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This week

On Saturday, the state cross country meet will be held at Yankton Trails in Rapid City (Isaac Smith is a state qualifier). The ACT Testing will be held at GHS on Saturday.

A Killdeer bird was seen Friday in Groton. They should be heading south for the winter.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Netters have clean sweep over Wilmot

Groton Area's volleyball teams came home with a 5-0 win in Wilmot Friday night.

The events were recorded and uploaded to GDIL-IVE.COM and archived at 397news.com, sponsored by Gordon and Dorene Nelson and VanderVorst Farms. No cellular or wifi service was available in the Wilmot gym.

In the first varsity set, the game was tied 10 times and there were eight lead changes when Groton Area took a 13-12 lead. The Tigers got the upper hand and went on to win, 25-17. Kenzie McInerney had two kills, Sydney Leicht had two ace serves and



Maddie Bjerke
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Alyssa Thaler
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Trista Keith
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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one kill, Alyssa Thaller and Trista Keith each had an ace serve, Jasmine Gengerke had two blocks and an ace serve, Madeline Flihs had one kill, Allyssa Locke had two kills and an ace serve and Maddie Bjerke had two kills.

Groton Area jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the second set, but the Wolves would tie the set at seven before Groton Area took an 11-7 lead and upped it to 17-10 en route to a 25-12 win. McInerney had two kills, Leicht had five kills, Gengerke had one block, five ace serves and a kill, and Flihs had four kills and two ace serves.

After a tie at one, Groton Area had the early lead in the third set, but the Wolves would tie it at seven and eight before taking the lead, 12-8. Groton Area would tie the set at 12 and 14 before taking a 15-14 lead. From there, the Tigers maintained a one to three point advantage and would go on to win, 25-22. McInerney had five kills and a block in that set while Leight had two kills, Gengerke had two blocks, an ace serve and a kill, Keith and Locke each had two ace serves and Flihs had three kills and an ace serve.

For the match Locke had 22 sets and Leicht had 12 digs and Thaler had 11 digs.

Paris Redthunder would lead the Wolves with seven kills.

Groton Area won the junior varsity match, 25-12 and 25-4. Ryan and Susan Fjeldheim sponsored the recording of the match through GDILIVE.COM.

Megan Flihs had six kills, Anna Fjeldheim had three ace serves and a kill, Lydia Meier had two kills and two ace serves, Aspen Johnson had three kills, Brooke Gengerke had three ace serves, Stella Meier had two kills, Riley Leicht and Sydney Leicht each had two ace serves and Emilie Thurston had one ace serve.

Groton Area, now 5-13, will travel to Deuel in Clear Lake on Monday and will finish the regular season hosting Redfield on Tuesday.

- Paul Kosel



Jasmine Gengerke

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Sydney Leicht

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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There is a lot of equipment being used as the scaffolding is attached to the tower while the welders weld the new water tower together. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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You can see the ball of fire as welding work is being done on the new water tower. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Deadline to Renew Expired Driver Licenses Is Dec. 30, 2020

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakotans are reminded that they have only until Dec. 30, 2020 to renew expired driver licenses or ID cards and are encouraged to renew online at Renew2020SD.com.

The state Driver Licensing program has been working since March to address the backlog of expired licenses and ID cards that were given an extension due to COVID-19. That extension ends on Dec. 30, 2020.

A reminder is being mailed this week to all South Dakotans whose licenses or ID cards are expired or will expire before the end of 2020.

“If you have not yet renewed your expired driver’s license or ID card, time is running out,” said Driver Licensing Director Jane Schrank. “We strongly suggest people to renew online if they are eligible to do so. Renewing online allows eligible citizens to renew their driver’s license or identification card and skip the trip to a driver license exam station. ”

To renew online, by mail or to make an appointment at an exam station, click on Renew2020SD.com. People with questions can call 605-773-6883.

The Driver Licensing Program is part of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

Trump Administration Invests \$78.2 Million to Improve Rural Electric Infrastructure in South Dakota

Investments to Benefit 1,984 Rural Residents and Commercial Customers

HURON, SD, October 22, 2020 – The Trump Administration today announced that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing \$78,297,000 to build and improve critical electric infrastructure that will benefit 1,984 rural residents and commercial customers.

“Reliable and modern electric infrastructure is a cornerstone to rural prosperity,” said Julie Gross, USDA Rural Development South Dakota State Director. “This funding is important to South Dakota’s rural communities and will expand electric service and modern power grids. Under the leadership of President Trump and Agriculture Secretary Perdue, USDA is committed to being a strong partner to rural South Dakota and their leaders because when rural America thrives, all of America thrives.”

Background:

Codington-Clark Electric Cooperative headquartered in Watertown will use an \$8,668,000 loan to connect 194 consumers and build and improve 148 miles of line. This loan includes \$275,100 in smart grid technologies. Codington-Clark serves 3,345 members over 1,905 miles of line in 10 counties including Beadle, Clark, Codington, Day, Deuel, Grant, Hamlin, Kingsbury, Roberts and Spink in northeastern South Dakota.

Union County Electric Cooperative headquartered in Elk Point will use an \$3,287,000 loan to connect 76 consumers and build and improve 29 miles of line. This loan includes \$175,912 in smart grid technologies. Union County Electric serves approximately 1,645 members over 512 miles in Union County in South Dakota.

Sioux Valley Energy headquartered in Colman will use a \$66,342,000 to connect 1,714 consumers and build and improve 684 miles of line. This loan includes \$1,390,073 in smart grid technologies. Sioux Valley serves an average of 26,025 members over 6,000 miles of line in seven counties of Brookings, Kingsbury, Lake, McCook, Minnehaha, Moody, and Turner in eastern South Dakota, five counties of Lincoln, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, and Rock in southwestern Minnesota and one county of Lyon in northwestern Iowa.

Today’s announcement is in conjunction with a larger announcement made by USDA where it is investing an additional \$3.1 billion to build or improve rural electric infrastructure in 25 states, and highlighted a record level of funding for fiscal year (FY) 2020 to upgrade infrastructure. USDA is investing in 53 projects through the Electric Loan Program. This funding will benefit 1.4 million rural residents and businesses in Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin.

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas.

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#243 in a series ~ Covid-19 Updates: by Marie Miller

There's not much news today except for bad news, so I'll get that out of the way, drop a couple of other nuggets, and sign off. Not a great day.

You see, people, this isn't even funny. We're in worse trouble than yesterday. We're over eight and a half million cases, dashing toward nine million at 8,535,200. We surpassed yesterday's terrible, awful, no good, very bad new-case number with 82,900 new cases today, another full percentage point higher than yesterday. Eight states, Alaska, Oregon, Wyoming, Utah, South Dakota, Ohio, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania, set new-case records today. It's still too early to tell whether this is a trend or just an aberration in the statistics, and the upcoming weekend will complicate our attempts to discern which it is. New-case reports tend to drop on Saturday, plummet on Sunday and Monday, then rebound on Tuesday; but I do not like the look of things at the moment. New-case numbers have been rising for a month now. You may recall that experts warned us about going into fall from too high a baseline of cases; well, I figure we're going into the weekend from too high a baseline too. The difference between now and our last peak in July is that now the cases are coming in many states, not just a few populous ones; that means community transmission is widespread across the country, and it's going to be much more difficult to contain than it was in fewer places this summer.

At least 17 states recorded their highest seven-day new-case averages today; these are Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Arkansas, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio. North and South Dakota lead the country in per capita new cases. Twelve states have added more cases in the past week than in any other week of the pandemic. We also have more than 41,000 people hospitalized in the US with Covid-19, the highest level in two months; this number has increased by 33% since the beginning of the month. At least eight states reported record hospitalizations; these are Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Kentucky. Utah is preparing to open a field hospital outside Salt Lake City. Hospitals in Idaho are planning to divert pediatric patients due to resource constraints. Once hospital capacity is under this kind of strain, anything can happen, including unnecessary deaths. The White House coronavirus task force report says there are "early signs of deterioration in the Sun Belt and continued deterioration in the Midwest and across the Northern States." This is not great news.

A significant part of this fall surge is cases at colleges and universities. Not all of them do reporting of cases, but among those who do, we have more than 214,000 cases and 75 deaths reported at over 1600 colleges, most of them since students returned for the fall term. More than 50 colleges have reported at least 1000 cases, and more than 375 have reported at least 100 cases. While students don't die of this as a rule, the folks to whom they spread it surely do.

There were 915 deaths reported today, a 0.4% increase from yesterday. Our total is now at 223,906. That's a lot of funerals. The seven-day average of deaths is climbing too and is now up to 763, the highest level in a month.

A new study published in the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that people with Down syndrome have 10 times the risk of dying as those without this disability. Some of this wildly increased risk can be attributed to their higher rate of cardiovascular and pulmonary disease and higher rates of residence in care homes; but not all of it can. While this condition is not currently included in guidance describing at-risk groups, it certainly looks like a risk factor. In addition to co-morbidities associated with Down syndrome, it is likely other factors contributing to this risk include the difficulty some may have understanding social distancing, masking, and other precautions, as well as difficulty telling others they don't feel well or describing symptoms. Those who care for people with Downs may need to remain watchful in order to help mitigate this risk.

We've been waiting a while to hear this: The AstraZeneca vaccine trial is ready to resume in the US. The FDA has reviewed the safety data and given the go-ahead. You may recall the pause occurred last month after a UK participant developed a neurological condition. Whatever lingering safety concerns the FDA harbored have been resolved, and they have concluded there is no evidence the vaccine candidate had caused the illness. This is good news. Additionally, the Johnson & Johnson trial is also ready to resume; the company, assisted by the input of independent experts, has determined the "serious medical event" in a participant had "no clear cause," but that it was not due to the vaccine candidate.

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Adverse events during a large-scale trial like these are not at all uncommon; while they can be caused by the vaccine, which is why every event is investigated, they are often just a coincidence. The chance that people who have been vaccinated will suffer heart attacks or other illnesses is a complicating factor that not infrequently arises; it becomes necessary to sort out whether this was caused by or independent of the vaccine. Doing so involves spotting and verifying patterns in a huge flow of data from tens or hundreds of thousands of recipients in the early months and years of a new vaccine's distribution. Monitoring the safety of newly-approved vaccines through these early months is generally assigned to the Immunization Safety Office. It is troubling that, just last year, the administration disbanded this group; if we wish to build public confidence in vaccines, it is important to provide transparent and robust procedures to monitor vaccine safety. This matter needs attention by the time a candidate receives approval.

Gail "Hal" Halvorsen, grew up on a sugar beet farm in Utah. He became a Civil Air Patrol pilot before joining the military. That was toward the end of World War II, and so when Berlin, situated as it was in the middle of Soviet-controlled East Germany, was cut off on the ground from all supplies by the Soviet Union and its people were starving, he found himself volunteering to fly in the Berlin airlift to bring food and fuel to keep people alive. This was life-changing work, but it wasn't the most important thing Halvorsen did in Berlin.

That work began in the summer of 1948, when he noticed children clustered up to the barbed-wire fence, watching the military airplanes at the airfield in Berlin. He decided to walk over to the fence and say hi to them. "I saw right away that they had nothing, and they were hungry. So I reached into my pocked and pulled out all that I had: two sticks of gum." He tore it into tiny pieces and distributed one to each child and made them a promise he would return the next day and drop them a load of chocolate bars from his plane, explaining he would "wiggle" his wings so they'd know which plane he was in. "Then I went back to the base and asked all the guys to pool their candy rations for the drop." Tying hundreds of Hershey bars with little parachutes made of handkerchiefs, he dropped candy bars over and over during the next 15 months, as long as the airlift continued—more than 23 tons of candy in all. The children of Berlin called him the "Candy Bomber."

That's cool, but why do we care after all these years? Because some of those kids who are now in their 80s and 90s got together and sent cards, letters, and video messages of thanks to Hal Halvorsen a couple of weeks ago on his 100th birthday. He retired from the military as a colonel, and there was an outdoor reception for his large extended family, complete with a helicopter flyover to drop chocolate bars and other candy. The original plan was to have a large group of German candy recipients come to the party as well, but with the pandemic, adjustments had to be made.

Some of those German kids came to the party via Zoom. One of them recalls she never caught a chocolate parachute because the boys ran faster and always beat her to them. "But that was not important to me or the other kids who did not get one. We knew there was an American pilot called the Candy Bomber who cared about us. He laid the ground stone to the fact that enemies could become friends in Berlin."

Halvorsen's son talked about the durability of people's memories of his dad, explaining that after Germans had watched American planes drop bombs on their city, to see a pilot drop candy made a lasting impression. "My dad helped to create an attitude shift in Berlin about America. I'm amazed at the number of people who continue to write to him about that airlift. They tell him that it's the one time they finally had hope." When you consider the United States' position in the world and how others view us, remember how the events of those long-ago months exemplify who we were: the people who refused to let their vanquished enemy suffer and starve and, instead mounted an effort involving over a quarter of a million flights to save them—and that some of these flights dropped candy for children to show an entire generation caring and give them hope, not just food.

One of those "children," herself now in her 80s, who first met Halvorsen in 2015 and now remains in regular contact with him, says, "I was 14 and had seen too much evil to believe in anything good, when the Candy Bomber made a place for himself in the heart of every West Berlin child. When a gust of wind carried that little parachute to me, you cannot imagine what it meant. Because of [Halvorsen], we started to believe that good could come out of bad."

A person—a society, a country—has to stand for something in the world. Doesn't hurt to remind ourselves of that from time to time.

Be well. We'll talk again.

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Unemployment Claims Filed for Week Ending Oct. 17

PIERRE, S.D. – During the week of Oct. 11-17, a total of 414 initial weekly claims for state unemployment benefits were processed by the Department of Labor and Regulation. This is a decrease of 29 claims from the prior week's total of 443.

A total of \$746,000 was paid out in state benefits, in addition to \$444,000 in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), \$363,000 in Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and \$139,000 in Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) benefits.

The Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund balance was \$119.2 million on Oct. 18.

The latest number of continued state claims is 4,146 for the week ending Oct. 10, a decrease of 1,323 from the prior week's total of 5,469. This indicates the number of unemployed workers eligible for and receiving benefits after their initial claim.

Benefits paid since March 16:
Regular State = \$85.2 million
FPUC = \$207.3 million
PUA = \$15.5 million
PEUC = \$2.2 million

Total = Approximately \$310.2 million

The Outdoors are Open and so is Pheasant Season

PIERRE, S.D. – Last weekend, the traditional South Dakota pheasant hunting season opener welcomed over 13,000 nonresident licensed hunters and nearly 7,000 resident licensed hunters to the fields.

“We have heard reports from across the state that individuals and families from South Dakota and many other states were here enjoying cooler fall weather and chasing those roosters,” said Kelly Hepler, Secretary of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks. “It’s incredible to know that this tradition is alive and well. We love to see people taking advantage of this historic outdoor opportunity safely while sharing it with others to ensure the next generation is able to carry on our state’s outdoor legacy.”

Reports from the field were positive, indicating higher bird populations than previous years. However, it was the South Dakota hospitality that took center stage, with hotels filling up as the opener approached.

“Hotels and lodges saw bookings increase in the last few weeks,” said Karen Kern, executive director at South Dakota Missouri River Tourism. “Guests were so happy to be back in South Dakota again – they love the wide open spaces and fresh air. Tom Steinhouser with Platte Creek Lodge said the hunters love South Dakota and our great people so much that hunting is sometimes second! Having an unbelievable time with friends old and new is truly at the heart of pheasant hunting in our state.”

“Pheasant hunting is all about tradition for so many families and friends who have become family,” said Casey Weismantel, executive director of the Aberdeen Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. “We love hearing stories of traditions and hunts that are more like family reunions. We never know what Mother Nature has in store for opening weekend, but we always know there will be thousands of families enjoying a tremendous tradition around pheasant hunting!”

Double P Ranch owner Dr. Cyrus Mahmoodi credited Governor Noem’s leadership for his operation’s successful year.

“We would like to thank Governor Kristi Noem for her leadership,” he said. “Even though we have experienced a record amount of cancellations due to the pandemic, these spots have been quickly filled with the resurgence of people interested in visiting South Dakota to hunt and fish. We are having one of our best hunting and fishing seasons in recent memory. Well done!”

With crop harvest well ahead of the 15-year average, hunters will continue to see opportunities to bag birds throughout the season, especially with the season extended to January 31 and increased public land opportunities.

“South Dakota has 1.1 million acres of public hunting land within the heart of South Dakota’s pheasant range,” said Secretary Hepler. “These are great opportunities for public access to pheasant hunting.”

The Walk-in Area program, which is private ground leased by GFP for public hunting opportunities, added 35,102 new acres in 2019. So far in 2020, over 8,000 new acres have been added.

“We have a lot to look forward to for the remainder of the pheasant season,” said Hepler. “Without a doubt, South Dakota is the best place in the nation to hunt pheasants.”

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Oct. 21	Oct. 22	Oct. 23	Oct. 24
Minnesota	125,531	126,591	128,152	129,863
Nebraska	59,409	60,308	61,285	62,510
Montana	24,093		25,640	26,503
Colorado	87,582	88,849	90,222	91,572
Wyoming	8,070	8,305	8,537	8,918
North Dakota	33,666	34,165	35,052	35,939
South Dakota	33,836	34,031	34,977	36,109
United States	8,275,093	8,338,413	8,411,259	8,497,011
US Deaths	221,083	222,220	223,059	224,005

Minnesota	+1,092	+1,060	+1,561	+1,711
Nebraska	+592	+899	+977	+1,225
Montana	+703		+1,547	+863
Colorado	+1,208	+1,267	+1,373	+1,350
Wyoming	+146	+235	+232	+381
North Dakota	1,036	+516	+1,038	+886
South Dakota	+562	+558	+948	+1,132
United States	+59,515	+63,320	+72,846	+85,752
US Deaths	+949	+1,137	+839	+946

	Oct. 14	Oct. 15	Oct. 16	Oct. 17	Oct. 18	Oct. 19	Oct. 20
Minnesota	114,574	115,763	117,106	119,145	121,090	122,812	124,439
Nebraska	53,543	54,467	55,428	56,714	57,334	58,068	58,817
Montana	19,611	20,210	20,933	21,595	22,233	22,821	23,390
Colorado	80,085	80,777	81,918	83,230	84,369	85,302	86,374
Wyoming	6,740	6,914	7,089	7,337	7,479	7,673	7,924
North Dakota	28,245	28,947	29,653	30,414	31,261	31,978	32,637
South Dakota	29,339	30,215	31,012	31,805	32,611	33,269	33,836
United States	7,859,365	7,917,223	7,980,899	8,052,978	8,107,404	8,148,368	8,215,578
US Deaths	215,914	216,904	217,717	218,618	219,311	219,668	220,134
218,							
Minnesota	+1,135	+1,189	+1,343	+2,039	+1,945	+1,722	1,627
Nebraska	+704	+924	+961	1,286	+620	+734	+749
Montana	+486	+599	+723	+662	+638	+588	+569
Colorado	+1,048	+692	+1,141	1,312	+1,139	+933	+1,072
Wyoming	+112	+174	+175	+248	+142	+194	+251
North Dakota	+508	+702	+706	+761	+847	+717	+659
South Dakota	+414	+865	+797	+793	+806	+658	+567
United States	+54,722	+57,858	+63,676	+72,079	+54,426	+40,964	+67,210
US Deaths	+825	+990	+813	+901	+693	+357	+466

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October 23rd COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

We hit the 1,000+ mark for positive cases in South Dakota with 1,132. The positivity rate dropped from yesterday's 21 percent to 16.7 percent for today. There were nine more deaths.

The deaths were five females and four males; three in the 80+ age group, five in the 70s and one in the 50s. Minnehaha and Pennington county each recorded two deaths while Gregory, Jerauld, Lincoln, Turner and Union each had one.

Locally, Brown had 31 positive and 23 recovered. Day had 2 positive and 1 recovered. Edmunds had 5 positive and 3 recovered. Marshall had 0 positive and 0 recoveries. McPherson had 1 positive and 1 recoveries. Spink had 6 positive and 1 recoveries.

Cases by age groups are as follows: Under 9=36, 10-19=106, 20s=199, 30s=204, 40s=202, 50s=195, 60s=139, 70s=69, 80+=35.

