

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 1 of 82

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Cemetery Improvements](#)
- [3- Changes in Groton Area COVID-19 protocol](#)
- [5- Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller](#)
- [8- Area COVID-19 Cases](#)
- [9- October 13th COVID-19 UPDATE](#)
- [13- South Dakota COVID-19 Numbers](#)
- [14- Brown County COVID-19 Numbers](#)
- [15- Day County COVID-19 Numbers](#)
- [16- Weather Pages](#)
- [20- Daily Devotional](#)
- [21- 2020 Groton Events](#)
- [22- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Netters beat Tiospa Zina

In the most intense volleyball match of the season, Groton Area defeated Tiospa Zina in a five set match.

27-25, 18-25, 22-25, 25-22, 19-17

### Wednesday, October 14, 2020

LifeTouch Pictures at Groton Area Elementary School

### Thursday, October 15, 2020

LifeTouch Pictures at Groton Area High School

3:30pm: Region 1A Cross Country Meet at Webster

Junior High Football hosts Webster Area (7th grade at 4:30 p.m., 8th at 5:30 p.m.)

Volleyball at Milbank (Junior High matches are cancelled. C/JV matches at 6 p.m. followed by varsity match.

### Friday, October 16, 2020

End of 1st Quarter

7:00pm: Football hosting Stanley County



## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 2 of 82



## Groton Legion Post #39 makes cemetery improvements

Pictured above is the newly improved flag circle at the Groton Union Cemetery. The photo below was taken before the improvement with the above showing the finished product. (Photos

by Doug Hamilton)



## Changes in Groton Area COVID-19 protocol

By Joe Schwan, Groton Area Superintendent

We sincerely hope that you and your families are doing well.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose many challenges for our community. The school district is no exception to that. We've gone from a very quiet start to the school year in terms of COVID-19 diagnoses of students or staff to a very busy couple of weeks.

At the time of this message, there are currently 19 active cases of COVID-19 for students and staff members of the Groton Area School District. The District has modified its protocol for notifying parents of a positive case of COVID-19 from sending a separate notification for each case to publicly reporting data totals by grade level on the district website on the COVID-19 page. We hope that doing so makes it easier for parents to actively monitor the situation as it relates to their children rather receiving, sorting, and tracking separate notifications on each individual case.

It is important to note that cases are considered active for a minimum of ten days following the onset of symptoms but may be longer if symptoms are not resolved by the tenth day. Additionally, not all positive cases were physically present at school or school activities during their infectious period.

The District continues to review protocols seeking additional ways we can act to slow down the rate of infection within our community, and we will continue our efforts of providing a clean and safe school environment.

One of the biggest challenges associated with operating schools this fall has been that of contact tracing and the subsequent issue of quarantines for close contacts. The Department of Health recommends that individuals self-quarantine for a period of 14 days following a close contact exposure to someone infected with COVID-19.

Some of the challenges associated with effective contact tracing in schools include:

Depending on a variety of factors such as the onset of symptoms, testing timelines, and communication between the Department of Health, the patient, and the District, close contacts are sometimes not determined until well into the recommended quarantine period.

While the district can assist the Department of Health with contact tracing for time spent in school and school activities, we cannot be involved with that process outside of the school day. We encourage you to be truthful and transparent with Department of Health officials if and when they contact you regarding a positive case within your household.

While symptoms can develop 2-14 days following exposure, the Centers for Disease Control reports that the median timeline for developing illness following exposure is 4-5 days. The exclusion of students from school for any longer than necessary can be harmful to a child's educational, social, and emotional development.

The Groton Area Board of Education has adopted a modified procedure for students that have been in close contact with positive cases of COVID-19 that will allow them to return to the classroom on the sixth day following exposure under the condition that they remain asymptomatic and wear a face covering during their recommended 14 day quarantine period. Students previously asked to quarantine may return to school on Wednesday, October 14 if they agree to wear a face mask for the remainder of their quarantine

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 4 of 82**

period and they remain asymptomatic. Students may also return to their school-based activities according to this timeline.

The procedures for students who have tested positive for COVID-19 remains unchanged and require a minimum isolation period of ten days, being fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications, and a general improvement in symptoms. The Department of Health is responsible for releasing individuals from their isolation periods.

Our primary goal of this year has been to preserve in-person learning for our students. Giving parents and students the option of returning to regular instruction in the school environment during their recommended quarantine period provided the student wears a mask will help us to balance the goal of in-person instruction for all students with the need to preserve a safe and healthy environment for students and staff members.

If these changes to protocol lead you to determine that the best decision for your children is to opt-in to remote learning, we will allow enrollments to occur outside of the pre-determined window for enrollment. This can be done by contact your school office 605-397-8381 (MS/HS) or 605-397-2317 (Elementary).

Please do your part in helping to keep our students, school staff, and community safe and healthy. Actively monitor your symptoms and symptoms of your children. Stay home if you're sick keeping in mind that many people, especially young people, infected with COVID-19 will have only mild symptoms. Wear a mask in public settings to reduce the likelihood of asymptomatic transmission, especially when physical distancing is not possible. Practice good hand hygiene.

We do not have all the answers when it comes to handling the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to carefully and thoughtfully monitor the impact of COVID-19 on our students and staff alongside any changes to the public health recommendations to modify our response bearing in mind our primary goal of preserving in-person learning.

Sincerely,  
Joe Schwan, Superintendent

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 5 of 82

**#233 in a series**

## **Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller**

We're looking pretty rough today. There were 53,300 new cases reported, so we're back up over 50,000 again after just a couple of days below—and those were weekend days that normally run low. This is a 0.7% increase in total cases to 7,892,800. Looking like we could be at eight million as soon as Thursday, likely no later than Friday. North and South Dakota are reporting more new cases per person than any state has so far in this pandemic. Wisconsin and Idaho set single-day new-case records. There have been 215,715 deaths so far. There were 785 of them reported today, a 0.4% increase.

As of yesterday, over half of the states reported more cases in the past week than a week previously: Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Vermont, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida. Thirteen report their highest weekly new-case averages: Alaska, Oregon, Montana, Colorado, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Ohio. Seven reported record one-day new-case numbers in the past week: Alaska, Colorado, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Missouri, and Indiana.

Nine states reported record hospitalizations: Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas, and Wisconsin. More people are hospitalized at the moment in the Northern Plains states than since late August. Some hospitals have beds available, but insufficient staff to care for the patients; an unstaffed bed may as well not exist. North Dakota reported last night it has fewer than 20 staffed ICU beds available; this is going to put pressure on the health care system in the state. In South Dakota, the Sioux Empire region, the southeastern portion of the state containing the bulk of its population and 48% of its hospital beds, reports zero hospital capacity available. This region with the largest hospitals in the state to which critical patients are routinely transferred is now diverting patients to small hospitals in outlying areas.

At least 14 states are recording positivity rates over 10%, a sign they're not testing enough. These are Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Wisconsin, Indiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said, "You'd like to see (the rates) less than 3%, optimally 1% or less." We're pretty far from that. He explained that these high positivity rates are "highly predictive of a resurgence of cases, which historically we know leads to an increase in hospitalizations and then ultimately an increase in deaths."

The experts are weighing in on what we're seeing here, and I'm not crazy about their conclusions, even though I've been suspecting as much for a week or so now. Dr. Peter Hotez, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, said today, "We went down to the lowest point lately in early September, around 30,000 – 35,000 new cases a day. Now we're back up to (about) 50,000 new cases a day. And it's going to continue to rise. This is the fall/winter surge that everyone was worried about. And now it's happening. And it's happening especially in the northern Midwest, and the Northern states are getting hit very hard—Wisconsin, Montana, the Dakotas. But it's going to be nationally soon enough." Perfect.

I've read about a powerful new tool for use in controlling this coronavirus, its genetic code. We've talked about using genomic analysis in tracing an outbreak before, most recently in my Update #185 posted August 26 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3907721769244200>. A genome is the entire complement of RNA this virus has which codes for every single aspect of the virus, including a full set of instructions for making more virus to the specifications included in the code. Now, when a virus replicates, sometimes errors occur; these are what we call mutations (which we explained in my Update #46 posted on April 9 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3496698997013148>). Thing is, these mutations leave their fingerprints behind in the genome of the virus; and once a mutation has occurred, it will appear in subsequent generations of virus from that parent. We can use those fingerprints to identify a point-source kind of outbreak and trace cases. This is something which has been done

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 6 of 82

extensively in the UK.

If we were to genetically sequence virus samples from patients, we could determine which sub-strains of the virus are involved, and that can tell us a lot about how an outbreak spreads and about sources. In simplest terms, let's say we have a virus with sub-strains differentiable by gene sequencing. Then if we have a number of cases related to a bar and they're all the same sub-strain as the bartender has, it looks very much as though the bartender is the source; so closing the bar would help to bring the virus under control. But if we have three kids in a school infected, all with different sub-strains, then we know those cases are not related, so the school can stay open. When we can identify a source, we may well be able to identify a transmission route, and that will improve our understanding of how to control spread. This sort of work is called genomic epidemiology, and it's a highly useful tool for detecting cryptic or hidden transmission. This enables you to detect outbreaks and act while they're still happening to shut them down. So if you can test a sample from a patient and determine the sub-strain it contains, you can match that against the genomes of other cases and sort out what impact that information has on the kinds of measures undertaken in control.

The cost of sequencing a viral sample from a patient is around \$10 plus the costs to collect the specimen. We have the infrastructure in a good share of the country to do sequencing on a fair proportion of patient samples. We have scientists pushing for such an effort. We are not doing much of this, however. So why haven't we moved on this? Several reasons: We still don't have even the capability to run diagnostic tests on the numbers of people we need to test. We do not have the federal coordination such an effort needs, only a patchwork of approaches from the various states. We do not have the coordinated data management systems required to maintain a database of the sub-strains seen and where they are showing up. We're so focused on the big home run of a vaccine or some miracle cure that we are missing the smaller things which will contribute to getting a handle on the virus. We have community spread so out of control that basic contact tracing, much less genomic analysis, is largely a fool's errand. And until we resolve these issues, we're not going to be able to move ourselves into a future unconstrained by this virus. Once again, it is the things we're not doing which could contribute to a solution, and we don't seem to be able to pull ourselves together enough to do any of them.

Eli Lilly and Company has paused its monoclonal antibody treatment's clinical trial because of a "potential safety concern." We do not yet know how many volunteers may have become sick or what is wrong with them. Data on their cases has been pulled and will be evaluated, but the study had not yet been unblinded in the last update I've seen. This means so far neither the researchers or the patients know whether this individual received the treatment or placebo. Meanwhile, the memo went out to researchers, telling them to stop adding participants to the trial. We will see how long this pause goes on.

Hita Gupta founded a nonprofit in 2018 which coordinated the efforts of volunteers to send letters, cards, and care packages to nursing homes across the country, and until March of this year, she had been volunteering herself at a facility near her home in Pennsylvania. About the change in her work, she said she felt these efforts have a positive impact on mental health; but as the pandemic shut down homes across the country, she realized these may not be enough. She said, "That cannot be matched by a real-time conversation with a senior, a real conversation where both sides are learning and they're building a bond. Being able to speak with someone who's having a hard time . . . who's experiencing isolation and loneliness, being able to ease some of that tension, I think that's so important."

So thinking about the regular Skype sessions she has with her own grandparents in India, Gupta started offering a new service, video calls with volunteers from her nonprofit. They've been collecting and donating camera-enabled devices to facilities—smart phones, tablets, and laptops. This allows residents to connect in real time with their families and with her volunteers.

We know the dangers to mental and physical health for seniors of social isolation and loneliness. Robert Roca, chair of the American Psychiatric Association's council on geriatric psychiatry, described her program as "ingenious. Somebody expressing interest, somebody prepared to listen, the experience of having somebody reach out to you, even if it's not a person you know well, there's something very powerful about that

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 7 of 82

in restoring the morale of somebody who's demoralized by loneliness." And we know that, while there is no single perfect cure, connection with others is most helpful.

Gupta's nonprofit has provided about 70 devices to nursing homes in several states and Canada. They have also received and distributed donated devices. About 100 volunteers participate in calls after an orientation that provides guidelines for how to conduct a call and how to facilitate an engaging conversation. One director of life enrichment at a facility being served says, "Every time our residents talk to one of the volunteers, they're . . . overjoyed afterward and that's all they can talk about."

One of the things that happens on these calls is that the seniors have the opportunity to offer advice. That is key to feeling valuable and needed, like they are contributing to the next generation. One resident explained, "It makes me very happy. It makes me glad to be here." And one of the volunteers says about her conversational partner, "We have great rapport. We have this relationship."

It is impressive that Gupta finds the time to run her nonprofit in addition to her full-time job, which is attending high school. You see, she is 15 years old, which means she started a nonprofit with nationwide outcomes when she was just 13. She's just getting a good start on a lifetime of service, another remarkable kid doing remarkable things in her own corner of the world.

It's hard for any of us to justify doing less, isn't it?

Take care. We'll talk again.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 8 of 82

## Area COVID-19 Cases

	Oct. 7	Oct. 8	Oct. 9	Oct. 10	Oct. 11	Oct. 12	Oct. 13
Minnesota	105,740	106,651	107,922	109,312	110,828	112,268	113,439
Nebraska	48,757	49,396	50,059	50,059	51,144	52,382	52,839
Montana	15,347	16,063	16,677	17,399	18,117	18,702	19,125
Colorado	74,191	74,922	75,785	76,619	77,642	78,461	79,037
Wyoming	5,751	5,866	6,031	6,226	6,338	6,476	6,628
North Dakota	24,364	24,857	25,384	26,040	26,628	27,265	27,737
South Dakota	24,876	25,433	26,441	27,215	27,947	28,564	28,925
United States	7,501,847	7,551,257	7,607,890	7,667,640	7,719,254	7,763,457	7,804,643
US Deaths	210,918	211,844	212,789	213,816	214,379	214,776	215,089
Minnesota	+941	+911	+1271	+1,390	+1,516	+1,440	+1,171
Nebraska	+950	+639	+663	----	+1,085	+1,238	+457
Montana	+500	+716	+614	+722	+818	+585	+423
Colorado	+654	+731	+863	+834	+1,023	+819	+576
Wyoming	+91	+115	+165	+195	+112	+138	+152
North Dakota	+502	+493	+527	+656	+588	+637	+472
South Dakota	+278	+557	+528	+774	+732	+617	+359
United States	+48,018	+49,410	+56,633	+59,750	51,614	+44,203	41,186
US Deaths	+791	+926	+945	+1,027	+563	+397	+313
	Oct. 14						
Minnesota	114,574						
Nebraska	53,543						
Montana	19,611						
Colorado	80,085						
Wyoming	6,740						
North Dakota	28,245						
South Dakota	29,339						
United States	7,859,365						
US Deaths	215,914						
Minnesota	+1,135						
Nebraska	+704						
Montana	+486						
Colorado	+1,048						
Wyoming	+112						
North Dakota	+508						
South Dakota	+414						
United States	+54,722						
US Deaths	+825						



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 9 of 82

## October 13th COVID-19 UPDATE

### Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Twelve more deaths in North Dakota. None in South Dakota. There were 18 more recovered cases than positive cases in the state today. Positivity rate for today's report is 13 percent.

Locally, Brown had 18 positive and 21 recovered, leaving 294 active cases. Day had 1 positive, 1 recovered leaving 24 active cases. Edmunds had 1 positive, 1 recovered, and 11 active; Marshall had 1 positive, 0 recovered, 12 active; McPherson had 1 positive, 0 recovered, 1 active; Spink had 4 positive, 1 recovered, 41 active.

Positive cases in the under 18 group was 13, those in the teens was 31, 20s was 65, 30s was 53, 40s was 47, 50s was 66, 60s was 55, 70s was 45 and 80+ was 39.

#### Brown County:

Total Positive: +18 (1,593) Positivity Rate: 14.3%

Total Tests: +126 (14,842)

Recovered: +21 (1,296)

Active Cases: -3 (293)

Ever Hospitalized: +2 (80)

Deaths: +0 (4)

Percent Recovered: 81.4

#### South Dakota:

Positive: +414 (29,339 total) Positivity Rate: 13.0%

Total Tests: 3,187 (338,717 total)

Hospitalized: +25 (1,911 total). 302 currently hospitalized +24)

Deaths: +0 (288 total)

Recovered: +432 (23,007 total)

Active Cases: -18 (6,044)

Percent Recovered: 78.4%

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 12% Covid, 46% Non-Covid, 43% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 19% Covid, 52% Non-Covid, 28% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 9% Covid, 12% Non-Covid, 79% Available

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

Aurora: +1 positive, +3 recovered (60 active cases)

Beadle (11): +1 positive, +9 recovered (131 active cases)

Bennett (4): +1 positive, +6 recovered (31 active cases)

Bon Homme (1): +3 positive, +3 recovered (69 active cases)

Brookings (2): +28 positive, +7 recovered (210 active cases)

Brown (4): +18 positive, +21 recovered (293 active cases)

Brule (1): +0 positive, +1 recovered (41 active cases)

Buffalo (3): +0 positive, +3 recovered (24 active cases)

Butte (3): +1 positive, +4 recovered (53 active cases)

Campbell: +0 positive, +2 recovered (22 active cases)

Charles Mix: +1 positive, +6 recovered (83 active cases)

Clark: +0 positive, +2 recovered (13 active cases)

Clay (8): +4 positive, +7 recovered (86 active cases)

Codington (9): +4 positive, +17 recovered (192 active cases)

Corson (1): +3 positive, +1 recovered (19 active cases)

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

Davison (4): +10 positive, +12 recovered (229 active cases)

Day: +1 positive, +1 recovered (24 active cases)

Deuel: +0 positive, +1 recovered (26 active cases)

Dewey: +0 positive, +1 recovered (87 active cases)

Douglas (1): +0 positive, +2 recovered (53 active cases)

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

Fall River (6): +0 positive, +1 recovered (38 active cases)

Faulk (1): +4 positive, +3 recovered (38 active cases)

Grant (2): +2 positive, +7 recovered (57 active cases)

Gregory (7): +2 positive, +4 recovered (22 active cases)

Haakon (1): +5 positive, +3 recovered (19 active case)

Hamlin: +0 positive, +0 recovered (27 active cases)

Hand (1): +0 positive, +3 recovered (17 active cases)

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 10 of 82

Harding: +0 positive, +0 recovered (5 active cases)  
 Hughes (5): +3 positive, +12 recovered (121 active cases)  
 Hutchinson (2): +3 positive, +6 recovered (55 active cases)  
 Hyde: +0 positive, +1 recovered (5 active cases)  
 Jackson (1): +0 positive, +0 recovered (17 active cases)  
 Jerauld (4): +0 positive, +1 recovered (21 active cases)  
 Jones: +2 positive, +0 recovered (4 active cases)  
 Kingsbury: +3 positive, +5 recovered (29 active cases)  
 Lake (8): +5 positive, +2 recovered (50 active cases)  
 Lawrence (5): +2 positive, +12 recovered (114 active cases)  
 Lincoln (10): +13 positive, +25 recovered (393 active cases)  
 Lyman (4): +1 positive, +5 recovered (19 active cases)  
 Marshall: +1 positive, +0 recovered (12 active cases)  
 McCook (1): +3 positive, +1 recovered (49 active cases)  
 McPherson: +1 positive, +0 recovery (11 active case)  
 Meade (6): +5 positive, +23 recovered (130 active cases)

Mellette: +0 positive, +2 recovered (5 active cases)  
 Miner: +2 positive, +0 recovered (34 active cases)  
 Minnehaha (88): +153 positive, +87 recovered (1354 active cases)  
 Moody (1): +3 positive, +4 recovered (49 active cases)  
 Oglala Lakota (4): +6 positive, +10 recovered (139 active cases)  
 Pennington (41): +30 positive, +55 recovered (632 active cases)  
 Perkins: +0 positive, +3 recovered (11 active cases)  
 Potter: +0 positive, +0 recovered (22 active cases)  
 Roberts (2): +4 positive, +3 recovered (40 active cases)  
 Sanborn: +2 positive, +0 recovered (20 active cases)  
 Spink (1): +4 positive, +1 recovered (41 active cases)  
 Stanley: +0 positive, +0 recovery (13 active cases)  
 Sully: +0 positive, +1 recovered (7 active cases)  
 Todd (5): +1 positive, +14 recovered (80 active cases)  
 Tripp (1): +3 positive, +5 recovered (34 active cases)  
 Turner (8): +4 positive, +2 recovered (90 active cases)  
 Union (10): +15 positive, +6 recovered (154 active cases)  
 Walworth (1): +3 positive, +4 recovered (65 active cases)  
 Yankton (5): +6 positive, +7 recovered (123 active cases)  
 Ziebach (1): +0 positive, +0 recovered (11 active case)

## AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	918	0
10-19 years	3296	0
20-29 years	6383	2
30-39 years	4937	7
40-49 years	3985	10
50-59 years	4063	23
60-69 years	3028	45
70-79 years	1584	53
80+ years	1145	148

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

- 7.5% rolling 14-day positivity
- 7.2% daily positivity
- 593 new positives
- 8,196 susceptible test encounters
- 140 currently hospitalized (+8)
- 4,169 active cases (+205)

Total Deaths: +12 (357)

## SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	15434	131
Male	13905	157

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 11 of 82

County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity
Aurora	137	77	662	0	Substantial	18.32%
Beadle	961	819	3537	11	Substantial	12.32%
Bennett	109	74	866	4	Substantial	15.69%
Bon Homme	167	97	1331	1	Substantial	23.91%
Brookings	1025	813	5464	2	Substantial	18.72%
Brown	1593	1296	8049	4	Substantial	20.10%
Brule	179	137	1323	1	Substantial	25.66%
Buffalo	181	154	813	3	Substantial	39.73%
Butte	172	116	1887	3	Substantial	15.38%
Campbell	55	33	161	0	Substantial	26.92%
Charles Mix	268	185	2766	0	Substantial	8.99%
Clark	55	42	632	0	Moderate	3.55%
Clay	654	560	2925	8	Substantial	14.93%
Codington	1123	934	5781	9	Substantial	15.73%
Corson	120	99	759	1	Moderate	35.90%
Custer	224	183	1520	3	Substantial	20.49%
Davison	585	352	4047	4	Substantial	18.04%
Day	114	90	1123	0	Substantial	11.00%
Deuel	126	96	708	0	Substantial	15.63%
Dewey	220	136	3231	0	Substantial	11.29%
Douglas	133	79	644	1	Substantial	10.26%
Edmunds	113	102	671	0	Moderate	2.34%
Fall River	137	93	1637	6	Substantial	15.84%
Faulk	133	94	493	1	Substantial	22.22%
Grant	224	165	1362	2	Substantial	14.66%
Gregory	162	133	723	7	Substantial	15.15%
Haakon	51	31	403	1	Substantial	5.66%
Hamlin	131	104	1110	0	Substantial	6.44%
Hand	78	60	529	1	Substantial	16.85%
Hanson	54	36	394	1	Moderate	8.47%
Harding	9	4	100	0	Minimal	33.33%
Hughes	656	530	3452	5	Substantial	13.71%
Hutchinson	161	104	1424	2	Substantial	5.56%

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 12 of 82

Hyde	28	23	285	0	Moderate	15.38%
Jackson	57	39	698	1	Substantial	21.88%
Jerauld	150	125	363	4	Substantial	11.11%
Jones	22	18	117	0	Minimal	5.56%
Kingsbury	104	75	945	0	Substantial	12.66%
Lake	260	202	1664	8	Substantial	16.09%
Lawrence	569	450	4893	5	Substantial	14.49%
Lincoln	1897	1444	11959	10	Substantial	16.76%
Lyman	203	180	1354	4	Substantial	11.73%
Marshall	52	40	718	0	Moderate	5.36%
McCook	154	104	1022	1	Substantial	6.86%
McPherson	49	38	365	0	Moderate	4.05%
Meade	725	589	4466	6	Substantial	13.29%
Mellette	42	37	534	0	Moderate	11.11%
Miner	69	35	393	0	Substantial	18.26%
Minnehaha	8189	6747	47132	88	Substantial	13.69%
Moody	149	99	1007	1	Substantial	23.40%
Oglala Lakota	441	298	5104	4	Substantial	10.97%
Pennington	3207	2534	21967	41	Substantial	13.63%
Perkins	52	41	403	0	Moderate	15.22%
Potter	78	56	564	0	Substantial	6.83%
Roberts	256	214	3026	2	Substantial	13.17%
Sanborn	61	41	395	0	Substantial	10.53%
Spink	191	145	1571	1	Substantial	11.27%
Stanley	58	45	485	0	Moderate	13.51%
Sully	24	17	149	0	Moderate	26.92%
Todd	241	156	3220	5	Substantial	19.15%
Tripp	210	172	1062	1	Substantial	11.88%
Turner	294	188	1685	8	Substantial	27.56%
Union	586	422	3655	10	Substantial	18.14%
Walworth	193	127	1219	1	Substantial	15.09%
Yankton	547	419	5391	5	Substantial	7.02%
Ziebach	71	59	547	1	Moderate	5.56%
Unassigned	0	0	2178	0		

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 13 of 82

## South Dakota

New Total Cases Today	New Confirmed Cases	New Probable Cases
414	411	3
Currently Hospitalized	Active Cases	Recovered Cases
303	6,044	23,007
Total Cases	Total Confirmed Cases	Total Probable Cases
29,339	28,707	632
Ever Hospitalized	Total Persons Tested	Total Tests
1,911	220,402	338,717
Deaths	% Progress (September Goal: 44,233 Tests)	% Progress (October Goal: 44,233 Tests)
288	216%	110%

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 14 of 82

## Brown County

New Total Cases Today

18

New Confirmed Cases

18

New Probable Cases

0

Currently Hospitalized

19

Active Cases

293

Recovered Cases

1,296

Total Cases

1,593

Total Confirmed Cases

1,589

Total Probable Cases

4

Ever Hospitalized

80

Total Persons Tested

9,642

Total Tests

14,842

Deaths

4

% Progress (September  
Goal: 44,233 Tests)

216%

% Progress (October Goal:  
44,233 Tests)

110%

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 15 of 82

## Day County

New Total Cases Today	New Confirmed Cases	New Probable Cases
1	1	0
Currently Hospitalized	Active Cases	Recovered Cases
1	24	90
Total Cases	Total Confirmed Cases	Total Probable Cases
114	114	0
Ever Hospitalized	Total Persons Tested	Total Tests
14	1,237	1,893
Deaths	% Progress (September Goal: 44,233 Tests)	% Progress (October Goal: 44,233 Tests)
0	216%	110%

# Broton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 16 of 82

Wind Advisory					
Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	
Chance Showers and Windy	Partly Cloudy and Blustery then Mostly Clear	Sunny then Sunny and Breezy	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	
<b>High: 61 °F</b>	<b>Low: 28 °F</b>	<b>High: 52 °F</b>	<b>Low: 29 °F</b>	<b>High: 48 °F</b>	

## Elevated Fire Danger This Afternoon

- Highs today in the low 60s
- Gusty winds 45-60 mph possible.

### Max Wind Gusts Today

### Elevated Fire Risk Locations

**Red Flag Warning In Effect Today**  
Valid 1pm-7pm CDT

weather.gov/Aberdeen
 National Weather Service Aberdeen
 @NWSAberdeen
 Updated: 10/14/2020 4:20 AM Central

A red flag warning for elevated fire danger is in effect today for parts of central and southeast SD. A high wind warning is also in effect this afternoon with wind gusts 45-60 mph possible.



