to the way human civilization operates.

"It is obvious that technology is the future," said the president of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo. "How else would we all have maintained a semblance of keeping in touch in the past six months, but for technology?"

He's not wrong. And yet.

The fact is, this U.N. General Assembly was a Really Boring Meeting, kind of like preparing dinner by opening a can of steak. Sure, all the right ingredients were in there — the world's leaders, a deeply urgent slate of problems, a global forum to hash them out. But it didn't taste right, and that wasn't just because it was virtual. Even an American online classroom, circa Fall 2020, is livelier.

What if, say, the world's leaders had been required — or even encouraged — to deliver their speeches live via satellite hookup? What if other leaders had been listening in real time? What if they could have responded? Riskier, yes, and potentially glitchier, but also more real. Something that had just happened might have been discussed. A loose, albeit very electronic, relationship between speaker and audience might have been possible.

As the prerecorded speeches droned on, even the most interesting of leaders appeared kind of two-dimensional. The biggest signs of life came in the "right of reply" section, where nations that don't like each other very much — Armenia and Azerbaijan, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, India and Pakistan

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— sent up lower-level diplomats to deliver often overheated responses in real time.

Overheated isn't always productive; Tuesday night's U.S. presidential debate showed that. But the distance of technology created something new even for the United Nations, an organization known for its procedural, bureaucratic nature: a meeting almost entirely free of the natural energy generated when human beings charting the future of their planet get together to talk.

Not that the promise of technology wasn't front and center; talk of it dominated the week. A "Roadmap for Digital Cooperation" summit was held, and dozens of world leaders rhapsodized about how the magic of electronic networks — connections unthinkable when some of them were children — is helping offset the pandemic's cleaving effects for both those who run governments and those who are governed.

Afghanistan's president, Ashraf Ghani, said his nation was "experimenting with how to adapt so that this digital revolution can be wielded as a source of economic opportunity" for younger people and a way to develop governance and law. He said 2020's blend of tech and circumstance was challenging Afghanistan to "adapt the ways we consume, the ways we work, and the ways we govern."

Kersti Kaljulaid, the president of Estonia, calls her nation "the world's first digitally transformed state" — a place where all public services run online. Because of that, she said, when the pandemic hit "we saw less scramble than any other country to move everything online which previously ran on paper."

"We want the same for the rest of the world," Kaljulaid said. But she also issued a warning — that technology without structure can make things worse.

"Leaders globally must understand that digital services do not, by themselves, rid any country from fat bureaucracy, corruption or inefficiency," she said. "By digitalizing these problems, we can only make things worse, unless we simultaneously rise transparency and straighten out our processes."

Through that lens, it becomes increasingly clear that the "information superhighway," as it was called in the 1990s, has, in the coronavirus era, become more choked with traffic than ever.

"COVID has created an inflection point. Countries are starting to rethink how they connect with each other. It's hard to imagine everything that has occurred over the last six months occurring five years ago," says William Muck, a political science professor and coordinator of global studies at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois.

"Tech is one way they see that they can solve problems and avoid political pitfalls," Muck says.

Perhaps. Speaker after speaker said it was time for the United Nations to be different, that the pandemic had handed it an opportunity to evolve. But this meeting suggested that for such an intricate bureaucracy, even adapting in an emergency may not be enough to jump-start genuine, irreversible innovation.

Despite that, hope peeks through. Thanks to technology, the people who rule us and, in the aggregate, steer humanity's destiny are still finding ways to talk — even if "talk," complete with air quotes, isn't quite what it used to be. That's what Volkan Bozkir thinks, at any rate.

"The fact that so many world leaders chose to address this assembly is a testament to the power and relevance of the United Nations," the president of the General Assembly said Tuesday evening as he pronounced the gathering closed. "No other organization can bring so many global leaders together."

And with that, he thanked U.N. tech support for all its help with the prerecorded speeches and was on his way.

Ted Anthony, director of digital innovation for The Associated Press, has covered global affairs since 1995 and oversees the news organization's coverage of the pandemic's ripple effect on society. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/anthonyted>

American, United to furlough 32,000 as time runs out on aid

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

American Airlines and United Airlines say they will begin to furlough 32,000 employees after lawmakers and the White House failed to agree on a broad pandemic relief package that includes more federal aid for airlines.

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American Airlines CEO Doug Parker said that if Washington comes up with a deal with \$25 billion for airlines "over the next few days," the company will reverse 19,000 furloughs set to begin Thursday and recall the workers.

United said the impasse forced it to furlough 13,000 workers. United said it told leaders in the Trump administration and Congress that if payroll aid is approved in the next few days, it too could undo the furloughs.

The moves by two of the nation's four biggest airlines represent the first — and likely the largest part — of involuntary job cuts across the industry in coming days.

Airline employees and executives made 11th-hour appeals this week to Congress and the Trump administration to avert furloughs when a federal prohibition on layoffs — a condition of an earlier round of federal aid — expires Thursday.

The passenger airlines and their labor unions are lobbying for taxpayer money to pay workers for six more months, through next March. Their request is tied up in stalled negotiations over a larger pandemic relief measure.

Industry officials acknowledged that prospects were bleak for action before Thursday's deadline. They said, however, they were cheered that the House this week included airline payroll help in a \$2.2 trillion relief plan that moved closer to Republicans' preference for a lower price tag.

"It provides a glimmer of hope that something will get done," said Nicholas Calio, president of the trade group Airlines for America.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Wednesday night that the administration wants to help hotels, airlines and schools. He said he was talking with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi but hinted that the White House doesn't want to go above about \$1.5 trillion — \$700 million below the House Democrats' figure.

"I don't think we're going to make significant progress" until Thursday, he said on Fox Business.

Calio foreshadowed the comments of American and United by suggesting that Thursday might not be a hard deadline — airlines could undo some furloughs if a deal between the White House and congressional Democrats appeared imminent.

"Ideally, if it's going to go beyond Thursday they will be close to a deal and say, 'Hang on for a couple days,' and we can wait," he said. "Beyond that, the notices have gone and furloughs will go into effect."

Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants, said she still expects action by Congress because majorities in the House and Senate have signaled support for more airline relief. She said a bailout that keeps airline workers employed would be cheaper for the government than putting them on the unemployment line during a pandemic.

"These are people who are not going to be able to pay their rent, they are not going to be able to take care of themselves," Nelson said on CNBC.

Beyond American and United, smaller airlines have sent layoff warnings to several thousand employees. Delta and Southwest, which entered the pandemic in stronger financial shape than American and United, have shed thousands of jobs through voluntary departures but don't plan to lay off workers immediately.

Airlines have persuaded tens of thousands of employees to take early retirement or severance deals. But even after those offers, the airlines have more pilots, flight attendants, mechanics and other workers than they need.

Critics say airlines shouldn't get special treatment, and that subsidizing their workforces will only delay the companies' need to adjust to the downturn in travel — which even airline trade groups think will last three or four years.

"The airlines are always the first ones begging for support. They get bailed out over and over again," Veronique de Rugy, a research fellow at George Mason University and columnist for a libertarian magazine, said in a recent interview. "Airlines have a history of not preparing properly for the next emergency because they know they are going to be bailed out."

In March, Congress approved \$25 billion mostly in grants to cover passenger airline payrolls through September and up to another \$25 billion in loans that the airlines could use for other purposes. Late Tues-

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day, the Treasury Department said it completed loans to seven major airlines: American, United, Alaska, JetBlue, Frontier, Hawaiian and SkyWest.

American now expects to borrow \$5.5 billion from the Treasury, and United can get \$5.17 billion. Airlines have also borrowed billions from private lenders. They could use that money to keep employees — as critics like de Rugy suggest they should — but they are trying to cut spending in case ticket revenue remains severely depressed for a long time.

U.S. air travel remains down nearly 70% from a year ago. Signs of a modest recovery faded this summer when COVID-19 cases spiked in many states. Traditionally lucrative business and international travel are even weaker than domestic leisure flying.

Biden, Trump snipe from road and rails after debate chaos

By STEVE PEOPLES, WILL WEISSERT and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden kept up their debate-stage sniping from the road and the rails on Wednesday, fighting for working-class voters in the Midwest while both parties — and the debate commission, too — sought to deal with the most chaotic presidential faceoff in memory.

The debate raised fresh questions about Trump's continued reluctance to condemn white supremacy, his questioning the legitimacy of the election and his unwillingness to respect debate ground rules his campaign had agreed to. Some Democrats called on Biden to skip the next two debates.

Biden's campaign confirmed he would participate in the subsequent meetings, as did Trump's. But the Commission on Presidential Debates promised "additional structure ... to ensure a more orderly discussion of the issues."

Less than 12 hours after the wild debate concluded, Biden called Trump's behavior in the prime-time confrontation a "a national embarrassment." The Democratic challenger launched his most aggressive day on the campaign trail all year, with eight stops planned for a train tour that began mid-morning in Cleveland and ended 10 hours later in western Pennsylvania. Trump proclaimed his debate performance a smashing success during a Wednesday evening rally in Duluth, Minnesota.

"Last night I did what the corrupt media has refused to do," Trump said. "I held Joe Biden accountable for his 47 years of failure."

Biden balanced criticism of Trump with a call for national unity.

"If elected, I'm not going to be a Democratic president. I'm going to be an American president," Biden said at the Cleveland train station. As his tour moved into Pittsburgh, he accused Trump of never accepting responsibility for his mistakes and promised, "I'll always tell you the truth. And when I'm wrong, I'll say so."

While some Republicans feared that Trump's debate performance was too aggressive, he gave himself high marks as he left Washington. He had spent much of the day assailing Biden and debate moderator Chris Wallace on social media.

"If you ever became president you have to deal with some of the toughest people in the world," Trump said at his Duluth rally. "And Chris Wallace is very very easy by comparison."

The first of three scheduled debates between Trump and Biden deteriorated into bitter taunts and chaos Tuesday night as the Republican president repeatedly interrupted his Democratic rival with angry jabs that overshadowed any substantive discussion of the crises threatening the nation.

Trump and Biden frequently talked over each other, with Trump interrupting, nearly shouting, so often that Biden eventually snapped at him, "Will you shut up, man?"

Trump refused anew to say whether he would accept the results of the election, calling on his supporters to scrutinize voting procedures at the polls — something that critics warned could easily cross into voter intimidation.

Trump also refused at the debate to condemn white supremacists who have supported him, telling one such group known as the Proud Boys to "stand back and stand by." Asked directly on Wednesday if he welcomed white supremacist support, he first said only that he favored law enforcement but when the

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questioner persisted, he said he had always denounced "any form of any of that."

On Capitol Hill, Republicans showed signs of debate hangover, with few willing to defend Trump's performance.

Utah Sen. Mitt Romney called the debate "an embarrassment" and said Trump "of course" should have condemned white supremacists.

"I think he misspoke," said South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, the only Black Republican senator. "I think he should correct it. If he doesn't correct it, I guess he didn't misspeak."

Trump did not say he misspoke when asked on Wednesday but claimed he did not know who the Proud Boys were.

"They have to stand down — everybody. Whatever group you're talking about, let law enforcement do the work," he said.

The president's brash debate posture may have appealed to his most passionate supporters, but it was unclear whether the embattled incumbent helped expand his coalition or won over any persuadable voters, particularly white educated women and independents who have been turned off in part by the same tone and tenor the president displayed on the debate stage.

With just five weeks until Election Day and voting already underway in several key states, Biden holds a lead in national polls and in many battlegrounds. Polling has been remarkably stable for months, despite the historic crises that have battered the country this year, including the coronavirus pandemic that has killed more than 200,000 Americans and a reckoning over race and police.

While Biden distanced himself from some of the priorities of his party's left wing — and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders — on Tuesday night, there was no sign that he had turned off his party's grassroots activists.

Sanders said Wednesday on ABC's "The View" that it was "terribly important" that Biden be elected, and campaign digital director Rob Flaherty said Biden had raised \$3.8 million at the debate's end in his best hour of online fundraising

Increasingly, the candidates have trained their attention on working-class voters in the Midwest, a group that helped give Trump his victory four years ago and will again play a critical role this fall.

Biden and his wife, Jill, traveled through Ohio and Pennsylvania aboard a nine-car train bearing a campaign logo, a throwback to Biden's days as a senator when he commuted most days via Amtrak from his family's home in Delaware to Capitol Hill.

He drew several hundred masked supporters to one afternoon stop in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, his largest crowd since suspending traditional events back in March, according to his campaign.

Biden wrapped up his train trip with a nighttime drive-in rally in Johnstown, Pennsylvania's poorest town. The campaign blocked off the surrounding street and erected a stage and giant screen. About 50 cars were arrayed around the area, with most attendees standing near their vehicles or sitting on the hoods and roofs. They stood close together in small groups, but nearly everyone wore masks.

Biden called Trump a "self-entitled, self-serving president who thinks everything is about him. He thinks if he just yells louder and louder, throws out lie after lie, he'll get his way."

Ohio Rep. Tim Ryan, a Democrat, said Trump's behavior in the debate was exactly why suburban voters across the Midwest and beyond have turned against him.

"I feel like he took an ax to one of the great American rituals we have in this country," Ryan said.

Trump, meanwhile, attended an afternoon fundraiser in Shorewood, Minnesota, a suburb to the west of Minneapolis, before appearing at an evening campaign rally in Duluth on the shores of Lake Superior.

While Trump carried Ohio and Pennsylvania four years ago, he narrowly lost Minnesota, one of the few states he hopes to flip from blue to red this fall. That likely depends on finding more votes in rural, conservative areas and limiting his losses in the state's urban and suburban areas.

To that end, the White House announced shortly before Trump's rally in Duluth Wednesday evening that the president had signed an executive order declaring a national emergency in the mining industry, a move that could resonate with voters in northeast Minnesota's Iron Range.

The order notes U.S. manufacturing's "undue reliance" on China for critical minerals and calls for the Interior Department to use the Defense Production Act to fund mineral processing in order to protect U.S. national security.

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"If Joe gets in, they'll shut down the Iron Range forever," Trump told rallygoers in Duluth. "I will always protect the state of Minnesota."

Peoples reported from New York and Freking from Duluth, Minn. Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro, Brian Slodysko, Laurie Kellman, Darlene Superville and Alexandra Jaffe in Washington contributed to this report.