Minnehaha County has 24 percent of the cases in South Dakota.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +31 (1,879) Positivity Rate: 12.1%
Total Tests: +256 (16,729)
Recovered: +23 (1,487)
Active Cases: +11 (397)
Ever Hospitalized: +4 (99)
Deaths: +0 (4)
Percent Recovered: 79.1

South Dakota:

Positive: +1132 (36,109 total) Positivity Rate: 16.7%
Total Tests: 6,762 (391,909 total)
Hospitalized: +59 (2,336 total). 349 currently hospitalized +94)
Deaths: +9 (356 total)
Recovered: +587 (26,984 total)
Active Cases: +589 (9,862)
Percent Recovered: 74.7%
Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 13% Covid, 53% Non-Covid, 34% Available
ICU Bed Capacity: 25% Covid, 43% Non-Covid, 32% Available
Ventilator Capacity: 10% Covid, 20% Non-Covid, 70% 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: +5 positive, +8 recovered (53 active cases)
Beadle (13): +29 positive, +10 recovered (239 active cases)
Bennett (5): +8 positive, +1 recovered (56 active

cases)

Bon Homme (1): +31 positive, +4 recovered (243 active cases)

Brookings (4): +49 positive, +23 recovered (343 active cases)

Brown (4): +34 positive, +23 recovered (397 active cases)

Brule (2): +8 positive, +3 recovered (82 active cases)

Buffalo (4): +2 positive, +6 recovered (34 active cases)

Butte (3): +13 positive, +6 recovered (111 active cases)

Campbell: +1 positive, +1 recovered (32 active cases)

Charles Mix: +18 positive, +6 recovered (102 active cases)

Clark: +7 positive, +1 recovered (44 active cases)

Clay (8): +16 positive, +8 recovered (126 active cases)

Codington (10): +37 positive, +23 recovered (315 active cases)

Corson (1): +5 positive, +6 recovered (36 active cases)

Custer (3): +4 positive, +7 recovered (69 active case)

Davison (5): +42 positive, +13 recovered (313 active cases)

Day (2): +2 positive, +1 recovered (39 active cases)

Deuel: +6 positive, +3 recovered (47 active cases)

Dewey: +14 positive, +40 recovered (89 active cases)

Douglas (4): +1 positive, +4 recovered (45 active cases)

Edmunds (1): +5 positive, +3 recovered (23 active cases)

Fall River (6): +6 positive, +4 recovered (54 active cases)

Faulk (1): +3 positive, +4 recovered (81 active cases)

Grant (2): +2 positive, +7 recovered (82 active cases)

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Gregory (10): +8 positive, +1 recovered (49 active cases)
 Haakon (1): +2 positive, +2 recovered (30 active case)
 Hamlin: +3 positive, +2 recovered (44 active cases)
 Hand (1): +8 positive, +3 recovered (30 active cases)
 Hanson (1): +4 positive, +2 recovered (25 active cases)
 Harding: +3 positive, +4 recovered (27 active cases)
 Hughes (5): +27 positive, +7 recovered (163 active cases)
 Hutchinson (2): +7 positive, +4 recovered (65 active cases)
 Hyde: +0 positive, +0 recovered (12 active cases)
 Jackson (1): +5 positive, +1 recovered (49 active cases)
 Jerauld (7): +0 positive, +2 recovered (17 active cases)
 Jones: +2 positive, +1 recovered (5 active cases)
 Kingsbury (2): +7 positive, +0 recovered (66 active cases)
 Lake (8): +15 positive, +3 recovered (93 active cases)
 Lawrence (6): +26 positive, +8 recovered (227 active cases)
 Lincoln (17): +54 positive, +50 recovered (653 active cases)

Lyman (5): +11 positive, +1 recovered (35 active cases)
 Marshall (1): +0 positive, +0 recovered (14 active cases)
 McCook (1): +7 positive, +6 recovered (63 active cases)
 McPherson: +1 positive, +1 recovery (19 active case)
 Meade (9): +7 positive, +12 recovered (174 active cases)
 Mellette (1): +2 positive, +1 recovered (15 active cases)
 Miner (1): +6 positive, +2 recovered (73 active cases)
 Minnehaha (102): +268 positive, +133 recovered (2236 active cases)
 Moody (2): +6 positive, +2 recovered (63 active cases)
 Oglala Lakota (5): +60 positive, +12 recovered (405 active cases)
 Pennington (49): +74 positive, +43 recovered (931 active cases)
 Perkins: +2 positive, +1 recovered (24 active cases)
 Potter: +6 positive, +1 recovered (28 active cases)
 Roberts (4): +14 positive, +3 recovered (68 active cases)
 Sanborn: +6 positive, +2 recovered (26 active cases)
 Spink (1): +6 positive, +1 recovered (69 active cases)
 Stanley: +4 positive, +2 recovery (22 active cases)
 Sully: +0 positive, +3 recovered (15 active cases)
 Todd (5): +14 positive, +11 recovered (142 active cases)
 Tripp (2): +2 positive, +4 recovered (48 active cases)
 Turner (9): +11 positive, +9 recovered (174 active cases)
 Union (11): +17 positive, +12 recovered (173 active cases)
 Walworth (2): +3 positive, +3 recovered (86 active cases)
 Yankton (5): +25 positive, +11 recovered (219 active cases)
 Ziebach (1): +4 positive, +6 recovered (17 active case)

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	1166	0
10-19 years	4052	0
20-29 years	7752	2
30-39 years	6250	7
40-49 years	5190	12
50-59 years	5223	30
60-69 years	4014	50
70-79 years	2041	69
80+ years	1514	186

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	19451	167
Male	17751	189

North Dakota Dept. of Health Report
 COVID-19 Daily Report, October 23:

- 10.1% rolling 14-day positivity
- 886 new positives
- 8,072 susceptible test encounters
- 168 currently hospitalized (+12)
- 6,363 active cases (+13)
- 440 total deaths (+9)

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity
Aurora	164	111	695	0	Substantial	21.05%
Beadle	1150	898	3864	13	Substantial	21.38%
Bennett	151	89	924	5	Substantial	23.44%
Bon Homme	485	142	1486	1	Substantial	36.19%
Brookings	1307	960	6109	4	Substantial	22.18%
Brown	1888	1487	8463	4	Substantial	21.21%
Brule	251	167	1377	2	Substantial	26.85%
Buffalo	220	186	813	4	Substantial	27.78%
Butte	274	161	2038	3	Substantial	28.50%
Campbell	72	40	156	0	Substantial	39.39%
Charles Mix	350	248	2905	0	Substantial	10.39%
Clark	95	51	662	0	Substantial	18.42%
Clay	751	609	3178	8	Substantial	20.29%
Codington	1362	1037	6327	10	Substantial	21.63%
Corson	148	111	767	1	Substantial	45.95%
Custer	292	218	1640	3	Substantial	30.00%
Davison	812	494	4339	5	Substantial	18.58%
Day	147	107	1187	2	Substantial	19.78%
Deuel	165	118	763	0	Substantial	22.31%
Dewey	291	202	3354	0	Substantial	17.28%
Douglas	155	107	682	4	Substantial	15.09%
Edmunds	132	108	699	1	Moderate	4.53%
Fall River	184	124	1735	6	Substantial	21.60%
Faulk	192	110	515	1	Substantial	28.00%
Grant	280	196	1446	2	Substantial	15.69%
Gregory	200	142	779	10	Substantial	18.10%
Haakon	75	44	414	1	Substantial	9.16%
Hamlin	176	132	1181	0	Substantial	10.55%
Hand	103	72	557	1	Substantial	13.33%
Hanson	76	50	437	1	Moderate	16.42%
Harding	42	15	107	0	Substantial	68.75%
Hughes	793	625	3664	5	Substantial	17.12%
Hutchinson	207	140	1528	2	Substantial	11.15%

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Hyde	37	25	290	0	Moderate	21.05%
Jackson	105	55	743	1	Substantial	19.77%
Jerauld	154	130	376	7	Moderate	10.53%
Jones	29	24	124	0	Moderate	43.75%
Kingsbury	158	90	1013	2	Substantial	16.20%
Lake	335	234	1805	8	Substantial	26.32%
Lawrence	772	539	5293	6	Substantial	18.91%
Lincoln	2437	1757	12811	17	Substantial	24.32%
Lyman	231	191	1395	5	Substantial	9.64%
Marshall	60	45	754	1	Moderate	17.78%
McCook	205	141	1074	1	Substantial	10.30%
McPherson	62	43	390	0	Moderate	7.30%
Meade	854	671	4834	9	Substantial	15.69%
Mellette	60	44	566	1	Moderate	16.67%
Miner	131	57	409	1	Substantial	34.78%
Minnehaha	9969	7631	50542	102	Substantial	17.86%
Moody	189	124	1063	2	Substantial	23.15%
Oglala Lakota	770	360	5440	5	Substantial	21.47%
Pennington	3909	2929	23632	49	Substantial	12.98%
Perkins	71	47	446	0	Moderate	19.44%
Potter	94	66	582	0	Substantial	10.26%
Roberts	315	243	3173	4	Substantial	16.87%
Sanborn	81	55	417	0	Substantial	25.64%
Spink	238	168	1643	1	Substantial	11.48%
Stanley	82	60	517	0	Substantial	21.74%
Sully	39	24	161	0	Substantial	38.71%
Todd	395	248	3335	5	Substantial	25.00%
Tripp	251	200	1113	2	Substantial	13.15%
Turner	424	241	1781	9	Substantial	23.53%
Union	703	519	3948	11	Substantial	18.67%
Walworth	260	172	1268	2	Substantial	20.89%
Yankton	706	482	5675	5	Substantial	8.42%
Ziebach	86	68	563	1	Moderate	13.64%
Unassigned	0	0	1833	0		

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South Dakota



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Brown County



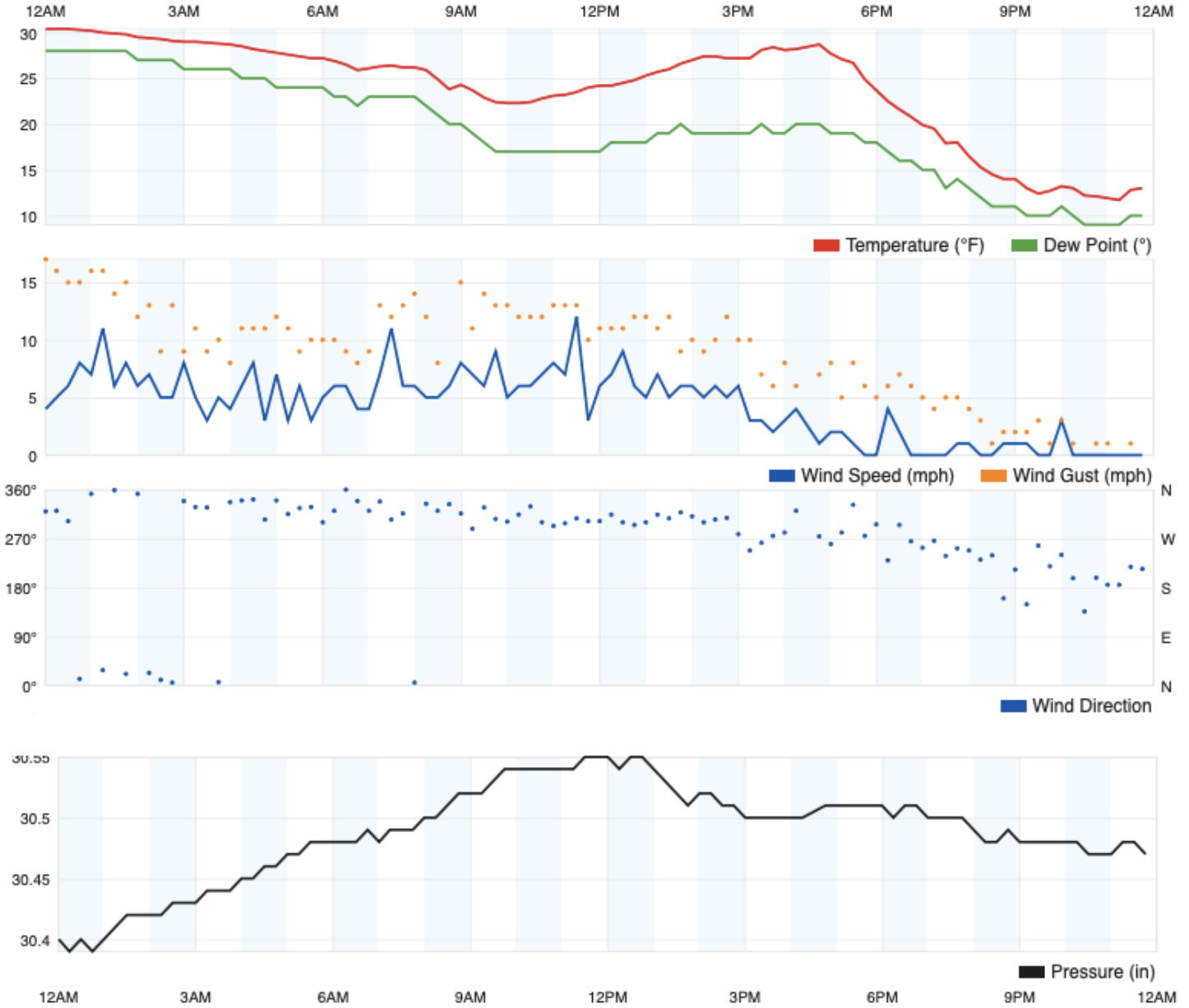
Day County



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

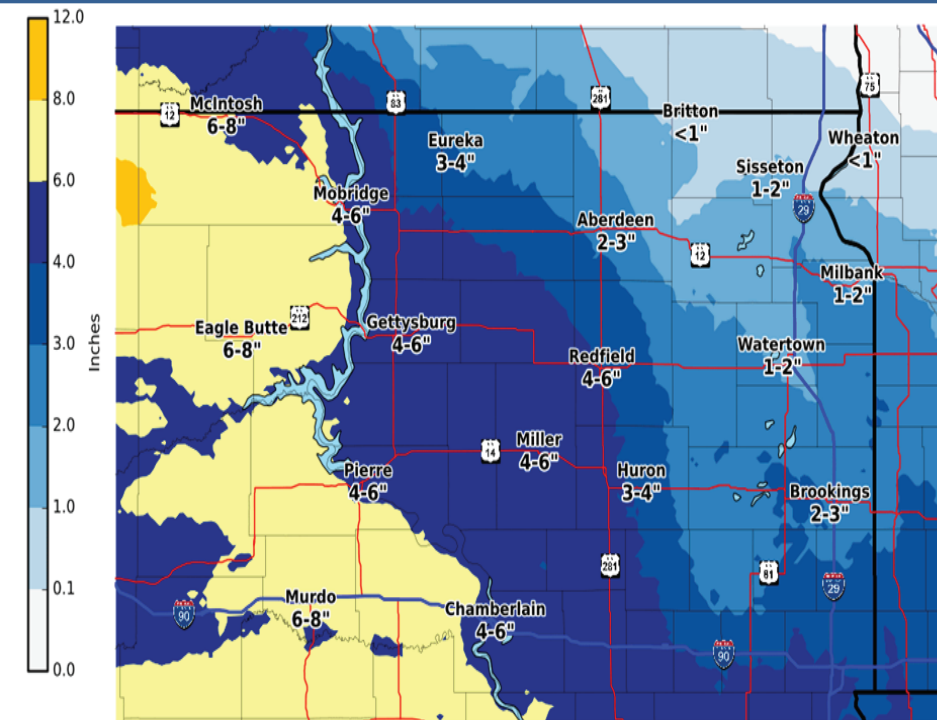
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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
				
30% → 70%	80%	30%		
Chance Snow then Snow Likely	Snow	Chance Snow	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 24 °F	Low: 19 °F	High: 23 °F	Low: 4 °F	High: 17 °F



Expected Snowfall Today through Sunday PM

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
Updated: 10/24/2020 4:44 AM CT



A snow storm will move out into the Plains today, with the greatest threat being heavy snow, especially along and west of the Missouri River. Patchy blowing snow will be possible later today.

An early season winter storm will spread accumulating snow across the area today through Sunday evening. The heaviest snow is expected over central and north central South Dakota.

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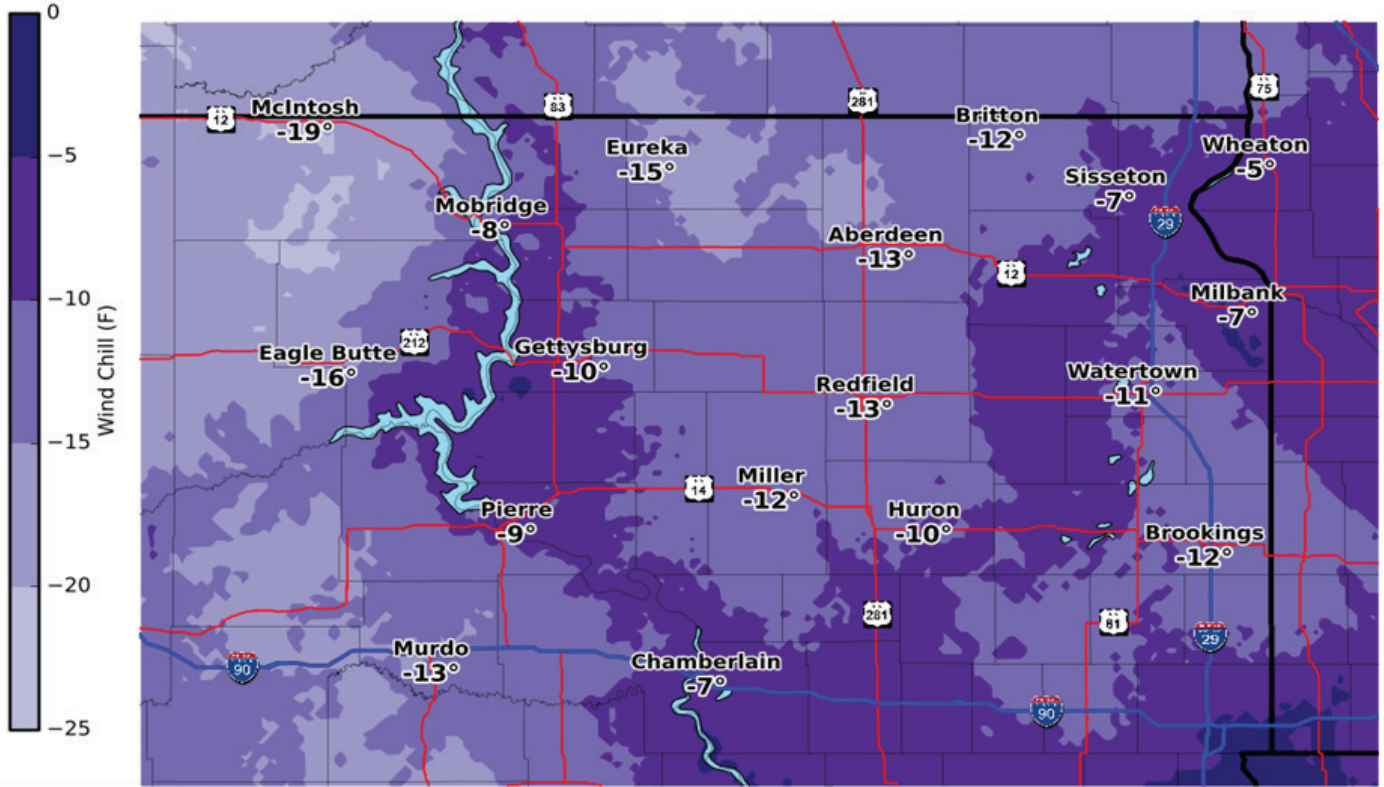


Coldest Wind Chills Sunday Afternoon – Monday Night

National Weather Service

Aberdeen, SD

Updated: 10/24/2020 5:19 AM CT



Unseasonably cold temperatures and wind chills can be expected Sunday afternoon through Monday night. High temperatures on Monday will only warm into the teens and low 20s!

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Today in Weather History

October 24, 1989: A storm in the western U.S. produced up to three feet of snow in the mountains around Lake Tahoe, with 21 inches reported at Donner Summit. Thunderstorms in northern California produced 3.36 inches of rain at Redding to establish a 24 hour record for October, and bring their rainfall total for the month to a record 5.11 inches. Chiefly "Indian Summer" type weather prevailed across the rest of the nation. Fifteen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 70s and 80s. Record highs included 74 degrees at International Falls, Minnesota and 86 degrees at Yankton, South Dakota. Record highs also occurred across parts of central and northeast South Dakota. The record highs were 80 degrees at Mobridge and Sisseton, 83 degrees at Aberdeen, and 84 degrees at Pierre.

1878: The Gale of 1878 was an intense Category 2 hurricane that was active between October 18 and October 25. It caused extensive damage from Cuba to New England. Believed to be the strongest storm to hit the Washington - Baltimore region since hurricane records began in 1851.

1926 - A hurricane came inland near Daytona Beach, FL. The hurricane caused 2.5 million dollars damage in eastern Florida, including the Jacksonville area. (David Ludlum)

1939 - The temperature at Lewiston, ID, hit 117 degrees to establish an all-time record high for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1943 - On a whim, and flying a single engine AT-6, Lieutenant Ralph O'Hair and Colonel Duckworth were the first to fly into a hurricane. It started regular Air Force flights into hurricanes. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in Minnesota spawned a tornado which moved in a southwesterly direction for a distance of thirty miles across Rice County and Goodhue County. Trees were uprooted and tossed about like toys, and a horse lifted by the tornado was observed sailing horizontally through the air. Thunderstorms drenched La Crosse, WI, with 5.26 inches of rain, their second highest 24 hour total of record. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Hot weather prevailed in the north central U.S. Williston, ND, reported a record high of 108 degrees. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the eastern U.S., and in southeastern Texas. Richland County, SC, was soaked with up to 5.5 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains in the southwestern U.S. Yuma, AZ, experienced their most severe thunderstorm of record. Strong thunderstorm winds, with unofficial gusts as high as 95 mph, reduced visibilities to near zero in blowing dust and sand. Yuma got nearly as much rain in one hour as is normally received in an entire year. The storm total of 2.55 inches of rain was a record 24 hour total for July. Property damage due to flash flooding and high winds was in the millions. (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Wisconsin and northern Illinois to New England, with 103 reports of large hail and damaging winds through the day. Thunderstorms in Wisconsin produced hail three inches in diameter near Oshkosh, and wind gusts to 65 mph at Germantown. (The National Weather Summary)

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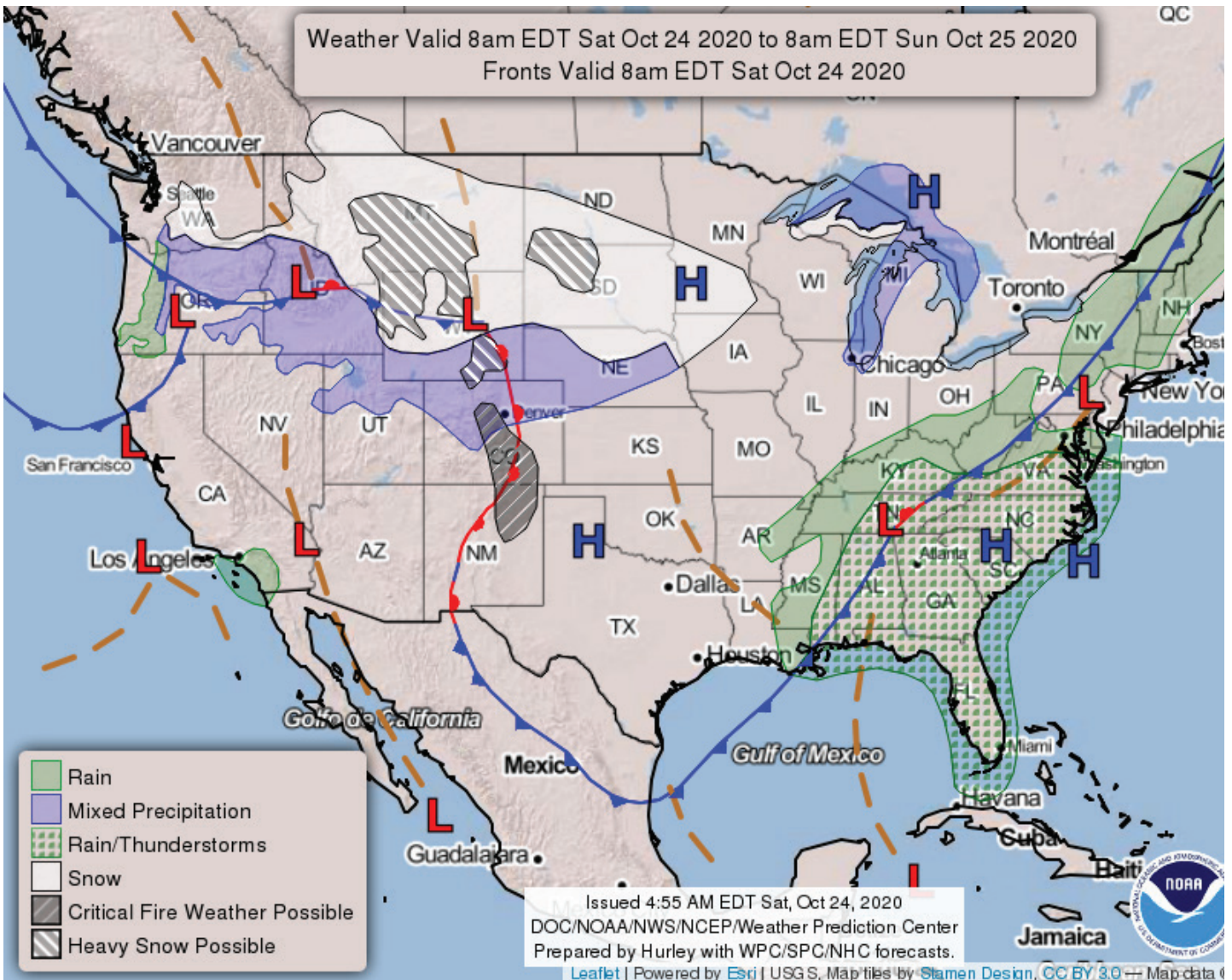
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 30 °F at 12:05 AM
Low Temp: 12 °F at 11:11 PM
Wind: 17 mph at 1:19 AM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 83° in 1989
Record Low: 6° in 1917
Average High: 54°F
Average Low: 30°F
Average Precip in Oct.: 1.61
Precip to date in Oct.: 1.06
Average Precip to date: 20.09
Precip Year to Date: 16.34
Sunset Tonight: 6:32 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:04 a.m.



