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Nehls Returns Tonight!

Back by popular demand, Mike Nehls will return tonight as a special guest commentator at the Aberdeen Roncalli football game on GDILIVE.COM!



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Guest Speaker at Groton C&MA



Pastor Brad Trosen

The Groton Christian & Missionary Alliance Church (706 N. Main St., Groton, SD) is inviting the community to hear stories of life on the mission field with Brad Trosen on Sunday evening, October 11 at 7pm. Pastor Brad Trosen and his wife Laura have led the International Church of Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan (N. Iraq), since 2014. This Alliance church is being used to help establish and grow the Church among various people groups represented in northern Iraq. Previously, they worked for a total of 17 years in international schools in both Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal, as house parents and in administration. As well, they had eight years of ministry experience in Montana at the Missoula Alliance church, leading both the worship ministry and the global outreach team. Brad's childhood was spent in Bristol and Sisseton, SD, and he graduated from Crown College (St. Bonifacius, MN), where he and Laura met and were both very involved in music ministry. Both Brad and Laura love music, love to read and love to invest in people! They are presently based near San Antonio, Texas, where they are caring for Laura's parents. Trosens have three grown children - Hannah, Emily and Ian. This event is free and open to the public. If you have any questions about the event, you can contact Pastor Josh Jetto at (605) 290-8258 or by email at joshjetto@gmail.com.

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#221 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

New cases are up again today over 40,000 at 48,400, a 0.6% increase to 7,307,800. The 7-day average continues to climb, although at a somewhat slower pace. The Midwest averaged 15.6 daily new cases per 100,000 residents over the past week, as compared with the South at 12.4, the West at 8.8, and the Northeast at 5.1. Still in trouble heading into the cold weather.

Less than a week after the White House coronavirus task force warned of a “rapid worsening” in the state, Wisconsin public health authorities are sounding the alarm as the state sets records for deaths and hospitalizations. The percentage of available hospital beds is dropping. Dr. Paul Casey, medical director of the emergency department at Bellin Hospital in Green Bay, said, “We are nearing a crisis in my community. This spike we’re seeing in Brown County, Wisconsin, should be a wake-up call to anyone who lives here that our community is facing a crisis.” His hospital currently has more patients than all four hospitals in the city had at the height of the spike in April; they’ve had to put patients in beds in the hallways three times in the past 10 days. Test positivity rates have been running between 8% and 10%. The task force recommended increasing social distancing “to the maximal degree possible” until cases decline; and accordingly, warnings have been issued about large gatherings of any kind—weddings, funerals, parties. Wisconsin currently sits third in the nation for per capita new-case reports in the past week; they’re averaging just over 40 new cases daily per 100,000 residents; that’s very high.

South Dakota reports another record number of new cases today, but the state reports that some of these are old cases and only 502 are from the past 24 hours. That would make this the second-worst day to date, but not far behind the record. Test positivity has improved to 17.6%, which is ridiculously high. We already know the state has the second-highest per capita new case counts in the nation and has been first or second for well over a month. Let’s put that in perspective: South Dakota’s 502 new cases today is more than New York City’s 451; population of South Dakota’s one-tenth of New York City’s. San Francisco, a city with roughly South Dakota’s population, currently has 11,332 reported cases (7-day rolling average is 46) and 106 deaths (1 in the last week) while South Dakota has 23,136 reported cases (7-day rolling average is 394) and 236 deaths (21 in the last week). For the record, epidemics are typically far harder to control when population density is high, for example, in a city. The state also announced today it is reducing its Department of Health media briefings to just once a week. I guess they don’t feel there is much of interest to report.

We have now reported 207,655 deaths. There were 881 reported today, a 0.4% increase. The latest ensemble forecast from the CDC for deaths in the US projects between 219,000 and 232,000 by October 24. This ensemble forecast is generally considered to be the most reliable one generated because it is based on over three dozen other models and projects only three weeks into the future. This one shows very large variation because of uncertainty about how well people are expected to comply with recommended precautions, which is to say whether people are willing to make small changes in their own behaviors in the interest of keeping their fellow Americans alive, a state of affairs I find incredibly distressing.

Apparently there are enough data coming in now to make some projections, and Moderna, one company currently in phase 3 clinical trials with its vaccine candidate—and the first to do so in the US, is saying they expect the earliest they’ll be prepared to begin their application for emergency use authorization (EUA) for its vaccine would be November 25. Their current estimate is that this is the soonest they’ll have enough safety data—could be longer. The EUA, if issued, would permit use of the vaccine for people deemed high priority, primarily health care workers and the elderly. We should also note here that the reason for the trials is to discover whether the vaccine is safe and whether it works; there is always the possibility it will fail in one or both of those, in which case there will be no application for anything—not to be a downer, but we have to be realistic here. There’s a reason, after all, we have clinical trials, and a fair proportion of candidates put into trials never come out the other end of them.

Working from that timeline, they are then projecting they’d have the Biologics License Application (BLA) filed with the FDA by late January or early February. This would be for full licensing of the vaccine,

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and if that goes well, the vaccine would probably be ready to distribute to the general public late in the first quarter or early in the second quarter of 2021. I think we're looking, roughly, at spring and then a gradual ramp-up as distribution mechanisms are worked out in actual practice and people come in to be vaccinated. With a reasonably effective vaccine, our lives will likely not change appreciably unless and until 75% or so of the population is vaccinated, so we have a while yet to wait. I remember way back at the beginning of this whole thing when Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said he figured it would be—at very best—a year to 18 months before we could have a vaccine on the market. It's almost like the guy knows things, isn't it? Go figure.

Also on the vaccine front, the European Medicines Agency (EMA), the EU's version of the FDA, has announced it is beginning what is called a rolling review of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine candidate. The purpose of this move is to speed up any approval which might follow the trial. Their statement says, "The decision to start the rolling review of the vaccine is based on preliminary results from non-clinical and early clinical studies suggesting that the vaccine triggers the production of antibodies and T cells that target the virus. The rolling review will continue until enough evidence is available to support a formal marketing authorisation application. . . . EMA will complete its assessment according to its usual standards for quality, safety and effectiveness." This rolling review process has never been applied by the EMA to a vaccine before, but it has been used once for a medication.

The trials for this vaccine candidate have been resumed in all the countries except for the US, where they remain paused. Dr. Stephen Hahn, commissioner of the FDA, confirmed this today without explaining why the pause continues, saying he cannot "speak to confidential commercial information." A company spokesman said, "We are continuing to work with the FDA to facilitate review of the information needed to make a decision regarding resumption of the US trial." I don't know what is missing here, and I'm not knowledgeable enough about the review process to guess, so we're left to wonder just when these will be able to resume. I'll watch for further news on this.

Yesterday we talked about a public health issue related to the pandemic, but not to the virus, alcohol consumption. I have another such issue today: traffic deaths. Early looks at a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration study published today indicate two interesting things. The first is that, in the three-month period ending June 30, overall traffic deaths decreased from the same period last year. This makes sense when you factor in that driving decreased by 26% in the time period; fewer miles driven should mean fewer traffic deaths.

The second is that, while the raw number of deaths fell, the fatality rate (deaths per mile driven) was at its highest point since 2005. What's happening, according to the report, is that "drivers who remained on the roads engaged in more risky behavior, including speeding, failing to wear seat belts, and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol." Average speeds increased, and extreme speeding was more common.

What's going on here? Probably several things. During this period, there was reduced enforcement of some traffic laws. The report says, "It is possible that drivers' perception that they may be caught breaking a law was reduced." Another is that older people, who are more at risk from the virus and more risk-averse drivers, may have been staying home more than younger, less risk-averse drivers were. And I'll add my thought that the same sorts of people who are willing to take the risk of going out and about during a lockdown due to a pandemic might be the same sorts of people who are willing to take risks behind the wheel irrespective of age. At any rate, all of this certainly falls under the heading of unforeseen consequences of both the pandemic and the lockdowns.

In May, the pandemic really hit home for 15-year-old Hannah Ernst; her maternal grandfather died of the disease on May 8. They were close; he'd been a graphic designer and passed his love of art to her. Ernst has been sketching and painting for years and recently began learning digital design, so after his death, she used an app to create a digital "portrait" of her grandfather, an image of his silhouette over a yellow heart.

Her mother was so pleased with the portrait of her father that she shared it with an online coronavirus support group and solicited requests for portraits of others who had died of the disease. Each one, drawn

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from a photograph, is a simple silhouette, but sometimes Ernst incorporates a uniform or favored accessory, maybe a loved pet or a meaningful object. Each one posts with a few sentences about the person's life and loved ones. She drew one fan in a Detroit Red Wings shirt, another holding his twins, and a third showing off an enormous fish he'd caught. They're personal and quite lovely.

Thinking she'd found a way to memorialize her beloved grandfather while helping others who'd suffered similar losses, the artist created a Facebook page (Faces of Covid Victims) and an Instagram account (covid.victims) to post her portraits, figuring she might receive a few additional requests. "It just snowballed," she said. "Suddenly, we were getting 10, and then 20 requests per day. Eventually, it went national, and then we were getting people from India, Greece, England and all over the place asking for portraits." As of a week ago, she's posted 387 portraits.

Ernst says, "It's kind of a more lighthearted way to remember victims, rather than just seeing the doom and gloom that this virus has unfortunately brought to this country." She has about 100 pending requests she is fulfilling in the order they were received, although she did take time out to draw a special portrait of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, this one backed by a purple heart and including one of Ginsburg's signature collars. Now that school is back in session and her 10th-grade year has begun, she continues to draw in her spare time, offering grieving families a sense that their losses are recognized and acknowledged.

She plans to continue into the future to raise awareness of the lives that can still be saved. "As much as I love helping the family members and remembering those lost, I'd rather not do it, because that just means there's one more person who's passed away." She posts the portraits with the hashtag #notjustanumber.

Indeed, they are not. Let's not allow the constant accumulation of loss to cause us to lose sight of the fact that each of these lives lost was precious to someone and is grieved by someone. And let's do what we can to stop the steady climb in the numbers. Unfortunately, the best we have to offer at the moment in many parts of the country is our individual action. Pitch in.

Keep yourself healthy. I'll see you tomorrow.

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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	Oct. 2				
Minnesota	98,447	99,134	100,200				
Nebraska	45,044	45,564	46,185				
Montana	12,724	13,071	13,500				
Colorado	70,025	70,536	71,218				
Wyoming	4,948	5,046	5,170				
North Dakota	21,401	21,846	22,218				
South Dakota	21,997	22,389	23,136				
United States	7,191,349	7,234,257	7,279,065				
US Deaths	206,005	206,963	207,816				
Minnesota	+809	+687	+1,066				
Nebraska	+466	+520	+621				
Montana	+311	+347	+429				
Colorado	+535	+511	+682				
Wyoming	+51	+98	+124				
North Dakota	+418	+445	+372				
South Dakota	+259	+392	+747				
United States	+41,232	+42,909	+44,808				
US Deaths	+914	+958	+853				

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October 1st COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Looks like there was some catchup on the state stats and that led to a delay in posting them on-line yesterday. 13 more deaths recorded in South Dakota. Five males and eight females. five in the 80+ age group, 5 in the 70s and 3 in the 60s. Those reporting their first deaths were Brule, Hanson, Haakon and Tripp. Others with one death were Beadle, Clay, Codington, Custer, Turner, Lawrence, Minnehaha and Union. Bennett County had 2 deaths.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +35 (1,275) Positivity Rate: 16.4%
Total Tests: +213 (11,070)
Recovered: +35 (1071)
Active Cases: -0 (200)
Ever Hospitalized: +1 (55)
Deaths: +0 (4)

Percent Recovered: 84.0

South Dakota:

Positive: +747 (23,136 total) Positivity Rates: 7.5%
Total Tests: 9,923 (279,609 total)
Hospitalized: +29 (1,578 total). 214 currently hospitalized +2)
Deaths: +13 (236 total)
Recovered: +560 (19,068 total)
Active Cases: +174 (3,832)
Percent Recovered: 82.4%
Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 9% Covid, 50% Non-Covid, 41% Available
ICU Bed Capacity: 17% Covid, 59% Non-Covid, 24% Available
Ventilator Capacity: 6% 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: +4 positive, +0 recovered (14 active cases)
Beadle (10): +7 positive, +16 recovered (97 active cases)
Bennett (3): +2 positive, +3 recovered (10 active cases)
Bon Homme (1): +3 positive, +1 recovered (22 active cases)
Brookings (2): +36 positive, +24 recovered (119 active cases)
Brown (4): +35 positive, +35 recovered (200 active cases)

Brule (1): +6 positive, +4 recovered (34 active cases)
Buffalo (3): +2 positive, +9 recovered (16 active cases)
Butte (3): +11 positive, +7 recovered (39 active cases)
Campbell: +1 positive, +2 recovered (21 active cases)
Charles Mix: +12 positive, +5 recovered (56 active cases)
Clark: +1 positive, +1 recovered (11 active cases)
Clay (7): +4 positive, +4 recovered (37 active cases)
Codington (7): +48 positive, +38 recovered (194 active cases)
Corson (1): +1 positive, +0 recovered (9 active cases)
Custer (3): +6 positive, +3 recovered (29 active case)
Davison (2): +30 positive, +16 recovered (133 active cases)
Day: +5 positive, +2 recovered (25 active cases)
Deuel: +1 positive, +3 recovered (9 active cases)
Dewey: +7 positive, +0 recovered (66 active cases)
Douglas (1): +6 positive, +5 recovered (28 active cases)
Edmunds: +2 positive, +4 recovered (16 active cases)
Fall River (4): +3 positive, +0 recovered (14 active cases)
Faulk (1): +2 positive, +5 recovered (9 active cases)
Grant (1): +14 positive, +12 recovered (57 active cases)
Gregory (3): +4 positive, +5 recovered (38 active cases)
Haakon (1): +1 positive, +0 recovered (9 active case)
Hamlin: +3 positive, +4 recovered (20 active cases)
Hand: +6 positive, +1 recovered (26 active cases)
Hanson (1): +2 positive, +0 recovered (13 active cases)
Harding: +0 positive (1 active case)
Hughes (5): +24 positive, +28 recovered (116 active cases)

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cases)

Hutchinson (2): +7 positive, +2 recovered (38 active cases)

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

Jackson (1): +1 positive, +2 recovered (9 active cases)

Jerauld (1): +3 positive, +2 recovered (37 active cases)

Jones: +3 positive, +4 recovered (6 active cases)

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

Lake (7): +5 positive, +4 recovered (33 active cases)

Lawrence (5): +14 positive, +16 recovered (98 active cases)

Lincoln (2): +66 positive, +21 recovered (256 active cases)

Lyman (3): +7 positive, +8 recovered (42 active cases)

Marshall: +3 positive, +1 recovered (12 active cases)

McCook (1): +7 positive, +3 recovered (32 active

cases)

McPherson: +1 positive, +4 recovery (5 active case)

Meade (5): +24 positive, +14 recovered (118 active cases)

Mellette: +0 positive, +0 recovery (3 active cases)

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

Minnehaha (82): +115 positive, +83 recovered (660 active cases)

Moody: +3 positive, +7 recovered (25 active cases)

Oglala Lakota (3): +17 positive, +4 recovered (72 active cases)

Pennington (37): +74 positive, +70 recovered (418 active cases)

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

Potter: +1 positive, +5 recovered (5 active cases)

Roberts (1): +3 positive, +10 recovered (53 active cases)

Sanborn: +2 positive, +4 recovered (10 active cases)

Spink: +9 positive, +4 recovered (34 active cases)

Stanley: +2 positive, +2 recovery (7 active cases)

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

Todd (5): +10 positive, +4 recovered (31 active cases)

Tripp (1): +12 positive, +11 recovered (62 active cases)

Turner (3): +9 positive, +5 recovered (35 active cases)

Union (8): +34 positive, +6 recovered (85 active cases)

Walworth (1): +3 positive, +7 recovered (32 active cases)

Yankton (4): +16 positive, +9 recovered (96 active cases)

Ziebach: +0 positive, +1 recovered (4 active case)

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	726	0
10-19 years	2594	0
20-29 years	5349	2
30-39 years	3990	7
40-49 years	3135	10
50-59 years	3151	22
60-69 years	2232	35
70-79 years	1123	45
80+ years	836	115

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	12025	106
Male	11111	130

North Dakota Dept. of Health Report
COVID-19 Daily Report, October 1:

- 7.0% rolling 14-day positivity
- 6.4% daily positivity
- 373 new positives
- 5,853 susceptible test encounters
- 106 currently hospitalized (+17)
- 3,690 active cases (+8)

Total Deaths: +10 (256)

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread
Aurora	63	48	556	0	Moderate
Beadle	822	715	2829	10	Substantial
Bennett	69	56	776	3	Substantial
Bon Homme	94	71	1204	1	Moderate
Brookings	815	709	4865	2	Substantial
Brown	1275	1071	7151	4	Substantial
Brule	138	103	1223	1	Substantial
Buffalo	142	123	815	3	Substantial
Butte	121	79	1630	3	Substantial
Campbell	37	16	148	0	Substantial
Charles Mix	196	140	2360	0	Substantial
Clark	44	33	569	0	Moderate
Clay	572	528	2638	7	Substantial
Codington	942	741	5103	7	Substantial
Corson	93	83	743	1	Moderate
Custer	195	163	1335	3	Substantial
Davison	359	224	3580	2	Substantial
Day	89	64	957	0	Substantial
Deuel	88	77	642	0	Moderate
Dewey	165	111	2947	0	Substantial
Douglas	93	64	570	1	Substantial
Edmunds	100	84	627	0	Substantial
Fall River	99	81	1476	4	Moderate
Faulk	76	66	317	1	Substantial
Grant	158	100	1199	1	Substantial
Gregory	140	99	666	3	Substantial
Haakon	28	18	385	1	Moderate
Hamlin	104	84	1021	0	Substantial
Hand	53	27	490	0	Substantial
Hanson	44	30	351	1	Moderate
Harding	4	3	90	0	Minimal
Hughes	483	362	2991	5	Substantial
Hutchinson	112	72	1256	2	Substantial

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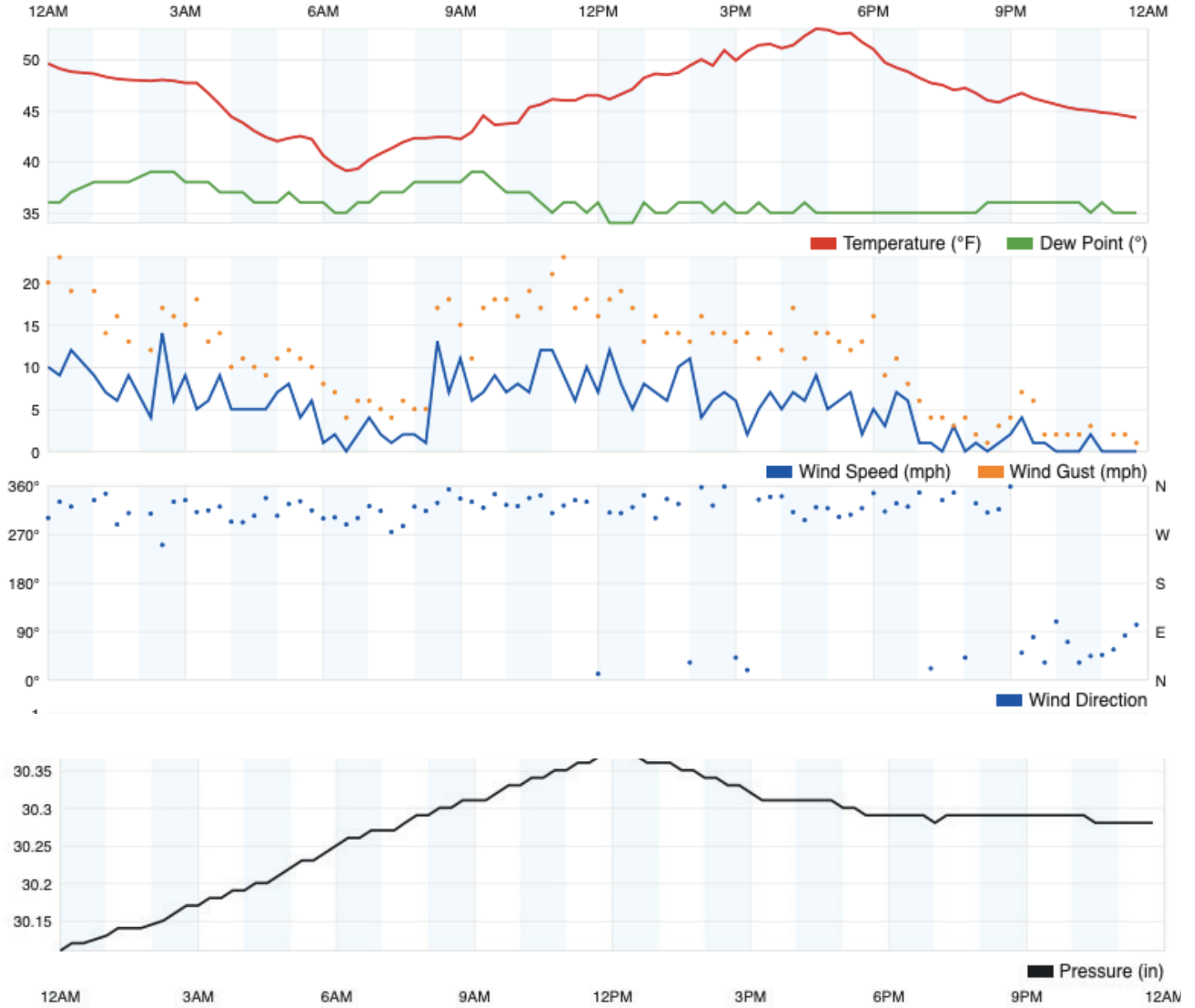
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Hyde	20	18	220	0	Moderate
Jackson	37	27	639	1	Moderate
Jerauld	99	61	336	1	Substantial
Jones	17	11	99	0	Minimal
Kingsbury	61	47	819	0	Substantial
Lake	206	166	1469	7	Substantial
Lawrence	442	339	4237	5	Substantial
Lincoln	1474	1216	10755	2	Substantial
Lyman	172	127	1267	3	Substantial
Marshall	46	34	664	0	Moderate
McCook	113	80	924	1	Substantial
McPherson	37	32	321	0	Moderate
Meade	584	468	3838	5	Substantial
Mellette	32	29	505	0	Minimal
Miner	27	21	351	0	Minimal
Minnehaha	6931	6189	42215	82	Substantial
Moody	101	76	885	0	Substantial
Oglala Lakota	312	217	4451	3	Substantial
Pennington	2479	2024	18525	37	Substantial
Perkins	43	33	370	0	Moderate
Potter	47	42	488	0	Moderate
Roberts	220	166	2730	1	Substantial
Sanborn	33	23	336	0	Moderate
Spink	149	116	1497	0	Substantial
Stanley	44	37	444	0	Moderate
Sully	14	10	136	0	Minimal
Todd	138	102	2902	5	Substantial
Tripp	176	113	935	1	Substantial
Turner	177	139	1422	3	Substantial
Union	442	349	3148	8	Substantial
Walworth	136	101	1162	1	Substantial
Yankton	451	351	4937	4	Substantial
Ziebach	63	59	512	0	Minimal
Unassigned	0	0	4818	0	

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



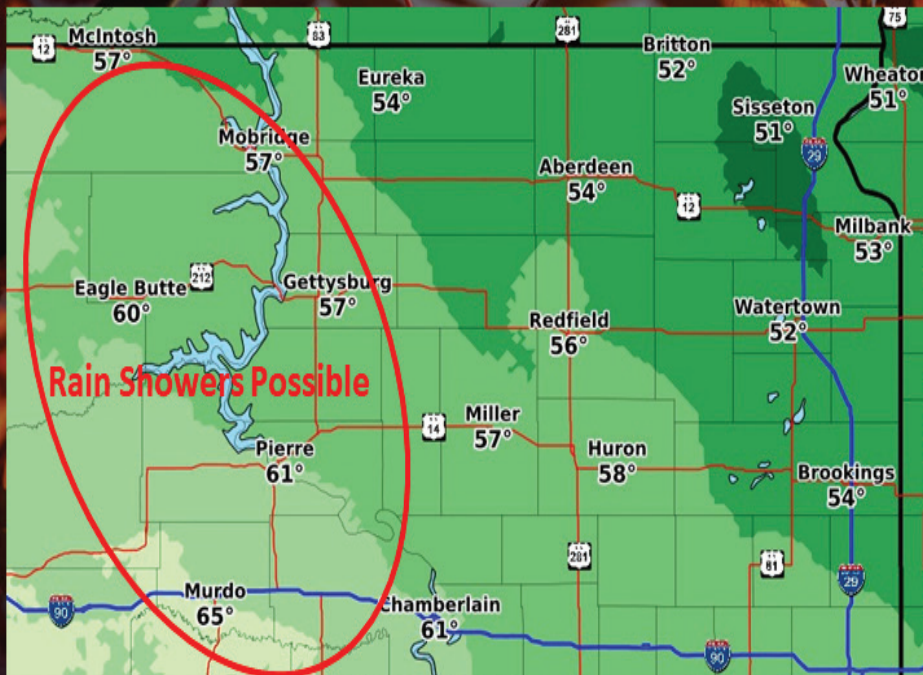
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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
				
Frost then Slight Chance Showers	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy then Patchy Frost	Frost then Sunny
High: 54 °F	Low: 39 °F	High: 53 °F	Low: 31 °F	High: 56 °F

Cold Temps Continue, Light Showers Possible Today

- *Today*: Patchy morning frost possible, light showers for parts of central SD
- *Saturday*: Highs continue in the 50s, light showers possible Saturday morning for northeastern SD



Friday High Temps

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Updated: 10/2/2020 4:43 AM Central

Some light rain showers will be possible this afternoon and this evening with any accumulations being under a tenth of an inch. Below average temps continue through the weekend with highs staying in the 50s for most of the region.

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Today in Weather History

October 2, 1971: Heavy wet snow of over a foot fell in the northern Black Hills. The heavy snow was accompanied by high winds which caused extensive damage to trees and utility lines. The power company said it was one of the worst storms they had experienced.

1858: The only hurricane to impact California struck San Diego on this day. Two researchers with NOAA Michael Chenoweth and Christopher Landsea reconstructed the path of the storm using accounts from newspapers of the high winds. They estimated that if a similar storm were to have hit in 2004, it would have caused around \$500 million in damage.

1898: A Category 4 hurricane made landfall in Georgia on this day. This is the most recent major (Cat 3 or stronger) hurricane to make landfall in Georgia.

1894: A tornado passed over the Little Rock, Arkansas Weather Bureau office on this day.

1882 - An early season windstorm over Oregon and northern California blew down thousands of trees and caused great crop damage in the Sacramento Valley. (David Ludlum)

1959 - A tornado struck the town of Ivy, VA (located near Charlottesville). Eleven persons were killed, including ten from one family. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - The temperature at Blue Canyon, CA, soared to 88 degrees, an October record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1981 - Severe thunderstorms raked Phoenix, AZ, with heavy rain, high winds, and hail up to an inch and a half in diameter, for the second day in a row. Thunderstorms on the 1st deluged Phoenix with .68 inch of rain in five minutes, equalling their all-time record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A fast moving cold front produced snow flurries from Minnesota to the Appalachian Mountains, and gale force winds behind the front ushered cold air into the Great Lakes Region. Valentine NE reported a record low of 25 degrees. Temperatures recovered rapidly in the Northern High Plains Region, reaching the lower 80s by afternoon. Jackson, WY, warmed from a morning low of 21 degrees to an afternoon high of 76 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Early morning thunderstorms in Georgia produced three inches of rain at Canton and Woodstock. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Flooding due to thunderstorm rains in the southeastern U.S. on the last day of September and the first day of October caused the Etowah River to rise seven feet above flood stage at Canton GA. Thunderstorms produced up to ten inches of rain in northeastern Georgia, with six inches reported at Athens GA in 24 hours. One man was killed, and another man was injured, when sucked by floodwaters into drainage lines. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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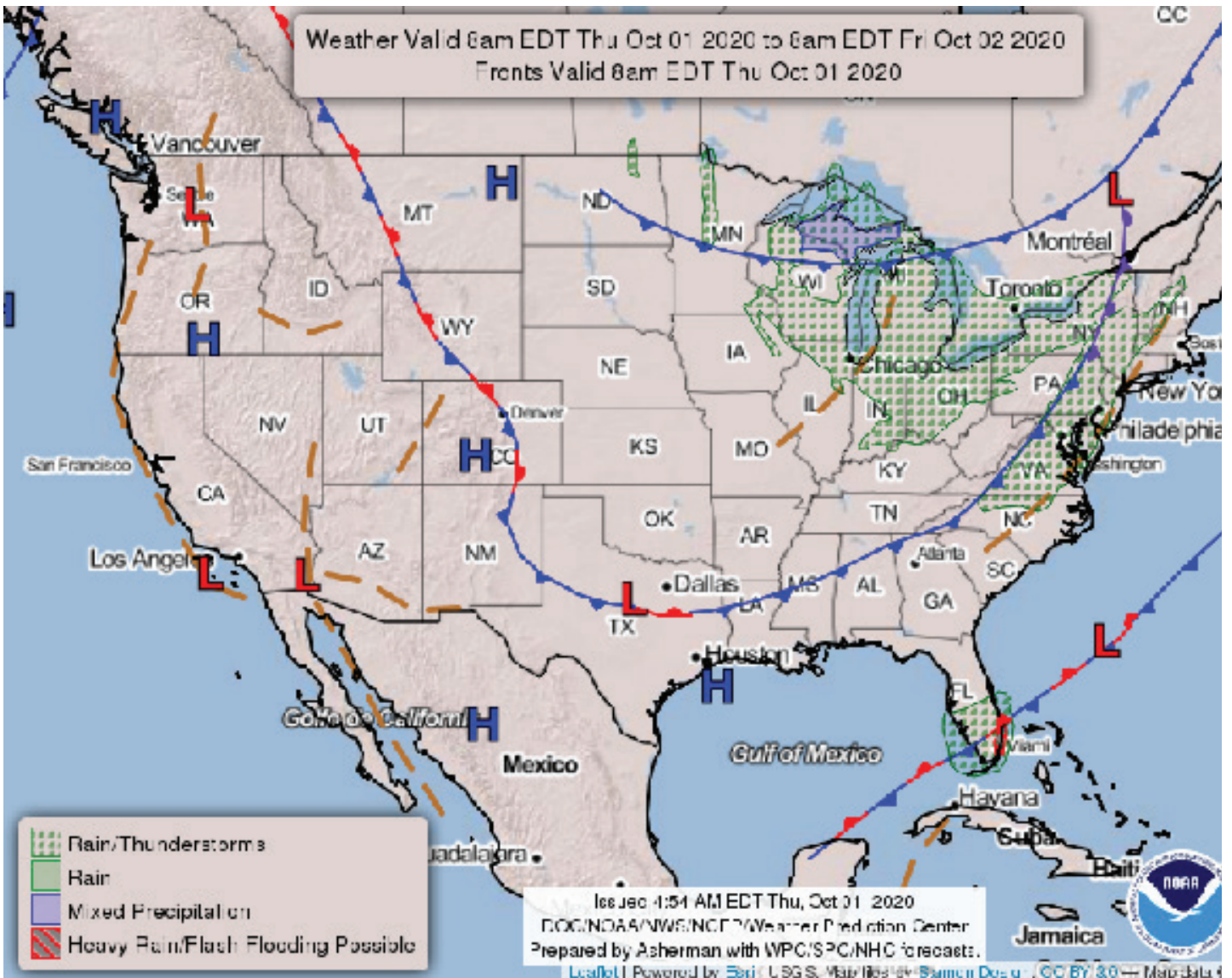
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 53 °F at 4:43 PM
Low Temp: 39 °F at 6:41 AM
Wind: 23 mph at 12:08 AM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 91° in 1897
Record Low: 17° in 1974
Average High: 65°F
Average Low: 38°F
Average Precip in Oct...: 0.08
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 18.56
Precip Year to Date: 15.15
Sunset Tonight: 7:11 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:35 a.m.