AP's Advance Voting guide brings you the facts about voting early, by mail or absentee from each state: <https://interactives.ap.org/advance-voting-2020>

Pelosi and Mnuchin have 'extensive' talks on COVID relief

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin held an "extensive conversation" Wednesday on a huge COVID-19 rescue package, meeting face to face for the first time in more than a month in a last-ditch effort to seal a tentative accord on an additional round of coronavirus relief.

After a 90-minute meeting in the Capitol, Pelosi issued a statement saying the two would continue to talk. "We found areas where we are seeking further clarification," she said. Talks resume Thursday.

"We made a lot of progress over the last few days. We still don't have an agreement," Mnuchin said after meeting with Pelosi and briefing top Senate Republican Mitch McConnell.

At the very least, the positive tone set by Pelosi and Mnuchin represented an improvement over earlier statements. But there is still a considerable gulf between the two sides, McConnell said.

"I've seen substantial movement, yes, and certainly the rhetoric has changed," White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said.

In an appearance on Fox Business Wednesday night, Mnuchin described the talks as the first serious discussions with Pelosi in "several weeks" and said he is raising his offer into "the neighborhood" of \$1.5 trillion. That's well above what many Senate Republicans want but would probably be acceptable to GOP pragmatists and senators in difficult races.

After initially saying the Democratic-controlled chamber would vote Wednesday night on a \$2.2 trillion relief bill — a debate that would have been partisan and possibly unproductive — Pelosi made an about-face and postponed the vote until Thursday in hopes of giving the talks with Mnuchin greater breathing room.

At issue is a long-delayed package that would extend another round of \$1,200 direct stimulus payments, restore bonus pandemic jobless benefits, speed aid to schools and extend assistance to airlines, restaurants and other struggling businesses. A landmark \$2 trillion relief bill in March passed with sweeping support and is credited with helping the economy through the spring and summer, but worries are mounting that the recovery may sputter without additional relief.

Mnuchin said Wednesday morning that he would tender a new offer resembling a plan released a couple of weeks ago by the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus. That proposal was previously rejected by Pelosi and other top Democrats as inadequate. It totals about \$1.5 trillion and would provide additional jobless benefits if unemployment remains unacceptably high.

The "top line" limit upon which Pelosi, the Trump administration and Senate Republicans might be able to agree has been a subject of considerable speculation. Pelosi had drawn a hard line until recently, and talks have foundered, but failure now could mean there wouldn't be any COVID relief until next year, especially if Trump loses his reelection bid. Pelosi has never had a reputation for leaving large sums of money on the table.

Pelosi and Mnuchin have ramped up talks in recent days but remain far apart. The two have worked effectively together in the past and were key forces on the "CARES Act" in March, but the bipartisan spirit that drove that measure into law has all but evaporated. Neither side has publicly offered the kind of concessions that would generate tangible momentum.

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McConnell said the two sides remain “very, very far apart,” though he spoke before being briefed on the Mnuchin-Pelosi meeting. GOP congressional aides said the two sides are not close, even as administration officials like Meadows and Mnuchin sounded more optimistic.

Even if Pelosi and Mnuchin were able to reach a tentative agreement on “top line” spending levels, dozens of nettlesome details would need to be worked out. A particularly difficult issue, Pelosi told her colleagues earlier in the day, remains McConnell’s insistence on a liability shield for businesses fearing COVID-related lawsuits after they reopen their doors.

“Let’s see if we can get a compromise agreement with the Speaker, something that works, and then we’ll continue to work with both sides on all the exact language and the policies,” Mnuchin said earlier.

Pelosi has sold her latest bill as an attempt to establish a negotiating position that might boost the negotiations. A more skeptical take is that the Speaker is trying to placate party moderates who protested that she has been too inflexible in negotiations and played a role in the collapse of aid talks this summer and earlier this month.

It would revive a \$600-per-week pandemic jobless benefit and send a second round of direct payments to most individuals. It would scale back an aid package to state and local governments to a still-huge \$436 billion, send a whopping \$225 billion to colleges and universities and deliver another round of subsidies to businesses under the Paycheck Protection Program. Airlines would get another \$25 billion in aid to prevent a wave of layoffs that are expected this week.

It also contains \$3.6 billion to assist voting during the pandemic, \$15 billion for the Postal Service and additional billions for treatment and vaccines.

The proposal represents a cutback from a \$3.4 trillion bill that passed the House in May but remains well above what Senate Republicans are willing to accept. Republicans have endorsed staying in the \$650 billion to \$1 trillion range.

The specific numbers are also fuzzy because both sides are using offset spending cuts or new tax revenues to pay for part of their respective bills. The Congressional Budget Office has not scored either the most recent Senate GOP measure or the Democratic plan slated for Wednesday night’s vote.

Hospitals feel squeeze as coronavirus spikes in Midwest

By TODD RICHMOND and LISA MARIE PANE Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — The coronavirus tightened its grip on the American heartland, with infections surging in the Midwest, some hospitals in Wisconsin and North Dakota running low on space and the NFL postponing a game over an outbreak that’s hit the Tennessee Titans football team.

Midwestern states are seeing some of the nation’s highest per capita rates of infection, and while federal health officials again urged some governors in the region to require masks statewide, many Republicans have resisted.

Like other states, health officials in Wisconsin had warned since the pandemic began that COVID-19 patients could overwhelm hospitals. That’s now happening for some facilities as experts fear a second wave of infections in the U.S.

A record number of people with COVID-19 were hospitalized in Wisconsin. Of those 737 patients Wednesday, 205 were in intensive care, with spikes in cases in northern parts of the state driving up the numbers. The state also reported its highest single-day number of deaths — 27 — raising the toll to 1,327.

Officials at ThedaCare, a community health system of seven hospitals, said they have exceeded capacity in the COVID-19 unit at their medical center in Appleton, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) north of Milwaukee. It’s started sending patients to other hospitals some 40 miles (64 kilometers) away.

Wisconsin health officials reported 2,319 new infections, bringing the total number to 122,274.

In North Dakota, hospitals are adding extra space amid concerns from employees about capacity. Nearly 678 COVID-19 infections per 100,000 people have been diagnosed over the past two weeks, leading the country for new cases per capita, according to the COVID Tracking Project.

A new Sanford Health hospital unit opened in the capital of Bismarck to add 14 more beds, with nearly

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half of those for intensive care patients. The space isn't exclusively for coronavirus patients but could be used to treat them if needed.

Overall, North Dakota has reported 21,846 infections and 247 deaths. There are 89 people now hospitalized.

The upswing has been seen throughout the Midwest. Iowa also reported a spike in people hospitalized with the virus, to 390. Last week, the state had the nation's sixth-highest rate of coronavirus infections per 100,000 people, according to a White House coronavirus task force report dated Sunday. It again recommended Iowa require masks statewide, which Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds has said is unnecessary.

Similarly, Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, a Republican, has said he won't impose such a requirement. The task force report found his state is among the worst in the United States for positive coronavirus tests per 100,000 people, up 15% from a week ago.

The number of reported coronavirus cases in Oklahoma increased by 980 on Wednesday, with 13 additional deaths, state health officials said. A total of 1,031 people have died of the virus there.

The strain of the virus in the Midwest comes as President Donald Trump and his Democratic rival, Joe Biden, sparred over the pandemic during the first presidential debate. Trump defended his handling of the virus, saying he has struck the right balance between preserving the economy and pushing for a vaccine. Biden criticized Trump for doing too little, too late and putting Americans' lives at risk by being slow to encourage the use of masks and social distancing.

Meanwhile, the NFL decided to postpone a game between the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Tennessee Titans after three Titans and five other team personnel tested positive for COVID-19. The Titans have closed their facility through at least Friday and will not be able to practice together until Saturday at the earliest.

On Sunday, Tennessee beat the Minnesota Vikings, which have closed their facility through at least Wednesday.

Cleveland Browns center JC Tretter, president of the players union, said the outbreak was a reminder that everyone must be more vigilant despite low testing numbers across the league.

"It's easy to fall into a sense of ease or relax on some of the protocols," he said. "But the protocols are what's keeping us going, making sure that we're making the right decisions. ... We have been going really smoothly for a long time and now there was some expectation that this was eventually going to happen. It's tough to keep the virus completely out."

There have been nearly 34 million confirmed cases worldwide — over 7 million in the United States alone — and more than 1 million deaths, according to a count kept by Johns Hopkins University. But the real number of infections is believed to be much higher.

The U.S. is averaging more than 40,000 new cases a day. While that's dramatically lower than the peak of nearly 70,000 over the summer, the numbers remain worrisome. The nation's death toll eclipsed 200,000 this week, the highest in the world.

Across the U.S., the numbers are determining whether parts of the economy can get going again.

In Hawaii, where infection numbers are low, movie and television productions have started or are scheduled to resume soon. Work on new seasons of the television shows "Magnum PI" and "Temptation Island" on Oahu are beginning and other productions are expected to shoot on Maui and the Big Island.

Richmond reported from Milwaukee. Pane reported from Boise, Idaho. AP staffers around the United States contributed to this report.

Voting lawsuits pile up across US as election approaches

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — They've been fighting in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania over the cutoff date for counting mailed ballots, and in North Carolina over witness requirements. Ohio is grappling with drop boxes for ballots as Texas faces a court challenge over extra days of early voting.

Measuring the anxiety over the November election is as simple as tallying the hundreds of voting-related

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lawsuits filed across the country in recent months. The cases concern the fundamentals of the American voting process, including how ballots are cast and counted, during an election made unique by the coronavirus pandemic and by a president who refuses to commit to accepting the results.

The lawsuits are all the more important because President Donald Trump has raised the prospect that the election may wind up before a Supreme Court with a decidedly Republican tilt if his latest nominee is confirmed.

"This is a president who has expressed his opposition to access to mail ballots and has also seemed to almost foreshadow the inevitability that this election will be one decided by the courts," said Kristen Clarke, executive director of the National Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

That opposition was on display Tuesday during the first presidential debate when Trump launched into an extended argument against mail voting, claiming without evidence that it is ripe for fraud and suggesting mail ballots may be "manipulated."

"This is going to be a fraud like you've never seen," the president said of the massive shift to mail voting prompted by the pandemic.

The lawsuits are a likely precursor for what will come afterward. Republicans say they have retained outside law firms, along with thousands of volunteer lawyers at the ready. Democrats have announced a legal war room of heavyweights, including a pair of former solicitors general.

The race is already regarded as the most litigated in American history, due in large part to the massive expansion of mail and absentee voting. Loyola Law School professor Justin Levitt, a former Justice Department elections official, has tallied some 260 lawsuits arising from the coronavirus. The Republican National Committee says it's involved in more than 40 lawsuits, and a website operated by a chief Democrat lawyer lists active cases worth watching in about 15 states.

Democrats are focusing their efforts on multiple core areas — securing free postage for mail ballots, reforming signature-match laws, allowing ballot collection by third-parties like community organizations and ensuring that ballots postmarked by Election Day can count. Republicans warn that those same requests open the door to voter fraud and confusion and are countering efforts to relax rules on how voters cast ballots this November.

"We're trying to prevent chaos in the process," RNC chief counsel Justin Riemer said in an interview. "Nothing creates more chaos than rewriting a bunch of rules at the last minute."

But there have been no broad-based, sweeping examples of voter fraud during past presidential elections, including in 2016, when Trump claimed the contest would be rigged and Russians sought to meddle in the outcome.

Some of the disputes are unfolding in states not traditionally thought of as election battlegrounds, such as Montana, where there is a highly competitive U.S. Senate race on the ballot. A judge Wednesday rejected an effort by Trump's reelection campaign and Republican groups to block counties from holding the general election mostly by mail.

But most of the closely watched cases are in states perceived as up-for-grabs in 2020 and probably crucial to the race.

That includes Ohio, where a coalition of voting groups and Democrats have sued to force an expansion of ballot drop boxes from more than just one per county. Separately on Monday, a federal judge rejected changes to the state's signature-matching requirement for ballots and ballot applications, handing a win to the state's Republican election chief who has been engulfed with litigation this election season.

In Arizona, a judge's ruling that voters who forget to sign their early ballots have up to five days after the election to fix the problem is now on appeal before the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

A federal appeals court on Tuesday upheld a six-day extension for counting absentee ballots in Wisconsin as long as they are postmarked by Election Day. The ruling gave Democrats in the state at least a temporary victory in a case that could nonetheless be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In neighboring Michigan, the GOP is suing to try to overturn a decision that lets the state count absentee ballots up to 14 days after the election.

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In battleground North Carolina, where voters are already struggling with rules requiring witness signatures on absentee ballots, the RNC and Trump's campaign committee have sued over new election guidance that will permit ballots with incomplete witness information to be fixed without the voter having to fill out a new blank ballot.

In Iowa, the Trump campaign and Republican groups have won a series of sweeping legal victories in their attempts to limit absentee voting, with judges throwing out tens of thousands of absentee ballot applications in three counties. This week, another judge upheld a new Republican-backed law that will make it harder for counties to process absentee ballot applications.

Pennsylvania has been a particular hive of activity.

Republican lawmakers asked the U.S. Supreme Court on Monday to put a hold on a ruling by the state's highest court that extends the deadline for receiving and counting mailed-in ballots. Republicans also object to a portion of the state court's ruling that orders counties to count ballots that arrive during the three-day extension period even if they lack a postmark or legible postmark.

Meanwhile in federal court, Republicans are suing to, among other things, outlaw drop boxes or other sites used to collect mail-in ballots.

The Supreme Court itself has already been asked to get involved in several cases, as it did in April, when conservative justices blocked Democratic efforts to extend absentee voting in Wisconsin during the primary.

There is, of course, precedent for an election that ends in the courts. In 2000, the Supreme Court settled a recount dispute in Florida, effectively handing the election to Republican George W. Bush.

Barry Richard, a Florida lawyer who represented Bush during that litigation, said there's no guarantee the Supreme Court will want to get involved again, or that any lawsuit over the election will present a compelling issue for the bench to address.

One significant difference between then and now, he said, is that neither candidate raised the prospect of not accepting the results.

"There was never any question, in 2000, about the essential integrity of the system. Neither candidate challenged it," Richard said. "Nobody even talked about whether or not the losing candidate would accept the results of the election. That was just assumed."

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

Getting warmer: Trump concedes human role in climate change

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

President Donald Trump publicly acknowledged that humans bear some blame for climate change, but scientists say the president still isn't dealing with the reality of our primary role.