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SHOULD IT BE FAITH OR FEELINGS?

Two best friends were walking home from church. It was a time for laughing and shoulder-nudging. Tim's Mom looked on approvingly as they enjoyed each other's company.

Suddenly, Tim caught Alex off-guard - looking in the wrong direction. To his left was a huge mud-puddle. Into the mud went Alex after a two-handed push from Tim.

"Why in the world did you do that, Tim?" asked his mother.

"Well," came his reply after a moment's thought, "the devil tricked me!"

"How?" she wondered. After all, they were walking home from church.

"Well," Tim said after thinking for a moment, "when the devil told me to do it, it felt so good I thought it was the Lord talking to me."

Scripture, Paul reminds us, is not only inspired by God but was given to us to teach us "what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right!" No small challenge!

Feelings come and go, but they are not facts that we can safely build our lives upon. There are times when our feelings encourage us to do what is right and avoid doing what is wrong. But, unfortunately, there are many times when our feelings and emotions are distorted by temptations and will lead us in the wrong direction. That's why God gave us clearly defined directions to follow in our relationships with others. We can find them in His Word if we look.

Prayer: Give us faith Lord that is strong enough to take You at Your Word and follow You every day of our lives. May we accept and follow Your guidance. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: All the Holy Writings are God-given and are made alive by Him. Man is helped when he is taught God's Word. It shows what is wrong. It changes the way of a man's life. It shows him how to be right with God. 2 Timothy 3:16

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

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

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News from the Associated Press

US sets coronavirus infection record; deaths near 224,000

By REBECCA BOONE and DAVID CRARY Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — The U.S. coronavirus caseload has reached record heights with more than 83,000 infections reported in a single day, the latest ominous sign of the disease's grip on the nation, as states from Connecticut to the Rocky Mountain West reel under the surge.

The U.S. death toll, meanwhile, has grown to 223,995, according to the COVID-19 Dashboard published by Johns Hopkins University. The total U.S. caseload reported on the site Friday was 83,757, topping the 77,362 cases reported on July 16.

The impact is being felt in every section of the country — a lockdown starting Friday at the Oglala Sioux Tribe's reservation in South Dakota, a plea by a Florida health official for a halt to children's birthday parties, dire warnings from Utah's governor, and an increasingly desperate situation at a hospital in northern Idaho, which is running out of space for patients and considering airlifts to Seattle or Portland, Oregon.

"We've essentially shut down an entire floor of our hospital. We've had to double rooms. We've bought more hospital beds," said Dr. Robert Scoggins, a pulmonologist at the Kootenai Health hospital in Coeur d'Alene. "Our hospital is not built for a pandemic."

In the southern Idaho city of Twin Falls, St. Luke's Magic Valley Medical Center said it would no longer accept children because it is overwhelmed with coronavirus patients. Except for newborns, all under age 18 will be sent 128 miles (206 kilometers) away in Boise.

Among those in northern Idaho joining Scoggins at a meeting of Idaho's Panhandle Health District was board member Walk Kirby.

"People are dying, they're going to keep dying and catching this stuff," Kirby said. "How many people won't wear a mask? The same people that won't get vaccinated for it."

Utah's Gov. Gary Herbert proclaimed Friday to be "a record day for Utah — but not a good one" as COVID-19 cases reached an all-time high for the state.

"Up until now, our hospitals have been able to provide good care to all COVID and non-COVID patients who need it," he said. "But today we stand on the brink. If Utahans do not take serious steps to limit group gatherings and wear masks, our healthcare providers will not have the ability to provide quality care for everyone who needs it."

By public health order, masks are required in 21 counties, said Herbert, urging Utah residents to wear one whenever they are around someone outside their immediate household.

The seven-day rolling average for new daily COVID-19 cases in the U.S. surpassed 61,140 Thursday, compared with 44,647 two weeks ago. The record was reached July 22 when the rolling average was 67,293 in the midst of a summer outbreak driven largely by surges of the virus in Florida, Texas, Arizona and California.

The U.S. surge mirrors a similarly widespread spike in Europe, where Rome, Paris and other major cities are reining in nightlife as part of the increasingly drastic measures undertaken to slow the spread of the pandemic. French authorities said the country had recorded over 1 million confirmed coronavirus cases since the start of the pandemic, becoming the second country in Western Europe after Spain to reach that number.

The head of the World Health Organization warned that countries in the Northern Hemisphere are at a "critical juncture" as cases and deaths continue to rise.

"The next few months are going to be very tough and some countries are on a dangerous track," said WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus at a press briefing on Friday.

Some of the latest developments in the United States:

SOUTH DAKOTA

In South Dakota, the Oglala Sioux Tribe ordered a one-week lockdown of the Pine Ridge Indian Reser-

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vation in response to a surging number of COVID-19 cases in the state. Through the morning of Oct. 30, all non-essential travel is banned and non-essential businesses must close.

The tribe posted on its Twitter page that there were 391 active COVID-19 cases as of Thursday on the reservation, which has about 20,000 residents.

The lockdown comes as South Dakota surpassed 9,000 active coronavirus cases on Thursday and reported an all-time high of 973 new cases in one day.

FLORIDA

The top health official in one of Florida's most populous counties discouraged parents from hosting birthday parties for their children, no matter the size.

Dr. Raul Pino, a state health officer in Orange County, said half of the 30 attendees at a recent Sweet 16 party in the Orlando area came down with the virus. Last month, an Orange County high school closed for two weeks after students who had attended a birthday party tested positive.

"Those parties will not only affect those people participating in that activity, but also everyone else they come into contact with when they leave," said Pino. "We will continue to see consequences if we don't act super-responsibly."

TEXAS

In Texas, Gov. Greg Abbott is sending more medical reinforcements to the El Paso area in response to a surge of coronavirus infections. The Texas Department of State Health Services and the Texas Division of Emergency Management will provide more medical personnel and equipment this week.

El Paso County reported 3,750 new coronavirus infections this week, including 1,161 on Thursday. That number accounts for 17.5% of the 21,321 cases reported this week by the state's 254 counties.

IDAHO

Even as the health-care situation worsened in northern Idaho, a regional health board voted to repeal a local mask mandate. It acted moments after hearing how the Kootenai Health hospital in Coeur d'Alene had reached 99% capacity.

Kootenai is the third-most populous county in conservative Idaho.

The state is experiencing its largest coronavirus spike since the pandemic began, with new cases increasing statewide by 46.5% percent over the past two weeks. Gov. Brad Little, a Republican, has declined to take steps such as requiring masks statewide to slow the virus' spread.

Dr. Joshua Kern, vice president of St. Luke's in the Magic Valley region that includes Twin Falls and Jerome, said Thursday during a virtual press conference that he and other medical professionals are scared.

"The purpose of any intervention around coronavirus has been to prevent the hospitals from being overwhelmed, and here I am today saying the hospital is being overwhelmed," he said.

A day later on Friday, his hospital announced the move to send younger patients to Boise.

NEW JERSEY and CONNECTICUT

For a while, as new COVID-19 cases surged in the Midwest and elsewhere, the level of new cases remained low in the Northeast, which had been hit hard earlier in the pandemic. Several states, including New Jersey and Connecticut, imposed 14-day quarantine requirements for travelers arriving from dozens of states with higher rates of positive tests.

This week, however, rates in New Jersey and Connecticut rose to the point where they qualify for their own quarantine restrictions.

After some confusion, the Democratic governors of New Jersey, Connecticut and New York, where rates remain lower, decided to keep their travel rules in place, but not add each other to their quarantine lists.

___ Crary reported from New York. Associated Press writers Amy Forliti in Minneapolis; Dave Collins in Hartford, Connecticut, Brady McCombs in Salt Lake City and Freida Frisaro in Orlando, Florida, contributed to this report.

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SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Friday:

Mega Millions

18-34-44-60-69, Mega Ball: 22, Megaplier: 2

(eighteen, thirty-four, forty-four, sixty, sixty-nine; Mega Ball: twenty-two; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$97 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$102 million

Hunters remember friend during South Dakota pheasant opener

By ERIN BORMETT Sioux Falls Argus Leader

OLIVET, S.D. (AP) — Don Bierle fondly remembers working at the request of his son, Steve, to convert part of his father-in-law's farmland into a wildlife habitat. Steve specialized in wildlife management and convinced his grandfather to let go of a few acres of crops in the interest of biodiversity.

These pieces of land became fertile hunting ground after planting native grasses, trees and other elements of a healthy habitat. The tradition of pheasant hunting with the Bierle family began.

In 2015, Steve drowned while saving his son from a strong current in the Pacific Ocean. Tradition changed after his death, and now family and friends gather to celebrate his memory while hunting on the land Steve created, the Argus Leader reported.

"You know old-time farmers, they don't give up land easy, it's for crops, but he persuaded him," said Bierle. "We're enjoying the fruit of Steve's labor even though he's not here anymore."

John Pollmann, Steve's best friend, said he feels blessed to come to such a special place year after year. Instead of the simple thrill of bagging pheasants, his experience is more layered.

"As I've gotten older I think it's become more about the experience of being out here," said Pollmann. "I mean, I love pulling the trigger. Steve and I always joked around about who could shoot faster. But now it's gone past that for me."

Pollmann has switched to shooting with a 16-gauge shotgun instead of the more typical 12-gauge because it was Steve's firearm of choice. He considers it his own "nod" to his friend's legacy.

Last year, heavy flooding got in the way of a quality pheasant hunt. Bierle said the property was entirely underwater. They even used it for duck hunting. For the upcoming season, his expectation in a word? "Positive."

"We heard there was a bit of an increase in the pheasant population," he said. "It's fun to get out here and see if it's producing."

In the middle of the first day of hunting, it was still hard to tell just how successful the season would be. Nearby fields with unharvested crops give the pheasants more places to hide until they come out to roost in the evening. In under three hours, Bierle and Pollmann's hunting group collected a total of seven birds.

"Overall, I'm happy, and it'll get better as the season progresses," said Pollmann.

Friday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Baltic def. Lennox, 25-21, 25-17, 25-22

Bridgewater-Emery def. Sanborn Central/Woonsocket, 25-13, 25-23, 25-22

Castlewood def. Oldham-Ramona/Rutland, 25-11, 25-13, 25-18

Clark/Willow Lake def. Tiospa Zina Tribal, 25-9, 25-23, 29-27

Colome def. Centerville, 25-19, 25-20, 25-13

Corsica/Stickney def. Scotland, 25-18, 25-18, 25-16

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Dakota Valley def. Vermillion, 25-11, 25-16, 25-10
Ethan def. Miller, 25-18, 25-20, 24-26, 25-22
Flandreau def. Deuel, 25-16, 25-15, 20-25, 18-25, 15-13
Florence/Henry def. Aberdeen Christian, 16-25, 25-13, 25-20, 25-18
Groton Area def. Wilmot, 25-17, 25-12, 25-22
Hanson def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-13, 25-13, 25-22
Highmore-Harrold def. Stanley County, 25-9, 25-11, 25-14
Hitchcock-Tulare def. Sully Buttes, 25-16, 25-15, 25-15
Madison def. Elk Point-Jefferson, 25-12, 25-10, 25-11
McCook Central/Montrose def. Canistota, 25-16, 25-14, 25-16
Potter County def. Faith, 26-28, 24-26, 25-18, 25-17, 15-5
Redfield def. Webster, 25-17, 14-25, 25-10, 21-25, 15-7
Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Sioux Falls Christian, 25-23, 25-15, 25-21
Sioux Falls Washington def. Mitchell, 25-17, 25-16, 25-14
Tea Area def. Tri-Valley, 27-25, 19-25, 25-23, 25-17
Warner def. Mobridge-Pollock, 25-14, 28-26, 25-5
Waverly-South Shore def. Waubay/Summit, 25-21, 25-15, 25-14
East-West Tournament=
Brandon Valley def. Rapid City Central, 25-13, 25-15
Brandon Valley def. Spearfish, 25-10, 26-24
Brookings def. Douglas, 25-14, 25-9
Brookings def. Rapid City Central, 25-11, 25-18
Brookings def. Spearfish, 25-22, 25-15
Harrisburg def. Rapid City Stevens, 25-5, 25-20
Harrisburg def. Sturgis Brown, 25-13, 25-20
Watertown def. Douglas, 25-6, 25-10
Watertown def. Rapid City Central, 25-10, 25-21
Watertown def. Spearfish, 25-11, 25-19
Yankton def. Rapid City Stevens, 30-28, 25-22
Yankton def. Sturgis Brown, 25-12, 25-19
New Underwood Triangular=
Wall def. New Underwood, 25-18, 25-21, 25-20

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

Pine Ridge Reservation going into lockdown due to COVID-19

PINE RIDGE, S.D. (AP) — The Oglala Sioux Tribe is locking down the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation on Friday, in response to a surging number of COVID-19 cases in the state.

The lockdown begins at 10 p.m. Friday and lasts until 6 a.m. Oct. 30. During that time, all non-critical travel is barred. The tribe said non-essential businesses should close to the public, and travel to non-essential work to or from the reservation should stop.

The tribe also said non-emergency medical appointments that require travel to or from the reservation should be rescheduled.

Tribes nationwide have taken an aggressive approach to preventing infections amid fears that Native Americans could be particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus — and this isn't the first time the Oglala Sioux Tribe has imposed a lockdown since the pandemic began.

The lockdown comes as the state reported 9,862 active coronavirus cases on Friday, and an all-time high of 1,132 new cases in one day. Nine new deaths were reported on Friday. October has been the state's deadliest month of the pandemic, with 133 of the state's 356 deaths happening this month.

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As of Thursday, South Dakota ranked second in the country in new infections per capita over the last two weeks, according to Johns Hopkins University data, with about one in every 97 people in the state testing positive for the virus in the last two weeks.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe posted on its Twitter page that there were 391 active COVID-19 cases on the reservation as of Thursday.

Trump votes in Fla. before rallies; Biden focusing on Pa.

By JILL COLVIN, WILL WEISSERT and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump said he voted Saturday “for a guy named Trump” and called it an “honor” to cast his own ballot in his adopted home state of Florida before he jetted off to campaign in three battleground states.

Democrat Joe Biden, with some help from rock legend Jon Bon Jovi, was focusing on hotly contested pockets of Pennsylvania that could prove key to deciding the outcome of the race in the state.

Trump, who spent the night at his Mar-a-Lago resort after campaigning Friday in Florida, stopped at an early voting polling site set up at a public library. The president last year switched his official residence from New York to his private Florida club, complaining that New York politicians had treated him badly.

Greeted at the polling site by a crowd of cheering supporters, Trump could have mailed in his ballot, but opted to vote in person. He wore a mask inside, following local rules in place to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus.

Biden hasn’t voted and is likely do so in person on Election Day, Nov. 3., as Delaware doesn’t offer early voting. Trump, who has made unsubstantiated claims of massive fraud about mail-in voting, gave another plug to in-person voting.

“When you send in your ballot it could never be like that. It could never be secure like that,” said Trump before leaving for his campaign stops in three states.

Rallies were planned for Lumberton, North Carolina, Circleville, Ohio, and Waukesha, Wisconsin, and the president promises to go full throttle over the final 10 days of the campaign even as the number of new daily coronavirus cases continues to climb.

The United States has hit a daily record of coronavirus cases with more than 83,000 reported infections, thousands more than the previous U.S. peak in July. The U.S. death toll has grown to nearly 224,00, according to the tally published by Johns Hopkins University. The total U.S. caseload reported Friday was 83,757, topping the 77,362 cases reported on July 16.

The numbers are an ominous sign the disease still has a firm grip on the nation that has more confirmed virus-related deaths and infections than any other in the world. Many states are reporting a surge of cases and say hospitals are running out of space in areas where the pandemic seemed remote only months ago.

Biden has focused much of his attention on making the case to voters that Trump doesn’t deserve a second term because of his handling of the pandemic. He punctuated the point in a podcast interview with former Obama administration aides that aired Saturday.

“Get control of the virus. Get control of coronavirus,” Biden told the Pod Save America. “Without that, nothing else is going to work very well.”

Biden planned drive-in events in Bucks County, part of suburban Philadelphia that 2016 Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton won by a slim margin, and Luzerne County, a blue-collar area that twice voted for Barack Obama but went overwhelmingly for Trump four years ago. Biden’s campaign said the former vice president will be joined by Bon Jovi, a native of neighboring New Jersey, who will sing at the Luzerne event.

Bon Jovi was part of a huge outdoor concert in November 2016 with the Obamas and Clinton in Philadelphia. That event came mere hours before Clinton lost to Donald Trump.

More than 54 million votes have already been cast, with an additional 100 million or so expected before a winner is declared.

The pandemic has pushed Trump onto the defensive for much of the fall, but for the moment it is Biden’s team that has been forced to explain itself. In the final minutes of Thursday night’s debate, the former

vice president said he supports a "transition" away from oil in the U.S. in favor of renewable energy. The campaign released a statement hours later declaring that he would phase out taxpayer subsidies for fossil fuel companies, not the industry altogether.

But Trump, campaigning in Florida, repeatedly seized on the issue.

"That could be one of the biggest mistakes made in presidential debate history," he said at a Friday rally at The Villages, a sprawling retirement community in central Florida. Later, in Pensacola, Trump recounted the moment with glee.

While Florida is still logging thousands of new COVID-19 cases daily, audience members stood and sat shoulder-to-shoulder and Make America Great Again hats far outnumbered face coverings. In-person voting in the state began Monday.

As part of his damage control, Biden dispatched running mate Kamala Harris to help clarify his position as she campaigned in swing state Georgia.

"Let's be really clear about this: Joe Biden is not going to ban fracking," Harris said, referring to a technique that uses pressurized liquid to extract oil or natural gas. "He is going to deal with the oil subsidies. You know, the president likes to take everything out of context. But let's be clear, what Joe was talking about was banning subsidies, but he will not ban fracking in America."

As for Biden and oil, while ending the nation's reliance on fossil fuel is popular among many liberals, the idea could hurt him among working-class voters in swing states such as Pennsylvania, Ohio and Texas who depend on the industry, and fracking in particular, to make a living.

Trump's allies immediately began running new attack ads seizing on the Democrats' inconsistent answers on energy. And Trump played a video at his Pensacola rally that included past comments from Biden and Harris about fracking, which Harris supported banning during her primary campaign.

As part of his plan to fight climate change, Biden has said he would ban new gas and oil permits — including fracking — on federal lands only. The vast majority of oil and gas does not come from federal lands.

Weissert reported from Wilmington, Delaware, and Madhani from Washington.

Fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh goes on despite US mediation

STEPANAKERT, Nagorno-Karabakh (AP) — Rocket and artillery barrage hit residential areas in Nagorno-Karabakh on Saturday hours after the United States hosted top diplomats from Armenia and Azerbaijan for talks on settling their decades-long conflict over the region.

The heavy shelling forced residents of Stepanakert, the regional capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, into shelters, as emergency teams rushed to extinguish fires. Local officials said the city was struck with Azerbaijan's Smerch long-range multiple rocket systems, a devastating Soviet-designed weapon intended to ravage wide areas with explosives and cluster munitions.

Nagorno-Karabakh authorities said other towns in the region were also targeted by Azerbaijani artillery fire. There was no immediate information about casualties.

Officials in Azerbaijan claimed that the town of Terter and areas in the Gubadli region came under Armenian shelling early Saturday, killing a teenager. They also said 13-year-old boy died Saturday of wounds from an earlier shelling of Ganja, Azerbaijan's second-largest city.

Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a war there ended in 1994. The current fighting that started Sept. 27 marks the worst escalation in the conflict since the war's end and has killed hundreds, perhaps even thousands, according to official reports.

After two failed attempts by Russia to broker a truce, the U.S. waded onto the scene on Friday, with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo hosting the Armenian and Azerbaijan foreign ministers for separate talks.

"Both must implement a ceasefire and return to substantive negotiations," Pompeo said in a tweet after the negotiations.

Those words were ignored on the ground.

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"Just now a bomb exploded in my garden," Georgiy, a resident of Stepanakert who only gave his first name amid the war jitters, said after the overnight attack. "If this is the so-called cease-fire, let the whole world see this cease-fire."

Georgiy, who was born in Stepanakert, said he would stay home despite the fighting.

"This is my motherland, I'm not going to leave it," he said. "All the people will stand until the last."

Despite the fighting, residents of the town of Shushi in Nagorno-Karabakh celebrated a wedding at the Holy Savior Cathedral, also known as the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral and which was badly damaged during earlier Azerbaijani shelling.

Hovhannes Hovsepyan, who serves in the region's military, took a two-day leave from the frontline to marry Mariam Sargsyan. The couple planned their wedding before the latest outburst of fighting began.

"I wish the war ends and everyone comes back and joins ceremonies like this one," Hovsepyan said. "Glory to heroes that are alive, and I wish new heroes are born and they don't see wars."

According to Nagorno-Karabakh officials, 963 of their troops have been killed, and 37 civilians also have died. Azerbaijan hasn't disclosed its military losses, but said that 65 civilians were killed and about 300 were wounded in the four weeks of fighting.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that according to Moscow's information, the death toll from the fighting was significantly higher than officially reported by the warring parties, nearing 5,000.

Russia, the United States and France have co-chaired the so-called Minsk Group set up by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to mediate in the conflict, but they haven't scored any progress after nearly three decades.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has said that to end hostilities Armenian forces must withdraw from Nagorno-Karabakh. He has insisted that Azerbaijan has the right to reclaim its territory by force since international mediators have failed.

Turkey has thrown its weight behind Azerbaijan, vowing to support its ally "on the battlefield or the negotiating table." It has trained Azerbaijani military and provided it with strike drones and long-range rocket systems that gave Azerbaijan a strong military edge on the battlefield.