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" IT MAY BE MY LAST"

It began as a day like any other day. James Galway, a brilliant flutist, was happily walking to his morning rehearsal. While crossing a street, a speeding motorcyclist hit him and shattered the bones in both of his legs and one arm.

He was rushed to the hospital, and the orthopedic surgeons immediately began a lengthy operation as they attempted to repair the damage. Unfortunately, the bones did not heal as quickly or properly as they had anticipated. As a result, he had to remain in the hospital for many months. As he left the hospital, he said, "It took quite a while to pick up the pieces."

While he was still recovering from the accident, he told a fellow-musician, "I decided from the moment I left the hospital, I would play every concert, record every album, give every performance and live every day as though it may be my last." He summed it all up by saying that his new goal in life was to make sure that every time he played, his performance would be as near to perfection as God wanted it to be!

No doubt that is what Paul had in mind when he wrote, "Whatever you may do, do all to the glory and honor of God!"

There is a two-fold implication in this verse: Whatever we do is a choice. And, with that choice, if we are a Christian, there is an opportunity to bring honor and glory to God. So, not only are our decisions critical but with each one we make, we represent Christ.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, guide us in each of our choices. Make us conscious of everything we do, knowing that we are always representing You by the way we live. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31

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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

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News from the  Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Central def. Mitchell, 25-23, 25-15, 25-18

Baltic def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-14, 25-17, 25-17

Bison def. Dupree, 25-11, 25-18, 22-25, 25-18

Bon Homme def. Menno, 15-25, 25-23, 26-24, 25-21

Boyd County, Neb. def. Burke, 25-14, 25-19, 25-13

Boyd County, Neb. def. Burke/South Central, 25-14, 25-19, 25-13

Brandon Valley def. Pierre, 25-16, 25-22, 25-14

Bridgewater-Emery def. Alcester-Hudson, 25-18, 25-22, 25-18

Chester def. Beresford, 25-12, 25-13, 25-9

Colman-Egan def. Castlewood, 25-19, 24-26, 25-10, 25-15

Corsica/Stickney def. Tripp-Delmont/Armour, 25-21, 19-25, 19-25, 25-15, 15-13

Custer def. Lead-Deadwood, 22-25, 25-15, 25-15, 25-23

Dell Rapids St. Mary def. Lake Preston, 25-8, 25-13, 25-19

Dell Rapids def. Lennox, 26-24, 25-9, 18-25, 20-25, 15-7

Deubrook def. Oldham-Ramona/Rutland, 25-16, 25-21, 25-10

Elkton-Lake Benton def. Arlington, 25-15, 25-20, 25-15

Estelline/Hendricks def. DeSmet, 24-26, 25-23, 25-13, 20-25, 15-12

Florence/Henry def. Great Plains Lutheran, 27-25, 25-11, 25-12

Gregory def. Chamberlain, 16-25, 25-18, 27-25, 25-12

Hamlin def. Groton Area, 25-12, 25-14, 25-17

Ipswich def. Potter County, 25-13, 25-15, 25-17

Irene-Wakonda def. Centerville, 25-18, 25-12, 25-19

Kadoka Area def. Jones County, 25-20, 25-23, 25-10

Kimball/White Lake def. Hanson, 25-12, 25-9, 25-10

Miller def. Lower Brule, 25-12, 25-15, 25-13

Mobridge-Pollock def. Standing Rock, N.D., 25-5, 25-10, 25-14

Parker def. Garretson, 25-23, 25-22, 25-17

Parkston def. Scotland, 25-14, 25-27, 25-9, 25-15

Platte-Geddes def. Canistota, 25-15, 25-17, 25-23

Sioux Falls Christian def. Elk Point-Jefferson, 25-19, 25-10, 25-7

Sioux Falls Washington def. Huron, 25-17, 15-25, 25-21, 25-23

Sioux Valley def. Flandreau, 25-19, 25-22, 25-14

Sturgis Brown def. Douglas, 23-25, 25-11, 25-21, 25-21

Sunshine Bible Academy def. Stanley County, 17-25, 25-13, 19-25, 25-16, 15-13

Tea Area def. Canton, 25-17, 25-16, 26-24

Vermillion def. South Sioux City, Neb., 25-10, 21-25, 25-18, 25-22

Warner def. Herreid/Selby Area, 25-8, 25-18, 25-12

Waubay/Summit def. Langford, 25-22, 15-25, 17-25, 25-23, 15-12

Waverly-South Shore def. Wilmot, 25-19, 21-25, 25-12, 25-16

POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=

Harrisburg vs. Yankton, ppd.

Ponca, Neb. vs. Dakota Valley, ppd.

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

The Latest: 2 Philippine tourist spots partially reopen

By The Associated Press undefined

MANILA, Philippines — Two of the most popular Philippine tourist destinations, including the Boracay beach, have partially reopened with only a fraction of their usual crowds showing up given continuing coronavirus restrictions.

Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat said Friday that 35 local tourists, including seven from Manila, came on the first day of the reopening of Boracay, a central island famous for its powdery white sands, azure waters and stunning sunsets. Only local tourists from regions with low-level quarantine designations could go, subject to safeguards, including tests showing a visitor is coronavirus-free.

The mountain city of Baguio, regarded as a summer hideaway for its pine trees, cool breeze and picturesque upland views, has been reopened to tourists only from its northern region, she told ABS-CBN News.

Despite the urgent need to revive the tourism industry, it's being done "very slowly, cautiously," she said, adding mayors and governors would have to approve the reopening of tourism spots. "We really have to be careful," she said.

Like in most countries, the pandemic has devastated the tourism industry in the Philippines, which now has the most confirmed COVID-19 cases in Southeast Asia at more than 314,000, with 5,504 deaths.

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

- Push to bring coronavirus vaccines to the poor faces trouble
- In Appalachia, people watch COVID-19, race issues from afar
- NFL postpones Steelers-Titans game after more positive tests
- The White House is backing a \$400 per week pandemic jobless benefit and possible COVID-19 relief bill with a price tag above \$1.5 trillion.
- France's health minister is threatening to close bars and ban family gatherings, if the rise in virus cases doesn't improve.
- Americans seeking unemployment benefits declined last week to a still-high 837,000, suggesting the economy is struggling to sustain a tentative recovery from the summer.

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

LOS ANGELES -- California's plan to safely reopen its economy will begin to require counties to bring down coronavirus infection rates in disadvantaged communities that have been harder hit by the pandemic.

The complex new rules announced late Wednesday set in place an "equity metric."

It will force larger counties to control the spread of COVID-19 in areas where Black, Latino and Pacific Islander groups have suffered a disproportionate share of the cases because of a variety of socioeconomic factors.

Some counties welcomed the news and said it will build on efforts underway. Supporters of a more rapid reopening criticized the measure.

NEW ORLEANS -- Starting this weekend, New Orleans bars will be allowed to sell drinks to go and restaurants may operate at 75% indoor capacity instead of 50% since a number of coronavirus indicators have stayed low, Mayor LaToya Cantrell said.

The limit for restaurants and other businesses matches the state limit set weeks ago. If all goes well, New Orleans could match all state reopening levels by Oct. 31, with two more possible groups of changes, Cantrell said Thursday at a livestreamed news conference.

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Those will depend on public response "ensuring we are a healthy city not only to live in but to visit," she said.

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards let some bars reopen and restaurants and other businesses move to 75% of indoor capacity on Sept. 11. New Orleans, which had shut down bars in July, did not follow suit.

French Quarter and downtown stores cannot sell package liquor outside bars' state-set hours of 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. because when bars were allowed to reopen earlier, "crowds continued drinking package liquor" after 11 p.m., the mayor said.

Cantrell said the city had closed six businesses as of Wednesday for flouting pandemic restrictions.

FRANKFORT, Ky. -- Kentucky reported 17 more coronavirus-related deaths on Thursday, one of its highest one-day totals as the state combats an escalating outbreak.

The latest deaths included a 29-year-old woman from Clark County who had "significant underlying health conditions," Gov. Andy Beshear said. Her death marked the first coronavirus-linked fatality of someone in their 20s to be reported in Kentucky, he said.

The 17 deaths were the fifth-highest daily total in Kentucky since the start of the pandemic, he said.

The state also reported 910 new cases of COVID-19, down from the prior two days when daily case counts topped 1,000, the governor said. The spike in cases is hitting rural and urban areas, and Beshear said the state remains on course to set another record for the number of cases in a week.

"When we have a lot of cases, sadly a lot of death follows," Beshear said at a news conference.

The Democratic governor continued to stress the need to wear masks in public, maintain social distancing and follow other health guidelines to contain the virus.

"We can turn this escalation around," he said.

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — South Dakota health officials have reported all-time highs for the toll of the coronavirus with 13 deaths and 747 more people who tested positive.

State epidemiologist Josh Clayton says communities statewide — from cities to rural areas — are seeing significant levels of the virus. He noted that 245 of the infections reported were backlogged from previous days after a reporting error.

One of the largest outbreaks came from a women's prison in Pierre as mass testing revealed that 29 more women in one housing unit had the virus. A total of 197 prisoners and staff have tested positive and 110 have recovered.

OKLAHOMA CITY — A mask mandate in Tulsa is being expanded and extended in an effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

The amended measure lowers the age of those who must wear face coverings from 18 and up to those older than 10. It also extends through Jan. 31 the mandate for masks to be worn in public when social distancing is not possible. Previously it was to expire Nov. 30.

President Donald Trump held an indoor campaign rally in Tulsa on June 20 that attracted about 6,000 attendees as well as protesters. Local Health Department director Bruce Dart said later that the event "likely contributed" to a sharp surge in new coronavirus cases.

As of Thursday, Oklahoma's state health department has recorded 88,369 virus cases and 1,035 deaths due to COVID-19, increases of 1,170 and four, respectively, from the previous day.

DENVER — Colorado's deadliest workplace coronavirus outbreak has been declared resolved after five months, 291 cases and six deaths.

The determination regarding the outbreak at the JBS meatpacking plant in Greeley was made by the state Department of Public Health and Environment after there were no new cases for at least 28 days and an investigation was completed.

The announcement comes as families of some JBS employees who died say their worker's compensa-

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tion claims have been denied.

JBS argues that their infections were not work-related. The plant did not respond to requests for comment by Colorado Public Radio.

PHOENIX — Arizona is reporting 705 additional COVID-19 cases and 24 more deaths as health officials say all 15 counties have cleared state benchmarks for partial reopening of certain businesses.

The overall statewide total of confirmed cases is now 219,212 cases, and the death toll 5,674.

Arizona's Department of Health Services says the classification of largely rural Graham County improved to "moderate transmission stage." That made it the final county to meet criteria for reopening businesses such as indoor gyms, bars serving food and movie theaters.

One county, tiny Greenlee in southeastern Arizona, is at "minimal" status, the highest step below normal conditions.

HELENA, Mont. — Nearly half Montana's confirmed COVID-19 cases came in September as the state continues to report record numbers of infections.

The state reported 429 cases Thursday, the highest daily total by a margin of 81. Overall there were just over 6,000 in September, or 44% of the 13,500 since mid-March.

The true numbers are thought to be much higher because not everyone has been tested, and studies show people can have COVID-19 without experiencing symptoms.

BOISE, Idaho — Idaho will remain in the fourth and final stage of Gov. Brad Little's economic-reopening plan for at least another two weeks as coronavirus infections and deaths rise.

The Republican governor says Idaho will receive 530,000 rapid antigen tests that will be prioritized for schools. Little also announced Thursday the formation of a COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee in anticipation of a vaccine that would be distributed by the federal government.

Stage 4 of Idaho's plan allows most businesses to open.

WASHINGTON — U.S. health officials say hospitals bought only about a third of the doses of remdesivir that they were offered over the last few months to treat COVID-19, as the government stops overseeing the drug's distribution.

Between July and September, 500,000 treatment courses were made available to state and local health departments but only about 161,000 were purchased.

Dr. John Redd of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said Thursday that "we see this as a very good sign" that supply now outstrips demand and it's OK for hospitals to start buying the drug, also known as Veklury, directly from maker Gilead Sciences Inc.

The government will buy some of the excess for the national stockpile.

Several studies suggest remdesivir can shorten time to recovery and hospital stays by four days on average.

At \$3,200 per treatment course, its price might be playing a role in the low demand.

LONDON — A British lawmaker has apologized for travelling to London to attend a coronavirus debate in Parliament despite having COVID-19 symptoms. She also took a train home to Scotland after getting a positive test.

The Scottish National Party suspended Margaret Ferrier after she said that "there is no excuse for my actions" and that she had reported herself to police.

People in Britain are told they must self-isolate if they have COVID-10 symptoms and while they are waiting for a test result.

Also Thursday, Stanley Johnson, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's father, apologized after he was photographed shopping without a face covering.

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Britain's government recently raised fines for not wearing masks in places like stores in a bid to curb a spike in infections.

HARRISBURG, Pa. — A Republican state lawmaker's positive test for the coronavirus has prompted legislative leaders to cancel the Pennsylvania House's voting session.

Human resources workers were deployed to trace Rep. Paul Schemel's personal contacts to see if others should be quarantined.

He was most recently in the Capitol on Tuesday, and it's unclear if he wore a mask while in the building's public spaces.

MADRID — Spain's health ministry has reported 9,419 new coronavirus cases as the country struggles to control Europe's most worrisome flare-up.

The ministry says 3,715 of the cases were diagnosed in the last 24 hours. The remainder were from previous days but not reported to central authorities until now.

Spain leads Europe with more than 778,600 cases. The ministry reported another 182 confirmed deaths, increasing the total to 31,973.

NEW YORK — Schools across New York report that at least 1,200 students and staff have tested positive for the coronavirus since the start of the academic year.

As of Tuesday, 693 public and private schools had reported at least one infection. Around 700 students and 400 school staff have tested positive. State officials note the count doesn't capture the full extent of infections among schoolchildren.

A separate data system operated by state health officials has documented around 2,300 infections among school-age children since Sept. 1.

The district is rolling out a monthly plan to test students and staff. Mayor Bill de Blasio says the city plans more than 100,000 tests on students a month, at a cost of \$78-\$90 a piece.

LAS CRUCES, N.M. — New Mexico State University will move classes entirely online after the Thanksgiving break and the college's fall commencement will not be held.

The Las Cruces Sun-News reports University President John Floros says the university surveyed students, faculty and staff at the Las Cruces campus about returning following the break, when there will be two weeks left in the fall semester.

The campus will remain open to provide housing, dining and other services. The college plans to return to in-person classes after winter break.

BEIRUT — Syrian state media report the country has reopened the capital's main airport for international flights amid tight coronavirus measures.

The Damascus International Airport had been closed since early March, though some flights have brought home Syrians stranded outside the country.

Syria has 4,200 confirmed coronavirus cases and 200 deaths in government-held areas. Scores more cases have been registered in northern areas outside government control.

CHICAGO — Add ballet in Chicago to the list of things called off because of the pandemic.

The Joffrey Ballet of Chicago says it has canceled its entire 2020-21 season, which runs through spring. The Joffrey says the decision will cost it more than \$9 million in lost box office receipts.

A philanthropic fund called the Joffrey Crisis Stabilization has been set up with a goal of raising \$12 million, with some \$9 million already raised.

MILAN — Italy has tallied 2,548 new coronavirus cases, the highest daily total in five months.

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Health authorities tested more than 118,000 people, a 10% increase from a day earlier.

Nearly 3,100 people are hospitalized, with 291 in intensive care. Italy has averaged 1,500 daily cases since schools reopened three weeks ago.

The nation has reached 317,409 cases and nearly 36,000 confirmed deaths.

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Police say several parties and large gatherings coinciding with the University of South Carolina's season-opening football game were broken up.

Columbia Police told The State newspaper Wednesday that three citations and four warnings were issued to residences that house some USC students.

The largest gathering was at an apartment complex near the Gamecocks' Williams-Brice stadium, where about 300 people got together Saturday after the game.

HILO, Hawaii — A Hawaii food bank is now serving up to 80,000 people monthly.

That's up from about 14,000 at this time last year, the Hawaii Tribune-Herald reports

Food Basket executive director Kristin Frost Albrecht says the group helps residents through a network of partner agencies and programs.

The organization serves between 2,000 and 3,700 people at each of its Big Island sites, and 80% to 85% of them are unemployed. Albrecht says there have been numerous donations, including food contributed by farmers.

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Maryland is reporting zero coronavirus deaths in a 24-hour period for the first time since March 28.

That doesn't necessarily mean no COVID-19 deaths occurred in that time frame, because sometimes there is a delay in the submission of a death certificate.

Still, Gov. Larry Hogan says it's an "encouraging milestone" and a tribute to the efforts of health care workers.

LONDON — The European Medicines Agency has begun its first review process for an experimental COVID-19 vaccine being developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca.

The EU regulator says it started a "rolling review" process it hopes will expedite any eventual approval.

The EMA has begun analyzing preliminary information from scientists on the Oxford vaccine that suggest it "triggers the production of antibodies and T-Cells," referring to immune system cells that target the virus.

The agency says it was waiting for data from ongoing late-stage tests of the vaccine involving thousands of people, which it hopes will be shared in the coming months.

The Oxford vaccine is proceeding with a large U.K. trial even though a similar study has been halted in the U.S. while the FDA examines the report of a serious neurological side effect in a British trial participant.

Teamsters Local 120 Blasts Cash-Wa Distributing Co. For Refusing to Bargain In Good Faith

BLAINE, Minn., Oct. 1, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Cash-Wa Distributing Company is harming its 75 essential drivers and warehouse workers in Fargo, N.D. by failing to negotiate a contract in good faith for these frontline workers who are delivering food to communities during this pandemic.

"It is outrageous that Cash-Wa is not recognizing the hard work these employees are doing day in and day out to keep our communities fed during the worst pandemic in a century," said Tom Erickson, President of Teamsters Local 120, which represents the workers.

"Cash-Wa likes to say it helps businesses thrive, but what about these workers who are putting their own health on the line to make sure restaurants, health care facilities, schools and other customers have the products they need?" said Brian Nowak, Local 120 Business Agent for the bargaining unit.

After meeting over the last six weeks, the privately held, family run company has stopped meeting to

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negotiate after submitting a last, best and final contract offer. Workers have voted to authorize a strike, if necessary and have filed several unfair labor practice charges against the company. Cash-Wa's headquarters is in Kearney, Neb., with another location in Aberdeen, S.D.

"We call on the company and its CEO, Tom Henning, to sit down with us to further negotiate wages, benefits and working conditions," Erickson said. "We remain far apart on these issues."

The drivers in Aberdeen are in the process of forming their union as Teamsters, and an election date is pending. Workers in Kearney and Aberdeen are supporting the drivers in Fargo in their contract campaign.

"We take pride in doing a great job, especially serving our customers during these challenging times," said Steve Johnson, a driver. "All we want is a fair contract to reflect the risks we are taking every day to make sure our customers get the products they need during this pandemic."

In 2019, Cash-Wa purchased the Fargo operation, which had been owned by Food Services of America (FSA), which was under contract with Local 120. US Foods acquired Food Services of America that same year, but in order for the deal to go through, US Foods was ordered by the Federal Trade Commission to divest three FSA distribution facilities, including the one in Fargo.

Contact: Brian Nowak, (701) 238-2541

View original content to download multimedia: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/teamsters-local-120-blasts-cash-wa-distributing-co-for-refusing-to-bargain-in-good-faith-301144425.html>

SOURCE Teamsters Local Union 120

South Dakota hits another high for daily COVID-19 toll

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials reported all-time highs for the toll of the coronavirus on Thursday, with 13 deaths and 747 more people who tested positive.

State epidemiologist Josh Clayton said communities statewide — from cities to rural areas — are seeing significant levels of the virus. He noted that that 245 of the infections reported were backlogged from previous days after a reporting error.

One of the largest outbreaks came from a women's prison in Pierre as mass testing revealed that 29 more women in one housing unit had the virus. A total of 197 prisoners and staff have tested positive and 110 have recovered.

The state has seen the nation's second-highest number of new infections per capita over the last two weeks, with 578 new cases per 100,000 people, according to Johns Hopkins researchers.

Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said that hospitals in the state remain capable of handling coronavirus patients. She acknowledged that patients may have been transferred out of state as hospital systems shift people around to provide everyone with adequate levels of medical care.

Over the course of the pandemic, 23,136 people have tested positive for the virus. About 82% have recovered, but 3,832 have active infections and 236 have died.

Man struck and killed near Maverick Junction identified

MAVERICK JUNCTION, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Highway Patrol has identified the pedestrian who was struck and killed walking across a highway on the southeastern edge of the Black Hills.

Eighty-two-year-old Roger Klein, of Hot Springs, died after being struck by a vehicle on Highway 18 west of Maverick Junction Monday afternoon. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

A 72-year-old woman driving a Chevy Impala was traveling on a crest in the highway when she saw the man walking across the roadway, swerved, but couldn't avoid striking him, according to authorities.

The driver wasn't injured.

Midwest Economy: September state-by-state glance

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Institute for Supply Management, formerly the Purchasing Management Association, began formally surveying its membership in 1931 to gauge business conditions.

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The Creighton Economic Forecasting Group uses the same methodology as the national survey to consult supply managers and business leaders. Creighton University economics professor Ernie Goss oversees the report.

The overall index ranges between 0 and 100. Growth neutral is 50, and a figure greater than 50 indicates growth in that factor over the next three to six months. A figure below 50 indicates decline.

Here are the state-by-state results for September:

Arkansas: The overall index for Arkansas rose to 68.5 from August's 63. Components from the September index were: new orders at 78.8, production or sales at 48.9, delivery lead time at 77, inventories at 53.9, and employment at 63.9. "Validating a rapidly improving state economy, U.S. Department of Labor data indicate that the state's insured unemployment rate stood at 0.9% in the second week of March, peaked at 11.7% in the third week of May, and fell to 3.3% in the first week of September," Goss said.

Iowa: The state's overall index climbed to 67.1 in September from 56.4 in August. Components of the overall index were: new orders at 80.1, production or sales at 70.5, delivery lead time at 65.7, employment at 67.4, and inventories at 64.8. "Validating a rapidly improving state economy, U.S. Department of Labor data indicate that the state's insured unemployment rate stood at 1.7% in the second week of March, peaked at 12.4% in the first week of May, and fell to 4.3% in the first week of September," Goss said.

Kansas: The overall state index for September increased to 69.9 from 63.0 in August. Components of the index were: new orders at 78.9, production or sales at 73.3, delivery lead time at 78.5, employment at 64.2, and inventories at 54.7. "Validating a rapidly improving state economy, U.S. Department of Labor data indicate that the state's insured unemployment rate stood at 0.7% in the second week of March, peaked at 14.6% in the third week of May, and fell to 4.1% in the first week of September," Goss said.

Minnesota: The overall index for Minnesota increased to 55.9 in September from 54.5 in August. Components of the overall index were: new orders at 76.5, production or sales at 61.9, delivery lead time at 46.7, inventories at 35.9, and employment at 58.3. "Validating a rapidly improving state economy, U.S. Department of Labor data indicate that the state's insured unemployment rate stood at 2.3% in the second week of March, peaked at 14.9% in the second week of May, and fell to 7.2% in the first week of September," Goss said.

Missouri: The overall index for Missouri improved to 74.4 from August's 63. Components of the overall index were: new orders at 82.5, production or sales at 73.2, delivery lead time at 58.8, inventories at 84.1, and employment at 73.5. "Validating a rapidly improving state economy, U.S. Department of Labor data indicate that the state's insured unemployment rate stood at 0.8% in the second week of March, peaked at 9.5% in the third week of May, and fell to 3.2% in the first week of September," Goss said.

Nebraska: Nebraska's overall index for September slipped to 62.9 from 64.2 in August. Components of the index were: new orders at 77.7, production or sales at 67.7, delivery lead time at 62.6, inventories at 45.4, and employment at 61.2. "Validating a rapidly improving state economy, U.S. Department of Labor data indicate that the state's insured unemployment rate stood at 0.5% in the second week of March, peaked at 11% in the fourth week of May, and fell to 3.2% in the first week of September," Goss said.

North Dakota: The overall index for North Dakota climbed to 55.6 in September from 53.6 in August. Components of the overall index were: new orders at 69.3, production or sales at 74.3, delivery lead time at 52.2, employment at 40, and inventories at 42.1. "Validating a rapidly improving state economy, U.S. Department of Labor data indicate that the state's insured unemployment rate stood at 1.5% in the second week of March, peaked at 9.7% in the first week of May, and fell to 2.3% in the first week of September," Goss said.

Oklahoma: The state's overall index declined to 58.6 in September from August's 61.8 but remained in positive territory. Components of the overall index were: new orders at 76.9, production or sales at 66.8, delivery lead time at 51.5, inventories at 38.8, and employment at 59.2. "Validating a rapidly improving state economy, U.S. Department of Labor data indicate that the state's insured unemployment rate stood at 1.1% in the second week of March, peaked at 9.6% in third week of May, and fell to 7.1% in the first week of September," Goss said.

South Dakota: The overall index for South Dakota declined to 59.9 from 62.9 in August. Components of

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the overall index were: new orders at 77.1, production or sales at 67.1, delivery lead time at 54.9, inventories at 40.8, and employment at 59.8. "Validating a rapidly improving state economy, U.S. Department of Labor data indicate that the state's insured unemployment rate stood at 0.6% in the second week of March, peaked at 9.7% in the fourth week of May, and fell to 1.6% in the first week of September," Goss said.

Business leaders say economy keeps improving after pandemic

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The economy continues to improve in nine Midwest and Plains states, but business remains slower than before the coronavirus pandemic began, according to a monthly survey of business leaders released Thursday.

The overall index for the region improved to 65.1 in September from August's already strong 60. The survey results are compiled into a collection of indexes ranging from zero to 100. Any score above 50 suggests growth, while a score below 50 suggests decline.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss, who oversees the survey, said even with the positive growth in the economy, manufacturing output remains well below the level it was at before officials began imposing restrictions because of the coronavirus.

Job growth remains strong in the region, and the employment index improved to 61.8 in September from August's 54.8. Goss said the region's unemployment rate fell to 4.6% in September after hitting a high of 11% in May. Before the coronavirus outbreak began, unemployment in region was at 1.3%.

Business leaders are optimistic about the next six months. The confidence index remained high at 69.4 in September even though it declined slightly from August's 73.3.

The monthly survey covers Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Dakota.

Election 2020 Today: Trump contracts COVID-19, globe reacts

By The Associated Press undefined

Here's what's happening Friday in Election 2020, 32 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:

TRUMP CONTRACTS COVID-19: President Donald Trump says he and first lady Melania Trump have tested positive for the coronavirus. Trump's positive test comes just hours after the White House announced that senior aide Hope Hicks came down with the virus after traveling with the president several times this week. Trump is 74 years old, putting him at higher risk of serious complications from a virus that has now killed more than 205,000 people nationwide. The president's physician said in a memo that Trump and the first lady "are both well at this time" and "plan to remain at home within the White House during their convalescence."

SHOCK, SYMPATHY, MOCKERY: News that Trump has the virus drew instant reactions of shock, sympathy, undisguised glee and, of course, the ever-present outrage and curiosity that follow much of what the U.S. president does — even from 10,000 miles away. The positive test reading for the leader of the world's largest economy added more uncertainty to investors' worries, including how the infection might affect the Nov. 3 election.

ABORTION SILENCE: Trump is now tiptoeing around the issue as he tries to get another justice confirmed to the Supreme Court before Election Day. Trump is trying to deliver for his conservative base on the issue but also avoid making abortion a central focus of the election. His team worries it could turn off voters who support abortion rights and drive on-the-fence or undecided voters — especially women — to turn out for Joe Biden en masse.

DENYING, DEFENDING AND NUMB: Trump's standing with white, working-class voters has proven resilient through federal investigations, impeachment and countless episodes of chaotic governing. But if those issues were too distant, reports about his tax avoidance might have had the potential to hit closer

to home during a time of economic upheaval. Yet, interviews with voters in swing-state Wisconsin show scant evidence of damaging impact from The New York Times' reporting this week on Trump's long-secret tax returns.

PHILLY TARGETED: Trump's campaign followed through on a threat to sue Philadelphia, filing papers in court over city officials preventing campaign representatives from watching people registering to vote or filling out mail-in ballots in election offices there. The lawsuit comes amid the president claiming that he can only lose the crucial battleground state of Pennsylvania if Democrats cheat.