Pressed repeatedly in Tuesday night's debate, Trump gave one of his fullest accountings yet of what scientists say is an escalating climate crisis threatening every aspect of life. Pushed by moderator Chris Wallace, and at one point by rival Joe Biden, Trump also pushed back on scientific findings that his environmental rollbacks would increase climate-damaging pollution.

The climate change exchange represented a rare microburst of policy discussion from Trump in a loud, nerve-abrading debate. And it ever so lightly nailed down the position of the Republican president on climate change.

"It is a sad statement about the President's history on climate change, but it is a major development to see him clearly acknowledge a role of greenhouse gases from human emissions," said Chris Field, director of the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment at Stanford University.

"It's still outright denial of the science, in addition to denial of the devastating impacts," such as the record wildfires once again forcing evacuations in the Western U.S., said Michael Mann, a Pennsylvania State University climate researcher and a veteran in scientists' battle to make ordinary people and leaders face facts on global warming.

Trump said Tuesday that humans — their tailpipe exhaust, oil and gas production, and smokestack fumes

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— are just one of many culprits for the weather-disrupting deterioration of Earth's atmosphere.

"You believe that human pollution, gas, greenhouse gas emissions contributes to the global warming of this planet?" Wallace asked.

"I think a lot of things do, but I think to an extent, yes," Trump finally responded after Wallace's third question pressing on the point.

Trump had evaded a direct answer to Wallace's previous two questions, instead responding with his administration's standard lines: It wants clean water and clean air, it supports planting trees and it blames worsening wildfires on Western states' failure to rake dead leaves, branches and trees on forest floors.

Trump's eventual answer still dodged the key point, which is that burning oil, gas and coal is damaging the climate.

"Humans more than account for all of the climate change over the last 50 years (when the vast amount of the changes have occurred)," Donald J. Wuebbles, a professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Illinois, said in an email.

Wuebbles, a lead author in the congressionally mandated National Climate Assessment in 2017-18, said because of a change in energy from the sun, Earth had been on a slight cooling trend before human-made heat-trapping gases kicked in.

Trump's attacks on climate scientists and repeated attempts to undo rules and laws reining in fossil-fuel emissions speak "louder than any reluctant admissions about our changing climate," said Kim Cobb, professor of earth and atmospheric sciences at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

The position Trump took Tuesday is more conservative than that of many lawmakers in his party. Some Republican members of Congress became more outspoken on human-made climate change after Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and other Democrats demanding aggressive action on global warming triumphed in 2018 midterms.

Trump's response Tuesday came under pressure, but he did take a position and acknowledge a human role. That compares to past statements from 2012 on in which Trump dismissed the science behind global warming as a "concept" invented by China to hurt the United States, a "hoax" and a "money-making industry."

As recently as mid-September, he told California leaders struggling with the worsening wildfires associated with global warming that the climate would "start getting cooler" again. "You just watch," he added.

On Tuesday, after Trump nodded at a human role in climate change, Wallace asked him why he then had undone the Clean Power Plan. That was a legacy Obama administration climate change effort intended to move U.S. utilities away from the dirtiest fossil-fuel plants.

"Because it was driving energy prices through the sky," Trump responded.

That's an exaggeration. The U.S. Energy Information Administration projects electricity prices would have averaged 2% higher through 2030 with Obama's emissions-cutting power plan, mainly from the initial costs of adding more solar, wind and natural gas production to the electricity mix.

Biden jumped in with his own question, asking Trump why he was axing President Barack Obama's other major climate effort — much tougher mileage standards that would have boosted electric cars.

The Obama administration said its move would have cut 6 billion metric tons in greenhouse gases. Trump's answers didn't address the climate damage, and he claimed to have given "big incentives" for electric cars. In fact, Trump had vowed to eliminate some tax credits boosting electric vehicles, and the White House has said it wants to do away with all incentives supporting renewables as well.

Wallace pressed Biden on his \$2 trillion proposal to wean the United States off fossil fuels, citing Trump's claims that the plan would "tank" the economy and cost jobs. Biden responded by describing massive investments in more efficient buildings, transportation and power plants that he said would produce millions of jobs.

Biden appeared to stumble at one point as he spoke of his plan, and Wallace and Trump pressed him on the left's more ambitious Green New Deal, with Biden saying the Green New Deal — rather than his plan — would "pay for itself." Biden specified a couple seconds later, "No, I don't support the Green New Deal."

Man charged in shooting of 2 Los Angeles County deputies

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Prosecutors charged a 36-year-old man Wednesday with a brazen ambush of two Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies earlier this month, an apparently unprovoked shooting as they sat in a squad car outside a rail station.

The deputies suffered head wounds in the Sept. 12 attack and have since been released from the hospital. Sheriff Alex Villanueva said their recoveries will be a long process and include further reconstructive surgeries.

The suspect, Deonte Lee Murray, pleaded not guilty to attempted murder and other charges Wednesday during his arraignment. He faces life in state prison if he is convicted.

Murray's attorney, Jack Keenan, declined to comment and said he has not yet seen prosecutors' evidence. Murray is being held in jail on \$6.15 million bail and is due back in court in November.

The sheriff's department arrested Murray two weeks ago in connection with a separate carjacking. But officials at the time said it was not related to the ambush case.

Murray has a criminal history including convictions for sales and possession of narcotics, firearm possession, receiving stolen property, burglary and terrorist threats, authorities said. Wednesday's criminal complaint includes allegations that he associates with gangs.

Investigators on Wednesday did not provide a specific motive for the attack, "other than the fact that he obviously hates policemen and he wants them dead," said Capt. Kent Wegener, the head of the sheriff's homicide bureau.

In the shooting — which the sheriff said depicted "the worst of humanity" — surveillance video shows a person walking toward the patrol car, which was parked at a Metro rail station in the city of Compton, and firing a handgun through the passenger-side window.

The deputies — a 31-year-old woman and 24-year-old man who had graduated together from the sheriff's academy 14 months ago — radioed for help despite their wounds.

The suspect fled in a black Mercedes Benz sedan. Investigators discovered that type of vehicle had been stolen Sept. 1 in a carjacking where the driver was shot. Photographs of the carjacking suspect seemed to match images from the ambush, Wegener said, strengthening a connection between the two cases.

On Sept. 15, an investigator spotted the suspect driving another vehicle and tried to stop him. The suspect threw a gun out of the car during a pursuit before abandoning the vehicle in the city of Lynwood. The suspect ran off and was ultimately captured after a nearly nine-hour standoff with police. The black Mercedes was found nearby.

That day, Villanueva and other sheriff's officials told reporters the carjacking suspect was not related to the ambush case. On Wednesday he defended his actions that misled the public, saying police didn't at the time have the hard evidence needed before telling citizens the suspect was linked to such a significant crime.

"We're not going to tell you everything we suspect," the sheriff said, adding that the investigation of the ambush could have been harmed had the name been made public sooner.

Ballistics testing of the gun — a so-called ghost gun that is homemade and unregistered — that was discarded during the pursuit showed it was the one used in the attack on the deputies, Wegener said.

The Los Angeles Times first reported Murray's arrest ahead of the news conference.

Compton is among communities near South Los Angeles, an area with a large Black population that has long been a flashpoint for racial tension and mistrust of police.

In recent weeks, demonstrators have marched to protest fatal shootings in the area, where deputies killed a Black man on Aug. 31 and a Black teenager in 2018.

After the ambush, a handful of protesters gathered outside the hospital where the deputies were treated and tried to block the emergency room entrance. Videos from the scene recorded protesters shouting expletives at police and at least one yelling "I hope they ... die."

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Wednesday's announcement of the arrest in the shooting of the deputies followed a separate, seemingly unprovoked assault on another law enforcement officer in Southern California.

A Los Angeles police officer was attacked Saturday night inside the Harbor Community police station in San Pedro.

The assailant was recorded on surveillance video as he knocked the officer to the ground inside the station, pistol-whipped him with his own gun and pointed it at his chest. The officer is recovering from his injuries.

GOP lawmakers grill Comey on leadership of Russia probe

By ERIC TUCKER and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican lawmakers on Wednesday confronted former FBI Director James Comey about his oversight of the Trump-Russia investigation during a politically charged hearing that focused attention on problems with the probe that have become a rallying cry for President Donald Trump's supporters.

Comey, making his first appearance before Congress since a harshly critical inspector general report on the investigation, acknowledged under questioning that the FBI's process for conducting surveillance on a former Trump campaign adviser was "sloppy" and "embarrassing." He said he would not have certified the surveillance had he known then what he knows now about applications the FBI submitted in 2016 and 2017 to eavesdrop on the aide, Carter Page.

The questioning of Comey, conducted with the election just weeks away, underscores the extent to which the FBI's investigation four years ago into potential coordination between Trump's campaign and Russia remains front and center in the minds of Republican lawmakers, who see an opening to rally support for the president and cast him as the victim of biased law enforcement. The hearing was part of a review of the Russia probe by the GOP-led Senate Judiciary Committee.

Though Comey acknowledged the FBI's shortcomings in the surveillance of Page, he also described that aspect of the probe as a "slice" of the broader Russia investigation, which he defended as legitimate and valid.

But those answers, including Comey's repeated assertions that he had been unaware at the time of the extent of problems, frustrated Republicans who point to the surveillance flaws to try to discredit the overall Russia investigation.

A Justice Department inspector general report identified errors and omissions in each of the four applications that the FBI submitted to obtain warrants to surveil Page, who was never charged with any wrongdoing. The FBI relied in part on Democratic-funded research in applying for those warrants. The inspector general report, and documents released in recent months, have raised questions about the reliability of that research.

The FBI relied on that documentation "over and over and over" again even though it was "fundamentally unsound," said the Judiciary Committee chairman, Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham.

"What do we do? We just say, 'Well, that was bad, that's the way it goes?' Does anybody get fired? Does anybody go to jail?" Graham said. "To my Democratic friends, if it happened to us, it can happen to you."

Comey was fired by Trump in May 2017 but has remained a prominent and complicated character for Republicans and Democrats alike. Republicans have joined Trump in heaping scorn on Comey, but Democrats have not embraced him either, angered by his public statements made during the Hillary Clinton email case that they believe contributed to her loss.

Democrats lamented the backward-looking nature of Wednesday's hearing, saying the FBI had good reason to investigate contacts between Trump associates and Russia and that the committee's time could be better spent on other matters.

"Most people think we should be talking about other things, except maybe President Trump," said Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota.

Comey defended the investigation, which was opened after a campaign adviser boasted that he had heard Russia had damaging information about Clinton. The probe examined multiple contacts between

Russians and Trump associates during the 2016 campaign. Comey noted that special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation resulted in criminal charges against dozens of people.

"In the main, it was done by the book. It was appropriate, and it was essential that it be done," Comey said.

He later added: "The overall investigation was very important. The Page slice of it? Far less given the scope."

But Comey, the latest high-profile former official from the FBI or Justice Department to testify in Graham's investigation, acknowledged "embarrassing" problems in the handling of surveillance applications. He said had he known then about the problems, he would not have certified the surveillance "without a much fuller discussion" within the FBI.

"I'm not looking to shirk responsibility," Comey said. "The director is responsible."

A Justice Department inspector general report did not find evidence of partisan bias and concluded the investigation was opened for a legitimate reason. But Republican lawmakers have seized on the critical aspects of the watchdog report to cast broader doubt on the Russia investigation. They have also released documents they say support the conclusion that the probe was flawed.

On Tuesday, Graham revealed that he had received declassified information on the probe from national intelligence director John Ratcliffe, a Trump loyalist, even though Ratcliffe has said he does not know if it is true.

In a letter to Graham made public Tuesday, Ratcliffe said that in late July 2016, U.S. intelligence agencies obtained "insight" into Russian spycraft alleging that Clinton had "approved a campaign plan to stir up a scandal against" Trump.

But Ratcliffe added that American intelligence agencies do "not know the accuracy of this allegation or the extent to which the Russian intelligence analysis may reflect exaggeration or fabrication."

Comey brushed aside questions about that document, saying, "I don't understand Mr. Ratcliffe's letter well enough to comment on it. It's confusing."

The Senate panel has already heard from Rod Rosenstein and Sally Yates, both former deputy attorneys general, and has scheduled testimony from ex-FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe.

Virus outbreak pushes Steelers-Titans to Monday or Tuesday

By TERESA M. WALKER AP Pro Football Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — The Tennessee Titans have at least one more day to see if the team's coronavirus outbreak is under control before their game with the Steelers is rescheduled for Monday or Tuesday.

Only one new positive test result came back Wednesday, a day after the Titans had three players and five team personnel test positive for COVID-19. More daily test results are upcoming.

The league announced the postponement from Sunday afternoon on Wednesday.

The Titans hope to be allowed back inside their facility Saturday, though coach Mike Vrabel said that could happen before then or later. The Titans are preparing to play as early as Monday. Vrabel said he's confident the NFL will allow them some time to practice before the game.

"We've worked on short weeks before," Vrabel said. "We've played three games in 13 days. I'm sure the other teams that we played before had a few extra days of practice. And so it'll be important that the time that we do get to spend practicing, we take advantage of it."

Outside linebackers coach Shane Bowen was the first to test positive, with the Titans learning Saturday of his results. He didn't make the trip to Minnesota, where Tennessee won 31-30.

On Tuesday, the Titans placed three players on the reserve/COVID-19 list, including key players defensive captain and lineman DaQuan Jones and long snapper Beau Brinkley. Outside linebacker Kamalei Correa became the fourth on that list Wednesday.

Vrabel is not identifying the five other personnel who tested positive, saying only that he was not among that group. The Titans coach said some of those who tested positive are experiencing "flu-like symptoms" and he expects they will feel better shortly.

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The league's infectious disease experts have been helping the Titans and the Vikings track down anyone in contact with those who tested positive. The Vikings had no positive test results Wednesday and were preparing to reopen their building Thursday, with a game Sunday at Houston.

The Titans also have evaluated all of the protocols and how they've handled meetings and social distancing. Vrabel said he and general manager Jon Robinson already had taken steps Monday to severely limit who had access to the team's headquarters this week before the NFL decision to close the building.

"We want to make sure that we're doing everything we can to make the players safe and that this doesn't happen again," Vrabel said.

Now the Titans must prepare virtually until they can hit the practice field for a game against the Steelers pitting two of the NFL's seven undefeated teams.