Armenian officials say Turkey is directly involved in the conflict and is sending Syrian mercenaries in 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.

Avet Demourian in Yerevan, Armenia, Aida Sultanova in London and Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed to this report.

Stressed freshmen missing quintessential college experience

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

It's a major life milestone, the first time many U.S. teens have ever been on their own. Even in normal times, freshman year in college can be a jumbled mix of anticipation, uncertainty and emotional highs and lows.

In these hardly normal times, when the quintessential college experience exists only in catalogs, freshmen are being challenged like never before.

Amid pandemic restrictions aimed at keeping students safe and healthy, colleges are scrambling to help them adjust. But many are struggling.

Social distancing requirements, mask mandates and daily temperature checks. Quarantine and isolation. Online learning glitches. Campus Black Lives Matter protests. Anxiety over whether to join parties or hole up in dorm rooms or at home to stay safe.

This is freshman year 2020 for many college students nationwide.

"There is a lot of stress and distress among students now," said Mary Ann Takemoto, interim vice presi-

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dent of student affairs at Cal State Long Beach near Los Angeles, where most classes are online.

Freshmen in particular “feel a little more fragile” than usual. “They feel overwhelmed by a lot of things going on as we approach this election. There’s this increasing national anxiety,” she said.

The Long Beach university offers an array of online resources on reducing stress, improving study habits, and where to go for counseling and other help. Takemoto said less than three months into the fall semester, almost 200 students — about 25% of them freshmen — have been referred to a campus counseling and crisis center. Five in one week went to psychiatric hospitals, a number more typical of an entire semester. While Takemoto didn’t have specifics on those students, she said some were likely freshmen.

“Sixty percent of our students are students of color. Many do not have technology hot spots, many do not have a good place at home for studying,” Takemoto said. The university has made efforts to loan laptops to needy students, but “we still know that it doesn’t always work.”

Freshman Santiago Mayer, who moved with his family from Mexico to California two years ago, said he’s a naturally optimistic person trying to make the best of a “nightmarish” time.

He lives at home and said it’s often too distracting to focus on online classes so he spends his time on other pursuits. That includes a political campaign he helped create that encourages high school graduates to don their unworn prom clothes while voting in upcoming elections.

“At this point I’ve completely forgotten about having a normal freshman year,” Mayer said.

At the University of North Carolina, Asheville, some classes are being held in person but on many days the campus looks like a ghost town, said Miracle Okoro, 20.

“It’s not easy to be able to thrive in this environment where it’s your first year in college, your first experience in the real world and having to do it in such an isolating way,” she said.

Originally from Nigeria, Okoro works as a student health ambassador, a campus program in which students encourage their peers to engage in safe and healthy behavior and steers them to campus resources and activities. These include daily mental health and fitness breaks, a pen pal program to help students make friends online, and arranging serenades by performing arts students outside housing for those who’ve been exposed to the virus or become ill.

Health ambassadors and other campus groups also hold online support sessions after stressful events, including the COVID-19 death of a student at nearby Appalachian State in late September, and less than two weeks later, an email threat to administrators demanding removal of a campus Black Lives Matter mural that Okoro had worked on. In response, the university imposed a day-long shelter-in-place order Oct. 9.

“It caused students anxiety and a lot of fear across the whole campus,” particularly students of color, Okoro said.

Unnerved, she spent the following week at her family’s Charlotte home, then returned to find an increased police presence on campus, creating mixed feelings for some students.

“It hasn’t been easy,” Okoro said of freshman year so far, but added, “I don’t wallow in it.”

“I think that is something a lot of Black people have grown up with,” she said. “The ability to take in your circumstances and try to move past them. What are you going to do — not survive? There’s no choice but to get through it.”

Just outside Asheville, at Warren Wilson College’s rural campus, freshman Robert French describes a “general sense of dread hanging over us.”

After battling a mild case of COVID-19 in the spring and being sequestered with his family in Detroit during Michigan’s emergency restrictions, French was looking forward to getting away and making a fresh start.

He found that daily campus life begins with temperature checks before breakfast and color-coded stickers to wear indicating no fever.

Some classes are online only, which he finds alienating. And one in-person class switched to online when the instructor was exposed to the virus. French said that has made it tough to interact with professors.

College-organized activities include cookouts, yoga classes and hikes, but French said the masks and social distancing requirements make it hard to form friendships.

Some students formed “germ families,” cliques whose members hang out and party together unmasked but don’t let other students join.

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French said he eventually found his own group of friends, but said some freshmen are having a tougher time.

Em Enoch is one of them. A reserved 18-year-old from Indianapolis, she has already decided to go home and finish the rest of freshman year with online classes.

Like at least 13% of U.S. teens, Enoch has a history of depression and said with all the virus-related campus restrictions, "being here has made everything feel like the world is ending even more than it is."

Though there have been no confirmed COVID-19 cases on the Warren Wilson campus, she avoids the dining hall and other places that seem too risky.

"I don't leave my room often, so I feel like I'm confined to this little space of existence," Enoch said.

Still, Art Shuster, the college's counseling director, said there's been a smaller than expected uptick in students struggling with isolation and anxiety.

These are not new issues for a generation that sometimes relies on social media for connection, he said, noting that "the surge in mental health need has been ongoing for a number of years."

Still, he said the college was anticipating an even greater need for counseling and similar services among this year's freshmen. They've missed out on some "pretty significant milestones."

Madison Zurmuehlen got over a ditched prom and delayed graduation ceremony, but arrived at the University of Missouri-Kansas City to find other disappointments.

She's on an athletic scholarship, but soccer season was moved from fall to spring.

She said daily practices, with masks, are "the one thing I look forward to," so it was tough when campus sports were canceled for two weeks after an outbreak among student athletes and staff.

To stay safe, athletes are discouraged from hanging out with other students, and aren't allowed to go home except for Thanksgiving break, she said.

She misses her family in the St. Louis area, and spends lots of time in her dorm room, either attending virtual classes or just hanging out with her roommate.

Her coach recently sensed that the team was stressed and arranged a virtual session with a therapist.

"He let us say how we were feeling in the COVID times and gave us ways to feel better about it," Zurmuehlen said.

"What felt helpful," she said, "was knowing my other teammates were going through the same thing."

Follow AP Medical Writer Lindsey Tanner at @LindseyTanner.

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Despite rhetoric, GOP has supported packing state courts

By ANDREW DeMILLO Associated Press

Republican claims that Democrats would expand the U.S. Supreme Court to undercut the conservative majority if they win the presidency and control of Congress has a familiar ring.

It's a tactic the GOP already has employed in recent years with state supreme courts when they have controlled all levers of state political power.

Republican governors in Arizona and Georgia have signed bills passed by GOP-dominated legislatures to expand the number of seats on their states' respective high courts. In Iowa, the Republican governor gained greater leverage over the commission that names judicial nominees.

"The arguments being advanced now by Republican leaders — that this is an affront to separation of powers, that this is a way of delegitimizing courts — those don't seem to be holding at the state level," said Marin Levy, a law professor at Duke University who has written about efforts to expand state high courts.

President Donald Trump and the GOP have seized on the issue in the final weeks of the presidential race, arguing that Democratic nominee Joe Biden would push a Democratic Congress to increase the number

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of seats on the Supreme Court and fill those with liberal justices.

Some on the left have floated the idea in the wake of Republicans' rush to confirm Amy Coney Barrett to fill the seat of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a liberal icon who died last month.

Biden, for his part, has said he's not a fan of so-called "court packing," and it's far from certain that Democrats can win back the majority in the U.S. Senate.

Arizona's governor, Republican Doug Ducey, said he opposes adding seats to the U.S. Supreme Court. "We shouldn't be changing our institutions," he told reporters recently.

Yet Ducey signed a bill that did just that at the state level in 2016, expanding the Arizona Supreme Court from five seats to seven. As a result, Ducey has appointed more judges than any other governor in the state's history.

Ducey said the situations are not the same because Arizona's system for selecting judges allows him to appoint them only from a list sent to him by a commission that interviews and vets candidates.

Arizona judges also face "retention" elections, a process that is essentially a formality. No state supreme court justice has ever lost a retention election.

"It's apples and oranges," Ducey said, comparing the state and federal high courts. "We have a merit selection process in Arizona, and I'm not the one who selects the judges that are put in front of me."

That same year in Georgia, then-Gov. Nathan Deal signed similar legislation expanding that state's supreme court from seven to nine seats. Supporters said the move was needed because of the state's growing population and economy.

But the expansion allowed Deal to leave his conservative mark on the court by appointing a majority of its justices by the time he left office.

Democrats, including then-House Minority Leader Stacey Abrams, opposed the expansion. She questioned the need for adding seats without seeing the effects of other changes the Legislature made to the court's responsibilities.

"To simultaneously increase the size of the court without really understanding the necessity, I find problematic," Abrams, who two years later narrowly lost a bid for governor, said at the time. "There are political concerns, always, about appointments to the court and the positions that those new justices would take."

Some of the court-packing efforts at the state level have come in response to controversial court rulings. In 2007, a Republican state senator in the majority-Republican Florida Legislature proposed and later withdrew a proposal to more than double the number of seats on the state Supreme Court after the court struck down a school voucher bill. The legislation said the court's decision "betrays a lack of respect on the part of the majority for the separation of state powers."

A Republican lawmaker in Iowa's Legislature, then controlled by Democrats, proposed expanding the state's high court in 2009 following a ruling legalizing gay marriage in the state.

That effort was unsuccessful, but conservatives in the now majority GOP Iowa Legislature last year upended the way justices are chosen for the court. Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds signed into law legislation that effectively gave her a majority on the commission that names potential judges and justices.

The change had the backing of the Judicial Crisis Network, a conservative group in Washington that has spent millions on ads urging Barrett's confirmation.

"The people of Iowa want fair justice, so why do trial lawyers carry more weight than you?" the group said in a video backing the changes in Iowa.

The state-level moves are part of a broader, longer-term effort by conservatives to reshape the judiciary. Outside groups have been playing an increasing role in state judicial races in recent years. They accounted for a quarter of all spending in the 2018 state supreme court elections, and in some states outspent the candidates, according to figures compiled by the Brennan Center for Justice.

"There are just so many stories to point to from so many different states of legislators using every tool they have to give themselves and their allies an upper hand in the state's most important courts," said Douglas Keith, counsel at the Brennan Center.

___ DeMillo reported from Little Rock, Ark. Associated Press writer Jonathan J. Cooper in Phoenix contributed to this report.

Ethiopia blasts Trump remark that Egypt will 'blow up' dam

By ELIAS MESERET Associated Press

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP) — Ethiopia on Saturday denounced “belligerent threats” over the huge dam it has nearly completed on the Blue Nile River, a day after U.S. President Donald Trump said downstream Egypt will “blow up” the project it has called an existential threat.

Ethiopia’s foreign minister summoned the U.S. ambassador to seek clarification, saying “the incitement of war between Ethiopia and Egypt from a sitting U.S. president neither reflects the longstanding partnership and strategic alliance between Ethiopia and the United States nor is acceptable in international law governing interstate relations,” a statement said.

Without naming Trump or the U.S., Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s office issued a separate critical statement amid an outcry in Ethiopia over Trump’s latest threat over the dam. The \$4.6 billion Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is a source of national pride, aimed at pulling millions of people from poverty.

“The man doesn’t have a clue on what he is talking about,” Former Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn tweeted, calling Trump’s remark reckless and irresponsible.

Trump made the comment while announcing that Sudan would start to normalize ties with Israel. Downstream Sudan is a party to the talks with Ethiopia and Egypt over the disputed dam. “They (Egypt) will end up blowing up the dam,” Trump said. “And I said it and I say it loud and clear ... they’ll blow up that dam. And they have to do something.”

The U.S. president earlier this year told the State Department to suspend millions of dollars in aid to Ethiopia because of the dam dispute, angering Ethiopians who had accused the U.S. of being biased during its earlier efforts to broker a deal on the project among Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan. Ethiopia walked away from those talks.

“They will never see that money unless they adhere to that agreement,” Trump said Friday.

“Occasional statements of belligerent threats to have Ethiopia succumb to unfair terms still abound,” the statement by the Ethiopian prime minister’s office said. “These threats and affronts to Ethiopian sovereignty are misguided, unproductive, and clear violations of international law.”

It added: “Ethiopia will not cave in to aggressions of any kind.”

There was no comment from the Egyptian government on Trump’s remarks, but pro-government media covered them extensively. Egypt has repeatedly said it wants to settle the dispute through diplomatic means, but it has said it would use “all available means” to defend the interests of its people.

Ethiopia celebrated the first filling of the dam in August, citing heavy rains, to the dismay of Egypt. Ethiopia later banned flights over the dam amid concerns over possible military action by Egypt.

Now, with Trump’s new remarks, some Ethiopians are urging Ethiopian Americans to help vote him out of office in next month’s election.

Worried by the prospect of further friction between two of Africa’s most powerful and populous countries, European Union representative Josep Borrell said in a statement that “now is the time for action and not for increasing tensions,” adding that a deal on the dam is within reach.

The statement by Abiy’s office said the talks with Egypt and Sudan have shown significant progress since the African Union has stepped in to oversee them. Trump’s statement could undermine that process, said Abel Abate Demissie, an associate fellow at Chatham House, adding that it proves the U.S. wasn’t an honest broker from the start.

Ethiopia says the colossal dam could help it become a major power exporter. Egypt depends on the Nile to supply its farmers and a booming population of 100 million with fresh water.

Negotiators have said key questions remain about how much water Ethiopia will release downstream if a multi-year drought occurs and how the countries will resolve any future disputes. Ethiopia rejects binding arbitration at the final stage.

A military strike on the dam would be disastrous, one water expert warned. The dam already has more than 4.9 billion cubic meters of water in its reservoir,” Abebe Yirga told The Associated Press. “It will affect thousands of people along the way if this huge amount of water gushes out of the dam.”

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The Blue Nile joins the White Nile in Sudan to become the Nile, and about 85% of the river's flow originates from Ethiopia. Officials hope the dam, now more than three-quarters complete, will reach full power-generating capacity in 2023.

Samy Magdy in Cairo contributed.

California utility may cut power to 1 million people

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Pacific Gas & Electric may cut power to over 1 million people on Sunday to prevent the chance of sparking wildfires as extreme fire weather returns to the region, the utility announced Friday.

The nation's largest utility said it could black out customers in 38 counties — including most of the San Francisco Bay Area — as weather forecasts called for a return of bone-dry, gusty weather that carries the threat of downing or fouling power lines or other equipment that in recent years have been blamed for igniting massive and deadly blazes in central and Northern California.

The safety shutoffs were expected to begin as early as Sunday morning and last into Tuesday, affecting 466,000 homes and businesses, or more than 1 million residents assuming between two and three people per home or business customer.

Cuts are predicted to encompass parts of the Sacramento Valley, the northern and central Sierra Nevada, upper elevations of the San Francisco Bay Area, the Santa Cruz Mountains, the Central Coast and portions of southern Kern County.

The projected shutoffs included 19,000 customers in parts of Butte County, where a 2018 blaze ignited by PG&E equipment destroyed much of the town of Paradise and killed 85 people.

Forecasts call for the "the driest humidity levels and the strongest winds of the wildfire season thus far," a PG&E statement said.

The National Weather Service issued red flag warnings for many areas, predicting winds of 35 mph (56 kph) or higher in San Francisco and lower elevations and up to 70 mph (113 kph) in some mountains. The concern is that any spark could be blown into flames sweeping through tinder-dry brush and forestland.

"On a scale of 1 to 10, this event is a 9," Craig Clements, director of San Jose State University's Fire Weather Lab, told the Bay Area News Group. "Historically our biggest fires are in October. We are in a critical period."

The National Weather Service said the conditions could equal those during devastating fires in California's wind country in 2017 and last year's Kincadee Fire.

Fire officials said PG&E transmission lines sparked that Sonoma County fire last October, which destroyed hundreds of homes and caused nearly 100,000 people to flee.

The public safety power shutoff, or PSPS, would be the fifth this year, including one that began Wednesday and was scheduled to end late Friday.

The upcoming weather forecast will be even more dangerous, said Scott Strenfel, the utility's chief meteorologist.

"We're seeing four extremes in the weather for this potential PSPS event: extremely high winds, extremely low humidity, extreme dry fuels due to the hottest average temperatures over the last six months according to records that go back 126 years, and extreme drought across the territory given lack of rainfall," he said in a statement.

Southern California, meanwhile, continued to cool down with patchy drizzle. Forecasters said light rain was expected Saturday night through early Monday, with light mountain snow possible Sunday night, followed by Santa Ana winds.

Eight of the 10 deadliest fires in California history have occurred in October or November. Some of the largest also have occurred since August of this year.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, known as Cal Fire, said 5,500 firefighters were working Friday to fully contain 19 wildfires. Two-dozen new fires were contained Thursday despite

red flag conditions. Numerous studies have linked bigger wildfires in America to climate change from the burning of coal, oil and gas.

Scientists say climate change has made California much drier, meaning trees and other plants are more flammable.

More 8,600 wildfires have scorched well over 6,400 square miles (16,576 square kilometers) and destroyed about 9,200 buildings in California this year. There have been 31 deaths.

All of the huge fires have been fully or significantly contained, but more than 6,000 firefighters remain committed to 19 blazes, including a dozen major incidents, Cal Fire said.

Many of this year's devastating fires were started by thousands of dry lightning strikes. But some of the fires remain under investigation for potential electrical causes.

This story has been corrected to show the utility may, not will, cut power to over 1 million people.

The Needle goes away as probability experts assess 2020 race

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The one thing most likely to conjure nightmares of the 2016 election night for opponents of President Donald Trump is the Needle.

A graphic on The New York Times' website, the Needle measured in real time the probability of victory for Trump or Hillary Clinton as votes were counted. Its steady movement triggered anxiety for Clinton supporters, who repeatedly refreshed the page, and elation for Trump fans.

The Needle won't be making a reappearance on Nov. 3, one change in the world of election probability gurus following the unexpected 2016 result. Nate Silver's influential FiveThirtyEight blog used a number, not a needle, for the same task four years ago but won't on election night 2020.

Silver said the change had more to do with uncertainties created by the high volume of early voting this year than any failures in 2016.

"I just think people need to be exceptionally careful," he said.

Silver has been a pioneer in the specialized field of statistic experts who crunch the growing number of public opinion polls to put them in a broader context. Nate Cohn of the Times and his blog The Upshot, is also a leader.

They amplified the shock of 2016 by predicting a high probability of a Clinton victory. Samuel Wang of the Princeton Election Consortium said she had a 93% chance of victory — a call that later led him to eat a cricket live on CNN as penance.

Cohn went into election night saying Clinton had an 85% chance of winning, and that served as the Needle's baseline. The graphic was a meter, shaped like a half-clock, with outcomes that ranged from a "very likely" Clinton win to the same for Trump.

At 8:02 p.m. Eastern time on election night, the Needle pointed sharply to the left, and a "likely" Clinton win. It moved to the right as results came in. By 10 p.m., the pointer headed into the "toss-up" category and, less than two hours later, was "leaning Trump."

You know how the story ended.

In later mea culpas, pollsters noted they weren't far off in predicting Clinton's advantage in the popular vote. Crucial state polls in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin had been wrong, however, and that was enough for Trump to win the Electoral College.

Silver was more cautious heading into election night; his final forecast gave Clinton a 71% chance of winning and Trump a 29% likelihood. For that, he was criticized by those who couldn't conceive of a Trump win.

While a 29% chance may not seem like much, Silver notes that a .290 batting average is pretty decent for a Major League baseball player. That's where the probability experts acknowledge their weakness, in communicating that a Trump victory was not impossible.

Cohn later wrote, "We failed at explaining that an 85% chance is not 100%."

"We think people should have been better prepared for it," Silver wrote after the election. "There was a

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widespread complacency about Clinton's chances in a way that wasn't justified by careful analysis of the data and uncertainties surrounding it."

When the Times announced before the 2020 Democratic primaries that the Needle would return, it provoked an anxious response encapsulated in a Rolling Stone magazine headline: "The New York Times Needle and the Damage Done."

But that response has a lot to do with perspective. The newspaper's readership, like the city itself, is heavily liberal.

"It performed exactly as we had hoped," Cohn wrote in 2018, "and, frankly, if more readers and journalists were conservative, they would have seen it ... as the leading indicator of a thrilling upset."

The Times didn't make Cohn available for an interview, so the Needle's demise is shrouded in some mystery. The Times' assistant masthead editor, Steve Duenes, said in a blog last week that the newspaper was "considering alternatives to the single, predictive needle that offered readers false confidence in 2016."

The probability experts aren't shying away from predictions this year. Silver's site said Saturday its computers had simulated the election 40,000 times, and Democrat Joe Biden won in 87% of them.

The Upshot said Biden would win 357 electoral votes if the polls through Saturday were correct, while Princeton put him at 358 electoral votes — both enough for a comfortable victory.

FiveThirtyEight has consciously given its election forecast a less prominent spot on the website this year, Silver said. That's not to signal a lack of confidence, but is being done to make it harder for followers to obsess over it.

The election night probability estimate is being replaced by an interactive tool that will allow readers to click and see what it does for the final result if individual states go one way or another.

Wang's Princeton site has an intriguing "Moneyball" feature that calculates where a person's vote has the greatest value, based on a state's population and the closeness of the polls. Currently, he puts voters in Nevada, Arizona and Maine's 2nd Congressional District at the top.

"Looking back on polling errors is missing the point this year," Wang said. "The point this year is whether we're going to have orderly and fair elections."

Silver said the average person probably had too much confidence in the polls in 2016 and now it has shifted in the other direction. They may be going out of their way to take seriously the chances Trump can win.

"I can't control what people think," he said. "I can only control that we're doing the best work that we possibly can."

'All talk, no action' defense likely in Michigan kidnap case

By JOHN FLESHER Associated Press

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP) — When members of a Michigan paramilitary group were accused a decade ago of scheming to overthrow the U.S. government, their defense was based largely on one claim: We were all talk, no action.

It worked so well that a federal judge took the rare step of dismissing most charges against the extremist group known as Hutaree, without giving the jury a say.

A defense lawyer in that case now represents Ty Garbin, one of six men accused of conspiring to kidnap Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer because of anger over her stay-at-home policies to contain the coronavirus. Again, attorney Mark Satawa contends his client had no intention to carry out the alleged plan, whatever he might have said in recorded or online conversations.

"Saying things like 'I hate the governor, the governor is tyrannical' ... is not illegal, even if you're holding a gun and running around the woods when you do it," Satawa told The Associated Press.

The "big talk" argument likely will be a primary theme for the defense, as attorneys indicated during a preliminary hearing this month. The verdict may turn on whether the judge or jury are convinced the plot was serious, say trial lawyers not involved with the matter.