QUOTABLE: "Tonight, @FLOTUS and I tested positive for COVID-19. We will begin our quarantine and recovery process immediately. We will get through this TOGETHER!" — Trump on Twitter after he and the first lady tested positive for the coronavirus.

ICYMI:

Trump debate comment pushing Black Americans, others to vote

In big states, tiny counties, Trump attacking voting rules

Trump adds to election anxiety by pushing legal boundaries

Trump, Biden appeal to Catholics at virtual charity dinner

Trump says he and first lady tested positive for coronavirus

By JILL COLVIN and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said early Friday that he and first lady Melania Trump have tested positive for the coronavirus, a stunning announcement that plunges the country deeper into uncertainty just a month before the presidential election.

Trump, who has spent much of the year downplaying the threat of a virus that has killed more than 205,000 Americans, said he and Mrs. Trump were quarantining. The White House physician said the president is expected to continue carrying out his duties "without disruption" while recovering.

Still, Trump's diagnosis was sure to have a destabilizing effect in Washington and around the world, raising questions about how far the virus had spread through the highest levels of the U.S. government. Hours before Trump announced he had contracted the virus, the White House said a top aide who had traveled with him during the week had tested positive.

"Tonight, @FLOTUS and I tested positive for COVID-19. We will begin our quarantine and recovery process immediately," Trump tweeted just before 1 a.m. "We will get through this TOGETHER!"

Trump was last seen by reporters returning to the White House on Thursday evening and did not appear visibly ill. Trump is 74 years old, putting him at higher risk of serious complications from a virus that has infected more than 7 million people nationwide.

The president's physician said in a memo that Trump and the first lady, who is 50, "are both well at this time" and "plan to remain at home within the White House during their convalescence."

The diagnosis marks a devastating blow for a president who has been trying desperately to convince the American public that the worst of the pandemic is behind them. In the best of cases, if he develops no symptoms, which can include fever, cough and breathing trouble, it will likely force him off the campaign trail just weeks before the election and puts his participation in the second presidential debate, scheduled for Oct. 15 in Miami, into doubt.

Trump's handling of the pandemic has already been a major flashpoint in his race against Democrat Joe Biden, who spent much of the summer off the campaign trail and at his home in Delaware because of the virus. Biden has since resumed a more active campaign schedule, but with small, socially distanced crowds. He also regularly wears a mask in public, something Trump mocked him for at Tuesday night's debate.

"I don't wear masks like him," Trump said of Biden. "Every time you see him, he's got a mask. He could be speaking 200 feet away from me, and he shows up with the biggest mask I've ever seen."

There was no immediate comment from the Biden campaign on whether the former vice president had been tested since appearing at the debate with Trump or whether he was taking any additional safety protocols. Trump and Biden did not shake hands during the debate, but stood without masks about 10

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feet apart for the 90-minute event.

World leaders offered the president and first family their best wishes after their diagnosis, as governments used their case as a reminder for their citizens to wear masks and practice social distancing measures.

On Friday, Trump had been scheduled to receive an intelligence briefing, attend a fundraiser and hold another campaign rally in Sanford, Florida. But just after 1 a.m., the White House released a revised schedule with only one event: a phone call on "COVID-19 support to vulnerable seniors."

Trump's announcement came hours after he confirmed that Hope Hicks, one of his most trusted and longest-serving aides, had been diagnosed with the virus Thursday. Hicks began feeling mild symptoms during the plane ride home from a rally in Minnesota on Wednesday evening, according to an administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity to disclose private information. She was isolated from other passengers aboard the plane, the person said.

Hicks had been with Trump and other senior staff aboard Marine One and Air Force One en route to that rally and had accompanied the president to Tuesday's presidential debate in Cleveland, along with members of the Trump family. The Trump contingent removed their masks during the debate, in violation of the venue rules.

Multiple White House staffers have previously tested positive for the virus, including Vice President Mike Pence's press secretary, Katie Miller, national security adviser Robert O'Brien and one of the president's personal valets.

But Trump has consistently played down concerns about being personally vulnerable, even after White House staff and allies were exposed and sickened. Since the coronavirus emerged earlier this year, Trump has refused to abide by basic public health guidelines — including those issued by his own administration — such as wearing face coverings in public and practicing social distancing. Instead, he has continued to hold campaign rallies that draw thousands of often mask-less supporters.

"I felt no vulnerability whatsoever," he told reporters back in May.

The news was sure to rattle an already shaken nation still grappling with how to safely reopen the economy without driving virus transmission. The White House has access to near-unlimited resources, including a constant supply of quick-result tests, and still failed to keep the president safe, raising questions about how the rest of the country will be able to protect its workers, students and the public as businesses and schools reopen. U.S. stock futures fell on the news of Trump's diagnosis.

Questions remain about why it took so long for Trump to be tested and why he and his aides continued to come to work and travel after Hicks fell ill. Trump traveled to New Jersey on Thursday for a fundraiser, exposing attendees to the virus.

Pence's aides had no immediate comment on whether the vice president had been tested or in contact with Trump.

It is unclear where the Trumps and Hicks may have caught the virus, but in his Fox interview, Trump seemed to suggest it may have been spread by someone in the military or law enforcement.

"It's very, very hard when you are with people from the military or from law enforcement, and they come over to you, and they want to hug you, and they want to kiss you," he said, "because we really have done a good job for them. And you get close. And things happen."

The White House began instituting a daily testing regimen for the president's senior aides after earlier positive cases close to the president. Anyone in close proximity to the president or vice president is also tested every day, including reporters.

Yet since the early days of the pandemic, experts have questioned the health and safety protocols at the White House and asked why more wasn't being done to protect the commander in chief. Trump continued to shake hands with visitors long after public health officials were warning against it, and he initially resisted being tested.

Trump is far from the first world leader to test positive for the virus, which previously infected Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who spent a week in the hospital, including three nights in intensive care. Former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was hospitalized last

month while fighting what he called a "hellish" case of COVID-19.

While there is currently no indication that Trump is seriously ill, the positive test raises questions about what would happen if he were to become incapacitated due to illness.

The Constitution's 25th Amendment spells out the procedures under which the president can declare himself "unable to discharge the powers and duties" of the presidency. If he were to make that call, Trump would transmit a written note to the Senate president pro tempore, Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. Pence would serve as acting president until Trump transmitted "a written declaration to the contrary."

The vice president and a majority of either the Cabinet or another body established by law can also declare the president unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, in which case Pence would "immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President" until Trump could provide a written declaration to the contrary.

Associated Press writer Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

Shock, sympathy, criticism: World reacts to Trump infection

By LORI HINNANT and FOSTER KLUG Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — News that the world's most powerful man was infected with the world's most notorious disease drew instant reactions of shock, sympathy, undisguised glee and, of course, the ever-present outrage and curiosity surrounding everything about President Donald Trump.

Trump's announcement Friday, on Twitter, that he and first lady Melania Trump tested positive for the coronavirus, and the deep uncertainty that accompanied it, flashed across screens large and small, upending countless plans and sparking comment everywhere from presidential offices to the thousands looking to weigh in on social media.

The positive test reading for the leader of the world's largest economy adds more uncertainty to investors' worries, especially about its effect on the Nov. 3 election between the Republican president and Democrat Joe Biden. U.S. stock futures and most world markets fell on the news as did the price of oil.

World leaders were quick to weigh in, with official sympathy from the top and something approaching schadenfreude elsewhere. Trump joins a growing list of the powerful who have contracted the virus, including many who were skeptical of the disease.

"I hope that your inherent vitality, good spirits and optimism will help you cope with the dangerous virus," Russian President Vladimir Putin wrote in a direct message to Trump released by the Kremlin.

World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus tweeted "My best wishes to President @realDonaldTrump and @FLOTUS for a full and speedy recovery." The Trump administration in July formally notified the United Nations of its withdrawal from WHO, although the pullout won't take effect until next year. Trump claims the U.N. health agency is in need of reform and is heavily influenced by China.

Italian right-wing opposition leader Matteo Salvini tweeted: "In Italy and in the world, whoever celebrates the illness of a man or of a woman, and who comes to wish the death of a neighbor, confirms what he is: An idiot without soul. A hug to Melania and Donald."

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who was hospitalized for a week in April after he contracted COVID-19, wished Trump a "speedy recovery."

Dr. Bharat Pankhania, who advises Johnson's government on communicable disease control, said he hopes that Trump's positive test sends a message to the president and other leaders.

"We need politicians, especially politicians like President Trump who has a lot of power and influence, to take this seriously and to support their scientists and clinicians in leading the outbreak management, rather than have political influence in trying to deny that this virus is in circulation and drag your feet around control measures because it suited your agenda."

Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike, speaking at a weekly news conference, did not mention Trump's reluctance to

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wear masks when asked about his infection, but she said the news "reminded me of how widely masks are worn in Japan."

Major media across the globe also played up the announcement, with bulletins crawling across TV screens in Seoul, Tokyo, Taipei, Dubai and Beijing.

"To say this potentially could be a big deal is an understatement," Rabobank said in a commentary. "Anyway, everything now takes a backseat to the latest incredible twist in this U.S. election campaign."

China's official Xinhua News Agency flashed the news, and an anchor on state broadcaster CCTV announced it; there was no immediate comment from the government Friday, the second day of an eight-day national holiday.

The positive test result for Trump and his wife was the most searched topic in China on the widely used social media app Weibo a few hours after the announcement, with most comments mocking or critical.

One user darkly joked that Trump had finally tweeted something positive.

The Chinese government has bristled at Trump's attempts to blame China, where the disease emerged, for the pandemic and called for global cooperation in fighting it, a message that has resonated with the public.

Hu Xijin, the outspoken editor of the state-owned Global Times newspaper, tweeted in English that "President Trump and the first lady have paid the price for his gamble to play down the COVID-19."

Multiple Arab news media outlets on Friday continuously broadcast footage of Trump and his wife after the virus announcement.

Al-Arabiya, a Saudi-owned satellite channel based in Dubai, cut to a long live shot of the White House. Qatari state-owned Al Jazeera channel brought in four commentators to discuss the "prevailing state of uncertainty" in the United States, questioning whether Trump could effectively steer a reelection campaign and run the country from quarantine.

Iranian state television announced Trump had the virus, an anchor breaking the news with an unflattering image of the U.S. president surrounded by what appeared to be giant coronaviruses. U.S.-Iran ties have suffered since Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers and reimposed crushing sanctions.

Social media platforms were ablaze with quick reaction.

Would Trump blame the Chinese? Would he thumb his nose at his critics and enemies by breezing through the quarantine without serious symptoms, tweeting away from the White House? Would he become gravely ill, or worse, and, if he did, what would that mean for the U.S. election, one of the most contentious in recent history? What would it mean for U.S. leadership during tumultuous times?

While the uncertainty seemed palpable on a scroll through various social media in an array of languages, many comments seemed to revel in the announcement.

"Here comes a chance for him to actually try out his idea of injecting disinfectant into himself and fighting back (against allegations that) it was fake news!" tweeted Hiroyuki Nishimura, a Japanese internet entrepreneur, referring to an idea Trump floated earlier this year for treatment.

Keio University economics professor Masaru Kaneko tweeted that populist leaders like British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro "got infected because they tended not to take the coronavirus seriously. The two other leaders seriously tackled (the virus) after they got infected themselves. Will the United States follow their examples?"

And the satirical Australian news site, the Betoota Advocate, posted a story with this headline: "Trump Family Records More Cases Of Community Transmission Than Entire State Of Queensland."

Lori Hinnant reported from Paris. Associated Press writers Danica Kirka in London; Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran, Ashok Sharma in New Delhi, Ken Moritsugu in Beijing, Jon Gambrell in Dubai, Rod McGuirk in Canberra, Australia, Mari Yamaguchi and Elaine Kurtenbach in Tokyo and Colleen Barry in Milan contributed to this report.

Trump joins growing list of virus-infected world leaders

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — President Donald Trump has tested positive for the coronavirus, joining a small group of world leaders who have been infected. Trump is 74, putting him at higher risk of serious complications. Here's a look at other leaders who have had the virus. Some are sending Trump their wishes for a speedy recovery.

BORIS JOHNSON

The British prime minister was the first major world leader confirmed to have COVID-19, after facing criticism for downplaying the pandemic. He was moved to intensive care in April after his symptoms dramatically worsened a day after he was hospitalized for what were called routine tests. He was given oxygen but did not need a ventilator, officials said. He later expressed his gratitude to National Health Service staff for saving his life when his treatment could have "gone either way." Prince Charles, the heir to the British throne, also tested positive in March and showed mild symptoms.

JAIR BOLSONARO

The Brazilian president announced his illness in July and used it to publicly extol hydroxychloroquine, the unproven malaria drug that he'd been promoting as a treatment for COVID-19 and was taking himself. For months he had flirted with the virus, calling it a "little flu," as he flouted social distancing at lively demonstrations and encouraged crowds during outings from the presidential residence, often without a mask.

JUAN ORLANDO HERNANDEZ

The Honduras president announced in June that he had tested positive, along with two other people who worked closely with him. Hernández said he had started what he called the "MAIZ treatment," an experimental and unproven combination of microdacyn, azithromycin, ivermectin and zinc. He was briefly hospitalized and released. He has added his voice to growing pleas for equitable access to any COVID-19 vaccine, asking the recent U.N. gathering of world leaders, "Are people to be left to die?"

ALEXANDER LUKASHENKO

The president of Belarus, who dismissed concerns about the virus as "psychosis" and recommended drinking vodka to stay healthy, said in July he had contracted it himself but was asymptomatic. Belarus is one of the few countries that took no comprehensive measures against the virus. Other top officials in former Soviet states who were infected include Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.

PRINCE ALBERT II OF MONACO

The palace of Monaco in March said the ruler of the tiny Mediterranean principality tested positive but his health was not worrying. He was the first head of state who publicly said he was infected.

ALEJANDRO GIAMMATTEI

The Guatemalan president said he tested positive for the virus in September. "My symptoms are very mild. Up to now, I have body aches, it hurt more yesterday than today, like a bad cold," he said during a televised address. "I don't have a fever, I have a bit of a cough." He said he'd be working from home.

JEANINE ANEZ

The virus drove the Bolivian interim president into isolation in July, but she said she was feeling well.

LUIS ABINADER

The newly elected president of the Dominican Republic contracted and recovered from COVID-19 during his campaign. He spent weeks in isolation before the country's July election.

IRAN

Iran, the epicenter of the Mideast's initial coronavirus outbreak, has seen several top officials test positive. Among them are senior Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri and Vice President Massoumeh Ebtekar. Cabinet members have tested positive, too.

INDIA

Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu, 71, recently tested positive but his office said he had no symptoms and was quarantined at home. Home Minister Amit Shah, the No. 2 man in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, was hospitalized for COVID-19 last month and has recovered. Junior Railways Minister Suresh

Angadi last week was the first federal minister to die from COVID-19.

ISRAEL

Israel's then-Health Minister Yaakov Litzman tested positive in April and recovered. Litzman is a leader in Israel's ultra-Orthodox community, which has seen a high rate of infection as many have defied restrictions on religious gatherings. The minister for Jerusalem affairs, Rafi Peretz, tested positive over the summer as cases surged nationwide and recovered.

SOUTH AFRICA

The country's defense minister, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, mineral resources and energy minister, Gwede Mantashe, and labor minister, Thulas Nxesi, were infected as cases surged in June and July.

SOUTH SUDAN

Vice President Riek Machar was among several Cabinet ministers infected.

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Vice President Isatou Touray tested positive in July along with the ministers of finance, energy and agriculture.

GUINEA-BISSAU

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Associated Press writers around the world contributed.

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Associated Press writers around the world contributed.

The Latest: Putin offers 'sincere support' to Trump

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump testing positive for the coronavirus (all times EDT):

5:15 a.m.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is extending wishes of a speedy recovery to U.S. President Donald Trump and his wife, Melania, and expressing "sincere support in this difficult moment," according to a statement released by the Kremlin on Friday.

Trump announced on Twitter early Friday that he and first lady Melania Trump had tested positive for the coronavirus.

The Kremlin says Putin sent Trump a telegram saying, "I hope that your inherent vitality, good spirits

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and optimism will help you cope with the dangerous virus.”

5 a.m.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo says he and his wife have tested negative for the coronavirus after they were examined on their airplane 20 minutes prior to landing in Dubrovnik, Croatia, on Friday.

He said it was the fourth time in two weeks he has been tested.

President Donald Trump announced on Twitter early Friday that he and first lady Melania Trump had tested positive for the coronavirus.

Pompeo says the last time he was with Trump was on Sept. 15, at the White House, for the signing of normalization agreements among Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

The top U.S. diplomat says he is reconsidering upcoming travel to Florida on Saturday and Asia starting Sunday as a precaution.

He says, “We are praying for the president and the First Lady and we hope they have a speedy recovery.”

4:30 a.m.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is wishing U.S. President Donald Trump a “speedy recovery” from COVID-19.

Johnson tweeted Friday morning: “My best wishes to President Trump and the First Lady. Hope they both have a speedy recovery from coronavirus.”

Johnson was hospitalized for a week in April after he contracted COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus. After he was released, the prime minister thanked doctors and nurses at St. Thomas’s Hospital for saving his life. Johnson was treated in the hospital’s intensive care unit, where he received oxygen but was not put on a ventilator.

Trump announced on Twitter early Friday that he and first lady Melania Trump had tested positive for the coronavirus.

4:20 a.m.

The Kremlin is sending wishes of speedy recovery to U.S. President Donald Trump after he said he and his wife Melania Trump tested positive for the coronavirus.

“We certainly wish President Trump a speedy and easy recovery,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Friday.

Russia currently has the fourth largest coronavirus caseload in the world with over 1.19 million confirmed cases and more than 21,000 deaths. The outbreak in Russia started to grow rapidly in September, with health officials reporting 9,412 new confirmed cases Friday in the largest daily surge since late May.

3:55 a.m.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is wishing the U.S. president and the first lady a “full and speedy recovery” after they said they tested positive for the coronavirus.

“Like millions of Israelis, Sara and I are thinking of President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump and wish our friends a full and speedy recovery,” Netanyahu tweeted on his official account, referring to his wife.

Netanyahu led an Israeli delegation to the White House for the Sept. 15 signing of normalization agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain at an outdoor ceremony attended by hundreds of people. Attendees did not practice social distancing and most guests did not wear masks.

2:20 a.m.

Vice President Mike Pence says he and his wife, Karen, are sending their “love and prayers” to President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump after the Trumps announced early Friday that they had tested positive for the coronavirus.

Pence says on Twitter, “We join millions across America praying for their full and swift recovery.”

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Trump's positive test came just hours after he confirmed late Thursday that senior aide Hope Hicks had come down with the virus.

The White House had no immediate comment on whether Pence had been tested after the Trumps' and Hicks' diagnoses.

1:40 a.m.

President Donald Trump's White House doctor has issued a statement saying the president will continue carrying out his duties "without disruption" after contracting the coronavirus.

Dr. Sean Conley, the physician to the president, says the president and first lady Melania Trump "are both well at this time, and they plan to remain at home within the White House during their convalescence."

Trump has canceled plans to attend a fundraiser and to fly to Florida for a rally on Friday, but he did keep on his schedule a previously planned midday telephone call "on COVID-19 support to vulnerable seniors."

Shares, oil prices sink after Trump tests positive for virus

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

U.S. stock futures and Asian shares fell Friday after President Donald Trump said he and first lady Melania Trump had tested positive for the new coronavirus.

The future contracts for both the S&P 500 and the Dow industrials dropped nearly 2% but were trading 1.2% lower several hours later. Oil prices tumbled about 3%.

Trump tweeted news of his test results just hours after the White House announced that senior aide Hope Hicks had come down with the virus after traveling with the president several times this week.

The positive test reading for the leader of the world's largest economy heaps uncertainty onto a growing pile of unknowns investors are grappling with, first among them how it might affect the Nov. 3 election and American policies on trade, tariffs and many other issues beyond then.

"To say this potentially could be a big deal is an understatement," Rabobank said in a commentary. "Anyway, everything now takes a backseat to the latest incredible twist in this US election campaign."

A statement issued by Trump's doctor saying both he and his wife were well and that he would continue his duties appeared to calm the markets' reaction.

Germany's DAX gave up 0.6% to 12,649.29 and the CAC 40 in Paris lost 0.6% to 4,796.97. Britain's FTSE 100 slipped 0.5% to 5,850.86.

Trading in Asia was thin, with markets in Shanghai and Hong Kong closed. The Nikkei 225 index shed strong early gains, losing 0.7% to 23,029.90 after the Tokyo Stock Exchange resumed trading following an all day outage due to a technical failure.

Reports that the Japanese government is preparing new stimulus measures to help the economy recover from a prolonged downturn worsened by the coronavirus pandemic provided only a temporary lift. Prices fell further after Trump's announcement.

Australia's benchmark S&P/ASX 200 slipped 1.4% to 5,791.50. Shares in Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia also fell.

On Thursday, the benchmark S&P 500 ended the day 0.5% higher, at 3,380.80, the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.1% to 27,816.90 and the Nasdaq composite rose 1.4% to 11,326.51, as big tech-oriented stocks propped up the market, much as they have through the pandemic.

Such big swings have become routine as investors assess chances of a deal on Capitol Hill to send more cash to Americans, restore jobless benefits for laid-off workers and deliver assistance to airlines and other industries hit particularly hard by the pandemic.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin continued their talks on Thursday, but no breakthrough arrived before stock trading ended on Wall Street. Instead, there were only hopes that were periodically raised and dashed as government officials took turns criticizing each other.

"Things remain fluid; we all know what is at stake if this deal does not go through before markets sun-down, it is unlikely to be pretty ugly," Stephen Innes of Axi said in a commentary.

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Beyond potential political developments, investors will be watching for job figures due out Friday. Data released Thursday painted a mixed picture for the economy, with one report showing the number of workers filing for unemployment benefits last week fell to 837,000 from 873,000. That was less than economists expected, but incredibly high compared with before the pandemic.

With airlines and other major companies announcing layoffs and furloughs, another round of economic aid from Congress is seen as crucial. Treasury Secretary Stephen Mnuchin and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi have worked effectively together in the past, helping to drive through the previous economic rescue approved by Congress in March. But the country's deepening partisan divide has stymied progress, with the presidential election only about a month away.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury was steady at 0.67%.

U.S. benchmark crude lost \$1.12 to \$37.60 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It gave up \$1.50 to \$38.72 on Thursday. Brent crude, the international standard, lost \$1.20 to \$39.73 per barrel.

The dollar weakened to 105.21 Japanese yen from 105.54 yen. The euro weakened to \$1.1724 from \$1.1747.

US hiring likely slowed in September for 3rd straight month

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A critical snapshot of the job market and the economy to be released Friday is expected to show a further slowdown in hiring as the nation's viral caseload creeps higher and as government financial aid has faded.

When the Labor Department issues its September jobs report, economists predict it will show a gain of 850,000, according to a survey by data provider FactSet. That would mark a third straight monthly slowdown, after June's 4.8 million job gain, July's 1.7 million and August's 1.4 million.

If the forecast for September proves accurate, it would mean that the economy has regained only slightly more than half the 22 million jobs that vanished when the pandemic flattened the economy in early spring. Should job gains continue to remain below 1 million a month, it would take until late 2021 or 2022 to recoup them all.

This will be the last jobs monthly report before the U.S. presidential election on Nov. 3. Polls consistently show that the economy is a key issue for voters.

So far, hiring has rebounded quickly compared with previous recessions. The gains have mainly reflected millions of temporarily laid-off Americans who were called back to work when retailers, restaurants, medical offices and other businesses reopened, at least partly, from their pandemic-induced shutdowns.

But slowing job growth has raised the specter of a prolonged downturn that feeds on itself and becomes harder to fully reverse. Many temporary layoffs are becoming permanent as hotels, restaurants, airlines, retailers, entertainment venues and other employers anticipate a longer slump than they initially expected. There is also growing fear of a resurgence of the virus, which would compound the threat.

The longer that laid-off workers fail to find jobs, the more likely it is that they will have to look for new work with new employers or in different occupations. Doing so can require additional training or education and take much longer to achieve than just returning to a previous job. The delay in landing a new job also erodes spending among the longer-term unemployed. The blow to consumer spending can force further job cuts as other businesses see their revenue decline and are forced to retrench.

A flood of government financial support had delayed such a vicious cycle in the spring and summer. A \$600-a-week federal check that Congress provided in an economic aid package was made available to the unemployed in addition to each state's jobless benefit. Government checks for \$1,200 were also sent to most adults.

But the \$600 benefit expired at the end of July. And while congressional negotiations, led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, continue, the prospect of a significant new aid package before the November elections looks far from certain.

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Without additional economic assistance, incomes will likely drop in the coming months, said Gus Faucher, chief economist at PNC Financial. After-tax income in August was higher than in February, partly because millions of Americans were receiving jobless aid. But it has fallen in three of the past four months. And Faucher said he expects after-tax income to fall below pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year.

"That means it will be difficult for consumers to maintain their spending," he said.

Overall wages and salaries are still 4% below pre-pandemic levels. In August, Americans' incomes fell 2.7%, the government reported Thursday. Income was slowed by a sharp drop in unemployment aid payments, reflecting the end of the \$600-a-week federal benefit.

The economy does show some positive signs. Americans are rushing to buy homes, encouraged by near-record low mortgage rates. Pending home sales jumped in August to a record high. And consumer confidence rose in September, fueled by optimism among higher-income households, though it remains below pre-pandemic levels.

Some real-time indicators suggest that hiring has continued to improve. Kronos, a human resources and timekeeping software firm, says shifts worked at small companies picked up in September after having weakened in July and August.

Yet the number of people requesting unemployment aid remains unusually elevated, with 837,000 claims filed last week. That's about 35,000 lower than the previous week but still historically high.

Until a vaccine is developed, many economists say that hiring and economic growth won't fully recover. Restaurants, for example, rehired many employees over the summer as outdoor dining picked up. But as temperatures cool, business may fall off again, which could force many restaurants to lay off workers again. One in six restaurants have shut down because of the viral pandemic, the National Restaurant Association says.

In the meantime, many large companies have announced further layoffs in recent days.

Disney said this week that it's cutting 28,000 jobs in California and Florida, a consequence of the damage it's suffered from the viral outbreak and the shutdowns and attendance limits that were imposed in response. Allstate said it will shed 3,800 jobs — 7.5% of its workforce.

And tens of thousands of airline workers will lose their jobs this month as federal aid to the airlines expires. The airlines were barred from cutting jobs as long as they were receiving the government assistance. Two of them — American and United — announced that they would begin to furlough 32,000 employees after lawmakers and the White House failed to agree on a pandemic relief package that would extend the aid to airlines. And on Thursday, those furloughs began.

In addition, Marathon Petroleum, the Ohio refiner, is slashing 2,000 jobs. And the U.K.'s Royal Dutch Shell said it's planning to cut up to 9,000 jobs worldwide by the end of 2022, though it's not known whether any are in the United States.

Timeline of Trump's activities in week coronavirus hit home

WASHINGTON (AP) — With just a month to go until the election, President Donald Trump had a busy schedule during the week the coronavirus hit home with him. Trump tweeted early Friday that he and first lady Melania Trump had tested positive for the coronavirus.

MONDAY

— Trump surveys a truck produced by Lordstown Motors on the White House South Lawn at an event attended by two members of Congress and three representatives from the Lordstown, Ohio, manufacturer.

— Trump holds a Rose Garden event to announce an administration effort to distribute millions of coronavirus test kits to states. The event is attended by administration officials including Vice President Mike Pence, members of Congress and state officials.

TUESDAY

— Trump travels to Cleveland for a 90-minute presidential debate against Democratic rival Joe Biden. The two men are both tested ahead of the debate and stand behind lecterns positioned a good distance from one another. They do not wear masks during the faceoff.

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— White House aide Hope Hicks is part of a large entourage that travels to Ohio with Trump aboard Air Force One for the debate, including members of the Trump family. Trump's adult children and senior staff do not wear masks during the debate, violating host rules.

WEDNESDAY

— Trump travels to Minnesota for a fundraiser at a private home in suburban Minneapolis and an outdoor rally in Duluth.

— Hicks is among the White House aides who accompany Trump on the trip. She feels unwell on the return trip and isolates herself aboard Air Force One.

THURSDAY

— Hicks tests positive for the coronavirus.

— Trump flies to his Bedminster resort in New Jersey for a private fundraiser. Several aides who were in proximity to Hicks scrap plans to accompany Trump.

— Trump announces in an evening interview on Fox News that he and the first lady are being tested for the coronavirus. He later tweets that they will "begin our quarantine process!"

FRIDAY

— Trump tweets shortly before 1 a.m. that he and the first lady have tested positive for the virus and "will begin our quarantine and recovery process immediately."

— Dr. Sean Conley, physician to the president, releases a statement that the president and first lady "are both well at this time, and they plan to remain at home within the White House during their convalescence."

Trump says he and first lady tested positive for coronavirus

By JILL COLVIN and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said early Friday that he and first lady Melania Trump have tested positive for the coronavirus, a stunning announcement that plunges the country deeper into uncertainty just a month before the presidential election.

Trump, who has spent much of the year downplaying the threat of a virus that has killed more than 205,000 Americans, said he and Mrs. Trump were quarantining. The White House physician said the president is expected to continue carrying out his duties "without disruption" while recovering.

Still, Trump's diagnosis was sure to have a destabilizing effect in Washington, raising questions about how far the virus had spread through the highest levels of the U.S. government. Hours before Trump announced he had contracted the virus, the White House said a top aide who had traveled with him during the week had tested positive.

"Tonight, @FLOTUS and I tested positive for COVID-19. We will begin our quarantine and recovery process immediately," Trump tweeted just before 1 a.m. "We will get through this TOGETHER!"

Trump was last seen by reporters returning to the White House on Thursday evening and did not appear visibly ill. Trump is 74 years old, putting him at higher risk of serious complications from a virus that has infected more than 7 million people nationwide.

The president's physician said in a memo that Trump and the first lady, who is 50, "are both well at this time" and "plan to remain at home within the White House during their convalescence."