Vrabel said they held a team meeting virtually Wednesday morning and he showed the Titans video of Pittsburgh. Players had meetings with their position coaches — all through video conference calls.

With only a practice and a walk-through possible before kickoff, the Titans will be preparing virtually for the Steelers to make sure they're all on the same page. Pittsburgh has a league-high 15 sacks, so paying attention and talking on those Zoom calls will be crucial.

Players with injuries still can receive treatment at the Titans' facility, with visits to the training room staggered. Other Titans are home hoping no more positive results turn up and that they themselves don't test positive even as they attempt to keep their family members safe.

Safety Kevin Byard said more positives remain a possibility, with the virus sometimes showing up days after exposure. In the meantime, it's up to individual players being professionals and finding a way to make up for missed practices.

"If it's getting on a Peloton bike, just going around your neighborhood, jogging around to making sure that you continue to try to get your blood going, get your blood flowing, do a little bit conditioning on your own, to make sure that when you actually get out there your muscles aren't just super tight," Byard said.

The Titans are working to bring in a new long snapper, a crucial position for a team that has won all three games inside the final two minutes on a field goal. That player will have to go through the NFL's testing protocol first. Replacing Jones also won't be easy, but defensive lineman Jeffery Simmons is off to a strong start.

For the Steelers, the only change is that the schedule pushes back a day or two. They host the Eagles on Oct. 11, when the Titans are scheduled to host Buffalo.

"We know we're going into an environment that had the outbreak, but we feel like if we do what we're supposed to, we'll be fine," Steelers cornerback Mike Hilton said.

Cleveland Browns center JC Tretter, the president of the players' union, said the outbreak was a reminder that everyone must be more vigilant despite low testing numbers across the league.

"It's easy to fall into a sense of ease or relax on some of the protocols," he said Wednesday. "But the protocols are what's keeping us going, making sure that we're making the right decisions. ... We have been going really smoothly for a long time and now there was some expectation that this was eventually going to happen. It's tough to keep the virus completely out."

And the Titans are the NFL's first team tasked with finding a way to adapt and play through the league's first COVID-19 outbreak.

"It's not ideal, but we have to find a way," quarterback Ryan Tannehill said. "We have to be able to overcome adversity. It's just a different type of adversity. We've done it throughout this season so far a few weeks in and showed our mental strength that we can find a way to win games, and this is just another challenge along that road."

AP Pro Football Writers Dave Campbell and Barry Wilner and Sports Writer Tom Withers contributed to this report.

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Census takers: We're being told to finish early, cut corners

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

As a federal judge considers whether the Trump administration violated her order for the 2020 census to continue through October by setting an Oct. 5 end date, her court has been flooded with messages from census takers who say they are being asked to cut corners and finish their work early.

Josh Harkin, a census taker in northern California, said in an email Tuesday to the court that he had been instructed to finish up by Wednesday, even though his region in the Santa Rosa area still had 17,000 homes to count.

"Please do something to help us! We really need to go until the end of October to have a chance at a reasonable count for our communities," Harkin wrote.

Paul Costa, a census taker in California currently working in Las Vegas, said in an email to U.S. District Judge Lucy Koh on Tuesday that census takers were being pressured to close cases quickly, "if not at all accurately."

"Many states, including Nevada has not been properly counted yet. Especially the Southeastern states ravaged by the recent hurricanes. We want to be able to do our jobs correctly & as accurately as possible," Costa wrote.

A San Francisco census taker, whose name was redacted in the email, was instructed to turn in census equipment on Wednesday since field operations were ending. The census taker asked the judge to order the Census Bureau to stop laying off census takers, also called enumerators, so that the head count will continue through October as the judge had ordered.

Another census taker, who only was identified as "Mr. Nettle," reached out to plaintiffs' attorneys and told them that census takers were being pressured "to check off as many households as complete, seemingly to boost numbers everywhere above 99%, while sacrificing accuracy and completeness," according to a court filing.

Last week, Koh issued a preliminary injunction stopping the census from ending Wednesday and clearing the way for it to continue through Oct. 31. The judge in San Jose, California, sided with with civil rights groups and local governments that had sued the Census Bureau and the Department of Commerce, which oversees the statistical agency, arguing that minorities and others in hard-to-count communities would be missed if the counting ended at the end of September instead of the end of October.

A three-judge appellate court panel on Thursday rejected a Trump administration appeal to suspend Koh's order, saying "hasty and unexplained changes to the Bureau's operations ... risks undermining the Bureau's mission."

Koh is holding a hearing on Friday to determine whether the Trump administration violated her order by putting out a statement that Oct. 5 was a target date for ending the census or whether it should be held in contempt.

While the court has the authority to find the Trump administration in contempt, attorneys for the civil rights groups and local governments said in a motion Thursday that they weren't seeking a contempt finding at this time. Instead, they said they wanted full compliance with the judge's order, arguing the Trump administration had violated it "several times over."

To achieve that, they asked Koh to require the Census Bureau to file weekly compliance reports, ensure that all field workers know about the injunction and require any cases to be reopened if they were closed because of a push to finish the count by either Sept. 30 or Oct. 5.

The census is used to determine how many congressional seats each state gets and the distribution of \$1.5 trillion in federal funds annually.

The complaints by the census takers echo concerns that other census takers have made to The Associated Press over the past week.

James Christy, the Census Bureau's assistant director for field operations, said in a declaration to the

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court on Tuesday that he had sent in an email to all managers involved with field operations that they must comply with Koh's injunction.

"To be clear, no occupied housing units will go 'uncounted,'" Christy said.

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

Country star and hit Elvis songwriter Mac Davis dies at 78

By KRISTIN M. HALL AP Entertainment Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Country star Mac Davis, who launched his career crafting the Elvis hits "A Little Less Conversation" and "In the Ghetto," and whose own hits include "Baby Don't Get Hooked On Me," has died. He was 78.

His longtime manager Jim Morey said in a press release that Davis died in Nashville on Tuesday after heart surgery and was surrounded by family and friends.

Davis had a long and varied career in music for decades as a writer, singer, actor and TV host and was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2006. He was named 1974's entertainer of the year by the Academy of Country Music and has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

"Thank you, dear Lord Jesus, for letting us know the man to whom you gave the most incredible talent," said Reba McEntire in a statement. "He entertained and spread joy to so many people. What a wonderful legacy he left all of us with his music. Mac was one of a kind. I'm so blessed to have been one of his many friends."

Born in Lubbock, Texas, and raised in Georgia, Davis was inspired by fellow Lubbock native Buddy Holly, but it was Elvis who gave him his first musical big break. Davis worked as a staff songwriter in Los Angeles for Nancy Sinatra's publishing company when in 1968 Presley cut the funky "A Little Less Conversation," which Davis had written with Aretha Franklin in mind.

Although it had a little success at the time, the song became a bigger hit after Presley's death, being covered by more than 30 artists and topping charts everywhere from Canada to Denmark. Davis' most licensed TV soundtrack song, "A Little Less Conversation" reached No. 1 in the UK in 2002 after it was used in a Nike commercial and was featured in the hit movie "Ocean's 11."

Davis also helped craft the sentimental "Memories" that was a cornerstone of Elvis' celebrated 1968 comeback TV special, and two other songs that were key to Presley's revival: The somber ballads "In the Ghetto" and "Don't Cry Daddy," both top 10 singles which marked rare times Presley covered material with any kind of political or social message.

"In the Ghetto" was the story of a young Black man raised in poverty who turns to crime and ends up dead, a story Davis would say was based on a childhood friend. "Don't Cry Daddy," in which a son consoles his grieving father after the boy's mother dies, appealed personally to Presley, who lost his beloved mother when he was in his early 20s.

"A small town boy who'd achieved the greatest kinds of fame, he remained a good guy, a family man," said country star Kenny Chesney. "That was Mac: a giant heart, quick to laugh and a bigger creative spirit. I was blessed to have it shine on me. And Mac, who was joyous, funny and created a family around him, never stopped writing great songs, creating music and inspiring everyone around him."

Davis got a recording deal of his own in 1970, recording "Hooked on Music," "It's Hard to be Humble," and "Texas in my Rearview Mirror," and getting crossover success on pop charts. He had his own TV series, "The Mac Davis Show" on NBC, and also acted in TV and film, including alongside Nick Nolte in the football film "North Dallas Forty." He even starred on Broadway, in "The Will Rogers Follies" and toured with the musical. The group Gallery had a hit on his song "I Believe in Music."

"He was the songwriter behind some of the most iconic and timeless songs that transcend genres and generations and was named a BMI Icon in 2015," said BMI President and CEO Mike O'Neil. "Beyond his extraordinary talent, Mac was a dedicated friend and advocate for songwriters everywhere."

He also wrote songs recorded by Kenny Rogers ("Something's Burning"), Dolly Parton ("White Limozeen")

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and Ray Price ("Lonesomest Lonesome"). He was still writing later in life, getting co-writing credits on songs by Avicii ("Addicted to You") and Bruno Mars ("Young Girls.")

"Today our country community lost an amazing entertainer, songwriter and artist," said Sarah Trahern, CEO of CMA. "I remember watching Mac's TV show as a kid as well as his three years co-hosting the CMA Awards with Barbara Mandrell, which proved his command of the TV medium as well as the music."

Breonna Taylor grand jury recordings to be released Friday

By DYLAN LOVAN and PIPER HUDSPETH BLACKBURN Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — A Kentucky judge has delayed until Friday the release of secret grand jury proceedings in Breonna Taylor's killing by police, so that prosecutors can edit out witnesses' names and personal information.

Audio recordings of the proceedings were originally supposed to be made public Wednesday, but Attorney General Daniel Cameron's office asked a Louisville court for a week's delay to remove details such as witnesses' addresses and phone numbers.

On Wednesday, Judge Ann Bailey Smith granted a shorter delay, giving the attorney general until noon on Friday.

Cameron's office sought the delay "in the interest of protection of witnesses, and in particular private citizens named in the recordings," according to its legal motion Wednesday. The recordings are 20 hours long.

Taylor was shot and killed in her Louisville home by police who were executing a narcotics warrant in March. The grand jury decided this month not to charge any of the police officers involved with her death; instead, one officer was charged with shooting into a neighboring home.

That decision angered many, and protesters took to the streets in Louisville and around the country to demand accountability for her killing, as frustrations spilled over after months of waiting for Cameron's announcement. Activists and Taylor's family called for the grand jury file to be released.

One of two Louisville police officers shot during protests last week called for law enforcement, protesters and other city residents to work together to move forward.

Maj. Aubrey Gregory, who was shot in the hip, returned to light duty earlier this week. He said fellow officer Robinson Desroches, who was shot in the abdomen, is still "in a lot of pain" and faces a longer recovery. Gregory said he doesn't blame all protesters for the actions of the gunman.

"If we can't come together to find solutions, then we're not going anywhere," Gregory said. "Violence has never been the answer and never will be."

Authorities arrested 26-year-old Larynzo Johnson in the officer shootings, charging him with two counts of first-degree assault on a police officer and 14 counts of wanton endangerment. Johnson has pleaded not guilty.

Facing questions about the grand jury this week, Cameron acknowledged that he did not recommend homicide charges for the officers involved. Instead, he only recommended one of the officers be indicted, for the wanton endangerment of Taylor's neighbors.

Cameron, a Republican protégé of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and the state's first African American attorney general, said the other two officers who fired their guns were justified because Taylor's boyfriend had fired at them first.

Cameron said the record will show that his team "presented a thorough and complete case to the grand jury."

Taylor, a 26-year-old emergency medical worker, was shot five times in her Louisville apartment on March 13 by officers carrying a narcotics warrant. Taylor and her boyfriend were watching a movie in her bedroom when police came to her door and eventually knocked it down. The warrant was related to an investigation of a drug suspect who didn't live with her, and police found no drugs at her apartment.

Former officer Brett Hankison, who was fired from the force for his actions during the raid, pleaded not guilty to three counts of wanton endangerment on Monday.

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Officers Jonathan Mattingly, who was shot in the leg by Taylor's boyfriend, and Myles Cosgrove, who Cameron said appeared to have fired the fatal shot at Taylor, according to ballistics tests, remain on the force.

Trump to far-right extremists: 'Stand back and stand by'

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

President Donald Trump on Tuesday didn't condemn white supremacist groups and their role in violence in some American cities this summer, branding it solely a "left-wing" problem and telling one far-right extremist group to "stand back and stand by."

"Almost everything I see is from the left wing, not from the right wing," said Trump, whose exchange with Democrat Joe Biden left the extremist group Proud Boys celebrating what some of its members saw as tacit approval.

He was responding to a question from debate moderator Chris Wallace, who asked the president if he would condemn white supremacist and militia groups that have shown up at some protests. Wallace specifically mentioned Kenosha, Wisconsin, where a white teenager was charged with killing two protesters during demonstrations over the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man. Trump has repeatedly blamed "antifa," which stands for the anti-fascist movement.

"I'm willing to do anything. I want to see peace," Trump said. "What do you want to call them? Give me a name."

"Proud Boys," Democrat Joe Biden chimed in, referencing a far-right extremist group that has shown up at protests in the Pacific Northwest. The male-only group of neo-fascists describes themselves as "western chauvinists," and they have been known to incite street violence.

"Proud Boys, stand back and stand by," Trump said. "But I'll tell you what, I'll tell you what, somebody's got to do something about antifa and the left because this is not a right-wing problem."

Facing widespread criticism for his failure to condemn the group, Trump on Wednesday said, "I don't know who the Proud Boys are." He added, "Whoever they are, they have to stand down. Let law enforcement do their work."

FBI Director Christopher Wray told a congressional panel last week that white supremacists and anti-government extremists have been responsible for most of the recent deadly attacks by extremist groups within the U.S.

Trump, a Republican, has tried to tie incidents of violence that have accompanied largely peaceful protests to Biden and the Democrats, running on a "law and order" message that warns people won't be safe under a Democratic president. It's a message aimed squarely at white suburban voters, including women who voted for Trump in 2016 but may not do so again.

"What we saw was a dog whistle through a bullhorn," California Sen. Kamala Harris, Biden's running mate, said on MSNBC after the debate. "Donald Trump is not pretending to be anything other than what he is: Someone who will not condemn white supremacists."

Proud Boys leaders and supporters later celebrated the president's words on social media. A channel on Telegram, an instant messaging service, with more than 5,000 of the group's members posted "Stand Back" and "Stand By" above and below the group's logo.