Yet they caution that unique factors pose challenges and uncertainties for both sides — particularly as

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the matter unfolds against the backdrop of a pandemic, economic upheaval and a yawning political divide in the U.S.

"The defense lawyers are going to have their work cut out for them finding fair and impartial jurors who haven't predetermined the outcome before they hear the case," said Mike Rataj, another member of the defense team for the Hutaree, who were acquitted in 2012.

"On its face it looks terrible," Rataj said, referring to police and news reports about the kidnap plot allegations.

A crucial difference between the Hutaree case and this one is that the Hutaree extremists were charged with sedition — rebellion against the government. In the alleged plot against Whitmer, six men, led by Adam Fox of the Michigan III%ers, are charged in federal court with conspiracy to kidnap — a more specific allegation.

Authorities say members of a second anti-government organization also participated in the abduction scheme. Eight other men are believed to be members or associates of a group called the Wolverine Watchmen and are charged in state court with counts including providing material support for terrorist acts. Some of the Wolverine Watchmen are accused of planning and training for other violent crimes, including storming the Michigan Capitol building.

To win a conviction on the federal charges, prosecutors must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that more than one person agreed to kidnap the governor and took at least one step toward carrying out the plan.

The preliminary hearing showed the prosecution would use text messages and conversations secretly recorded by informants as evidence. The plotters cased Whitmer's northern Michigan vacation home in August and September and one purchased a Taser, while others agreed to buy explosives and tactical gear, FBI agent Richard Trask testified.

Defense attorneys grilled Trask about missing details, such as how the kidnapping would be done and where Whitmer would be taken. They questioned whether infiltrators had egged on the defendants. They argued that inflammatory comments and even live-fire training exercises were constitutionally protected.

Magistrate Judge Sally Berens ruled there was enough to send the case to a grand jury, which could issue indictments.

"The government isn't required to show that the conspirators signed on a dotted line or had a five-step plan for exactly how it was to go," she said. "They're required to show unity of purpose."

But the defense likely will portray the plot as more fantasy than reality, said John Smietanka, a former federal prosecutor.

"The tricky thing about conspiracy cases is ... when you have multiple parties, whether they have the same motives and agree on a common plan," said Smietanka, who also has been a defense lawyer. "What exactly did they agree to, and how?"

Defense attorneys probably also will focus on the informants and raise the idea of entrapment, he said. A potential wild card is the defendants' alleged political motivation.

While polls show many Michigan residents support Whitmer's strict handling of the coronavirus outbreak, she has drawn fierce opposition from some conservatives, including people who rallied at the state Capitol.

The jury pool in a kidnapping trial would be drawn from western Michigan, which leans Republican.

"Some of them may be sympathetic to these guys," Rataj said. "They may not like the governor. They might be the kind of folks who think she exceeded her power."

Prosecutors will try to weed out potential jurors who might be biased against Whitmer or the government in general, or skeptical about the pandemic, he said.

Defense attorneys, meanwhile, will be on the lookout for those who might be turned off by anti-government paramilitary activities.

"A federal judge is going to give you a lot of leeway in asking jurors about their sympathies and thinking" in the hope of getting an impartial panel, said Terry Dillon, another former federal prosecutor.

But at a time of bitter partisanship and overheated political rhetoric, he said, a claim that "this was loose talk, I was frustrated, I was just mouthing off, I never in this world intended to do anything" might be

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enough to raise doubts.

"All you need is one to hang a jury," Dillon said.

Four years in, Trump has plenty of unfinished business

By AAMER MADHANI and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump swept into office nearly four years ago as an outsider who promised to get things done quickly on behalf of the American people through sheer force of will and unrivaled knowledge about the art of the deal.

He has checked off some items on his to-do list.

Trump pushed through the most significant overhaul of the U.S. tax system since President Ronald Reagan. Trump, as he said he would, tilted the Supreme Court further to the right with confirmation of two conservative justices and likely a third, Amy Coney Barrett, in the coming days. His promise to get tough on illegal immigration has resulted in a surge in migrant apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexico border.

But Trump has also faced the same hard truth that each of his White House predecessors learned: Governing is rarely easy.

A look at some of the president's unfinished business as he asks voters for a second term in the White House:

HEALTH CARE

Trump has managed to undermine President Barack Obama's health care law, but has fallen far short of his promise to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.

His administration has managed to dismantle parts of the law. Enrollment periods have been shortened, some subsidies were ended and the individual mandate -- the fine for people without health insurance -- has been eliminated.

Trump says he's still focused on replacing the with something "much better and much less expensive." He said in an interview with CBS' "60 Minutes" that "it will be so good" if the Supreme Court puts an end to "Obamacare" when the justices hear challenges to it next month.

The number of uninsured Americans has risen under Trump's watch. According to Census Bureau data released last month, nearly 30 million people in the U.S. lacked coverage at some point during 2019, about 1 million more than in the previous year.

"ENDLESS WARS"

Trump has made only modest progress toward meeting his 2016 pledge to bring home all troops from what he calls America's "endless wars."

When Trump took over the White House, the number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan stood at about 8,400, and there were about 6,800 troops in Iraq.

Within a year, the number of troops in Afghanistan climbed to about 15,000. Trump approved commanders' requests for additional troops to reverse setbacks in the training of Afghan forces, fight an increasingly dangerous Islamic State group and put enough pressure on the Taliban to force it to the peace table.

In February, the U.S. and the Taliban signed an agreement that calls for the eventual complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan.

With an eye toward the election, Trump has accelerated his push to bring troops home, teasing that all U.S. troops could be out of Afghanistan by the end of the year.

Pentagon officials said the number of troops in Afghanistan will drop to 4,500 in November. But defense officials insist there are no plans to have all troops home from Afghanistan by the end of the year. U.S. officials also say there currently is no approved plan to reduce the number to 2,500 by early next year. The officials were not authorized to publicly discuss internal deliberations and spoke on condition of anonymity.

In Iraq, the number of U.S. troops has dipped from about 5,000 to roughly 3,000, although officials say the number fluctuates higher as units rotate in and out.

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THE WALL

During his 2016 primary run, Trump sought to mark his ground as a hard-line immigration enforcer who would build "a great, great wall on our southern border."

"And I will make Mexico pay for that wall," Trump said as he launched his run for the White House in June 2015. "Mark my words."

Nearly four years later, Trump still has work to do completing his wall and much that has been completed has been paid by U.S. taxpayers despite promises otherwise.

The president's administration has promised to build 450 miles by the end of this year and has so far built 371. Trump has replaced hundreds of miles of old, worn-out barriers, meant only to stop cars, with tall, 30-foot fencing that is much harder to get over and impedes wildlife from crossing the border. Conservationists in Arizona, where a bulk of the building has taken place, say the new wall is detrimental to wildlife and the surrounding ecosystems.

Mexico has steadfastly refused to pay for the border wall, though Trump earlier this year suggested that the wall is being paid, in part, by remittances from Mexican immigrants working in the U.S.

To date, the money is coming from the U.S. Treasury, meaning today's taxpayers and the future ones who will inherit the federal debt. To the extent any people who came into the U.S. illegally are kicking in for the wall, it's because they're working and paying taxes like other workers.

Trump also freed up \$3.6 billion for the wall last year by diverting money from military construction projects as well as \$2.5 billion from approved counterdrug spending.

MIDEAST PEACE

Early in his presidency, Trump expressed confidence that his administration could broker a long-term peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. "We will get it done," Trump declared in May 2017. He put his son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner in charge.

Trump moved the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a step that was cheered by Israelis and the president's evangelical Christian supporters in the U.S. but angered Palestinian leaders. He scored a big win in recent weeks with the U.S. nudging Bahrain, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates — three Arab states — to normalize relations with Israel.

The normalization of relations between Israel and the three Arab nations is certainly an important achievement. But the agreements between nations that have never been in direct conflict don't meaningfully move the ball in achieving the large and long elusive goal of achieving peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The White House's multiple attempts to designate an "infrastructure week" — each effort quickly eclipsed by other issues — have become something of a running punchline in the administration.

In his 2016 victory speech, Trump said he would rebuild the nation's highways, bridges, tunnels, airports, schools and hospitals, making American infrastructure "second to none" and putting millions to work in the process.

Nearly four years later, Trump's soaring rhetoric has failed to produce legislation.

In April 2019, Trump reached an agreement with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., to pursue a \$2 trillion infrastructure plan. This March, he resurrected the idea for a "VERY BIG & BOLD" plan for infrastructure spending to help jolt the staggering economy after the coronavirus pandemic hit.

While Pelosi and Schumer again threw their support behind big infrastructure spending, Senate Republicans have bristled at deficit spending, and Trump's sales pitch has gone nowhere with his own party.

TRUMP'S TAXES

On the debate stage four years ago, Trump said his federal income taxes were "under a routine audit" but promised they would be released as soon as the IRS finished.

Four years later, Trump says the IRS still hasn't completed its work, and the president has yet to fulfill

his promise to release his tax returns. No law prevents Trump from making his tax filings public while under audit.

Questions about Trump's tax returns — and his broader financial situation — have only grown following revelations that he is personally liable for more than \$400 million in debt. That sort of debt load, ethics experts say, raises concerns he could be manipulated to sway U.S. policy by those to whom he's indebted.

The New York Times reported last month that Trump's debt includes more than \$300 million in loans that will come due in the next four years.

Trump dismisses his debt load as a "peanut" compared with his assets.

The president is the only post-Watergate president not to release his tax returns.

Associated Press writers Robert Burns, Hope Yen, Calvin Woodward and Astrid Galvan contributed to this report.

As Trump casts doubt on election, new agency contradicts him

By BEN FOX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Earlier this month, President Donald Trump was predicting on Twitter that this election would be "the most corrupt" in American history. A day later, the head of an obscure government agency he created offered a much different message.

Christopher Krebs, the director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, closed an online conference with a warning about "bad guys, whoever they are," trying to "sow chaos, sow doubt" about the integrity of the U.S. election.

"I have confidence that your vote is secure, that state and local election officials across this country are working day in and day out, 24/7, that the 2020 election is as secure as possible," Krebs said.

It was just one of many ways that CISA has been offering a counternarrative as it works behind the scenes to not only help safeguard the election but also to reassure the public despite messages to the contrary from the White House.

That conflict could be on display on Election Day. Krebs and CISA will be in the national spotlight, monitoring the election amid the inevitable voting glitches and delays, which could be worsened by the coronavirus pandemic, under a president who has said he might not respect the results if he loses.

Krebs warned voters this week to "be prepared for efforts that call into question the legitimacy of the election" without mentioning that it's the president who has questioned mail-in voting and has called attention to relatively minor incidents in which a small number of ballots had apparently been discarded.

That conflict is all the more notable since CISA was signed into existence by Trump in November 2018 as part of the Department of Homeland Security, which itself has been accused of politicizing its missions under this administration.

Krebs and Ken Cuccinelli, the acting deputy secretary of DHS, spoke to journalists Thursday and said that, with tens of millions of votes already cast, there has been no sign of any foreign interference, unlike in 2016.

Still, there have been attempts to disrupt the election, including a campaign to send threatening emails to voters in several states that CISA and other federal agencies attributed to Iran, and election security is a widespread concern.

"It is true that the defense has gotten better since 2016, but it's also true that the offense has gotten better still," said Tom Warrick, a former deputy assistant secretary for counterterrorism policy at DHS who is now with the Atlantic Council. "I don't know of anyone who has absolute confidence that this is all going to go well from an election process standpoint."

CISA has been largely out of the public eye. It works with the state and local officials who run U.S. elections as well as private companies that supply voting equipment to address cybersecurity and other threats while monitoring balloting and tabulation from a control room at its headquarters near Washington.

Krebs, who with his collar-length hair looks more like a tech executive than a senior Trump administration

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official, also keeps a low profile. His carefully calibrated remarks at government or cybersecurity conferences rarely make major headlines.

That has helped him avoid the wrath that Trump has directed at FBI Director Chris Wray for saying there was little evidence of fraud with mail-in balloting, among other things.

Krebs should be praised for “staying focused on the mission and not getting caught up in the fray,” said Kiersten Todt, managing director of the nonprofit Cyber Readiness Institute.

“The importance of him staying in this job certainly through elections is pretty critical, and I think he feels that, too,” she said.

CISA also enjoys a good reputation among its core constituency — the state and local election officials who rely on its advice and services at a time of near-constant cyberattacks.

“They have really established themselves as kind of partners and facilitators,” said Trevor Timmons, chief information officer for Colorado’s secretary of state. “I have been really impressed with how CISA has really upped their game in the face of what is a threat to our democracy.”

The agency emerged from rocky beginnings. Just before President Barack Obama left office, the U.S. designated election systems as critical national security infrastructure, like dams or power plants, as a result of the interference by Russia, which included the penetration of state elections systems as well as massive disinformation.

Some state election officials and Republicans, suspicious of federal intrusion on their turf, were opposed to the designation. The National Association of Secretaries of State adopted a resolution in opposition to the move in February 2017.

But the Trump administration supported the designation, and, eventually, skeptical state officials welcomed the assistance. West Virginia Secretary of State Mac Warner said a turning point was when CISA and DHS began providing election officials with previously tightly held information on foreign threats.

“We started seeing DHS more as an ally or a friend than another one of the frustrations we had to deal with,” Warner said.

CISA, which has about 2,000 employees and a budget of around \$2 billion, deploys advisers throughout the country. It hasn’t received anywhere near the criticism directed at DHS, which has been blasted by former senior officials and members of Congress for seeming to push the administration’s political agenda on immigration and civil unrest. But there are still concerns.

“We have seen DHS involved with activities outside of CISA that I found, and most people in the country found, extremely troubling and inappropriate, and I think that does pose a challenge for CISA,” said Phil Reitinger, the president of the Global Cyber Alliance and a former federal official and prosecutor.

Todt, who as a congressional aide helped craft the legislation that created the Department of Homeland Security in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, said it may be time to either make CISA a standalone agency or at least give it a more prominent role within DHS given the extent of the threat.

“CISA has had four years to build out this capability, but I think we absolutely have to allocate resources to election infrastructure moving forward,” she said.

Loeffler charts path to the right in Georgia Senate race

By BEN NADLER Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Republican Sen. Kelly Loeffler stepped out of a Humvee on a foggy morning in northwest Georgia wearing an American flag trucker hat to accept the endorsement of a congressional candidate who has expressed support for baseless QAnon conspiracy theories and made disparaging comments about Black people, Muslims and Jews.

Loeffler smiled and nodded as Marjorie Taylor Greene praised her as “the most conservative Republican” running in Georgia’s multi-candidate special election for the U.S. Senate seat Loeffler was appointed to 10 months ago.

“What impressed me with Kelly is I found out that she believes a lot of the same things that I believe,” Greene said at the Oct. 15 event.

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Loeffler was appointed to the Senate on the hope that she would help the GOP hold on to moderates — especially suburban women — uncomfortable with the party's right turn under President Donald Trump. Instead, the wealthy businesswoman has followed Trump's lead and then some, embracing people like Greene, a political figure even many conservatives consider too extreme.

Her choice has many Republicans worried about how she'd fare in an anticipated January runoff election in a state where Republican dominance is slipping and victory could depend on more moderate voters and independents.

Loeffler spokeswoman Caitlin O'Dea said Loeffler was not available to be interviewed for this story and declined to answer questions.

In her quest to win a spot in the runoff, Loeffler has been locked in a brutal battle for the conservative base of the Republican Party with GOP Rep. Doug Collins, a four-term congressman and one of Trump's most visible defenders in the U.S. House. Meanwhile, Democratic challenger Raphael Warnock, pastor of the Atlanta church where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. preached, has been able to consolidate support among Democrats with relative ease.

A Jan. 5, 2021 runoff between the race's top two candidates — likely Warnock and either Loeffler or Collins — will be required if nobody wins more than 50% in November.

Loeffler took office this past January after being appointed by Republican Gov. Brian Kemp to replace retiring GOP Sen. Johnny Isakson, who was known for being a consensus builder willing to reach across the aisle to get things done.

Before her appointment, Loeffler was a relatively unknown figure — the co-owner of Atlanta's WNBA basketball team, CEO of a cryptocurrency trading platform and the wife of Jeffrey Sprecher, who leads the company that owns the New York Stock Exchange.

Once her appointment was made public, Loeffler quickly moved to bolster her conservative bona fides. "I'm a lifelong conservative, pro-Second Amendment, pro-Trump, pro-military and pro-wall," she said at a December news conference as Kemp announced her as his pick for the Senate seat.

Soon after, Collins, who sought the appointment himself but was passed over, mounted a bid to challenge her, sparking a scramble among the two top-tier candidates to shore up support from hardcore GOP voters.

"Loeffler and Collins are essentially running in a primary within a special election," said Brian Robinson, a Republican strategist in Georgia. "If either candidate had run some play-to-the-middle, appeal-to-moderates campaign, they would be dead in the water. There's just no market."

Right out of the gate, Loeffler introduced several anti-abortion legislative proposals. "Since coming to the Senate, I've co-sponsored four pro-life bills to end taxpayer funding for abortion, roll back the scope of Roe v. Wade, and increase criminal penalties for medical professionals performing illegal abortions," she boasted in February.

More recently, she has staunchly defended Trump's handling of the coronavirus, sparked a battle with WNBA players after objecting to the league's initiatives to honor the Black Lives Matter movement, sponsored legislation to pull federal funding from schools that allow transgender girls to participate in girls' sports, and run a series of TV ads calling herself "more conservative than Attila the Hun."

On Monday, when six of the top candidates in the race met in their first debate, Loeffler was asked if she could name something Trump has said or done that she disagreed with. She responded: "No" and touted a "100% voting record with President Trump."

Perhaps most striking has been Loeffler's embrace of Greene, a U.S. House candidate from northwest Georgia who has expressed support for QAnon, a baseless pro-Trump conspiracy theory, and made racist remarks in a series of online videos. While Greene has been denounced by some Republicans — a primary opponent used the slogan "All of the conservative, none of the embarrassment" — Loeffler has defended her.

"Look, I don't know anything about QAnon, and I know how the media twists people's words," Loeffler said after enthusiastically accepting Greene's endorsement.

"What we agree on is that we are fighting socialism. We are promoting conservative values. And I'm not

going to stand for attacks on her character because she has stood for American values," Loeffler said.

Collins' campaign has sought to push back on Loeffler's conservative credentials, calling her "supposedly conservative," a "pretend gun owner" and accusing her of having supported pro-abortion groups and candidates before taking office. Loeffler has said Collins is lying about her record.

Whichever Republican secures a spot in a runoff would have just over two months to make their case to a statewide audience.

"Whoever emerges between Collins and Loeffler will then pivot the next day to a general election message and they'll be talking about different topics," Robinson said. "They won't necessarily step back from the rhetoric that they've had in this phase of the campaign, but they'll be talking about different issues."

No escaping from Wales: UK police to enforce travel ban

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A police force in England says it will try to stop people from leaving Wales, which has started a 17-day lockdown to slow a surging rate of coronavirus infections.

The Gloucestershire Constabulary will patrol routes from Wales and pull over drivers they believe are making long journeys. Travelers without a good excuse will be asked to turn around. If they don't comply, officers will inform their Welsh counterparts so they can take action because Gloucestershire police don't have the authority to fine people traveling from Wales, the department said.

The situation illustrates the patchwork of coronavirus restrictions imposed by authorities throughout the U.K., which has Europe's deadliest coronavirus numbers, with 44,661 confirmed virus deaths. Some 1,756 of those occurred in Wales, which has a population of about 3 million.

Under the U.K.'s system of devolved authority, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have established their own public health rules. Meanwhile, the national government in Westminster has created a three-tiered virus alert system that applies to England alone.

South Yorkshire on Saturday became the latest region to enter Tier 3 — the tightest level of virus risk restrictions in England — following Liverpool, Greater Manchester and Lancashire.

But it is the Welsh government that has imposed one of the U.K.'s strictest lockdowns, including a ban on non-essential travel. Under rules that took effect Friday evening, Wales also closed most businesses and restricted high schools to online instruction.

Another English police force, West Mercia, also said it will be working with their Welsh counterparts to "enforce, where necessary, the relevant rules for the area we serve."

New infections are continuing to rise across Britain. Professor Neil Ferguson, whose modelling led to the U.K.'s original lockdown in March, told the BBC that the current situation was "worrying."

"We are in a critical time right now," he said. "The health system will not be able to cope with this rate of growth for much longer."

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

AP FACT CHECK: Trump and Biden in their last clash on stage

By CALVIN WOODWARD and HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A more measured President Donald Trump does not necessarily mean a more truthful one.

In the final debate of the presidential campaign, he was loose with facts on the crisis of the time — the pandemic — and much else.

Trump did, though, exploit confusion sowed by Joe Biden during the primaries, when the Democrat occasionally made his position on energy sound more to the left than it actually is. Trump accurately called out Biden when Biden denied he had ever vowed to ban fracking. That was never Biden's position, but it sometimes sounded that way.

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A review:

CORONAVIRUS

TRUMP: "We're rounding the turn. We're rounding the corner. It's going away."

THE FACTS: No, the coronavirus isn't going away. It's coming back. New cases are on the rise toward their summer peak. Deaths have also been increasing.

The United States has hit a daily record of coronavirus cases with more than 83,000 reported infections, thousands more than the previous U.S. peak in July. The U.S. death toll has grown to nearly 224,00, according to the tally published by Johns Hopkins University. The total U.S. caseload reported Friday was 83,757, topping the 77,362 cases reported on July 16.

The seven-day rolling average of positive test rates has risen in 40 states over the past two weeks, from Oct. 8 to Oct. 22, according to the COVID Tracking Project. A few states seeing rising cases have very low levels of COVID-19, but in most states the increase comes on top of already concerning background levels of the coronavirus.

TRUMP: "All he does is talk about shutdowns. But forget about him. His Democrat governors — (Andrew) Cuomo in New York — you look at what's going on in California, you look at Pennsylvania, North Carolina. Democrats — Democrats all. They're shut down so tight, and they're dying."

BIDEN: "Look at the states that are having such a spike in the coronavirus. They're the red states. They're the states in the Midwest or the states in the Upper Midwest. That's where the spike is occurring significantly."

THE FACTS: Neither of them is right. Coronavirus is a public health problem that affects people no matter where they live or what their politics are.

Some Republican-led states that were quick to reopen saw a surge of virus cases in the summer and are still struggling to get their transmission rates down. Florida's test positivity rate is about 12% currently, a level indicating widespread transmission. South Dakota is approaching 35%.

Democratic-led states such as New York that were hit hard in the initial wave closed down and got their virus transmission rates down to very low levels. But they're now seeing rebounds in certain communities, prompting them to target renewed restrictions.

Nevada and Pennsylvania are two states with Democratic governors and high transmission rates at 20% and 10% respectively by week's end, based on a 14-day trend.