The diagnosis marks a devastating blow for a president who has been trying desperately to convince the American public that the worst of the pandemic is behind them. In the best of cases, if he develops no symptoms, which can include fever, cough and breathing trouble, it will force him off the campaign trail just weeks before the election.

Trump's handling of the pandemic has already been a major flashpoint in his race against Democrat Joe Biden, who spent much of the summer off the campaign trail and at his home in Delaware because of the virus. Biden has since resumed a more active campaign schedule, but with small, socially distanced crowds. He also regularly wears a mask in public, something Trump mocked him for at Tuesday night's debate.

"I don't wear masks like him," Trump said of Biden. "Every time you see him, he's got a mask. He could be speaking 200 feet away from me, and he shows up with the biggest mask I've ever seen."

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There was no immediate comment from the Biden campaign on whether the former vice president had been tested since appearing at the debate with Trump or whether he was taking any additional safety protocols.

Trump had been scheduled to attend a fundraiser and hold another campaign rally in Sanford, Florida, on Friday evening. But just after 1 a.m., the White House released a revised schedule with only one event: A phone call on "COVID-19 support to vulnerable seniors."

Trump's announcement came hours after he confirmed that Hope Hicks, one of most trusted and longest-serving aides, had been diagnosed with the virus Thursday. Hicks began feeling mild symptoms during the plane ride home from a rally in Minnesota on Wednesday evening, according to an administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity to disclose private information. She was isolated from other passengers aboard the plane, the person said.

Hicks had been with Trump and other senior staff aboard Marine One and Air Force One en route to that rally and had accompanied the president to Tuesday's presidential debate in Cleveland, along with members of the Trump family. They did not wear masks during the debate, in violation of the venue rules.

Multiple White House staffers have previously tested positive for the virus, including Vice President Mike Pence's press secretary, Katie Miller, national security adviser Robert O'Brien and one of the president's personal valets.

But Trump has consistently played down concerns about being personally vulnerable, even after White House staff and allies were exposed and sickened. Since the coronavirus emerged earlier this year, Trump has refused to abide by basic public health guidelines — including those issued by his own administration — such as wearing masks in public and practicing social distancing. Instead, he has continued to hold campaign rallies that draw thousands of supporters.

"I felt no vulnerability whatsoever," he said told reporters back in May.

The news was sure to rattle an already shaken nation still grappling with how to safely reopen the economy without driving virus transmission. The White House has access to near-unlimited resources, including a constant supply of quick-result tests, and still failed to keep the president safe, raising questions about how the rest of the country will be able to protect its workers, students and the public as businesses and schools reopen.

Questions remain about why it took so long for Trump to be tested and why he and his aides continued to come to work and travel after Hicks fell ill. Trump traveled to New Jersey on Thursday for a fundraiser, exposing attendees to the virus.

Pence's aides had no immediate comment on whether the vice president had been tested or in contact with Trump.

It is unclear where the Trumps and Hicks may have caught the virus, but in his Fox interview, Trump seemed to suggest it may have been spread by someone in the military or law enforcement.

"It's very, very hard when you are with people from the military or from law enforcement, and they come over to you, and they want to hug you, and they want to kiss you," he said, "because we really have done a good job for them. And you get close. And things happen."

The White House began instituting a daily testing regimen for the president's senior aides after earlier positive cases close to the president. Anyone in close proximity to the president or vice president is also tested every day, including reporters.

Yet since the early days of the pandemic, experts have questioned the health and safety protocols at the White House and asked why more wasn't being done to protect the commander in chief. Trump continued to shake hands with visitors long after public health officials were warning against it and he initially resisted being tested.

Trump is far from the first world leader to test positive for the virus, which previously infected Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who spent a week in the hospital, including three nights in intensive care. Former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was hospitalized last month while fighting what he called a "hellish" case of COVID-19.

While there is currently no evidence that Trump is seriously ill, the positive test raises questions about

what would happen if he were to become incapacitated due to illness.

The Constitution's 25th Amendment spells out the procedures under which a president can declare themselves "unable to discharge the powers and duties" of the presidency. If he were to make that call, Trump would transmit a written note to the Senate president pro tempore, Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. Pence would serve as acting president until Trump transmitted "a written declaration to the contrary."

The vice president and a majority of either the Cabinet or another body established by law, can also declare the president unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, in which case Pence would "immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President" until Trump could provide a written declaration to the contrary.

Associated Press writer Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

Trump debate comment pushing Black Americans, others to vote

By KAT STAFFORD, JAY REEVES AND CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — When President Donald Trump refused to outright condemn white nationalists in this week's presidential debate and urged his supporters to monitor polling sites, Portia Roberson was reminded of earlier eras when Black Americans were intimidated at the polls to deter them from voting.

Roberson, a 51-year-old Black woman who lives in Detroit, found the comments chilling — but also felt a renewed resolve to vote.

For many Black Americans and other people of color, Trump's comments in his debate with Democratic challenger Joe Biden were a harsh reminder that the nation has yet to fully grapple with systemic racism laid bare this year by protests against police killings of Black people, the coronavirus pandemic, and the resulting economic fallout.

But they were also a call to action.

"I hope that we take some of that frustration, anger and sadness that we've all been feeling for the better part of 2020, and use it to motivate ourselves to go to the polls and make sure we vote and vote for candidates who really reflect what Black folks need in this country," said Roberson, CEO of the Detroit nonprofit Focus: Hope.

Trump tried to walk back his debate comments on Wednesday, but the moment when he told one far-right group to "stand back and stand by" had already been cemented in the minds of many Americans, experts and activists say. A day after the debate, the president said he didn't know the group but that it should "let law enforcement do their work."

During the debate, he also urged his "supporters to go into the polls and watch very carefully because that's what has to happen."

Eric Sheffield, a Black real estate developer in Atlanta whose parents hail from the Deep South, said Trump's comments reminded him of the Jim Crow era.

"I hear the ghost of voter suppressionists past," said Sheffield, 52. "It's the same soup. It's just warmed over now."

It's not just Black Americans who took notice — and umbrage — at the president's debate comments. Similar concerns are also reverberating among Americans from other backgrounds, said Anna Mach, a biracial Filipino American woman who is a master's student at the University of Denver.

"I'm disgusted and angry and terrified by those comments," Mach, 22, said. "But I'm not surprised."

Since the coronavirus, which first flared in China, spread to the United States, Mach said she's seen a surge in hate directed toward Asian Americans. Trump himself has been criticized for referring to COVID-19 as the "Chinese virus."

"I'm worried there will be more hate crimes from white supremacists," she said.

On Thursday, when asked for a definitive statement on whether the president denounces white supremacy, White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said that Trump had said the day before: "I have

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always denounced any form of that.”

Some organizations are working to transform the fears elicited by Trump’s comments into votes.

The New Georgia Project has identified about 600,000, Black, Latino, Asian American and young voters that it wanted to encourage to vote in November, said CEO Nse Ufot. She said that doesn’t include an additional 90,000 Black voters who live in Georgia’s “rural Black belt” who didn’t vote in 2016 and who they’re also trying to reach.

“The debate was not about communicating his (Trump’s) vision for America,” Ufot said. “It was about making it super unpleasant and awful and distasteful and to encourage people to withdraw from the process, and we won’t let that happen.”

Dr. Elvin Geng, a professor at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis helped establish Asian Americans Against Trump, which has been funding digital and print ads in Asian-language media outlets in battleground states.

Geng hopes younger Asian Americans who don’t support Trump will talk to their relatives who do about their thinking and maybe change some minds.

“In many realms ... immigrants do look to their kids for what they think, how to think about what’s happening in America,” Geng said.

While Trump’s comments — and his record on race — may have unsettled many Americans, for some Black people they evoke a particularly dark history.

The rhetoric conjured up memories of Southern segregationists and voter intimidation tactics for the Rev. Wendell H. Paris, 75, who was involved in voting rights work in the 1960s including registration drives in Alabama and the Selma-to-Montgomery march.

“Whenever you hear him say, ‘law and order,’ that’s coded language,” said Paris. “We have reverted back to the racial situation of the 1950s and the 1960s.”

Even after the Voting Rights Act in 1965 offered greater protections, Paris recalled the way white deputies in uniform would show up at voting precincts in mostly Black areas to watch over voters — which had the effect of intimidating them given the history of racist mistreatment.

Because of that history, University of Michigan political science professor Vincent Hutchings said he believes Trump’s comments are stirring legitimate concerns that overzealous supporters will cause trouble at polling sites, particularly in Black communities.

“What sorts of things would represent violations or fraud?” Hutchings asked. “It’s very murky and so, as a consequence, people have to exercise their own discretion, and when that happens, all bets are off, so it is certainly dangerous in that regard.”

Chicago resident Cynthia Bell, who said the debate “broke my heart,” has decided to vote early out of concern over potential intimidation at the polls.

“How is this possible in this day and age?” asked Bell, who manages a senior center in her mostly Black community. “What have we gotten ourselves into?”

Reeves reported from Birmingham, Alabama, and Fernando from East Greenwich, Rhode Island. Associated Press writers Aaron Morrison in New York, Terry Tang in Phoenix and Tammy Webber in Oak Park, Illinois, also contributed. Stafford, Reeves, Fernando, Morrison and Tang are members of The Associated Press’ Race and Ethnicity team.

India’s contracting economy rebooting from coronavirus blow

By ASHOK SHARMA and RISHABH R. JAIN Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Millions of distressed Indian manufacturers and traders are counting on the eagerly-awaited October-December festive season to rescue them from their coronavirus catastrophe.

But spending may be the last thing on the minds of many Indians who have lost their jobs or businesses in the pandemic downturn, and pressure is building for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to do more to regain the momentum of growth that, at 8.2% in 2016-17, made India one of the fastest growing major economies.

The Hindu Dussehra, Diwali and Durga Puja celebrations that extend through the Christmas and New

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Year holidays are an occasion to splurge on big ticket items like gold, homes and cars as well as clothing, smartphones and electronics.

This year will likely lack the customary pomp and show, given the need for masks and social distancing with the pandemic still raging and no vaccine yet available.

The government began easing a stringent two-month-long lockdown in June, but business still is only a quarter to a fifth of usual and customers are scarce, said Praveen Khandelwal, general secretary of the Confederation of All India Traders.

In August, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced \$1.46 trillion in infrastructure projects to boost the sagging economy and allocated \$2 billion to upgrading the country's overwhelmed health system.

That followed a 1.7 trillion rupees (\$22 billion) economic stimulus package announced in March, including delivering rations of grain and lentils for 800 million people, some 60% of the world's second-most populous country.

Other subsidies included a meager cash grant of 6,000 rupees (\$80) a year each for 86 million poor farmers and free cooking gas cylinders for 83 million poor women until the end of September.

The economy still contracted an unprecedented 24% in the April-June quarter, with another downturn forecast for July-September.

The government needs to do more, said Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee, such as direct cash transfers for the poor and others severely affected by the prolonged lockdown. India's pandemic assistance has amounted to only about 1% of its GDP, he said, compared with the U.S.'s package in March of about 10% of its GDP.

The crisis is far from over: India's coronavirus caseload jumped from 1 million in mid-July to 6.3 million in less than three months and the number of fatalities is approaching 100,000.

Modi's administration is hard strapped to push out more stimulus, however, given the financial demands of dealing with the pandemic on top of military tensions with China along a disputed border in the mountainous Ladakh region, where both sides have amassed tens of thousands of troops.

Defense analysts estimate India may need up to 1 billion rupees (\$13 million a day to run its military machine at an altitude of 16,000 feet (4,875 meters) if the two countries fail to defuse their months-long faceoff.

The lockdown imposed in late March cost more than 10 million impoverished migrant workers their jobs in the cities. Many made grueling journeys back to their hometowns and villages. Now they face the ordeal of trying to get back to their factory jobs.

"There is almost no work," said Ram Ratan, 46, who was working in a printing company before he returned to his home village in April. "We keep roaming around, looking for some steady work, but most factories don't let us in."

Mansoor Ansari is among hundreds of workers who wait every day on what is called a "labor roundabout," in an industrial area, hoping to get picked up by employers.

Before the pandemic lockdown, Ansari had a steady job at a garment factory in the industrial town of Manesar near New Delhi, earning \$200 a month, he said. He was able to pay rent and send money to his wife and five children in a village in eastern Bihar state.

As Ansari's factory shut down, he joined a caravan of workers who walked several miles before jumping on to overcrowded flatbed trucks to get home.

Unable to find work there, and digging himself deeper into debt, after restrictions were lifted Ansari joined the legions of workers returning to Manesar.

Deshraj, who uses one name, lost his job as a waiter at a roadside eatery in Surat, a city in western India known for diamond cutting and polishing, in the spring and resumed farming in his home village. But unusually heavy rains in April damaged the crop.

"This is a common story in villages where crops have been destroyed by unseasonal rains, leading people to commit suicide," said Raja Bhaiya, who runs a non-governmental organization to help farmers.

Compared to the scale of need, government relief has been "meager," Raghuram Rajan, former governor of the Reserve Bank of India, said in a Linked In post. He likened such help to a tonic.

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"When the disease is vanquished, it can help a patient get out of her sickbed faster," Rajan said. "But if a patient has atrophied, a stimulus will have little effect."

The government maintains that the worst is behind.

Agriculture overall is growing at a 3.4% pace. With good monsoon rains, India might attain a record of 301 million metric tons of food-grain output, including wheat, rice, oil seeds, lentils and mustard, in the 2020-21 financial year — 4 million metric tons more than in 2019-20.

Key sectors such as coal, oil, gas, steel and cement have been recovering gradually, said the government's chief economic advisor, Krishnamurthy Subramanian.

"In a V-shaped recovery, it is possible that the slope (of rise) actually may not always be the same exactly as that of the fall, which is a drastic one," he said.

One other bright spot: Domestic brands are getting a boost from a trend to boycott inexpensive Chinese-made statues of Hindu deities, festive LED lights and electronics that have flooded the market, in favor of locally made products, said Khandelwal.

For India's nearly 70 million traders, who employ about 400 million people, an upturn could not come fast enough. They are keeping their fingers crossed and trying not to let their hopes get too high as the festive season approaches.

Sanyam Jain, 24, and his brother Ankit Jain, 31, owned three clothing shops in New Delhi and its suburbs, each store averaging more than \$25,000 in monthly sales before the lockdown.

They've shut one store and would be happy to sell even half of their inventory this year.

"The government hasn't given us any relief at all," said Ankit Jain.

Sales usually pick up 20-25% during the holidays, said Nitin Makkar, who runs a store in Noida on the outskirts of New Delhi, the capital. "I have no such hopes this time as people may restrict themselves to buying essentials and avoiding luxurious items."

AP Writer Biswajeet Banerjee in Lucknow, India, contributed to this report.

California milestone: 4 million acres burned in wildfires

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — California is poised to hit a fearsome milestone: 4 million acres burned this year by wildfires that have killed 30 people and incinerated hundreds of homes in what is already the worst fire season on record.

Flames have scorched an area larger than Connecticut and fire crews at a blaze in the northern wine country were on high alert as forecasters warned of red flag conditions of extreme fire danger into Saturday morning.

Winds up to 30 mph (48 kph) were forecast to push through the hills in Napa and Sonoma counties as the Glass Fire, exploded in size earlier in the week, continued to threaten more than 28,000 homes and other buildings.

"It's a time of nervousness," said Paul Gullixson, a spokesman for Sonoma County.

Winds were blowing at higher elevations on the western side of the fire and crews expected a long battle to keep flames from jumping containment lines and spot fires from leaping ahead to spark new blazes.

"It's going to be a big firefight for us over the next 36 hours," said Billy See, an assistant chief with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire.

More crews and equipment were deployed in and around Calistoga, a town of 5,000 people known for hot springs, mud baths and wineries in the hills of Napa County about 70 miles (110 kilometers) north of San Francisco.

The area was also experiencing high temperatures and thick smoke that fouled the air throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.

Gov. Gavin Newsom toured fire-ravaged Napa County on Thursday and said the state was putting "all we have in terms of resources" into firefighting, particularly over the 36 hours of the wind period.

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"I've got four young kids in elementary school and I can't imagine for the children and parents, the families, that may be seeing these images, what's going through your minds," said Newsom, standing in front of a burned-out elementary school building.

"We're in it for the long haul. We're not just here for a moment. We're here to rebuild and to reimagine your school," he said, adding: "We have your backs."

The Glass Fire is the fourth major blaze in the region in three years and comes ahead of the third anniversary of an Oct. 8, 2017, wildfire that killed 22 people.

Newsom said people there have been "torn asunder by wildfires seemingly every single year, this drum-beat, where people are exhausted, concerned, anxious about their fate and their future."

Around the state, 17,000 firefighters were battling nearly two dozen major blazes. Virtually all the damage has been done since mid-August, when five of the six largest fires in state history erupted. Lightning strikes caused some of the most devastating blazes.

Numerous studies have linked bigger wildfires in America to climate change from the burning of coal, oil and gas. Scientists say climate change has made California much drier, meaning trees and other plants are more flammable.

Cal Fire Deputy Chief Jonathan Cox said wildfires have scorched 3.9 million acres in California since Aug. 15. That figure, which works out to over 6,000 square miles (15,500 square kilometers), is astonishing even in a state that has had its fair share of fires.

"It's likely that over the next day or two we will crest the 4-million-acre mark. The biggest year before this year was 1.54 million," Cal Fire Chief Thom Porter said. "We are dwarfing that previous record and we have a lot of season left to go."

Fire officials said the Glass Fire had first priority. Since erupting last Sunday, the fire has destroyed nearly 600 buildings, including 220 homes and nearly the same number of commercial structures.

Some 80,000 people were under evacuation orders, which were expanded on Thursday.

Fire and public safety officials warned that more evacuations are possible. They asked the public to remain vigilant, stay out of evacuation zones and quit demanding that officers let them back into off-limits neighborhoods.

About 150 miles (240 kilometers) to the north of wine country, the Zogg Fire, which also erupted during Sunday's high winds and grew quickly, has killed four people.

The Shasta County sheriff's office released two of their names Thursday: Karin King, 79, who was found on the road where the fire started, and Kenneth Vossen, 52, who suffered serious burns and later died in a hospital. Both were from the small town of Igo.

The fire had destroyed 153 buildings, about half of them homes. It was 39% contained.

Winds intensifying as firefighters battle fire in California

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Winds grew stronger Thursday in California's wine country, threatening to escalate a massive wildfire that has burned for days and destroyed hundreds of buildings.

More fire crews and equipment were deployed in and around Calistoga, a town of 5,000 people known for hot springs, mud baths and wineries in the hills of Napa County about 70 miles (110 kilometers) north of San Francisco.

Winds gusting to 30 mph were forecast to push through the hills Thursday night and Friday, according to the National Weather Service. The area was also experiencing high temperatures and thick smoky air.

Fire and public safety officials warned that more evacuations are possible. They asked the public to remain vigilant, stay out of evacuation zones and quit demanding that officers let them back into off-limits neighborhoods.

"It's been a long fire season and we're still at the heart of fire season here in California," said Billy See, an incident commander with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, also known as Cal Fire.

By the end of the week, "hopefully Mother Nature will play nice for a bit so my folks can get a little more

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aggressive on the ground," he said.

More than 2,000 firefighters were battling the Glass Fire, which has charred 92 square miles (238.28 square kilometers) in Napa and Sonoma counties with almost no containment. It has destroyed nearly 600 buildings, including 220 homes and nearly the same number of commercial structures.

Gov. Gavin Newsom toured wildfire damage in Napa County on Thursday. With firefighters stretched thin by dozens of fires in recent weeks — and the potential for increasingly bad fire seasons in the future — Newsom promised to work for more funding to avoid and combat future blazes.

"I've got four young kids in elementary school and I can't imagine for the children and parents, the families, that may be seeing these images, what's going through your minds," said Newsom, standing in front of a burned-out elementary school building.

"We're in it for the long haul. We're not just here for a moment. We're here to rebuild and to reimagine your school," he said, adding: "We have your backs."

It's the fourth major fire there in three years and comes ahead of the third anniversary of an Oct. 8, 2017, wildfire that killed 22 people.

Three fires, driven by gusty winds and high temperatures, merged into one on Sunday, tearing into vineyards and mountain areas, including part of the city of Santa Rosa. About 70,000 people were under evacuation orders, including the entire population of Calistoga.

Cal Fire Deputy Chief Jonathan Cox said wildfires have scorched 3.9 million acres in California since Aug. 15, an astonishing record even in a state that has had its fair share of fires. The state is battling some two dozen major fires with crews scrambling to snuff out smaller fires before they balloon.

"It's likely that over the next day or two we will crest the 4 million-acre mark. The biggest year before this year was 1.54 million," Cal Fire Chief Thom Porter said. "We are dwarfing that previous record and we have a lot of season left to go."

Numerous studies have linked bigger wildfires in America to climate change from the burning of coal, oil and gas. Scientists say climate change has made California much drier, meaning trees and other plants are more flammable.

California's power grid operator called for voluntary conservation of electricity from 3 p.m. to 10 p.m. Thursday, as high heat is expected to grip the state, taxing electricity supplies, primarily from the use of air conditioning.

About 150 miles (240 kilometers) to the north of wine country, the Zogg Fire, which also erupted during Sunday's high winds and grew quickly, has killed four people.

The Shasta County sheriff's office released two of their names Thursday: Karin King, 79, who was found on the road where the fire started, and Kenneth Vossen, 52, who suffered serious burns and later died in a hospital. Both were from the small town of Igo.

The deadly blaze that spread to neighboring Tehama County has burned 87 square miles (nearly 226 square kilometers) and destroyed 153 buildings, about half of them homes. It was 39% contained.

Fire-related deaths in California this year total 30.

Since the beginning of the year, thousands of wildfires have burned over 6,000 square miles (15,500 square kilometers) in California. More than 96,000 residents are under evacuation orders across the state, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said.

This story has been corrected to accurately quote Newsom.

Denying, defending and numb: Voters not moved by Trump taxes

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

OSHKOSH, Wisconsin (AP) — Danielle Fairbank closed the tailgate of her fire-engine red pickup truck in a Target parking lot in Oshkosh, Wisconsin and offered a hearty "Fake news!" to dismiss reports that President Donald Trump paid only \$750 in income taxes in 2017.

The assembly worker at a nearby military vehicle plant just as swiftly brushed aside the notion that

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Trump's tiny tax bill put him out of touch with blue-collar workers like herself. Her job — which she's held throughout the recession and pandemic — is proof to her that the billionaire president is on the side of the working-class.

"I know in my heart he's doing more for this economy, for people like me and for me personally, than anyone is giving him credit," Fairbank said. "That stuff is made up, and it would have come out by now if it were true."

Trump's standing with white, working-class voters has proven resilient through federal investigations, impeachment and countless episodes of chaotic governing. But if those issues were too distant — centered on complicated foreign entanglements — reports about his tax avoidance might have had the potential to hit closer to home during a time of economic upheaval.

Yet, interviews with voters in swing-voting Wisconsin show scant evidence of damaging impact from The New York Times' reporting this week on Trump's long-secret tax returns.

In the hub of swing-voting Winnebago County and Milwaukee's dynamic suburbs, the reactions fit into categories of flat-out disbelief, like Fairbanks, defense of a tax strategy as smart business and an overall fatigue many voters feel with every revelation.

If there is was one common reaction, it's laughter, though not joyful.

Seth Willer snickered from the front porch of his home in the upscale neighborhood of Bellhaven Estates near the shores of Lake Winnebago on Oshkosh's east side when asked what he thought about Trump's income taxes.

"Nah, that's the game, right?" said the 40-year-old industrial laundry equipment distributor who supports Trump. "We all try to lower our tax burden. You can't blame him."

Likewise, Cathy Gerring, a 60-year-old part-time employee from the north Milwaukee suburb of Shorewood echoed, "I just feel he's a smart business owner."

Mary Herrick, down the street from Willer in Oshkosh's upscale subdivision notes Trump's donation of the president's salary as a counter to criticism of his tax burden. "That's giving back to the country," said Herrick, who works from home.

In fact, Trump donates his salary to charities, and continues to earn income from his real estate interests. In 2018, he reported making more than \$434 million in a federal disclosure. That same year he reported losses to the IRS of \$47 million, according to the New York Times report.

Some national polls have shown esteem for Trump's performance in business ebbing somewhat after similar stories that have suggested tax avoidance in the past. However, national polls have shown the president's support to be relatively stable at roughly 42 to 45 percent of voters nationally throughout the tumultuous summer and into the fall.

Amy Helmers also laughed about Trump's tax records, which he has refused to release as other presidents have, but out of exasperation.

"None of it surprises me," the 49-year-old mental health counselor said unloading her groceries outside Pick 'n Save on Oshkosh's middle-income south side. "He's got supporters thinking he's a patriot. But it's another example of the fraud he is."

Even before the coronavirus pandemic's economic upheaval, Trump's trade war with China slowed production of steel and machined parts in Oshkosh and the surrounding Fox River Valley, among the most politically competitive regions in the country.

Bob Poeschl, a politically independent member of Oshkosh's city council, calls revelations of Trump's tax maneuvers "appalling, but typical of this president."

"I find it out of touch with the American public and how hard they have to work to get," Poeschl, a low-income housing manager, said on the front porch in Oshkosh's politically mixed Washington Avenue neighborhood. "I have a hard time accepting my independently conservative friends who say how much he is doing for the economy."

Trump campaigned in Oshkosh in mid-August and is expected in Green Bay, the northern end of the valley, on Saturday. Democratic nominee Joe Biden campaigned in Manitowoc, part of the same media

market, last week.

Wendy Taylor says no one she knows in her tiny hometown of Clintonville, east of Oshkosh, trust reports Trump has avoided paying taxes.

"It's not true," the 57-year-old retired information technology manager said. "He's not the miser and cheat the media make him out to be."

She noted the \$72,000 in coronavirus relief her town of about 4,300 received was proof Trump was concerned about the well-being of low and middle-income Americans. "That was a lot of frickin' money for our little city."

Retiree Lee Houk of Pewaukee, a booming exurb west of Milwaukee, was just as dismissive of the tax claims. "I think it's just games being played by the Democrats," Houk, 69, said.

Associated Press reporter Steve Megargee contributed from Pewaukee, Wisconsin.

Why Trump doesn't want to talk about abortion rights

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump doesn't want to talk about abortion.

After years of saying he would appoint "pro-life" judges and bragging that the landmark Roe v. Wade decision would be overturned "automatically" if he won, Trump is now tiptoeing around the issue as he tries to get another justice confirmed to the Supreme Court before the Nov. 3 election.

"You don't know what's on the ballot," Trump interjected during this week's first presidential debate when Democrat Joe Biden said the ruling giving women the right to an abortion was at stake.

"Why is it on the ballot? Why is it on the ballot?" Trump demanded. "It's not on the ballot. ... There's nothing happening there."

That reticence stands in stark contrast to his past statements and underscores the risks Trump and Republicans are facing as they rush to confirm Judge Amy Coney Barrett before the election.

With polls showing Trump trailing Biden nationally and in some battleground states, Trump is trying to deliver for his conservative base while avoiding making abortion a central focus of the election. His campaign worries it could turn off voters who support abortion rights and drive on-the-fence or undecided voters — especially women — to turn out for Biden en masse.

"He knows at the end of the day that opposing access to safe, legal abortion is a losing strategy," said Kelley Robinson, executive director of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

While Trump insisted during the debate that Barrett's views on Roe v. Wade are unknown, there is little doubt she opposes abortion personally. She belonged to the University of Notre Dame's "Faculty for Life" group. She signed a 2015 letter to Catholic bishops affirming the "value of human life from conception to natural death." In 2006, she signed onto a newspaper ad sponsored by an anti-abortion group in which she said she opposed "abortion on demand."

The second page of the ad, which was unsigned, read, "It's time to put an end to the barbaric legacy of Roe v. Wade and restore laws that protect the lives of unborn children."

Barrett insisted in a 2017 White House questionnaire that her personal views on abortion and other issues would "have no bearing on the discharge of my duties as a judge." But in a 2013 Texas Law Review article, Barrett didn't include Roe v. Wade on a list of 10 cases she said are widely considered "super-precedents," ones no justice would dare reverse even if they believed they were wrongly decided.

During a 2013 lecture at Notre Dame on the 40th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, Barrett said she thought it was "very unlikely at this point that the court is going to overturn" the landmark ruling. But she said in 2016 that even if "the right to abortion" doesn't change, "I think some of the restrictions would change. ... The question is how much freedom the court is willing to let states have in regulating abortion."

Barrett also has voted at least twice on abortion issues as an appellate judge, both times joining dissenting opinions to decisions in favor of abortion rights.

"Oh, I think her record's awfully clear," said Republican Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri, speaking to re-

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porters on Capitol Hill. "She meets my standard of having evidence in the record, out there in public, on the record, that indicates that she understands that Roe was really an act of judicial imperialism that was wrongly decided. And I think her record of all the people being considered, the president considered, I think her record was by far the clearest on that."

Abortion rights activists agreed. "Amy Coney Barrett's record could not be more clear," said Kristin Ford, a spokeswoman for NARAL Pro-Choice America. "Trump made perfectly clear on the campaign trail in 2016 that he was going to appoint judges who were hostile to Roe v. Wade. ... We're taking him at his word."

Trump, however, insisted during the debate that Barrett's views on the topic were unknown and said he'd never discussed it with her, claiming that would be inappropriate.

"The president has been clear that he would never ask a judge to prejudge a case," said White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany. She stressed that Barrett had said on multiple occasions that "it is never appropriate for a judge to impose that judge's personal convictions, whether they derive from faith or anywhere else, on the law."

That approach stands in sharp contrast to Trump's past comments, including during a debate in 2016. It was then that Trump proudly declared, "The justices that I am going to appoint will be pro-life." He went as far as to say that overturning Roe v. Wade "will happen, automatically, in my opinion" if he was elected president, "because I am putting pro-life justices on the court."

It was a similar case during a Senate debate in Iowa this week, when Republican Sen. Joni Ernst criticized her opponent's support for abortion rights, while also saying she believes the chance of the court overturning Roe v. Wade is "very minimal. I don't see that happening."