# Groton Daily Independent

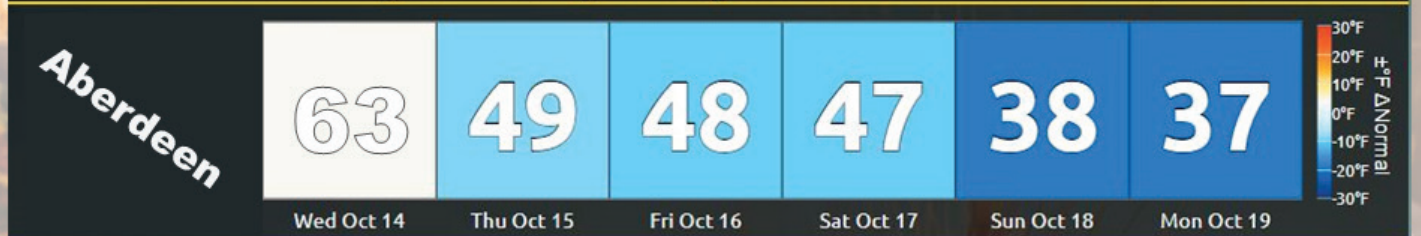
Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 17 of 82

## COOL-DOWN COMING

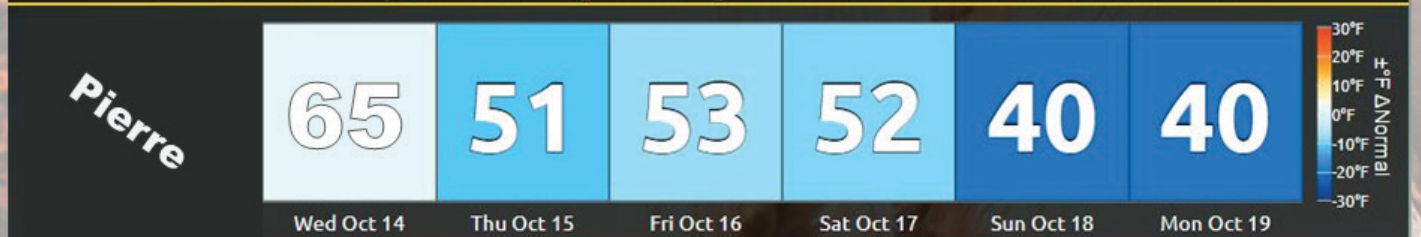
Updated: 10/13/2020 4:23 PM Central



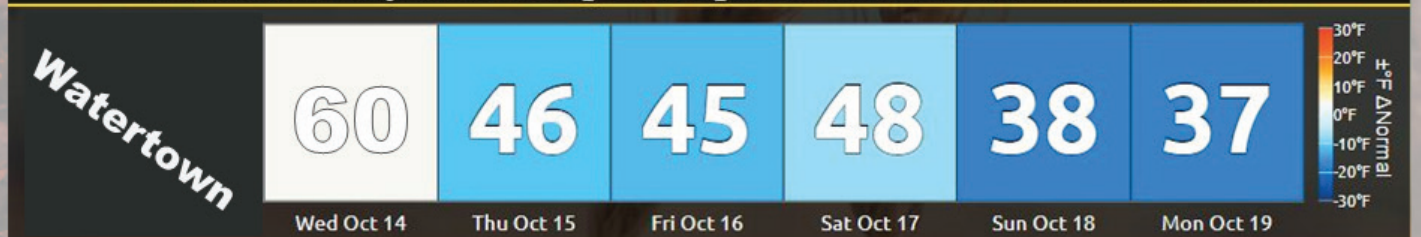
### Forecast Daily Max Temp vs Departure for Oct 13-Oct 19, 2020



### Forecast Daily Max Temp vs Departure for Oct 13-Oct 19, 2020



### Forecast Daily Max Temp vs Departure for Oct 13-Oct 19, 2020



**High temperatures will be on the decline over the next several days, as cold front after cold front sweeps through. By early next week, we could be around 20 degrees cooler than average.**

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 18 of 82

## Today in Weather History

October 14, 1969: Cold air during the overnight produced lows from six degrees in Custer, Gillette, and Devils Tower to fifteen degrees in Dupree, Hot Springs, and the Rapid City Airport.

1909: An F3 tornado struck Pittsburg Landing and Stantonville, TN killing 23 people and injuring 80 others.

1941: America's first television weather forecast was broadcast on New York's WNBT (later WNBC). There weren't many televisions at that time, so viewers were limited to perhaps a few hundred people. The weathercast consisted of a sponsor's message followed by a text screen containing the next day's forecast.

1981: Four days of heavy rain across northern Texas and southern Oklahoma came to an end. The most torrential rains fell in a band from the southwest of Abilene, Texas, to McAlester Oklahoma, with up to 21 inches reported at Breckenridge, north-central Texas. The torrential rains resulted from decaying Hurricane Norma, which also spawned thirteen tornadoes across the region. Seven deaths were attributed to the flooding.

1984: Dense fog contributes to a 118 vehicle accident on I-94, just south of Milwaukee. At the time of the accident, the visibility was reportedly close to zero.

1957 - Floodwaters roared through a migrant labor camp near the town of Picacho AZ flooding fifty cabins and a dozen nearby homes. 250 migrant workers lost their shelters. The month was one of the wettest Octobers in Arizona weather history. (The Weather Channel)

1965 - Heavy rains hit the coastal areas of southeastern Florida. In a 24 hour period rains of twenty inches were reported from Deerfield Beach to Fort Lauderdale, with 25.28 inches on the Fort Lauderdale Bahia-Mar Yacht Basin. Flooding that resulted caused considerable damage to roads and streets. The rains inundated numerous newly planted vegetable fields, and some residences. Ten miles away just 4.51 inches of rain was reported. (14th- 15th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1981 - Four days of heavy rain across northern Texas and southern Oklahoma came to an end. The heaviest rains fell in a band from southwest of Abilene TX to McAlester OK, with up to 26 inches reported north of Gainesville, in north central Texas. The heavy rains were the result of decaying Hurricane Norma, which also spawned thirteen tornadoes across the region. Seven deaths were attributed to the flooding. (Storm Data)

1984 - Dense fog contributed to a 118 vehicle accident on I-94, just south of Milwaukee WI. It was the seventh day of an eight day stretch of dense fog. At the time of the accident the visibility was reportedly close to zero. (Storm Data)

1987 - Sixteen cities, mostly in the Appalachian Region, reported record low temperatures for the date. Record lows included 43 degrees at Lake Charles LA, 35 degrees at Augusta GA, and 27 degrees at Asheville NC. Gale force winds buffeted the Carolina coast. Light snow fell across parts of Wyoming, Colorado, and western South Dakota. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Forty cities in the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Elkins WV was the cold spot in the nation with a record low of 18 degrees above zero. Thunderstorms in Arizona drenched Phoenix with nine inches of rain in nine hours, the fifth highest total for any given day in ninety-two years of records. Carefree AZ was soaked with two inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather over Michigan during the morning, and over New York State and Connecticut during the afternoon and evening hours. Thunderstorms spawned two tornadoes, and there were ninety reports of large hail or damaging winds, including seventy reports of damaging winds in New York State. A tornado at McDonough NY killed one person and injured three other people. Strong thunderstorm winds gusted to 105 mph at Somerset. Temperatures warmed into the 80s and lower 90s over much of the nation east of the Rockies, with eleven cities reporting record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 81 degrees at Beckley WV and Bluefield WV equalled October records. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

# Groton Daily Independent

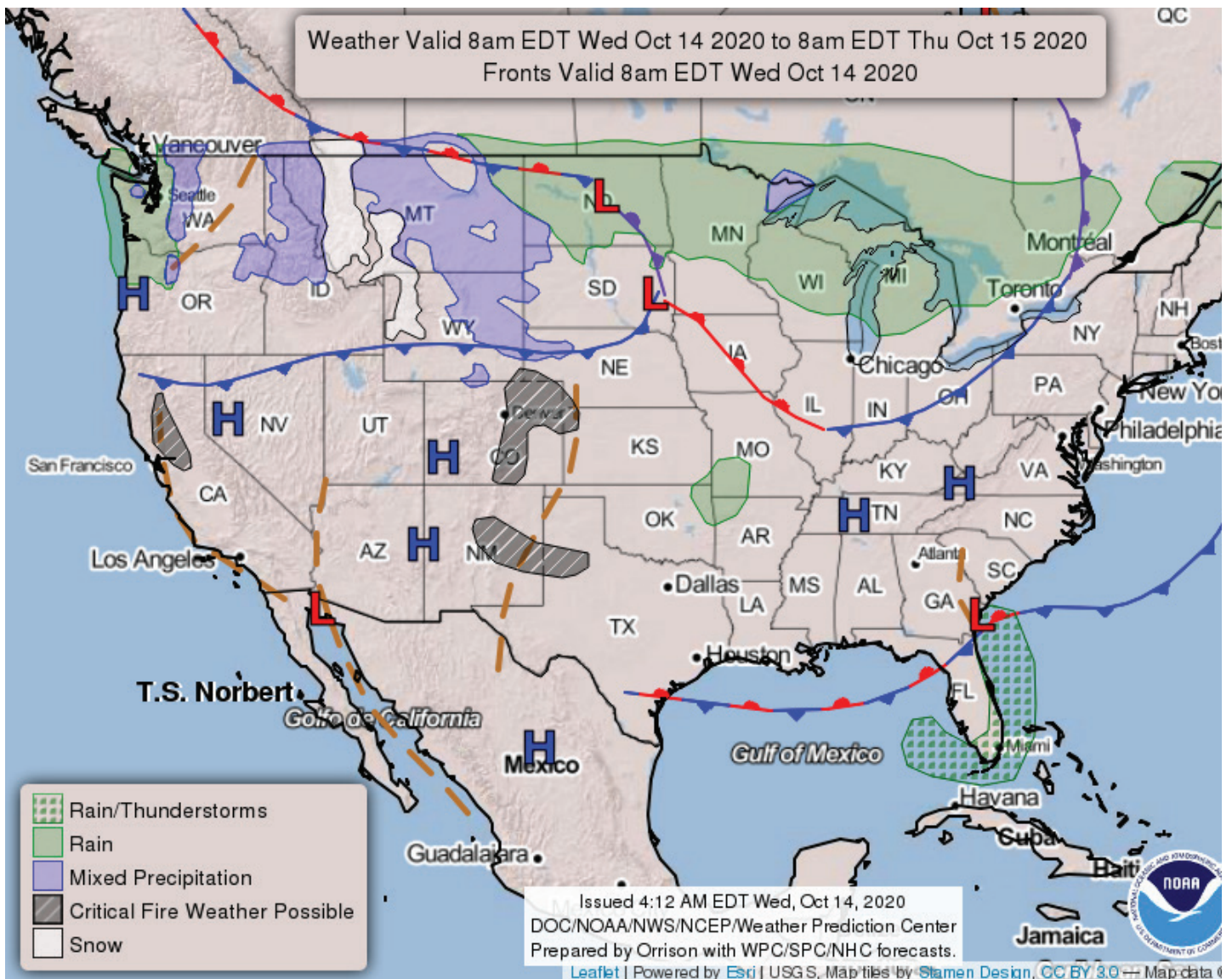
Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 19 of 82

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 62 °F at 4:20 PM**  
**Low Temp: 41 °F at 7:29 AM**  
**Wind: 22 mph at 1:38 PM**  
**Precip: .00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 87° in 1933, 1962**  
**Record Low: 10° in 1937**  
**Average High: 59°F**  
**Average Low: 34°F**  
**Average Precip in Oct.: 0.94**  
**Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00**  
**Average Precip to date: 19.42**  
**Precip Year to Date: 15.28**  
**Sunset Tonight: 6:49 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:51 a.m.**



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 20 of 82



## THE GIFTS OF ANCESTORS

It was a luncheon for art collectors in New York City. Only the wealthy and influential were invited to attend. One lady sitting next to a rabbi, wanting to impress him, asked, "Did you know that one of my ancestors signed the Declaration of Independence?"

"No, I did not," he replied. "And did you know that one of mine signed the Ten Commandments?"

Tracing ancestors back hundreds of years has become an exciting hobby for many individuals. The idea of knowing one's relatives and where they came from may be impressive and fascinating. And, for others, it may be a reason for pride while others will be embarrassed.

Many parents take great pride in telling their children about their ancestors, who they were, where they came from, and what they accomplished. But, no doubt, there are far more parents who cannot tell where their children were last night or what they were doing.

The Psalmist said, "How happy are those who fear the Lord - and follow His ways!" This psalm clearly describes the benefits and blessings that God will give a family that follows His teachings and honors Him in all that they do. His values, defined in this psalm, include love, service, honesty, integrity, and prayer. They are the "essential elements" for every healthy relationship - especially family relationships because they will last into eternity.

The most significant legacy parents can leave their children is a legacy of a family united in Bible-reading, worship, and attending church together.

Prayer: Father, we pray that all families everywhere will place You and Your Word at the center of their home and honor You. May parents understand their responsibilities. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: How joyful are those who fear the Lord - all who follow his ways! Psalm 128

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 21 of 82

## 2020 Groton SD Community Events

- **CANCELLED** Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- **CANCELLED** Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
- **CANCELLED** Fireman's Fun Night (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- **POSTPONED** Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
- **CANCELLED** Father/Daughter dance.
- **CANCELLED** Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
- **CANCELLED** Girls High School Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services
- 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
- 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
- 07/24/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ferney Open Golf Tourney
- 07/25/2020 City-Wide Rummage Sales
- **CANCELLED** State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
- 08/07/2020 Wine on Nine Event at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/12-13/2020 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In at the Groton Airport north of Groton
- 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
- 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
- 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/30/2020 Downtown Trick or Treat
- 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat
- **CANCELLED** Groton Legion Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 11/26/2020 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center
- 12/05/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/05/2020 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
- 01/--/2021 83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates

## News from the Associated Press

### The Latest: Russia sets daily infection record: Over 14,230

By The Associated Press undefined

MOSCOW — Russian authorities have reported a record 14,000 new coronavirus cases, the latest daily spike in infections.

Russia, which has the world's fourth-largest confirmed coronavirus caseload of more than 1.3 million, has been reporting over 10,000 new cases for 11 straight days. The 14,231 new infections on Wednesday is the highest number since the beginning of the pandemic.

Most of the virus restrictions in the country have been lifted over the summer. Despite the rapid resurgence of the outbreak, Russian authorities have dismissed suggestions of a second national lockdown.

In Moscow, which has been reporting over 4,000 new cases every day since Saturday, officials recommended that the elderly to self-isolate at home and ordered employers to have 30% of their staff work from home. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin also extended school holidays by one week.

On Wednesday, Sobyenin said school students from 6th to 11th grades will shift to online studies for two weeks beginning Monday. Pupils in 1st to 5th grades will continue attending schools as usual.

"Older school students are more susceptible to the risk of contracting the coronavirus," Sobyenin said.

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

- More masks, less play: Europe tightens rules as virus surges
- Possible safety issue spurs pause of COVID-19 antibody study
- AP-NORC poll: New angst for caregivers in time of COVID-19
- Lives Lost: Indian doctor embodied his family's dreams
- Despite virus fears, Texas sends most voters to the polls

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — For the second consecutive day, the United Arab Emirates has reported a record number of coronavirus cases, with 1,431 new infections.

The caseload brings the total number in the country over 110,000, including 450 fatalities. Recorded infections have soared in recent weeks as authorities have relaxed restrictions and resumed schools for in-person instruction. Dubai, the region's business hub, recently reopened its airport for international travelers.

While coming amid an aggressive testing campaign, the upward trend has raised fears that authorities could reinstate lockdowns in parts of the country that rely heavily on tourism.

STOCKHOLM — Sweden's third-largest city has decided to temporarily make faces masks mandatory for health care workers who are in close contact with elderly.

Gisela Ost, head of administration of Malmo, the southern Sweden city of nearly 345,000, called it "an extra precaution" for when staff are within 1 meter (3.3 feet) of an elderly person.

Sweden's Public Health Agency says for the time being it didn't recommend face masks in public but adds "there may be situations where face masks can be useful."

Sweden which has had 100,654 cases and 5,899 deaths, has in recent days seen an increase in cases and there have been "some worrying signs that nursing homes may begin to be affected," according to chief epidemiologist Anders Tegnell.

Sweden has opted for a much debated COVID-19 approach of keeping large parts of the society open.

BERLIN — The number of newly reported coronavirus cases in Germany has passed 5,000 for the first

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 23 of 82

time since mid-April.

The country's disease control agency, the Robert Koch Institute, said Wednesday that a further 5,132 infections and 43 deaths from COVID-19 were recorded over the past day.

Chancellor Angela Merkel is meeting the governors of Germany's 16 states Wednesday to discuss which measures to take in response to the growing case load.

Officials are particularly concerned that COVID-19 infections might increase among older people, who are more likely to suffer serious illnesses.

So far, some 620 people in Germany are receiving intensive care treatment for COVID-19.

Since the start of the pandemic, Germany has recorded a total of 334,585 coronavirus infections, of which almost 282,000 are considered to have recovered. There have been 9,677 deaths in the country from COVID-19.

**LONDON** — Health officials are scheduled to meet Wednesday to discuss whether to add areas of northern England, including Manchester and Lancashire, to the highest-risk tier, meaning additional anti-coronavirus measures such as closing pubs could soon be imposed there. Only Liverpool was placed in the highest-risk category when the plan was unveiled Monday.

The discussions come as the regional government in Northern Ireland prepares to announce even tougher measures, including a two-week school closure. Northern Ireland has the highest infection rate among the U.K.'s four nations.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson is being criticized by all sides two days after announcing his three-tier approach to controlling the virus.

A report released Tuesday showed that the government's science advisers have called for tougher measures, including a two- to three-week national lockdown. The opposition Labour Party has called for that advice to be followed, while members of Johnson's Conservative Party say the measures already in place go too far and are damaging the economy.

**BERLIN** — Berlin's Staatskapelle orchestra under star conductor Daniel Barenboim has called off a three-country European tour planned for November because of the coronavirus pandemic and the difficulties of juggling different countries' travel restrictions.

The Staatskapelle had planned to play Beethoven works in Paris, Athens and Vienna between Nov. 6 and 22.

The orchestra said Wednesday that it had proven impossible to go ahead with the tour, "not least because of the complex situation with travel to three countries, each with different travel and quarantine rules." It said the orchestra hopes to be able to rearrange the concerts in the future.

The decision comes after new coronavirus infections hit a record daily increase last week across Europe.

**NEW DELHI** — India has confirmed more than 63,000 new cases of the coronavirus, an increase of over 8,000 from the previous day but still far fewer than it was reporting a month ago, when the virus was at its peak in the country.

The Health Ministry reported 63,509 new cases on Wednesday, raising India's total to more than 7.2 million, second in the world behind the U.S. The ministry also reported 730 fatalities in the past 24 hours, raising the death toll to 110,586. The country was seeing more than 1,000 deaths per day last month.

According to the Health Ministry, India's average number of daily cases dropped to 72,576 last week from 92,830 during the week of Sept. 9-15, when the virus peaked. Over the last month, the country has been seeing a trend of declining cases on a week-to-week basis.

On Tuesday, India registered 55,342 new cases, its lowest single-day tally since mid-August.

**ZAGREB, Croatia** — Croatia has reported a steep rise in new daily infections, which reached a record of 748 cases in the past 24 hours. Four people died of COVID-19 in the same period.

Health authorities on Wednesday said anti-virus measures must be implemented to stop the surge in

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 24 of 82

infections. The previous record of 542 cases in 24 hours came earlier this month.

Croatia has introduced mandatory masks in closed spaces and limited gatherings and numbers of people in bars and restaurants to try and curb the spread of the virus.

The country has seen a rise in cases since the end of the summer, when hundreds of thousands of tourist visited the scenic Adriatic Sea nation of 4.2 million people.

**LJUBLJANA, Slovenia** — Slovenia has reported a huge jump in daily new infections, which reached 707 cases on Wednesday compared to nearly 400 a day before.

Authorities say four people have died and additional 30 have been hospitalized. Wednesday's number of new cases is the highest in the country of 2 million people since the start of the outbreak.

Slovenia's government is expected to strengthen anti-virus measures later on Wednesday. Officials have said the measures could include lockdown of certain municipalities, closing of bars and restaurants and gyms.

Authorities could also ban religious ceremonies and weddings in certain municipalities.

**PAGO PAGO, American Samoa** — An estimated 600 residents of the U.S. territory of American Samoa were away when the governor closed its borders in March to keep the cluster of Pacific islands free from the coronavirus. Most have not been allowed to return.

The governor has said he understands the plight of the stranded residents but has to protect against accidental virus transmission by people without symptoms. He is reviewing a petition by stranded residents demanding repatriation.

But amid a spike in coronavirus cases in Hawaii, he has asked the only air carrier with regularly scheduled service between Honolulu and Pago Pago to suspend flights through November.

**BEIJING** — China says it has carried out more than 4.2 million tests in the northern port city of Qingdao, with no new cases of coronavirus found among the almost 2 million sets of results received.

The city has reported a total of 12 cases, six with symptoms and six without, since the new outbreak was first spotted over the weekend at a hospital.

China on Wednesday reported 27 new cases of coronavirus, including 13 new cases of local transmission and 14 cases brought from outside the country.

China has reported a total of 4,634 deaths among 85,611 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

**DENVER** — Colorado is experiencing another surge of coronavirus cases and hospitalizations, prompting Gov. Jared Polis to plead with residents to wear masks, stay home as much as possible, and maintain social distancing practices.

As of Tuesday, Colorado's three-day average positivity rate was 5.4%, and the state recorded 1,000 new cases both on Saturday and on Monday, the highest daily numbers recorded during the pandemic, Polis said.

About 290 people were hospitalized for COVID-19 on Tuesday, the highest total since May 31, The Denver Post reported.

Polis didn't suggest he was contemplating renewed mandatory restrictions on business or other activities to stem the surge. But he insisted: "If this continues, our hospital capacity will be in jeopardy."

The World Health Organization recommends trying to keep the positivity rate below 5% of all tests. Higher rates suggest authorities are missing large numbers of infections.

**SIOUX FALLS, S.D.** — Gov. Kristi Noem has blamed South Dakota's recent surge in coronavirus cases on an increase in testing, even as the state sees a new high in the number of people hospitalized by the virus.

There are currently no open general-care hospital beds in the southeastern part of the state, which contains the two largest hospitals, according to the Department of Health. Hospitals are dealing with both an increase in COVID-19 patients and people needing other medical care.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 25 of 82

"We have triple the amount of testing that we are doing in the state of South Dakota, which is why we're seeing elevated positive cases," Noem said. "That's normal, that's natural, that's expected."

The Department of Health reports 302 COVID-19 patients are hospitalized — an all-time high in the state.

DES MOINES, Iowa — Hospitalizations, virus spread and deaths continued at high levels Tuesday in Iowa on the eve of a campaign rally by President Donald Trump, where Gov. Kim Reynolds and thousands of other Trump supporters will likely defy the governor's own emergency proclamation to keep distance between people in public places.

A public health emergency proclamation signed by Reynolds requires that organizers of mass gatherings "must ensure at least six feet of physical distance between each group or individual attending alone." A White House Coronavirus Task Force report on Iowa from Oct. 4 said, "group gathering sizes should be limited."

Officials at Des Moines International Airport, where the rally will be held in a cargo hangar, have been told to plan for up to 10,000 people.

Trump campaign spokesman Tim Murtaugh said the event will be in an open-door airplane hangar, and temperature checks will be taken of all participants who will also be issued masks and instructed to wear them.

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

11-44-45-46-70, Mega Ball: 25, Megaplier: 2

(eleven, forty-four, forty-five, forty-six, seventy; Mega Ball: twenty-five; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$69 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$72 million

## Tuesday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Aberdeen Christian def. Britton-Hecla, 25-14, 25-8, 25-16

Aberdeen Roncalli def. Mobridge-Pollock, 25-23, 25-23, 25-14

Arlington def. Sioux Valley, 25-17, 25-20, 25-20

Brandon Valley def. Brookings, 29-27, 25-18, 19-25, 25-20

Burke def. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, 25-10, 25-14, 25-13

Chester def. West Central, 25-23, 25-12, 25-12

Corsica/Stickney def. Mitchell Christian, 25-18, 25-7, 25-12

Dakota Valley def. Lennox, 25-9, 25-7, 25-11

Edgemont def. Newell, 13-25, 25-21, 25-22, 25-23

Elkton-Lake Benton def. Deuel, 25-8, 25-7, 25-10

Estelline/Hendricks def. Florence/Henry, 25-16, 25-14, 25-15

Ethan def. Howard, 25-20, 25-11, 25-18

Faulkton def. Herreid/Selby Area, 18-25, 25-21, 25-23, 25-16

Flandreau def. Clark/Willow Lake, 25-13, 27-25, 25-20

Freeman def. Oldham-Ramona/Rutland, 25-14, 25-14, 22-25, 25-21

Garretson def. McCook Central/Montrose, 25-12, 25-20, 25-19

Gayville-Volin def. Canton, 25-15, 25-21, 25-20

Grant County, N.D. def. Lemmon, 19-25, 25-17, 25-20, 23-25, 15-13

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 26 of 82

Gregory def. Colome, 22-25, 25-15, 25-18, 25-22  
Groton Area def. Tiospa Zina Tribal, 27-25, 18-25, 22-25, 25-22, 19-17  
Hamlin def. DeSmet, 25-9, 25-11, 25-8  
Highmore-Harrold def. Wolsey-Wessington, 25-19, 25-16, 25-10  
Hill City def. St. Thomas More, 22-25, 25-23, 25-16, 25-20  
Huron def. Harrisburg, 18-25, 20-25, 25-21, 25-19, 16-14  
Kadoka Area def. White River, 26-24, 22-25, 25-22, 14-25, 16-14  
Madison def. Milbank, 25-10, 25-9, 25-16  
McLaughlin def. Standing Rock, N.D., 24-26, 25-19, 25-18, 25-19  
Menno def. Hanson, 22-25, 25-18, 25-14, 17-25, 15-10  
New Underwood def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-11, 25-17, 25-13  
Platte-Geddes def. Miller, 21-25, 18-25, 25-18, 25-21, 15-12  
Rapid City Christian def. Hot Springs, 25-3, 25-12, 25-8  
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket def. James Valley Christian, 25-21, 25-21, 25-22  
Sioux Falls Christian def. Tri-Valley, 25-16, 25-15, 25-10  
Sioux Falls Roosevelt def. Aberdeen Central, 26-24, 21-25, 25-27, 25-22, 16-14  
Spearfish def. Belle Fourche, 25-5, 25-18, 25-20  
Sturgis Brown def. Rapid City Central, 13-25, 25-19, 25-19, 25-23  
Tea Area def. Beresford, 25-20, 25-15, 25-19  
Warner def. Redfield, 25-14, 25-12, 25-19  
Watertown def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 25-7, 25-21, 25-17  
Waubay/Summit def. Wilmot, 20-25, 25-22, 25-14, 23-25, 15-10  
Webster def. Langford, 24-26, 25-17, 25-17, 25-23  
Wessington Springs def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-22, 25-22, 25-13  
Winner def. Chamberlain, 25-12, 25-13, 25-11  
Yankton def. Mitchell, 25-17, 22-25, 25-23, 25-22

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

## The Latest: China carries out 4.2 million tests in Qingdao

By The Associated Press undefined

BEIJING — China says it has carried out more than 4.2 million tests in the northern port city of Qingdao, with no new cases of coronavirus found among the almost 2 million sets of results received.

The city has reported a total of 12 cases, six with symptoms and six without, since the new outbreak was first spotted over the weekend at a hospital.

China on Wednesday reported 27 new cases of coronavirus, including 13 new cases of local transmission and 14 cases brought from outside the country. The local cases included seven that had been shifted to confirmed from asymptomatic. It wasn't immediately clear whether any of those involved cases reported in Qingdao.

China has reported a total of 4,634 deaths among 85,611 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

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

- WHO: Europe reported more than 700,000 coronavirus cases last week
- Dutch order bars, restaurants closed over coronavirus concerns
- India has 55,342 coronavirus cases, lowest single-day tally since mid-August
- Safety monitoring panel will try to determine what might have caused sickness in a second COVID-19 vaccine trial paused over unexplained illness
- New poll finds coronavirus pandemic has thrust many Americans into role of caring for an older or disabled loved one for first time.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 27 of 82

— Cristiano Ronaldo latest high-profile soccer player infected with the coronavirus, Portuguese soccer federation says.

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

## HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

BOISE, Idaho -- Idaho health care experts say coronavirus is increasing as kids are returning to school — but most of the new infections aren't happening in school buildings.

Instead, Dr. Joshua Kern with St. Luke's hospitals in the Magic Valley says it's likely because many people are treating the return to school like a return to normalcy and slacking off on good habits like social distancing, hand-washing and mask-wearing.

A tally from Johns Hopkins University shows Idaho currently ranks sixth in the country for new cases per capita, with a total of more than 48,660 confirmed cases of coronavirus statewide. So far more than 500 Idaho residents have died of COVID-19.

DENVER — Colorado is experiencing another surge of coronavirus cases and hospitalizations, prompting Gov. Jared Polis to plead Tuesday with residents to wear masks, stay home as much as possible, and maintain social distancing practices.

As of Tuesday, Colorado's three-day average positivity rate — the percentage of total tests coming in positive — was 5.4%, and the state recorded 1,000 new cases both on Saturday and on Monday, the highest daily numbers recorded during the pandemic, Polis said.

About 290 people were hospitalized for COVID-19 on Tuesday, the highest total since May 31, The Denver Post reported.

During a briefing on the pandemic, Polis didn't suggest he was contemplating renewed mandatory restrictions on business or other activities to stem the surge. But he insisted: "If this continues, our hospital capacity will be in jeopardy."

The World Health Organization recommends trying to keep the positivity rate below 5% of all tests. Higher rates suggest authorities are missing large numbers of infections.