TRUMP on the toll of COVID-19 in the U.S.: "So as you know 2.2 million people, modeled out, were expected to die."

THE FACTS: This was his first line in the debate, and it is false. The U.S. death toll from the pandemic was not expected to be that high.

Such an extreme projection was merely a baseline if nothing at all were done to fight the pandemic. Doing nothing was never an option and public health authorities did not expect over 2 million deaths.

Trump often cites the number to put the reality of more than 220,000 deaths in a better light and to attempt to take credit for reducing projected mortality.

At an April 1 briefing, when Trump and his officials discussed an actual projection of 100,000 to 240,000 deaths, the president held out hope of keeping deaths under 100,000. "I think we're doing better than that." He has repeatedly moved the goal posts to make the massive mortality and infection numbers look better.

FRACKING

BIDEN: "I never said I oppose fracking."

THE FACTS: Yes he did. But he misspoke on one occasion, prompting his campaign to correct him after, and left unclear just where he stood at least one other time.

In a March Democratic primary debate, Biden said that if he became president, there would be "no more — no new — fracking." His campaign quickly clarified that Biden meant he would ban new gas and oil permits — including fracking — on federal lands only. The vast majority of oil and gas does not come

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from federal lands.

That is Biden's consistent position, stated frequently and in writing. Longer term, Biden has spoken about helping the country move toward a midcentury future free of fossil fuels. That does not equate to a fracking ban during his presidency.

MIGRANTS

TRUMP, speaking about children who were separated from parents at the U.S.-Mexico border: "They are so well taken care of. They're in facilities that are so clean."

THE FACTS: Not so.

At the height of the family separations in 2018, Border Patrol facilities were cramped well beyond capacity with migrants who were kept in squalid conditions, according to watchdog reports and the lawyers responsible for a federal settlement that governs how children are cared for in immigration custody. Long-term facilities for adults and children were at capacity, meaning the administration held people in the small border stations for much longer than the 72 hours normally allowed by law.

The stations are hardly meant for long-term care. Children were not provided hot meals and families slept on the floor on top of Mylar blankets. Flu and sickness ran rampant, and hundreds of small children were kept together without adequate care.

TRUMP, on immigrants who are released from custody in the U.S. to wait out their cases being allowed to stay: "They say they come back, less than 1% of the people come back. We have to send ... Border Patrol out to find them."

THE FACTS: That's false. There are far fewer no-shows for immigration hearings among those who are released pending their cases. According to Justice Department statistics, a majority come back for their hearings.

HEALTH CARE

BIDEN: "Not one single person with private insurance would lose their insurance under my plan, nor did they under 'Obamacare,' they did not lose their insurance, unless they chose they wanted to go to something else."

THE FACTS: He's wrong about the Affordable Care Act, also known as "Obamacare."

President Barack Obama promised if you liked your health insurance, you could keep it under his health plan, but that's not what happened for some.

When the law took effect in 2014, several million people lost individual health insurance plans that no longer met minimum standards established by the law. A backlash forced the White House to offer a work-around, but the political damage was done.

Health insurance is such a complicated area that almost any action has the potential for unintended consequences.

CLIMATE CHANGE

TRUMP: The Paris accord meant "we were going to have to spend trillions of dollars They did a great disservice. They were going to take away our business."

THE FACTS: The Paris accord, an international agreement that aims to halt the rise in global temperatures, is based on voluntary emission reductions. No nation was forced to do anything.

TRUMP'S TAXES

TRUMP on his taxes: "They keep talking about \$750, which I think is a filing fee. ... Tens of millions of dollars (in income taxes) I prepaid." On his China bank account: "I was a businessman in 2013 and I closed the account in 2015."

THE FACTS: Trump is not being honest about his taxes.

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Reporting by The New York Times, which obtained his tax records, contradicts his claims.

The IRS does not charge taxpayers a filing fee, though tax preparation services do. The \$750 that Trump paid in 2016 and 2017 in the income taxes was to the federal government, not a tax preparation service.

It's not clear what Trump is talking about with regard to prepaying his taxes, but what matters is what he ultimately owed the government. Americans often have their income tax payments deducted from their paychecks. The Times reported that Trump, starting in 2010, claimed and received an income tax refund that totaled \$72.9 million, which was at the core of an ongoing audit by the IRS. The Times said a ruling against Trump could cost him \$100 million or more.

Nor did Trump close his Chinese bank account, according to Alan Garten, a lawyer for Trump's company. He told the newspaper that the account remains open, though the company's office in China has been inactive since 2015.

HUNTER BIDEN

TRUMP: "Joe got \$3.5 (million) from Russia. And it came through Putin because he was very friendly with the former mayor of Moscow, and it was the the mayor of Moscow's wife. ... Your family got \$3.5 million. Someday you're going to have to explain why."

THE FACTS: There is no evidence of this. Trump is falsely characterizing a recent report by Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., who investigated Biden's son, Hunter, and his business dealings in Ukraine.

The report did not allege that Joe Biden himself got \$3.5 million or that Russia President Vladimir Putin had anything to do with such a payment. Nor does the report allege that Hunter Biden pocketed the money himself. The report said the sum went instead to an investment firm he co-founded. Hunter Biden's lawyer has said in a statement to reporters that his client had no interest in and was not a founder of the firm.

WIND POWER

TRUMP to Biden: "I know more about wind than you do. It's extremely expensive."

THE FACTS: No it isn't. His point is outdated.

Wind-energy costs hit all-time lows as of 2019, averaging less than 2 cents per kilowatt-hour for newly built projects, making it increasingly competitive with other generation sources, according to a report by the Energy Department's Lawrence Berkeley National Lab. "Land-based utility-scale wind is one of the lowest-priced energy sources available today," the department says.

Wind and solar have become much cheaper as their industries grow and technology improves.

It's why solar and wind are expanding, along with cheap natural gas, while coal plants and nuclear plants are closing. This, despite regulatory rollbacks by the Trump administration to benefit the oil, gas and coal industries and undo Obama-era efforts against climate change and air pollution.

TRUMP: "It's very intermittent. It's got a lot of problems."

THE FACTS: He's exaggerating the downsides.

Trump's opinion about wind power being unreliable isn't shared by many big energy users. By next year, renewables such as wind and solar will be providing more of Americans' electricity than nuclear- and coal-fired power plants do, says the government's Energy Information Administration.

And it says that by 2045, renewables will surpass even natural gas in powering U.S. electricity plants.

TRUMP: "The fumes coming up to make these massive windmills is more than anything that we're talking about with natural gas."

THE FACTS: That's false. (Also, they're called wind turbines. Windmills mill grain.)

Wind turbines produce pollution when they are manufactured and little to none when in operation, federal scientists say. Even taking manufacturing emissions into account, wind power is far cleaner than natural gas.

Scientists in the Energy Department's Natural Renewable Energy Laboratory calculate that wind turbines produce an average of 0.4 ounces of carbon dioxide per kilowatt hour generated, over their lifetime. That includes emissions from manufacturing. Natural gas produces 58 times more carbon dioxide — at least

22.6 ounces per kilowatt-hour.

TRUMP: Wind power "kills all the birds."

THE FACTS: That's obviously not true. But turbines do kill many.

Studies find that wind turbines kill an average of 230,000 birds a year in North America, says the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The number will grow as more turbines are deployed.

Glass windows in buildings kill an estimated 599 million per year and vehicles, about 214 million a year, the agency says. Altogether, the agency estimates that wind turbines are responsible for 1 in 14,000 bird deaths. So turbines are an additional threat to birds, if a comparatively small one.

Associated Press writers Ellen Knickmeyer, Seth Borenstein, Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Josh Boak and Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

EDITOR'S NOTE — A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

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US sets coronavirus infection record; deaths near 224,000

By REBECCA BOONE and DAVID CRARY Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — The U.S. coronavirus caseload has reached record heights with more than 83,000 infections reported in a single day, the latest ominous sign of the disease's grip on the nation, as states from Connecticut to the Rocky Mountain West reel under the surge.

The U.S. death toll, meanwhile, has grown to 223,995, according to the COVID-19 Dashboard published by Johns Hopkins University. The total U.S. caseload reported on the site Friday was 83,757, topping the 77,362 cases reported on July 16.

The impact is being felt in every section of the country — a lockdown starting Friday at the Oglala Sioux Tribe's reservation in South Dakota, a plea by a Florida health official for a halt to children's birthday parties, dire warnings from Utah's governor, and an increasingly desperate situation at a hospital in northern Idaho, which is running out of space for patients and considering airlifts to Seattle or Portland, Oregon.

"We've essentially shut down an entire floor of our hospital. We've had to double rooms. We've bought more hospital beds," said Dr. Robert Scoggins, a pulmonologist at the Kootenai Health hospital in Coeur d'Alene. "Our hospital is not built for a pandemic."

In the southern Idaho city of Twin Falls, St. Luke's Magic Valley Medical Center said it would no longer accept children because it is overwhelmed with coronavirus patients. Except for newborns, all under age 18 will be sent 128 miles (206 kilometers) away in Boise.

Among those in northern Idaho joining Scoggins at a meeting of Idaho's Panhandle Health District was board member Walk Kirby.

"People are dying, they're going to keep dying and catching this stuff," Kirby said. "How many people won't wear a mask? The same people that won't get vaccinated for it."

Utah's Gov. Gary Herbert proclaimed Friday to be "a record day for Utah — but not a good one" as COVID-19 cases reached an all-time high for the state.

"Up until now, our hospitals have been able to provide good care to all COVID and non-COVID patients who need it," he said. "But today we stand on the brink. If Utahans do not take serious steps to limit group gatherings and wear masks, our healthcare providers will not have the ability to provide quality care for everyone who needs it."

By public health order, masks are required in 21 counties, said Herbert, urging Utah residents to wear one whenever they are around someone outside their immediate household.

The seven-day rolling average for new daily COVID-19 cases in the U.S. surpassed 61,140 Thursday, compared with 44,647 two weeks ago. The record was reached July 22 when the rolling average was

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67,293 in the midst of a summer outbreak driven largely by surges of the virus in Florida, Texas, Arizona and California.

The U.S. surge mirrors a similarly widespread spike in Europe, where Rome, Paris and other major cities are reining in nightlife as part of the increasingly drastic measures undertaken to slow the spread of the pandemic. French authorities said the country had recorded over 1 million confirmed coronavirus cases since the start of the pandemic, becoming the second country in Western Europe after Spain to reach that number.

The head of the World Health Organization warned that countries in the Northern Hemisphere are at a "critical juncture" as cases and deaths continue to rise.

"The next few months are going to be very tough and some countries are on a dangerous track," said WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus at a press briefing on Friday.

Some of the latest developments in the United States:

SOUTH DAKOTA

In South Dakota, the Oglala Sioux Tribe ordered a one-week lockdown of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in response to a surging number of COVID-19 cases in the state. Through the morning of Oct. 30, all non-essential travel is banned and non-essential businesses must close.

The tribe posted on its Twitter page that there were 391 active COVID-19 cases as of Thursday on the reservation, which has about 20,000 residents.

The lockdown comes as South Dakota surpassed 9,000 active coronavirus cases on Thursday and reported an all-time high of 973 new cases in one day.

FLORIDA

The top health official in one of Florida's most populous counties discouraged parents from hosting birthday parties for their children, no matter the size.

Dr. Raul Pino, a state health officer in Orange County, said half of the 30 attendees at a recent Sweet 16 party in the Orlando area came down with the virus. Last month, an Orange County high school closed for two weeks after students who had attended a birthday party tested positive.

"Those parties will not only affect those people participating in that activity, but also everyone else they come into contact with when they leave," said Pino. "We will continue to see consequences if we don't act super-responsibly."

TEXAS

In Texas, Gov. Greg Abbott is sending more medical reinforcements to the El Paso area in response to a surge of coronavirus infections. The Texas Department of State Health Services and the Texas Division of Emergency Management will provide more medical personnel and equipment this week.

El Paso County reported 3,750 new coronavirus infections this week, including 1,161 on Thursday. That number accounts for 17.5% of the 21,321 cases reported this week by the state's 254 counties.

IDAHO

Even as the health-care situation worsened in northern Idaho, a regional health board voted to repeal a local mask mandate. It acted moments after hearing how the Kootenai Health hospital in Coeur d'Alene had reached 99% capacity.

Kootenai is the third-most populous county in conservative Idaho.

The state is experiencing its largest coronavirus spike since the pandemic began, with new cases increasing statewide by 46.5% percent over the past two weeks. Gov. Brad Little, a Republican, has declined to take steps such as requiring masks statewide to slow the virus' spread.

Dr. Joshua Kern, vice president of St. Luke's in the Magic Valley region that includes Twin Falls and Jerome, said Thursday during a virtual press conference that he and other medical professionals are scared.

"The purpose of any intervention around coronavirus has been to prevent the hospitals from being

overwhelmed, and here I am today saying the hospital is being overwhelmed," he said.

A day later on Friday, his hospital announced the move to send younger patients to Boise.

NEW JERSEY and CONNECTICUT

For a while, as new COVID-19 cases surged in the Midwest and elsewhere, the level of new cases remained low in the Northeast, which had been hit hard earlier in the pandemic. Several states, including New Jersey and Connecticut, imposed 14-day quarantine requirements for travelers arriving from dozens of states with higher rates of positive tests.

This week, however, rates in New Jersey and Connecticut rose to the point where they qualify for their own quarantine restrictions.

After some confusion, the Democratic governors of New Jersey, Connecticut and New York, where rates remain lower, decided to keep their travel rules in place, but not add each other to their quarantine lists.

Crary reported from New York. Associated Press writers Amy Forliti in Minneapolis; Dave Collins in Hartford, Connecticut, Brady McCombs in Salt Lake City and Freida Frisaro in Orlando, Florida, contributed to this report.

Thai PM repeats calls for calm ahead of protesters' deadline

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Thailand's government and the country's pro-democracy movement appeared no closer to resolving their differences Saturday, as the protesters' evening deadline for Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha to step down approached.

Prayuth's office issued a statement repeating his plea to resolve differences through Parliament, which will discuss the political situation in a special session starting Monday.

"Although the ongoing political situation comprises many opposing views among different groups, we should rather take this as an opportunity for Thais to consult each other on what is best for the nation," said the statement.

Prayuth this past week issued a call to allow Parliament to seek a solution to the crisis, and in a gesture to appease the protesters, revoked a state of emergency for Bangkok he had imposed a week earlier that made protest rallies illegal.

"If all parties are committed to exercise full restraint and flexibility, the circumstances would be more conducive to de-escalating the current tense political conflict and reaching an outcome that is acceptable to all stakeholders," said Saturday's statement, quoting government spokesperson Anucha Burapachaisri.

The protesters, however, said they were sticking to a deadline of 10 p.m. Saturday for Prayuth to meet their demands that he resign, and that their arrested comrades be released from jail.

One of the protest leaders, Jatupat "Pai Dao Din" Boonpattaraksa, told a crowd outside Bangkok Remand Prison that protesters should gather there Saturday and consider their next step as they wait for a response from Prayuth.

Protesters had rallied outside the prison on Friday to press for their comrades' release. They welcomed the release of Jatupat, who called for seven others still imprisoned to be freed.

However, three prominent protest leaders were denied release on bail Saturday morning.

In addition to calling for Prayuth's resignation, the protesters' core demands also include a more democratic constitution and reforms to the monarchy.

The protesters charge that Prayuth, who as then-army commander led a 2014 coup, was returned to power unfairly in last year's general election because laws had been changed to favor a pro-military party. The protesters also say that a constitution written and passed under military rule is undemocratic.

The implicit criticism of the monarchy, which protesters believe wields too much power, has irked conservative Thais because it traditionally has been treated as sacrosanct and a pillar of national identity.

There is concern that the situation may become more volatile, because in the past week there has been

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a mobilization of forces who claim to be defenders of the monarchy.

Royalists held rallies in several cities, in many cases led by local civil servants. On Wednesday, a small counter-protest held in Bangkok turned violent when a few attendees attacked anti-government students.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn made a rare appearance Friday night as he and Queen Suthida and other members of the royal family walked through a crowd of ardent royalists who had gathered on a street to cheer him as he passed by.

The king, in an unusually informal manner, was seen on a widely circulated video giving thanks to an on-looker who earlier in the week had held up a sign supporting the monarchy in the midst of anti-government supporters. The video showed the queen pointing out the man to the king.

Vajiralongkorn also spoke briefly with Suwit Thongprasert, a royalist activist who had been part of a group whose violent protests in 2014 put pressure on an elected government that helped trigger the coup led by Prayuth. Suwit was a Buddhist monk known as Buddha Issara when he was a leader of the right-wing People's Democratic Reform Committee during the 2014 protests.

Work already underway for presidential inauguration

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — While much of Washington is twisted in knots over the upcoming election, there's another contingent already busy trying to figure out how to stage an inauguration for the to-be-determined next president during a pandemic.

Visitors to the U.S. Capitol and the White House can already see preparations underway for the Jan. 20 ceremony, a date set by the 20th Amendment to the Constitution, for whoever emerges as the winner. And low-flying helicopters are swooping around town as part of beefed-up security precautions.

Construction work is taking place with the mindset that it is easier to scale down, if the coronavirus makes that necessary, than to scale up, said Paige Waltz, a spokesperson for the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies.

The committee has voted to hold the inaugural ceremonies on the West Front of the Capitol, a tradition that began under Ronald Reagan. The Architect of the Capitol is busy constructing the inaugural platform from scratch. The platform traditionally holds more than 1,600 people, including the president and vice president, members of Congress, Supreme Court justices, and the outgoing president and vice president. Bleachers above the platform hold 1,000 additional people. The view from the West Front stretches the length of the National Mall, where Americans from around the country gather to catch a glimpse of history.

But in recognition that life has changed as a result of COVID-19, lawmakers are leaving all options on the table when it comes to safety precautions that could be taken. Will attendees be required to wear a mask? Or have their temperatures taken? Or social distance to the extent possible? Such precautions are being discussed, though no final determinations have been made with the ceremony still about three months away.

Waltz said the six-member committee overseeing the inaugural ceremonies is "committed to traditional, inclusive, and safe ceremonies and will continue to monitor the situation and provide information as it comes available."

After the ceremony, the president and vice president will attend a luncheon in National Statuary Hall that includes speeches, gifts and toasts. The format used today began in 1953 when President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his wife and 50 other guests of the joint committee dined on creamed chicken, baked ham and potato puffs in the Old Senate Chamber.

Then it's on to the parade and inaugural balls. A Presidential Inaugural Committee, a nonprofit representing the president-elect, will be organized following the Nov. 3 election. The committee oversees inaugural events held away from the U.S. Capitol.

In the meantime, the National Park Service is preparing for the construction of the reviewing and media stands used by the president-elect, his staff and family for the Presidential Inaugural Parade. It has closed a portion of Lafayette Park and the White House sidewalk to allow construction to begin.

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The Nuclear Security Administration, part of the Energy Department, has begun conducting low-altitude helicopter flights around the capital during the daytime. The department said the aircraft contain state-of-the-art radiation-sensing technology, and the flights are part of standard preparations to protect public safety.

For the Washington, D.C., metro area, the inauguration has traditionally provided an economic boost as visitors fill local hotels and restaurants. The 2021 inauguration comes at a difficult time for the district. Visitor spending was down 80%, or \$6.9 billion, from March 8 to October 10, compared to the same period last year, according to Tourism Economics. That translated to \$313 million in lost tax revenue for the District of Columbia.

Many of the region's restaurants are shuttered, while hotel room demand was down nearly 5 million rooms, or 83%, from the same time period in 2019, according to STR Inc., which tracks the hotel industry.

"Traditionally, a second-term inauguration is not as big as the first, and if we have a new president taking office, numbers are typically larger," said Elliott Ferguson, president and CEO of Destination DC, the district's marketing organization. "However, visitation to Washington, D.C., during inauguration will depend on what people are able to do in the city based on COVID-19's impact this winter, which remains to be seen."

Buehler leads Dodgers over Rays 6-2 for 2-1 Series lead

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Walker Buehler pitched in the World Series like the Los Angeles Dodgers' aces of old.

Think Sandy Koufax, Fernando Valenzuela and Orel Hershiser, all leaders of title runs.

Now Buehler has the Dodgers two wins from the championship that has eluded them since 1988.

Buehler struck out 10 over six innings in a pulsating performance, and Los Angeles beat the Tampa Bay Rays 6-2 on Friday night for a 2-1 World Series lead.

"Being a big-game pitcher and really succeeding on this stage, there's only a few guys currently and throughout history," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "He's in some really elite company,"

Justin Turner homered in the first inning against a surprisingly hittable Charlie Morton, who was chased in the fifth.

Austin Barnes, the Dodgers' No. 9 hitter and catcher, added a sixth-inning homer against John Curtiss. He became just the second player to drive in runs with both a homer and a sacrifice bunt in the same Series game.

He'll probably remember the home run most.

"It's a cool little stat, but it's not easy to barrel the ball up against all these really good pitchers," Barnes said.

Los Angeles overwhelmed Tampa Bay in all phases, leaving the Rays' scuffling offense with a .206 batting average and 11 runs in the Series. The Rays' .133 average (6 for 45) against Clayton Kershaw, Tony Gonsolin and Buehler is the lowest through three Series games against a team's starters since the Boston Red Sox held the Philadelphia Phillies to .129 in 1915, according to STATS.

Julio Urías, a hard-throwing Mexican left-hander in a Dodgers lineage dating to Valenzuela, starts Game 4 on Saturday night, while the Rays start Ryan Yarbrough, who relieved in the first game.

Thirty-eight of 59 previous teams that won Game 3 for a 2-1 lead went on to take the title.

Justin Turner and Austin Barnes homered for the Dodgers, who have outhomered the Rays 7-4 in the Series and opponents 25-16 in the postseason. Barnes also drove in a run with a squeeze, the second player with RBIs on a bunt and home run in a Series game behind Héctor López of New York Yankees in Game 5 of 1961.

Steely-eyed like Hershiser, who won MVP honors of the 1988 Series, Buehler has supplanted Kershaw as the Dodgers' ace. He showed no indisposition from the blister on his right index finger that has bothered him.

He has allowed one run in 13 Series innings that include seven scoreless in Game 3 against Boston two years ago. He improved to 2-0 with a 1.80 ERA in four postseason starts that include the win over Atlanta

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in Game 6 of the NL Championship Series last weekend.

"I've taken the failures that I've had and tried to learn from them a little bit," Buehler said.

The 26-year-old right-hander started 15 of 21 batters with strikes and threw strikes on 67 of 93 pitches. Buehler didn't allow a hit until Manuel Margot's one-out double in the fifth. Willy Adames then drove in Margot with another double.

Tampa Bay's only other hit off him was Austin Meadows' leadoff single in the sixth.

"You can see the fastball just pop through the zone," Rays manager Kevin Cash said. "Other than a few breaking balls here or there, it was very much a there it is, hit it approach. You totally understand and appreciate why he's so talented."