Biden has said he decided to run for president after Trump said there were "very fine people" on both sides of a 2017 protest led by white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia, where a counterprotester was killed.

Trump said Tuesday that Biden was afraid to say the words "law and order" and pressed him to give examples of law enforcement groups that back his campaign. Biden didn't name any, but said he's in favor of "law and order with justice, where people get treated fairly."

Biden called antifa "an idea, not an organization." That's similar to how Wray described it, though Trump has called on the federal government to characterize antifa as a terrorist organization.

At another point in the debate, when discussing a Trump administration move to end racial sensitivity

training in the federal government, Biden directly called Trump a racist. He also accused him of trying to sow racist hatred and racist division in the country.

A lesson from Trump taxes: An underfunded IRS is outmatched

By MARCY GORDON and PAUL WISEMAN AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Revelations of President Donald Trump's near-zero federal income tax payments have underscored the ability of wealthy individuals with high-priced lawyers to outmatch an IRS that has long been understaffed and underfunded.

A result is that the IRS has tended to pursue taxpayers of modest means more aggressively than they have high-powered businesspeople, even though the wealthy are believed to be disproportionately to blame for depriving the government of tax revenue. The top 10% of earners have accounted for most of the revenue gap, experts say, by underreporting their liabilities, intentionally or not, as tax avoidance or outright evasion.

Just as the nation's economic inequality has widened, so, too, has the unequal treatment of taxpayers: Those with annual incomes under \$25,000 are audited at a higher rate (0.69%) than those with incomes up to \$500,000 (0.53%), according to the IRS data. Taxpayers who receive the earned-income tax credit, which serves mainly low-income workers with children, are audited at a higher rate than all but the very wealthiest tax filers.

As their staffing and investigative resources have diminished, so have the IRS's overall audits — including of affluent taxpayers. A key reason is that for the past decade, lawmakers in Congress have steadily reduced funding for the agency. Critics say the big winners have been people with the financial resources to keep the IRS at bay.

"These very, very wealthy people like Donald Trump are able to run circles around the IRS because the IRS is understaffed and under-resourced right now," said Steve Wamhoff, director of federal tax policy at the left-leaning Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.

Buttressed by his accountants and lawyers, Trump has fought for a decade with IRS auditors over a roughly \$73 million refund he sought and received after declaring staggering financial losses, according to a report this week in *The New York Times*. The *Times* said Trump declared hundreds of millions in losses in recent years, thereby allowing him to pay just \$750 in federal income tax the year he entered the White House — and no income tax at all in 11 of the 18 years that the *Times* reviewed.

Trump has accused the IRS of unfairly targeting him with audits. He has cited the ongoing audit as the primary reason for his refusal to make his tax returns public, in contrast to every other modern-day president.

Yet an ongoing audit doesn't legally bar Trump from releasing his tax returns. His refusal ignited a battle royal with the Democratic-led House of Representatives and Manhattan prosecutors over the tax filings that has been waged in the courts and could reach the Supreme Court.

Funding for the IRS, long a punching bag for Republicans who accuse it of overreaching into ordinary taxpayers' lives, has plummeted by about 21% since 2010. An independent IRS watchdog has warned Congress that the funding cuts have eroded the agency's ability to upgrade its technology and fulfill its role of collecting taxes and enforcing the law to prevent cheating.

The IRS will fail to collect nearly \$7.5 trillion in taxes owed between 2020 and 2029, according to a study by University of Pennsylvania law professor Natasha Sarin and former Treasury Secretary and Harvard University President Lawrence Summers. They say the agency could shrink that shortfall by more than \$1 trillion if it were able to conduct more audits — especially of high earners — gather more information from taxpayers and acquire better technology.

"While most Americans pay taxes directly out of their paychecks, wealthy people like Donald Trump can turn tax evasion into a lucrative business model and deflect any audits into a bureaucratic black hole," Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, the senior Democrat on the tax-writing Senate Finance Committee, told *The Associated Press*.

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"Republican budget cuts going back a decade have gutted the ability of the IRS to crack down on tax cheating by high earners like Donald Trump. The next Congress needs to get serious about making sure that corporations and the wealthy are paying a fair share, and rebuilding IRS enforcement is a big part of that job."

IRS spokespeople didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

Charles Rettig, the Trump-appointed IRS commissioner, has told Congress that the 74,000-employee agency has lost more than 3,100 audit staffers — revenue agents, tax compliance officers and tax examiners — between the 2010 budget year and April 2019, a 28% drop. Rettig said the IRS couldn't afford to shift attention to high-income audits "because of employee experience and skill set."

The earned-income tax credit, a refundable credit claimed by taxpayers who earn an average \$20,000 a year, is viewed by its proponents as a major anti-poverty tool for working families. IRS data show that people claiming the EITC in 2018 had their tax returns audited at a rate (0.60%) that is 10 times that for taxpayers in the upper income brackets (0.06%).

The simple tax filings of people who receive the EITC — in contrast to the deductions, credits and loopholes used by the wealthy — may draw the attention of IRS auditors looking to focus their diminished resources on easier targets. Day Manoli, a tax expert at the University of Texas at Austin, noted, too, that the EITC is a direct expenditure and hit to the Treasury, unlike the deductions and credits used by the affluent which represent indirect losses of revenue not collected.

In a report last year for the journal *Tax Notes*, Kim Bloomquist, a former IRS economist, found that the most-audited place in the country from tax years 2012 through 2015 was Humphreys County, Mississippi, which is 76% Black and has a poverty rate of 37% — more than three times the national poverty rate.

The 10 most-audited U.S. counties were 79% nonwhite (mostly Black), and 51% of the taxpayers there claimed the EITC. Led by Denali County, Alaska, the 10 least-audited counties, were 93% white. Only 10% of their taxpayers claimed the low-income credit.

Rettig, a Beverly Hills tax lawyer for decades, represented individuals and companies in civil and criminal tax matters before the agency and against it in court. He was confirmed by the Senate as IRS commissioner two years ago over Democrats' objections.

At his confirmation hearing, Rettig pledged that upgrading the agency's infrastructure and technology would be among his top priorities. And he defended Trump's decision to break with tradition by refusing to release his tax filings during the 2016 presidential campaign.

"Would any experienced tax lawyer representing Trump in an IRS audit advise him to publicly release his tax returns during the audit?" Rettig asked in an opinion piece during the 2016 campaign.

He answered his own question: "Absolutely not."

World reacts with surprise, worry to 1st Biden-Trump debate

By JAMEY KEATEN and ROD MCGUIRK Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Head-scratching perplexity about U.S. democracy in Australia and Denmark. Disdain for "chaos" and "insults" between America's presidential contenders in a Chinese Communist Party tabloid. A European market watcher's warning of a "credibility deficit" in U.S. politics amid fears that a long tradition of peaceful, amicable transfer of power could be in jeopardy.

Many across the world looked on largely aghast as the first debate between President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden devolved into a verbal slugfest short on substance but heavy with implications for America's international image.

Emotions and adjectives ran the gamut but few observers appeared to come away thinking that the last remaining superpower could rise above its bitter partisan rancor as the election looms barely a month away.

"If last night's presidential debate was supposed to inform and educate, all it did was merely confirm the credibility deficit in U.S. politics, as President Trump, and Democrat nominee Joe Biden, engaged in what can only be described as a fact-free, name-calling contest," wrote Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets UK.

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While many in Europe fondly recalled the more even-keeled America of yesteryear, others in Asia were monitoring the markets — which were little changed mostly. Share prices slipped further in Japan and the dollar weakened against the Japanese yen and the euro. European bourses showed few initial tremors.

But one major worry to emerge from the debate was whether the election results might be challenged or delayed, in part because Trump raised concerns about ballots and possible vote-rigging that his critics say are a ploy to tamp down turnout or scare people away from the polls.

"A highly polarized and possibly legally contested U.S. election is just around the corner," said Stephen Innes of AxiCorp, a foreign exchange trading services provider. "With mail-in votes likely to be too high (and potentially questioned), there is a chance that we still will not know the result by Inauguration Day, with constitutional chaos ensuing."

Europe and Africa woke up to reports about the cacophonous showdown overnight.

"The comments I've seen from various European press (outlets) is basically: 'I'm happy I'm not an American voter this year.' It's just a mess," said Jussi Hanhimaki, a Finnish-Swiss professor of International History at the Graduate Institute in Geneva.

"That's all extremely disturbing for many Europeans, who generally would think the United States would be a symbol of democracy -- that's been the oldest democracy in the world — that has this long, long tradition of, yes, very acrimonious debate, but there's always been a winner and a peaceful transfer of power," he said.

Kenyan commentator Patrick Gathara quipped on Twitter: "This debate would be sheer comedy if it wasn't such a pitiful and tragic advertisement for U.S. dysfunction."

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen wrote on Facebook: "An election debate in the States last night, where interruptions and quarrels were allowed to fill up way too much. Fortunately, this is not the case in Denmark. And I never hope it will be like that. The harsh words polarize and split."

Amanda Wishworth, a lawmaker in Australia's center-left Labor Party, said: "A lot of people would be scratching their heads, especially here from Australia, where, believe it or not, our politics is a little bit more gentle than the U.S. of A."

Other government leaders tuned in — but kept their distance.

Steffen Seibert, German Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman, said she was "informed about what took place last night," but he declined to comment.

"We don't want to comment on this, don't want to provide an assessment, because it will be immediately perceived as an attempt to interfere," said Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin. "The Russian Federation has never interfered in the internal affairs of the United States and never will."

Walter Veltroni, a columnist for Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera and a former center-left mayor of Rome, said he had seen all the U.S. TV debates since Kennedy vs. Nixon in 1960, but "I have never witnessed a spectacle similar to the one last night."

He said the debate showed how there are two Americas that appear irreconcilable.

"The impression is that of a country in stalemate, paralyzed by politics and tones that are foreign to its tradition," Veltroni said.

Hu Xijin, editor of China's nationalistic Communist Party tabloid Global Times, wrote in the paper's microblog that the "chaos, interruptions, personal attacks and insults" on display were a reflection of America's "overarching division, anxiety and the accelerating erosion of the system's original advantages."

"I used to admire this kind of televised debate in American politics, but I have much more mixed feelings when (I) watch it again now," wrote Hu, who personally and through his paper routinely attacks American policies.

The editor-at-large of The Australian newspaper, Paul Kelly, described the debate as a "spiteful, chaotic, abusive, often out-of-control brawling encounter with both candidates revealing their contempt for each other."

"America faces a dangerous several weeks," he said.

Leslie Vinjamuri, director of the U.S. and the Americas program at the London think tank Chatham

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House, said many European observers already had “very low” expectations of Trump, but even so the debate was jarring.

“There’s still just a level of disbelief, just shock, frankly,” that the president and former vice president “were talking over each other, talking over the moderator, in President Trump’s case, telling each other off, going off-topic, off-script,” Vinjamuri said. “So I think it was something extraordinarily upsetting because people want to be able to look to America to lead and to guide and to role model.”

Foreign policy issues were largely absent from the debate, although Trump slung accusations that China had paid Biden’s son Hunter for consulting work and Biden attacked Trump’s trade deals with China for failing to deliver benefits.

Trump also repeatedly blamed China for the coronavirus pandemic that has killed more than 1 million people globally and ravaged economies around the world.

In the Mideast, the largely domestic debate drew raised eyebrows when Biden at one point said “inshallah” as Trump hedged on saying when he would release his tax returns. “Inshallah” in Arabic means “God willing.” It also can be used in a way to suggest something won’t ever happen.

Al-Arabiya, a Saudi-owned satellite channel based in Dubai, and The National, a state-linked newspaper in Abu Dhabi, both published articles noting Biden’s use of the word.

A Emirati political scientist, Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, wrote on Twitter that he saw the debate as a “tumultuous verbal battle.”

“How did America reach this level of political decline?” he wrote.

McGuirk reported from Sydney, Australia. Cara Anna in Johannesburg; Karl Ritter in Rome; Jan M. Olsen in Copenhagen, Denmark; Sylvia Hui in London; and Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

Vision 2020: How does early voting work in the US election?

By The Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — What states vote early and when are these votes counted?

All states allow some form of early voting, be it by casting votes in person at polling places, voting by mail, or both. But each state has its own rules and timelines on when this occurs. Some started in September. Some don’t start until mid-October, or even closer to Election Day on Nov. 3.

Just as there are 50 different timelines for early voting, there are 50 different ones for how the votes are counted. Some states allow the “processing” of mail-in ballots — the often time-consuming flattening and opening of envelopes, verifying signatures and sorting ballots into the correct piles for tabulation — to begin as many as three weeks before Election Day. Some only allow it to begin on Election Day itself, which can lead to a chaotic and lengthy count.

That’s the process in several key swing states. Democrats fear this will delay the count of mail-in ballots, expected to heavily favor Democrats, and give President Donald Trump a phony early lead that he could seize on to declare the election over.

Vision 2020 is a new series from the AP dedicated to answering commonly asked questions from our audience about the 2020 U.S. presidential election. Submit your questions at: Vision2020@AP.org. AP’s Advance Voting guide brings you the facts about voting early, by mail or absentee from each state: <https://interactives.ap.org/advance-voting-2020/>

AP FACT CHECK: False claims swamp first Trump-Biden debate

By CALVIN WOODWARD and HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) —

President Donald Trump unleashed a torrent of fabrications and fear-mongering in a belligerent debate

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with Joe Biden, at one point claiming the U.S. death toll would have been 10 times higher under the Democrat because he wanted open borders in the pandemic. Biden preached no such thing.

Trump barreled into the debate Tuesday night as unconstrained by the facts as at his rallies, but this time having his campaign opponent and even the Fox News moderator, Chris Wallace, calling him out in real time, or trying. Biden stumbled on the record at times as the angry words flew from both men on the Cleveland stage.

In just one detour from reality, Trump asserted that the U.S. armed forces will be delivering hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 vaccine doses to the public as soon as a vaccine is available. The Pentagon says there is no such plan for national vaccine distribution by military personnel.

A look at how some of the candidates' statements from Cleveland stack up with the facts in the first of three scheduled presidential debates for the Nov. 3 election:

VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

TRUMP: "Well, we're going to deliver it right away. We have the military all set up. Logistically, they're all set up. We have our military that delivers soldiers and they can do 200,000 a day. They're going to be delivering ... it's all set up."

THE FACTS: This is not true.