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — Gov. Kristi Noem has blamed South Dakota's recent surge in coronavirus cases on an increase in testing, even as the state sees a new high in the number of people hospitalized by the virus.

There are currently no open general-care hospital beds in the southeastern part of the state, which contains the two largest hospitals, according to the Department of Health. Hospitals are dealing with both an increase in COVID-19 patients and people needing other medical care. The Sioux Falls hospitals do have about 41% of their Intensive Care Units available.

"We have triple the amount of testing that we are doing in the state of South Dakota, which is why we're seeing elevated positive cases," Noem said. "That's normal, that's natural, that's expected."

The Department of Health reports 302 COVID-19 patients are hospitalized — an all-time high in the state.

DES MOINES, Iowa — Hospitalizations, virus spread and deaths continued at high levels Tuesday in Iowa on the eve of a campaign rally by President Donald Trump, where Gov. Kim Reynolds and thousands of other Trump supporters will likely defy the governor's own emergency proclamation to keep distance between people in public places.

A public health emergency proclamation signed by Reynolds requires that organizers of mass gatherings "must ensure at least six feet of physical distance between each group or individual attending alone." A White House Coronavirus Task Force report on Iowa from Oct. 4 said, "group gathering sizes should be limited."

Officials at Des Moines International Airport, where the rally will be held in a cargo hangar, have been told to plan for up to 10,000 people.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 28 of 82

Trump campaign spokesman Tim Murtaugh said the event will be in an open-door airplane hangar, and temperature checks will be taken of all participants who will also be issued masks and instructed to wear them.

Photos and reporting from a Trump rally in Florida on Monday showed little apparent social distancing efforts, and most of those at the rally didn't appear to be wearing masks. Trump, who was hospitalized with COVID-19 only a week ago, didn't wear a mask while speaking.

"I would say any type of rally that's going to gather large groups of people, whether it's a couple hundred or couple thousand, is one of the riskiest things we can do in the setting of the pandemic," said Dr. Megan Srinivas, an infectious disease doctor who lives in Iowa and is a faculty member of the University of North Carolina.

**ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.** — New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced Tuesday she will renew public health restrictions and warned that more stringent rules could be imposed because of a rise in COVID-19 cases.

The updated regulations will take effect later this week. They'll include limiting gatherings to five people or less, a mandatory 14-day quarantine for visitors from states deemed high-risk, reduced hotel capacities and a 10 p.m. closing time for food or drink establishments serving alcohol.

Lujan Grisham said the virus is spiking in New Mexico right now and that the state has experienced some of the worst increases in the U.S. so far this fall. Without a vaccine, she said officials have only a few tools to fight the virus — such as making people wear masks, staying home as much as possible and avoiding groups of people.

"This kind of overwhelming and dramatic statewide spread signals one thing: Too many of us, succumbing to COVID fatigue, are no longer using those tools," the Democratic governor said.

State health officials have reported more than 33,360 cases since the pandemic began. Officials have said 915 residents have died.

**LANSING, Mich.** — Michigan's chief health officer warned Tuesday that the state could be beginning a second wave of the coronavirus as cases rise along with the number of people in hospitals.

Michigan had 89 new cases per 1 million people per day, up from 81.6 cases last week, the health department said.

About 700 people with COVID-19 were in hospitals, up about 20% from last week. The rate of positive tests has ticked up to 3.6% from 3.4%. It was under 3% in June.

"It is very possible this is the beginning of a second wave," said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, Michigan chief medical executive. "The virus has not changed. It is an opportunist. If people are not wearing masks, if people are gathering, if people are not washing their hands, it will spread."

The number of new cases reported statewide Tuesday was 1,237.

The Upper Peninsula is a hot spot. Nick Derusha, a health officer in four U.P. counties, said there's "pandemic fatigue" among some residents.

Derusha said some people doubt the severity of the coronavirus.

"We need all yoopers to wear your mask," he said.

**BISMARCK, N.D.** — Health officials in North Dakota said Tuesday that a sixth straight day of record active COVID-19 cases put the state's number of current infections at 4,600.

The update confirmed 517 positive tests in the last day and 12 deaths, increasing the number of fatalities due to the coronavirus to 357. The state's rate of positive tests has risen steadily in the last week and came in over 10% Tuesday.

John Hopkins University researchers say there were more than 888 new cases per 100,000 people in North Dakota over the past two weeks, which ranks first in the country for new cases per capita.

Hospitalizations remained unchanged at 158. Health department data shows the state has 29 staffed

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 29 of 82

ICU beds and 253 staffed inpatient beds available.

HILLSBOROUGH, N.J. — New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy said Tuesday that officials aren't aware of any COVID-19 cases stemming from the campaign fundraiser that President Donald Trump held recently at his Bedminster golf club.

More than 200 donors and staff were at the Oct. 1 event. The Democratic governor said state and county officials have been working to contact all attendees but have not heard of any cases that trace back to the event.

The White House said last week that the president did not have any contact with anyone that would be considered close, based on CDC guidelines.

Trump announced he was positive for COVID-19 less than 24 hours after the fundraiser.

Murphy spoke Thursday at an unrelated event in the same county where the president's golf club is located.

MADISON, Wis. — Wisconsin has hit a pair of grim coronavirus milestones, with record highs for positive cases and deaths reported on the eve of an overflow field hospital opening near Milwaukee.

The state Department of Health Services reported 3,279 new cases Tuesday, breaking a five-day-old record. It reported 34 deaths, also a new high, bringing the state's death toll to 1,508. To date, more than 155,000 people in the state have tested positive for the coronavirus.

Democratic Gov. Tony Evers urged people to stay home, wear masks when they go outside, limit exposure to others and maintain a social distance.

OKLAHOMA CITY — A requirement to wear masks in Oklahoma City in an effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus was extended to Dec. 7 on Tuesday by the City Council.

"I think it's important that we know again that masking reduces the transmission of infection in the community by 70-85%," Oklahoma City/County Health Department Director Patrick McGough said before councilors approved the extension from the original Oct. 20 expiration date.

The Oklahoma State Department of Health on Tuesday reported 1,309 new virus cases and 15 more deaths due to COVID-19, the illness caused by the virus. There have been 101,493 reported virus cases and 1,119 deaths since the pandemic began. The department reports that a record 760 people are currently hospitalized.

INDIANAPOLIS — The University of Notre Dame's president has ended his quarantine after testing positive for the coronavirus after his attendance at a White House event without wearing a mask.

The Rev. John Jenkins "is symptom-free," the university announced Monday. He began his self-isolation period on Sept. 28, two days after he attended the Rose Garden nomination ceremony of Notre Dame law professor Judge Amy Coney Barrett for Supreme Court justice.

The university announced the university president's COVID-19 diagnosis on Oct. 2. Jenkins has since apologized, writing his regret in a Sept. 28 letter to the Notre Dame campus of about 12,000 students.

The university's online coronavirus tally showed five new cases reported on Tuesday, giving the school 819 total infections among students and staff. The school estimates 29 active cases.

PHOENIX — Arizona health officials are reporting more than 680 new coronavirus cases and eight deaths.

After two days of no virus-related deaths, the latest numbers on Tuesday bring the statewide confirmed case total to more than 226,000 and the 5,767 confirmed deaths.

On Saturday, state Department of Health Services officials reported 894 new cases. That was the largest daily increase since mid-September.

The number of actual coronavirus infections is likely far higher because many people haven't been tested and studies suggest people can be infected without feeling sick.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 30 of 82

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana health officials have added 27 more coronavirus-related deaths to the state's pandemic toll as the infection rates and hospitalizations increase.

The 1,288 COVID-19 hospitalizations on Monday marked the ninth straight day topping 1,000 after not reaching that high since the end of May, the Indiana State Department of Health reported.

The hospitalizations are up 70% in the past three weeks, which is when Gov. Eric Holcomb decided to lift nearly all of Indiana's restrictions on businesses and crowd sizes while keeping the statewide mask mandate.

The deaths raise the state's confirmed toll to 3,822.

MADRID — The Spanish government says the spread of the coronavirus in Madrid is still worrisome despite a drop in the number of patients treated in hospitals.

The Madrid regional chief, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, urged again the central government to lift a soft lockdown that was imposed on Friday.

But Health Minister Salvador Illa says time is needed to evaluate if a slower spread of the virus is not due to delays in the reporting of infections or the lower number of lab tests performed in Madrid.

Madrid accounted for 15% of 7,118 new infections reported Tuesday by the health ministry, bringing the national caseload to more than 896,000. With 80 new deaths confirmed in the past 24 hours, the death toll rose to 33,204.

Health experts agree that official numbers fail to capture the real extent of the outbreaks due to insufficient testing, cases missed or other issues.

JERUSALEM — An Israeli Cabinet minister has acknowledged violating the country's lockdown restrictions, joining a long list of senior officials to flout the rules.

Channel 13 TV says Rabbi Yaakov Avitan, the minister of religious affairs, performed a wedding ceremony in southern Israel on Tuesday. The station says there were some 60 people at the ceremony, well over the 20 people permitted at such gatherings.

In a statement to the station, Avitan says he made a mistake in judgment and expressed regret.

A number of top officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Sara, President Reuven Rivlin, the head of the Shin Bet security agency and other politicians have violated lockdown restrictions in recent months, undercutting public trust in the government's response to the pandemic.

Israel, a country of 9 million, is grappling with one of the worst coronavirus outbreaks on a per capita basis. It has reported more than 243,000 confirmed cases and more than 2,000 deaths.

AMMAN, Jordan — Jordan has reported a record 2,054 new coronavirus cases, raising the confirmed total to 28,127.

Through a strict lockdown earlier this year, Jordan appeared to bring a first wave of infections under control.

But after reopening its economy and international airport, the coronavirus has returned in recent months, forcing the government to impose new lockdown restrictions that include the closings of schools and tight weekend curfews.

## Noem blames surge in cases on testing as hospitals fill

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem on Tuesday blamed South Dakota's recent surge in coronavirus cases on an increase in testing, even as the state saw a new high in the number of people hospitalized by the virus.

There are currently no open general-care hospital beds in the southeastern part of the state, which contains the two largest hospitals, according to the Department of Health. Hospitals are dealing with both an increase in COVID-19 patients and people needing other medical care. The hospitals in Sioux Falls do

have about 41% of their Intensive Care Units available.

"We have triple the amount of testing that we are doing in the state of South Dakota, which is why we're seeing elevated positive cases," Noem said. "That's normal, that's natural, that's expected."

The Republican governor did not explain how an increase in hospitalizations would be connected to an increase in testing. The state has also seen one of the nation's highest positivity rates for testing in the last 14 days, according to Johns Hopkins researchers. The roughly 23% positivity rate is an indication there are more infections than tests are indicating.

The Department of Health reported 302 people are currently in the hospital with COVID-19, including 61 in Intensive Care Units. While health officials have said the state has plenty of hospital capacity as it sees a surge of the virus, hospitals have had to juggle patients as they prioritize people with severe cases of COVID-19.

The state currently has the nation's second-highest number of new cases per capita in the last two weeks, according to Johns Hopkins. There were about 815 new cases per 100,000 people in the state.

Noem said that the state's health care providers have reported to her they "are in good shape." She pointed out that people delaying treatment for routine medical issues early on in the pandemic has led to an increase in hospitalizations for other diseases.

The Department of Health released a more detailed picture of hospital capacity across the state on Tuesday, breaking the state into four regions and providing COVID-19 patient numbers by facility.

Noem raised the possibility of the National Guard assembling field hospitals if hospitals become overwhelmed with patients, but said "that's not necessary at this time."

The Department of Health also reported 414 more people had tested positive for the virus. No deaths were reported, leaving the number of people who have died from COVID-19 at 288.

## South Dakota AG told 911 he hit 'something' in fatal crash

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Attorney General Jason Ravensborg told a 911 dispatcher that he had hit "something" in the middle of the road the night he struck and killed a pedestrian, according to a recording of a 911 call authorities released Tuesday.

When a 911 dispatcher asked if could have been a deer, Ravensborg said at first, "I have no idea" before adding "it could be."

The 911 recording was released as state officials gave an update into the ongoing investigation into the Sept. 12 crash, in which the attorney general killed Joseph Boever, 55. Officials said a toxicology report taken roughly 15 hours after the crash showed no alcohol in Ravensborg's system. But even someone who had been drinking heavily would not have alcohol show up in their system 15 hours later, according to Ernest Lykissa, the lab director of a toxicology lab in Texas called ExperTox.

Investigators, including a Wyoming crash reconstruction expert and the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation, are looking into the circumstances surrounding the crash and making a forensic map of the crash scene. A preliminary autopsy report showed Boever died from extensive traumatic injuries from the crash, but a complete report will take several weeks to complete, Secretary of Public Safety Craig Price said.

Ravnsborg initially told a county sheriff dispatched to the crash site that he thought he struck a deer on U.S. Highway 14 near Highmore in central South Dakota. He said it was only the next morning, when he had returned to the scene, that he found he had struck a man.

The family of Boever has questioned how Ravensborg could have mistaken a man for a deer, especially in a state where collisions with deer are a common hazard to driving rural highways.

"I hit something," Ravensborg says in a recording of the 911 call he made after the crash. "It was in the middle of the road."

The attorney general was driving home to Pierre from a Republican fundraiser some 110 miles (180 kilometers) away in Redfield when the crash happened. Ravensborg had said he had nothing to drink and announced in a public statement that he had had his blood drawn by investigators. In the 911 recording,

Ravnsborg sounds composed and his speech is not slurred.

Secretary of Public Safety Craig Price said the toxicology report found "zero" alcohol in Ravnsborg's blood, which was drawn on the day following the crash at 1:30 p.m. Ravnsborg has also said he agreed to let investigators search two cellphones he had with him.

Gov. Kristi Noem has promised a transparent investigation into the Republican attorney general, who is serving his first term in office after winning election in 2018.

But Nick Nemec, Boever's cousin, said he was frustrated with how slow the investigation was proceeding. Boever's body was cremated about a week after he was killed, leading Nemec to question why has taken more than a month for a full autopsy report to be released.

"I understand you want to do a thorough job, but it sure does seem like it's gone on to the back burner," he said.

Crash investigations in the state usually take around a month to complete, and Noem said she called for the news conference to give as "much information as we can that would be appropriate to release at this time."

Officials released little else and said the investigation may take several more weeks. Price said investigators have faced delays as they travel back and forth from North Dakota while awaiting the complete autopsy report.

Such accidents would ordinarily be investigated by the South Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation, which answers to the attorney general's office. The other agencies took on the investigation to avoid a conflict of interest, but Ravnsborg has continued to work as attorney general.

Noem declined to comment on whether he should have taken a leave of absence during the investigation and said she has not been in communication with him.

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This story has been corrected to reflect that the blood sample was taken 15 hours after the crash, not 13.

## **\$2 million in spending tied to Mount Rushmore July event**

KEYSTONE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota tourism officials estimate the Mount Rushmore Independence Day event last July generated \$2 million in direct spending for the state's economy.

Deputy tourism director, Wanda Goodman, recently told the state Tourism Advisory Board the July 3 event also generated \$22 million in advertising value for South Dakota because of media coverage.

President Donald Trump was present for the celebration in the Black Hills when attendees signed up for a ticket lottery.

Based on applications for tickets, tourism officials say 10% of the event attendees were Black Hills residents and each spent about \$54 per day; 22% of those present were from other parts of South Dakota and each spent about \$115 per day; and 68% of those attending the event were from out of state, with each spending about \$120 per day, the Black Hills Pioneer reported.

The cost to stage the event, including \$350,000 for fireworks, was about \$1.5 million.

Tourism officials said Google searches for Mount Rushmore reached an all-time high and web traffic for TravelSouthDakota.com saw an increase of 872% compared to July 3-4, 2019.

## **Barrett back on Capitol Hill for senators' final questions**

By LISA MASCARO, MARK SHERMAN and LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett returns to Capitol Hill for a third day of confirmation hearings as senators dig deeper into the conservative judge's outlook on abortion, health care and a potentially disputed presidential election — the Democrats running out of time to stop Republicans pushing her quick confirmation.

Wednesday's session is set to be Barrett's last before the Senate Judiciary Committee. She has been battling away questions in long and lively exchanges, insisting she would bring no personal agenda to the



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 33 of 82

court but decide cases "as they come."

Her nomination by President Donald Trump to replace the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has ground other legislative business to a halt as Republicans excited by the prospect of locking in a 6-3 conservative court majority race to confirm her over Democratic objections before Election Day.

"We're going to fill this vacancy," Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., the committee chairman, said late Tuesday after a nearly 12-hour session.

Graham said he appreciated that Trump had nominated a judge "who's unabashedly pro-life, somebody who embraces their faith, but somebody who understands the difference between their personal views and judging."

Barrett's nomination has been the focus at a Capitol mostly shut down by COVID-19 protocols, frustrating Democrats who are virtually powerless to stop a judge from confirmation. They warn she will be seated on the court in time to cast a vote to undo the Affordable Care Act next month, causing millions of Americans to lose coverage during a pandemic.

"People are fed up," said Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., criticizing GOP priorities in forcing the Senate action as the country suffers from the pandemic and Congress squabbles over approving additional economic aid.

The 48-year-old appellate court judge declared her conservative views in often colloquial language, but she refused many specifics Tuesday. She aligns with the late Justice Antonin Scalia, a conservative mentor, and declined to say whether she would recuse herself from any election-related cases involving Trump and Democratic nominee Joe Biden.

"Judges can't just wake up one day and say I have an agenda — I like guns, I hate guns, I like abortion, I hate abortion — and walk in like a royal queen and impose their will on the world," Barrett told the committee during its second day of hearings.

"It's not the law of Amy," she said. "It's the law of the American people."

Trump seemed pleased with her performance. "I think Amy's doing incredibly well," he said at the White House departing for a campaign rally.

Trump has said he wants a justice seated for any disputes arising from his heated campaign against Biden, but Barrett testified she has not spoken to Trump or his team about election cases. Pressed by Democrats, she skipped past questions about ensuring the date of the election or preventing voter intimidation, both set in federal law, and the peaceful transfer of presidential power. She declined to commit to recusing herself from any post-election cases without first consulting the other justices.

"I can't offer an opinion on recusal without short-circuiting that entire process," she said.

A frustrated Sen. Dianne Feinstein, the top Democrat on the panel, all but implored the nominee to be more specific about how she would handle landmark abortion cases, including *Roe v. Wade* and the follow-up Pennsylvania case *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which confirmed it in large part.

"It's distressing not to get a good answer," the U.S. senator from California told the judge.

Barrett was unmoved. "I don't have an agenda to try to overrule *Casey*," she said. "I have an agenda to stick to the rule of law and decide cases as they come."

She later declined to characterize the *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion as a "super-precedent" that must not be overturned.

Democrats had no such reticence.

"Let's not make any mistake about it," said California Sen. Kamala Harris, the Democratic vice presidential nominee, appearing remotely due to COVID concerns.

Allowing Trump to fill the seat with Barrett "poses a threat to safe and legal abortion in our country," Harris said.

The Senate, led by Trump's Republican allies, is pushing Barrett's nomination to a quick vote before Nov. 3, and ahead of the latest challenge to the Affordable Care Act, which the Supreme Court is to hear a week after the election. Democrats warn that she would be a vote to undo the "Obamacare" law.

"I'm not hostile to the ACA," Barrett told the senators.

The judge, accompanied by her family, described herself as taking a conservative, originalist approach

to the Constitution. A former law professor, she told the senators that while she admires Scalia, she would bring her own approach.

"You would not be getting Justice Scalia, you would be getting Justice Barrett," she declared.

Overall, Barrett's conservative views are at odds with the late Ginsburg, a liberal icon. She would be Trump's third justice.

Underscoring the Republicans' confidence, Graham set an initial committee vote on the nomination for Thursday, the last day of hearings, which would allow final approval by the full Senate by the end of the month.

Protesters rallied outside the Senate building, unable to come inside the hearing room.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Matthew Daly and Jessica Gresko in Washington, and Elana Schor in New York contributed to this report.

## Fighting in swing states, Trump also forced to play defense

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, WILL WEISSERT, KEVIN FREKING and BILL BARROW Associated Press  
WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is being forced to play Electoral College defense with a trip to Iowa, a state he won handily in 2016 but where Democrat Joe Biden is making a late push.

Trump's heavy travel this week, including his rally Wednesday in Des Moines, reflects his uphill climb three weeks before the election. He has already visited Pennsylvania and Florida and will head to another battleground state he likely can't win without — North Carolina — as well as those he once thought were in his grasp but where recent polling shows Biden improving — Iowa and Georgia.

Both candidates tailored their campaigning Tuesday to best motivate voters who could cast potentially decisive ballots.

Biden, who doesn't have any public campaign events scheduled Wednesday, an unusual move just 20 days before the election, went to Florida on Tuesday to court older voters. He was looking to deliver a knockout blow in a state Trump needs to win while trying to woo a group whose support for the Republican president has slipped. And Trump visited Pennsylvania, arguably the most important state on the electoral map, unleashing fierce attacks on Biden's fitness for office in his opponent's backyard.

"He's shot, folks. I hate to tell you, he's shot," Trump told a big rally crowd in Johnstown, saying there was extra pressure on him to win because Biden was the worst presidential candidate of all time. "Can you imagine if you lose to a guy like this? It's unbelievable."

In his second rally since contracting the novel coronavirus, Trump spoke for more than an hour to thousands packed in tightly and mostly maskless. Like the night before in Florida, Trump seemed healthy, and his rhetoric on the pandemic — including the dubious claim that it was mostly a thing of the past — changed little despite his own illness, except for his threat to kiss audience members to prove his immunity.

Trump made a local pitch, hammering home the false claim that a Biden administration would limit fracking in areas where the economy is heavily dependent on energy. Biden's proposal would only bar new leases on federal land, a fraction of U.S. fracking operations. Touting his elimination of a federal rule that would have brought more low-income housing to the suburbs, Trump zeroed in on groups whose support he has struggled to retain, including female voters turned off by his rhetoric.

"So I ask you to do me a favor. Suburban women: Will you please like me? Please. Please. I saved your damn neighborhood, OK?" Trump said. "The other thing: I don't have that much time to be that nice. You know, I can do it, but I gotta go quickly."

Biden spent the day in Florida, his third visit to the state in a month, looking to expand his inroads with older voters. To Trump, "you're expendable, you're forgettable, you're virtually nobody," Biden said at a senior center in Pembroke Pines, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from Fort Lauderdale.

The "only senior Donald Trump seems to care about" is himself, Biden added.

After frequently criticizing Trump for not doing enough to promote mask wearing to prevent the spread of the virus, Biden was wearing two masks, an N95 underneath a blue surgical mask, as he deplaned in

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 35 of 82

Florida. Later in the day, he switched to his normal mode of donning just one.

Introducing Biden in Pembroke Pines, Democratic Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz noted that "neither of these men will walk into the White House without the blessing of Florida seniors."

"Much is made of the rise of the youth vote, and thank God for it," the Florida congresswoman said. "But it's residents 65 or older who still swing elections in the Sunshine State."

Biden also held a drive-in rally designed to promote voter mobilization in the heavily African American community of Miramar. His swing coincided with a \$500,000 donation from billionaire former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg to increase Democratic turnout in Miami-Dade County.

"I'm running as a proud Democrat, but I will govern as an American president," Biden said to supporters blaring their horns as they listened from cars. "I'll work as hard for those who vote against me as those who vote for me."

Back in Washington, Tuesday marked a second day of Senate hearings to confirm Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court. Trump and top Republicans see a swift confirmation as a chance to energize conservatives. Trump mentioned those proceedings as he left the White House, saying, "Amy was doing incredibly well."

Biden's campaign believes it can win the White House without Florida's 29 electoral votes, but it wants to lock up the state to pad a margin of victory over Trump, who has questioned the legitimacy of an election where many people will cast mail-in ballots during the pandemic. Biden has vowed to win Pennsylvania, but if he falls short, his path to victory narrows substantially.

The Trump campaign, meanwhile, has grown increasingly worried about states he won handily four years ago, including Ohio and, to a lesser extent, Texas. He all but must win at least one of the three Great Lakes states he flipped red in 2016.

But facing stubborn deficits in Wisconsin and Michigan, the president has placed renewed focus on Pennsylvania.

With 20 electoral votes, Pennsylvania is anchored by Philadelphia to the east, Pittsburgh to the west. But the rest of the state is largely rural, comprised of small cities and towns where Trump ran up the score four years ago. He will need to again, in even greater numbers, as his prospects have slipped since 2016 in places like vote-rich suburban Philadelphia, where he underperformed by past Republican measures.

Trump's rally was at the airport in Johnstown in Cambria County, a historically coal and steel area that narrowly backed Democrat Barack Obama in 2008. But it has trended Republican for the past three decades and, in the 2016 election, Trump scored a 37 percentage-point victory. The area is also substantially whiter and has lower median incomes and lower rates of college-degree attainment than the rest of Pennsylvania.

Biden, who was born 220 miles (350 kilometers) away in Scranton, visited Johnstown late last month. The former vice president has tried to cast himself as a champion of working-class voters while accusing Trump of focusing instead on stock market returns and Park Avenue values.

Despite the pandemic, Trump's campaign has prioritized in-person events and aggressive door-knocking as it tries to turn out new and low-propensity voters, including more members of the white working class who may have backed Democrats in the past.

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Freking reported from Johnstown, Pa; Lemire reported from New York; Barrow from Pembroke Pines, Fla. Associated Press writers Thomas Beaumont in Des Moines, Iowa, and Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pa., contributed to this report.

## Supreme Court halts census in latest twist of 2020 count

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

The Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled that the Trump administration can end census field operations early, in a blow to efforts to make sure minorities and hard-to-enumerate communities are properly counted in the crucial once-a-decade tally.

The decision was not a total loss for plaintiffs in a lawsuit challenging the administration's decision to

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 36 of 82

end the count early. They managed to get nearly two extra weeks of counting people as the case made its way through the courts.

However, the ruling increased the chances of the Trump administration retaining control of the process that decides how many congressional seats each state gets — and by extension how much voting power each state has.

The Supreme Court justices' ruling came as the nation's largest association of statisticians, and even the U.S. Census Bureau's own census takers and partners, have been raising questions about the quality of the data being gathered — numbers that are used to determine how much federal funding and how many congressional seats are allotted to states.

After the Supreme Court's decision, the Census Bureau said field operations would end on Thursday.

At issue was a request by the Trump administration that the Supreme Court suspend a lower court's order extending the 2020 census through the end of October following delays caused by the pandemic. The Trump administration argued that the head count needed to end immediately to give the bureau time to meet a year-end deadline. Congress requires the bureau to turn in by Dec. 31 the figures used to decide the states' congressional seats — a process known as apportionment.

By sticking to the deadline, the Trump administration would end up controlling the numbers used for the apportionment, no matter who wins next month's presidential election.

In a statement, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called the Supreme Court's decision "regrettable and disappointing," and said the administration's actions "threaten to politically and financially exclude many in America's most vulnerable communities from our democracy."

Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor dissented from the high court's decision, saying "respondents will suffer substantial injury if the Bureau is permitted to sacrifice accuracy for expediency."

The Supreme Court ruling came in response to a lawsuit by a coalition of local governments and civil rights groups, arguing that minorities and others in hard-to-count communities would be missed if the census ended early. They said the schedule was cut short to accommodate a July order from President Donald Trump that would exclude people in the country illegally from being counted in the numbers used for apportionment.

Opponents of the order said it followed the strategy of the late Republican redistricting guru, Thomas Hofeller, who had advocated using voting-age citizens instead of the total population when it came to drawing legislative seats since that would favor Republicans and non-Hispanic whites.

Last month, U.S. District Judge Lucy Koh in San Jose, California sided with the plaintiffs and issued an injunction suspending a Sept. 30 deadline for finishing the 2020 census and a Dec. 31 deadline for submitting the apportionment numbers. That caused the deadlines to revert back to a previous Census Bureau plan that had field operations ending Oct. 31 and the reporting of apportionment figures at the end of April 2021.

When the Census Bureau, and the Commerce Department, which oversees the statistical agency, picked an Oct. 5 end date, Koh struck that down too, accusing officials of "lurching from one hasty, unexplained plan to the next ... and undermining the credibility of the Census Bureau and the 2020 Census."

An appellate court panel upheld Koh's order allowing the census to continue through October but struck down the part that suspended the Dec. 31 deadline for turning in apportionment numbers. The panel of three appellate judges said that just because the year-end deadline is impossible to meet doesn't mean the court should require the Census Bureau to miss it.

The plaintiffs said the ruling against them was not a total loss, as millions more people were counted during the extra two weeks.

"Every day has mattered, and the Supreme Court's order staying the preliminary injunction does not erase the tremendous progress that has been made as a result of the district court's rulings," said Melissa Sherry, one of the attorneys for the coalition.