Rays batters were kept off balance by his mix of 59 four-seam fastballs, 14 knuckle-curves, 12 sliders and eight cut fastballs. He became the first pitcher in the Series with 10 or more strikeouts in six or fewer innings.

"That might have been the best I've ever seen him," Barnes said.

Blake Treinen and Brusdar Graterol followed with a perfect inning apiece. Kenley Jansen finished the four-hitter, giving up Randy Arozarena's record-tying eighth postseason homer.

Morton, a right-hander who turns 37 on Nov. 12, had entered unbeaten in seven straight postseason decisions, one shy of Orlando Hernandez's record, including wins in five consecutive postseason starts. But he took the loss, allowing five runs and seven hits in 4 1/3 innings — more than the four runs total he gave up in his previous five postseason starts combined.

No Rays starter has finished the fifth inning in their last five Series starts since Matt Garza in Game 3 against Philadelphia in 2008. Tampa Bay repeated its pattern of a dozen years ago, losing the opener, winning the next game and dropping the third.

"I wasn't particularly sharp," Morton said. "I felt like I was able to get two strikes pretty quickly with a lot of guys and just not able to put them away."

Turner put the Dodgers ahead on Morton's 14th pitch, turning on a high 94.8 mph fastball with a 1-2 count and driving the ball 397 feet over the left-field wall. Turner's home run was the 11th of his postseason career over 69 games, tying the team record set by Duke Snider over 36 games with the Brooklyn and Los Angeles Dodgers from 1954-59.

Los Angeles extended the lead to 3-0 in the third when Morton hit Corey Seager on a toe with a pitch, Turner doubled and Max Muncy drove a cutter into center for a two-run single.

After singles by Cody Bellinger and Joc Pederson, Barnes drove in a run with the safety squeeze to first baseman Ji-Man Choi, the first RBI bunt in the Series since the Rays' Jason Barlett in Game 2 in 2008 and the first since for the Dodgers since Billy Cox in 1953.

Mookie Betts followed with a two-out RBI single that made it 5-0, and Barnes homered off John Curtiss in the sixth. Five of the Dodgers' first six runs scored with two outs, raising their total to nine of 18 in the Series and 50 of 87 in the postseason.

"Obviously there's two outs, but you can still build an inning not giving away at-bats," Betts said. "That's how you win a World Series."

SWIPING

Betts stole two bases, giving him three in the Series and six in the postseason.

GOING DEEP

Arozarena tied Barry Bonds (2002), Carlos Beltrán (2004) and Nelson Cruz (2011) for homers in a postseason and set the rookie record for hits with 23, one more than Derek Jeter in 1996.

UP NEXT

Urías pitched three perfect innings for the win in Game 7 NLCS win. He is 4-0 with a 0.56 ERA in one postseason start and three relief appearances, allowing one earned run and seven hits in 16 innings with 16 strikeouts and three walks.

Yarbrough threw 19 pitches in the opener, his only action since pitching five innings against Houston on Oct. 13.

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

California prosecutors again seek death for Scott Peterson

By DON THOMPSON Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California prosecutors said Friday they again will seek the death penalty for Scott Peterson even as a county judge considers throwing out his conviction for murdering his pregnant wife, Laci Peterson, because of juror misconduct during a 2005 trial that riveted the nation.

Stanislaus County Assistant District Attorney Dave Harris announced that it is prosecutors' intention to retry the penalty phase of the case, spokesman John Gould said after a court hearing. He said prosecutors otherwise won't comment or discuss the decision.

Peterson, 47, wearing a buzz haircut and a mask designed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, appeared remotely in the Modesto courtroom from San Quentin State Prison north of San Francisco, home to the state's death row.

District Attorney Birgit Fladager acted after the California Supreme Court in August overturned Peterson's 2005 death sentence in a case that attracted worldwide attention.

The state's high court upheld his conviction in that ruling. But the same justices in October ordered a new hearing in San Mateo Superior Court to determine whether his underlying murder conviction must also be tossed out if a juror committed "prejudicial misconduct."

"He's innocent — an innocent man's been sitting in jail for 15 years. It's time to get him out," attorney Pat Harris told reporters outside the courtroom in explaining why he is again taking the case. He also was on Peterson's original trial team alongside celebrity attorney Mark Geragos.

Janey Peterson, his sister-in-law, said the family is looking forward to his new day in court.

"We still need justice for Laci, Connor and Scott," she told reporters. "We don't have justice for Laci with Scott on death row, because Scott is innocent."

Peterson was convicted in San Mateo Superior Court after his trial was moved from Stanislaus County due to the massive pre-trial publicity that followed the Christmas Eve 2002 disappearance of 27-year-old Laci Peterson, who was eight months pregnant with their unborn son, Connor.

Investigators say Peterson took the bodies from their Modesto home and dumped them from his fishing boat into San Francisco Bay, where they surfaced months later.

The Supreme Court said his death sentence could not stand because potential jurors were improperly dismissed from the jury pool after saying they personally disagreed with the death penalty but would be willing to follow the law and impose it.

In the second ruling, it ordered a San Mateo judge to decide whether the conviction itself must be overturned because one juror failed to disclose that she had sought a restraining order in 2000 against her boyfriend's ex-girlfriend.

The juror said in seeking the order that she feared for her unborn child.

The San Mateo judge will have to decide if that was juror misconduct, and if so if it was so prejudicial that a new trial is warranted.

Pat Harris said he was "sandbagged" by prosecutors' surprisingly swift announcement that they would again seek the death penalty, and said he needs to consult with Peterson before agreeing to put off the penalty phase until the judge decides whether to throw out underlying conviction.

They set a new court appearance for Nov. 6.

"It's been 15 long years, and as you can imagine there are ups and downs, but overall he was very happy that the court is basically taking a look at the motions, taking a look at the evidence, and has given him two separate chances here. So we're excited about that," Pat Harris said of Peterson's reaction to the high court's dual rulings.

Peterson was convicted of first-degree murder of his wife and second-degree murder of his unborn son. Peterson was arrested after Amber Frey, a massage therapist living in Fresno, told police that they began

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dating a month before his wife's death, but that he had told her his wife was dead.

Despite throwing out the death penalty, the Supreme Court said there was considerable incriminating circumstantial evidence against Peterson, including that he researched ocean currents, bought a boat without telling anyone, and couldn't explain what type of fish he was trying to catch that day.

He also sold his wife's car, considered selling their house, and turned the baby nursery into a storage room before their bodies were found, the court said in August, all indicating that "he already knew Laci and Conner were never coming back."

California has not executed anyone since 2006 because of legal challenges, and Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom issued a moratorium on executions for as long as he is governor.

Senate GOP marches ahead on Barrett over Democrats' blockade

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate is poised for a rare weekend session as Republicans race to put Amy Coney Barrett on the Supreme Court and cement a conservative majority before Election Day despite Democratic efforts to stall President Donald Trump's nominee.

Democrats mounted time-consuming procedural hurdles Friday, but the party has no realistic chance of stopping Barrett's advance in the Republican-controlled chamber. Barrett, a federal appeals court judge, is expected to be confirmed Monday and quickly join the court.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York warned Republicans that they were making a "colossal and historic mistake."

Republicans appeared unmoved. In a lengthy speech, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell praised Barrett as an "extraordinary" nominee and defended her quick confirmation. "We will give this nominee the vote she deserves no later than Monday," he said.

Barrett, 48, presented herself in public testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee as a neutral arbiter of cases on abortion, the Affordable Care Act and presidential power — issues soon confronting the court. At one point she suggested, "It's not the law of Amy."

But Barrett's past writings against abortion and a ruling on the Obama-era health care law show a deeply conservative thinker.

Trump said this week he is hopeful the Supreme Court will undo the health law when the justices take up a challenge Nov. 10, the week after the election.

The fast-track confirmation process is like none other in U.S. history so close to a presidential election.

Schumer called it the "least legitimate process in the country's history" as he forced procedural steps, including an unusual private Senate session, in hopes of changing Republicans' minds.

But Republicans quickly convened, then ended, the closed-door meeting, pushing forward. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, dismissed the stall tactics as "frivolous."

At the start of Trump's presidency, McConnell engineered a Senate rules change to allow confirmation by a majority of the 100 senators, rather than the 60-vote threshold traditionally needed to advance high court nominees over objections. With a 53-47 GOP majority, Barrett's confirmation is almost certain.

Most Republicans are supporting Barrett's confirmation. Only Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine has said she won't vote for a nominee so close to the presidential election.

Another, Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, early on said she would prefer not to vote ahead of the election. But in a statement Thursday, Murkowski said now that the process is moving forward, the decision on whether to vote to confirm Barrett is one "each senator has to make on their own."

Republicans on the Judiciary Committee powered Barrett's nomination forward Thursday despite a boycott of the vote by Democrats.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, the committee chairman, acknowledged the partisan nature of the proceedings, but said he could not live with himself if the Senate failed to confirm someone he said was such an exceptional nominee. Graham, R-S.C., called Barrett a "role model" for conservative women and for people strongly held religious beliefs.

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Democrats decried the “sham” process and said Barrett would undo much of what was accomplished by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the liberal icon who died last month.

By pushing for Barrett’s ascension so close to the Nov. 3 election, Trump and his Republican allies are counting on a campaign boost, in much the way they believe McConnell’s refusal to allow the Senate to consider President Barack Obama’s nominee in February 2016 created excitement for Trump among conservatives and evangelical Christians eager for the Republican president to make that nomination after Justice Antonin Scalia’s death.

Graham, for example, with his high-profile role leading the hearings, has been raking in about \$1 million a day this month for his reelection campaign. That rate outpaces Graham’s third-quarter total of \$28 million, which his campaign said represented the largest amount ever raised by any Republican Senate candidate in a single quarter, in any state.

In trying to derail or at least slow Barrett’s confirmation, Democrats argue the winner of the presidential election should decide who replaces Ginsburg.

Barrett was a professor at Notre Dame Law School when she was tapped by Trump in 2017 for an appeals court opening. Two Democrats joined at that time to confirm her, but none is expected to vote for her in the days ahead.

During the three days of testimony, and subsequent filings to the Senate committee, Barrett declined to answer basic questions for senators, such as whether the president can change the date of federal elections, which is set in law. Instead, she pledged to take the cases as they come.

Associated Press writer Meg Kinnard in Columbia, South Carolina, and Becky Bohrer in Alaska contributed to this report.

Chief: Illinois officer who shot Black couple in car fired

WAUKEGAN, Ill. (AP) — A suburban Chicago police officer who shot a Black couple inside a vehicle — killing a 19-year-old man and wounding his girlfriend — has been fired, the police chief announced late Friday.

The officer who fatally shot Marcellis Stinnette and the wounded Tafara Williams following what authorities have described as a traffic stop late Tuesday committed “multiple policy and procedure violations,” Waukegan Police Chief Wayne Walles said in a brief statement. No other details, including the officer’s name, were provided.

The announcement of the firing came shortly after Lake County’s chief prosecutor announced the FBI will join Illinois State Police in investigating the shooting.

Lake County State’s Attorney Michael Nerheim said he asked the U.S. Justice Department to review the circumstances surrounding the shooting.

“I am confident in the work being done by the Illinois State Police and welcome the assistance of the FBI,” Nerheim said in a statement. “As I have said before, once the investigation is concluded, all the evidence will be reviewed and a final decision will be made with respect to any potential charges.”

Waukegan police have said Williams was driving and Stinnette was a passenger in a vehicle that fled a traffic stop late Tuesday and that the vehicle was later spotted by another officer. Police said that as the second officer approached, the vehicle started moving in reverse and the officer opened fire. No weapon was found in the vehicle.

The officer who shot the couple is Hispanic and had been with the Waukegan Police Department for five years. The officer who conducted the original traffic stop is white, police said.

During a Thursday demonstration, Clyde McLemore, head of the Lake County chapter of Black Lives Matter, called for a federal investigation. Activists and relatives of the couple also have demanded the release of police video of the shooting, which authorities say has been turned over to investigators.

Activist Chris Blanks said the video is particularly important because the police version of events and the version Cliffina Johnson said her wounded daughter, Williams, shared with her appear to contradict each other. Johnson said her daughter told her that Williams and her boyfriend had done nothing to provoke

the officer.

Nerheim urged calm while the investigation takes place and pledged transparency.

Biden's warning on oil tests voter resolve on climate change

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Joe Biden is confronting the harsh political realities of combating climate change.

The Democratic presidential nominee has spent months touting a \$2 trillion plan to boost investment in clean energy and stop all climate-damaging emissions from the U.S. economy by 2050. The plan implied that he would wean the U.S. off oil and gas, but Biden wasn't so explicit about the industry's fate — until Thursday night.

During the final moments of the presidential debate, Biden said he would "transition away from the oil industry."

President Donald Trump, trailing Biden in many national and battleground state polls, immediately sensed an opportunity to appeal to voters in competitive states like Texas and Pennsylvania that produce oil and gas.

"Basically what he is saying is he is going to destroy the oil industry," Trump said. "Will you remember that, Texas? Will you remember that, Pennsylvania? Oklahoma? Ohio?"

With less than two weeks until the election, Biden's comment is prompting a sudden test of whether voters who increasingly say they are worried about the climate crisis will embrace steps to confront it. During a season of worsening wildfires, hurricanes and other disasters, scientists are issuing urgent warnings that big cuts in burning oil, gas and coal are needed right away.

Republicans, eager to shift focus away from the president's handling of the intensifying coronavirus pandemic, say Biden's plan would cost jobs.

Biden "just killed paycheck(s) earned by hardworking families in Texas," Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, tweeted after Thursday's final presidential debate saw Trump and Biden spell out their worlds-apart stances on climate-damaging fossil fuels.

"Joe just wants to transition away from Texas. Remember that on election day," Abbott wrote.

Even some Democrats distanced themselves from Biden's comment. Rep. Kendra Horn, a Democrat who flipped a Republican seat in Trump-loyal Oklahoma in 2018, tweeted: "We must stand up for our oil and gas industry."

So did Rep. Xochitl Torres Small, a first-term Democratic congresswoman in a tossup race in New Mexico, in the oil- and gas-rich Permian Basin.

"We need to work together to promote responsible energy production and stop climate change, not demonize a particular industry," she tweeted, adding that she was ready to "stand up to" the Democratic Party.

Polling by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago shows a majority of Americans acknowledge people are causing global warming and link global warming to worsening natural disasters.

But Biden, who has mostly been disciplined in keeping the focus on Trump, seemed to sense the political peril. Shortly after the debate, he told reporters he wasn't talking about any kind of fossil fuel ban.

"We're not getting rid of fossil fuels for a very long time," he said.

Biden's energy plan spells out the time frame — three decades, zeroing out greenhouse gas emissions, which realistically would require substantially cutting fossil fuel use, by 2050.

Campaigning in Atlanta on Friday, Biden's running mate, Kamala Harris, told reporters that he wouldn't ban fracking, the technique used to extract natural gas.

"You know, the president likes to take everything out of context," Harris said. "Let's be clear: What Joe was talking about was banning subsidies, but he will not ban fracking in America."

Biden has said he would ban new gas and oil permits — including fracking — on federal lands only. The vast majority of oil and gas does not come from federal lands.

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That's an especially sensitive point in a state like Pennsylvania, which may prove decisive on Election Day. Trump's clearest path to reelection hinges on winning both Florida and Pennsylvania, states that he won in 2016.

National polls show Americans are increasingly skeptical of fracking. And even in Pennsylvania, voters in the suburbs and other spots have spoken out against the drilling and against massive gas pipelines.

Berwood Yost, director of the Center for Opinion Research at Franklin and Marshall College in Pennsylvania, said fracking opinions there fall on regional lines and the comments could hurt Biden's efforts to cut into Trump's support in southwestern Pennsylvania, where the industry is strong.

"Anything that the president can do to try to make sure he's able to maintain the sizable advantage that he had in 2016 in these fracking areas, he's going to do," Yost said.

But Biden's call to end subsidies for the oil and gas industry may be politically popular. Biden must try to thread the needle in explaining his calls for a transition away from fossil fuels without an outright ban, Yost said.

Improving technology and falling prices mean renewables already are making huge gains in the marketplace. Solar, wind and other clean energy will surpass coal and nuclear next year in the share of U.S. electricity they produce, the U.S. Energy Information Administration says.

Rich Fitzgerald, a Democrat and the county executive in Pennsylvania's Allegheny County, said Biden expressed his views in an "inarticulate way" on the debate stage but called Trump's efforts to capitalize on it a "desperation play."

Royalties from a fracking project on land owned by the Pittsburgh airport in 2013 have kept the airport financially afloat, Fitzgerald said. Biden was supportive of that project and another large fracking-related project in a neighboring county during his time as vice president, Fitzgerald said.

He added that while natural gas is important to the regional economy, it's not the only game in town.

"Is natural gas important to Western Pennsylvania? Certainly it is," Fitzgerald said. "But it's not everything we have."

Associated Press writers Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pa., Bill Barrow in Atlanta and Alan Fram in Washington contributed to this report.

Trump campaign sues in Nevada to stop Vegas-area vote count

By KEN RITTER Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The Trump campaign and Nevada Republicans asked a state judge on Friday to stop the count of Las Vegas-area mail-in ballots, alleging that "meaningful observation" of signature-checking is impossible in the state's biggest and most Democratic-leaning county.

A lawsuit filed in state court less than two weeks before the Nov. 3 election complains that observers haven't been allowed close enough to workers and machines at the busy vote-counting center to see whether ballots that get second- and third-step validation should be rejected.

Judge James Wilson in Carson City declined to issue an immediate order to stop the count, but scheduled a hearing next Wednesday on the request.

The battle is the latest among court skirmishes across the U.S. amid President Donald Trump's doubts about issues including voter registration, voter rolls and mail-in ballot deadlines prompted by the pandemic.

"There has been great concern whether the rolls are clean and properly registered voters are the ones receiving ballots, signing them and mailing them back," Trump for President Nevada co-chairman Adam Laxalt said. "All we want is to be part of the signature verification process and the ability to challenge a mail-in signature."

Laxalt invoked memories of the legal battle over the 2000 presidential election, which was ultimately decided in mid-December by the Supreme Court in *Bush v. Gore*.

But vote-by-mail "was not really an issue until someone started tweeting about it in a presidential year," said Amber McReynolds, head of the nonprofit National Vote At Home Institute, which advocates expanded

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mail balloting.

Trump has repeatedly taken to Twitter to sow doubt about widespread use of mailed ballots, suggesting that it encourages fraud.

"It seems to me that Clark County is not doing anything different from counties in other states," said McReynolds, a former elections chief in Denver. She said the Las Vegas area is among many now using computers with software to compare signatures before turning ballots with verification questions over to humans.

"Vote-by-mail has been expanded in red and blue states alike without issues," McReynolds said, including Florida, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Nebraska, Montana, Kentucky, Oregon, California, Georgia, and her home state, Colorado.

The lawsuit alleges Clark County Registrar of Voters Joe Gloria failed to get proper approval in April from Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske for his plan to accommodate observers. It seeks a court order to "prohibit ... processing and counting ballots until the proper procedures are in place."

It also complains that a GOP offer to install video monitoring equipment at the Clark County election headquarters was rejected.

Laxalt, a former Nevada attorney general, said in an interview that it appeared that not enough ballots were being rejected.

"It's hard to believe there's only a 1% rejection rate," Laxalt said, citing state election data showing that more than 98% of the 190,000 mailed ballots received to date in Clark County had been accepted as valid. He noted that once a signature is verified, no campaign can challenge that vote.

In 2016, Nevada counties reported that 1.6% of absentee ballots returned were rejected, according to data collected by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. Nationally, about 1% of absentee ballots cast were rejected that year.

State Democrats called the lawsuit a "plain and simple" effort to suppress votes in the state's most diverse county. The U.S. Census puts the Clark County population at more than 31% Hispanic, 13% Black and about 10% Asian American.

In a statement, the party referred to a lawsuit dismissed by a federal judge in September that sought to block a state law enacted under pandemic emergency measures to allow mail-in ballots to be sent to every active registered voter in Nevada. The Legislature, controlled by Democrats, passed the law along party-lines. The Democratic governor signed it in August.

The federal judge in Las Vegas said Republicans and the Trump campaign failed to show how they would be harmed by the law. The ruling was not appealed.

"Throughout this election, Trump and Republicans have resorted to baseless attacks to undermine confidence in Nevada's election integrity," the Democratic Party statement said.

Las Vegas-area voter and volunteer count-watcher Fred Kraus is the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit, which was filed in Nevada's capital city because the Republican secretary of state is a defendant.

A Cegavske spokeswoman, Jennifer Russell, said she couldn't comment on an active lawsuit.

Clark County has more than 70% of the nearly 1.75 million active voters in the state. Registered Democrats number more than 504,000, compared with about 351,000 Republicans and 300,000 with no party affiliation.

County registrar Gloria said in an interview before the lawsuit was filed that Las Vegas-area vote processing is safe, fair and nonpartisan, and that observers were being accommodated even amid social distancing rules.

Allowing a party to install and control cameras and keep recordings to itself would be inappropriate, he said, and would violate state law prohibiting public photos or videos at the counting center.

Gloria added that changing operations now would be challenging. Early voting in Nevada began Oct. 17.

Ballots are rejected during every election, even under the best of circumstances, and authorities nationally say problems could be compounded this year as millions of voters cast mail-in ballots for the first time because of election changes forced by the coronavirus.

Some ballots typically go uncounted because they arrive too late in the mail, voters forget to sign them

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or signatures don't match the one on file at local election offices.

Large numbers of uncounted ballots could be used to cast doubts about the election.

This story has been corrected to show that the Secretary of State is a defendant, not a plaintiff.

AP reporters Sam Metz in Carson City and Christina Cassidy in Atlanta contributed to this report. Metz is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative, a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues.

Trump, Biden scrap on oil, virus with just over a week to go

By STEVE PEOPLES, JILL COLVIN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

PENSACOLA, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump and his allies fought for support in pivotal battleground states Friday after a debate performance that gave new hope to anxious Republicans. Democrat Joe Biden, campaigning close to home, tried to clean up a debate misstep while urging voters to stay focused on the president's inability to control the worsening pandemic.

The surge of activity with just 11 days remaining in the 2020 contest highlighted the candidates' divergent strategies, styles and policy prescriptions that are shaping the campaign's closing days. More than 52 million votes have already been cast, with an additional 100 million or so expected before a winner is declared.

The coronavirus pandemic has pushed Trump onto the defensive for much of the fall, but for the moment it is Biden's team that has been forced to explain itself. In the final minutes of Thursday night's debate, the former vice president said he supports a "transition" away from oil in the U.S. in favor of renewable energy. The campaign released a statement hours later declaring that he would phase out taxpayer subsidies for fossil fuel companies, not the industry altogether.