The Pentagon says in a statement that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is responsible for executing the plan to distribute vaccines to the public when the time comes. The Defense Department is helping in the planning but, with perhaps some exceptions in remote areas, is not going to be delivering, as Trump claimed.

"Our best military assessment is that there is sufficient U.S. commercial transportation capacity to fully support vaccine distribution," the department's statement says. "There should be no need for a large commitment of DOD units or personnel to support the nationwide distribution of vaccines. Any DOD required support would be by exception."

VIRUS DEATH TOLL

TRUMP, addressing Biden on U.S. deaths from COVID-19: "If you were here, it wouldn't be 200,000 people, it would be 2 million people. You didn't want me to ban China, which was heavily infected. ... If we would have listened to you, the country would have been left wide open."

THE FACTS: The audacious claim that Biden as president would have seen 2 million deaths rests on a false accusation. Biden never came out against Trump's decision to restrict travel from China. Biden was slow in staking a position on the matter but when he did, he supported the restrictions. Biden never counseled leaving the country "wide open" in the face of the pandemic.

Trump repeatedly, and falsely, claims to have banned travel from China. He restricted it.

The U.S. restrictions that took effect Feb. 2 continued to allow travel to the U.S. from the Chinese territories of Hong Kong and Macao. The Associated Press reported that more than 8,000 Chinese and foreign nationals based in the two locales entered the U.S. in the first three months after the travel restrictions were imposed.

Additionally, more than 27,000 Americans returned from mainland China in the first month after the restrictions took effect. U.S. officials lost track of more than 1,600 of them who were supposed to be monitored for virus exposure.

Dozens of countries took similar steps to control travel from hot spots before or around the same time the U.S. did.

PROTESTS

TRUMP: "The (Portland, Oregon) sheriff just came out today and he said I support President Trump."

THE FACTS: That is false. The sheriff of Multnomah County, Oregon — where Portland is located — said he does not support Trump.

The sheriff, Mike Reese, tweeted, "As the Multnomah County Sheriff I have never supported Donald

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Trump and will never support him.”

Portland has been a flashpoint in the debate over racial injustice protests in the U.S. Police and federal agents have repeatedly clashed with demonstrators gathered outside the downtown federal courthouse and police buildings. Some protesters have thrown bricks, rocks and other projectiles at officers. Police and federal agents responded by firing tear gas, rubber bullets and other non-lethal ammunition to disperse the crowds.

BIDEN: “There was a peaceful protest in front of the White House. What did he do? He came out of his bunker, had the military do tear gas.”

THE FACTS: It was law enforcement, not the military, that used chemical irritants to forcefully remove peaceful protesters from Lafayette Square outside the White House on June 1.

And there is no evidence Trump was inside a bunker in the White House as that happened. Secret Service agents had rushed Trump to a White House bunker days earlier as hundreds of protesters gathered outside the executive mansion, some of them throwing rocks and tugging at police barricades.

HEALTH CARE

TRUMP: “Drug prices will be coming down 80 or 90%.”

THE FACTS: That’s a promise, not a reality, and it’s a big stretch.

Trump has been unable to get legislation to lower drug prices through Congress. Major regulatory actions from his administration are still in the works, and are likely to be challenged in court.

There’s no plan on the horizon that would lower drug prices as dramatically as Trump claims.

Prescription drug price inflation has been low and slow during the Trump years, but it hasn’t made a U-turn and sped off in the other direction. Prices have seesawed from year to year.

Looking back at the totality of Trump’s term, from January 2017, when he was inaugurated, to the latest data from August 2020, drug prices went up 3.6%, according to an analysis by economist Paul Hughes-Cromwick of Altarum, a nonprofit research and consulting organization.

Hughes-Cromwick looked at figures from the government’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, which measures prices for a set of prescription medicines, including generics and branded drugs.

When comparing prices in 2019 with a year earlier, there indeed was a decline. Prices dropped by 0.2% in 2019, a turnabout not seen since the 1970s. But that’s nowhere near close to 80% or 90%.

From August of last year to this August, prices rose by 1.4%.

JUDGES

TRUMP, criticizing Barack Obama and Biden for leaving federal judicial vacancies unfilled before they left office in January 2017: “When you leave office you don’t leave any judges. You just don’t do that. They left 128 openings. And if I were a member of his party ... I’d say if you left us 128 openings, you can’t be a good president, you can’t be a good vice president.”

THE FACTS: That’s misleading. Trump does have a stronger record than Obama in picking federal judges, but it isn’t due to complacency from the Obama administration. Instead, unprecedented lack of action by the Republican-controlled Senate on Obama’s judicial nominees in his last two years in office left Trump more vacancies to fill.

Of the 71 people whom Obama nominated to the district courts and courts of appeals in 2015 and 2016, only 20 were voted on and confirmed, said Russell Wheeler, an expert on judicial nominees at the Brookings Institution. Trump entered office in January 2017 with more than 100 vacancies on the federal bench, about double the number Obama had in 2009.

Trump has been aided by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., who has pushed through Trump’s nominations of appeals court judges in particular, as well as two Supreme Court justices. McConnell has pledged to have a Senate vote on Trump’s third nominee to the high court, Amy Coney Barrett, while Democrats say the seat should be filled by the winner of the election.

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VIRUS RESPONSE

TRUMP: Dr. Anthony Fauci "said very strongly, 'masks are not good.' Then he changed his mind, he said, 'masks, good.'"

THE FACTS: He is skirting crucial context. Trump is telling the story in a way that leaves out key lessons learned as the coronavirus pandemic unfolded, raising doubts about the credibility of public health advice.

Early on in the outbreak, a number of public health officials urged everyday people not to use masks, fearing a run on already short supplies of personal protective equipment needed by doctors and nurses in hospitals.

But that changed as the highly contagious nature of the coronavirus became clear, as well as the fact that it can be spread by tiny droplets breathed into the air by people who may not display any symptoms.

Fauci of the National Institutes of Health, along with Dr. Robert Redfield of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Stephen Hahn of the Food and Drug Administration and Dr. Deborah Birx of the White House coronavirus task force, all agree on the importance of wearing masks and practicing social distancing. Redfield has repeatedly said it could be as effective as a vaccine if people took that advice to heart.

TRUMP, on coronavirus and his campaign rallies: "So far we have had no problem whatsoever. It's outside, that's a big difference according to the experts. We have tremendous crowds."

THE FACTS: That's not correct.

Trump held an indoor rally in Tulsa in late June, drawing both thousands of participants and large protests.

The Tulsa City-County Health Department director said the rally "likely contributed" to a dramatic surge in new coronavirus cases there. By the first week of July, Tulsa County was confirming more than 200 new daily cases, setting record highs. That's more than twice the number the week before the rally.

TRUMP, addressing Biden: "You didn't do very well on the swine flu. H1N1. You were a disaster."

THE FACTS: Trump frequently distorts what happened in the pandemic of 2009, which killed far fewer people in the United States than the coronavirus is killing now. For starters, Biden as vice president wasn't running the federal response. And that response was faster out of the gate than when COVID-19 came to the U.S.

Then, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's flu surveillance network sounded the alarm after two children in California became the first people diagnosed with the new flu strain in this country.

About two weeks later, the Obama administration declared a public health emergency against H1N1, also known as the swine flu, and the CDC began releasing anti-flu drugs from the national stockpile to help hospitals get ready. In contrast, Trump declared a state of emergency in early March, seven weeks after the first U.S. case of COVID-19 was announced, and the country's health system struggled for months with shortages of critical supplies and testing.

More than 200,000 people have died from COVID-19 in the U.S. The CDC puts the U.S. death toll from the 2009-2010 H1N1 pandemic at about 12,500.

ECONOMY

BIDEN: Trump will be the "first (president) in American history" to lose jobs during his presidency.

THE FACTS: No, if Trump loses reelection, he would not be the first president in U.S. history to have lost jobs. That happened under Herbert Hoover, the president who lost the 1932 election to Franklin Roosevelt as the Great Depression caused massive job losses.

Official jobs records only go back to 1939 and, in that period, no president has ended his term with fewer jobs than when he began. Trump appears to be on track to have lost jobs during his first term, which would make him the first to do so since Hoover.

VOTING

TRUMP, on the prospect of mass fraud in the vote-by-mail process: "It's a rigged election."

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THE FACTS: He is exaggerating threats. Trump's claim is part of a months-long effort to sow doubt about the integrity of the election before it's even arrived and to preemptively call into question the results.

Experts have repeatedly said there are no signs of widespread fraud in mail balloting, as have the five states that relied exclusively on that system for voting even before the coronavirus pandemic. Trump's own FBI director, Chris Wray, said at a congressional hearing just last week that the bureau has not historically seen "any kind of coordinated national voter fraud effort in a major election, whether it's by mail or otherwise."

Wray did acknowledge voter fraud at the local level "from time to time," but even there, Trump appeared to paint an overly dire portrait of the reality and he misstated the facts of one particular case that received substantial attention last week following an unusual Justice Department announcement.

Trump said nine military ballots found discarded in a wastebasket in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, were all marked for him. Though that's consistent with an initial statement the Justice Department made, officials later revised it to say seven of the nine ballots had Trump's name.

FOOTBALL

TRUMP: "I'm the one who brought back football. By the way, I brought back Big Ten football. It was me and I'm very happy to do it."

THE FACTS: Better check the tape. While Trump had called for the Big Ten conference to hold its 2020 football season, he wasn't the only one. Fans, students, athletes and college towns had also urged the conference to resume play.

When the Big Ten announced earlier this month that it reversed an earlier decision to cancel the season because of COVID-19, Trump tweeted his thanks: "It is my great honor to have helped!!!"

The conference includes several large universities in states that could prove pivotal in the election, including Pennsylvania, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin.

SUPREME COURT

BIDEN, on Supreme Court nominee Barrett: "She thinks that the Affordable Care Act is not constitutional."

THE FACTS: That's not right.

Biden is talking about Trump's pick to replace the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Barrett has been critical of the Obama-era law and the court decisions that have upheld it, but she has never said it's not constitutional. The Supreme Court will hear arguments in the case Nov. 10, and the Trump administration is asking the high court to rule the law unconstitutional.

DELAWARE STATE

TRUMP: "You said you went to Delaware State, but you forgot the name of your college. You didn't go to Delaware State. ... There's nothing smart about you, Joe."

THE FACTS: Trump is quoting Biden out of context. The former vice president, a graduate of the University of Delaware, did not say he attended Delaware State University but was making a broader point about his longstanding ties to the Black community.

Trump is referring to remarks Biden often says on the campaign, typically when speaking to Black audiences, that he "goes way back with HBCUs," or historically Black universities and colleges. Biden has spoken many times over the years at Delaware State, a public HBCU in his home state, and the school says that's where he first announced his bid for the Senate – his political start.

"I got started out of an HBCU, Delaware State — now, I don't want to hear anything negative about Delaware State," Biden told a town hall in Florence, South Carolina, in October 2019. "They're my folks."

Biden often touts his deep political ties to the Black community, occasionally saying he "grew up politically" or "got started politically" in the Black church. In front of some audiences, he's omitted the word "politically," but still with a clear context about his larger point. The statements are all part of a standard section of his stump speech noting that Delaware has "the eighth largest Black population by percentage."

A spokesman for Delaware State University, Carlos Holmes, has said it took Biden's comments to refer

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to his political start. Holmes said Biden was referring to the support he received from the school when he announced his bid for the U.S. Senate on the school's campus in 1972.

Biden's broader point is to push back on the idea that he's a Johnny-come-lately with the Black community or that his political connections there are owed only to being Obama's vice president.

CRIME

BIDEN: "The fact of the matter is violent crime went down 17%, 15%, in our administration."

THE FACTS: That's overstating it.

Overall, the number of violent crimes fell roughly 10% from 2008, the year before Biden took office as vice president, to 2016, his last full year in the office, according to data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting program.

But the number of violent crimes was spiking again during Obama and Biden's final two years in office, increasing by 8% from 2014 to 2016.

More people were slain across the U.S. in 2016, for example, than at any other point under the Obama administration.

TRUMP: "If you look at what's going on in Chicago, where 53 people were shot and eight died. If you look at New York where it's going up like nobody's ever seen anything ... the numbers are going up 100, 150, 200%, crime, it's crazy what's going on."

THE FACTS: Not quite. The statistics in Chicago are true, but those numbers are only a small snapshot of crime in the city and the United States, and his strategy is highlighting how data can be easily molded to suit the moment. As for New York, Trump may have been talking about shootings. They are up in New York by about 93% so far this year, but overall crime is down about 1.5%. Murders are up 38%, but there were 327 killings compared with 236, still low compared with years past. For example, compared with a decade ago, crime is down 10%.

An FBI report released Monday for 2019 crime data found that violent crime has decreased over the past three years.

Associated Press writers Robert Burns, Matthew Daly, Michelle R. Smith, Josh Boak, Colleen Long, Ellen Knickmeyer, Mark Sherman, Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Bill Barrow, David Klepper, Amanda Seitz, Michael Balsamo and Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

EDITOR'S NOTE — A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

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As Brazil's wetlands burned, government did little to help

By TATIANA POLLASTRI and DAVID BILLER Associated Press

PORTO JOFRE, Brazil (AP) — After hours navigating Brazil's Pantanal wetlands in search of jaguars earlier this month, Daniel Moura beached his boat to survey the fire damage. In every direction, he saw only devastation. No wildlife, and no support from federal authorities.

"We used to see jaguars here all the time; I once saw 16 jaguars in a single day," Moura, a guide who owns an eco-tourism outfit, said on the riverbank in the Encontro das Aguas state park, which this year saw 84% of its vegetation destroyed.

"Where are all those animals now?"

The world's largest tropical wetlands, the Pantanal is popular for viewing the furtive felines, along with caiman, capybara and more. This year it is exceptionally dry and burning at a record rate. The fires have been so intense that at one point smoke reached Sao Paulo, 900 miles away.

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President Jair Bolsonaro's government says it has mobilized hundreds of federal agents and military service members to douse the flames. However, all along the only highway through the northern Pantanal, dozens of people — firefighters, ranchers, tour guides and veterinarians — told The Associated Press the government has exaggerated its response and there are few federal boots on the ground.

What little concrete assistance has come mostly from planes dropping water from above, locals said, but that only happened after great delay and mainly targeted private ranches rather than protected areas. Making matters worse, several aircraft remained grounded at the start of the inferno.