The desire to gloss over the subject reflects an acknowledgment that the issue is a potentially potent motivator for the Democratic base. Recent polls show that a majority of voters oppose overturning Roe.

As they move toward Barrett's confirmation hearings, White House officials have expressed concern about what will happen if Democrats are able to successfully use the battle to highlight the potential impact on abortion rights as well as the future of the Affordable Care Act.

If Democrats are able to energize their base and win over enough swing voters, some Trump allies fear Trump could win the confirmation fight and, in the process, lose the election.

They're hoping that Democrats will go too far in attacking Barrett's faith and her family, energizing conservatives and turning off those in the middle. Trump's allies accuse Democrats of fear-mongering, arguing that they have been spreading anxiety about the court overturning Roe v. Wade for decades.

But advocates of abortion rights say the alarm bells are justified, with 17 cases currently in the legal pipeline. And even if Roe v. Wade is not overturned outright, Barrett's addition to the court could lead to the further erosion of abortion rights, with more and more restrictions.

Ford, from NARAL Pro-Choice America, said Trump and other Republicans "know that they are quite out of step with the mainstream" and are trying to have it both ways — putting Barrett on the court "while also trying to dance around their agenda."

But Mallory Quigley, of the Susan B. Anthony List, which seeks to elect candidates who oppose abortion rights, brushed off the suggestion that Trump was trying to hide anything.

"President Trump has governed as the most pro-life president in our nation's history and never misses an opportunity to bring up his pro-life policy victories on the campaign trail," she said. "Americans agree overwhelmingly with President Trump and pro-life senators that want to pass reasonable limits on abortion — and see abortion policy set by the legislature, not courts."

Associated Press writer Zeke Miller contributed to this report.

National Guard taps units for rapid response to civil unrest

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The National Guard has designated military police units in two states to serve as rapid reaction forces so they can respond quickly to any potential civil unrest around the country, following

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violent protests that rocked the nation's capital and several states this summer.

Military leaders don't explicitly tie the changes to concerns about possible election-related violence, but the nation is bracing for unrest surrounding the tumultuous presidential campaign, particularly if voting results are not known for days or weeks because of the increase in mail-in ballots.

According to the Guard, about 600 troops — 300 in both Alabama and Arizona — will be ready to deploy within 24 hours if requested by a governor in another state. And Guard leaders have also bought more than \$200,000 in new protective equipment, and have increased troop training on proper procedures in dealing with protests.

The moves come as Defense Department and National Guard leaders work to address shortfalls that were identified in the military response to the June protests triggered by the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Military reviews of the response to the protests found problems with coordination between various state and federal government and law enforcement agencies — which at times slowed down troop movements.

"Coordination and communication were the probably the things that we'll look back on and see very challenging," Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy said in an interview with The Associated Press. He said that as the protests escalated in D.C., and the call for help went out to governors around the country, 11 states said they were willing to provide support.

"But the problem with that is how quickly can you marshal them together, ensure they have the appropriate training, ensure they have the appropriate equipment, understand the task you're going to give them?" said McCarthy. "It's American streets. It could turn violent. It was an incredibly challenging thing."

Governors can use National Guard troops for a variety of things, ranging from natural disasters such as hurricanes and wildfires, to assisting with border security and civil unrest. If a governor needs additional help, they can request troops from other state governors through a compact agreement system that details how the forces will be used and what they can and cannot do.

Lt. Gen. Mark Sasseville, vice chief of the National Guard Bureau, said the Guard employs a graduated approach, with states using their own troops first, and then, if more help is needed, they request forces from other states within their region. If more support is needed, then governors reach out to states further away.

"That makes sense because typically the states have good relations with the neighboring states," said Sasseville in an interview with The Associated Press. "Speed becomes an element of this discussion."

The problem, however, is that some states couldn't free up troops to send to others because they also were dealing with protests or other emergencies. The Guard's decision to formally designate troops in Alabama and Arizona as quick reaction forces will help because those units have aircraft that will allow them to rapidly deploy to another state within 24 hours of a governor's request.

Guard officials said the forces in Alabama would respond in the eastern half of the country, and those in Arizona would respond in the west, and their deployment window at this point extends through the end of this year.

"A big thing that we've done differently is being able to move faster," said Sasseville, adding that the Guard also had to buy equipment to replace protective gear for some units.

During the June protests, governors used their own Guard troops and, in some cases sought and received forces from other states. At the peak, in early June, there were more than 43,000 Guard forces deployed across 34 states and the District of Columbia to help with civil unrest. That number has now plunged to about 3,200 across 10 states.

In extreme cases, the president can invoke the Insurrection Act and use active duty troops on domestic soil to quell riots or assist law enforcement. President Donald Trump pushed for that to happen, but senior defense and military leaders opposed it.

During the June protests, Defense Secretary Mark Esper drew the ire of the president when he told reporters that the Insurrection Act should be invoked in the United States "only in the most urgent and dire of situations." He added, "We are not in one of those situations now."

One Chicago community endures virus, violence and turmoil

By SHARON COHEN National Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — In harrowing moments, in the sobs of grieving mourners and the incessant wail of sirens, the crises of 2020 have played out painfully within a single Chicago community:

Patricia Frieson posted a hopeful Facebook message in late February when a mysterious new disease invaded her neighborhood: "May the world recover from coronavirus soon. May all be well and happy."

Less than three weeks later, she was gone.

Ron Cashaw is a shopkeeper who has devoted 17 years to building his business. A community mainstay, he plays Santa every year. Alerted one horrible weekend that looters were smashing the windows of his clothing store, he rushed to confront them.

Would he be wiped out?

Teyonna Lofton, a beaming high school graduate, was honored by friends and family with a car parade one spring day. Later, as she waited at a gas station to buy a soft drink, shots rang out, and she fell hard. She prayed she would not die.

In a chaotic year destined for the history books, Auburn Gresham has written its own grim chapter. This Black community on the city's South Side has endured a deadly virus, gun violence and economic misery — a constant state of turmoil that mirrors the tumult afflicting much of urban America.

Auburn Gresham was hit early by the pandemic. COVID-19 infections rose quickly. Stores closed during a citywide lockdown. Then the agonizingly public death of George Floyd spurred protests that turned ugly. Businesses were set ablaze. As summer arrived, shootings surged in the 6th police district. Over three months, there were a shocking 175 victims. The youngest, 10 and 11, were wounded in a drive-by attack.

Auburn Gresham has faced hard times before. Guns are easy to find. Fresh produce isn't. Poverty hovers around 20%. But there's never been anything like this: A once-in-a-century epidemic in a community without a hospital. Long lines of the newly unemployed waiting for food donations. Jobs disappearing. Anxious shopkeepers. And police racing from one scene to the next.

"Forty-five years I've been here and never has it been as bad as it is right now in terms of hopelessness, anger and despair. Never," says the Rev. Michael Pflieger, one of the city's most vocal social activists. He presides at St. Sabina, a Catholic church that's a community anchor.

One day in July, a gang dispute erupted in a shootout in front of a local funeral home, wounding 15 and leaving 60 bullet casings strewn about the sidewalk.

Pflieger walked over to the scene, then went home and cried.

"Take care everyone."

So began the Facebook message that Patricia Frieson posted in late winter.

As a nurse, Frieson had tended to the sick in Arkansas, where she'd relocated as a child to help her widowed grandmother. But her own ailments, including severe asthma and lymphedema (a swelling of the limbs), forced her to retire in the '90s. She returned to Auburn Gresham.

Frieson, a regular at the local Pentecostal church, was a devoted sister and loving aunt in a tight-knit family of nine siblings. She also was someone they could turn to for advice, a vocalist often called upon to sing at family weddings, parties and funerals.

On March 2, the family gathered for cake and ice cream to celebrate the birthday of Wanda Bailey, a sister who was two years older than Patricia.

A double tragedy followed.

More than a week later, Patricia's asthma flared up and she was hospitalized. Four days later, she was diagnosed with COVID-19. She died the next day — the first known casualty of the disease in all of Illinois — as Wanda entered the hospital for breathing problems. She died of the virus nine days later.

"My sisters never had a chance," says Anthony Frieson, who also was infected but didn't become seriously ill. "We have to figure out how to keep going without them."

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They were two of the earliest victims in the country of a pandemic that has ravaged Black people disproportionately. In Chicago, one of the nation's most segregated cities, nearly 43% of the virus' victims have been Black – more than twice the number of whites.

COVID-19 "has pulled the curtain back on historic health inequities... and Auburn Gresham is a tremendous example," says Dr. David Ansell, senior vice president for community health equity at Rush University Medical Center.

In Chicago, white people live on average almost nine years longer than Black people, compared with a four-year mortality gap nationwide, he says. And Auburn Gresham's rates of diabetes, asthma and cancer exceed citywide averages, according to the 2019 Chicago Health Atlas.

The higher rates of illness here and in other Black communities are attributed to a variety of factors, including lack of insurance and access to health care, poor housing, limited food options and stress.

As for the pandemic, Ansell says residents are also more vulnerable because many live in close quarters — multigenerational families, for example, sharing a bungalow — or hold front-line jobs in home health care, cafeterias and grocery stores.

State public health officials report more than 1,700 COVID-19 infections in ZIP code 60620, which includes Auburn Gresham. There were 77 COVID-19 deaths in the area as of late August, About half of the community's 45,000 residents have been tested.

Auburn Gresham was one of Chicago's early COVID-19 hot spots; city public health officials dispatched supplies, including masks and hand sanitizer. But some local leaders were extremely frustrated it took several weeks to bring a testing site to the area. City officials say those sites were set up as soon as kits and trained staff were available.

With stores closing and layoffs widespread, a local group, the Auburn Gresham Development Corp., stepped in, distributing about a half-million dollars from private donations and government funds to help pay mortgages, utilities and other bills. It also has kept on staff about a dozen workers who delivered food to the elderly, made well-being calls and dispatched a mobile testing unit to 13 senior or veteran centers.

Others have walked the streets to warn one segment of the population — victims and perpetrators of gun violence — of the dangers of a virus they could unwittingly pass on to their families.

The Target Area Development Corporation, a social service group that addresses stubborn local problems, supplied its outreach workers face masks to distribute while making their rounds to prevent gang retaliation.

It hasn't been easy making the argument to young men who pay little attention to the virus and already have a fatalistic view of life, says Autry Phillips, the group's executive director.

"Most of the youths we work with and talk to don't believe that they'll reach the ripe old age of 20 or 25 because what they see is that their friends are dying," he says. For them, seeing is believing so they think "if none of my guys have died from the virus, it's not real."

Some expected the pandemic would keep people hunkered down in their homes, reducing gang tensions.

"We thought that the violence would have died down," says Jerrell Wayne Harris, an outreach worker. "Unfortunately, it didn't. The same beefs were still out there."

Some worried longstanding disputes would be revived as the county jail released inmates to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The ready flow of guns in the community heightens the danger. Last year, 1,149 guns were recovered from the 6th police district — about 10% of the haul for the entire city.

As of the end of September, the district had recorded 59 homicides this year, nearly 60% higher than the same period last year.

The violence has stretched beyond bitter rivalries with the pandemic playing a supporting role.

When the virus turned Teyonna Lofton's high school graduation into a virtual event, she basked in her car parade celebration, preparing for the actual ceremony the next day.

Hours later, Lofton, 18, was in line outside a locked gas station, waiting to buy a soft drink. The crowd was buzzing with talk about protests nearby that had grown violent.

A white SUV pulled in and a gunman started shooting. One bullet struck Lofton in her left arm. She

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collapsed. And she prayed.

"No! Not me. Not today." She heard screams but didn't know if the shooter was gone. She saw a second victim sprawled on the ground. (He survived; no one was arrested.)

Lofton crawled on her stomach toward an ice cooler to prop herself up to inventory her wounds -- her fingers were already numb. A friend called 911 but the emergency center was overwhelmed with reports of looting and vandalism across the city. Police would receive about 65,000 calls — 50,000 more than normal — in a 24-hour period.

And Lofton, her jacket soaked in blood, couldn't wait.

Her mother arrived within moments. Lofton was whisked to a hospital where doctors found a bullet had pierced an artery. She needed two surgeries and a vein had to be grafted from her left leg to increase blood flow in her arm.

Now college is on hold as she undergoes therapy.

"I'm not angry at my shooter," she says. "This happens every day. It's just crazy that it happened to me ... I'm still here. I'm blessed. I can't complain."

And yet she is frustrated by a political system she believes favors the moneyed business interests and shortchanges the needs of her community. It's a common refrain in Chicago's Black and brown neighborhoods and one the mayor has pledged to address.

Why, Lofton asks, is there no local hospital? Why didn't police respond to her call? "Nobody helps us," she says. "Nobody."

No incident in Auburn Gresham was more shocking than the shootout outside a funeral home that wounded 15. In its aftermath, Pfleger, the pastor, couldn't stop crying.

Maybe it was the scale of the carnage. Or his doubts about whether his years of anti-gun activism had made a dent. Or maybe it was because he was reminded of his foster son, who was 18 when he was fatally shot across the street 22 years earlier.

"We're looking at a whole community suffering from PTSD," he says.

Police Commander Rahman Muhammad says there's been a big shift since he began work in the 6th district 25 years ago — the first of three tours — when gun violence revolved around narcotics or some other criminal enterprise.

Now, he says, social media is often the driving force behind the shootings. Disputes frequently begin online by gang members who've grown up together and are now rivals. They taunt each other over petty matters that escalate into tragedy.

Muhammad also says solving crimes has become tougher because of "an erosion of trust between the police and the community." Residents fear their own safety, and so are less inclined to cooperate.

Carlos Nelson, the head of the Greater Auburn Gresham group, views the recent rise in shootings as a byproduct of all the ills that torment this community — poverty, joblessness, a struggling education system -- combining to make people feel "hopeless and helpless."

Add to that warm weather when people are outside and "it's like a fuse that had been lit," he says. "It will subside. Then the numbers will tick up again. But until you deal with the core issues at hand, you're going to be talking about this forever."

"I had tears in my eyes," says Ron Cashaw.

Blocked by security bars, looters smashed the front window of his clothing store, Just Kicking, grabbed some clothing and ran away before Cashaw arrived.

The looting was something new, and horrible. But the community has a long history of trouble attracting and maintaining businesses.

"We were living in economic apartheid before the coronavirus," Nelson says.

Auburn Gresham suffers from decades of disinvestment that began as the population transitioned from white to Black in the 1960s, he says, and residents frequently travel outside the community for health care or groceries. That creates enormous hardships for the elderly.

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The pandemic added new pressures as barber shops, nail salons, restaurants and other mom-and-pop operations closed their doors, squeezing a community where about 30% of the residents are unemployed, according to Nelson.

Many of those working survive paycheck-to-paycheck, and they've suffered, too, amid furloughs and job cuts. Food pantries have popped up. Nelson's group, working with a food depository, has served 1,200 families a week.

So in late spring, when protests spread nationwide against police brutality and calls for racial justice following George Floyd's death, Auburn Gresham was fertile ground. Peaceful demonstrations spun into violence.

Stores burned to the ground. Looters grabbed money orders from a currency exchange and tried to crack open an ATM. Drug stores and grocery store shelves were stripped bare.

While Cashaw and his 17-year-old son were cleaning and boarding up, a menacing group of men approached. "Why are you destroying the place where you shop and where you live?" he asked.

Sensing they were about to force their way into the store, Cashaw's son stood firm. "I will fight each and every one of you," he said, his father recalls. The group moved on.

Pfleger, the priest, watched from another street, sensing a futility he hadn't seen before. During the looting of a Walgreen's, a young woman he knew walked by, carrying an armful of stolen goods.

"What are you doing? This isn't even you," he told her.

"I know," she responded sheepishly, the priest recalls. "But I don't have anything. I need this stuff. And they don't give a damn about us anyway."

As this agonizing year nears an end, some in Auburn Gresham are looking ahead — with hope.

Tequila Butler is among them. She suspects she was infected with the virus this spring after she was transferred from her job in a hospital kitchen to one cleaning COVID-19 patients' rooms.

Butler, 41, wasn't tested, but she lost her sense of smell and taste, two common symptoms of the coronavirus. Her mother and a daughter also got sick.

After she was furloughed, she decided not to go back.

"I know I gotta pay my bills, but if I bring this home to my family, how can I live with myself after that?" she asks.

So Butler, a culinary school graduate, converted a rented U-Haul into a truck that sells \$1 tacos, the low price to accommodate customers with little money. It's working; now she's looking to buy her own truck.

Nelson is trying to convince businesses that were looted or destroyed to return. "We've been begging and pleading, 'Help us rebuild,'" he says.

A recent study of Auburn Gresham and three neighboring communities found 30% of groceries have closed since the pandemic and civil unrest.

Nelson's organization recently won a highly competitive \$10 million grant from the Pritzker Traubert Foundation that will be used to build a hub that will provide medical, dental and other healthy living services.

The project -- which will also be financed with \$4 million in city funds -- will include a community center, an urban farm that produces thousands of pounds of food a year and an anaerobic digester, which converts food waste into clean energy.

For Betty Swanson, it's one more sign of the resilience of a community she's called home since 1964. A block club president and community activist, she's weathered many turbulent years in Auburn Gresham.

This is another. But she's not deterred.

"When you've been knocked down so many times, there's not too much that's a blow to you," she says. "We keep pushing on and plowing right along and if we can't make it through, we just turn around and go another way. So we don't give up. We don't quit. And we do come back."

Sharon Cohen, a Chicago-based national writer for The Associated Press, can be reached at scohen@ap.org or on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/SCohenAP>. Martha Irvine and David Goldman contributed to this report.

Trump adds to election anxiety by pushing legal boundaries

By DEB RIECHMANN and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has floated the unconstitutional idea of delaying the Nov. 3 election. His administration may have violated a judge's order on the 2020 census and could be held in contempt. Another court ruled that he illegally sidestepped Congress to find billions for his border wall.

In ways large and small, in multiple corners of the government, the president has demonstrated a willingness to push the boundaries of federal law, if not outright flout them. And in the heat of a presidential campaign, that track record only adds to anxiety about whether Trump will abide by the results of the election.

"When the president talks about being the law-and-order candidate, it's clear that when he says the word 'law' he means the laws he personally cares about enforcing," said Liz Hempowicz, public policy director at the private Project On Government Oversight. "That's not how a law-and-order system works. You can't pick and chose. It's just a complete breakdown of our democratic systems happening in front of our eyes."

Trump has already suggested the election will be rigged, and he has pointedly declined to promise a peaceful transfer of power if he loses. He jokes about staying in office beyond two terms, prompting supporters in Atlanta last week to chant "12 more years!"

But it's no joke to critics who see a callous attitude toward the laws he claims to uphold. They point to a series of instances in which Trump or officials in his administration have violated the spirit of the law, ignored it or made end runs around statutes to implement his policies.

"We are used to presidents bowing to a court determination, bowing to a finding by an inspector general ... but if the president refuses to do that, what is the mechanism to hold him and his administration accountable?" asked Trevor Potter, president of the private Campaign Legal Center.

Trump's defenders say such concerns are overblown.

David Rivkin Jr., a constitutional lawyer who served in the White House counsel's office and the Justice Department in the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations, sees no cause for alarm when it comes to Trump abiding by the election results.

"There is every reason to believe that he would use only lawful means to contest the electoral outcome, if a situation arises where the outcome is contestable," he said by email.

Trump has already telegraphed that he's expecting the election to be determined in the courts. He quickly nominated Amy Coney Barrett for the Supreme Court following the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a move that many Republicans hope will help deliver a quick and decisive end to potential election litigation.

But Trump has also raised a multitude of doubts and objections about whether the election will be fair, and tossed out his own suggestions that could well contribute to confusion.

He urged people in North Carolina to vote twice, which is a felony. The president said later he was only suggesting that voters check to make sure their mail-in votes had been counted by trying to vote again in-person. But some states do not even tally mail-in ballots until the polls close on Election Day.

Trump also recently suggested that his supporters go to polling places in Philadelphia, which has a heavily minority population, but if they interfere with voting, that could violate state law. If supporters tried to intimidate or keep a person from voting, they could be found in violation of the Civil Rights Act or the Ku Klux Klan Act, Potter said.

In a move that dovetails with the Trump administration's claim that irregular voting will skew the election, a U.S. attorney in Pennsylvania last week sent out a press release about an investigation into nine ballots — some for Trump — that were found in a trash can. That raised eyebrows because Justice Department officials typically do not reveal details about ongoing criminal investigations, especially ones linked to the election or a particular political party.

Beyond election law, government watchdog groups have been tracking a raft of other examples where they allege that Trump is flouting laws.

There's ongoing drama over whether the Commerce Department violated a federal judge's order when it chose Oct. 5, 2020, as the date to end the census. Last week, U.S. District Judge Lucy Koh in San Jose,

California, suspended the deadline.

But Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross decided to end the count on Oct. 5 anyway. A hearing is scheduled for Friday to consider whether Ross' move was a violation of the judge's order and whether commerce officials should be held in contempt. August Flentje, an attorney for the Trump administration, said the suggestion that the federal government should be held in contempt was "unfair."

Multiple legal skirmishes have unfolded over people Trump has ousted from government and those he's brought on under questionable circumstances.

Last spring, Trump used his authority to force out five inspectors general from various federal agencies who were tasked with sniffing out government mismanagement, waste and fraud. The president has the authority to fire inspector generals for failure to perform their duties, but he does not have broad authority to fire someone for the wrong reason.

The removals were described as retaliation for doing things that displeased Trump. For example, the intelligence community inspector general who was fired had given Congress the whistleblower complaint that led to Trump's impeachment. It claimed the president had asked Ukraine to investigate his political rival, Democrat Joe Biden, and Biden's son, Hunter, in exchange for military assistance.

Two top officials at the Department of Homeland Security, a sprawling agency with 230,000 people, were found to have been wrongly appointed to their positions and ineligible to serve, according to the Government Accountability Office, the independent investigative arm of Congress. One has since been nominated to fill the post of secretary permanently.

On Thursday, a judge ruled that a national commission on law enforcement, created earlier this year by Trump and Attorney General William Barr, violated federal law because its members lacked diversity and did not provide public access to meetings.

The Office of Special Counsel has cited the president's top advisers multiple times for violating the Hatch Act, which restricts partisan political activity by federal employees. Special counsel Henry Kerner, a Trump appointee, recommended that Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway be fired after repeated violations, but the White House ignored that.

Concern also persists that the president is improperly benefiting personally when foreign governments spend money, rent rooms and schedule events at Trump's historic hotel in Washington.

"If he is taking money from foreign governments without congressional consent, he is violating the Constitution," said Potter, a former chairman of the Federal Election Commission.

Breonna Taylor grand jury recording slated to be released

By DYLAN LOVAN Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — An audio recording of grand jury proceedings that ended with no criminal charges against police officers for the fatal shooting of Breonna Taylor was slated to be released Friday.

A court in Louisville ruled that the content of the proceedings, typically kept secret, should be made public by noontime.

Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron, whose office led the investigation into police actions in the Taylor shooting, did not object to the file's release. On Wednesday, his office asked for a week's extension to redact personal information from the recording before it is heard by the public. The judge gave him two days.

Cameron, a Republican and the state's first African American attorney general, has been criticized since announcing last week that the grand jury did not charge the officers for killing Taylor. The officers used a narcotics warrant to enter Taylor's Louisville apartment on March 13 and shot her after Taylor's boyfriend fired a shot at them. The 26-year-old emergency medical worker was shot five times. Police found no drugs there.

Cameron said two officers who fired their guns, hitting Taylor, were justified because Taylor's boyfriend had fired at them first. The boyfriend had said he thought someone was breaking in.

Protesters have taken to the streets in Louisville and around the country to demand more accountability in

the case. Activists, Taylor's family and one of the grand jurors called for the grand jury file to be released.

The audio recording of the jury proceedings will be added to the public court file of fired Officer Brett Hankison. The grand jury charged Hankison with three counts of wanton endangerment for firing into a neighboring apartment where people were inside. No one was hit. He pleaded not guilty on Monday. Cameron said there was no conclusive evidence that any of Hankison's shots hit Taylor.

The developments come a day after the first woman to lead the Louisiana Metro Police Department, Yvette Gentry, was sworn in Thursday as the department's interim chief.

"I know I'm interim," Gentry said at a small ceremony streamed on the department's Facebook page. "But I represent something different to a lot of people being the first woman to take this title, so I'm not going to shortchange that."

Find more AP stories on the Breonna Taylor case at <https://apnews.com/hub/breonna-taylor>

Heat are ailing, but insist NBA Finals vs Lakers aren't over

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — Jimmy Butler had a bandage on his right knee and a wrap on his left ankle. His team's starting point guard and center are both doubtful to play in Game 2 of the NBA Finals. And his Miami Heat are coming off a one-sided loss to the Los Angeles Lakers.

Given all that, Butler believes a perception exists that this series is already over.

"I beg to differ," Butler said Thursday.

Say this for the Heat: They're down but refuse to believe they're anywhere near out. Game 2 of the finals is Friday night, with Miami bracing to be without point guard Goran Dragic because of a torn left plantar fascia and All-Star Bam Adebayo due to a newly diagnosed neck injury on top of his ongoing shoulder issues.

"When it rains, it pours," said Butler, who'll play through a sore ankle in Game 2. "All in all, though, we're still expected to win. We got here for a reason. We realize we belong. ... Obviously, we definitely need those two guys, don't get me wrong. But I've always said, next man up when a man goes down."

The Lakers won Game 1 116-98, a score that didn't exactly show how lopsided things were for much of the game. Miami started on a 25-12 run; the Lakers scored 75 of the game's next 105 points — a staggering burst. A 13-point deficit midway through the first quarter became a 32-point lead midway through the third for the Lakers.

That, combined with Miami's injury problems, sure seems to indicate that the Lakers have full control of this matchup. Dragic had been Miami's leading scorer in the first three playoff rounds. Adebayo is the team's best rebounder and blossoming into a superstar.

Lakers coach Frank Vogel said he'll plan for Dragic and Adebayo to play. But even if they can't go, Vogel said Miami's fourth-quarter lineup from Game 1 — a group that included Kendrick Nunn and Kelly Olynyk, both of whom would see much bigger roles if Dragic and Adebayo are out — presented some challenges.

"They have an army of guys that play a great style of play, that's very, very difficult to guard," Vogel said. "They work extremely hard on the defensive end and we've got to prepare for whoever's in uniform."

The Lakers have a locked-in LeBron James — who was one assist shy of extending his record for finals triple-doubles — and Anthony Davis made his finals debut look easy with 34 points. But James is taking nothing for granted, revealing that he was up until 4:30 a.m. Thursday watching film from Game 1.

James said he saw plenty of ways the Lakers can be better.

"We are playing against an exceptional basketball team," James said. "Obviously, great-coached. We've have to continue to understand that coming into Game 2 ... they're going to make adjustments in Game 2 and we need to be ready for that."

Nunn had 18 points in Game 1. He was Miami's starter the entire regular season, finished second in the rookie of the year voting, but has been used sparingly in the playoffs — in part because Dragic has been so good, in part because Nunn missed Miami's first 25 days in the bubble because of his recovery from the coronavirus.

"I'm ready to play," Nunn said. "I've been ready, been all season. I had to step up, and simple as that. I'll be ready to play and compete and go out there and try to get a win."

The numbers clearly show that Game 1 winners typically prevail in a series. The Heat know it's not an absolute rule. So does James. All three of Miami's NBA titles came after Game 1 losses in the finals. James was part of two of those comebacks, and his third championship in Cleveland was won in the same fashion.

This feels a bit different, of course, given the injury concerns.

"This is when you feel most alive, when you're being tested competitively and challenged in new ways, different ways," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "This is a quality opponent. This is the way the whole playoff system is supposed to be set up. It's supposed to get tougher and more challenging every single round and may the best team win at the very end."

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

Texas governor restricts mail-in ballot drop-off locations

By ACACIA CORONADO Report for America/ Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Gov. Greg Abbott on Thursday dramatically reduced the state's number of drop-off sites for mail-in ballots, a move the Republican said was needed to ensure election security, while Democrats quickly blasted it as a naked effort to suppress voters.

Abbott's order limits drop-offs to a single location per county starting Friday, shuttering dozens of sites statewide in some of Texas' largest cities — Democratic strongholds in a state run by Republicans — as voters are already returning ballots for the November presidential election, among others. The order also allows poll watchers to observe ballot deliveries at each place.

"These enhanced security protocols will ensure greater transparency and will help stop attempts at illegal voting," Abbott said, days after fellow Republican, President Donald Trump, urged his supporters to watch the polls.

Trump has spread falsehoods about mail voting, suggesting without evidence that the process — which is surging in popularity during the coronavirus pandemic — was ripe for fraud.

Texas is one of just five states not allowing widespread mail-in voting this year, with polls showing unusually tight races in America's biggest red state. Democrats could take over the state House of Representatives for the first time in 20 years.

Meanwhile, battles over voting access have intensified. Abbott has resisted calls to expand eligibility to vote by mail, and courts have sided with GOP leaders who say fear of catching COVID-19 doesn't qualify voters to receive mail-in ballots.

To qualify for a mail-in ballot in Texas, voters must be: away from their county of residence on Election Day and during the early voting period; sick or disabled; confined in jail but otherwise eligible to vote; or 65 years old or more.

Abbott's latest order is likely to draw more court action.

Harris County — which includes Houston and is one of the most populous counties in the U.S. — had 12 drop-off locations planned for its more than 2 million registered voters as of September. Travis County, which includes the state capital of Austin, had four. And some of Texas' 254 counties are individually as large as 6,000 square miles (15,500 square kilometers).

The top elected official in for the Houston area drove home that point in a tweet: Harris County alone is larger than the entire state of Rhode Island.

"Mail ballot voters shouldn't have to drive 30 miles to drop off their ballot, or rely on a mail system that's facing cutbacks," said Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo, a Democrat.

The county will "fight this to the extent that we can," Hidalgo told The Associated Press, and county lawyers are considering legal action. She said Abbott's action was another effort to suppress voters and an additional obstacle to democracy.

The U.S. Postal Service informed Texas in July that given the state's current mail ballot request deadline,

some ballots may not be delivered to voters by Election Day, and that even if all ballots reached voters on time, there was a "significant risk" that completed ballots postmarked on or near Election Day would not be received by the state's Nov. 4 deadline.