Besides deciding how many congressional seats each state gets, the census helps determine how \$1.5 trillion in federal funding is distributed each year.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 37 of 82

San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo said that his city lost \$200 million in federal funding over the decade following the 2010 census, and he feared it would lose more this time around. The California city was one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

"A census count delayed is justice denied," Liccardo said.

With plans for the count hampered by the pandemic, the Census Bureau in April had proposed extending the deadline for finishing the count from the end of July to the end of October, and pushing the apportionment deadline from Dec. 31 to next April. The proposal to extend the apportionment deadline passed the Democratic-controlled House, but the Republican-controlled Senate didn't take up the request. Then, in late July and early August, bureau officials shortened the count schedule by a month so that it would finish at the end of September.

The Senate Republicans' inaction coincided with Trump's order directing the Census Bureau to have the apportionment count exclude people who are in the country illegally. The order was later ruled unlawful by a panel of three district judges in New York, but the Trump administration appealed that case to the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court decision comes as a report by the the American Statistical Association has found that a shortened schedule, dropped quality control procedures, pending lawsuits and the outside politicization of some parts of the 2020 census have raised questions about the quality of the nation's head count that need to be answered if the final numbers are going to be trusted.

The Census Bureau says it has counted 99.9% of households nationwide, though some regions of the country such as parts of Mississippi and hurricane-battered Louisiana fall well below that.

As the Census Bureau winds down field operations over the next several days, there will be a push to get communities in those two states counted, said Kristen Clarke, president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, one of the litigants in the lawsuit.

"That said, the Supreme Court's order will result in irreversible damage to the 2020 Census," Clarke said.

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Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/MikeSchneiderAP>

## Russian-US crew launches on fast track to the space station

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A trio of space travelers launched successfully to the International Space Station, for the first time using a fast-track maneuver to reach the orbiting outpost in just three hours.

NASA's Kate Rubins along with Sergey Ryzhikov and Sergey Kud-Sverchkov of the Russian space agency Roscosmos lifted off as scheduled Wednesday morning from the Russia-leased Baikonur space launch facility in Kazakhstan for a six-month stint on the station.

For the first time, they tried a two-orbit approach and docked with the space station in just a little over three hours after lift-off. Previously it took twice as long for crews to reach the station.

They will join the station's NASA commander, Chris Cassidy, and Roscosmos cosmonauts Anatoly Ivanishin and Ivan Vagner, who have been aboard the complex since April and are scheduled to return to Earth in a week.

Speaking during Tuesday's pre-launch news conference at Baikonur, Rubins emphasized that the crew spent weeks in quarantine at the Star City training facility outside Moscow and then on Baikonur to avoid any threat from the coronavirus.

"We spent two weeks at Star City and then 17 days at Baikonur in a very strict quarantine," Rubins said. "During all communications with crew members, we were wearing masks. We made PCR tests twice and we also made three times antigen fast tests."

She said she was looking forward to scientific experiments planned for the mission.

"We're planning to try some really interesting things like bio-printing tissues and growing cells in space and, of course, continuing our work on sequencing DNA," Rubins said.

Ryzhikov, who will be the station's skipper, said the crew will try to pinpoint the exact location of a leak

at a station's Russian section that has slowly leaked oxygen. The small leak hasn't posed any immediate danger to the crew.

"We will take with us additional equipment which will allow us to detect the place of this leak more precisely," he told reporters. "We will also take with us additional improved hermetic material which will allow to fix the leak."

In November, Rubins, Ryzhikov and Kud-Sverchkov are set to greet NASA's SpaceX first operational Crew Dragon mission, bringing NASA astronauts Mike Hopkins, Victor Glover and Shannon Walker, and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Soichi Noguchi to the space station aboard the Crew Dragon vehicle. It follows a successful Demo-2 mission earlier this year.

The Crew Dragon mission was pushed back from Oct. 31 into November, and no new date has been set yet. The delay is intended to give SpaceX more time to conduct tests and review data from an aborted Falcon 9 launch earlier this month.

## Activist fined for dislodging African art from Paris museum

PARIS (AP) — A Congolese activist was fined 2,000 euros (\$2,320) Wednesday for trying to take a 19th-century African funeral pole from a Paris museum in a protest against colonial-era injustice that he streamed online.

The Paris court convicted Emery Mwazulu Diyabanza and two other activists of attempted theft, but the sentence stopped far short of what they potentially faced for their actions at the Quai Branly Museum: 10 years in prison and 150,000 euros in fines.

Activists and defense lawyers viewed the case as a trial about how former empires should atone for past crimes. Diyabanza's museum action took place in June, amid global protests against racial injustice and colonial-era wrongs unleashed by George Floyd's death on May 25 in the U.S. at the knee of a white policeman.

In the Quai Branly protest, Diyabanza and other activists dislodged the funeral pole from its perch while he gave a livestreamed speech about plundered African art. Guards quickly stopped them. The activists argue that they never planned to steal the work but just wanted to call attention to its origins.

The presiding judge insisted the trial should focus on the specific funeral pole incident and that his court wasn't competent to judge France's colonial era.

French officials denounced the Quai Branly incident, saying it threatens ongoing negotiations with African countries launched by French President Emmanuel Macron in 2018 for legal, organized restitution efforts.

Diyabanza has staged similar actions in the Netherlands and the southern French city of Marseille. He accuses European museums of making millions on artworks taken from now-impoverished countries like his native Congo, and said the funeral pole, which came from current-day Chad, should be among the works returned to Africa.

## Nagorno-Karabakh fighting raises threat of deadly escalation

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A Russian attempt to broker a cease-fire to end the worst outbreak of hostilities over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh in more than a quarter-century has failed to get any traction, with rivals Azerbaijan and Armenia trading blame for new attacks.

The failure of the truce that was supposed to begin Saturday reflects the uncompromising positions of the two South Caucasus nations that have stymied decades of diplomatic efforts. The escalation of fighting raises the specter of a wider conflict that could draw in Russia and Turkey and threaten Caspian Sea energy exports.

A look at some military and geopolitical aspects of the conflict and its potential fallout:

### ROOTS OF THE CONFLICT

Nagorno-Karabakh, populated mostly by Armenians, was an autonomous region inside Azerbaijan during the Soviet era. Historic tensions between Christian Armenians and mostly Muslim Azerbaijanis, fueled by

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 39 of 82

memories of the 1915 massacre of 1.5 million Armenians by Ottoman Turks, exploded in the final years of the Soviet Union.

In 1988, the region sought to join Armenia, triggering hostilities that morphed into an all-out war as the USSR collapsed in 1991. By the time a 1994 cease-fire ended the fighting, an estimated 30,000 people had been killed and up to 1 million were displaced. Armenian forces not only held Nagorno-Karabakh itself but also seized substantial chunks of land outside the territory's borders.

Nagorno-Karabakh, a forested, mountainous territory that covers about 4,400 square kilometers (1,700 square miles), the size of the U.S. state of Delaware, has run its own affairs ever since, relying on Armenia's support.

## FAILED PEACE INITIATIVES

Ever since Armenian forces routed Azerbaijani troops in the war, international mediators have sought a political settlement.

Russia, the United States and France, which co-sponsored the Nagorno-Karabakh peace talks under the aegis of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, have put forward numerous peace initiatives, but Armenia's stiff resistance to surrendering any land has been a key stumbling block.

Azerbaijan, meanwhile, has relied on its oil wealth to modernize its military and now argues that it has the right to reclaim its land by force after nearly three decades of failed international mediation.

## MILITARY DISPARITY

While separatist forces in the Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian military continue to rely mostly on aging Soviet-built weapons, Azerbaijan has completely revamped its arsenal with state-of-the-art attack drones and powerful long-range multiple rocket systems supplied by its neighbor and ally, Turkey.

More than two weeks of fighting has shown that Azerbaijan has clearly outgunned the Nagorno-Karabakh forces and put them on the defensive. Azerbaijani troops have made significant advances in several areas around Nagorno-Karabakh and showered its towns with rockets and artillery shells.

Armenian forces have countered with Soviet-built howitzers, antiquated BM-21 rocket launchers and obsolete Tochka-U missiles that lack the punch and precision of Azerbaijan's more modern weapons.

## TURKEY'S NEW ROLE

Unlike previous outbursts of hostilities over Nagorno-Karabakh, NATO-member Turkey, which has close ethnic, cultural and historic bonds with Azerbaijan, took a higher profile and vowed to help Azerbaijan reclaim its territory. Turkey's newly assertive role reflects President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ambitions to expand his nation's clout.

Armenian officials say Turkey is directly involved in the conflict and is sending Syrian mercenaries to fight on Azerbaijan's side. Turkey has denied deploying combatants to the region, but a Syrian war monitor and Syria-based opposition activists have confirmed that Turkey has sent hundreds of Syrian opposition fighters to fight in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenian authorities also charge that Turkey provides Azerbaijan with intelligence and even air cover, claiming that a Turkish F-16 fighter jet shot down an Armenian warplane. Turkey and Azerbaijan have denied the claim, but Azerbaijan's president admitted that Turkish F-16s have stayed on in Azerbaijan weeks after a joint military exercise. He insisted that they have remained grounded.

## CONFLICTING GOALS

While Armenia aims to preserve the 1994 status quo in the region and desperately needs a cease-fire to contain the damage and regroup, Azerbaijan, with Turkey's blessing, clearly is bracing for a long fight, hoping to bleed Armenia and force it to make concessions.

The escalation of fighting is a major challenge for Russia, which has a military base in Armenia but also has sought to maintain good ties with Azerbaijan and avoid a showdown with Turkey. Russia and Turkey have learned to accommodate mutual interests in Syria and Libya and have developed strong economic ties, but the fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh could now shatter their alliance.

Azerbaijan and Turkey have accepted Russia's mediation and grudgingly agreed to a truce, but they have made it clear that see the cease-fire as temporary until Armenia agrees to pull back its forces from Nagorno-Karabakh.

## LOOMING ESCALATION

Landlocked Armenia, emaciated by three decades of Turkish and Azerbaijani blockades, lacks resources for a drawn-out conflict. But it can't be expected to yield to pressure. Patriotic sentiments run high, and Armenians of all trades and ages have volunteered to go the front lines.

If Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh start losing ground, Armenia could raise the stakes in the conflict by recognizing the separatist region's independence — something it hasn't done yet — and openly challenging Azerbaijan militarily. So far, Armenian officials have denied making any strikes on Azerbaijan from its territory, a claim contested by Azerbaijan.

Armenia has several high-precision Iskander surface-to-surface missile systems supplied by Russia. It hasn't used the powerful weapon yet, but it could be tempted to if Armenian forces face the prospect of losing Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenian authorities so far have vowed not to target Azerbaijan's infrastructure, including an oil pipeline carrying its Caspian crude to Turkey and on to Western markets, but their calculus may change if Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh are cornered. If the Armenian forces target the strategic pipeline, Azerbaijan could also up the ante.

During the previous escalation of hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan in July, Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry boasted of its state-of-the-art missile systems that are capable of striking Armenia's Metsamor nuclear power plant — a threat the Armenian authorities at the time denounced as "genocidal."

If Azerbaijan openly strikes Armenian territory, Moscow would be obliged by its military pact with Yerevan to intervene militarily to protect its ally. Turkey could hardly be expected to stay idle too.

## Coronavirus lockdown 2.0 deepens divisions in Israel

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — When Israel went into lockdown last spring, Jerusalem pub owner Leon Shvartz moved quickly to save his business — shifting to a delivery and takeaway model that kept him afloat throughout the summer. Then came the second lockdown.

With restaurants and shops shuttered again, Shvartz's business is struggling to survive. He has laid off 16 of his 17 employees.

By contrast, Israeli software maker Bizzabo, which operates in the hard-hit conference-management sector, quickly reinvented itself last spring by offering "virtual events." It has more than doubled its sales and is expanding its workforce.

Such tales of boom and bust reflect Israel's growing "digital divide."

Even before the pandemic, Israel had one of the largest income gaps and poverty rates among developed economies, with a few high earners, mostly in the lucrative high-tech sector, while many Israelis barely get by as civil servants, in service industries or as small business owners.

Those gaps have widened as the second nationwide lockdown, imposed last month, dealt a new blow to an economy already hit hard by the first round of restrictions.

The fallout from the pandemic has also deepened long-simmering divisions among Israeli Jews, pitting a largely secular majority against a powerful ultra-Orthodox minority.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a target of months of mass protests over his perceived mishandling of the pandemic, has been seen as favoring his ultra-Orthodox partners at the expense of the greater good. In trying to contain the latest outbreaks, Netanyahu opted for an economically devastating blanket lockdown instead of targeted restrictions in infection hot spots, including many ultra-Orthodox communities, presumably to avoid upsetting his allies.

The deep tear in Israel's social fabric prompted a warning from Israel's figurehead president, Reuven Rivlin. "I feel the air is full of gunpowder. I feel the fury on the streets," Rivlin told parliament this week. "Israel's tribalism is breaking out through the cracks, and accusatory fingers are pointed from one part of society to the other, one tribe to the other."

Netanyahu initially won plaudits for his handling of the virus crisis, after he quickly sealed the border and



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 41 of 82

imposed a lockdown, which appeared to bring the outbreak under control.

But the lockdown came at a great cost, pushing unemployment near 35% in April as hundreds of thousands were either laid off or furloughed, mainly in low-paying jobs such as retail, travel and hospitality.

Although most jobs gradually returned as the economy reopened, the caseload dramatically spiked in the fall, forcing the government to declare a second, open-ended lockdown last month. According to official figures, over 967,000 people, or almost a quarter of the work force, are again out of work.

Shvartz, who owns two bars and a craft beer company, Biratenu, managed to scrape by with his mail-order business until restaurants reopened over the summer. But safety regulations limited the number of customers he could serve, cutting sales.

Shvartz let a third of his staff go and cut his own salary. Then, the government announced its second lockdown. Now, he and his lone employee are again focused on the delivery business.

"It looks like a garage," he said. He estimates business is down at least 60% from pre-pandemic levels.

Alon Alroy, a Bizzabo co-founder, faced a similar existential crisis in early March, when he realized the business of managing conferences was about to dry up. In what he described as "the toughest month we've ever had," he let go a quarter of his workforce as his team scrambled to come up with a new strategy.

By the end of the month, they decided to focus on "virtual events." The key, he said, was to go beyond standard Zoom calls and create an environment for engagement.

The software allows participants at large online gatherings to network or break away for private meetings, just as they would at an old-fashioned business conference.

"Everyone knew the events industry could disappear unless we invented, in a way, the event technology space," he said, speaking from New York.

After its two strongest quarters on record, Bizzabo has rehired its laid-off workers and brought an additional 40 people on board. It now employs about 150 people at offices in Israel and New York.

While some Israeli high-tech firms have been affected by the economic downturn, the industry as a whole is experiencing perhaps its strongest year ever.

According to the nonprofit Start-Up Nation Central, Israeli firms are having little difficulty attracting investors. "Israeli tech companies raised \$7.24 billion this year, which is a 30% increase over the same period last year," said Uri Gabai, the group's co-general manager.

Jon Medved, founder and chief executive of Israeli venture capital firm OurCrowd, said the strong Israeli tech scene, in contrast to the rest of the economy, is reflective of a global trend.

"It's just more accentuated," he said. "What we've noticed going on worldwide is that there really is a very strong two-tier-economy impact of the virus."

Medved said Israel is well-positioned, given the many firms focused on sectors that have thrived during the crisis. They include digital health care and telemedicine, artificial intelligence, cyber security, and technologies for banks and online retailers. Israel's newly established ties with the United Arab Emirates have brought a new source of cash-rich investors.

But as Israel's technology scene thrives, many others are being left behind, creating divisions that have fueled angry protests.

For over three months, thousands of Israelis have held weekly demonstrations calling for Netanyahu to resign, primarily because of his handling of the economy. Many of the protesters are people who have lost their jobs or businesses.

Much public anger has also turned toward ultra-Orthodox leaders, whose communities have flouted public safety rules, sent coronavirus rates skyrocketing and vociferously resisted calls for targeted lockdowns. Critics accuse Netanyahu of coddling his political allies to help protect himself as he goes on trial for corruption.

Israeli economist Dan Ben-David, founder of the Shores Institute and a professor at Tel Aviv University, has been warning about these divisions for years, saying they are rooted in the country's education system.

He said schools in outlying rural areas, Arab communities and the ultra-Orthodox sector have long been neglected, leaving their students poorly prepared for the modern world.

"About half the children in Israel today are getting a Third World education," he said.

In the case of the ultra-Orthodox, the neglect is intentional — religious leaders use their political clout to fund an education system that promotes the study of scripture over subjects such as math and English.

"We're the only nation in the entire developed world that allows parents to deprive their children of a core curriculum," he said. "The fact that we've been allowing it for decades makes us complicit in all of this."

## AP Road Trip: Racial tensions in America's 'sundown towns'

TIM SULLIVAN and NOREEN NASIR Associated Press

VIENNA, Ill. (AP) — Ask around this time-battered Midwestern town, with its empty storefronts, dusty antique shops and businesses that have migrated toward the interstate, and nearly everyone will tell you that Black and white residents get along really well.

"Race isn't a big problem around here," said Bill Stevens, a white retired prison guard with a gentle smile, drinking beer with friends on a summer afternoon. "Never has been, really."

"We don't have any trouble with racism," said a twice-widowed woman, also white, with a meticulously-kept yard and a white picket fence.

But in Vienna, as in hundreds of mostly white towns with similar histories across America, much is left unspoken. Around here, almost no one talks openly about the violence that drove out Black residents nearly 70 years ago, or even whispers the name these places were given: "sundown towns."

Unless they're among the handful of Black residents.

"It's real strange and weird out here sometimes," said Nicholas Lewis, a stay-at-home father. "Every time I walk around, eyes are on me."

The rules of a sundown town were simple: Black people were allowed to pass through during the day or go in to shop or work, but they had to be gone by nightfall. Anyone breaking the rules could risk arrest, a beating or worse.

These towns were an open secret of racial segregation that spilled over much of the nation for at least a century, and still exist in various forms, enforced today more by tradition and fear than by rules.

Across America, some of these towns are now openly wrestling with their histories, publicly acknowledging now-abandoned racist laws or holding racial justice protests. Some old sundown towns are now integrated. But many also still have tiny Black communities living alongside residents who don't bother hiding their cold stares of disapproval.

This story was produced with the support of the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

This part of southern Illinois had at least a half-dozen sundown towns. We came here on the second stop of The Associated Press' road trip across America, a reporting journey that three of us are taking to look at how the U.S. has been shaken and shaped by months of protests, the COVID-19 pandemic, an economic crisis and the looming November elections.

We wanted to take a close look at systemic racism, trying to understand how something that is so crushingly obvious to some people can be utterly invisible to others.

So we went to a longtime sundown town.

They were called "grey towns," in some parts of America, "sunset towns" in others. The terms were used by both Black and white people.

Very often, especially in well-to-do suburbs that didn't want to be known as racist, they had no name at all. But they still kept out Black residents. There were hundreds of such towns, scholars say, reaching from New York to Oregon. Perhaps thousands.

James Loewen, a historian who spent years studying sundown towns, found them in the suburbs of Detroit, New York City and Chicago. He found them outside Los Angeles, in midwestern farming villages and in New England summer towns.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 43 of 82

Sometimes, the rules were official policies, with signs at the edge of towns warning Black people to be gone by nightfall. More often, everyone - both Black and white - simply knew the unwritten rules.

In this area, near the borders of both Missouri and Kentucky, young Black people were raised to be aware of which towns they should avoid.

"It was something that was known," said James Davis, 27, a Black truck driver from the nearby town of Cairo, which is largely Black. "But also something that our parents taught us growing up."

In places still seen as sundown towns, many Black people now follow their own rules: Avoid them if possible, and lock your car doors if you have to drive through. If you stop for gas, look for a well-lit gas station with security cameras.

So it is in Vienna.

"Every time you come into town, or you go into a gas station, or in a store, people look at you," said Victoria Vaughn, a biracial 17-year-old who has been coming to Vienna for years to visit her white grandparents.

"You can feel them looking at you, feel them staring," she said. "I've never had anybody say anything (racist) to me in Vienna, but I've definitely felt the way they felt about me."

She was in Vienna on a recent Saturday to join a rally organized after a group of Vienna High School students created a social media account that included the phrase "hate Black people" in its title. Vaughn and her grandmother were among the 50 or so people who turned out for the rally, along with about 25 counter-protesters.

At first things went well. Protesters and counter-protesters prayed together. They talked calmly about race. But not for long.

"Bullshit!" an older white man shouted at Vaughn, after she said Black people aren't treated equally. "They get the same as the white people get!"

Vaughn, whose grandmother gently pulled her back from the confrontation with the angry older man, isn't surprised that Vienna's white residents don't see racial issues around them. The situation is far more subtle today than when Black residents were forced out.

"Until you live in a Black or brown person's body you're not going to understand," she said. "You have to know somebody who lived it, or live it yourself, to truly understand."

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Today it's just an overgrown field, vibrant green from recent rains.

But 60 years ago, there was a small collection of houses along that stretch of 7th Street, where the outer edges of Vienna bump up against Little Cache Creek. Everyone who lived there was Black.

The violence erupted in August, 1954, after the arrest of a 31-year-old resident, Thomas Lee Latham, who was accused of brutally beating an elderly white woman with a soft drink bottle and trying to rape her granddaughter.

"Vienna Negro Held on Charge of Assault With Attempt to Murder," the Vienna Times declared on its front page after Latham was arrested, hours after the attack. The older woman died days later.

A few weeks after his arrest, Latham escaped from jail. Dozens of armed men took to the streets of Vienna and the surrounding fields, backed up by bloodhounds and spotters in low-flying planes.

Within hours, the cluster of Black homes along 7th Street were ablaze, with smoke and flames rising above the town.

A week or so later Latham gave himself up and pleaded guilty. One day after he surrendered, he was sentenced to 180 years in prison.

By then, the town's Black residents were gone.

"The Black community, from that point on, disappeared from Vienna," said Darrel Dexter, a historian and high school teacher who has studied the violence of 1954.

Black people had lived in and around Vienna since the late 1820s or early 1830s, said Dexter. But he estimates that after the fires, perhaps 50 people fled the town. The town later repaid Black residents for their lost homes, the Times reported, though there is no indication anyone was ever prosecuted.

The 1950 census showed 54 Black people living in Vienna.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 44 of 82

In 2000, it showed one.

A couple of blocks from the field where Vienna's Black community once lived, down a narrow dead-end street, a grandmother with pink fingernails and an easy laugh watches over an extended family that spans much of America's Black-white divide.

They are not what you'd expect to find here.

"It's our sanctuary," Maribeth Harris said of the street. One of her daughters lives next door. Another lives across the street with her boyfriend, Nicholas Lewis. Harris has custody of three grandkids while Lewis cares for the fourth, an 18-month-old in Spiderman pajamas on a recent afternoon.

Harris, her husband and their daughters are white. Lewis is Black. The grandchildren are biracial.

"This is our own little world down here," Harris said, sighing before she begins listing some of the troubles the family has faced. "They just brush everything under the rug."

There was the time one of the kids was called "burned toast" by a classmate. Or when an elderly woman walked past the family at a church dinner and loudly called the children "damn half-breeds."

There was the day the 10-year-old came home with a painful question: "Grandma, why do I have to be Black?"

She and her husband moved to Vienna about 10 years ago from northern Illinois, chasing work and a cheaper cost of living. But with her oldest grandson edging up on adolescence, she knows they should leave soon, before they have to worry about such things as confrontations with police.

"We want to get out of here," she said. "We have to figure out what's good for them. And Vienna won't be good for them."

Lewis joined the little enclave two years ago, expecting a short visit but staying after his girlfriend, one of Harris' daughters, got pregnant.

He's an unassuming man deeply in love with his young son, Nick. If he hasn't felt the sting of outright racism in Vienna, he's exhausted by how residents constantly watch him.

It's complicated, he added, because most people are friendly once they know him. But he also believes his family should leave.

"I don't want my son raised down here," he said. "I don't want him out here where (white people) are all he sees."

They call themselves The Gunsmoke Club.

Their clubhouse, a few miles outside Vienna, is an old gas station, later turned into a convenience store and now a gathering place for a dozen or so friends. It's part workshop, part bar, part informal store. But mostly it's a place for a bunch of gray-haired men to pass the time, drink light beer and relive a sliver of their childhoods every day at noon with reruns of "Gunsmoke," the TV show about a marshal whose steely nerve and Colt revolver kept the peace in the American West.

"That's what formed this nation!," said Rick Warren, a 65-year-old in blue jeans and a T-shirt, only partially joking. "Gunsmoke' and John Wayne!"

This is a deeply conservative part of the nation — 77 percent of the county voted for President Donald Trump in the 2016 elections; just 19 percent went for Hillary Clinton. The Gunsmoke Club reflects that. They are pro-Trump, anti-abortion, virulently against gun control and distrust the coronavirus rules and the media (though after warming up they were very welcoming to us).

For them, race has become an issue twisted far beyond proportion, a cudgel for hypocritical liberals.

"Really, we got a good country, and I think there is probably some racism going on. But I try not to be racist," Stevens, the retired prison guard, said in his gentle drawl about this year's protests over racial injustice. "I think they're overreacting a little bit."

Warren is more blunt, pounding his fist on a particle-board table when he gets really angry.

"I've had Black friends. I've had Black babysitters. I had Black people who took care of me through my childhood," he said. But the easygoing race relations of his youth were lost, he said, when President Lyn-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 45 of 82

don Johnson, who pushed through some of the most important civil rights legislation of the 20th century, "came along and turned it into a bunch of racial bullshit!"

Then there's former President Barack Obama, who speaks regularly about his white mother from Kansas and his Black father from Kenya, but who personally identifies as Black.

"He claims to be Black!" Warren said, pounding the table. "What the hell happened to his white mama?"

Another of the men later pulls back his shirt to show that he now carries a .357-magnum revolver tucked into his jeans, worried about the unrest that occasionally flared during this year's racial protests.

Vienna's own violent history doesn't come up until the men are asked about it.

Stevens was about 10 when it happened.

"When they burned them out that time, a lot of them just packed their bags and went up north," said Stevens, who said he hated to see Black classmates driven from town.

"For a long time there were very very few Blacks in this county, and then they started easing back in," he said. "We got a few more families in here now, but we get along good."

How many sundown towns remain? It's rarely clear anymore. Openly racist laws are now largely illegal, and few towns want the infamy of being known for keeping out Black people. Scholars often rely now on demographic data, looking carefully at towns that have tiny Black populations.

Loewen, the historian, says the number is clearly dropping, categorizing many as "recovering" sundown towns, where organized resistance to Black residents has ended but the racial divide can remain wide. Vienna would almost certainly fall into that category.

Dexter sees hope in the dozens of former sundown towns that have held racial justice protests, from the infamous Illinois sundown town of Anna to Hopewell, Michigan, once home to a powerful Ku Klux Klan leader, which Black Detroit residents have long avoided.

"I do think that there are lots of changes, and progress, being made today. Mostly I think that comes from people talking about the issue," he said. "People didn't want to talk about it before."

But while legal protections and changing mores have lessened the power of sundown towns, there are still plenty of them with well-known racist histories. Sometimes, towns know their violent past keeps racial minorities away. Sometimes, that history makes those minorities avoid them.

"It's not by law" that Black people remain a tiny population in many towns, Dexter said. "It's by tradition."

Even in Vienna things are changing.

But ever so slowly.

In 2010, the U.S. census said there were 1,434 people in Vienna. Sixteen of them were Black.

## Asia Today: India reports 63,000 new cases, China tests 4.2M

NEW DELHI (AP) — India has confirmed more than 63,000 new cases of the coronavirus, an increase of over 8,000 from the previous day but still far fewer than it was reporting a month ago, when the virus was at its peak in the country.

The Health Ministry reported 63,509 new cases on Wednesday, raising India's total to more than 7.2 million, second in the world behind the U.S. The ministry also reported 730 fatalities in the past 24 hours, raising the death toll to 110,586. The country was seeing more than 1,000 deaths per day last month.

According to the Health Ministry, India's average number of daily cases dropped to 72,576 last week from 92,830 during the week of Sept. 9-15, when the virus peaked. Over the last month, the country has been seeing a trend of declining cases on a week-to-week basis.

On Tuesday, India registered 55,342 new cases, its lowest single-day tally since mid-August.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— China says it has carried out more than 4.2 million tests in the northern port city of Qingdao, with no new cases of the coronavirus among the almost 2 million results received. The city has reported a total of 12 cases, six with symptoms and six without, since the new outbreak was first spotted over the weekend at a hospital. China on Wednesday reported 27 new cases, including 13 of local transmission and 14 brought from outside the country. The local cases included seven that had been shifted to confirmed

from asymptomatic. It wasn't immediately clear whether any of those involved cases reported in Qingdao, China has reported a total of 4,634 deaths among 85,611 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

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

## Racial justice movement a factor for 5 state ballot measures

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

The Black Lives Matter movement isn't named in any of the 120 statewide ballot measures up for a vote on Nov. 3. But this year's nationwide protests over police brutality and racial injustice are major factors in the campaigns in several states for measures with distinctive racial themes.