"I can't see much federal help; it is basically us here," said Felipe Augusto Dias, executive director of SOS Pantanal, an environmental group.

Both sides of the Trans-Pantanal highway — an area that should feature pools of water, even in its dry season — were parched. As of Sunday, nearly a quarter of the Pantanal — an area more than the size of Maryland — had been consumed by fire, according to satellite imagery from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Pantanal vegetation can regenerate quickly with rain, but the wildlife that survive are left stranded without habitat.

Along that scorched landscape were injured and disoriented animals, plus charred corpses of others. On the river, Moura motored past a dead 6-foot-long anaconda, tangled on a fallen tree branch. A fawn, lost and alone amid burned shrubs, eyed the boat. The sky was an apocalyptic orange.

Pantanal fires began burning wildly in July and continued into September. The number of fires so far this year — more than 17,000 — exceeds the 12-month totals for every year on record, stretching back to 1998, and is triple the annual average, according to data from the government's space agency, which uses satellites to count the blazes.

Fires, whether intentionally set or the result of lightning strikes, can easily spiral out of control in the dry season. A Federal Police investigation indicates fires to clear pastures at four ranches spread across 25,000 hectares (almost 100 square miles), detective Alan Givigi said. The wildfire burned preservation areas and a national park.

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly last week, Bolsonaro said Brazil has been targeted by a disinformation campaign, and compared the Pantanal's vulnerability to that of California — without noting that this year's Pantanal wildfires have destroyed an area more than twice the size of California's blazes.

"Large fires are the inevitable consequences of high local temperature in addition to the accumulation of decomposing organic matter," he said in his pre-recorded message.

With government agents largely absent, firefighters and volunteers carved firebreaks and used buckets and hoses to battle walls of flames. Along a dirt road off the Trans-Pantanal, a man carrying a basin of water ran from his improvised water truck to a stretch of burning vegetation. It had little effect as wind redirected the flames toward a tree, causing it to explode as though it had been soaked with gasoline.

"The wind changed direction," Divino Humberto said dejectedly. "It (the fire) is going into the forest."

Brazil's Defense Ministry told the AP that numbers vary day to day, but on Sept. 14, the navy had 172 service members in the Pantanal in Mato Grosso, along with 139 federal agents and 11 aircraft. That same day, the Mato Grosso state firefighters corps said the count of navy and agents was only 60, and there was just one plane.

During the five days AP journalists traveled the Pantanal this month, they didn't see a single member of Brazil's armed forces.

The Defense Ministry didn't respond to AP questions about the disparity between its figures and those from the firefighters.

The Chico Mendes Institute, which administers federal parks for the Environment Ministry, hired five planes to drop water in Mato Grosso, a ministry statement said.

But pilots complained they were denied permission to fly when they arrived in mid-August, when the fires had already been burning for weeks, despite sufficient visibility to do so.

"The pilots said it clearly: If those five planes had fought throughout that week, there wouldn't have been a big fire," said Mario Friedlander, an environmentalist and photographer who has worked in the region for

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40 years and came to volunteer, told the AP. "The fire would have been drastically controlled."

One pilot said the mission was delayed because those in charge wanted to wait for the environment minister to arrive. But as panic set in, he said the planes were ordered airborne to put out fires burning bridges on the Trans-Pantanal, then told to stand down again.

Only after Environment Minister Ricardo Salles came on Aug. 18 did flights begin with some regularity, said the pilot, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of losing his job.

The Environment Ministry declined to respond to repeated requests for comment. However, a source at the Chico Mendes Institute, who was involved in the firefighting strategy, said dropping water from planes only helps if there is ground support, which there sometimes wasn't. Otherwise flying can be ineffective, said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the person wasn't authorized to speak publicly.

Meanwhile, as fires raged, animals were injured, displaced or perished. Mato Grosso' firefighters and environment secretariat created a center for rescued animals.

"We try to have hope to rescue the few animals we can," veterinarian Karen Ribeiro said after treating the injured wing of a jabiru — a massive bird that is a symbol of the Pantanal.

Dias, the SOS Pantanal director, also said volunteers have begun focusing less on fighting fires than rescuing animals, leaving fruit in places where lost creatures might find it.

After eight hours of searching, Moura, the guide, finally found a jaguar. It was limping; likely it had burned its paws, he said. Eventually it lay down on a spot of partially burned vegetation.

Earlier this month, Brazil's government approved 13.9 million reais (about \$2.5 million) to fight the fires, though most of the money is contingent on Mato Grosso getting approval for projects before a 90-day deadline. One week ago it dispatched 43 national guard firefighters to the region.

The fresh funds and troops came almost two months after the Pantanal blazes began and shortly before rains are anticipated.

Moura said he doubts the money will come through in time to make any difference whatsoever.

"Unfortunately, that is the situation," Moura said. "They act like they're putting out the fires, and we act like we believe it."

Billier contributed from Rio de Janeiro. Mauricio Savarese contributed from Sao Paulo.

Here's the reality behind Trump's claims about mail voting

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

President Donald Trump continued his assault on the integrity of the U.S. elections during the first presidential debate Tuesday, spreading falsehoods about the security of voting and misrepresenting issues with mail ballots.

In the final segment of the contentious debate between Trump and Democrat Joe Biden, Trump launched into an extended argument against mail voting, claiming without evidence that it is ripe for fraud and suggesting mail ballots may be "manipulated."

"This is going to be a fraud like you've never seen," the president said of the massive shift to mail voting prompted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Trump's riff was laden with misstatements and inaccuracies. Mail voting has proved to be safe and secure in the five states that already use it broadly. And while some irregularities and errors have occurred in the early vote, Trump on Tuesday mischaracterized those incidents.

His comments come as his reelection campaign and the Republican Party have begun challenging the way those ballots are being processed and preparing for broad legal battles after Election Day.

A look at Trump's claims and the facts.

—Trump accused Philadelphia election officials of inappropriately keeping his campaign's poll monitors from observing voters filling out mail ballots at a voting center Tuesday. He was repeating an accusation he and his son had made earlier this week — and election officials have disputed. Election lawyers note Trump campaign's watchers had no legal right under state law to observe citizens filling out mail ballots.

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—Trump cited a case of military ballots marked for him being thrown in the trash as evidence of a possible plot to steal the election. But he didn't mention the strange details of the case. County election officials say that the seven ballots, along with two unopened ones, were accidentally tossed in an elections office in a Republican-controlled county by a single contract worker and that authorities were swiftly called.

—Trump pointed to problems that have arisen as states rush to adapt to mail balloting — mainly in his native New York, where elections officials sent error-riddled mail ballots this week and a slow count left the outcome of multiple congressional primaries up in the air in June. But he falsely claimed that the outcome of one of those races, the primary won by Democratic Rep. Carolyn Mahoney, was fraudulent.

—Trump claimed a West Virginia mail worker was "selling ballots." That drew a clarification from West Virginia's Republican secretary of state, Mac Warner, who noted the case involved a postal worker altering eight absentee ballot applications during the state's primary election earlier this year. Five ballot requests had party affiliations changed from Democrat to Republican. On the other three requests, the voters' GOP party affiliation was not changed but the postal worker circled the word "Republican" in a different color ink than was used on the forms. The carrier pleaded guilty to election fraud and injury to the mail in July.

—Voter fraud is rare in the United States. An analysis by the Brennan Center for Justice found Americans were more likely to be struck by lightning than to commit voter fraud.

Still, Trump continued to sow distrust and again refused to commit to avoid declaring victory if the count goes past Election Day, as expected. Last week his refusal during a news conference to commit to a peaceful transition alarmed many.

Biden tried to lower the temperature about accepting the voters' will. "I will accept it, and he will, too. You know why?" Biden said. "Because once the winner is declared once all the ballots are counted, that'll be the end of it. And that's fine."

Associated Press writer Anthony Izaguirre in Lindenhurst, New York, contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to reflect that the organization that conducted the voter fraud study is the Brennan Center for Justice, not the Brennan Institute for Justice.

Cardinal Pell returns to Vatican mired in financial scandal

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Cardinal George Pell, who left the Vatican in 2017 to face child sexual abuse charges in Australia, returned to Rome on Wednesday to find a Holy See mired in the type of corruption scandal he worked to expose and clean up.

The 79-year-old Pell arrived at Rome's Leonardo da Vinci airport on a flight from Sydney wearing a blue surgical mask. He waved briefly to reporters before getting into a waiting car without making any comments.

The trip is his first back to Rome after he took a leave of absence as Pope Francis' finance czar in 2017 to face historic sexual abuse charges stemming from his time as the archbishop of Melbourne. After he was absolved by Australia's High Court in April, Pell said he wanted to return to Rome to clean out his Vatican apartment, but intended to make Sydney his home.

It wasn't immediately clear how long Pell would remain in the Vatican or what his agenda might involve. The Vatican didn't immediately say if he would meet with Francis. The pope never turned on Pell throughout the Australian court proceedings, keeping his job vacant for two years so as to not prejudge the outcome.

Pell arrived the same day that European anti-money laundering evaluators began a periodic visit to the Vatican. They, too, found a mounting financial scandal in the tiny city-state that already has cost a half-dozen people their jobs, including one of the Holy See's most powerful cardinals, Angelo Becciu.

Pell and Becciu had long clashed over the Australian's efforts to bring greater transparency and accountability to the Vatican's balance sheets.

The Council of Europe's Moneyval team will be checking the Vatican's compliance with international norms to fight money laundering and terror financing.

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The Vatican submitted to the Moneyval evaluation process after it signed onto the 2009 EU Monetary Convention and in a bid to shed its image as a financially shady offshore tax haven whose bank has long been embroiled in scandal.

Moneyval has faulted Vatican prosecutors in the past for failing to prosecute many cases despite receiving dozens of suspicious transaction reports from the Vatican's financial watchdog.

Vatican prosecutors did last year open a corruption investigation into the Holy See's investment in a London real estate venture, but to date no one has been indicted.

The Vatican's secretariat of state has sunk more than 350 million euros (nearly \$400 million) into the London venture, much of it donations from the faithful. Tens of millions were paid in fees to Italian businessmen who acted as middlemen in the real estate deal.

Last week, Pope Francis fired Becciu, the cardinal who helped orchestrate the original deal. Becciu was the "substitute," or No. 2 in the Vatican secretariat of state from 2011 to 2018, when Francis made him a cardinal and named him prefect of the Vatican's saint-making office.

Becciu has defended the London investment as sound and has denied any wrongdoing in it. He says Francis actually cited an unrelated issue in firing him: allegations that he used 100,000 euros (\$117,000) in Holy See money to make a donation to a charity controlled by his brother.

Becciu and his family have denied wrongdoing.

Pell's brusque style and aggressive clean-up effort ruffled many feathers within the Vatican old guard, Becciu's especially. The Australian congratulated Francis after Becciu was sacked.

"I hope the cleaning of the stables continues in both the Vatican and Victoria," Pell said in a statement last week, referring to his home state of Victoria, where he was initially convicted.

Pell served 13 months in prison before Australia's High Court acquitted him in April of molesting two choir boys in the late 1990s when he was archbishop of Melbourne.

In his first television interview after his release, Pell linked his fight against Vatican corruption with his prosecution in Australia.

AP visual journalist Luigi Navarro contributed.

Cold weather means new challenges for struggling restaurants

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

U.S. restaurants are moving warily into fall, hoping their slow recovery persists despite the new challenge of chilly weather and a pandemic that's expected to claim even more lives.

New York opens indoor dining on Wednesday, restricting capacity to 25%. San Francisco may do the same as early as this week. Chicago is raising its indoor capacity from 25% to 40% on Thursday, but says restaurants still can't seat more than 50 people in one room.

It's a dose of reality for an industry that was able to stem at least some of its losses by pivoting to outdoor dining this summer, setting up tables and chairs on sidewalks and parking lots and offering some semblance of normalcy.

But as temperatures start to slide across the country, restaurants will have to coax patrons to come back inside, and it's anyone's guess how many actually will. That could spell trouble for an industry that has already lost nearly 100,000 U.S. restaurants — or 1 in 6 — since the start of the pandemic, according to the National Restaurant Association. The future remains uncertain for thousands more.

"We're all a little apprehensive, but that was the case when we started outdoor dining, too," said Samantha DiStefano, owner of Mama Fox, a restaurant and bar in Brooklyn.

Mama Fox can only seat 18 people inside at 25% capacity, so DiStefano will still rely heavily on her 14 outdoor tables. She thinks many New York restaurants won't open indoor dining until the limit reaches 50% because they can't cover their costs at 25%.

In the meantime, Mama Fox and others are trying to figure out how to extend the outdoor dining season using space heaters, tents, temporary igloos and even blankets. Heat lamps are already in short supply.

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Restaurants are also promoting delivery and carryout. Nearly 70% of 3,500 restaurants surveyed in September by the National Restaurant Association said they added curbside takeout during the pandemic; 54% added delivery.

Philip Moseley, co-owner of Blue Oak BBQ in New Orleans, said carryout demand has risen from 10% of sales before the pandemic to 50% now.

Blue Oak BBQ's dining room is open at half capacity, or about 20 people. But a tent in the parking lot seats 80. That's enough traffic that the restaurant was able to hire back all 50 employees.

"You do anything you have to do to make the food work, to make the experience work, to get butts in seats," Moseley said.

Although fall in New Orleans is ideal for outdoor dining, tourists are scarce and the usual round of festivals won't happen this year.

"Every day has a new set of struggles," co-owner Ronnie Evans said.

Seventy percent of U.S. restaurants are independent, but chains are hurting too. NPC International, the largest franchisee of both Pizza Hut and Wendy's, filed for bankruptcy protection in July.

Steve Nikolakakos closed one of his three Manhattan restaurants because his landlord wouldn't give him a break on the rent. Another, Gracie's Diner, closed for two months in March after two employees died of the coronavirus.

Even with outdoor seating, the diner is only making 65% of what it did before the pandemic, he said. Still, that's better than May, when he was doing only 30% of his usual business.

"This is the worst thing I have ever seen," said Nikolakakos, a 40-year veteran of the industry.

Il Carino, a tiny Italian restaurant in Manhattan, is reopening its dining room with just 12 seats. Outdoor seating has recaptured only about 30% of the restaurant's business, and it has had to lay off 13 workers, said Giolio Alvarez, the restaurant's manager.