The Texas Secretary of State's office has not responded to Associated Press requests for comment on its plans to ensure the timely delivery of ballots.

Harris County Clerk Chris Hollins said in a statement that he had applauded Abbott's July decision to allow voters to drop off their mail ballots before Election Day because it "gave voters more options to vote safely during the global pandemic and alleviated concerns over mail delivery."

But cutting back to a single drop-off location will harm voters, Hollins said.

"Our office is more than willing to accommodate poll watchers at mail ballot drop-off locations," Hollins said. "But to force hundreds of thousands of seniors and voters with disabilities to use a single drop-off location in a county that stretches over nearly 2,000 square miles is prejudicial and dangerous."

Texas Democratic Party Chair Gilberto Hinojosa said in a statement following the proclamation that Republicans were "on the verge of losing, so Gov. Abbott is trying to adjust the rules last minute." He said courts nationwide have held that it is too late to make changes to election rules.

"Make no mistake: Democracy itself is on the ballot," Hinojosa said in a statement.

Acacia Coronado is a corps member for the Associated Press/ Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

Potty training: NASA tests new \$23M titanium space toilet

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA's first new space potty in decades — a \$23 million titanium toilet better suited for women — is getting a not-so-dry run at the International Space Station before eventually flying to the moon.

It's packed inside a cargo ship that should have blasted off late Thursday from Wallops Island, Virginia. But the launch was aborted with just two minutes remaining in the countdown. Northrop Grumman said it would try again Friday night if engineers can figure out what went wrong.

Barely 100 pounds (45 kilograms) and just 28 inches (71 centimeters) tall, the new toilet is roughly half as big as the two Russian-built ones at the space station. It's more camper-size to fit into the NASA Orion capsules that will carry astronauts to the moon in a few years.

Station residents will test it out for a few months. If the shakedown goes well, the toilet will be open for regular business.

With SpaceX now launching astronauts to the space station and Boeing less than a year from sending up its first crew, more toilets are needed. The new one will be in its own stall alongside the old one on the U.S. side of the outpost.

The old toilets cater more toward men. To better accommodate women, NASA tilted the seat on the new toilet and made it taller. The new shape should help astronauts position themselves better for No. 2, said Johnson Space Center's Melissa McKinley, the project manager.

"Cleaning up a mess is a big deal. We don't want any misses or escapes," she said.

Let's just say everything floats in weightlessness.

As for No. 1, the funnels also have been redesigned. Women can use the elongated and scooped-out funnels to urinate while sitting on the commode to poop at the same time, McKinley said. Until now, it's been one or the other for female astronauts, she noted.

Like earlier space commodes, air suction, rather than water and gravity, removes the waste. Urine collected by the new toilet will be routed into NASA's long-standing recycling system to produce water for drinking and cooking. Titanium and other tough alloys were chosen for the new toilet to withstand all the acid in the urine pretreatment.

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Going to the bathroom in space may sound simple, but “sometimes the simple things become very difficult” without gravity, said NASA astronaut Mike Hopkins, commander of the second SpaceX crew, due to launch Oct. 31 from Kennedy Space Center.

While the old design isn’t that hard to use, subtle design changes can make all the difference for women, noted NASA astronaut Shannon Walker, a former space station resident who’s also on the next SpaceX crew.

“Trust me, I’ve got going to the bathroom in space down, because that is a vital, vital thing to know how to do,” she told The Associated Press earlier this week.

The typical space station population will go from six to seven with the next SpaceX flight, and even more when non-professionals like tourists start showing up as early as next year. Astronauts normally stay six months.

The last time NASA ordered up a new toilet was in the early 1990s to accommodate two-week space shuttle missions. The agency contracted with Collins Aerospace to provide the latest model; the company also worked on the shuttle potties.

Also in the 8,000-pound (3,600-kilogram) shipment aboard Northrop Grumman’s Cygnus capsule: air tanks to make up for a slight space station leak, radish seeds for greenhouse growing and a cinematic 360-degree VR camera for you-are-there-spacewalk shots.

Perhaps the most unique payload: Estee Lauder’s newest wrinkle serum. The cosmetics company is paying \$128,000 for an out-of-this-world photo shoot, part of NASA’s push to open the final frontier to marketing, industry and tourism.

Don’t count on perfumed aromas, though, to counter bathroom odors.

The serum is fragrance-free and the 10 bottles will remain sealed until returned to Earth early next year.

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In big states, tiny counties, Trump attacking voting rules

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI, JONATHAN DREW and SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — When Donald Trump’s campaign took issue with a new rule on processing some votes in North Carolina, it didn’t just complain to the Board of Elections and file a lawsuit. It wrote to some of the state’s 100 local election offices with extraordinary guidance: Ignore that rule.

“The NC Republican Party advises you to not follow the procedures,” Trump campaign operative Heather Ford wrote in an email to county officials last week.

The email urging defiance was a small glimpse at the unusually aggressive, hyperlocal legal strategy the Trump campaign is activating as voting begins. Through threatening letters, lawsuits, viral videos and presidential misinformation, the campaign and its GOP allies are going to new lengths to contest election procedures county-by-county across battleground states.

That means piling new pressure on the often low-profile election officials on the frontline of the vote count, escalating micro-disputes over voting rules and seeking out trouble in their backyards.

The local approach already is producing a blizzard of voting-related complaints. Trump and his allies have then seized on the disputes, distorted them and used them to sow broad doubts of fairness and accuracy.

“It’s clearly based on an overall strategy to disrupt the election as much as possible,” said Barry Richard, who represented President George W. Bush’s campaign in the 2000 Florida recount. “You’re really seeing a broad-based, generalized strategy to suppress the vote by the Republican Party.”

Trump’s campaign says it’s simply trying to ensure a fair election. It says the explosion of disputes is a result of Democrats’ efforts to change the way America votes during the coronavirus pandemic, largely by expanding access to mail-in voting. More than 200 lawsuits have been filed over voting procedures in the election.

“Since when is fairness a bad thing?” campaign spokesperson Thea McDonald said in a statement.

But election experts and lawyers say the GOP efforts demonstrate a new willingness to fight and amplify

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relatively minor, even legally dubious issues.

The strategy was on display last week when Trump tweeted about nine "discarded" ballots in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. Then this week the hot spot was a Philadelphia fight over whether Trump campaign poll monitors could be allowed into newly opened satellite election offices.

Trump poll monitors requested entry, but city election offices said neither party's observers had a legal right to access the buildings. Under state law, poll monitors can only observe live, in-person voting and not places where people can register, fill out early ballots and drop them off to be counted weeks later. The campaign sent observers to the sites, and in one case, they were turned away by a Republican on the city election commission. The campaign sued the city Thursday night in an effort to gain access to the sites.

Richard described this fight as largely "for public consumption." Trump brought up the episode in Tuesday night's debate, mentioning none of the legal subtleties. Instead, he held it up as a broad-brushed indictment of the reliability of the vote count.

"Today there was a big problem in Philadelphia," Trump said at the debate. "You know why? Because bad things happen in Philadelphia, bad things."

The next day, Trump's son Eric and other supporters tweeted a video apparently recorded by a member of the campaign as a Philadelphia election official expelled him from a city building. "Now they are throwing poll watchers out of City Hall in Philly!" Eric Trump wrote.

President Trump for months has cast doubt on the integrity of the U.S. voting system. His primary target has been mail ballots, which may be used by as many as half of all voters as people look to avoid crowded polling places. Trump has baselessly claimed they will lead to massive fraud.

Trump's campaign is now pushing to ensure scrutiny on those mail-in ballots as they are returned. In North Carolina, where Black voters were sending in a disproportionate number of ballots with errors, the Board of Elections settled a lawsuit with a voting rights group making it easier for voters to fix mistakes.

The board's two Republicans quit in protest, and the GOP sued to block the settlement. North Carolina's Democratic attorney general in court papers included a Trump campaign email to some local board of election members as an example of how he said the party was improperly undermining an official state directive.

Says McDonald, the Trump campaign spokesperson: "County board members need guidance on how to proceed in the wake of these unelected Democrats' attempt to radically rewrite the law 40 days out from Election Day."

On Thursday, the state Board of Elections, which has a Democratic majority, told counties to halt using the new cure method pending the outcome of court hearings this week and next.

Regardless of the outcome of the litigation, voting rights specialists were stunned at the Trump campaign's step.

"What we're talking about is an effort to deliberately place these barriers in front of people. And many may be discouraged from trying to cure, or making it impossible for them to cure, a deficiency," said Irving Joyner, a law professor at North Carolina Central University who's not involved in the case.

North Carolina is not the only state that has seen upheavals to its election procedures even as ballots are being filled out. Many of the more than 200 lawsuits filed over voting issues are still lingering, an enormous question mark over the election as more and more states start early voting.

Republicans have asked the U.S. Supreme Court to review a ruling in South Carolina on how to handle errors in mail ballots and a judgment in Pennsylvania allowing the count of some ballots arriving after Election Day. Also in Pennsylvania, the Trump campaign is asking a federal judge to throw out a state law that requires poll watchers to live in the county where they are monitoring. It's become a major obstacle to Republican plans to send out some 50,000 poll watchers in battlegrounds.

But the GOP's scrutiny of local elections offices isn't always over complex legal issues. In Wisconsin, Republicans warned the city of Madison against holding a "Democracy in the Park" event, sending a cease and desist letter late last week warning it could be a venue for illegal collection of ballots in the liberal bastion. The event went ahead anyway, and city officials say about 10,000 participated.

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On Wednesday, there was a new warning to Milwaukee and its sports teams. It covered not only players but mascots such as the Brewers' famed racing sausages as enticements for people to vote.

"It seems kind of silly to be worried about racing sausages, but the larger point is the law is pretty clear," GOP state party chair Andrew Hitt told The Associated Press by phone on Wednesday.

Wisconsin state elections officials have already warned the Trump campaign off once after it sent a survey to local elections offices asking for details on procedures. Such surveys can help find issues to be litigated — but they also are a way for campaigns to make connections with local election officials who will help determine their success. The Trump campaign noted that such surveys are standard and also sent by Democrats.

Rick Hasen, a law professor at the University of California, Irvine who has been a frequent critic of Trump's approach to voting, said there's a difference between campaigns talking to election offices and trying to pressure them.

"To know the rules of the game you're going to play under, it's different than trying to work the refs," Hasen said. "All of this conduct is so beyond the pale — it's hard to put in context because there's been nothing like it in modern American campaigns."

Associated Press writer Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pa., contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show that litigation over Pennsylvania's poll watcher law was in federal court, not U.S. Supreme Court.

Hundreds of Honduran migrants set out for US amid pandemic

By SONIA PÉREZ D. and CLAUDIO ESCALÓN Associated Press

GUALÁN, Guatemala (AP) — About 2,000 Honduran migrants hoping to reach the United States entered Guatemala on foot Thursday morning, testing the newly reopened frontier that had been shut by the coronavirus pandemic.

Guatemala's president quickly vowed to detain them and return them to Honduras, saying the migrants represented a threat to the health of Guatemalans amid efforts to contain the pandemic.

"The order has been given to detain all those who entered illegally, and return them to the border of their country," President Alejandro Giammattei said in a broadcast address to the nation. "We will not allow any foreigner who has used illegal means to enter the country, to think that they have the right to come and infect us and put us at serious risk."

Giammattei issued an order that would suspend some constitutional rights in the provinces they were expected to pass through, apparently in order to facilitate detaining them."

Authorities had planned to register the migrants as they crossed earlier Thursday and offer assistance to those willing to turn back, but the group crossed the official border at Corinto without registering, pushing past outnumbered Guatemalan police and soldiers who made little attempt to stop them.

In one group were four teenagers, all friends and neighbors from San Pedro Sula, from which hundreds of migrants had set out the previous night. The teens decided to leave after seeing others organize on Facebook.

The youngest, 15-year-old Josty Morales, said he wanted to live the "American dream" and was looking for a way to support his 6-month-old son at home.

"There's no work. The necessity strangles you," he said.

Within hours of the border crossing, Guatemalan authorities reported the first migrant death. A person tried to climb aboard a moving flatbed trailer, but fell under its wheels. Authorities did not immediately provide any additional details.

Central American migrants began traveling in large groups in recent years, seeking safety in numbers and in some cases avoiding the cost of smugglers. Calls for a new migrant caravan to leave Oct. 1 had circulated for weeks on social media.

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The odds of a large migrant caravan reaching the U.S. border, already low, have grown increasingly slim over the past year. Under pressure from the United States, Mexico deployed its National Guard and more immigration agents to break up attempted caravans last year. They dispersed large groups of migrants attempting to travel together in southern Mexico. Actually crossing into the U.S. legally is virtually impossible now with pandemic, and entering illegally is as difficult as ever.

The departure of the new group was reminiscent of a migrant caravan that formed two years ago shortly before U.S. midterm elections. It became a hot issue in the campaign, fueling anti-immigrant rhetoric. While the caravans draw attention, they really only account for a small fraction of the daily migration flow by small groups that pass unnoticed through Central America and Mexico.

By mid-afternoon the migrants who crossed into Guatemala on Thursday had strung out in small groups for miles (kilometers) along the highway, as some caught rides and others walked under the hot sun.

Christian Martínez, 19, saw leaving as a way out when few other options were apparent in Honduras. "If we stay what is left for us is to become criminals because there's no way to survive," he said.

Already halfway to Guatemala City, Martínez and his companions had advanced on foot and with the occasional ride. They said they all carried masks but weren't worried about the pandemic.

The larger group that set out Wednesday night appeared to be mostly young men, though there were the occasional small children being pushed in strollers.

At the border, Guatemalan officials were asking the migrants to provide documents showing a negative COVID-19 test — even though last week they said they wouldn't require a test for those spending less than 72 hours in the country.

But about 2,000 migrants hustled through without registering. In addition, AP journalists saw others crossing the border illegally near the formal crossing. There were no reports of violence.

Guatemala's military said it was establishing interior checkpoints to review migrants' documents. In the past, authorities have set up roadblocks deeper in the country to winnow down larger groups. A regional agreement allows citizens of Honduras to transit through Guatemala.

Governments throughout the region made it known they were watching Wednesday.

Mexico's immigration agency said in a statement that it would enforce "safe, orderly and legal" migration and not do anything to promote the formation of a caravan. The U.S. Embassy in Honduras said on Twitter Wednesday that migration to the U.S. was more difficult than ever right now — and more dangerous because of the coronavirus.

But the factors driving migrants to leave Central America certainly haven't eased during the pandemic. As economies have suffered, there are ever fewer jobs to be had, and the struggle for families to put food on the table has only worsened. Some migrants also cited the ever-present high rate of crime.

The U.N.'s International Labor Organization said Wednesday that at least 34 million jobs have been lost in Latin America due to the pandemic. The ILO lists Latin America and the Caribbean as the worst-hit region in the world in terms of lost working hours, with a drop of 20.9% in the first three quarters of the year.

The flow of migrants north from Central America had slowed dramatically during the pandemic as countries throughout the region closed their borders. Most migrant shelters along the principal routes closed their doors to new arrivals as they tried to keep the virus from spreading to vulnerable populations. Mexico and the United States deported hundreds of migrants back to their home countries to try to empty detention centers.

Guatemala has now opened all of its borders, including the one with Mexico. But the U.S.-Mexico border remains closed for nonessential travel, and the U.S. government effectively shut down the asylum system at its southern border during the pandemic.

Mexico tried to bus asylum seekers stuck at its northern border to other parts of the country and back to their home countries. Mexico has typically offered migrants the opportunity to seek asylum there, but many have their minds set on the United States. Migrants are also likely to find it more difficult to find work in Mexico now as the economy is expected to contract 10% this year due to the impact of the pandemic.

Escalon reported from Corinto, Honduras. Associated Press writer Christopher Sherman in Mexico City

contributed to this report.

House Democrats pass partisan COVID bill; relief talks drag

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats controlling the House narrowly passed a \$2.2 trillion COVID-19 relief bill Thursday night, a move that came as top-level talks on a smaller, potentially bipartisan measure dragged on toward an uncertain finish. An air of pessimism has largely taken over the Capitol.

The Democratic bill passed after a partisan debate by a 214-207 vote without any Republicans in support. The move puts lawmakers no closer to actually delivering aid such as more generous weekly unemployment payments, extended help for small businesses and especially troubled economic sectors such as restaurants and airlines, and another round of \$1,200 direct payments to most Americans.

Passage of the \$2.2 trillion plan came after a burst of negotiations this week between Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. The Trump administration delivered concessions Wednesday, including a \$400 per week pandemic jobless benefit and a markedly higher overall price tag of \$1.6 trillion, but that failed to win over Pelosi.

"This isn't half a loaf, this is the heel of the loaf," Pelosi said in a televised interview Thursday. Pelosi spoke after the White House attacked her as "not being serious."

The ramped-up negotiations come as challenging economic news continues to confront policymakers. The airlines are furloughing about 30,000 workers with the expiration of aid passed earlier this year, and a report Thursday showed 837,000 people claiming jobless benefits for the first time last week. Most of the economic benefits of an immediate round of COVID relief could accrue under the next administration, and failure now could mean no significant help for struggling families and businesses until February.

The vote was advertised as a way to demonstrate Democrats were making a good faith offer on coronavirus relief, but 18 Democrats abandoned the party and sentiment remains among more moderate Democrats to make more concessions and guarantee an agreement before Election Day. Republicans controlling the Senate remained divided.

Talks between Mnuchin and Pelosi were closely held and the Speaker told reporters that no deal would come on Thursday. Mnuchin's offer of a \$400 per week jobless benefit put him in the same ballpark as Democrats backing a \$600 benefit. Mnuchin's price tag of \$1.6 trillion or more could drive many Republicans away, however, even as it failed to satisfy Pelosi.

"We raised our offer to \$1.6 trillion," White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany told reporters Thursday. "It's one that she is not interested in."

Mnuchin and Pelosi spoke by phone Thursday, but the speaker was publicly dismissive of the latest White House plan. Discussions are continuing, Pelosi said.

The White House plan, offered Wednesday, gave ground with a \$250 billion proposal on funding for state and local governments and backed \$20 billion in help for the struggling airline industry.

Details on the White House offer were confirmed by congressional aides, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss closed-door discussions.

As the talks dragged on, House leaders announced a Thursday evening vote on their scaled-back "HEROES Act," which started out as a \$3.4 trillion bill in May but is now down to \$2.2 trillion after Pelosi cut back her demands for aiding state and local governments. The legislation came after party moderates openly criticized her stance.

White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows has drawn a line in the sand and warns that Trump won't approve legislation that approaches a \$2 trillion threshold. But there's plenty of wiggle room in numbers so large, and the revenue picture for many states is not as alarming as feared when Democrats passed more than \$900 billion for state and local governments in May.

Pelosi said Thursday that the administration is still far short on aid to state and local governments and in other areas.

"Some of you have asked, 'Isn't something better than nothing?' No," Pelosi told reporters, citing the

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“opportunity cost” for provisions sought by Democrats but potentially lost in any rush to agreement.

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.

Pelosi has largely assumed a hard line so far. But she’s never had a reputation for leaving large sums of money on the table and her tactical position — facing a White House and Senate controlled by Republicans — is not as strong as her demands might indicate.

The White House also seems far more eager for a deal than Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. Any compromise that could pass both the House and Senate is sure to alienate a large chunk of the Senate GOP. McConnell expressed support for the talks and another bill but isn’t leaning into the effort. But some of his members appear worried that the deadlock is harming their reelection bids.

“I’d like to see another rescue package. We’ve been trying for months to get there,” McConnell told reporters Thursday. “I wish them well.”

Even if Pelosi and Mnuchin were able to reach a tentative agreement on “top line” spending levels, dozens of 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.

The latest Democratic bill 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 \$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.

Conservative hoaxers face charges over false voter robocalls

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

Two conservative operatives were charged Thursday in connection with false robocalls that aimed to dissuade Black residents in Detroit and other Democratic-leaning U.S. cities from voting by mail, Michigan’s attorney general announced.

Jacob Wohl, 22, and Jack Burkman, 54, each face four felony counts in Detroit, including conspiring to intimidate voters in violation of election law and using a computer to commit crimes, Attorney General Dana Nessel said.

The calls falsely warned residents in majority-Black Detroit and cities in at least four other states that if they vote by mail in the Nov. 3 election they could be subjected to arrest, debt collection and forced vaccination, Nessel said.

The men, who have a history of staging hoaxes and spreading lies about prominent Democrats and government officials, are not in custody, and no date for their arraignments has been set.

Nessel said her office would work with local law enforcement to secure their appearances, saying they could face arrest and extradition or could voluntarily travel to Michigan to face the charges.

The charges carry the potential for years in prison and thousands of dollars in fines. The computer charges carry up to seven years apiece, while election law violations could bring up to five.

Nessel’s office warned the public about the calls and launched an investigation in August after thousands of Detroit residents received them.

Wohl and Burkman both denied involvement at the time. Burkman didn’t reply to a Thursday voicemail seeking comment and Wohl didn’t reply to an email.

Nessel said the investigation found that Burkman and Wohl created and funded the robocalls to deter voters of color from participating in the November election.

“We’re all well aware of the frustrations caused by the millions of nuisance robocalls flooding our cell-phones and landlines each day, but this particular message poses grave consequences for our democracy

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and the principles upon which it was built," Nessel said. "Michigan voters are entitled to a full, free and fair election in November, and my office will not hesitate to pursue those who jeopardize that."

The pair was behind 85,000 calls nationwide, including nearly 12,000 in Detroit's 313 area code, Nessel said. Similar calls also blanketed urban pockets of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois and New York, she said. She encouraged anyone who received such a call to file a complaint with her office.

Wohl and Burkman have a history of supporting President Donald Trump and attacking his opponents. Trump narrowly won the key battleground state of Michigan in 2016 in part due to a drop in turnout for Hillary Clinton in heavily Democratic Detroit. In Michigan, voters can cast an absentee ballot for any reason.

The robocalls sought to discourage voting by mail, which voters are expected to do in record numbers this election cycle to avoid crowded polling places during the coronavirus pandemic.

Republicans are limiting mail-in voting in several states and Trump has warned, without evidence, that it will lead to fraud. The president also encouraged his supporters during Tuesday's debate to "go into the polls and watch very carefully" on Election Day.

A woman on the robocalls said she was part of Project 1559, a group founded by Wohl and Burkman. The calls falsely claimed that voting by mail would result in personal information going into databases that will be used by police to resolve old warrants, credit card companies to collect debts and federal officials to track mandatory vaccines.

"Don't be finessed into giving your private information to the man," the caller said. "Beware of vote by mail."

Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, like Nessel a Democrat, in August called the robocalls "an unconscionable, indefensible, blatant attempt to lie to citizens about their right to vote."

She praised Nessel for the swift investigation, saying the charges show the state will "use every tool at our disposal to dispel false rhetoric" and protect voting rights.

Wohl lives in Los Angeles, and investigators served search warrants in California as part of the inquiry last week, Nessel said.

Wohl and Burkman have made a name for themselves by orchestrating political dirty tricks and hoaxes, including spreading false claims of sexual misconduct by Robert Mueller and former Democratic presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg.

The pair came under scrutiny in Michigan last year, when a college student said they recruited him to pretend he was raped by Buttigieg, then published the smear without the student's permission.

Last month, the Washington Post said it was duped into falsely reporting that FBI agents had conducted a raid at Burkman's home in Arlington, Virginia, when it was actually a staged event featuring actors.

In August, Wohl told The Associated Press that they suspected "leftist pranksters" were behind the robocalls because the caller ID was Burkman's cellphone number. Burkman called the situation "a joke," saying nobody would use their own number for a robocall and threatening to sue Benson for defamation.

Associated Press writer David Eggert contributed to this story from Lansing, Michigan.

This story has been corrected to reflect that Nessel said nearly 12,000 residents in the 313 area code, not ZIP code, received the calls in Detroit.

Trump opposes changing debate rules but will still attend

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

MORRISTOWN, N.J. (AP) — President Donald Trump opposes changing the rules for the remaining two presidential debates against Democrat Joe Biden, but his campaign says he will attend regardless.

Tuesday's opening debate in Cleveland quickly turned chaotic, with frequent interruptions by the candidates — particularly Trump. The Commission on Presidential Debates said Wednesday that it "intends to ensure that additional tools to maintain order are in place for the remaining debates."

The commission and representatives from Trump's and Biden's campaigns met Wednesday morning to

discuss the previous night's debate and potential changes. Some potential changes that have been discussed include adding opening and closing statements and shortening open discussion.

Trump, a Republican, tweeted Thursday that he opposed any changes. "Why would I allow the Debate Commission to change the rules for the second and third Debates when I easily won last time," he tweeted shortly after landing in New Jersey, where he was to hold a campaign fundraiser at his private golf club.

On a conference call with reporters, Trump's reelection campaign indicated that Trump would attend the remaining debates regardless of whether the rules are changed.

"We're ready to move on to the second and third debates," said campaign communications strategist Jason Miller. "There shouldn't be any changes. We don't want any changes."

He declined to issue an ultimatum that Trump would not attend if changes were made.

Biden said he'll participate in the next debate, which will be a town hall format.

"I think it's appropriate that when a person, a constituent, someone considering how they're going to vote this year, when they ask a question," the candidate "gets an opportunity to answer it fully," Biden said.

Organizers and both campaigns expect that the format for its next presidential debate on Oct. 15 in Miami will be more orderly, as the candidates address questions asked directly to them by voters. The third and final debate, set for Oct. 22 in Nashville, is slated to feature a similar format to Tuesday's event.

Associated Press writer Alexandra Jaffe in Washington contributed to this report.

AP: Trooper's mic records talk of beating, choking Black man

By JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

In graphic, matter-of-fact chatter picked up on his body-camera mic, a Louisiana State trooper implicated in the death of a Black man can be heard talking of beating and choking him before "all of a sudden he just went limp."

"I beat the ever-living f--- out of him," the trooper said in a 27-second audio clip obtained by The Associated Press.

It is the most direct evidence to emerge yet in the death last year of Ronald Greene, which troopers initially blamed on injuries from a car crash at the end of a chase. The long-simmering case has now become the subject of a federal civil rights investigation and growing calls for authorities to release the full body-cam video.

Master Trooper Chris Hollingsworth, who died last week in a single-car crash, is heard recounting the May 2019 arrest of Greene in rural north Louisiana on audio provided to the AP through an intermediary who asked not to be identified because the case remains under investigation. Its veracity was confirmed by two law enforcement officials familiar with the case who spoke on condition of anonymity. State Police did not dispute the tape's authenticity.

"Choked him and everything else trying to get him under control," Hollingsworth is heard saying, apparently in his part of a phone conversation with a colleague.

"We finally got him in handcuffs when a third man got there, and the son of a b----- was still fighting him, was still wrestling with him trying to hold him down," he said. "He was spitting blood everywhere and all of a sudden he just went limp."

"It is shocking that this evidence has been withheld for over a year," said Lee Merritt, an attorney for Greene's family. He called on state officials to immediately release the full footage.

Eugene Collins, president of the Baton Rouge branch of the NAACP, called Hollingsworth's remarks "disgusting and morally bankrupt" and said the recording raised new questions about the actions of other law enforcement officials familiar with Greene's death.

"How far did this coverup go?" Collins asked in an interview. "We are deeply saddened in the actions of State Police and call on the governor to take swift and aggressive action."

Gov. John Bel Edwards, a Democrat, told reporters last week that footage of Greene's arrest would be made public at the conclusion of the state and federal investigations.

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Hollingsworth, who was white, was the only one of six troopers placed on leave last month following an administrative investigation that State Police did not open until late August.

He died in a single-car crash last week hours after he learned he was being fired for his role in the Greene case. Even after the trooper's death, the State Police have refused to comment on Hollingsworth's use of force or say which policies he was accused of violating in Greene's arrest. The agency declined to comment due to ongoing investigations.

Initially, Greene's family was told that the 49-year-old died from injuries suffered in a crash into a "shrub/tree" at the end of a long car chase near Monroe that began over an unspecified traffic violation.

A State Police crash report obtained by AP omits any reference to troopers using force — or even arresting Greene — but notes that he was not wearing a seat belt in the crash. State Police later acknowledged there was a "struggle" with troopers who were trying to arrest him.

Greene's family has filed a federal wrongful-death suit alleging troopers "brutalized" him, shocked him three times with a stun gun and left him "beaten, bloodied and in cardiac arrest."

Last month, they disputed the car crash narrative by releasing graphic photos of Greene's body that appeared to show deep bruises on his face and cuts on his scalp, as well as photos of the SUV he was driving showing it with only minor damage.

Greene, a barber who had lived for years in central Florida, was not known to be wanted on any charges at the time of the police chase. He had a criminal record in Florida that included arrests ranging from theft to drug possession. Court records show he served more than a year in prison following a 2015 conviction for burglary and grand theft.

The State Police crash report does indicate whether alcohol or drug use was involved.

Mustian reported from New York.

Check's in the mail? Trump doling out aid before election

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — It's almost as if he's writing a personal check.

In recent days, President Donald 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.

"What I've done for them, with the \$28 billion for the farmers, and that includes you," Trump told supporters at a rally in Newport News, Virginia, last week — without mentioning that the aid was needed to offset the hit farmers took from his trade standoff with China. "That includes tobacco, that includes a lot of things, but that includes your farmers."

As Trump talks up heaps of federal aid flowing to key constituency groups in the lead-up to the November elections, he rarely mentions Congress' role in the appropriation of those dollars.

The president was in the battleground state of North Carolina last week when he proposed the idea of \$200 drug cards for Medicare recipients — a move that comes as polls show slipping support for the president among older voters. Government officials say key details, like when and how the drug benefit would be paid for, are still being fleshed out.

"I will always take care of our wonderful senior citizens," Trump said. "Joe Biden won't be doing this."

Earlier in September, Trump used a rally in northern Wisconsin, a battleground he narrowly won in 2016, to announce another \$13 billion in pandemic aid to assist farmers. That came after Trump announced the release of \$13 billion in assistance to repair years-old hurricane damage in Puerto Rico and pledged to restore its economy.

He didn't mention his past harsh comments about the island and its leaders as he looks to curry favor with Puerto Rican voters elsewhere in the U.S., particularly in crucial Florida.