In California, voters will decide whether to allow affirmative action in public hiring, contracting and college admissions — 24 years after Californians approved an initiative outlawing programs that give preference based on race and gender.

Elsewhere, the topics include a replacement for Mississippi's Confederate-themed state flag, a proposed change in Rhode Island's official name to remove the word "plantations," and efforts in Nebraska and Utah to strip language from the state constitutions providing an exemption to the ban on slavery.

In California, key supporters of the new affirmative-action measure — Proposition 16 — said they weren't sure they could get the needed two-thirds support in both legislative chambers to move forward. That changed, they said, amid the nationwide outcry over the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police in May.

"Before his death, it was touch and go," said Black businessman and civil rights activist Walter Wilson. "Now there's been a sea change. ...Social justice and racial reform are on the ballot."

Ward Connerly, a Black businessman and former University of California regent who pushed for the 1996 ban, leads the campaign against Prop 16. He acknowledges that the Black Lives Matter movement has energized his opponents.

"It may give them impetus but that doesn't make it right," Connerly said. "The response should be looking at law enforcement and police tactics — it doesn't justify discrimination."

In Mississippi, where legislators voted in June to retire the last state flag in the U.S. bearing the Confederate battle emblem, voters will decide whether to accept a new flag with a magnolia design. If they vote "No," another new design will be proposed — and there would be a chance for supporters of the Confederate-themed flag to seek its reinstatement via a ballot measure next year.

In Rhode Island, whose official name is "Rhode Island and Providence Plantations," voters will have an opportunity to eliminate the last three words. The measure's proponents say the word "plantations" evokes the grim legacy of slavery, even though that wasn't the connotation when the full name was adopted in 1636.

Near-identical measures in Nebraska and Utah also deal with wording — they propose eliminating passages in the state constitutions, dating from the 19th century, that allow slavery as punishment for a crime. In neither of those states is there organized opposition to the measures, which advanced through the legislatures on unanimous votes.

In Mississippi and Rhode Island, Black supporters of the ballot measures hope this year's nationwide spotlight on racial injustice will bring a different outcome than when similar proposals were on the ballot previously.

In Mississippi, 64% of voters in a 2001 referendum opted to keep the Confederate-themed flag.

This time, there was overwhelming support for a new flag among legislators and government leaders. They faced intense pressure from business, religious, education and sports groups amid widespread protests against Confederate symbols.

Not all Mississippians are on board. Hundreds of people attended a Statehouse rally in August organized by Let Mississippi Vote, the group hoping to have a measure on the 2021 ballot that would offer a chance to reinstate the Confederate-themed flag.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 47 of 82

"In my mind, it is not about a flag at all — this is about the people having a voice," said state Sen. Chris McDaniel, a leader of the campaign. "Ultimately we will be pleased with whatever the people decide."

Some Black residents may vote against the proposed new magnolia flag for a different reason, said Marquise Hunt, a senior at Tougaloo College and former president of the Mississippi NAACP's Youth & College Division.

As mandated by the Legislature, the proposed new flag bears the words "In God We Trust."

"There are a lot of Black people asking, 'Is that a God of continued white supremacy?'" said Hunt, 22. "I think we can do better than this."

In Rhode Island, which was a major player in the global slave trade during colonial times, a proposal to delete "Providence Plantations" from the state's name was soundly defeated in 2010.

Supporters of the change believe they have a better chance of prevailing this time, in part because of the momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement and other campaigns for racial justice.

"I think this time people will say 'Yes,'" said Ray Rickman, a Black civic leader and former deputy secretary of state. "It will be about white folks feeling good about themselves."

"I wish it were something bigger and better — like getting the first Black justice on the state Supreme Court," he said. "But this would be a start. It's an easy, symbolic gesture."

In Nebraska, state Sen. Justin Wayne proposed the amendment to strip the slavery provision from the state constitution back in January 2019 — 16 months before George Floyd's death. But Wayne said this year's dramatic race-related events made it all the more important that Nebraska address racist aspects of its past.

He noted that Nebraska's efforts to join the union in 1866 were complicated by its unsuccessful efforts to limit voting rights to white men only.

"With all that we've seen going on with race this year, it's critical that we remove the legacy and the tentacles of slavery from our founding documents," Wayne said.

The provision allowing slavery as punishment for a crime hasn't been used in many decades; it was used long ago to force former slaves back into unpaid labor for private parties.

In Utah, the slavery measure's lead sponsor was Rep. Sandra Hollins, the only Black person now serving in the Legislature. There was little debate on the measure itself, but Hollins hopes national developments will prompt her colleagues to address issues of racism and police reform.

"It's a conversation you can no longer avoid," she said.

## **Pandemic leaves American Samoa residents stranded, homesick**

By FILI SAGAPOLUTELE and JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

PAGO PAGO, American Samoa (AP) — Makerita Iosefo Va'a hasn't been home for nearly eight months — the longest she's ever been away from American Samoa.

She longs for the breezes that cool island humidity and the ocean sounds and smells that permeate her home in the village of Tula. She also misses the food that's impossible to recreate in Tracy, California, where the coronavirus pandemic has left her and her husband stranded.

"Every time I talk about it, I just cry," she said.

Va'a left the U.S. territory in the Pacific in February with her husband for medical treatment. They planned to fly home in March from San Francisco but decided to postpone after hearing a security worker at the airport had contracted the virus.

Since then, they haven't been able to leave because American Samoa Gov. Lolo Matalasi Moliga closed the territory on March 13 to protect those on the islands from COVID-19 — and it hasn't reported any cases.

In July, after the order was extended, the Va'as stopped bothering to make travel plans and are awaiting word from government officials about when they can come home.

"The interests of the 60,000 residents on-island and protecting their lives outweighs the interest of the 600 or more residents stranded in the United States," said Iulogologo Joseph Pereira, chairman of the territorial government COVID-19 task force. "As the governor has continuously pointed out, more health-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 48 of 82

care facilities are available in Hawaii and mainland states that they can access if they contract the virus.”

Some people from American Samoa were stranded in the midst of family visits or business travel. A Facebook page started by Va’a and others to share information has turned into a support system for those who long to go back to American Samoa, said Kueni Aumoeualogo-Hisatake. She went to Honolulu with her husband for their bi-annual medical checkups on the last flight out of the territory on March 26 — not anticipating they would not be able to return.

Aumoeualogo-Hisatake said the situation makes her “feel abandoned and neglected.”

Other people can’t leave American Samoa.

Epifania Rapozo lives in Washington state and returned to the territory in February for the first time in 20 years to visit her ailing grandfather, who later died. Unable to return to the U.S., Rapozo’s 10-year-old daughter has been taking online classes and her 6-year-old son is enrolled in a local school.

“I am grateful that we are COVID-free but also quite disappointed on how the government is handling the issue,” Rapozo said. “There is absolutely no excuse as to why there hasn’t been any action implemented to repatriate not only us U.S. citizens but our own people.”

Moliga is reviewing a petition by stranded residents demanding repatriation. But amid a spike in coronavirus cases in Hawaii, he has asked Hawaiian Airlines — the only carrier with regularly scheduled service between Honolulu and Pago Pago — to suspend flights through November.

The territory is controlling its ports by quarantining crew members on boats, and essential workers arriving from the U.S. are tested for the virus.

Officials did arrange a free charter flight in July to take 150 Medicaid patients and support staff to the United States for medical treatment. There were enough extra seats to accommodate 45 students heading to the U.S. for college and 79 people who had been stranded on the island since March.

The nonmedical passengers paid \$884 for their one-way ticket, a price that prevented Rapozo from taking the flight. There were no passengers on the charter’s return flight to Pago Pago.

“In the beginning, everybody was happy that our government closed the borders, you know, for safety,” Aumoeualogo-Hisatake said. “But now, as time has accumulated, there’s more understanding about the virus and the preventive measures and all that stuff and how to deal with it.”

She and others say they don’t want American Samoa to open its borders, just bring them home safely.

As they wait, the Va’as are living with relatives but fear they have overstayed their welcome and are making plans to move in with other family in Seattle.

They consider themselves lucky among the stranded. Makerita Iosefo Va’a is a manager at American Samoa’s Medicaid office and her husband Shaun Va’a is a member of the territory’s House of Representatives. While away, they’re able to work remotely without losing income and they have rented a car so they can get out of their family’s hair once in awhile.

“We have each other. We don’t have children,” she said. “There are people I know who have lost their jobs.”

“It’s nice here, but home is home,” she added, pointing out that California, with its dry heat and isolation is much different than American Samoa. “Here, we don’t really know people, versus back home you have a village. ... We have family here, but with COVID, you can’t really go visit them.”

Back home, not everyone wears a mask and social distancing is still catching on, especially in tight-knit Samoan cultures. Many people wonder what will happen when American Samoa opens its borders.

Ilalio Polevia and his 16-year-old daughter, Rita, were essentially homeless in Honolulu, when a group that helps Hawaii visitors put them up in a hotel. They had left American Samoa in November so she could go to high school in Washington state. He stayed and got a job at a bagged salad company.

When the pandemic was declared in March, they decided it was time to go home and left Tacoma for Honolulu, but their flight to Pago Pago had been canceled.

“I’m surprised there’s people here in Hawaii that care about us,” Polevia said.

After the father and daughter stayed at three different hotels, the visitors group connected them with a Samoan church and they have been living at the reverend’s house for the past month.



Rita enrolled at Waipahu High School and is taking classes online. They are living off church donations and hope they can be home by Christmas.

Kelleher reported from Honolulu.

## Barrett bats away tough Democratic confirmation probing

By LISA MASCARO, MARK SHERMAN and LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett batted away Democrats' skeptical questions Tuesday on abortion, health care and a possible disputed-election fight over transferring presidential power, insisting in a long and lively confirmation hearing she would bring no personal agenda to the court but decide cases "as they come."

The 48-year-old appellate court judge declared her conservative views with often colloquial language, but refused many specifics. She declined to say whether she would recuse herself from any election-related cases involving President Donald Trump, who nominated her to fill the seat of the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and is pressing to have her confirmed before the the Nov. 3 election.

"Judges can't just wake up one day and say I have an agenda — I like guns, I hate guns, I like abortion, I hate abortion — and walk in like a royal queen and impose their will on the world," Barrett told the Senate Judiciary Committee during its second day of hearings.

"It's not the law of Amy," she said. "It's the law of the American people."

Barrett returned to a Capitol Hill mostly shut down by COVID-19 protocols, the mood quickly shifting to a more confrontational tone from opening day. She was grilled by Democrats strongly opposed to Trump's nominee yet unable to stop her. Excited by the prospect of a judge aligned with the late Antonin Scalia, Trump's Republican allies are rushing ahead to install a 6-3 conservative court majority for years to come.

The president seemed pleased with her performance. "I think Amy's doing incredibly well," he said at the White House departing for a campaign rally.

Trump has said he wants a justice seated for any disputes arising from his heated election with Democrat Joe Biden, but Barrett testified she has not spoken to Trump or his team about election cases. Pressed by panel Democrats, she skipped past questions about ensuring the date of the election or preventing voter intimidation, both set in federal law, and the peaceful transfer of presidential power. She declined to commit to recusing herself from any post-election cases without first consulting the other justices.

"I can't offer an opinion on recusal without short-circuiting that entire process," she said.

A frustrated Sen. Dianne Feinstein, the top Democrat on the panel, all but implored the nominee to be more specific about how she would handle landmark abortion cases, including *Roe v. Wade* and the follow-up Pennsylvania case *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which confirmed it in large part.

"It's distressing not to get a good answer," Feinstein told the judge.

Barrett was unmoved. "I don't have an agenda to try to overrule *Casey*," she said. "I have an agenda to stick to the rule of law and decide cases as they come."

She later declined to characterize the *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion as a "super-precedent" that must not be overturned.

Democrats had no such reticence.

"Let's not make any mistake about it," said California Sen. Kamala Harris, the Democratic vice presidential nominee, appearing remotely due to COVID concerns as the hearing pushed into the evening.

Allowing Trump to fill the seat with Barrett "poses a threat to safe and legal abortion in our country," Harris said.

Democrats also criticized GOP priorities in forcing the Senate action as the country suffers from the pandemic and Congress squabbles over approving additional economic aid.

The committee chairman, Republican Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, opened the nearly 12-hour session under coronavirus restrictions that kept it off limits to in-person attendance by members of the public.

Republicans have been focused on defending Barrett and her Catholic faith against possible criticism

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 50 of 82

concerning issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage, and Graham asked if she would be able to shelve her personal beliefs to adhere to law.

"I have done that," she said. "I will do that still."

He said, "I will do everything I can to make sure that you have a seat at the table. And that table is the Supreme Court."

The Senate, led by Trump's Republican allies, is pushing Barrett's nomination to a quick vote before Nov. 3, and ahead of the latest challenge to the "Obamacare" Affordable Care Act, which the Supreme Court is to hear a week after the election. Democrats warn that she would be a vote to undo the law and strip health coverage from millions of Americans.

"I'm not hostile to the ACA," Barrett told the senators. She distanced herself from her past writings perceived as critical of the Obama-era health care law, saying those pieces were not addressing specific aspects of the law as she would if confirmed to the court. "I'm not here on a mission to destroy the Affordable Care Act."

She appeared stumped when Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., tried to put her on the spot about several details of the health care law's effects. She could not recite specifics, including that 23 million people are covered by the law or that more than 2 million young people are on their parents' health insurance.

The Indiana judge, accompanied by her family, described herself as taking a conservative, originalist approach to the Constitution. A former law professor, she told the senators that while she admires Scalia, her conservative mentor for whom she once clerked, she would bring her own approach.

"You would not be getting Justice Scalia, you would be getting Justice Barrett," she declared.

Senators probed her views on gun ownership, gay marriage and racial equity, at one point drawing an emotional response from the mother of seven, whose children include two adopted from Haiti, as she described watching the video of the death of George Floyd at the hands of police.

"Racism persists," she said, adding that Floyd's death had a "very personal" effect on her family and that she and her children wept over it. But she told Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., that "making broader diagnoses about the problem of racism is kind of beyond what I'm capable of doing as a judge."

Republicans were thrilled when she held up a blank notebook, apparently showing she had been fielding questions without aid.

Overall, Barrett's conservative views are at odds with the late Ginsburg, the liberal icon.

While Ginsburg testified at her 1993 confirmation hearing that the decision to have a child is one a woman "must make for herself," Barrett says as a judge she must reserve opinions, despite having made her anti-abortion views known before joining the bench.

"You would be the polar opposite of Justice Ginsburg," said Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn.

Barring a dramatic development, Republicans appear to have the votes to confirm Barrett to a lifetime seat on the Supreme Court, and they spent their time portraying her as a thoughtful judge with impeccable credentials. She would be Trump's third justice.

Underscoring the Republicans' confidence, Graham set an initial committee vote on the nomination for Thursday, the last day of hearings, which would allow final approval by the full Senate by the end of the month.

Protesters rallied outside the Senate building, unable to come inside the hearing room.

Other issues aside, Democrats are outraged that Republicans are moving so quickly, having refused to consider President Barack Obama's nominee after Scalia's death in February 2016, well before that year's election.

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Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Matthew Daly and Jessica Gresko in Washington, and Elana Schor in New York contributed to this report.

## Trump, Biden zero in on swing states that are key to victory

By WILL WEISSERT, JONATHAN LEMIRE, KEVIN FREKING and BILL BARROW Associated Press

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 51 of 82

JOHNSTOWN, Pa. (AP) — With Election Day just three weeks away, President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden concentrated Tuesday on battleground states both see as critical to clinching an Electoral College victory, tailoring their travel to best motivate voters who could cast potentially decisive ballots.

Biden went to Florida to court seniors, looking to deliver a knockout blow in a state Trump needs to win while trying to woo a group whose support for the president has slipped. And Trump visited Pennsylvania, arguably the most important state on the electoral map, unleashing fierce attacks on Biden's fitness for office in his opponent's backyard.

"He's shot, folks. I hate to tell you, he's shot," Trump told a big rally crowd in Johnstown, saying there was extra pressure on him to win because Biden was the worst presidential candidate of all time. "Can you imagine if you lose to a guy like this? It's unbelievable."

In his second rally since contracting the coronavirus, Trump spoke for more than an hour to a crowd of thousands packed in tightly and mostly maskless. Like the night before in Florida, Trump seemed healthy, and his rhetoric on the pandemic — including the dubious claim that it was mostly a thing of the past — changed little despite his own illness, except for his threat to kiss audience members to prove his immunity.

Trump made a local pitch, hammering home the claim that a Democratic administration could limit fracking in areas where the economy is heavily dependent on energy, despite Biden's proposal to only bar new leases on federal land, a fraction of U.S. fracking operations. And Trump, touting his elimination of a federal rule that would have brought more low-income housing to the suburbs, zeroed in on groups whose support he has struggled to retain, including female voters turned off by his rhetoric.

"So I ask you to do me a favor. Suburban women: Will you please like me? Please. Please. I saved your damn neighborhood, OK?" Trump said. "The other thing: I don't have that much time to be that nice. You know, I can do it, but I gotta go quickly."

Biden spent the day in Florida, his third visit to the state in a month, looking to expand on his inroads with older voters. To Trump, "you're expendable, you're forgettable, you're virtually nobody," Biden said at a senior center in Pembroke Pines, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from Fort Lauderdale.

The "only senior Donald Trump seems to care about" is himself, Biden added.

After frequently criticizing Trump for not doing enough to promote mask wearing to prevent the spread of the virus, Biden was wearing two masks, an N-95 underneath a blue surgical mask, as he deplaned in Florida. Later in the day, he switched to his normal mode of donning just one.

Introducing Biden in Pembroke Pines, Democratic Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz noted that "neither of these men will walk into the White House without the blessing of Florida seniors."

"Much is made of the rise of the youth vote, and thank God for it," the Florida congresswoman said. "But it's residents 65 or older who still swing elections in the Sunshine State."

Biden also held a drive-in rally designed to promote voter mobilization in the heavily African American community of Miramar. His swing coincided with a \$500,000 donation from billionaire former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg to increase Democratic turnout in Miami-Dade County.

"I'm running as a proud Democrat, but I will govern as an American president," Biden said to supporters blaring their horns as they listened from cars. "I'll work as hard for those who vote against me as those who vote for me."

Back in Washington, Tuesday marked a second day of Senate hearings to confirm Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court. Trump and top Republicans see a swift confirmation as a chance to energize conservatives. Trump mentioned those proceedings as he left the White House, saying, "Amy was doing incredibly well."

Biden's campaign believes it can win the White House without Florida's 29 electoral votes, but it wants to lock up the state to pad a margin of victory over Trump, who has questioned the legitimacy of an election where many people will cast mail-in ballots during the pandemic. Biden has vowed to win Pennsylvania, but if he falls short, his path to victory narrows substantially.

With 20 electoral votes, Pennsylvania is anchored by Philadelphia to the east, Pittsburgh to the west. But

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 52 of 82

the rest of the state is largely rural, comprised of small cities and towns where Trump ran up the score four years ago. He will need to again, in even greater numbers, as his prospects have slipped since 2016 in places like vote-rich suburban Philadelphia, where he underperformed by past Republican measures.

Trump's rally was at the airport in Johnstown in Cambria County, a historically coal and steel area that narrowly backed Democrat Barack Obama in 2008. But it has trended Republican for the past three decades and, in the 2016 election, Trump scored a 37 percentage-point victory. The area is also substantially whiter and has lower median incomes and lower rates of college-degree attainment than the rest of Pennsylvania.

Biden, who was born 220 miles (350 kilometers) away in Scranton, visited Johnstown late last month. The former vice president has tried to cast himself as a champion of working-class voters while accusing Trump of focusing instead on stock market returns and Park Avenue values.

Despite the pandemic, Trump's campaign has prioritized in-person events and aggressive door-knocking as it tries to turn out new and low-propensity voters, including more members of the white working class who may have backed Democrats in the past.

Republicans point to an aging population and a shrinking voter-registration edge for Democrats, down 20% from 2016's election to 717,000, according to the latest Pennsylvania data.

Weissert reported from Washington; Lemire from New York; Barrow from Pembroke Pines, Fla. Associated Press writers Thomas Beaumont in Des Moines, Iowa, and Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pa., contributed to this report.

## Cut cable shuts down Virginia voter portal; lawsuit filed

By BEN FINLEY, ALAN SUDERMAN and DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — An accidentally severed fiber optic cable that shut down Virginia's online voter registration system for several hours Tuesday, the last day to register before the November general election, has prompted a lawsuit from a civil rights organization.

The Virginia Department of Elections said in a statement on Twitter that a "fiber cut" affected connectivity for multiple agencies, including the department's citizen portal and registrar's offices. The cable was inadvertently cut during a Chesterfield County roadside utilities project, according to the state's information technology agency.

Six hours later, the Department of Elections issued a statement saying the portal was back online. But the fallout led to concerns that voters were being disenfranchised at a crucial moment.

Voting advocates said the accident couldn't have come at a worse time and lambasted state officials for the technological failure. The day of the deadline is when many Virginians decide to register, particularly after being reminded on social media and in the news.

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law filed a lawsuit Tuesday night saying voter registration must be extended for 48 hours and that the state should make "a significant effort" to tell the public about the change. Named as defendants in the lawsuit are the Virginia Department of Elections; the Virginia State Board of Elections; elections board chairman Robert H. Brink and vice chairman John O'Bannon; Christopher Piper, commissioner of the Department of Elections; and Jamilah D. Lecruise, secretary of the board of elections.

"Absent relief, voters who attempted to register to vote through the online portal on October 13, 2020, but were unable through no fault of their own, will be absolutely disenfranchised in the upcoming elections," the lawsuit said.

If the deadline isn't extended, the lawsuit said, "Plaintiffs themselves will be prevented from helping citizens register to vote through the online voter registration system, frustrating their core mission and activities in advancing that mission, and thereby disenfranchising those citizens in the coming general election."

Kristen Clarke, president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, said in a news release that Virginia "failed the public and it must grant a significant extension to ensure all Virginians are given an equal opportunity to exercise their fundamental right to vote."

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 53 of 82

Democratic members of Virginia's congressional delegation had called for a 72-hour extension.

U.S. Reps. Don Beyer, Gerry Connolly and Jennifer Wexton said in a statement that they "hope the courts will swiftly grant such an extension" and account for the time it will take to inform the public of a new deadline.

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam said at a press conference that he supports extending the deadline. But he said it appears that only the courts have the ability to change it.

Northam, a Democrat, said the state did not have a backup plan for this particular cable and the episode shows the need for the state to continue its efforts at creating a secure network.

"Obviously, we still have a lot of work to do," Northam said.

Secretary of Administration Keyanna Conner said the cut occurred on a 10-gigabit optical fiber circuit that was installed this spring to help the state handle increased web demand during the coronavirus. She said backup circuits aren't as large as the main circuit, but plans are in place to upgrade them.

Virginia, which has 13 electoral votes, is not considered a marquee battleground state in the presidential race by political observers. But three congressional races are considered highly competitive, and their outcomes could affect the makeup of the U.S. House.

Democratic freshmen Reps. Abigail Spanberger and Elaine Luria are facing tough challenges in the 7th District and 2nd District, respectively, and the 5th District seat is open. The races in the 2nd and 5th districts are considered a "toss up" by the Cook Political Report. Spanberger's seat is listed as leaning Democratic.

While the site was down, people who wanted to register could still fill out applications in person. They could also mail paper copies, as long as they are postmarked Tuesday, said Vicki Lewis, the voter registrar for the city of Newport News. People who wanted to vote early were given provisional ballots, which will be counted the day after this year's Nov. 3 election.

This isn't the first time technical problems affected Virginians' ability to register to vote under a looming deadline.

In 2016, an unknown number of people were not able to register because of unprecedented demand, in part because of social media postings reminding people of the registration deadline that year.

A voter advocacy group, the New Virginia Majority Education Fund, sued for an extension and a federal judge granted a brief one to make up for the computer glitches that occurred.

Finley reported from Norfolk.

This story has been corrected to show it was a 10-gigabit cable, not 10-gigabyte.

## Agent: Michigan, Virginia governors mentioned in kidnap plot

By DAVID EGGERT and KATHLEEN FOODY and JOHN FLESHER Associated Press

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — Members of anti-government paramilitary groups implicated in an alleged plot to kidnap Michigan's governor ahead of the November election because of her measures to slow the coronavirus also discussed abducting Virginia's governor, an FBI agent testified Tuesday.

The disclosure came during a federal court hearing in Grand Rapids, where agent Richard Trask revealed new details about investigators' use of confidential informants, undercover agents and encrypted communication to thwart the purported scheme to abduct Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

A judge ordered three of six men charged in the case held without bond until trial, delaying rulings on two defendants. Another was ordered returned to Michigan from Delaware.

"They discussed possible targets, taking a sitting governor, specifically issues with the governor of Michigan and Virginia based on the lockdown orders" they had issued to deal with the pandemic, Trask said, referring to a June 6 meeting in Dublin, Ohio, attended by roughly 15 members of anti-government groups from "four or five states." A criminal complaint said at least two of the defendants were among them.

It wasn't immediately clear if talk of targeting Virginia's Democratic governor, Ralph Northam, continued beyond the meeting. Nothing from the complaint or Trask's testimony indicated that anyone had been

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 54 of 82

charged with plotting against Northam.

But the mention of another governor who, like Whitmer, has drawn attacks from President Donald Trump — and the alleged intent to carry out the kidnapping shortly before the bitterly divisive U.S. election — escalated political tension surrounding the case. Trump urged supporters to “LIBERATE” Michigan, Virginia and Minnesota in a series of tweets in April, encouraging protesters who turned up at state Capitols to oppose restrictions aimed at minimizing the spread of the virus.

Trump falsely claimed in a recent interview on Fox News that Northam, a supporter of abortion rights, had “executed a baby.”

The president “regularly encourages violence against those who disagree with him,” Northam’s spokeswoman, Alena Yarmosky, said in a statement Tuesday. “The rhetoric coming out of this White House has serious and potentially deadly consequences. It must stop.”

Whitmer and others have similarly accused Trump of emboldening extremists.

Following the arrests last week, the White House said the president has condemned hate, and Trump tweeted: “I do not tolerate ANY extreme violence.”

Northam said during a news conference he and his family felt safe with security Virginia’s state police provide, and that he had been threatened before. His protection was tightened this year after he signed gun control legislation.

“I’m continuing my work for the commonwealth as I would any other day,” he said.

Yarmosky said the FBI had alerted key members of Northam’s security team during the investigation. But in keeping with security protocols for highly classified information, neither the governor nor members of his staff were informed.

During the hearing in Grand Rapids, Magistrate Judge Sally Berens ordered Kaleb Franks, Daniel Harris and Brandon Caserta held without bond. She said she would rule later on Adam Fox and Ty Garbin. All five are from Michigan.

The sixth defendant, Delaware resident Barry Croft, was ordered transferred to Michigan during a separate proceeding.

Trask, the FBI agent, testified that authorities learned of the June meeting in Ohio while investigating various anti-government groups. Authorities have said the men wanted to retaliate against Whitmer because of what they considered her “uncontrolled power” during the coronavirus outbreak.

Trask said Fox, whom investigators describe as a ringleader and was the only defendant without a mask at the hearing, had said during a post-arrest interview he’d considered taking Whitmer from her vacation home out onto Lake Michigan and stranding her there on a disabled boat.

According to the complaint, Fox also spoke of taking her to “a secure location in Wisconsin for ‘trial.’”

Some defendants conducted surveillance of her northern Michigan house in August and September, according to the complaint. Authorities said four of the men had planned to meet last week to pay for explosives and exchange tactical gear.

Several defense attorneys suggested during cross-examination that their clients were “big talkers” who didn’t intend to follow through with action.

When investigating paramilitary-type groups, “you find a lot of people who talk about things, but they’re never a threat to do anything. It’s fairly common in these groups?” Scott Graham, attorney for Franks, asked Trask. “Big talk between crackpots — you’ve seen that, haven’t you? People who talk a lot, brashly, boldly, but are never going to do anything about that talk.”

Graham described Franks as a “follower, not a leader” and argued he shouldn’t be detained before trial. He said Franks was a drug addict but had turned his life around and posed no flight risk.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Nils Kessler countered that Franks should not be released. “There’s a serious public safety risk,” he said, although not disputing that Franks was more of a follower in the matter.