Alvarez said customers are asking for heat lamps, but the restaurant doesn't know if they're worth the extra money. And increasing menu prices is off the table.

"How are we going to increase prices?" he said. "Everyone is broke."

Monthly U.S. restaurant sales hit their lowest point in April, when they plunged to \$30 billion, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That was less than half the amount restaurants made a year earlier. Sales steadily improved as lockdowns ended, carryout demand picked up and states allowed to-go alcohol. U.S. restaurant sales hit \$55 billion in August, but that's still \$10 billion less than last year.

Some waiters and kitchen staff have gone back to work. Restaurant employment rose by 3.6 million people over the four months ending in August, according to government data. Still, there were 2.5 million fewer U.S. restaurant workers in August compared to February. September's unemployment numbers are due out Friday.

Mario Sandoval, an unemployed server from Las Vegas, appeared before a U.S. House committee last week to urge lawmakers to restart monthly stimulus checks. He also wants a guarantee that he can return to his job when his restaurant reopens.

"I'm worried about the economy crashing again," he said.

On Wednesday, some restaurant workers in Washington planned to strike, saying they can't survive on subminimum wages and tips that are a fraction of what they used to be because of capacity limits. The workers, backed by the group One Fair Wage, want lawmakers to guarantee minimum wages for restaurant workers.

But even if restaurants rehire staff, reopen dining rooms or shell out \$1,000 for a fiberglass igloo, there's no guarantee customers will return.

Nancy Chapman used to eat out often, at restaurants near her College Grove, Tennessee, home and on the road when she traveled to horse shows. But Chapman, 70, who recently retired from her CPA and business management practice, said she isn't going to restaurants until she is satisfied there is a better understanding of COVID-19 and a clear path to its resolution.

Juliana Gonzalez, 31, of Howard Beach, New York, is also trying to stay safe. She limits her contacts to her parents and her boyfriend, and she has walked out of dining rooms in New Jersey when she felt they

were too crowded. But she's also ready for some normalcy, and she's eager for dining rooms to reopen in New York.

"I feel that most restaurants are trying to stay open, so most of them are trying their best to be safe," Gonzalez said.

AP Writers Anne D'Innocenzio and Jim Mustian in New York and Paul Wiseman in Washington contributed to this report.

Timothy Ray Brown, 1st person cured of HIV, dies of cancer

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer

Timothy Ray Brown, who made history as "the Berlin patient," the first person known to be cured of HIV infection, has died. He was 54.

Brown died Tuesday at his home in Palm Springs, California, according to a social media post by his partner, Tim Hoeffgen. The cause was a return of the cancer that originally prompted the unusual bone marrow and stem cell transplants Brown received in 2007 and 2008, which for years seemed to have eliminated both his leukemia and HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

"Timothy symbolized that it is possible, under special circumstances," to rid a patient of HIV -- something that many scientists had doubted could be done, said Dr. Gero Huetter, the Berlin physician who led Brown's historic treatment.

"It's a very sad situation" that cancer returned and took his life, because he still seemed free of HIV, said Huetter, who is now medical director of a stem cell company in Dresden, Germany.

The International AIDS Society, which had Brown speak at an AIDS conference after his successful treatment, issued a statement mourning his death and said he and Huetter are owed "a great deal of gratitude" for promoting research on a cure.

Brown was working in Berlin as a translator when he was diagnosed with HIV and then later, leukemia. Transplants are known to be an effective treatment for the blood cancer, but Huetter wanted to try to cure the HIV infection as well by using a donor with a rare gene mutation that gives natural resistance to the AIDS virus.

Brown's first transplant in 2007 was only partly successful: His HIV seemed to be gone but his leukemia was not. He had a second transplant from the same donor in 2008 and that one seemed to work.

But his cancer returned last year, Brown said in a recent interview with The Associated Press.

"I'm still glad that I had it," he said of his transplant.

"It opened up doors that weren't there before" and inspired scientists to work harder to find a cure, Brown said.

A second man, Adam Castillejo -- called "the London patient" until he revealed his identity earlier this year -- also is believed to have been cured by a transplant similar to Brown's in 2016.

Because such donors are rare and transplants are medically risky, researchers have been testing gene therapy and other ways to try to get a similar effect. At an AIDS conference in July, researchers said they may have achieved a long-term remission in a Brazil man by using a powerful combination of drugs meant to flush dormant HIV from his body.

Mark King, a Baltimore man who writes a blog, said Brown "was just this magnet for people living with HIV, like me," and embodied the hope for a cure.

"He has said from the beginning, 'I don't want to be the only one. They have to keep working on this,'" King said.

Resorts to RV parks: Parents take school year on the road

By LEANNE ITALIE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — In RVs, rental homes and five-star resorts, families untethered by the constraints of physical classrooms for their kids have turned the new school year into an extended summer vacation,

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some lured by the ailing hotel industry catering to parents with remote learners through "roadschooling" amenities.

With the pandemic ongoing, the change of scene for desperate work- and school-from-home families boils down to "risk versus reward," said Amanda Poses, a travel consultant and mother of two teenagers in Austin, Texas. "God willing, we don't have the opportunity to do this again."

Poses and her husband let 13-year-old Addison attend school from Park City, Utah, for three days of a five-night stay in early September. In search of a flight of three hours or less, they rode horses, hiked and zip-lined. They went tubing and enjoyed an alpine slide. And, yes, there was a bit of logging in to school.

"I ended up skipping like half of my classes," Addison smiled. "It was nice. It was like a new start."

Addison's 16-year-old brother sat out the trip. "He was concerned about being distracted," mom said.

One of the places the family stayed, the luxury Montage Deer Valley mountain resort, now offers "Montage Academy" for distance learners, complete with an all-day monitored "study hall" and access to virtual tutors. Other hotels are offering on-site tutors and tickets for "field trips" at area attractions.

Anna Khazenzon, a data and learning scientist for the online study platform Quizlet, said the monotony of weeks stuck at home for school on top of six months of pandemic restrictions risks bringing on burnout for distance learners.

But there are dangers lurking in schoolcations as well.

"Formal schoolcation programs have the potential to create further achievement gaps between high- and low-income families, and more cost-effective versions should be developed, but overall there are many learning benefits for taking children on schoolcations," Khazenzon said. "If students are burnt out and under-stimulated studying at home, then they may not be engaged in class at all."

Jennifer Steele, an associate professor of education at American University, said that if distance learners don't show up for class during schoolcations, "we would expect them to lose some knowledge and skills." In addition, she said, the idea "exposes socioeconomic inequities in terms of people's inability to leave and go to different places."

Since the start of the pandemic, families of means have decamped to second homes or taken long-term rentals in vacation spots around the world. With summer over, schoolcations offer others similar experiences, whether they're roughing it on the road for extended periods or spending on hotels and resorts trying to make up for a summer slump.

For Jayson and Tammy Brown, schoolcations for their three kids have been both ongoing and life-affirming over the past five years. The parents and 11-year-old Jayde, 13-year-old Jay'Elle and 14-year-old Jayson are used to traveling the world with school topics in mind, but the pandemic has them avoiding planes.

Before the pandemic, there was a trip to Israel at a time Jay'Elle was studying the Mideast. Young Jayson made science connections between rock formations there and bioluminescent organisms he saw on another adventure.

In South Africa, the family focused on Nelson Mandela, visiting the former prison and military fort Constitution Hill, which has been turned into a history museum on the country's journey to democracy.

The Browns have taken a few road trips within driving distance of home in Atlanta since March, and have more planned. Tammy, a special education teacher, is handling her students remotely. She and her husband make sure their kids log on to school when attendance is required.

"Oh we stay on them for sure," dad said.

What do the kids think they're gaining?

"I find it much more fun than school, being able to experience firsthand what I'm actually learning in class," Jay'Elle said.

Her brother's favorite part of all that travel? "The food, and the animals," he said.

The siblings are writing a book about their travels.

Terika Haynes, a luxury travel planner in Orlando, Florida, said all of the "school from paradise" packages she's recently spotted guarantee dedicated workspaces for children. Some are adding after-school activities, including sports training for student athletes.

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Packages range from seven to 21 days, she said.

"It's a bit too early to capture numbers since these programs are just starting to roll out, but these programs are designed for those with more of a disposable income who are accustomed to luxury," Haynes said.

In Florida, the Marker Key West Harbor Resort began offering private tutors in mid-September. It has technical support available for kids, and educators to cover local topics, such as the island's literary history and marine life. There have been a handful of reservations so far.

The extras add between \$225 and \$250 to the room rate, which varies depending on the date and room type.

"Family vacations are the new field trip," said Lee Rekas, the resort's director of sales and marketing. "The virtual learning has been tough for a lot of kids. They're stuck on screens all day or sitting there at home, with their parents over their shoulders, doing work sheets."

Stephanie Gunderson, a stay-at-home mom in southeastern Pennsylvania, plans a two-week trip to North Carolina's Outer Banks in October with her four children — ranging from 5 to 13 — and their school-issued iPads. Her husband will stay behind to work.

They'll be staying in a small cabin close to the beach that they rented at a lower, off-season price. They're packing in their food and will bypass the usual tourist attractions.

"We plan primarily to stay in the cabin doing schoolwork. That's the No. 1 priority, for the kids to attend school but then having the late afternoons free to walk on the beach or walk on a trail," she said.

Breaux Walker and Edie Silver Walker prefer Stormy, the nearly 30-foot RV they bought for \$17,000 just before they took off Aug. 8 from home in San Francisco with their sixth-grader and twin first-graders. Logging in to school and homework is mandatory, the parents said.

"We're working our itineraries around WiFi. We're using hot spots on our cell phones a lot," Silver Walker said from Ennis, Montana, about seven weeks in.

Reyne, the 11-year-old doing full days of live instruction, didn't miss a moment when Stormy blew an air hose in the middle of school in a sleet storm north of Helena, Montana, on Interstate 15.

"With her laptop and her headphones, she just hopped up into the tow truck," Silver Walker laughed.

Breaux added: "We're out in the woods every single day after they go to class. They're getting the coolest, most experiential, useful education every day."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Oct. 1, the 275th day of 2020. There are 91 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 1, 2017, a gunman opened fire from a room at the Mandalay Bay casino hotel in Las Vegas on a crowd of 22,000 country music fans at a concert below, leaving 58 people dead and more than 800 injured in the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history; the gunman, 64-year-old Stephen Craig Paddock, killed himself before officers arrived.

On this date:

In 1908, Henry Ford introduced his Model T automobile to the market.

In 1910, the offices of the Los Angeles Times were destroyed by a bomb explosion and fire; 21 Times employees were killed.

In 1937, Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black delivered a radio address in which he acknowledged being a former member of the Ku Klux Klan, but said he had dropped out of the organization before becoming a U.S. senator.

In 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China during a ceremony in Beijing. A 42-day strike by the United Steelworkers of America began over the issue of retirement benefits.

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In 1957, the motto "In God We Trust" began appearing on U.S. paper currency.

In 1961, Roger Maris of the New York Yankees hit his 61st home run during a 162-game season, compared to Babe Ruth's 60 home runs during a 154-game season. (Tracy Stallard of the Boston Red Sox gave up the round-tripper; the Yankees won 1-0.)

In 1962, Johnny Carson debuted as host of NBC's "Tonight Show," beginning a nearly 30-year run.

In 1971, Walt Disney World opened near Orlando, Florida.

In 1982, Sony began selling the first commercial compact disc player, the CDP-101, in Japan.

In 1987, eight people were killed when an earthquake measuring magnitude 5.9 struck the Los Angeles area.

In 1994, National Hockey League team owners began a 103-day lockout of their players.

In 1996, a federal grand jury indicted Unabomber suspect Theodore Kaczynski in the 1994 mail bomb slaying of advertising executive Thomas Mosser. (Kaczynski was later sentenced to four life terms plus 30 years.) The federal minimum wage rose 50 cents to four dollars, 75 cents an hour.

Ten years ago: White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, planning an ultimately successful Chicago mayoral run, relinquished his post to Pete Rouse. Georgy Arbatov, 87, a foreign policy adviser to Soviet presidents and the Kremlin's top America watcher, died in Moscow.

Five years ago: A gunman opened fire at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon, killing nine people and then himself. Officials in Michigan declared a public health emergency over the city of Flint's water in response to tests that showed children with elevated levels of lead. Oregon marijuana shops began selling for the first time to recreational users.

One year ago: The Trump administration resisted efforts by Congress to gain access to impeachment witnesses; Secretary of State Mike Pompeo sought to delay five current and former officials from providing documents and testimony. Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, dismissed suggestions that President Donald Trump froze military aid to pressure Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden; the Ukrainian leader said no one explained to him why the aid was being delayed. Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders was diagnosed with a heart attack at a Las Vegas hospital, where he'd been taken after experiencing chest discomfort at a campaign event; doctors inserted two stents to open up a blocked artery. A white former Dallas police officer, Amber Guyger, was convicted of murder in the shooting death of her Black neighbor, Botham Jean; Guyger said she had mistaken his apartment for hers. Jimmy Carter celebrated his 95th birthday, becoming the first U.S. president to reach that milestone.

Today's Birthdays: Former President Jimmy Carter is 96. Actor-singer Julie Andrews is 85. Actor Stella Stevens is 82. Rock musician Jerry Martini (Sly and the Family Stone) is 77. Baseball Hall-of-Famer Rod Carew is 75. Jazz musician Dave Holland is 74. Actor Yvette Freeman is 70. Actor Randy Quaid is 70. Rhythm-and-blues singer Howard Hewett is 65. Former British Prime Minister Theresa May is 64. Alt-country-rock musician Tim O'Reagan (The Jayhawks) is 62. Singer Youssou N'Dour is 61. Actor Esai Morales is 58. Retired MLB All-Star Mark McGwire is 57. Actor Christopher Titus is 56. Actor-model Cindy Margolis is 55. Producer John Ridley is 55. Rock singer-musician Kevin Griffin (Better Than Ezra) is 52. Actor Zach Galifianakis is 51. Singer Keith Duffy is 46. Actor Sherri Saum is 46. Actor Katie Aselton is 42. Actor Sarah Drew is 40. Actor Carly Hughes is 38. Actor-comedian Beck Bennett is 36. Actor Jurnee Smollett-Bell is 34. Actor Brie Larson is 31. Singer/songwriter Jade Bird is 23. Actor Priah Ferguson is 14. Actor Jack Stanton is 12.