"I'm the best thing that ever happened to Puerto Rico," Trump said without a trace of irony. "No one

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even close.”

On Wednesday, he spoke in personal terms at a rally in Duluth, Minnesota, about his decision to sign an executive order declaring a national emergency in the mining industry. It’s a step he said would provide “billions of dollars” to the industry and bring “countless” jobs to the state’s Iron Range.

“I will always protect Minnesota,” said Trump, who is looking to add the historically Democratic-leaning state to his win column on Nov. 3. “It’s been very good to me.”

Trump was also happy to have his name splashed on checks when the U.S. Treasury earlier this year sent economic stimulus payments to millions of Americans struggling during the coronavirus. It was the first time a president’s name appeared on any IRS payments, whether refund checks or other stimulus checks that have been mailed during past economic crises.

Similarly, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is including letters signed by the president in boxes of surplus food being distributed around the country to people in need.

Greg Trotter, a spokesman for the Greater Chicago Food Depository, said that some food pantries and other non-profits in the Chicago area have decided to remove the letters before distributing the packages to clients, some were troubled by the letters but don’t have the time or manpower to remove them, and others were not bothered by the inclusion. He said it was “inappropriate” to include the letters in the boxes so close to the election even if the tone was not overtly political.

“The master marketer is marketing himself through federal resources,” said Rep. Marcia Fudge, D-Ohio, one of several lawmakers to raise concerns about the president’s letter to the USDA. She added: “It is no different than when he did the stimulus checks earlier this year...To me, it’s nothing but politicking, and I think it’s illegal.”

White House officials said the criticism is unmerited, saying the president is only trying to distribute information to help Americans during the pandemic.

Ross Baker, a congressional scholar at Rutgers University, said Trump’s approach to legislation is much like his style in the real estate world: In the end, he always wants to plaster his name on the finished product.

“It’s Donald the entertainer,” Baker said. “It’s one of the things that he learned from reality television that he’s applied pretty directly to the power of the presidency.”

Trump isn’t the first incumbent president to work the levers of government to his advantage ahead of an election.

As Democrat Barack Obama ramped up his 2012 reelection campaign, he used the backdrop of the battleground state of New Hampshire to press Republicans to get behind an extension of a temporary payroll tax cut that was set to expire.

Republican George W. Bush traveled to Iowa weeks before the 2004 election to sign legislation that lowered taxes for millions of middle-class Americans. But even as Bush highlighted the legislation in a state that he would narrowly win, he also thanked Democratic lawmakers for their support of the bill.

Ahead of the 1996 Democratic National Convention, Bill Clinton signed a 90-cent hike of the minimum wage into law, legislation to improve access to health insurance and a controversial bill overhauling the welfare system as he sold himself to the electorate as a pragmatist governing from the middle.

Matt Bennett, an aide in the Clinton White House who served on both of the former president’s White House campaigns, said there is little evidence that the last-second entreaties of past presidents had significant impact at the polls. And he’s doubtful there are many voters whom Trump is trying to reach who haven’t already made up their minds.

“The cake is pretty baked at this point,” Bennett said.

Trump in recent weeks has taken the election-year courting of key constituencies to a new level as he uses rallies and official White House events for showy pronouncements, sometimes at odds with the facts.

One frequent boast is that his signing of a China trade deal earlier this year is straightening out decades of imbalance between the two nations. In fact, Commerce Department data shows that U.S. exports to China were down in the first seven months of this year.

“I’ve taken in billions and billions of dollars from China,” Trump recently told reporters. “No other presi-

dent has done what I've done. I've given much of it to the farmers."

Even when he's not doling out money, Trump — in the final lap before Election Day — has taken to dangling other benefits for key voter groups.

In Atlanta on Friday, Trump announced second-term plans to increase access to capital in Black communities by almost \$500 billion and make a federal holiday of Juneteenth, the commemoration of the emancipation of enslaved people in the U.S.

Last week, after being asked about whether he'll endorse Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, Trump launched into a long aside about his efforts to help the state's lobster industry. He visited Maine in June to spotlight his administration's efforts to get the European Union to lower tariffs on Maine lobsters.

"What I've done for Maine is what nobody has done," Trump said.

Facebook, Twitter flounder in QAnon crackdown

By AMANDA SEITZ and BARBARA ORTUTAY Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Facebook and Twitter promised to stop encouraging the growth of the baseless conspiracy theory QAnon, which fashions President Donald Trump as a secret warrior against a supposed child-trafficking ring run by celebrities and government officials, after it reached an audience of millions on their platforms this year.

But the social media companies still aren't enforcing even the limited restrictions they've recently put in place to stem the tide of dangerous QAnon material, a review by The Associated Press found. Both platforms have vowed to stop "suggesting" QAnon material to users, a powerful way of introducing QAnon to new people.

But neither has actually succeeded at that.

On Wednesday, hours after a chaotic debate between Trump and Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, a video from a QAnon account that falsely claimed Biden wore a wire to cheat during the event was trending on Twitter, for example.

Twitter is even still running ads against QAnon material, in effect profiting off the type of tweets that it has vowed to limit. In some cases Facebook is still automatically directing users to follow public and secret QAnon pages or groups, the AP found.

"Their algorithm worked to radicalize people and really gave this conspiracy theory a megaphone with which to expand," Sophie Bjork-James, an anthropologist at Vanderbilt University who studies QAnon, said of social platforms. "They are responsible for shutting down that megaphone. And time and time again they are proving unwilling."

The QAnon phenomenon sprawls across a patchwork of secret Facebook groups, Twitter accounts and YouTube videos. QAnon has been linked to real-world violence such as criminal reports of kidnapping and dangerous claims that the coronavirus is a hoax. But the conspiracy theory has also seeped into mainstream politics. Several Republican running for Congress this year are QAnon-friendly.

Although restricted to the backwaters of the internet for years, QAnon posts reached millions of people via social media this year. Interactions -- primarily likes and comments -- with public Facebook and Instagram posts that included QAnon terms began climbing in March. By July, they received more attention than at any other point in the last year, according to an AP analysis of data from CrowdTangle, a Facebook-owned tool that helps track material on the platforms.

That month, public posts on Facebook-owned Instagram featuring the #QAnon hashtag received an average of 1.27 million likes and comments every week, according to the analysis. Some of those posts included news stories about QAnon. But the majority of the most popular Instagram posts during July were expressing support for the conspiracy theory, President Donald Trump, or far-right conservative causes, the AP found.

One post that used the QAnon hashtag, which raked up nearly 20,000 likes, claimed that "no one has died from coronavirus." Another was a photo of a Donald Trump that called him "One of God's Finest Warriors."

Twitter didn't limit the conspiracy theory until July 21, when it announced it was kicking off 7,000 QAnon

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accounts and promised to stop promoting or recommending QAnon. Facebook introduced its new rules on Aug. 18, pledging to stop encouraging users to join QAnon groups, banning QAnon hashtags and kicking off thousands of QAnon groups that encouraged violence.

"Unfortunately, it was too late and not enough," Bjork-James said.

The AP also discovered more than a dozen popular QAnon accounts on Twitter that collectively maintain a following of nearly 1.5 million users, almost all of which were recommended to users who followed other QAnon accounts.

And Twitter appears to be profiting from those QAnon accounts. Nearly all of the accounts the AP identified had ads showing in their feeds for big brand names that sell everything from beer to toilet paper. That doesn't mean the brands intentionally placed their ads in the feeds of the accounts, although it does suggest that Twitter isn't preventing the ads from appearing next to QAnon material.

Twitter suspended just one of the accounts -- which had more than 250,000 followers -- after the AP inquired about it.

Many of those Twitter profiles featured QAnon terminology or imagery. Others were more subtle. One of the accounts is named after John F. Kennedy Jr. and promotes QAnon beliefs, including a theory that Kennedy Jr. isn't dead and is staging a comeback to announce his support for Trump.

Twitter said it has not banned QAnon from its site entirely, but says it doesn't make QAnon tweets or accounts visible in searches or recommendations. Views of QAnon tweets has dropped by 50 percent since its new rules took hold in July. The company did not address questions about ads running on QAnon pages for the record.

Facebook, meanwhile, hasn't followed through on some of its promises and is still directing users to groups that promote it, the AP found.

As recently as Thursday, Facebook's algorithm still directed to and even invited users to join QAnon groups. One page called "QAnon Updates," where 11,000 users swap conspiracy theory videos and links, remained at the top of the site's recommendations in one QAnon search. Facebook's algorithm suggested a handful of QAnon groups, including one with "Trump 2Q2Q" in its name and another that used the term "cue" to hide from the crackdown. And an automated Sept. 2 email from Facebook recommended one user join a Facebook group whose cover photo featured a modified U.S. seal that said: "In QAnon We Trust."

On Instagram, versions of the hashtag "WWG1WGA," shorthand for the QAnon motto "Where we Go One, We Go All," are still searchable and used hundreds of times daily.

In a statement, Facebook acknowledged that QAnon accounts have been skirting the platform's new policies and said in a statement that its efforts require "ongoing vigilance."

Facebook said it has been following the developments for QAnon followers, including a purported directive that they should drop references to "Q" or "QAnon" in order to avoid detection and bans by social media companies. But due to its sheer size and power, Facebook still appears to be the primary platform aiding QAnon's spread into the mainstream.

"Are they responsible in some part for QAnon's rise because they didn't see the lies and misinformation those people were purveying?" asked David Kirkpatrick, author of the "Facebook Effect." "They are the primary platform on which QAnon dialogue takes place. Because they are the primary platform for any dialogue."

Ortutay reported from Oakland, Calif.

Barrett opposed 'abortion on demand,' raising doubts on Roe

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett signed a 2006 newspaper ad sponsored by an anti-abortion group in which she said she opposed "abortion on demand" and defended "the right to life from fertilization to the end of natural life."

The ad, which had more than 1,200 names attached to it, appears to be the most direct expression

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of Barrett's opposition to abortion and is sure to intensify debate that she would vote to restrict, if not overturn, abortion rights if she is confirmed to the Supreme Court.

It was not included in materials Barrett provided to the Senate Judiciary Committee for her pending high-court nomination or in 2017, when she was nominated to the job she currently holds as a judge on the federal appeals court based in Chicago.

President Donald Trump has nominated Barrett to take the seat of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, an abortion rights supporter who died last month.

White House spokesperson Judd Deere said Barrett already has distinguished her personal views from her responsibility as a judge. "As Judge Barrett said on the day she was nominated, 'A judge must apply the law as written. Judges are not policymakers, and they must be resolute in setting aside any policy views they might hold,'" Deere said in an email.

Barrett, meeting for a third day with senators on Capitol Hill, declined to comment when asked why she did not disclose the ad on her questionnaire.

She was meeting with Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo, who has pledged to support only nominees who acknowledge that *Roe v. Wade* was wrongly decided. "How she will vote in the future on *Roe*, I don't know," Hawley said after the meeting.

Barrett was a professor at the University of Notre Dame Law School when she and her husband, Jesse, along with other people affiliated with Notre Dame, signed the brief statement sponsored by Right to Life of St. Joseph County, Indiana. "We, the following citizens of Michiana, oppose abortion on demand and defend the right to life from fertilization to the end of natural life," the ad in the South Bend (Indiana) Tribune read. "Please continue to pray to end abortion."

The statement was part of a two-page spread that ran in conjunction with the anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* ruling in 1973 that declared a nationwide, constitutional right to abortion. "It's time to put an end to the barbaric legacy of *Roe v. Wade* and restore laws that protect the lives of unborn children," the other, unsigned page of the ad read.

Jackie Appleman, executive director of the anti-abortion group, declined to comment. The group is now known as Right to Life Michiana, encompassing parts of Indiana and Michigan.

The South Bend Tribune provided a copy of the ad, dated Jan. 21, 2006, to The Associated Press. The Guardian newspaper first reported the existence of the ad.

Barrett's name on the ad points in the same direction as her membership in Notre Dame's "Faculty for Life" group and her name on a 2015 letter to Roman Catholic bishops affirming the "value of human life from conception to natural death."

But she said about abortion in her 2017 questionnaire before her confirmation to the appeals court that "my views on this or any other question will have no bearing on the discharge of my duties as a judge."

On the Senate floor, meanwhile, Democrats who know they can't stop Barrett's nomination continued Thursday to use Senate rules to delay and call attention to Republican states' lawsuit, backed by the Trump administration, to strike down the Affordable Care Act. The court will hear the latest challenge to the law a week after the election, and if confirmed by then, Barrett could take part.

"The threat to Americans' health care is very, very real," Schumer said before senators voted on whether to prevent the Department of Justice from arguing to strike down the Affordable Care Act in the Supreme Court. "And Senate Republicans are tying themselves in knots in trying to explain how it's not."

The vote got 51 of the 60 votes it needed to pass.

While Democrats knew the vote would fail, Schumer tied up business on the Senate floor for over an hour – and forced Republicans to go on the record as endorsing the administration's efforts to repeal it. Six Republicans voted with Democrats: Maine Sen. Susan Collins, Iowa Sen. Joni Ernst, Colorado Sen. Cory Gardner, Arizona Sen. Martha McSally and Alaska Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan. All but Murkowski are in competitive races for reelection this year.

Trump said in Tuesday's debate that he doesn't know Barrett's views on *Roe v. Wade* and didn't discuss them with her when they met in the Oval Office three days after Ginsburg's death. She said in her Senate

questionnaire that no one had asked her about her views on any specific legal issue.

She has voted at least twice on abortion issues as an appellate judge, both times joining dissenting opinions to decisions in favor of abortion rights.

Last year, after a three-judge panel blocked an Indiana law that would make it harder for a minor to have an abortion without her parents being notified, Barrett voted to have the decision thrown out and the case reheard by the full court. In July, the Supreme Court did, in fact, throw out the panel's ruling and ordered a new look at the case.

In 2018, a three-judge panel ruled that Indiana laws requiring that funerals be held for fetal remains after an abortion or miscarriage and banning abortions because of the sex, race or developmental disability of a fetus were unconstitutional.

Barrett was among four judges who wanted the full court to weigh in and suggested that the laws, signed by then-Gov. Mike Pence, might be constitutional.

Last year, the Supreme Court reinstated the fetal remains law, but not the ban on abortions for race, sex and developmental disabilities.

Barrett, who is Catholic, co-wrote a 1998 law review article in which she said "that Catholic judges (if they are faithful to the teachings of their church), are morally precluded from enforcing the death penalty. This means that they can neither themselves sentence criminals to death nor enforce jury recommendations of death." The article in the Marquette Law Journal was jointly bylined with John Garvey, then a Notre Dame law professor and now president of Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

The authors, though, drew a distinction between the church's opposition to capital punishment and abortion. "The prohibitions against abortion and euthanasia (properly defined) are absolute," they wrote, but that "those against war and capital punishment are not."

"There are two evident differences between the cases. First, abortion and euthanasia take away innocent life. This is not always so with war and punishment."

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller, Lisa Mascaro and Mary Clare Jalonick in Washington contributed to this report.

High demand for flu shots? Experts hope to avoid 'twindemic'

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

October is prime time for flu vaccinations, and the U.S. and Europe are gearing up for what experts hope is high demand as countries seek to avoid a "twindemic" with COVID-19.

"There's considerable concern as we enter the fall and winter months and into the flu season that we'll have that dreaded overlap" of flu and the coronavirus, Dr. Anthony Fauci of the U.S. National Institutes of Health said Thursday. He got his own flu shot earlier this week.

A record number of flu vaccine doses are on the way, between 194 million and 198 million for the U.S. alone -- seemingly plenty considering last year just under half of adults got vaccinated and there usually are leftovers.

Still, there's no way to know how many will seek shots this year and some people occasionally are finding drugstores or clinics temporarily out of stock.

Be patient: Flu vaccine ships gradually. Less than half has been distributed so far, and the CDC and manufacturers say more is in transit.

"This year I think everyone is wanting to get their vaccine and maybe wanting it earlier than usual," Dr. Daniel Jernigan of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention told The Associated Press. "If you're not able to get your vaccination now, don't get frustrated" but keep trying.

Pharmaceutical giant Sanofi Pasteur, which is supplying nearly 250 million doses worldwide including 80 million for the U.S., says it has shipments staggered into November.

Vaccine maker Seqirus is exploring if it could squeeze out "a limited number of additional doses" to meet high demand, said spokeswoman Polina Miklush.

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Brewing flu vaccine is time-consuming. Once production ends for the year, countries can't simply order more -- making for a stressful balancing act as they guess how many people will roll up their sleeves.

Germany usually buys 18 million to 19 million doses, and this year ordered more. As German Health Minister Jens Spahn put it: "If we manage, together, to get the flu vaccination rate so high that all 26 million doses are actually used, then I'd be a very happy health minister."

Spain purchased extra doses in hopes of vaccinating far more older adults and pregnant women than usual, along with key workers in health facilities and nursing homes.

In contrast, Poland, which last year had 100,000 doses go unused, didn't anticipate this fall's high demand and is seeking more.

The good news: The same precautions that help stop spread of the coronavirus -- wearing masks, avoiding crowds, washing your hands and keeping your distance -- can help block influenza, too.

Winter just ended in the Southern Hemisphere and countries like South Africa, Australia, Argentina and Chile diagnosed hardly any flu thanks to COVID-19 restrictions combined with a big push for influenza vaccinations.

With the coronavirus still circulating and cold weather coming just as more schools and businesses re-open, there's no guarantee that countries in the Northern Hemisphere will be as lucky with flu.

"How much flu, we don't know -- but there will be flu," predicted Dr. William Schaffner of Vanderbilt University and the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases.

A flu vaccine only protects against influenza, not the coronavirus. And while its effectiveness varies from year to year, people vaccinated against flu don't get as sick, avoiding pneumonia, hospitalization and death, Schaffner said.

The CDC estimated that last year the flu hospitalized 400,000 Americans and killed 22,000.

Adding flu to the toll of COVID-19 -- which has killed more than 1 million people worldwide including more than 206,000 Americans -- would further strain hospitals. Both flu and the coronavirus have similar symptoms and even if they're mild, Schaffner warned of confusion as people seek testing to learn which illness they have and if anyone they've been around needs to quarantine.

"Take flu out of the equation this fall," Jernigan advised.

Who needs flu vaccine? The U.S. recommends it for everyone starting at 6 months of age. But flu is most dangerous for people over age 65, young children, pregnant women and people with certain health conditions such as heart disease, asthma, even diabetes.

Most Americans with insurance can get it without a co-pay, and there are different kinds to choose from: Regular shots, two types of shots that aim to give older adults a little extra protection, and a nasal spray.

The CDC doesn't recommend one over another. If you can't find your preferred type, "we ask people not to shop around and wait forever," Jernigan said. "The best vaccine to get is the vaccine that's available to you."

The CDC this year wants states to increase flu vaccinations among Blacks and Hispanics, who are less likely to get a shot than whites and also are at extra risk from COVID-19. Some states also are holding drive-thru flu vaccinations and outdoor clinics to avoid crowds.

And at the same time they get immunized against flu, older adults and people with chronic illnesses also should ask about getting a vaccine against a type of pneumonia that is a frequent complication, U.S. officials urged.

In much of Europe, those at high risk get prioritized. France has ordered 30% more flu vaccine than last year, with first shots given to the high risk as inoculations begin later this month.

In Italy, doctors and pharmacists have expressed concern about the supply, as the health ministry conducts negotiations with vaccine producers to ensure everyone who wants the vaccine can get it. Italy also lowered the threshold -- from age 65 to 60 -- for receiving the flu vaccine free of charge.

Britain's health department expects enough doses for nearly half the population but cautions that phased deliveries might mean some doctors and pharmacies won't receive shots until later in the fall. Britain typically offers free flu vaccines to older adults, pregnant women and certain other at-risk groups, and are

discussing whether others should qualify for a free shot this year.

The World Health Organization said last week that some countries are scrambling to make sure they've got enough flu vaccine. WHO encouraged any countries worried about a shortfall to give priority to health workers and older adults.

AP journalists Maria Cheng in London, Aritz Parra in Madrid, Sylvie Corbet in Paris, Frank Jordans in Berlin and Colleen Barry in Milan contributed to this report.

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Documentary tries to prove existence of dead Lincoln photo

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The image is haunting, depicting a gaunt-faced man with a familiar beard, staring ahead lifelessly. The right eye is bulging and appears disfigured from an unseen wound.

Some experts believe the man is Abraham Lincoln, captured hours after the nation's beloved 16th president succumbed to an assassin's bullet on April 15, 1865, a heretofore unknown photo of incalculable emotional and historic value.

Others dismiss the mere possibility.

The original ambrotype image is locked away in an Illinois safe deposit box, the subject of court fights and accusations of robbery and, on Sunday, a Discovery network documentary that attempts to unravel the mystery behind it.

"In the world of authenticating, this is like finding the Holy Grail," said Whitney Braun, a California investigator whose effort to determine if the photo is real is traced in Discovery's special, "The Lost Lincoln." The man who claims to own the image is suing to halt the show from being aired.

After looking into it for two years, Braun said she's 99% convinced the photo is genuine. She and the special's producer, Archie Gips, say it makes too much sense for it to be real than not.

Discovery, meanwhile, is putting its reputation on the line. The network is either telling the world of an historic treasure or producing the 2020 version of "The Mystery of Al Capone's Vaults," Geraldo Rivera's laughingstock 1986 special that revealed an empty safe.

"I've seen enough of these things to know that this is a whole lot of hysteria about something that is not Lincoln," said Harold Holzer, whose 1984 book, "The Lincoln Image: Abraham Lincoln and the Popular Print," traced the 130 known photographs of the former president.

Braun learned about the image two years ago when she was cold-called by Jerald Spolar, the Illinois dentist who claims ownership. She didn't believe the story. At first glance, the face looks different — thinner, smoother — than the image most Americans are familiar with.

As the story goes, the image was captured by Henry Ulke, a professional photographer who lived across the street from Washington's Ford's Theatre in the boardinghouse where Lincoln was brought after being shot. Lincoln died early the next morning, and Ulke supposedly took the picture in secret before the president's body was taken to the White House.

It was an ambrotype, a process where a photo is created by using a glass negative on a dark background. That alone has led some experts to doubt the picture's authenticity, since ambrotypes were largely out of style by the mid-1860s.

It was kept secret because Lincoln's powerful secretary of war, Edwin Stanton, was strongly opposed to any images of the dead president. Only one fuzzy photo is known to exist, taken from a distance when Lincoln's body was lying in state in New York, Holzer said.

The photo was quietly given to the descendants of Nancy Hanks, Lincoln's mother, in Illinois (actor Tom Hanks is a distant cousin), and in the 1980s was in the possession of Margaret Hanks, a second cousin once removed of the former president. Before she died in 1986, she sold a collection of artifacts to Larry

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Davis, an auctioneer and Civil War buff from Quincy, Illinois.

They included the ambrotype, affixed with a Post-it note saying "Cousin Abe," Gips said.

Davis, who would not comment when reached by The Associated Press, alleges in court papers that his ex-wife stole the ambrotype and sold it to Spolar. The dentist disputes that he bought stolen property, said lawyer Bill Holbrow III, and has spent several years trying to prove the photo is genuine.

Braun goes through a lengthy process herself, consulting with facial recognition experts, medical experts, a ballistics expert, Lincoln scholars and descendants of Ulke.

"My first reaction was 'how could this be,'" Braun said. "How could a plate like this go unnoticed for 150 years? My initial thought was that it was too good to be true."

The experts convinced her. The ballistics expert — Braun's father — showed how it was unlikely there would be an exit wound from the bullet fired into Lincoln's head. The facial experts said the man in the image had a slight scar under the lip consistent with one Lincoln had. Ulke's descendants explained how Henry Ulke specialized in "death photos," particularly ones with the eyes left open.

"There will be plenty of naysayers, of course, as there is with anything, especially the historians," Gips said. But the photo was taken in complete secrecy and shared with very few people, which only makes him believe it more, he said.

The human frailty caught in the image is what is haunting to Braun.

"It's a really important piece of history that's incredible," Gips said. "It's not what you'd expect. You'd expect to see blood pouring out of his eye. But you get a sense of eeriness. You don't get a shock value or disgust."

Could that be because it isn't real? The image has been seen by several people in the community of Lincoln experts and is not believed, Holzer said.

"It's not credible," he said.

In one of the last photographs of Lincoln taken alive, his once-full beard was wispy, almost a goatee, he said. But the man in the image has a full beard. Braun said there's evidence that the photo was retouched to add more facial hair and to color the cheeks, making them appear smoother.

Holzer also said Lincoln was stripped of his clothes to check for other wounds when he was brought to the boardinghouse, yet the man in the picture is wearing a shirt. He's also suspicious that it's an ambrotype used at a time most photographers had moved on to another process, and taken with apparently good lighting.

"Not every man with a beard photographed after 1861 was Abraham Lincoln," he said. "It's going to take a lot for me to take this seriously. It doesn't scan."

As of Thursday, it wasn't entirely sure the Discovery documentary would air. Spolar has asked a California judge to stop it, a lawsuit Discovery dismisses in court papers as "patently frivolous."

He's also sued Braun, saying she violated a non-disclosure agreement made when he showed her a copy of the image, and is attempting to profit off somebody else's property. Braun declined comment on the action.

If the photo was proven genuine, there's no telling what it would be worth on the open market. In 2011, billionaire William Koch paid \$2.3 million for the only known photograph of the Wild West gunfighter Billy the Kid.

Braun said it should be in a museum.

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Inside the church at the heart of the Louisville protests

By CLAIRE GALOFARO AP National Writer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — The story of how the First Unitarian Church of Louisville flung open its doors to protesters who marched for justice for Breonna Taylor began years before the helicopters swirled overhead, before police in riot gear began marching up the alley.

It began with much quieter moments, in the hearts of congregants like Pam Middleton.

She came to First Unitarian in 2012, at her darkest hour. Her husband had died, and she'd fallen into despair, and the First Unitarian community helped her begin again. She found joy; she joined a dance group.

But when one dancer, a Black woman, posted online that she was terrified of being brutalized by police when she walked outside, Middleton was stunned, and ashamed. In the 1960s, she'd fought for women's rights. She protested the war in Vietnam. But she did not march for racial justice. She had tried to atone ever since.

First Unitarian, like Middleton, had humbled itself with the hard self-reflection she believes all white Americans must undertake: They considered their church's progressive actions throughout history, the times they rose to the moment, but also the times they had failed.

The church has for months played a background role in the protest movement in a downtown square a mile away that demonstrators have occupied in honor of Taylor, the 26-year-old emergency medical technician killed in her home when police burst through her door in the middle of the night in a botched drug raid. This was an opportunity to quietly drop off ice, to bandage wounds, to listen to Black voices.

In the background is where they wanted to remain. But then, a string of serendipitous events thrust

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them into the spotlight and into history.

When the church told protest leaders that people could seek refuge there as needed, they assumed small groups might need shelter from time to time. But demonstrators were marching nearby as curfew fell. There was a small fire at the public library across the street, and police in riot gear with guns and batons closed in. A flurry of phone calls were made and the church declared itself a sanctuary and welcomed all to come inside.

Protesters crammed into the courtyard and front lawn as police marched down the alley and set up a perimeter. Journalists from all over the world captured this conflict, the church rising up in the background of the photographs, its Black Lives Matter sign tied high above the stained-glass windows.

Inside, Middleton and other congregants were scrambling, many of them white women, many in their 70s, like her. They set up a triage unit in what moments earlier had been the lobby of the sanctuary to tend to the sick or wounded. They scrounged through the kitchen cabinets to find food for all these people.

"Just breathe," they told each other as their church became the epicenter of one of the tensest moments in their city's history. The downtown streets all around them were blocked with barricades and military vehicles, as marchers filled the streets to protest the attorney general's announcement that no charges would be filed against the police officers who shot and killed Taylor.

They had just happened to be in exactly the right place, at the exactly the right time, when the movement needed them most.

"It felt very providential, and I'm not necessarily a person who believes in providence," said Lisa Willner, a state representative and church member. She was at the square as part of the demonstration when she made the first call to the reverend suggesting it might be a good place to offer as a sanctuary.

Protesters returned every night as long as the citywide curfew stayed in place. It became, for several days, the heart of this movement. Donations poured in: people dropped off water, snacks and toilet paper. So, too, did invective. One called them the "devil's church." Someone emailed Rev. Lori Kyle and said they'd looked at the website and found no evidence of God.

But she told her congregation that she had seen God in all they had done.

"Every time we give a bottle of water to someone, God is there," congregant Kathy Kremer recalled the minister saying. The words perfectly summarized her feelings about faith and meaning: "Every time we offer comfort, God is there. Whenever we put a Band-Aid on somebody or talk to someone who just got out of jail, or fed them, or gave them something to wear, or let them sleep, God is there."

Middleton has for months spent several days each week at the protest site downtown. As a retired doctor, she has offered her skills to protesters injured by police. One young woman had a bruise the size of cantaloupe from being pelted with a tear gas cannister. She was tear gassed herself.

Her fellow congregants did what they could to help. The church welcomes all people of all faiths, including atheists and agnostics because they believe church should be about love and service and community, and less about a specific creed.

It has long been at the forefront of civil rights movements. In 1991, its minister worked with a local civil rights leader, Louis Coleman, to stage a piece of role-reversal performance art outside an exclusive men's club a couple blocks away. They set up a fancy dinner table, with a linen tablecloth, a bottle of wine and a floral centerpiece. Then Coleman sat down and the minister, a white man, dressed as a waiter and served him. The local newspaper snapped a photo and it hangs on the wall of the church's library.

Before the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage, one minister refused to officiate any weddings at all until same-sex couples got the same rights as everyone else. They rewrote their hymnal to remove masculine pronouns so God is no longer "he" or "him."

When the Black Lives Matter movement began in 2013, the women's alliance suggested to the board that they hang a banner, and they did. It was vandalized more than once, and each time they replaced it.

But also: They have heard that decades ago ushers used to quietly suggest Black families who came in ought to find a different church. And before that, some of their members were slaveowners.

"We're no different. I like to say that if we've been here since 1832, we are going to have reflected what's

going on in the county," said Kremer, 70, who serves as the church's archivist. "It was always difficult and it was never perfect. But the thing is we grappled, we struggled with it."