The judge also acknowledged some of the defendants did not have leadership roles, but said their participation in repeated discussions about kidnapping Whitmer and in surveillance of the governor’s home indicated they should remain locked up until trial.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 55 of 82

"It is the plot along the way that is clearly very dangerous," Berens said. "This is a very, very serious crime."

The men could get up to life in prison if convicted.

"Anyone who is facing a charge like this would be very concerned," Gary Springstead, an attorney for Garbin, told reporters outside the courthouse. "Literally your life and liberty are on the line."

During the brief hearing in Wilmington, Delaware, Croft waived his right to a detention hearing there but reserved his right to one in Michigan.

Whitmer, who was considered as Joe Biden's running mate and is nearly halfway through a four-year term, has been widely praised for her response to the virus outbreak but also criticized by Republican lawmakers and people in conservative areas of Michigan. The state Capitol has been the site of many rallies, some with gun-toting protesters demanding her ouster.

Michigan, and particularly the Detroit area, were hit hard early during the pandemic, leading Whitmer to tightly restrict personal movement and the economy. Many of the limits have been lifted since spring.

Seven other men linked to a paramilitary group called the Wolverine Watchmen were charged in state court with allegedly seeking to storm the Michigan Capitol and providing material support for terrorist acts by seeking a "civil war."

The investigation is ongoing.

Foody reported from Chicago, and John Flesher reported from Traverse City. Associated Press writer Alan Suderman in Richmond, Virginia, also contributed to this report.

## Despite virus fears, Texas sends most voters to the polls

By ACACIA CORONADO Report for America/Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Early voting began Tuesday with long lines in Texas, one of the few places in the U.S. not allowing widespread mail balloting during the pandemic, and Jill Biden rallied supporters across the red state that Democrats are no longer writing off.

Texas is one of just five states that did not dramatically expand mail-in voting this year because of COVID-19. And hours before polls opened, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott's order limiting counties to one mail ballot drop-off box was upheld by a federal appeals court, stopping dozens of shuttered sites around Texas from reopening.

Both the virus and Texas' high stakes in November were front-of-mind in Jill Biden's first stop, the border city of El Paso, where Abbott has deployed more nurses and medical equipment as cases and hospitalizations climb. Campaigning for her husband, former Vice President Joe Biden, she was due to end her 800-mile (1,300-kilometer) swing across Texas in Houston, with a stop in Dallas in between.

Regina Cuchapin, a registered Democrat and Houston resident, said she still didn't feel safe eating in restaurants because of the coronavirus but that she was willing to be among crowds to exercise her right to vote.

"I think that now that people know how serious it is and what precautions to take, I think those who are ready to come out are taking those precautions," said Cuchapin, a healthcare worker.

By Tuesday afternoon, Houston election officials reported more than 100,000 votes had been cast in Harris County, a record turnout for a single day of early voting, which continues through Oct. 30.

Long lines were common at polling sites across Texas, as were masks, although voters are not required to wear them inside polling places. In suburban Houston's Fort Bend County, technical problems kept machines offline for more than an hour as hundreds of people waited to vote. The county's top elected official said he would authorize an investigation.

"Those who are responsible will be held accountable," said Fort Bend County Judge KP George.

Much is on the line in America's largest red state, which has competitive congressional and state legislative races and is a potential presidential battleground. And local election authorities have been pulling out all the stops to ensure the state's 16 million registered voters can safely cast their ballots in person.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 56 of 82

In Harris County — which includes Houston and is home to more than 2.4 million voters — there will be triple the number of polling places compared to previous elections. Voters will be able to choose between standing in socially distant lines to vote in person at a polling place, or a drive-thru option that resembles pulling up to order at a fast-food restaurant. Some polling places will stay open later than usual on select nights, and on Oct. 29, seven locations will be open for 24 hours.

To staff the more than 100 voting locations, Harris County officials have doubled the number of paid election workers to 11,000. Bilingual poll workers will be available at each location, and high school students will be on hand as technology aides.

Other large counties are taking similar measures. Travis County, which includes the state capital of Austin, will also offer extended hours at select locations during early voting. Dallas County positioned clear barriers between election workers and voters, and poll workers sanitized any surfaces that were touched and provided finger coverings or a popsicle stick to be used as a stylus on voting machines. El Paso County has an app to inform voters about voting locations and wait times.

Getting to this point in Texas — which has some of the strictest voting laws in the country — has been fraught with legal battles. Abbott expanded the amount of time for early voting by six days but also drew backlash and lawsuits from Democrats and voting rights groups over his order to limit places where voters can hand-deliver ballots. Abbott has said without evidence that the move would “help stop attempts at illegal voting.”

Texas Republicans have echoed President Donald Trump’s rhetoric that mail-in voting is ripe for fraud, though proof is thin. Harris County, which is run by Democrats, tried to send applications for mail ballots to all of its registered voters, but Abbott sued and the Texas Supreme Court sided with the governor.

“It is more likely that you will get struck by lightning than experience voter fraud,” Harris County Clerk Chris Hollins said during a tour of the Houston area’s temporary voting headquarters. To drive home his point, he pointed to a metal cage under 24-hour law enforcement surveillance where dropped-off and mailed-in ballots are kept secure until Election Day.

Upping the ante is the chance to flip the Republican-controlled Texas State House of Representatives. Democrats are just nine seats away from seizing control for the first time in two decades. Several longtime Republican stronghold districts in the Houston area are in play after close calls in 2018.

Mary Sullivan Casas, 51, stood in line for more than two hours Tuesday to vote at a Methodist church in Westlake, near Austin. She said the state’s efforts to limit mail-in voting amounted to voter suppression, but given the limited options, in-person voting was worth the risk.

“It is our privilege as citizens of the United States,” she said. “We are hoping for a blue wave. If people get out early enough and vote in force, then the message is clear enough.”

The same factor drove Michael Parga, a Republican, to vote early in the Houston suburb of Katy. He said election security is more important than the virus.

“What got me motivated was that they said this was a battleground state, and I thought that was impossible,” said Parga, 42.

“This state will stay Republican,” he insisted.

Estela Cisneros, 33, from Houston, said COVID-19 concerns during the election are serious, especially for Black and minority communities hit hardest by the pandemic. But this election is too important to not vote.

“There is just so much at stake,” Cisneros said. “All I can really tell people is get out there. I was born here and through my vote I am going to give a voice to the people who look like me.”

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AP video journalist John L. Mone in Katy, Texas, and AP writer Paul J. Weber in Austin contributed to this story.

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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.



## 'Two and a Half Men' star Conchata Ferrell dies at 77

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Conchata Ferrell, who became known for her role as Berta the housekeeper on TV's "Two and a Half Men" after a long career as a character actor on stage and in movies, including "Mystic Pizza" and "Network," has died. She was 77.

Ferrell died Monday at Sherman Oaks Hospital in Los Angeles following cardiac arrest, according to publicist Cynthia Snyder.

Ferrell soldiered through more than a decade on "Two and a Half Men," playing opposite Charlie Sheen and Jon Cryer until Sheen was fired from the sitcom for erratic behavior that included publicly insulting producer Chuck Lorre.

The series, which debuted in 2003 on CBS, continued on the network with new star Ashton Kutcher until 2015. Ferrell was on board for the full run.

She was remembered by Cryer for the "joy she brought so many."

"Berta's gruff exterior was an invention of the writers. Chatty's warmth and vulnerability were her real strengths," he posted on Twitter.

In a tweet, Sheen described Ferrell as "an absolute sweetheart, a consummate pro, a genuine friend," and called her loss painful.

Ferrell, a native of Charleston, West Virginia, and graduate of Marshall University, gained recognition and several theater awards in 1974 for her role in "The Sea Horse." Her work in Lanford Wilson's "Hot L Baltimore" led to a starring role in the Norman Lear sitcom of the same name.

She received two Emmy supporting actress Emmy nominations for "Two and a Half Men," and a nod for her role as Susan Bloom on "L.A. Law."

Ferrell's other credits include the films "Heartland," "True Romance" and "Erin Brockovich," while her TV appearances came on "Good Times," "ER," "Grace and Frankie" and "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," among other series.

She is survived by her husband, Arnie Anderson, and her daughter, Samantha.

## Takeaways: Barrett is reticent as Dems focus on health care

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett faced her first day's worth of questions Tuesday from the Senate Judiciary Committee, and it was a calmer affair than other recent confirmation hearings that featured Democratic procedural delays and interruptions from protesters.

With public attendance limited by the coronavirus pandemic and Democrats staying focused on a health care message just three weeks ahead of the Nov. 3 presidential election, the back and forth was serious, disciplined and mostly uninterrupted — save a few technical glitches from those participating virtually.

But similar to past hearings, Barrett avoided taking positions on a variety of subjects and rulings, saying it would be inappropriate to do so.

Takeaways from day two of the confirmation hearing:

### DEMURRING ON HER VIEWS

Barrett repeatedly declined to give her personal views, or to preview how she might rule, on key issues that could become before the court. Like other Supreme Court nominees before her, she said she was prohibited from expressing those opinions by the "canons of judicial conduct."

Among the issues she declined to weigh in on was the upcoming election. Barrett said she could not give an opinion on whether she would recuse herself from any election-related litigation involving President Donald Trump, who said as he nominated her that he wanted the full nine justices in place ahead of any possible election decisions. Barrett also said she could not answer whether Trump has the power to delay the general election, an idea the president floated earlier this year.

Trump does not have the authority to unilaterally change the date of the election — Article II of the

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 58 of 82

Constitution gives Congress that power.

The Indiana judge, a faithful Catholic, also declined to say whether she believes *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that established the right to abortion, should be struck down. She said she did not want to join the court with an "agenda" on the subject, only to "stick to the rule of law and decide cases as they come."

California Sen. Dianne Feinstein, the top Democrat on the panel, told Barrett that it was "distressing to not get a straight answer" to her question.

Even though other recent nominees have similarly declined to elaborate on their views, Barrett has publicly identified herself as an abortion opponent, signing at least three public letters and joining a Faculty for Life group at the University of Notre Dame.

Barrett also declined to give her personal views on the Supreme Court's decision to legalize gay marriage or whether the Affordable Care Act should be overturned, the subject of a November hearing.

## HER CATHOLIC BELIEFS

Barrett acknowledged her strong Catholic faith while also saying she will put her beliefs aside when ruling if she's confirmed. She said she has done that already in her current post as a federal appeals court judge.

In a series of questions from Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham, Barrett said her faith means a lot to her personally and that she has chosen to raise her children in the church.

Republicans have sought to use Barrett's faith to attack Democrats ahead of the presidential election. They point to Feinstein's questioning of Barrett at her 2017 confirmation hearing, when the senator told the then-law professor that she believed "the dogma lives loudly within you." Since Barrett was nominated to the Supreme Court, Republicans have mounted an all-out defense of her Catholicism and repeatedly said they expect Democrats to attack it.

Democrats say they have no interest in revisiting that issue during this confirmation process. None of them have yet asked about her faith, and most Democratic members of the committee have said they believe it's an inappropriate line of questioning.

## DEMOCRATS FOCUS ON "REAL PEOPLE"

Democrats appear to have settled, at least for now, on a different approach from the confirmation hearings for Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, when they used procedural tactics to disrupt and delay the process.

As with Kavanaugh, Democrats do not have enough votes to block Barrett's confirmation on their own. But they say they want to make their case to the American people ahead of the presidential election.

This time, Democrats have focused on the effects on "real people" if the Affordable Care Act is overturned by the high court. Using poster boards with pictures and telling stories of their constituents, they said they are trying to make the hearings more understandable to the general public by highlighting the benefits of the health care law, trying to portray Barrett as extreme and criticizing the rushed GOP process to confirm her before the election.

Graham acknowledged the different tone during Tuesday's session, noting that there were "a lot of good questions, good interchange, not one time has a senator and the judge talked over each other. I hope the American people understand that this is the way it should be."

## AN "EXCRUCIATING" PROCESS

Barrett said she accepted Trump's nomination because she is "committed to the rule of law" and the role of the Supreme Court. But she said the process has been difficult for her and her family.

She said she has been on a "media blackout for the sake of my mental health," though it's impossible to stay completely walled off.

"I don't think it's any secret to any of you or to the American people that this is a really difficult, some might say excruciating, process, and Jesse and I had a very brief amount of time to make a decision with momentous consequences for our family," she said, referring to her husband.

Barrett said they knew "that our lives would be combed over for any negative detail. We knew that our faith would be caricatured. We knew our family would be attacked. And so we had to decide whether those difficulties would be worth it."

She said she realized that it would be a difficult road for any nominee, and "if the difficulty is the only reason to say no, I should serve my country."

## SENATORS RETURN AFTER QUARANTINE

Republican Sens. Thom Tillis of North Carolina and Ted Cruz of Texas returned to the Senate on Tuesday after absences related to coronavirus. Tillis tested positive Oct. 2, and Cruz was in a self-imposed quarantine after contact with Republican Sen. Mike Lee of Utah, another committee member who tested positive earlier this month. Lee returned to the Senate on Monday.

At least two members of the committee appeared virtually — Democratic Sens. Patrick Leahy of Vermont and Kamala Harris of California, who is her party's vice presidential nominee. Both said they would not attend in person because other committee members had tested positive after attending a White House event.

"I've stayed away simply because I don't think it is safe for you or anybody else to be there," Leahy told Barrett after technical difficulties with the volume of his video feed.

Tillis disagreed, saying later in the hearing that he considers the Senate an essential business, and "I would encourage anybody who works in the Senate to come to work."

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaró, Alan Fram, Elana Schor, Jessica Gresko and Colleen Long contributed to this report.

## Apple unveils new iPhones for faster 5G wireless networks

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE and TALI ARBEL AP Technology Writers

Apple unveiled four new iPhones equipped with technology for use with faster new 5G wireless networks, hoping that demand for higher data speeds will spark demand for new phones.

That might not happen as quickly as Apple would like.

In a virtual presentation Tuesday, the company announced four 5G-enabled versions of the new iPhone 12 ranging in price from almost \$700 to roughly \$1,100. Apple also announced a new, less expensive version of its HomePod smart speaker.

Smartphone sales have been slowing for years as their technology has matured. That has meant far fewer gotta-have-it innovations that can drive demand and, at least until recently, increasingly pricey phones. Add to that pandemic-related economic crisis, and consumers have tended to eke as much life as possible out of their existing phones.

Apple, however, is clearly betting that 5G speeds could push many users off the fence. At its event, the company boasted about 5G capabilities and brought in Verizon CEO Hans Vestberg to champion the carrier's network.

5G is supposed to mean much faster speeds, making it quicker to download movies or games, for instance. But finding those speeds can be a challenge. While telecom operators have been rolling out 5G networks, significant boosts in speed are still uncommon in much of the world, including the U.S. So far, there are no popular new consumer applications that require 5G.

Updates in the new phones mostly amount to "incremental improvements" over predecessor iPhones, technology analyst Patrick Moorhead said, referring to 5G capabilities and camera upgrades on higher-end phones. But he suggested that if carriers build out their 5G networks fast enough, it could launch a "supercycle" in which large numbers of people switch to 5G phones.

That might be a big if. Mobile expert Carolina Milanesi of the firm Creative Strategies said economic pain caused by the global pandemic and accompanying job losses could easily restrain that buying impulse.

Apple's new models include the iPhone 12, which features a 6.1-inch display and starts at almost \$800, and the iPhone 12 Mini, with a 5.4-inch display at almost \$700. A higher-end iPhone 12 Pro with more powerful cameras will begin at roughly \$1,000; the 12 Pro Max, with a 6.7-inch display, will set buyers back at least \$1,100. Apple said the phones should be more durable.

In a move that may annoy some consumers, Apple will no longer include charging adapters with new phones. It says that will mean smaller, lighter boxes that are more environmentally friendly to ship. Apple, however, separately sells power adapters that cost about \$20 and \$50, depending on how fast they charge phones.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 60 of 82

The iPhone models unveiled Tuesday will launch at different times. The iPhone 12 and 12 Pro will be available starting Oct. 23; the Mini and the Pro Max will follow on Nov. 13.

That compresses Apple's window for building up excitement heading into the key holiday season.

Although other parts of Apple's business are now growing more rapidly, the iPhone remains the biggest business of a technology juggernaut currently worth about \$2 trillion, nearly double its value when stay-at-home orders imposed in the U.S. in mid-March plunged the economy into a deep recession.

The pandemic temporarily paralyzed Apple's overseas factories and key suppliers, leading to a delay of the latest iPhones from their usual late September rollout. The company also closed many of its U.S. stores for months because of the pandemic, depriving Apple of a prime showcase for its products.

Apple on Tuesday also said it was shrinking the size and price of its HomePod speaker to catch up to Amazon and Google in the market for internet-connected speakers, where it has barely made a dent. Both Amazon and Google are trying to position their speakers, the Echo and the Nest, as low-cost command centers for helping people manage their homes and lives. They cost as little as \$50, while the HomePod costs almost \$300.

The new HomePod Mini will cost almost \$100. It will integrate Apple's own music service, of course, with Pandora and Amazon's music service in "coming months." Apple didn't mention music-streaming giant Spotify. It will be available for sale Nov. 6 and start shipping the week of Nov. 16.

The research firm eMarketer estimates about 58 million people in the U.S. use an Amazon Echo while 26.5 million use a Google Nest speaker. Roughly 15 million use a HomePod or speakers sold by other manufactures, including Sonos and Harman Kardon.

## First lady unseen as Trump restarts campaign after COVID-19

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump and his wife received their positive COVID-19 tests on the same day. He's already returned to campaigning, but there's been no public sighting yet of the first lady.

Melania Trump last provided a health update over a week ago after saying her symptoms were mild, and the White House has not indicated when she will make her next public appearance.

What role she will play in the campaign's final weeks remains an open question as Trump embarks on a schedule of daily rallies through the Nov. 3 election.

"My family is grateful for all of the prayers & support! I am feeling good & will continue to rest at home," the first lady tweeted Oct. 5, three days after the president announced they both had the disease caused by the coronavirus and that they would quarantine.

"Thank you to medical staff & caretakers everywhere, & my continued prayers for those who are ill or have a family member impacted by the virus," she said.

Mrs. Trump was last seen Sept. 29 accompanying the president to Cleveland for his nationally televised debate with Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden.

Before that trip, she attended a Sept. 26 gathering in the White House Rose Garden that is now believed to have been a "super spreader" event for the virus. The president introduced Supreme Court nominee Judge Amy Coney Barrett to scores of guests who sat close together, many without face coverings. Several guests later tested positive for COVID-19.

The first lady's office provided no update Tuesday on her condition. The president's campaign referred questions to the White House.

A possible upside for the White House in the positive test results is that they overshadowed the release of audio recordings by Stephanie Winston Wolkoff, a former confidante and adviser to the first lady, in which Mrs. Trump was heard complaining about having to decorate the mansion for Christmas. She also was heard downplaying the conditions in which migrant children were housed in U.S. detention centers after the administration separated them from their families at the Mexico border.

Wolkoff detailed her falling out with Mrs. Trump in a new book the White House has dismissed as full of "mistruths and paranoia." Wolkoff also had confirmed she had Mrs. Trump on tape.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 61 of 82

David B. Cohen, political science professor at the University of Akron, said the tapes were “damaging” for the first lady’s image, especially since the president often bragged that he was singularly responsible for people saying “Merry Christmas” again.

“By keeping her behind closed doors, it makes it sort of a non-story at this point,” Cohen said.

Most coronavirus patients suffer mild to moderate symptoms and recover quickly, typically anywhere from two to six weeks, according to the World Health Organization, though older, sicker patients tend to take longer to get well.

The president’s quicker reemergence again highlights differences in how he, at age 74, and the first lady, who is 50, have approached the pandemic — from mask wearing to travel. The White House has said their son, Barron, 14, tested negative for the virus.

President Trump was admitted to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center for treatment on Oct. 2, and was sent home three days later. He remained out of public view until this past weekend, when he stepped onto a balcony to address a large crowd of supporters who had been invited to the White House lawn to watch him speak.

On Monday, a week after leaving the hospital, the president — who has declared himself “immune” to COVID-19, although the science makes it impossible to know that — resumed the rigors of campaigning at a Florida rally. His White House doctor said Trump tested negative for the virus on consecutive days and was no longer considered contagious.

Trump has an aggressive schedule with campaign rallies set for every day this week in Pennsylvania, Iowa, North Carolina, Georgia and back to Florida.

Former Trump White House press secretary Sean Spicer said Mrs. Trump may want to be a “little bit more selective” about how she reengages after recovery. The first lady is known to be intensely private and someone who operates on her own timetable.

“She just may be taking a different approach to this as well,” Spicer said.

Mrs. Trump has been more consistent about encouraging use of face masks while her husband has vacillated between describing mask-wearing as “patriotic” and criticizing Biden for routinely donning one. Trump was mask-free on Monday. Neither Trump nor the first lady wore masks at the Rose Garden event.

Trump also traveled extensively during the height of the pandemic, including to “hot spot” cities, while his wife waited until mid-September to visit New Hampshire on her first solo appearance outside the Washington area since the outbreak.

COVID-19 isn’t Mrs. Trump’s first bout with illness at the White House.

She spent a week at Walter Reed military hospital in May 2018 after undergoing an embolization procedure to treat what her office said was a benign kidney condition. Mrs. Trump convalesced at the White House for nearly a month before she resumed a public schedule.

## More masks, less play: Europe tightens rules as virus surges

By JAMEY KEATEN and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Governments across Europe are ratcheting up restrictions to try to beat back a resurgence of the coronavirus that has sent new confirmed infections on the continent to their highest weekly level since the start of the pandemic.

The World Health Organization said Tuesday there were more than 700,000 new COVID-19 cases reported in Europe last week, a jump of 34% from the previous week. Britain, France, Russia and Spain accounted for more than half of the new infections.

The increasing caseload is partly the result of more testing, but the U.N. health agency noted that deaths were also up 16% last week from the week before. Doctors are warning that while many of the new cases are in younger people, who tend to have milder symptoms, the virus could again start spreading widely among older people, resulting in more serious illnesses.

Italy and France are restricting parties and putting limits on restaurants and bars. The Netherlands went further and ordered the closing of all bars and restaurants, and to discourage partying at home, it banned

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 62 of 82

the sale of alcohol after 8 p.m.

The Czech Republic is closing all schools until Nov. 2, while Latvia is ordering teenagers to switch to distance learning for a week. And Britain unveiled a three-tiered system for deciding what restrictions to impose, based on how severe the outbreak is in certain areas.

Those moves reflect a new approach to containing the virus among governments wary of hurting already fragile economies. Officials are eager to avoid the total lockdowns they imposed in the spring that resulted in heavy job losses. Instead, they are relying on a patchwork of regional or targeted restrictions that have sometimes caused confusion and frustration by those affected.

The U.N. health agency appeared to support the new approach, with WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic saying lockdowns should be a "last resort."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel told a European Union advisory body Tuesday that she is watching the rising infection figures "with great concern."

"We must not squander now what we achieved through restrictions in recent months," Merkel said in a video address.

"None of us found it easy to impose those restrictions," she added. "Many people lost their lives, and so it is all the more important that we ensure now that a further lockdown won't be necessary, that our health system isn't overstrained again."

Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte ordered bars and restaurants to close at midnight and banned pickup sports games among friends and parties in enclosed spaces. Private gatherings at homes with more than six people who don't live together are also discouraged.

"Our objective is clear: We must prevent our country from plunging back into a generalized lockdown," Conte said.

Italy reported more than 5,900 people tested positive over the past day and 41 people died, bringing the country's official COVID-19 death toll to more than 36,200, the second-highest in Europe after Britain.

The outbreak has spread to the annual Giro d'Italia, which was thrown into chaos after several top riders withdrew from the cycling race following positive tests for the coronavirus.

Italy made masks mandatory outdoors last week, a requirement already in place in Spain, Turkey, India and a few other Asian countries. Elsewhere in Europe, such mandates are in effect in many places in Poland and hot spot cities like Paris and Brussels, and are being introduced in several German cities.

In France, which has seen a rapid increase in infections, Paris, Marseille and seven other large cities have been placed under maximum alert, resulting in the closing of bars, gyms and swimming pools. Public parties are banned, and restaurants have to maintain at least 1 meter (3 feet) between tables, with groups of diners limited to six people.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki urged the country's citizens to observe social distancing and wear masks as he himself went into quarantine following contact with someone who later tested positive for COVID-19. He said in a video message that his government was working as usual and that he had no symptoms.

Poland, a nation of about 38 million, has seen a sharp spike in newly recorded infections, with close to 5,100 cases and 63 deaths reported Tuesday. Over the summer, new daily cases were around 600.

Some doctors are warning that Poland's chronically underfunded health care system may collapse if the current rate of new cases continues.

In Britain, which has suffered the deadliest outbreak in Europe, with a toll of more than 43,000, officials defended their new system as striking the right balance. Under the plan unveiled this week, Liverpool is in the highest-risk category, and its pubs, gyms and betting shops have been shut.

"The prime minister has to balance protecting people's lives and the NHS (National Health Service) from the virus while also prioritizing things that matter to us as a society, like education and keeping as many people in employment as possible," Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick told the BBC.

Britain's number of newly confirmed COVID-19 cases has more than tripled in the last three weeks, with infection rates rising across all age groups and regions.

In an effort to keep people and goods moving throughout the European Union, member countries approved a color-coded system Tuesday.

The countries agreed to not restrict people traveling between green areas — where infection numbers are low — but EU governments will continue to set their own restrictions, such as quarantines or mandatory testing upon arrival, for people coming from orange or red zones.

Associated Press writer Jamey Keaten reported this story in Geneva and AP writer Frank Jordans reported from Berlin. AP writers around Europe contributed to this report.

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

## **NASA's new moonshot rules: No fighting or littering, please**

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA's new moonshot rules: No fighting and littering. And no trespassing at historic lunar landmarks like Apollo 11's Tranquility Base.

The space agency released a set of guidelines Tuesday for its Artemis moon-landing program, based on the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and other agreements. So far, eight countries have signed these so-called Artemis Accords.

Founding members include the U.S., Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom. NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine said he expects more countries to join the effort to put astronauts back on the moon by 2024.

It promises to be the largest coalition for a human spaceflight program in history, according to Bridenstine, and is expected to pave the way for eventual Mars expeditions.

It's important not only to travel to the moon "with our astronauts, but that we bring with us our values," noted NASA's acting chief for international and interagency relations, Mike Gold.

Rule No. 1: Everyone must come in peace. Other rules:

- Secrecy is banned, and all launched objects need to be identified and registered.
- All members agree to pitch in with astronaut emergencies.
- Space systems must be universal so everyone's equipment is compatible, and scientific data must be shared.

- Historic sites must be preserved, and any resulting space junk must be properly disposed.

- Rovers and other spacecraft cannot have their missions jeopardized by others getting too close.

Violators could be asked to leave, according to Bridenstine.

The coalition can say, "Look, you're in this program with the rest of us, but you're not playing by the same rules," Bridenstine said.

The U.S. is the only country to put humans on the moon: 12 men from 1969 through 1972.

Russia is still on the fence. The country's space agency chief, Dmitry Rogozin, said at an International Astronautical Congress virtual meeting Monday that the Artemis program is U.S.-centric and he would prefer a model of cooperation akin to the International Space Station.

China, meanwhile, is out altogether. NASA is prohibited under law, at least for now, from signing any bilateral agreements with China.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## **Cristiano Ronaldo tests positive for COVID-19**

By TALES AZZONI AP Sports Writer

Cristiano Ronaldo has become the latest international soccer star to test positive for the coronavirus.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 64 of 82

The Portuguese soccer federation said Tuesday that Ronaldo was doing well and had no symptoms after he tested positive while with his country's national team.

He was in isolation and was dropped from the country's Nations League match against Sweden on Wednesday in Lisbon.

"Ronaldo is doing great. He is dealing very well with this," Portugal coach Fernando Santos said. "He is asymptomatic, he has no problems. He doesn't even know how this happened to him."

Ronaldo, one of the most prolific goal scorers in the sport's history, played in the 0-0 draw at France in the Nations League on Sunday and in the 0-0 draw against Spain in a friendly last week.

On Monday, the Juventus forward posted a photo on Twitter and Instagram showing him and the rest of the Portugal squad having a meal together. The players were all close to each other at a table, with a smiling Ronaldo apparently taking the photo himself at the front end.

Along with the tweet, Ronaldo wrote, in Portuguese, "United on and off the field!"

Photos published by Portuguese media showed Ronaldo on a balcony overlooking his teammates practicing below on a field at the national team's training center. In one of the images, he was shown giving the thumbs-up sign.

The 35-year-old Ronaldo last month became only the second male soccer player to reach 100 goals for a national team, after former Iran striker Ali Daei.

Players who tested positive for COVID-19 recently include Neymar, Kylian Mbappé, Paul Pogba, Paulo Dybala, Ángel Di María, Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Diego Costa.