The protest movement has been driven largely by the young, steeped in social media and broadcast live online. But inside this church is a very different demographic: These are mostly older people. When you call out for "Kathy," half the women in the congregation respond, Middleton said, a testament to the popularity of that name in the post-World World II years when most of them were born.

But here they were, events unfolding so quickly it was hard for them to process in real time.

Kremer, a retired office manager who naturally likes to keep things orderly, found herself anxious about something that seems so small in retrospect. The church had just raised money to repaint some rooms. Now protesters were taping signs to those walls, directing people to food and bathrooms and jail support. She fretted about the paint for a while, tried to stand up a sign on an easel asking people not to tape anything to the walls, but the easel was quickly lost in the crowd. Then she realized: The paint does not matter.

Because at the same time there was fear. Dozens of officers were surrounding the building, a response the minister describes as "clearly incongruent" with what was happening.

Still, the parishioners here said they found incredible beauty in what happened over those days. That first, chaotic night, they tracked down enough boxes of macaroni and cheese to make 16 pounds of it. Over time, meals got better. A chef in the crowd made enough chili and chicken to feed the whole group. People opened their wallets and handed over every bill to keep the meals coming.

A toilet broke; a protester announced he was a plumber, and got it working again. People started sweeping and mopping. One woman swept the alley. Middleton said the parking lot was cleaner than it's ever been.

Middleton doesn't like the word "proud," because if you become proud, she said, you might stop searching. But she feels something close to that about what her church has done.

"It's not enough, let me make it clear, anything that I can do is not enough," she said. "But it is necessary. It is what needs to be done."

Follow Galofaro on Twitter at @clairegalofaro.

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 is 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, that 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 has 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, Russia and the U.S. have said they do not intend to join. Other countries, including France and Germany, will technically join Covax but won't procure vaccines for their citizens via the initiative.

Not only that, but firm agreements with Covax came in too late to prevent more than half of all potential

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doses being snapped up by countries representing 13% of the world's population, according to an Oxfam study.

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

He praised Covax for the solidarity it represents but said there are serious questions about allocation, saying African nations' 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?"

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. Instead, the EU has signed its own deals to buy more than 1 billion doses, after some member states raised concerns about what was described as Gavi's "dictatorship" approach to running Covax.

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 \$300 million more from governments or other sources. By the end of next year, Gavi estimates the project will need \$5 billion more.

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.

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

Gavi's Aurelia Nguyen, managing director of Covax, said 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," and a "significant and urgent ramp-up of cold chain capacity" may be needed.

On Thursday, Gavi announced it will provide \$150 million to help some countries with planning, technical assistance and refrigeration equipment.

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 whether that condition is acceptable. Thailand so far has signed only 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>

After pandemic delay, Biden launching in-person canvassing

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After months of avoiding direct contact with voters because of the pandemic, Joe Biden's campaign is about to launch door-to-door canvassing across several battleground states.

The decision comes amid growing concern from Democratic officials on the ground in key states who fear that Biden has been giving a significant advantage to President Donald Trump and his Republican allies, who have been aggressively courting voters at their doorsteps for months. The reversal also reflects a sense of rising urgency as polls tighten just a month before Election Day.

Biden's campaign, which detailed the new effort to The Associated Press, insists that its existing phone and online voter outreach is effective. The new plans will build upon what's already in place, not replace it.

"Our voter contact operation is the most innovative and technologically advanced of any presidential campaign in history, and it has been thriving in this unprecedented environment," Biden campaign manager Jenn O'Malley Dillon said.

"We're now expanding on our strategy in a targeted way that puts the safety of communities first and foremost and helps us mobilize voters who are harder to reach by phone now that we're in the final stretch — and now that Americans are fully dialed-in and ready to make their voices heard."

Biden this weekend will dispatch several hundred newly trained volunteers to engage voters across Nevada, Michigan, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania. The effort, focusing on voters who are considered difficult to reach by phone, is expected to spread quickly into several more battleground states and include many more volunteers.

Campaign officials and volunteers acknowledge their virtual-contact strategy had holes they're hoping to fill with in-person conversations.

"It's just harder and harder to get people on the phone," said Patrick Sullivan, a Biden volunteer who lives in suburban Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. "So being able to go to someone's door and talk to them makes a big difference."

Trump's campaign and allied Republican groups have been having in-person contacts with voters since at least June. Republican National Committee Chair Ronna McDaniel told the AP over the summer that her team was knocking on roughly one million doors each week.

Democratic officials have been extremely critical of the GOP's tactics. Lily Adams, a spokesperson for the Democratic National Committee, tweeted in August that the Trump campaign was "risking the lives of their staff, the lives of voters and risking becoming a super spreader organization during the middle of a pandemic."

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Republicans quickly seized on Biden's reversal.

"What changed? They know they're being hopelessly outworked on the ground, and down-ballot Democrats in key states have been freaking out about it," Trump campaign spokesman Tim Murtaugh said. "You can't just parachute in a month before the election and hope to make up ground."

While Biden leads many polls, lingering questions remain about the commitment of his supporters to actually vote. To defeat Trump, Democrats will need strong turnout from every piece of his broad coalition, including groups that typically don't vote in large numbers, such as younger Americans and African Americans.

And with the pandemic still raging, voters in 2020 face unprecedented challenges in getting counted.

"It is possible that without the face-to-face-engagement, you may have a few voters who fall off," said Mairi Luce, an attorney and a Biden volunteer who lives in Philadelphia. "But passions run high on both sides, and a lot of people are motivated to vote. I don't think there are a lot of undecided voters out there."

Ahead of the voter outreach expansion, Biden's campaign has already opened 109 supply centers across 17 battleground states to help distribute campaign literature, lawn signs and other materials for the canvassers.

Biden volunteers in Pennsylvania and Nevada began dropping campaign literature at voters' homes just last weekend, although they were instructed to avoid any direct conversations. Those conversations will begin this weekend following training sessions designed to ensure Biden's team can engage with people at doorsteps as safely as possible.

All volunteers involved will be provided personal protective equipment, including masks, and will have their temperatures checked. The campaign also plans to send text messages telling voters to expect a knock at their door before volunteers enter a neighborhood.

Biden's team is particularly focused on ensuring his supporters have updated information about how and where to vote as early as possible. Literature used in Pennsylvania in recent days, for example, encourages people to make a specific plan to vote — either by mail, in person early voting or in person on Election Day.

Even before Biden executes his new plan, Democrats are leading Republicans in some early voting prodding. For example, registered Democrats have been issued far more mail and absentee ballots than Republicans in Florida, Iowa and Pennsylvania, according to data collected by The Associated Press.

Still, local Democratic officials have been concerned.

Just before news of Biden's decision broke, Philadelphia Democratic Party Chairman Bob Brady acknowledged he had worries when asked about the lack of in-person canvassing to date. He wasn't alone. Pennsylvania's Northampton County Democratic Party chair, Matt Munsey, recently warned of the limitations of phone outreach.

"One big difficulty is we don't have phone numbers that reach everyone and a lot of people don't answer the phone, especially unknown numbers, so it's a limitation on being able to reach people," Munsey said. "And I think it's harder, it can be difficult to have a really good conversation over the phone when you're not talking face to face."

AP writer Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania contributed.

Friendly skies: Jet-owning donors reap Trump-era rewards

By BRIAN SLODYSKO and MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ben Pogue, owner of a Texas construction company, provided the use of a private jet to President Donald Trump's reelection campaign last fall. Several months later, his father received a presidential pardon.

Like more than a dozen other big Republican donors, many whose businesses are affected by Trump administration policy, he found a way to gain influence beyond simply writing a check. And, like many of them, he received some form of payback.

Records reviewed by The Associated Press show that donors with private aircraft have provided nearly

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\$600,000 in private flights since July 2019 to Trump Victory, the president's big-dollar fundraising committee led by Kimberly Guilfoyle, a former Fox News star who is dating Donald Trump Jr.

The donations highlight the gulf between Trump's promise to clean up Washington's pay-to-play "swamp," and the reality of his presidency.

While there is rarely a straight line between a donation and a desired result, the flight arrangements offered donors a valuable opportunity to interact with campaign officials. Some donors were recipients of government contracts. Others stood to benefit from regulatory changes or were awaiting a favor, like the clearing of Pogue's father's name.

"He turned 'the swamp' into a gold-plated hot tub without a drain," said Anthony Scaramucci, a Wall Street financier and former Trump fundraiser, who briefly served as White House communications director before being ousted.

Lobbyists, political groups and foreign governments have also racked up massive bills at his Washington hotel to curry favor. Taxpayers have shelled out an estimated \$100 million from Trump's own stays at his resorts, according to a recent report by the government watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. And his administration has worked closely with industry groups, many of whom are major donors, to change regulations, which can yield millions in corporate profits.

To trace the flights to specific donors, the AP reviewed campaign finance disclosures, federal spending data, state business filings and Federal Aviation Administration records.

Some donors provided relatively modest flight service, while others contributed tens of thousands of dollars in air time. The flights were often recorded as "in kind" contributions. In other cases, Trump Victory footed the bill, as required under election law.

Guilfoyle has drawn past scrutiny over her preference for flying private. It's unusual for campaign aides not traveling with the politician they work for to do so because the flights are expensive.

The Trump campaign said it paid market rates and that the jets were used to transport prominent surrogates, but campaign officials declined to say who was aboard. They did not make Guilfoyle available for an interview.

"The president's supporters are willing to run through a brick wall for him, and any assistance with travel is merely a reflection of that enthusiasm and dedication to his reelection efforts," spokeswoman Samantha Zager said.

For relatives of Paul Pogue, the value was highly personal. The family mounted an aggressive campaign to secure a presidential pardon after he pleaded guilty to filing false tax returns in 2010 and was sentenced to three years of probation.

Former GOP presidential candidate Sen. Rick Santorum and current Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton lobbied Trump to show leniency, records show.

Ben Pogue donated more than \$385,000 to Trump's reelection effort, more than \$100,000 of which came in the form of private jet travel for Trump Victory, records show. The younger Pogue has a Gulfstream IV jet. A used version of the aircraft sells as much as \$6.5 million.

Pogue did not respond to a request for comment left with his business.

Colorado-based oil and gas magnate Alex Cranberg similarly offered use of his French-made Dassault Falcon 900 EX to the campaign.

In February, Cranberg was paid \$50,055 for providing flights to Trump Victory. In April 2019, he made a \$50,000 cash donation to the committee.

Cranberg has deep GOP ties, including former Trump Energy Secretary Rick Perry, who Cranberg flew on his corporate jet during the former Texas governor's failed 2012 presidential bid.

Once he became energy secretary, Perry used his influence to help a company owned by Cranberg win a huge gas exploration contract from the Ukrainian government. At an energy industry roundtable in Kyiv in November 2018, Perry touted the company.

"You know, Alex Cranberg, who has been in this business a long time, can attest to this probably as well as anyone sitting around the table, that we have the potential to change the world," Perry said, according to a transcript released by the U.S. Embassy.

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Perry's interactions with Ukrainian officials came under intense scrutiny after the disclosure that Trump held up military aid to Ukraine as his personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani pushed President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government to open an investigation into Democratic presidential rival Joe Biden and his son Hunter's business dealings in the former Soviet-bloc country.

In a statement, Cranberg said he "scrupulously" follows the law and makes donations "based on issues, not favors."

Florida disaster cleanup contractor Randall Perkins, who ran for Congress as a Democrat in 2016, is another major Trump donor who offered the use of a jet.

Perkins initially supported Hillary Clinton. But he has since donated more than \$725,000 to campaign committees supporting the president's reelection, disclosures show.

Trump Victory made a nearly \$10,000 payment for flights to a Florida limited liability company that has the same address as AshBritt Environmental, Perkins' cleanup business.

The company has drawn repeated scrutiny for billing the Federal Emergency Management Agency at rates far above market rates, which came to light during cleanup from Florida hurricanes in 2004, records show.

Since Trump took office, Ashbritt's federal contracting has expanded, including contracts worth up to \$1.7 billion, federal spending data shows.

Perkins did not respond to a request for comment.

Others who have provided jet use to Trump Victory include:

— James and Deanna Bodenstedt, who own Mui! Brands, a major franchisee of fast food restaurants. The couple, who have donated over \$1 million to Trump's election efforts, were paid \$36,000 in March for providing flights. Weeks later, Mui! Brands and its subsidiaries were among the first companies to be awarded coronavirus relief aid, collecting between \$16 million and \$37 million in forgivable loans, government data shows.

— Syed Javaid Anwar, an oil and gas magnate from Texas who in recent years has emerged as a major Republican donor. Anwar, who founded Midland Energy Inc., and his wife have given roughly \$1.5 million to Trump. That includes \$47,000 in donated air time, as well as an additional \$46,000 in flights the campaign paid for.

— At least \$47,000 in flights from other energy sector interests that have donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Trump effort while seeking regulatory relief from his administration.

Campaign finance experts caution that Trump's operation could be blocking additional flights from disclosure, including whether the campaign paid a fair market rate, as required by law.

Trump's political organization has also obscured more than \$360 million in spending by routing money to companies controlled by campaign operatives, who act as middlemen to dole out payments to vendors. The arrangement satisfies basic reporting requirements, but it shields the identities of the ultimate recipients and is the subject of a complaint pending before the Federal Election Commission.

The campaign says that — unlike other forms of spending — it has disclosed all flight payments.

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 flu-type deal," she says.

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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 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.

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"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 abandoned building after another.

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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 shifts 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.

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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."

Gifts big league foul balls sweet way to connect with fans

By JANIE McCAULEY AP Baseball Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — It began when lifelong baseball fan Kimberlee MacVicar intimated that in her 52 years, she had never corralled a foul ball.

"I've waited half a century, so I'm not in a rush," she texted me on July 24 — opening night in Oakland.

With nobody else to scavenge for baseballs during this strange COVID-19 season devoid of fans, I had a clear advantage as a regular covering Bay Area baseball and one of the few people allowed inside the stadium. So I saw to it that the next day, MacVicar received a ball hit foul by slugger Mark Canha as her Athletics defeated the Angels.

This sparked an idea: Why not share the souvenirs, spreading some joy to those who can't go to the ballpark?

A's management signed off on the project. The Coliseum grounds crew took to tipping me off as to where to find the prizes.

Across San Francisco Bay, the Giants' clubhouse staff was encouraging. The public relations department provided permission to retrieve a ball or two mid-game at Oracle Park.

There were days baseballs would mysteriously turn up at my Oakland workstation. Other times, they were delivered during a game.

I'd regularly holler for an assist: "Where'd it land?" With no fans to stop them, balls roll fast and far.

Once retrieved, they went into my trunk for gifting — more than 100 so far. Some went to people I knew well, others to strangers, like the road maintenance workers and construction crews offered the usual choice: "clean, or dirty and scuffed?"

"Hmm ... dirty," requested beloved Alameda kindergarten teacher (and A's fan) Terry Eichel. It was her first foul ball.

The farthest any ball traveled was some 5,500 miles, to longtime Giants fan Manner Pohl in tiny Schwenntinental, Germany — a request from daughter Astrid Keene for his 85th birthday in August.

"He is so excited, giving him something to live for since he is almost blind," Keene said. "It was wonderful to hear him being so happy."

Balls have gone to essential workers — jovial UPS driver Derek Reynolds, friendly Tionne Eitz at the post office, firefighter colleagues Mike DeWindt and Stephen Lucero, grocery manager Paul Chai, his brother and golf buddies. They have gone to perfect strangers like an overjoyed Padres fan in the Bay Area, Vinicio López.

There was a man named Casey, who secured a ball I dropped carefully from Oracle Park's outfield walkway to the path along McCovey Cove. When I saw him later, Casey was beaming. "I'm working on all

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the grips," he said, proudly demonstrating one.

Balls went to Alameda Unified School District Teacher of the Year Brian Dodson, an A's supporter all his life, and his principal at Maya Lin Elementary School, Judith Goodwin. To longtime local dance studio owner and instructor Marnell Xavier.

And to Cormac Daly, an Irish lad of 9 who roots for the Giants and played in Little League for the A's.

And to cooks like Carlos Cruz at Little House Cafe who makes a mouth-watering breakfast burrito. And bakers like Beth Woulfe and her staff at Crispian Bakery.

And to Padres fan Bob Gans, who stopped to talk about bay swimming on a visit from La Jolla and walked away with a souvenir.

Cathie Caris, a fan of both the A's and Giants, was thrilled when a ball turned up on her porch. Her thank you note is lovely and handwritten.

"You certainly cheered me up once again with your thoughtful and sweet and cool gift from the ballpark (that I miss so much)," said the proud owner of classic Converse sneakers — in both Giants orange and A's green, of course.

While nonstop news about the effects of the coronavirus has become commonplace, so, too, have tales of kindness. "One Good Thing" is a series of AP stories focusing on glimmers of joy and benevolence in a dark time. Read the series here: <https://apnews.com/OneGoodThing>

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

Subway bread isn't bread, Irish court says

LONDON (AP) — Ireland's Supreme Court has ruled that bread sold by the fast food chain Subway contains so much sugar that it cannot be legally defined as bread.

The ruling came in a tax dispute brought by Bookfinders Ltd., an Irish Subway franchisee, which argued that some of its takeaway products - including teas, coffees and heated sandwiches - were not liable for value-added tax.

A panel of judges rejected the appeal Tuesday, ruling that the bread sold by Subway contains too much sugar to be categorized as a "staple food," which is not taxed.

"There is no dispute that the bread supplied by Subway in its heated sandwiches has a sugar content of 10% of the weight of the flour included in the dough, and thus exceeds the 2% specified," the judgement read.

The law makes a distinction between "bread as a staple food" and other baked goods "which are, or approach, confectionery or fancy baked goods," the judgement said.

Subway disagreed with the characterization in a statement.

"Subway's bread is, of course, bread," the company said in an email. "We have been baking fresh bread in our restaurants for more than three decades and our guests return each day for sandwiches made on bread that smells as good as it tastes."

Bookfinders was appealing a 2006 decision by authorities who refused to refund value-added tax payments. Lower courts had dismissed the case before it reached the Supreme Court.

Subway said it was reviewing the latest tax ruling. It added that the decision was based on an outdated bread exemption set by the Irish government that was updated in 2012.

After ruling K-pop, BLACKPINK aim to takeover pop world too

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Four years after they debuted as the next buzzed-about girl group on the K-pop music scene, BLACKPINK's lofty dreams in music have come into fruition.

Perform at Coachella. Check.

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Record a song with Lady Gaga. Check.
Collaborate with Selena Gomez. Check.
Get a verse from Cardi B. Check.

Another major objective: Record their first-full length album after being known for dropping hit single after single to showcase a deeper, more personal side of the group.

Boldly titled "The Album," the eight-song project being released Friday highlights all the things BLACKPINK have become known for: fun, big, explosive songs that meshes sounds like pop, electronica, hip-hop, dance and trap.

"We had so many things to take a look into. When it comes to one song, the video, the choreography, the fashion, the visual, everything is just put into one — let's just times that by how many. We were kind of freaking out at first, but then we have been working for it for a long time," Jennie, 24, said in an interview with The Associated Press. "It gave us enough time to perfect everything and make it into our own."

BLACKPINK — which also includes Rosé, Jisoo and Lisa — debuted with the singles "Boombayah" and "Whistle," which quickly topped the South Korean music charts. They've had success with other hits and marked their debut on the Billboard Hot 100 in 2018 with the gold-selling "Ddu-Du Ddu-Du," which has more than 1 billion views on YouTube, and "Kiss and Make Up," a collaboration with English hitmaker Dua Lipa. A year later, they nearly cracked the Top 40 with "Kill This Love," while a pair of their EPs reached the Top 40 on the Billboard 200 albums chart.

They performed on a worldwide tour last year, taking on U.S. arenas like The Forum in Inglewood, California, and Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey. They became the first K-pop girl group to perform at Coachella when they hit the stage there last year.

Those moments have prepared them for "The Album," partially recorded during the pandemic. Outside of the big beats and slick choreography, the members wanted to get deep on the songs.

"We feel like we tried to put as many personalities of us as we could in the album. We have some very personal songs; songs that are a little more close to our hearts, that speak our story a little more," Rosé, 23, said. "Personal songs take a little more to record, definitely. We had to bring our souls into the recording studio. It was us being very vulnerable. We heard that our fans can kind of feel that."

The in-your-face first single, "How You Like That," set a record on YouTube for most views within 24 hours for a music video (BTS later broke it); the track won song of summer at the 2020 MTV Video Music Awards; and it became their first Top 40 hit in the U.S., peaking at No. 33. Two months later, second single "Ice Cream," co-starring Gomez and co-written by Ariana Grande, debuted at No. 13 on the Hot 100.

"She's like the sweetest girl," Jennie said of Gomez. "As soon as we were talking about collaborating with someone for 'Ice Cream,' we all thought of Selena maybe and then it actually came true and we made it happen."

Cardi B is featured on "Bet You Wanna," and the girls couldn't control themselves when they first heard the Grammy-winning rapper's verse: "We were screaming. We were literally screaming," Rosé exclaimed.

"It was our first time having a rapper feature for our song," Jennie said. "As soon as we heard the verse we were like, 'Ah! Cardi B!!!"

The collaborations with Cardi and Gomez come months after BLACKPINK recorded "Sour Candy" for Gaga's "Chromatica" album, released in May.

"It's crazy because I grew up listening to her songs on the radio. She was always on the radio. I remember when we were talking to her, she just was so sweet and so down to earth and so down to work with us. She was very genuine about it," Rosé said.

"She was asking us about our opinions and speaking about the message that she wants to put out in the song," Jennie chimed in. "We were like, 'Yes, yes. We're all there.'"

BLACKPINK say they're excited to see female artists open their doors to the group finding its way in the international music industry. "We feel very supported," Rosé said.

"The fact that they're reaching out to us. The fact that they're featuring us. That move itself kind of speaks to that there are no boundaries and they are willing to create something fun, which we love to

do," Jennie said. "It's a great feeling and we're so lucky to be able to make things happen."

Though BLACKPINK's rise to fame might have come out of nowhere to some audiences, the performers have trained for years to get to this point. Through South Korean entertainment company YG Entertainment — which launched the 2012 viral and colorful "Gangnam Style" song and video from Korean rapper PSY — each singer auditioned individually as teenagers, spending years in vocal, dance and language training. It's documented in Netflix's "BLACKPINK: Light Up the Sky," the streaming platform's first K-pop documentary. It will be available Oct. 14.

"We're very nervous that they get to see those sides of us. It's very new for us to have cameras in the in-progress stages. We're always very used to showing our fans the final stages — what we've already considered 10 times before releasing anything. Just to have an extra eye in there, more like thousands of new eyes now in the progress, we feel very vulnerable, but excited to share," Rosé said.

"It's like the unfiltered version of us," Jennie added. "It's the best way we could have shown this to our fans."

Those die-hard fans — called the BLINKS — have followed the foursome for four years, helping the girls build a strong social media presence around the world.

"How do I give this back? How do I show that we love you guys more than it might seem? We're very lucky," Jennie said of their supporters.

Rosé said she's hoping "The Album" can be a bright spot for their fans in a year full of gloom and doom: "We hope our album can be a little light in your life guys because we love you all and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts."

Chrissy Teigen and John Legend grieve their miscarriage

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Chrissy Teigen said she and John Legend are in "deep pain" following her miscarriage, which she announced in a heart wrenching social media post.

Teigen wrote that they were "driving home from the hospital with no baby. This is unreal."

"We are shocked and in the kind of deep pain you only hear about, the kind of pain we've never felt before. We were never able to stop the bleeding and give our baby the fluids he needed, despite bags and bags of blood transfusions. It just wasn't enough," she wrote in a post late Wednesday, alongside a picture of herself in tears on a hospital bed. Another image showed her and Legend grieving together over a bundle cradled in her arms.

Revealing they had chosen the name Jack, the model and the musician wrote of their love for their lost son, who would have been their third child.

"To our Jack - I'm so sorry that the first few moments of your life were met with so many complications, that we couldn't give you the home you needed to survive. We will always love you," she wrote.

Legend retweeted her post, adding "We love you, Jack."

Teigen announced she was pregnant with her third child in August. She had been hospitalized with excessive bleeding earlier in the week.

Thanking those who have been sending "positive energy, thoughts and prayers," Teigen concluded, "We are so grateful for the life we have, for our wonderful babies Luna and Miles, for all the amazing things we've been able to experience. But everyday can't be full of sunshine. On this darkest of days, we will grieve, we will cry our eyes out. But we will hug and love each other harder and get through it."

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

The EU move 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

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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.

Helena Kennedy, an opposition Labour Party member of the House of Lords, said the bill was "a flagrant breach of international law," and Parliament's upper chamber would try to stop it.

"People come to the courts in the United Kingdom because our judiciary is respected. Our respect for the law is one of our badges — a badge of honor," she told the BBC. "Well it's gone down."

The British government stood its ground in an immediate reaction to the EU move, 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.

Hundreds of thousands of jobs are at stake on both sides, especially in nations close to Britain like France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte sought to play down the significance of the European Commission's action, and instead focus on seeking a trade deal.

"Don't look for too much behind this," Rutte said about the start of legal action. "It is normal procedure, more administrative than political."

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 "dump-

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ing" of U.K. merchandise at prices lower than in the EU.

Jill Lawless reported from London.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Oct. 2, the 276th day of 2020. There are 90 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 2, 1944, German troops crushed the two-month-old Warsaw Uprising, during which a quarter of a million people had been killed.

On this date:

In 1869, political and spiritual leader Mohandas K. Gandhi was born in Porbandar, India.

In 1890, comedian Groucho Marx was born Julius Marx in New York.

In 1941, during World War II, German armies launched an all-out drive against Moscow; Soviet forces succeeded in holding onto their capital.

In 1950, the comic strip "Peanuts," created by Charles M. Schulz, was syndicated to seven newspapers.

In 1958, the former French colony of Guinea in West Africa proclaimed its independence.

In 1967, Thurgood Marshall was sworn as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court as the court opened its new term.

In 1970, one of two chartered twin-engine planes flying the Wichita State University football team to Utah crashed into a mountain near Silver Plume, Colorado, killing 31 of the 40 people on board.

In 1984, Richard W. Miller became the first FBI agent to be arrested and charged with espionage. (Miller was tried three times; he was sentenced to 20 years in prison, but was released after nine years.)

In 2002, the Washington, D.C.-area sniper attacks began, setting off a frantic manhunt lasting three weeks. (John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo were finally arrested for killing 10 people and wounding three others; Muhammad was executed in 2009; Malvo was sentenced to life in prison.)

In 2005, a tour boat, the Ethan Allen, capsized on New York's Lake George, killing 20 elderly passengers. Playwright August Wilson died in Seattle at age 60. Actor-comedian Nipsey Russell died in New York at age 87.

In 2017, rock superstar Tom Petty died at a Los Angeles hospital at the age of 66, a day after suffering cardiac arrest at his home in Malibu, California.

In 2018, President Donald Trump ignited a crowd at a campaign rally in Mississippi by mocking Christine Blasey (BLAH'-zee) Ford over her claim that she had been sexually assaulted by Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh decades ago; Trump also said it's a "very scary time for young men in America" who could be considered guilty based on an accusation.

Ten years ago: A coalition of progressive and civil rights groups marched by the thousands on the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C., pledging to support Democrats struggling to keep power on Capitol Hill.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama said he wouldn't sign another temporary government funding bill after the current one expired Dec. 11, insisting that congressional Republicans and Democrats work out a long-term budget deal with the White House. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced his resignation, which President Obama reluctantly accepted. Former Panamanian President Eric Arturo Delvalle, 78, who was deposed in 1988 after challenging then-dictator Manuel Noriega, died in Cleveland, Ohio.

One year ago: House Democrats threatened to make White House defiance of a congressional request for testimony and documents potential grounds for an article of impeachment. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo acknowledged for the first time that he had been on the phone call in which President Donald Trump pressed Ukraine's president to investigate Democrat Joe Biden. Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders canceled campaign events "until further notice," a day after being treated for what his campaign later confirmed was a heart attack. A World War II-era plane with 13 people aboard crashed

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and burned at an airport near Hartford, Connecticut, after encountering mechanical trouble on takeoff; seven people were killed. A Dallas jury sentenced white former police officer Amber Guyger to 10 years in prison, a day after convicting her of murder in the killing of her Black upstairs neighbor; she said she had mistaken his apartment for her own.

Today's Birthdays: Retired MLB All-Star Maury Wills is 88. Movie critic Rex Reed is 82. Singer-songwriter Don McLean is 75. Cajun/country singer Jo-el Sonnier (sahn-YAY') is 74. Actor Avery Brooks is 72. Fashion designer Donna Karan (KA'-ruhn) is 72. Photographer Annie Leibovitz is 71. Rock musician Mike Rutherford (Genesis, Mike & the Mechanics) is 70. Singer-actor Sting is 69. Actor Robin Riker is 68. Actor Lorraine Bracco is 66. Country musician Greg Jennings (Restless Heart) is 66. Rock singer Phil Oakey (The Human League) is 65. Rhythm-and-blues singer Freddie Jackson is 64. Singer-producer Robbie Nevil is 62. Retro-soul singer James Hunter is 58. Former NFL quarterback Mark Rypien (RIP'-ihn) is 58. Rock musician Bud Gaugh (Sublime, Eyes Adrift) is 53. Folk-country singer Gillian Welch is 53. Country singer Kelly Willis is 52. Actor Joey Slotnick is 52. Rhythm-and-blues singer Dion Allen (Az Yet) is 50. Actor-talk show host Kelly Ripa (TV: "Live with Kelly and Ryan") is 50. Rock musician Jim Root (AKA #4 Slipknot) is 49. Singer Tiffany is 49. Rock singer Lene Nystrom is 47. Actor Efrén Ramirez is 47. Rhythm-and-blues singer LaTocha Scott (Xscape) is 47. Gospel singer Mandisa (TV: "American Idol") is 44. Actor Brianna Brown is 41. Rock musician Mike Rodden (Hinder) is 38. Former tennis player Marion Bartoli is 36. Actor Christopher Larkin is 33. Rock singer Brittany Howard (Alabama Shakes) is 32. Actor Samantha Barks is 30. Actor Elizabeth McLaughlin is 27.