The Portuguese federation said Ronaldo's result prompted another round of tests for the rest of the national squad. It said everyone else in the team tested negative.

Tuesday's practice session was moved from the morning to the afternoon so there was time for all the results to come back.

"We have done everything we were told, we have taken all precautions," Santos said. "We are here confined. It's like a bubble. No one is coming in or going out. In the first training period there was no problem, but now there was a problem, but not because we broke the rules. It just happened. The players are very concerned about abiding by the safety rules."

Santos said Ronaldo's positive result came on Monday and he remained in isolation in his room until he could be tested again on Tuesday along with the rest of the squad. He said the players have been tested seven times since they arrived.

"Every day we have been tested and of course that leaves us with a bitter taste because we have done everything right," he said. "We followed every health rule. Unfortunately, this still happened. That's life."

Two other Portugal players, José Fonte and Anthony Lopes, tested positive for COVID-19 recently.

Speaking during an official visit to Belgium, Portugal President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa said he had already wished Ronaldo the best in his recovery.

Across Europe, governments are ratcheting up restrictions to try to beat back a resurgence of the virus. More than 700,000 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Europe last week, a jump of 34% from the previous week, the World Health Organization said Tuesday.

Doctors are warning that while many of the new cases are in younger people, who tend to have milder symptoms, the virus could again start spreading widely among older people, resulting in more serious illnesses.

Portugal and France lead Group 3 of the Nations League with seven points each after three matches.

Ronaldo could miss Juventus' Serie A match at Crotone on Saturday and the team's Champions League opener at Dynamo Kyiv next Tuesday. And depending on his condition and the results of future tests, he could also miss the much-anticipated match against Barcelona on Oct. 28.

Juventus had been in isolation following positive tests for two staff members. There has been some controversy that Ronaldo and six other players were allowed to leave the isolated group and join their national teams.

Portugal's next round of matches will be next month.



More AP soccer: <https://apnews.com/Soccer> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## Report: Social media influencers push voting misinformation

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Social media influencers, partisan news outlets and even President Donald Trump's son are driving the spread of online misinformation swirling around the U.S. vote, casting doubt on this year's election and prematurely raising suspicions about the accuracy of its results.

Legitimate U.S. social media accounts are sharing false claims of voter fraud, misleading photos of ballots being dumped in the trash and stoking fears of violence at the polls on Election Day, according to new research from the Election Integrity Partnership, a group of some of the world's top misinformation researchers.

In some cases, those social media accounts are using isolated or old stories and photos about voting mishaps to create widespread concern about the election system, said Kate Starbird, an associate professor of Human-Centered Design and Engineering at the University of Washington who is part of the research group.

"What's happening right now is these incidents are being framed in misleading ways that exaggerate their impact on the election," Starbird said.

In one example, a photo purporting to show stacks of ballots sitting in a dumpster made its way to social media from conservative news outlets before being retweeted on the Twitter account of Donald Trump Jr., the president's eldest son.

"SHOCKING: 1,000+ mail-in ballots found in a dumpster in California," the post said.

That tweet was wrong and later deleted. A spokesperson for Trump Jr. did not immediately provide on-the-record comment about the inaccurate tweet.

Ballots in Sonoma County hadn't even been mailed out yet, and the photo was taken in 2018 of ballots that were properly disposed of after the election, county officials wrote in a Facebook post last month. Still, the claim continues to circulate in some form online. The photo was also shared widely by conservative social media influencers, some of whom have thousands of followers.

Another image of mail bins and envelopes sitting on the side of the road was used in a viral meme shared by Facebook, Instagram and Twitter users that claimed, "They are finding Trump ballots thrown away all over the place." The photo, in fact, was taken of abandoned mail bins in 2018.

Facebook has said it is working to curb election-related misinformation by including a label on posts about voting that directs users to state board of election websites, for example. The platform also enlists the help of fact-checking organizations to investigate false or misleading claims around voting and covers those posts if they are found to be untrue. The Associated Press is part of that fact-checking initiative.

Twitter, meanwhile, has promised to label or remove posts entirely that include false claims about election rigging, voter fraud or ballot tampering.

But even when the companies do act on voting misinformation, the posts are often labeled or removed after they've been seen widely. It has taken Twitter and Facebook hours to label misinformation from one of its most visible users: the president, who is a frequent purveyor of misleading claims about widespread voter fraud — despite little evidence of such cases.

"We can't see how effective these labels are," Starbird said. "I'm not sure that those labels are having a strong effect on the people who need them the most."

Twitter said it is working with the research group on identifying voting misinformation and will take action on posts that undermine the U.S. vote. Facebook did not comment for this story.

A smaller number of liberal social media accounts have also shared out-of-context images of dumped mail to generate distrust around the ability of the U.S. Postal Service to process ballots for this election, the research found. The Postal Service is overseen by an appointee of President Trump's.

Trump's opponents responded to social media posts from the president and his campaign calling for an

"army" to sign up as poll watchers on Election Day by suggesting it will spur violence at the polls. The research group said headlines from news outlets also amplified those social media concerns about Trump's poll watching efforts.

That "could be a potential cause of voter suppression if people think there's going to be violence at the polls or there could be a chance for voter intimidation, that might be a cause for them to stay home," said Rachel Moran, a misinformation scholar at the University of Washington. \_\_\_\_\_

Associated Press writers Ali Swenson in Seattle and David Klepper in Providence, R.I., contributed to this report.

## **Possible safety issue spurs pause of COVID-19 antibody study**

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE and LINDA A. JOHNSON AP Medical Writers

Independent monitors have paused enrollment in a study testing the COVID-19 antiviral drug remdesivir plus an experimental antibody therapy being developed by Eli Lilly that's similar to a treatment President Donald Trump recently received.

Lilly confirmed Tuesday that the study had been paused "out of an abundance of caution" and said safety is its top concern. The company would not say more about what led to this step.

The U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, which sponsors the study, would not immediately comment.

Antibodies are proteins the body makes when an infection occurs; they attach to a virus and help it be eliminated. The experimental drugs are concentrated versions of one or two specific antibodies that worked best against the coronavirus in lab and animal tests.

This study was testing a single antibody that Lilly is developing with the Canadian company AbCellera. Trump received an experimental two-antibody combo drug from Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc.

Lilly and Regeneron have asked the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to grant emergency use authorization for their drugs for COVID-19 while late-stage studies continue.

The paused study, called ACTIV-3, started in August and aims to enroll 10,000 hospitalized COVID-19 patients in the United States, Denmark and Singapore. All are given remdesivir, which has been authorized in the U.S. as an emergency treatment for COVID-19, plus either the Lilly antibody or a placebo.

The main goals are reducing the need for extra oxygen and time to recovery. Deaths, relief of symptoms and other measures also are being tracked. All of the drugs are given through an IV.

Such pauses are not uncommon in long clinical studies. Unlike a study hold imposed by government regulators, a pause is initiated by the sponsor of the drug trial and often can be quickly resolved.

The pause in the Lilly study comes a day after a temporary halt to enrollment in a coronavirus vaccine study. Johnson & Johnson executives said Tuesday that it will be a few days before they know more about an unexplained illness in one participant that caused a pause in its late-stage vaccine study. Johnson & Johnson isn't disclosing the nature of the illness.

"It may have nothing to do with the vaccine," said Mathai Mammen, head of research and development for Janssen, Johnson & Johnson's medicine development business.

Mammen said the company doesn't know yet whether the ill participant received the experimental vaccine or a dummy shot. He says Johnson & Johnson gave information on the case to the independent monitoring board overseeing the safety of patients in the study, as the research protocol requires. It will recommend next steps.

The study of the one-dose vaccine will include up to 60,000 people from multiple countries. The company expects to complete enrollment in the study in two or three months.

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**AP FACT CHECK: Trump's distortions on WHO and lockdowns**

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 67 of 82

By JAMEY KEATEN and HOPE YEN Associated Press

President Donald Trump is claiming the World Health Organization shifted its stance on lockdown measures to control COVID-19 and has now acknowledged he was right to say such restrictions are harmful. That's a distortion.

TRUMP: "The World Health Organization just admitted that I was right. Lockdowns are killing countries all over the world. The cure cannot be worse than the problem itself. Open up your states, Democrat governors. Open up New York. A long battle, but they finally did the right thing!" — tweet Monday.

WHITE HOUSE: "Over the weekend, the World Health Organization officially changed their policy and strongly stated that prolonged lockdowns must end because of their significant harms." — White House official in call Monday with reporters, speaking on condition of anonymity.

THE FACTS: They're twisting words out of context. WHO has not shifted its position that national stay-at-home orders or "lockdowns" should be considered a measure of last resort to contain the virus. Nor did it ever declare that Trump "was right" on his COVID-19 response.

Trump appeared to be referring to comments made last week by Dr. David Nabarro, one of six special envoys to the WHO on COVID-19. He told the British magazine *The Spectator* that lockdowns should be considered as just one measure among many to control the virus, with an aim to give countries "breathing space" to roll out other, better anti-COVID measures.

"We in the World Health Organization do not advocate lockdowns as the primary means of control of this virus," Nabarro said. He added that lockdowns can only be justified "to buy you time to reorganize, regroup, rebalance your resources, protect your health workers who are exhausted. But by and large, we'd rather not do it."

Since declaring the coronavirus a pandemic in March, WHO has said that if countries decide to go into lockdown, it should be considered temporary and they should use the time to implement measures like testing, tracing, informing local populations and promoting physical distancing.

Nowhere in his interview did Nabarro mention Trump. Nabarro has advocated a "middle path" in addressing the coronavirus, with measures in between lockdowns and allowing the virus to "run wild and build up herd immunity" and disappear — which Trump has promoted.

In the early months of the pandemic, Trump pushed for a lifting of lockdown orders as the head of WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, warned that easing restrictions prematurely could "lead to a deadly resurgence." Trump has been critical of WHO and has ordered a U.S. pullout from the group next July — saying WHO was too accepting of China's explanations of its handling of the early outbreak.

The United Nations body has been inconsistent at times with its recommendations, such as mask-wearing that it first opposed for the general public. It has also lagged governments in pushing border closings. But on "stay at home" lockdown measures, it hasn't changed.

"We have been very consistent from the beginning on this pandemic," WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic told reporters Tuesday. "National lockdowns shouldn't be the default control measure, but movement restrictions may be among a range of measures governments can consider in certain geographical areas."

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Associated Press writer Maria Cheng in London contributed to this report.

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EDITOR'S NOTE — A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

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## What you need to know about Ohio drop box restrictions

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — How many drop boxes can each Ohio county set up for collecting absentee ballots cast in the November presidential election, and where can they be located? It's a seemingly simple

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 68 of 82

question with a complicated answer.

A flurry of sometimes conflicting court rulings on Republican Secretary of State Frank LaRose's directive restricting the boxes to one per county, combined with steps LaRose has taken attempting to clarify the issue, have made it more confusing. All with Election Day just three weeks off. The issue is now before a federal court in Cleveland.

Here's a look at where things currently stand:

**Q: WHAT DID THE INITIAL DIRECTIVE SAY?**

A: The first directive, issued on Aug. 12, prohibited installing drop boxes "at any other location other than the board of elections." All references were to a singular box, not multiple boxes, which the order defined as "a secure receptacle outside the office for the return of ballots."

Ohio has seen a record number of absentee ballot requests in 2020, more than 2.1 million in the presidential battleground state as of the first day of early voting last week. In Ohio, completed ballots can be turned in by mail, in person or at a drop box.

**Q: WHAT PROMPTED THE DIRECTIVE?**

A: LaRose, who oversees state elections, was getting questions about whether counties could set up multiple drop boxes, an option growing in popularity as absentee and mail-in ballot use increases nationally due to the coronavirus. Ohio state lawmakers had passed an emergency coronavirus bill in March that required every county to set up a single secure drop box as a convenience during the April 7 primary. The language was designed to be temporary, but many people — including LaRose and some county election officials — were unclear on whether the provision still applied to the general election and whether it was meant to be a limit or not.

**Q: HOW WAS ONE DROP BOX SETTLED ON?**

A: On July 20, LaRose asked Republican Attorney General Dave Yost for legal advice settling the issue. LaRose rescinded that request on Aug. 11, saying it was taking too long and boards needed an answer now. (Yost's office has said the opinion was imminent.)

Ultimately, LaRose, a former state senator, said the Legislature makes policy and he would defer to the last position lawmakers had taken on the matter. He used the exact language from the March legislation that specified a single drop box, but further prohibited having more than one. At a Statehouse news conference, LaRose called additional drop boxes "a fine idea" but said he feared deviating from the March legislation would prompt litigation. He also worried multiple boxes could present a security risk and burden election boards already swamped with new responsibilities amid the virus.

**Q: DIDN'T LAROSE GET SUED ANYWAY?**

A: Yes. The first suit was filed by the Ohio Democratic Party on Aug. 25. Democrats argued that LaRose's order unnecessarily impeded the right to vote during a pandemic and in a manner not required under state law. President Donald Trump's reelection campaign and other Republican committees jumped in to defend the order. The trial judge sided with Democrats, declaring LaRose's order "unreasonable and arbitrary" and blocking it. The state's 10th District Court of Appeals unblocked it until it could hear the case. A three-judge panel of the court agreed with Democrats' legal arguments in an Oct. 2 ruling: The order was unreasonable and LaRose was not beholden to abide by that temporary March law. But they also said that while the order might be misguided, it wasn't illegal. They declined to require LaRose to change it.

**Q: HOW DID LAROSE RESPOND?**

A: LaRose issued a new directive on Oct. 5 cast as a "clarification" of the earlier order, telling county election boards that the earlier order "never prohibited and does not prohibit a board of elections from installing more than one secure receptacle outside the office of the board of elections." The phrase "outside the board of elections" was italicized in bold, prompting more questions. Was it broad permission to collect ballots off board property, an essential reversal of the initial order? LaRose's office said no: More than one box would now be allowed but only "outside" on board property.

**Q: SO HOW DID THIS LAND IN FEDERAL COURT?**

A: The A. Philip Randolph Institute, a civil rights group founded by Black union members, filed a separate federal suit in Cleveland in late August along with other voting rights groups. Judge Dan Polster had paused

that suit waiting to see what the state courts would say. He ordered LaRose to try to work things out in the meantime. Through those negotiations, LaRose agreed on Sept. 28 to allow the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections to set up an additional drop box across the street from its building, off board property. LaRose rejected the board's plan to also collect ballots at six public libraries throughout the county.

**Q: WHERE DOES THE FEDERAL SUIT STAND?**

**A:** The day after LaRose issued his new order, Polster weighed in. He interpreted "outside" a board of elections as broadly permitting drop boxes at multiple locations throughout each of Ohio's 88 counties, partly because LaRose had already permitted a drop box off a board's property. He dismissed the voting groups' lawsuit, saying their concerns appeared to be remedied.

But LaRose's office said the order had been misinterpreted. He ordered the election board not to proceed with its library plan. Following a plea by the plaintiffs, Polster agreed to reconsider the case and again blocked the order. The 6th Circuit Court of Appeals has allowed the order to remain in effect while Polster reconsiders his earlier ruling.

## **AP-NORC poll: New angst for caregivers in time of COVID-19**

By EMILY SWANSON and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The coronavirus pandemic has thrust many Americans into the role of caring for an older or disabled loved one for the first time, a new poll finds.

And caregivers on the whole say they're encountering unexpected risks and demands as a result of the virus, requiring greater time and effort. Still, they're more worried about the relatives and friends they are helping than about themselves.

The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll finds that 17% of Americans say they are providing ongoing caregiving, part of an informal volunteer corps. About 1 in 10 caregivers has begun since the virus outbreak, and about half of those say they are providing care specifically because of the pandemic.

For Chad Reese, of Canton, Ohio, caregiving has coincided with the pandemic. His mother-in-law moved in with his family shortly before the outbreak as she was being treated for advanced breast cancer. "It was a natural thing for us to do," said Reese, technology director for a museum.

What didn't feel quite right is that they couldn't accompany his mother-in-law to cancer treatments because of coronavirus protocols. "A lot of things were lost in translation," said Reese. "One of us has to stay in the car. That's still going on to this day."

Among those who already were providing care, 36% say their responsibilities have increased. Added responsibilities are more keenly felt by caregivers who've lost jobs or income in the pandemic. Forty-two percent of those under financial strain said their caregiving responsibilities increased, compared with 25% of those who are holding their own economically.

The poll finds that 1 in 20 caregivers has provided care to someone infected with COVID-19. When unpacked, that number reveals some social disparities. While 11% of nonwhite caregivers say they've cared for someone who got infected, just 2% of white caregivers have. Part of an ongoing series, the survey was funded by The SCAN Foundation, a nonprofit focused on quality-of-life issues for elders.

The fear of unwittingly passing on the virus has become a major preoccupation for caregivers. In the poll, 44% were extremely or very concerned about risks to the person they care for, versus 28% who said the same about their own risks.

"I stay awake at night and toss and turn," said Seth Peters, a university associate professor in Utah. He's a one-man logistics operation for his 78-year-old widowed mother, who lives alone in her own home, more cloistered than ever because of the virus. In the rest of his life, Peters has interaction with college students, and his two young kids are themselves in school.

When he goes to see his mother, "she is even afraid to let me pet the dog," said Peters.

"I don't even know if that is possible, to give it to the dog," he added, referring to the virus.

Nora Voytko, who lives near Austin, Texas, helps care for her adult son-in-law, who is disabled due to

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 70 of 82

muscular dystrophy, a genetic disease that causes progressive weakness and loss of muscle. The disease has also compromised his breathing.

After the outbreak began, the family suspended in-home physical therapy treatments. The poll found that 28% of current caregivers had previously employed someone to provide in-home care but had canceled it as a result of the outbreak.

Voytko's daughter has taken on the role of therapist. "Once COVID hit, then the dangers to him were too great for any of us to be exposed to the general public," said Voytko.

The poll found that caregivers, like others, are increasingly using telehealth as well as ordering supplies and food.

But Aaron Pettry, of Marmet, West Virginia, makes occasional runs to the store. He and his wife care for his mother-in-law in their home, and Pettry said he follows a procedure when he returns home: street clothes in the washing machine.

His mother-in-law is in her 80s, and "we know if she gets it, it could be really bad on her," he said. The mail gets sprayed with Lysol disinfectant.

William Arnone, CEO of the nonprofit National Academy of Social Insurance, said the poll highlights both increasing stress on caregivers and the lack of a support system for those in the middle class.

"It's an amazing set of pressures, both physical and emotional," he said. "The pandemic has exacerbated it, but the aging of the population alone is going to be making things worse."

The poll found that a growing number of Americans say the government or health insurance should pay for the costs of long-term care. Since 2018, the share saying Medicare should have a large responsibility increased from 45% to 56%, and the share saying the same about health insurance companies increased from 50% to 59%.

One major alternative to in-home care is nursing homes, but their reputation has taken a blow. Nursing homes and long-term care facilities represent roughly 1% of the U.S. population, but they account for about 40% of COVID-19 deaths.

In the poll, 41% said they now have a less favorable opinion of nursing homes than before the virus. Just 10% have a more favorable view.

"I would be very nervous about a communal living situation," said Paul Frese, who watches over his parents, living on their own in their 80s. "I would much rather that they agree to a caregiver who can come over every day and make sure everything is safe in the house."

Frese is a retired communications technology specialist from Chicago, and most of his caregiving these days is by remote devices. He has installed a camera system outside his parents' home to make sure they're protected against intruders. It also lets him check that they are masked if they leave the house.

But the physical distancing gnaws on him. "I can't hug them," said Frese. "I can't have any of the normal family interactions ... and there is only so much time left in all of our lives."

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Associated Press writer Marion Renault and polling reporter Hannah Fingerhut contributed to this report.

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The AP-NORC poll of 1,893 adults, including 565 current caregivers, was conducted Aug. 27-Sept. 14 with funding from The SCAN Foundation. It uses a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>.

## **NASA moon-landing tech hitches ride to space on Bezos rocket**

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin space company launched a New Shepard rocket

for a seventh time from a remote corner of Texas on Tuesday, testing new lunar-landing technology for NASA that could help put astronauts back on the moon.

The entire flight — barely skimming space with a peak altitude of 66 miles (106 kilometers) — lasted just 10 minutes. The booster landed vertically back at the launch complex after liftoff, and the capsule followed, parachuting onto the desert floor.

The capsule carried science experiments, including 1.2 million tomato seeds that will be distributed to schoolchildren around the U.S. and Canada, and tens of thousands of children's postcards with space-themed drawings that will be returned to the young senders.

NASA's navigation equipment for future moon landings was located on the booster. The sensors and computer — tested during the booster's descent and touchdown — will hitch another suborbital ride with Blue Origin. It's all part of NASA's Artemis program, which aims to put the first woman and next man on the moon by 2024, a deadline imposed by the White House.

"Using New Shepard to simulate landing on the Moon is an exciting precursor to what the Artemis program will bring to America," Blue Origin's chief executive Bob Smith said in a statement.

Texas-based Southwest Research Institute had a magnetic asteroid-sampling experiment on board, as well as a mini rocket-fueling test.

Led by Amazon founder Bezos, Washington state-based Blue Origin is leading a team of companies to develop a lunar lander for astronauts. Elon Musk's SpaceX is also working on a lander, as is Alabama-based Dynetics. NASA chose three teams in this early phase of the Artemis moon-landing program to increase the chances of getting astronauts to the lunar surface by the end of 2024.

Delayed three weeks by technical issues, this was the 13th New Shepard flight for Blue Origin. The first was in 2015. The rocket is named for the first American in space, Alan Shepard.

Tuesday's launch was the first in nearly a year for Blue Origin: The pandemic stalled operations. Blue Origin said its staff is maintaining social distancing and taking other safety measures.

Blue Origin said it needs a couple more flights before launching people — tourists, scientists and professional astronauts — on short hops. The capsule has six seats and six windows, the biggest to fly in space.

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## Barrett hearing turns to discussion of few high court cases

WASHINGTON (AP) — Amy Coney Barrett's Supreme Court confirmation hearing on Tuesday quickly turned to discussion of a few notable high court cases, including key decisions on abortion and gun rights.

Barrett was nominated by President Donald Trump to take the seat vacated by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who died Sept. 18. GOP senators are moving swiftly on the nomination because they want her on the bench in time for Election Day, Nov. 3.

Democrats are concerned about her conservative record and worry she will vote to overturn the Affordable Care Act.

Here is a look at the cases that were referenced repeatedly by both senators and Barrett. One of the cases is coming to the Supreme Court while others were decided years ago.

### ROE v. WADE and PLANNED PARENTHOOD v. CASEY

These cases from 1973 and 1992, respectively, are the two main decisions on abortion rights. Barrett is the most openly anti-abortion nominee to the Supreme Court in decades. She is certain to be asked repeatedly whether the cases were decided correctly, and whether they should be overturned. She's not likely to answer either question. Barrett signed an anti-abortion newspaper ad in 2006, was a member of Notre Dame's Faculty for Life and has cast two anti-abortion votes as an appellate judge.

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA v. HELLER

This is the court's seminal 2008 case that declared for the first time that the Constitution protects an individual's right to have a gun, at least in the home for self defense. The case was decided by a 5-4 vote,

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 72 of 82

with conservatives in the majority. Barrett's mentor, Justice Antonin Scalia, wrote the majority opinion in which he acknowledged that the decision still left room for some gun regulations, including "longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill, or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings, or laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms."

But in the intervening 12 years, the court has not elaborated on the extent of gun rights, including whether the Second Amendment includes the right to carry firearms in public or whether states can ban semiautomatic weapons and large-capacity ammunition magazines. The justices have repeatedly refused to take up those issues. With Barrett on the court, there could be enough votes to deal with some of these issues.

## CALIFORNIA v. TEXAS

The Supreme Court will hear this case on Nov. 10, a week after the election. It's the third major challenge to the Affordable Care Act since its enactment in 2010.

The Supreme Court upheld key parts of the law in the two earlier cases. At issue now is whether Congress' decision in 2017 to eliminate the penalty for not getting insurance renders that part of the law unconstitutional. That's not a terribly important issue since the mandate to have insurance is now toothless. But if the court finds the mandate is unconstitutional, it next will consider whether the provision is so central to the law that the rest of it must fall as well. That would cause an enormous upheaval in American health care because other parts of the law include protections for people with preexisting conditions and measures to allow people under 26 to remain on their parents' plans.

## Holiday shopping gets early start with October Prime Day

By JOSEPH PISANI AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Halloween is still weeks away, but retailers are hoping you'll start your holiday shopping now.

The big push is coming from Amazon, which is holding its annual Prime Day sales event Tuesday and Wednesday, kickstarting the holiday shopping season. It's the first time Prime Day has been held in the fall, after the pandemic forced it to postpone from July.

Walmart, Best Buy and Target are also offering online deals over the same two days, hoping to lure deal seekers.

"Beat the holiday hustle," Amazon's site said on Tuesday. "Holiday savings start now," a message on Target.com said.

There's good reason for the early start. Retailers are worried that a rush of online orders later could lead to shipping delays in November and December. And stores want to avoid big crowds inside their stores during the pandemic. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said shopping in crowded stores during Thanksgiving holiday weekend, when stores typically start their holiday deals, is a higher risk activity.

Whether people will start shopping early remains to be seen. Market research firm eMarketer expects Amazon to bring in \$9.9 billion in sales worldwide during the two-day event, up 43% from last year. Amazon hasn't released sales numbers for past Prime Days.

Prime Day, which Amazon started in 2015 as a way to get people shopping during the summer lull, has become one of the company's biggest shopping days of the year, offering discounts on TVs, toys and its own gadgets, such as Fire tablets and Echo voice-activated speakers.

Amazon also sees the event as a way to get more people to sign up for its Prime membership, since only those paying \$12.99 a month or \$119 a year can partake in the discounts.

This year's Prime Day is in 19 countries, including two new ones: Brazil and Turkey. It already held Prime Day in India this summer.

## IMF envisions a sharp 4.4% drop in global growth for 2020

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 73 of 82

WASHINGTON (AP) — The International Monetary Fund foresees a steep fall in international growth this year as the global economy struggles to recover from the pandemic-induced recession, its worst collapse in nearly a century.

The IMF estimated Tuesday that the global economy will shrink 4.4% for 2020. That would be the worst annual plunge since the Great Depression of the 1930s. By comparison, the international economy contracted by a far smaller 0.1% after the devastating 2008 financial crisis.

The monetary fund's forecast for 2020 in its latest World Economic Outlook does represent an upgrade of 0.8 percentage point from its previous forecast in June. The IMF attributed the slightly less dire forecast to faster-than-expected rebounds in some countries, notably China, and to government rescue aid that was enacted by the United States and other major industrial countries.

While forecasting a global contraction this year, after 2.8% growth in 2019, the IMF predicts a rebound to global growth of 5.2% next year, 0.2 percentage point lower than in its June forecast.

The 189-nation lending agency cautioned that many developing countries, notably India, are faring worse than expected, in large part because of a resurgent virus. Many nations face the threat of economic reversals if government support is withdrawn too quickly, the IMF warned.

"While the global economy is coming back, the ascent will be long, uneven and uncertain," Gita Gopinath, the IMF's chief economist, wrote in the new outlook. "Recovery is not assured while the pandemic continues to spread."

At a news conference, Gopinath said it was critical that government economic support not be withdrawn too quickly.

"This crisis will leave scars," she told reporters, stemming from damage to labor markets that will take time to regain lost jobs, lost business investment and diminished schooling that will reduce the development of human capital around the world.

For the United States, the IMF forecasts an economic contraction of 4.3% this year, 3.7 percentage points better than in its June forecast. The less-pessimistic outlook reflects a stronger-than-expected bounce from the \$3 trillion in relief aid that Congress enacted earlier this year.

For next year, the IMF envisions 3.1% growth in the United States, 1.4 percentage points less than in its June outlook and in line with the view of private forecasters. Last year, the U.S. economy grew 2.2%.

China, the world's second-largest economy, is expected to grow 1.9% this year, a sharp slowdown from the 6.1% gain in 2019, and then expand 8.2% in 2021.

The IMF said that while a swift recovery in China had surprised forecasters, the global rebound remains vulnerable to setbacks. It noted that "prospects have worsened significantly in some developing countries where where infections are rising rapidly" and that in India and in poorer nations in Africa and Asia, the pandemic has continued to spread and in some areas even accelerate.

"Preventing further policy setbacks," the IMF said, "will require that policy support is not prematurely withdrawn."

In the United States, a variety of economic aid programs, including small business loans to prevent layoffs and a \$600-a-week unemployment benefit, have expired. Congress has so far failed to reach a compromise agreement to provide further financial assistance to individuals and businesses.

The scale of disruptions in hard-hit economic sectors of the U.S. economy, notably restaurants, retail stores and airlines, suggests that without an available vaccine and effective drugs to combat the virus, many areas of the economy "face a particularly difficult path back to any semblance of normalcy," the IMF said.

Even as China has rebounded much faster than many expected, India, another populous country in Asia, is enduring difficulties. India's economy is expected to contract 10.3% this year — 5.8 percentage points deeper than the decline the IMF had forecast in June.

The monetary fund predicted that the euro area, which covers the 19 European nations that use the euro currency, would contract 8.3% this year but rebound 5.2% next year.

The IMF produced the updated outlook for this week's virtual meetings of the 189-nation lending institution and its sister institution, the World Bank. Those meetings are expected to be dominated by discussions

of how to provide more aid to the world's poorest countries in the form of medical aid and debt relief.

Finance ministers and central bank presidents from the Group of Seven wealthy industrial countries — the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Canada — held a videoconference led by U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to discuss debt relief proposals for poor nations and their efforts to support the global economy, the Treasury said.

One idea being considered is to extend for six months a debt-payment freeze for the poorest nations that took effect May 1 but is due to expire at year's end. Many aid groups are pressing for rich nations to go further and forgive part of the debt rather than just halt repayments.

Poor countries have been hurt the most by the pandemic. The World Bank has estimated that the pandemic has thrown between 88 million and 114 million people into extreme poverty, which is defined as living on less than \$1.90 a day. That would mark the largest increase in extreme poverty on data going back to 1990. And it would end a period of more than two decades in which the rate of extreme poverty had declined.

## Landlords are getting squeezed between tenants and lenders

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — When it comes to sympathetic figures, landlords aren't exactly at the top of the list. But they, too, have fallen on hard times, demonstrating how the coronavirus outbreak spares almost no one.

Take Shad Elia, who owns 24 single-family apartment units in the Boston area. He says government stimulus benefits allowed his hard-hit tenants to continue to pay the rent. But now that the aid has expired, with Congress unlikely to pass a new package before Election Day, they are falling behind.

Heading into a New England winter, Elia is worried about such expenses as heat and snowplowing in addition to the regular year-round costs, like fixing appliances and leaky faucets.

Elia wonders how much longer his lenders will cut him slack.

"We still have a mortgage. We still have expenses on these properties," he said. "But there comes a point where we will exhaust whatever reserves we have. At some point, we will fall behind on our payments. They can't expect landlords to provide subsidized housing."

The stakes are particularly high for small landlords, whether they own commercial properties, such as storefronts, or residential properties such as apartments. Many are borrowing money from relatives or dipping into their personal savings to meet their mortgage payments.

The big residential and commercial landlords have more options. For instance, the nation's biggest mall owner, Simon Property Group, is in talks to buy J.C. Penney, a move that would prevent the department store chain from going under and causing Simon to lose one of its biggest tenants. At the same time, Simon is suing the Gap for \$107 million in back rent.

Michael Hamilton, a Los Angeles-based real estate partner at the law firm O'Melveny & Myers, said he expects to see more retail and other commercial landlords going to court to collect back rent as they get squeezed between lenders and tenants.

Residential landlords are also fighting back against a Trump administration eviction moratorium that protects certain tenants through the end of 2020. At least 26 lawsuits have been filed by property owners around the country in places such as Tennessee, Georgia and Ohio, many of them claiming the moratorium unfairly strains landlords' finances and violates their rights.

Apartment dwellers and other residential tenants in the U.S. owe roughly \$25 billion in back rent, and that will reach nearly \$70 billion by year's end, according to an estimate in August by Moody's Analytics.

An estimated 30 million to 40 million people in the U.S. could be at risk of eviction in the next several months, according to an August report by the Aspen Institute, a nonprofit organization.

Jessica Elizabeth Michelle, 37, a single mother with a 7-month-old baby, represents a growing number of renters who are afraid of being homeless once the moratorium on evictions ends.

The San Francisco resident saw her income of \$6,000 a month as an event planner evaporate when COVID-19 hit. Supplemental aid from the federal government and the city helped her pay her monthly

rent of \$2,400 through September. But all that has dried up, except for the unemployment checks that total less than \$2,000 a month.

For her October rent, she handed \$1,000 to her landlord. She said her landlord has been supportive but has made it clear he has bills to pay, too.

"I never had an issue of paying rent up until now. I cry all night long. It's terrifying," Michelle said. "I don't know what to do. My career was ripped out from under me. It's gotten to the point of where it's like, 'Am I going to be homeless?' I have no idea."

Some landlords are trying to work with their commercial or residential tenants, giving them a break on the rent or more flexible lease terms. But the crisis is costing them.

Analytics firm Trepp, which tracks a type of real estate loan taken out by owners of commercial properties such as offices, apartments, hotels and shopping centers, found that hotels have a nearly 23% rate of delinquency, or 30 days overdue, on their loans, while the retail industry has a 14.9% delinquency rate as of August.

The apartment rental market has so far navigated the crisis well, with a delinquency rate of 3%, according to Trepp. That's in part because of the eviction moratorium, along with extra unemployment benefits from Washington that have since expired.

"There are bad actors, but the majority of landlords are struggling and are trying to work with a bad situation," said Andreanecia M. Morris, executive director of HousingNOLA, a public-private partnership that pushes for more affordable housing in the New Orleans area.

Morris, who works with both landlords and tenants, said that government money wasn't adequate to help tenants pay their rent, particularly in expensive cities. She is calling for comprehensive rental assistance.

She fears that residential landlords will see their properties foreclosed on next year, and the holdings will be bought by big corporations, which are not as invested in the neighborhoods.

Gary Zaremba, who owns and manages 350 apartment units spread out over 100 buildings in Dayton, Ohio, said he has been working with struggling tenants — many of them hourly workers in restaurants and stores — and directs them to social service agencies for additional help.

But he is nervous about what's next, especially with winter approaching and the prospect of restaurants shutting down and putting his tenants out of work. He has a small mortgage on the buildings he owns but still has to pay property taxes and fix things like broken windows or leaky plumbing.

"As a landlord, I have to navigate a global pandemic on my own," Zaremba said, "and it's confusing."

AP Writer Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville, Tennessee and AP Small Business columnist Joyce M. Rosenberg in New York contributed to this report.

## Disney recruits Rapsody, others for EP honoring Black lives

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Grammy-nominated gifted lyricist Rapsody has written "maybe 15 verses this year to reflect the times" — as she put it — about the Black experience. So when Disney asked the rapper to pen a new tune for a new EP honoring Black lives and social justice, she thought to herself: "How else can I talk about what's going on?"

She began to think from the perspective of a mother who lost her son to police brutality. Or a father whose daughter died simply because of the color of her skin.

Recorded under quarantine during the pandemic, Rapsody came up with the soulful rap tune "Pray Momma Don't Cry." She said she pulled from Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come" and Marvin Gaye's "Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)," calling the classic songs "beautiful music but it was also heavy and real at the same time." Crafting the lyrics after receiving the beat from veteran producer and frequent collaborator 9th Wonder, Rapsody thought of "Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Sandra Bland, Trayvon Martin."

"What does it feel like when you go to those funerals? All these black cars and trucks, everybody dressed

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 76 of 82

in black. The emotion. How does that feel after you've gone through that and you go home and that person is not in your life anymore? That's kind of the energy or emotion I wanted to touch on," she said.

"Pray Momma Don't Cry" is one of four songs featured on "I Can't Breathe/Music for the Movement," a four-song album that is a joint venture between Disney Music Group and The Undefeated, ESPN's platform for exploring the intersections of race, sports and culture. Rapsody is hoping the album can unite people.

"Sometimes music does more than sitting across the table trying to hammer something into somebody's head who just doesn't get it because they don't live your life," she explained. "Music is a universal language in that way."

Rapsody's song is the sole original track on the EP — to be released Friday — with the rest of the album focused on covers of historically significant songs like Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit," The Impressions' "People Get Ready" and Gaye's "Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)."

Grammy-winning soul singer Bilal adds vocals to "Pray Momma Don't Cry" to bring it to life, while other stars on the album include Robert Glasper, Terrace Martin, Alex Isley, Jensen McRae and Keedron Bryant, the teen who turned heads on social media with his passionate performance about being a young Black man in today's world with the song "I Just Wanna Live."

"The goal is to explore the uncanny similarities between the past and present, speak directly to the Black community and drive the conversation forward and to get out the vote," said Jathan Wilson, the creative director and A&R representative for the EP. "We are upon probably one of the most consequential presidential elections of our lives. We wanted to speak to all of that."

Black artists, including NUWARHOL, Al-Baseer, Blue the Great and Laurence "Sketch" Cheatham, were commissioned to create artwork for each track to highlight the deep messages in the songs.

Wilson, whose official Disney Music Group title is manager of partnership marketing and synergy, said as a Black employee he's happy to see his company get involved in the movement.

"In the wake of George Floyd I think a lot of companies, not just Disney, had to do some soul searching in regards to how they addressed their Black consumers and their Black employees. The company is a company that wants to be on the right side of history and do the right thing. To have them step up in the way that they did was great for me as a Black man but then also to kind of be in support of projects like this that help drive the conversation forward," he said. "It just became a special experience."

Rapsody echoed his words, explaining that she was excited "Disney would want to take on something like this."

"They really have been standing behind what we have been asking everybody to do: Use your voice. Use your platform. Use your dollars where they can count," she said. "We can educate, inspire, heal people through music."

## Filmmaker's trial raises concerns over freedom in new Sudan

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — More than a year after the overthrow of Sudanese strongman Omar al-Bashir, amid the promise of new leadership, Sudanese film director Hajooj Kuka was arrested during a theater workshop by the security forces that had served al-Bashir for years. He was tried and sentenced to prison on vague charges often used by the former government to enforce its conservative interpretation of religion.

The jarring episode, including alleged beatings by guards, rattled Kuka and other artists and activists, who say that the country has a long way to go before it can overcome the legacy of three decades of autocratic rule under al-Bashir.

Although a higher court overturned the ruling and released Kuka earlier this month, the case has raised concerns about personal freedoms in Sudan. The country has been ruled by a joint civilian-military government for 14 months, after a popular uprising led to the military's ouster of al-Bashir in April 2019 and put the country on a fragile path to democracy.

"While these rules exist, we will never have a freedom of expression," Kuka said.

Kuka, who is a member of the film academy that awards the Oscars, was one of a group of young art-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 77 of 82

ists taking part in a three-day theater workshop in August when neighbors complained about the noise, and the fact that women and men were mixing at the event. The organizers responded by lowering the volume, but the dispute escalated.

One of the neighbors physically assaulted Duaa Tarig, an artist and office manager for Civic Lab, the organization hosting the workshop. Other neighbors beat and threw stones at participants and staff. Dozens were trapped for a couple of hours before the police arrived.

When they did, they took 11 artists, including Kuka and Tarig, along with several neighbors, to a police station. The neighbors were quickly released, according to both artists.

The artists, however, were tried and sentenced in mid-September to two months in prison on charges of public disturbance and violating public safety measures amid the pandemic.

"The circumstances of the case including the charges combined with the police abuse and the sentences against the artists highlight the continuation of infringement on basic rights," said Mohammed Osman, Sudan researcher at Human Rights Watch.

Sudan's Justice Ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment, other than refer to a previously released statement that it is working to reform the country's legal system in order to "establish a state of law." A government spokesman did not return numerous phone calls.

After Kuka and his fellow artists were arrested, they said they were beaten and intimidated. When Tarig lost consciousness after allegedly being hit by a police officer, the other arrested artists started to chant slogans they used in last year's anti-government protests.

That seemed to only anger security officers more, who then decided to press charges against them, the artists and their lawyer Othman al-Basry said.

More than a year after al-Bashir's ouster, the laws that empower Sudan's security state have not changed, Kuka said.

Promises for reform have often run up against an alliance between Islamist officials and security forces that was forged to underpin al-Bashir's rule and has outlasted his overthrow. According to the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, a rights group, the Sudanese judiciary system continues to be influenced by what the group described as the militant Islamist ideology of the former leadership.

The transitional government has taken some steps to eliminate several al-Bashir-era laws. In November, it overturned the Public Order Act, a Shariah-inspired law that criminalized a wide range of individual behavior including revealing clothing and drinking alcohol. It also passed a set of sweeping amendments to the country's criminal code, including one that criminalized the widespread practice of female genital mutilation, and abolished the death penalty for people under 18.

But Tarig, the artist, described these changes as cosmetic. She said that al-Bashir's Islamist base remains intact and wants to show that it still holds power within the security and judicial system.

Last month, while Kuka and his fellow artists were in jail, a group of artists held a protest outside the Justice Ministry in Khartoum. They met with Justice Minister Naser al-Din Abdel-Bari, who promised reforms.

The ruling against Kuka and the other artists has also grabbed the attention of film professionals worldwide, many of whom sent an open letter to the government calling for the artists' release.

Kuka's documentary film "Beats of the Antonov," which weaves together the sounds of bombardment in the Nuba Mountains with resident's use of music to deal with the ongoing war, won the People's Choice Award at the 2014 Toronto International Film Festival. His previous works have focused on the plight of displaced people in the country's war-torn south. He was ushered in to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which awards the Oscars, earlier this year.

Kuka is originally from the Nuba Mountains, held by the rebel Sudan Liberation Movement-North led by Abdel-Aziz al-Hilu. Prior to the uprising that erupted late in 2018, he could not enter government-run areas. He arrived in Khartoum in January 2019 at the height of the uprising to take part in the protests, and was detained the following month and spent a couple of weeks in jail, he said.

Al-Hilu's movement, the country's largest single rebel group, did not join a peace agreement sealed earlier this month between the government and another rebel alliance, because of disputes mainly over

the role for religion in lawmaking.

Kuka said he hopes Sudan's political changes will help end decades of war between the government and rebels in the south, and usher in a more inclusive society.

"The peace is not complete," Kuka said. "It is a start for putting down arms."

He has chosen to stay in the capital even after his arrest, because he believes things are changing. Now, he sees himself as a member of a vocal opposition that can act as a check on the institutions of power.

"I can work, I can live here," he said. "Although we got attacked and things are not perfect, it is definitely way, way, way better."

## **Biden addresses idea of high court packing: 'I'm not a fan'**

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden says he is "not a fan" of adding seats to the Supreme Court, after weeks of avoiding questions about the idea that's been pushed by progressives and used by Republicans to attack him.

"I've already spoken on — I'm not a fan of court packing, but I don't want to get off on that whole issue. I want to keep focused," the Democratic presidential nominee said in an interview Monday with Cincinnati's WKRC.

Biden argued that the focus should remain on President Donald Trump and Republicans' efforts to push through Amy Coney Barrett as a replacement for Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg before the Nov. 3 election.

"That's the court-packing the public should be focused on," he said.

Biden has expressed opposition to the idea of expanding the Supreme Court before, but in recent weeks notably dodged multiple questions from the media about the proposal, insisting he would answer the question after the election. Pressure on Biden to respond intensified after his running mate, California Sen. Kamala Harris, refused to answer the question during her debate with Vice President Mike Pence last week.

Harris, however, expressed support for court-packing during her primary bid for president, along with a number of other progressive candidates. Faced with the prospect of a decades-long conservative majority on the court following Ginsburg's death, the idea of adding seats to the nine-person court has gained renewed traction among Democrats.

That has Biden caught between the conflicting pressures of appeasing his progressive base and appealing to more moderate and conservative voters that may be open to voting for Biden but reluctant to support such sweeping structural reforms to the court. Biden, who spent years as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, expressed opposition to court-packing throughout the Democratic primary.

"No, I'm not prepared to go on and try to pack the court, because we'll live to rue that day," he warned in an interview with a local Iowa political blogger last summer.

In dodging the question in recent weeks, Biden has argued that the proposal is a distraction from GOP efforts to push through Ginsburg's replacement. But Republicans have seized on Biden's refusal to answer as evidence he is being disingenuous and would be beholden to the Left on the issue if elected.

"Biden evades 'Court Packing' question. @FoxNews Because his puppet masters are willing to destroy the U.S. Supreme Court. Don't let this, and so many other really bad things, happen. VOTE!" Trump tweeted earlier this week.

## **When school is home and home is school, which rules prevail?**

By KATHLEEN FOODY Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Toys that look like weapons. Barefoot students. Disruptive imagery in the background. Pets roaming the room. All a clear violation of rules inside most American classrooms. But that was when most American students were actually inside schools.

How do standards like these translate when everyone is logging on from home? Schools are struggling to figure it out this fall — yet another adaptation demanded of educators during the coronavirus pandemic.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 79 of 82

In the learn-from-home world, teachers and experts can easily imagine the friction of extending regular classroom discipline into young people's previously private spaces.

Can students have posters visible in the background backing social or political movements that others disagree with or find racist? Can they wear clothes at home that are banned from classrooms? How can a teacher respond when a student says or does something that the instructor deems rude, offensive or threatening?

Weeks into the fall semester, a growing number of school officials are navigating those grey areas.

In Colorado, Maryland and Pennsylvania, school administrators asked police to investigate separate incidents of toy guns, BB guns and a suspected rifle visible on video feeds from students' homes. The actions raised complaints that they had overreacted to something that didn't threaten either those students or their classmates.

There's more. A Florida school district promised an investigation of an apparent high school student shouting racial slurs over a virtual class session. A Texas teacher was put on leave after parents noticed her virtual classroom is decorated with (virtual) posters backing LGBTQ rights and the Black Lives Matter movement.

"So many of our legal standards for speech at school are based on the notion that there's a limited expectation of privacy when you're at school, and certainly the expectation of privacy in your own home is much more expansive," says Miranda Johnson, director of the Education Law and Policy Institute at Loyola University.

"I think, under the circumstances, we have to be really mindful of the ways in which discipline is extending into the home environment," she says.

She recommends that school leaders evaluate whether a student's action disrupts learning — and if it does, look for a way to address it one on one.

"The ultimate goal should be to avoid punitive or exclusionary consequences, because students have already had their education disrupted in so many different ways," Johnson says.

It's not easy when the lines are so blurred. Standards that were never in doubt inside school classrooms have prompted pushback in some communities. On social media, parents and teachers have mocked lists of rules about wearing shoes, keeping pets out of view or banning food and drink during virtual lessons. It is, they say, school going too far and reaching into private spaces.

Angela McByrd, a statistics teacher at Mansueto High School in Chicago, says she's been horrified by lengthy rule lists shared by other teachers in Facebook groups for educators.

Mansueto is part of the Noble Charter Schools network, known for its demerit-based system enforcing a strict dress code and other rules. McByrd said teachers began pushing back against that approach before the pandemic and demanded more leniency as they prepared for virtual learning this fall.

When her classes began this month, McByrd told her high schoolers that they were expected to participate in class activities but she wouldn't require video cameras to be on. She had to reassure some students repeatedly that there was no need to wear their usual uniforms.

Schools around the country relying on virtual learning are taking various approaches to rules and discipline. Some have created new policies; others have decided existing rules for student conduct would be enforced, including dress codes.

Advocates, though, worry that many schools will turn to suspensions or expulsions first, neglecting built-in features that allow teachers to turn off a disruptive student's microphone or camera while still allowing him or her access to the lesson.

"Students have a right to attend school, and they also have a right to express themselves freely," says Johanna Miller, director of the New York Civil Liberties Union's Education Policy Center. "And those rights can come into tension with each other ... But there are other ways to deal with things without saying to that child: 'Because you distracted people, you can no longer be part of this class.'"

Reliance on suspensions or expulsions could be particularly damaging for students who are Black and Latino and historically face more frequent discipline for violating school rules, says Andrew Hairston, director of the School-to-Prison Pipeline Project at Texas Appleseed. The group has joined other advocacy

groups calling on Texas to ban on expulsions or suspensions during the pandemic.

"If we as adults expect our employers and our friends to give us breaks during this pandemic ... to be able to use the restroom, drink water and rest, we should be extending that grace for the young people," Hairston said.

Ultimately, the uneasy line-blurring between school and home — and melding those different rules in a manner that's appropriate for extraordinary times — is temporary. Few students or educators expect a different approach to classroom rules when in-person learning again becomes the norm.

Until then, however, those who teach students and mete out discipline will have to navigate an uncertain, constantly shifting educational landscape.

"I know some schools are saying, 'Oh, we want to present students with some sense of normalcy,'" says McByrd, the statistics teacher in Chicago. "But it's so easy for people to forget that the times that we're in right now are not normal. And this is a chance for us to try to do things differently than we've done in the past."

Follow Chicago-based Associated Press journalist Kathleen Foody on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/KatieFoody>

## Retiree checks to rise 1.3% in 2021 amid coronavirus fallout

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Social Security recipients will get a modest 1.3% cost-of-living-increase in 2021, but that might be small comfort amid worries about the coronavirus and its consequences for older people.

The increase amounts to \$20 a month for the average retired worker, according to estimates released Tuesday by the Social Security Administration. That's a little less than this year's 1.6% cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA.

The COLA affects the personal finances of about 1 in 5 Americans, including Social Security recipients, disabled veterans and federal retirees, some 70 million people in all.

The economic fallout from the virus has reduced tax collections for Social Security and Medicare, likely worsening their long-term financial condition. But there's been no real discussion of either program in the personally charged election contest between President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden.

"It's very difficult to talk about anything policy-wise," said Mary Johnson, an analyst with the nonpartisan Senior Citizens League. "We are looking at a period where there are growing inadequacies in Social Security benefits, particularly for people with lower-to-middle benefits."

With the just-announced COLA, the estimated average Social Security payment for a retired worker will be \$1,543 a month next year. A typical couple's benefits would increase \$33 to \$2,596 per month.

"The guaranteed benefits provided by Social Security and the COLA increase are more crucial than ever as millions of Americans continue to face the one-two punch of the coronavirus's health and economic consequences," said AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins.

But Diana LaCroix, of Omaha, Nebraska, says her COLA doesn't cushion rising health care costs most years. And she has new responsibilities. Her youngest daughter and two grandsons moved in with her this summer after the daughter's landlord decided to sell the house they were renting.

LaCroix, retired from customer service jobs, is now buying diapers some days as she scrounges for good deals on hand sanitizer. "Something's got to give," she said. "Something's got to change."

People 65 and older went for Trump in 2016, but this election some polls show Biden even with Trump among older voters, or ahead.

Trump has kept his promise not to cut Social Security benefits, but this summer he sent confusing signals with a plan to temporarily suspend collection of certain taxes that fund the program. While the White House staff said it was a limited measure that would have no lasting impact, Trump kept hinting to reporters that he had much bigger tax cuts in mind. Early in the year, he told an interviewer he wanted to tackle "entitlements," or benefit programs, in a second term.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 81 of 82

Biden has a Social Security plan that would revamp the COLA and peg it to an inflation index that more closely reflects changes in costs for older people, particularly health care. That's been a priority for advocates. He would also increase minimum benefits for lower-income retirees, addressing financial hardship among the elderly.

The former vice president would raise Social Security taxes by applying the payroll tax to earnings above \$400,000 a year. The 12.4% tax, equally distributed among employees and employers, currently only applies to the first \$137,700 of a person's earnings. The tax increase would pay for Biden's proposed benefit expansions and also extend the life of program's trust fund by five years, to 2040, according to the nonpartisan Urban Institute.

Jane Whilden lives in a household that leans heavily on Social Security. The southern New Jersey resident retired early from a local government job to serve as the main caregiver for her family, including her mother and her husband, a retired trucker.

The program should be at the top of the list for the presidential candidates, she said.

"Everybody's getting older, and we need to know what's going on," said Whilden. "I haven't heard what they're going to do. You just hear all sorts of negative things."

The COLA is only part of the annual financial calculation for seniors. Medicare's "Part B" premium for outpatient care usually gets announced in the fall as well. That amount generally increases, so at least some of any additional Social Security raise goes to health care premiums.

The Medicare premium for 2021 has not been released yet, but there's been concern that some emergency actions the government took in response to the coronavirus pandemic could lead to a big jump. That prompted Congress to pass recent election-year legislation that limits next year's premium increase but gradually collects the full amount later on under a repayment mechanism.

"There's a lot of uncertainty with regard to the effect of the coronavirus on the cost of the premium for next year," said Casey Schwarz, a policy expert with the Medicare Rights Center advocacy group. The Medicare monthly premium is now \$144.60.

This story has been corrected to reflect that Diana LaCroix's youngest daughter — not the eldest — moved in with her.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Oct. 14, the 288th day of 2020. There are 78 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 14, 1964, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was named winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

On this date:

In 1890, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th president of the United States, was born in Denison, Texas.

In 1933, Nazi Germany announced it was withdrawing from the League of Nations.

In 1939, a German U-boat torpedoed and sank the HMS Royal Oak, a British battleship anchored at Scapa Flow in Scotland's Orkney Islands; 833 of the more than 1,200 men aboard were killed.

In 1944, German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel took his own life rather than face trial and certain execution for allegedly conspiring against Adolf Hitler.

In 1947, U.S. Air Force Capt. Charles E. ("Chuck") Yeager (YAY'-gur) became the first test pilot to break the sound barrier as he flew the experimental Bell XS-1 (later X-1) rocket plane over Muroc Dry Lake in California.

In 1960, the idea of a Peace Corps was suggested by Democratic presidential candidate John F. Kennedy to an audience of students at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

In 1964, Soviet leader Nikita S. Khrushchev was toppled from power; he was succeeded by Leonid Brezhnev as First Secretary and by Alexei Kosygin as Premier.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 103 ~ 82 of 82

In 1968, the first successful live telecast from a manned U.S. spacecraft was transmitted from Apollo 7. In 1981, the new president of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak (HOHS'-nee moo-BAH'-rahk), was sworn in to succeed the assassinated Anwar Sadat. Mubarak pledged loyalty to Sadat's policies.

In 2001, as U.S. jets opened a second week of raids in Afghanistan, President George W. Bush sternly rejected a Taliban offer to discuss handing over Osama bin Laden to a third country.

In 2014, a second nurse at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas came down with Ebola after contracting it from a dying patient. (The nurse, Amber Joy Vinson, was later declared free of the disease.)

In 2017, a truck bombing in Somalia's capital killed more than 500 people in one of the world's deadliest attacks in years; officials blamed the attack on the extremist group al-Shabab and said it was meant to target Mogadishu's international airport, but the bomb detonated in a crowded street after soldiers opened fire. The board of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences revoked the membership of movie mogul Harvey Weinstein, after published reports about allegations of sexual harassment and rape against Weinstein.

Ten years ago: Chile's 33 rescued miners posed with President Sebastian Pinera and were examined by doctors a day after they were freed from their underground prison. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (ah-muh-DEE'-neh-zahd) taunted arch-enemy Israel from just across the tense border in Lebanon, rallying tens of thousands of Hezbollah supporters.

Five years ago: Hundreds of soldiers fanned out in cities across Israel and authorities erected concrete barriers outside some Arab neighborhoods of east Jerusalem in a stepped-up effort to counter a month-long wave of Palestinian violence. The state of Texas executed Licho Escamilla (LEE'-cho es-kuh-MEE'-uh) for the fatal 2001 shooting of Christopher Kevin James, a Dallas police officer who was trying to break up a brawl involving Escamilla.

One year ago: President Donald Trump announced sanctions targeting Turkey's economy in response to Turkey's assault against Kurdish fighters and civilians in Syria; the assault had begun after Trump announced that he was moving U.S. troops out of the way. Two researchers from MIT and one from Harvard won the Nobel Prize in economics for research into what works and what doesn't in the fight to reduce global poverty. Canadian writer Margaret Atwood and British author Bernardine Evaristo shared the Booker Prize after the judging panel for the prestigious fiction trophy refused to pick just one of them as the winner.

Today's Birthdays: Classical pianist Gary Graffman is 92. Movie director Carroll Ballard is 83. Country singer Melba Montgomery is 83. Former White House counsel John W. Dean III is 82. Fashion designer Ralph Lauren is 81. Singer Sir Cliff Richard is 80. Singer-musician Justin Hayward (The Moody Blues) is 74. Actor Greg Evigan is 67. TV personality Arleen Sorkin is 65. World Golf Hall of Famer Beth Daniel is 64. Singer-musician Thomas Dolby is 62. Actor Lori Petty is 57. Philadelphia Phillies manager Joe Girardi is 56. Actor Steve Coogan is 55. Singer Karyn White is 55. Actor Edward Kerr is 54. Actor Jon Seda is 50. Country musician Doug Virden is 50. Country singer Natalie Maines (The Chicks) is 46. Actor-singer Shaznay Lewis (All Saints) is 45. Actor Stephen Hill is 44. Singer Usher is 42. TV personality Stacy Keibler is 41. Actor Ben Wishaw is 40. Actor Jordan Brower is 39. Director Benh Zeitlin is 38. Actor Skyler Shaye is 34. Actor-comedian Jay Pharoah is 33. Actor Max Thieriot is 32.