But Trump, campaigning in Florida, repeatedly seized on the issue.

"That could be one of the biggest mistakes made in presidential debate history," he gloated at a rally at The Villages, a sprawling retirement community in Florida, where thousands of people gathered outdoors on a polo field. Most did not wear masks.

Later, in Pensacola, Trump recounted the moment with glee.

"It looked like he made it, it looked like it was going to be OK. He got off the stage, going back to his basement, and then they hit him with the energy question. They hit him with a thing called oil," he told a sprawling crowd that appeared to be one of the largest of his campaign to date.

While Florida is still logging thousands of new COVID-19 cases daily, audience members stood and sat shoulder-to-shoulder and Make America Great Again hats far outnumbered face coverings. In-person voting in the state began Monday.

As part of his damage control, Biden dispatched running mate Kamala Harris to help clarify his position as she campaigned in swing state Georgia.

"Let's be really clear about this: Joe Biden is not going to ban fracking," Harris said, referring to a technique that uses pressurized liquid to extract oil or natural gas. "He is going to deal with the oil subsidies. You know, the president likes to take everything out of context. But let's be clear, what Joe was talking about was banning subsidies, but he will not ban fracking in America."

As he campaigned in The Villages, Trump fired an insult at Harris that pointed to her gender, quickly stirring criticism.

"Kamala will not be your first female president," Trump declared. "Look, we're not going to be a socialist nation. We're not going to have a socialist president, especially any female socialist president."

As for Biden and oil, while ending the nation's reliance on fossil fuel is popular among many liberals, the idea could hurt him among working-class voters in swing states such as Pennsylvania, Ohio and Texas who depend on the industry, and fracking in particular, to make a living.

Trump's allies immediately began running new attack ads seizing on the Democrats' inconsistent answers on energy. And Trump played a video at his Pensacola rally that included past comments from Biden and Harris about fracking, which Harris supported banning during her primary campaign.

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As part of his plan to fight climate change, Biden has said he would ban new gas and oil permits — including fracking — on federal lands only. The vast majority of oil and gas does not come from federal lands.

With 29 Electoral College votes, Florida is widely seen as a must-win state for Trump if he wants to win a second term in the White House. While polling here in early October showed Biden with a slight advantage, a more recent poll has the two candidates neck and neck.

Trump told rallygoers he planned to vote while in Florida on Saturday. "Eleven days from now, we are going to win my home state of Florida," he said.

Trump's fate in the state is closely tied to his handling of the pandemic, especially among older voters, whose support for him has faded. He and his campaign have spent the last weeks trying to win them back, including Friday, when Trump pledged to protect Social Security and tried to paint Biden in hyperbolic terms.

A Biden election, Trump claimed at one point, "would mean that America's seniors have no air conditioning during the summer, no heat during the winter and no electricity during peak hours." Biden has not endorsed anything of the sort.

The pandemic was a major focus of Thursday's debate and it was the sole focus of Biden's only public appearance Friday close to his home in Delaware, which is hardly a swing state.

During the debate, Trump rosily predicted that the pandemic, which is escalating in several states, will "go away." Biden countered that the nation was headed toward "a dark winter." The former vice president reiterated that theme Friday in Wilmington as he outlined his plans.

Biden vowed to work with Congress to enact a new economic relief package for hard-pressed individuals, businesses and states by the end of January after seeking input from Republican and Democratic governors. He also promised to encourage state leaders to implement mask mandates. Should they refuse, Biden said he would lean on municipal leaders to require universal mask wearing in their communities.

"We're more than eight months into this crisis, the president still doesn't have a plan. He's given up," Biden charged. "I'm not going to shut down the country. I'm going to shut down the virus."

Though U.S. cases are soaring and deaths are nearing 224,000, Trump insisted that Biden was being too pessimistic.

"We're not entering a dark winter," he insisted. "We're entering the final turn and approaching the light at the end of the tunnel. That's how I look at it."

In fact, infections, hospitalizations and deaths are on the rise across the United States.

The seven-day rolling average for daily new cases in the U.S. rose over the past two weeks from 44,647 on Oct. 8 to 61,141.9 on Oct. 22, and the rolling average for daily new deaths rose over the same period from 710.3 to 762.9, according to data through Thursday from Johns Hopkins University.

Even in the closing days of the race, Biden has maintained a cautious campaign schedule, citing the pandemic, while Trump has been a much more aggressive traveler. And he said he would be campaigning nonstop until Election Day, with as many as five or six rallies in the race's final day.

Weissert reported from Wilmington, Delaware. AP writers Kevin Freking and Zeke Miller in Washington and Bill Barrow in Atlanta contributed.

US Navy: 2 onboard training plane killed in Alabama crash

FOLEY, Ala. (AP) — A U.S. Navy training plane that took off from Florida crashed Friday in an Alabama residential neighborhood near the Gulf Coast, killing both people in the plane, authorities said.

Zach Harrell, a spokesperson for Commander, Naval Air Forces, said both people in the T-6B Texan II training plane died, but they weren't immediately releasing their names. No injuries were reported on the ground.

Foley Fire Chief Joey Darby said responders encountered a "large volume of fire" with a home and several cars engulfed in flames. Firefighters were able to make "a quick stop on the fire," the chief told local news outlets.

The crash occurred southeast of Mobile, near the city of Foley and the town of Magnolia Springs. Darby

called the neighborhood a "heavily populated" residential area. No firefighters were injured, he added.

The plane had flown out of Naval Air Station Whiting Field, about 30 miles (48.28 kilometers) northeast of Pensacola, Florida, Navy spokeswoman Julie Ziegenhorn said.

The U.S. Department of Defense and the Navy were set to handle the investigation, the Baldwin County Sheriff's Office tweeted.

Arnold Schwarzenegger feels 'fantastic' after heart surgery

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Arnold Schwarzenegger says he is feeling "fantastic" after his recent heart surgery. The 73-year-old "Terminator" actor and former California governor said on social media Friday that he had a new aortic valve implanted in his heart. He posted a photo of himself with a thumbs up from his hospital bed.

"Thanks to the team at the Cleveland Clinic, I have a new aortic valve to go along with my new pulmonary valve from my last surgery," he wrote. The actor underwent heart surgery in 2018 to replace a pulmonary valve that was originally installed in 1997.

Schwarzenegger also posted some photos of himself standing in front of a few monuments in Cleveland. "I feel fantastic and have already been walking the streets of Cleveland enjoying your amazing statues," he said.

Asteroid samples escaping from jammed NASA spacecraft

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A NASA spacecraft is stuffed with so much asteroid rubble from this week's grab that it's jammed open and precious particles are drifting away in space, scientists said Friday.

Scientists announced the news three days after the spacecraft named Osiris-Rex briefly touched asteroid Bennu, NASA's first attempt at such a mission.

The mission's lead scientist, Dante Lauretta of the University of Arizona, said Tuesday's operation 200 million miles away collected far more material than expected for return to Earth — in the hundreds of grams. The sample container on the end of the robot arm penetrated so deeply into the asteroid and with such force, however, that rocks got sucked in and became wedged around the rim of the lid.

Scientists estimate the sampler pressed as much as 19 inches (48 centimeters) into the rough, crumbly, black terrain.

"We're almost a victim of our own success here," Lauretta said at a hastily arranged news conference. Lauretta said there is nothing flight controllers can do to clear the obstructions and prevent more bits of Bennu from escaping, other than to get the samples into their return capsule as soon as possible.

So, the flight team was scrambling to put the sample container into the capsule as early as Tuesday — much sooner than originally planned — for the long trip home.

"Time is of the essence," said Thomas Zurbuchen, chief of NASA's science missions.

This is NASA's first asteroid sample-return mission. Bennu was chosen because its carbon-rich material is believed to hold the preserved building blocks of our solar system. Getting pieces from this cosmic time capsule could help scientists better understand how the planets formed billions of years ago and how life originated on Earth.

Scientists were stunned — and then dismayed — on Thursday when they saw the pictures coming from Osiris-Rex following its wildly successful touch-and-go at Bennu two days earlier.

A cloud of asteroid particles could be seen swirling around the spacecraft as it backed away from Bennu. The situation appeared to stabilize, according to Lauretta, once the robot arm was locked into place. But it was impossible to know exactly how much had already been lost.

The requirement for the \$800 million-plus mission was to bring back a minimum 2 ounces (60 grams).

Regardless of what's on board, Osiris-Rex will still leave the vicinity of the asteroid in March — that's the earliest possible departure given the relative locations of Earth and Bennu. The samples won't make

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it back until 2023, seven years after the spacecraft rocketed away from Cape Canaveral.

Osiris-Rex will keep drifting away from Bennu and will not orbit it again, as it waits for its scheduled departure.

Because of the sudden turn of events, scientists won't know how much the sample capsule holds until it's back on Earth. They initially planned to spin the spacecraft to measure the contents, but that maneuver was canceled since it could spill even more debris.

"I think we're going to have to wait until we get home to know precisely how much we have," Laretta told reporters. "As you can imagine, that's hard. ... But the good news is we see a lot of material."

Japan, meanwhile, is awaiting its second batch of samples taken from a different asteroid, due back in December.

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.

Washington state discovers first 'murder hornet' nest in US

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Scientists in Washington state have discovered the first nest of so-called murder hornets in the United States and plan to wipe it out Saturday to protect native honeybees, officials said.

Workers with the state Agriculture Department spent weeks searching, trapping and using dental floss to tie tracking devices to Asian giant hornets, which can deliver painful stings to people and spit venom but are the biggest threat to honeybees that farmers depend on to pollinate crops.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we did it," agency spokeswoman Karla Salp said at a virtual briefing. Bad weather delayed plans Friday to destroy the nest found in Blaine, a city north of Seattle.

The nest is about the size of a basketball and contains an estimated 100 to 200 hornets, according to scientists, who suspected it was in the area ever since the invasive insects began appearing late last year. Officials have said it's not known how they arrived in North America.

Despite their nickname and the hype that has stirred fears in an already bleak year, the world's largest hornets kill at most a few dozen people a year in Asian countries, and experts say it is probably far less. Meanwhile, hornets, wasps and bees typically found in the United States kill an average of 62 people a year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said.

The real threat from Asian giant hornets — which are 2 inches (5 centimeters) long — is their devastating attacks on honeybees, which are already under siege from problems like mites, diseases, pesticides and loss of food. A small group of the hornets can kill an entire honeybee hive in hours, and they have already destroyed six or seven hives in Washington state, officials said.

The nest was found after an Agriculture Department worker trapped two of the hornets Wednesday. Two more were captured Thursday, the agency said.

Using dental floss, "entomologists were able to attach radio trackers to three hornets, the second of which led them to the discovery of the nest" Thursday, agriculture officials said.

It was about 300 yards (274 meters) from the traps in the cavity of a tree on private property, officials said. Dozens of the hornets were seen buzzing in and out of the tree about 7 or 8 feet (2 meters) above the ground. The owner is letting the state eradicate the nest and remove the tree.

The plan Saturday is to fill the cavity with foam and cover it with plastic wrap to prevent the hornets from escaping, said Sven-Erik Spichiger, an entomologist for the Agriculture Department. Then a tube will be inserted to vacuum up the hornets trapped inside and deposit them in a collection chamber, he said.

Workers will wear thick protective suits that can prevent the 6-millimeter-long stingers of the hornets from hurting workers, Spichiger said. They also will wear face shields because the trapped hornets can spit a painful venom into their eyes.

"We extract them alive," he said. "We will kill them."

The tree will then be cut down to extract newborn hornets and learn if any queens have left the hive

already, he said. Officials suspect more nests may be in the area and will keep searching.

"It's still a very small population, and we are actively hunting them," Spichiger said.

Scientists for the department have been searching for nests since the first Asian giant hornets were caught earlier this year. The first confirmed detection of the hornet in the U.S. was in December 2019 near Blaine and the first live hornet was trapped this July. Just over 20 have been caught so far, all in Whatcom County.

The invasive insect is normally found in China, Japan, Thailand, South Korea, Vietnam and other Asian countries. Washington state and the Canadian province of British Columbia are the only places the hornets have been found on the continent.

'Honor the ancestors': Harris appeals directly to Black men

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Democratic vice presidential hopeful Kamala Harris made a direct appeal to Black men Friday, defending her record as a prosecutor, blasting President Donald Trump as "racist" and vouching for Joe Biden as a man capable of addressing systemic racism and leading a diverse country.

"I'm not going to tell anybody, including Black men, that they're supposed to vote for us. We need to earn that vote," Harris told a roundtable of Black men in one of several stops across Atlanta, the Democratic base of Georgia, an emerging battleground state.

The California senator warned that Trump wants to "turn 20% of Black men in favor of him," a mark that could tilt a range of battleground states in the South and Upper Midwest to the president. But Harris, the first Black woman on a major party's national ticket, said Trump's pitch is rooted in "spinning" and misrepresenting her record and the Democratic ticket's proposals.

"Joe Biden has the ability to say the words 'Black Lives Matter,' unlike that other fella," Harris told a group of students from Atlanta's historically Black college campuses.

Still, Harris faced new questions Friday about her record as a prosecutor. She cast herself as a change agent in a "flawed" structure and promised that a Biden White House would understand that "Black boys and Black men have to be seen through the prism of life" and that "these systems have failed them."

Her Georgia itinerary — small events with Black audiences, a stop at an iconic Black-owned restaurant near Atlanta's HBCU campuses and a drive-in rally at Morehouse College, whose alumni include Martin Luther King Jr. — highlighted how critical the Biden campaign sees Harris in its efforts to urge Black turnout.

"We're not going to let anyone mess with our right to vote," she said at Morehouse, calling voting a way "to honor the ancestors."

The drop-off in Black votes from President Barack Obama's reelection in 2012 to the 2016 election was a critical factor in Trump managing narrow victories over Democrat Hillary Clinton in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, a trio of Great Lakes states that gave the president his Electoral College majority. Higher Black turnout also could push North Carolina, Georgia and Florida into the Democratic column.

Harris visited Georgia a day after the final presidential debate, which Trump used to claim that "nobody has done what I've done" for Black Americans, "with the exception of Abraham Lincoln — possible exception." The president blamed Biden for the mass incarceration of "young Black men" via a sweeping 1994 federal crime bill when Biden was a senator representing Delaware.

Biden touted his support of civil rights measures over the years and said Trump "pours fuel on every single racist fire." But it was Harris in Atlanta who confronted the issue of race with a personal pitch that neither of the white men at the top of the ballot can muster.

Citing her time as a local district attorney and state attorney general, Harris said she learned that the "war on drugs was, by every measure, a failure, and Black men were hit the hardest." She said Biden would push to decriminalize marijuana and expunge existing convictions from records — though the former vice president has opposed legalizing it altogether. She promised sweeping programs to expand health care access, capital for small businesses and educational opportunities for struggling communities, all matters aimed at racial disparities.

Among the friendly audiences, though, Atlanta rapper and producer Jermaine Dupri told Harris that "you

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put a lot of Black brothers away in your past" and asked her to explain her record.

"Yes, I decided to go up the rough side of the mountain, as we say in church," Harris told him, framing her career choice as a conscious decision to change a "flawed" system from within. She rattled off several efforts, describing a reentry program that she said steered young men arrested or convicted of nonviolent drug offenses into jobs. "They referred to my program as a 'hug a thug' program," she said.

Harris acknowledged she didn't "change the whole system," but pushed back on the criticism. "It suggests Black people shouldn't be prosecutors. ... It suggests that you don't love your community, or you don't want to reform the system if you decide to go in it."

She told the group of Black men that Trump is "spinning" her record and Biden's to obscure his own priorities on race and ethnicity, from his "birtherism" lies about Obama's birthplace to his insults of certain political opponents and entire nations.

Trump, Harris said, pushed "the theme that the first Black man to be president of the United States was illegitimately there" and referred "to countries on the continent as 'shithole' countries" and "refused to condemn white supremacists."

At Morehouse, she mused about sometimes being asked whether Trump is racist. "Yes," Harris said. "It's not like it's some random one-off."

Biden, she added, would be a president "who acknowledges systemic racism, who acknowledges the history of America, and uses that bully pulpit and that microphone in a way that speaks truth ... and brings our country together."

Nebraska, Maine could play pivotal role in presidential race

By GRANT SCHULTE Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska will never be mistaken for a swing state given that it hasn't supported a Democratic presidential candidate since 1964, but if the race is close this fall, the state could have a key role in choosing the next president.

It's all thanks to a law approved decades ago that was intended to attract presidential candidates to a state they usually ignore because it's so reliably conservative. While the statewide vote will clearly go to President Donald Trump, former Vice President Joe Biden has a good chance of winning in the state's 2nd Congressional District, meaning one of Nebraska's five Electoral College votes could go to the Democrat.

But there's a problem with that scenario: Maine.

Maine is the only other state that awards Electoral College votes by congressional district, and it could go the opposite way and award a vote to Donald Trump even as the state as a whole likely will go to Biden.

"I wasn't aware of that," Shirl Mora James, a leader in the Nebraska Democratic Party, said with a sigh. "I've been working the phones in Pennsylvania. Maybe I need to be making calls in Maine."

Although Nebraska and Maine take the same approach to awarding Electoral College votes — two votes for the overall winner plus votes for the winner of each congressional district — they had different motivations for their laws.

In Maine, legislators approved the new approach in 1969 in hopes of better representing voters who might be on the losing end of the statewide count but were still a substantial minority.

Nebraska arrived at the same system more than 20 years later, but lawmakers focused more on gaining the attention of presidential candidates. A Democratic legislator, DiAnna Schimek, recalled Democratic presidential candidate Bobby Kennedy's 11-city whistle stop campaign across the state in 1968 and convinced enough Republicans that by changing the Electoral College system, the state could return to relevance.

"That was when Nebraska mattered," Schimek reminisced recently.

Or as longtime Democratic activist Patricia Zieg put it, without Nebraska's current system, "We'd just be a warm North Dakota."

While they share the distinction of potentially going against their statewide votes, the Maine and Nebraska districts are decidedly different.

Maine's sprawling 2nd District is among the nation's largest and most rural, made up of small farms,

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coastal communities and vast stretches of forest. It's nothing like Nebraska's tightly packed 2nd District, which stretches from Omaha's century-old urban neighborhoods and trendy downtown lofts through suburban developments and finally ends about 20 miles west in hobby farms and cornfields. The Nebraska district also dips south to older suburbs near Offutt Air Force Base.

The differences help explain why the two districts could favor opposing candidates.

A big reason for Biden's strength in polls is his support among urban and suburban voters. Polling indicates Biden has a slight lead in the Nebraska district despite trailing badly statewide.

In a sign the president's campaign has noticed those polls, Trump plans to hold a rally Tuesday at the Omaha airport.

In Maine, the more urban 1st District, anchored by liberal Portland, is strongly Democratic, but the 2nd District is far more favorable to Trump. Polls have shown Biden and Trump in a tight race there.

In 2016, Trump managed to collect a single electoral vote in the 2nd District while Democrat Hillary Clinton took the state's other three.

During this election cycle, Trump visited Maine in June to talk to fishermen and visit a factory that makes swabs critical to COVID-19 testing. Both of his sons have paid visits to Maine, too, along with Vice President Mike Pence, who paid a visit on Monday.

"It's on, Maine. And the road to victory runs right through northern Maine," Pence told a gathering in Hermon, in the 2nd District.

Nebraska Republicans were embarrassed when Democrat Barack Obama won the 2nd District's electoral vote in 2008 and changed the district's boundaries in 2011 to siphon off Democratic votes and avoid a repeat.

The state GOP also has called for the return of a traditional winner-take-all Electoral College system. But until then, Theresa Thibodeau, chairwoman of the Douglas County Republican Party, said she has used that vote for Obama as motivation for her fellow Republicans.

"I think it was an eye-opener for a lot of people," Thibodeau said. "Quite honestly, I think a lot of Republican voters stayed home because they thought Nebraska would stay red."

Fred Conley, a former Democratic city councilman who is running for the Nebraska Legislature, said it's clear that the competitive race in the district has generated more excitement and organizing by party activists.

And that, Schimek said, is why she pushed for the change so many years ago.

"I wanted to give people a feeling that their vote really counted," she said.

Associated Press writers David Sharp in Portland, Maine, and Margery A. Beck in Omaha, Nebraska, contributed to this report.

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Battleground postal delays persist with mail voting underway

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

U.S. Postal Service records show delivery delays have persisted across the country as millions of Americans are voting by mail, raising the possibility of ballots being rejected because they arrive too late.

Postal data through Oct. 9, released through a federal court order, show nearly all the agency's delivery regions missing its target of having at least 95% of first-class mail arrive within five days. Parts of the presidential battleground states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Ohio fell short of delivery goals by wide margins as the agency struggles to regain its footing after a tumultuous summer.

The districts that include the major urban areas and their suburbs in each of those states all performed below the national average for on-time delivery, with the area around Pittsburgh in western Pennsylvania the lone exception.

The delays are a worrisome sign for voters who still have not returned their absentee ballots. That is

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especially true in states such as Michigan, where ballots must be received by Election Day. Other states require a postmark by Nov. 3.

"We do encourage people who are worried about ballots not getting here on time to get them in as soon as possible," said Perry County Commissioner Brenda Watson in Pennsylvania.

She said her office has sent out more than 600,000 absentee ballots, more than double the number from the primary, and has extended office hours so staff can monitor a drop box.

With more than 2.9 million mail-in ballots requested in Pennsylvania, on-time delivery is crucial. But delays are lingering throughout the state, according to the agency's most recently available data released as part of the federal court order.

In the week that ended Oct. 9, first-class mail was delivered on time 79.7% of the time in the district covering Philadelphia and its suburbs, and 83.2% of the time in central Pennsylvania, both below the national average of 86.1%.

A deadlock at the U.S. Supreme Court this week allowed the state to count mailed-in ballots received up to three days after the Nov. 3 election, although Republicans have filed another challenge.

Delays have plagued the Postal Service during the coronavirus pandemic and worsened under a series of cost-cutting policies implemented by Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, who took over the agency in June. Following a series of court orders and intense public scrutiny, the agency has reversed the policies and seen improvements, but has not yet fully restored delivery times.

"As these delays continue across the country just weeks before the upcoming presidential election, it is incumbent upon you to take immediate and necessary actions to fully restore on-time mail delivery," U.S. Sen. Gary Peters, a Michigan Democrat, wrote to DeJoy this week.

In a statement, Postal Service spokesman David Partenheimer said offices have been authorized to use expanded processing procedures, additional delivery and collection trips, and overtime hours to ensure election mail arrives on time. The agency also announced it will treat election mail as first-class, which had previously been an informal policy.

"The Postal Service is fully committed and actively working to handle the increase in election mail volume across the country over the next two weeks," Partenheimer said.

Mail-in ballots arriving past the deadline is a main reason many of them get rejected. That has led election officials nationwide to urge voters to return ballots as soon as possible or take advantage of ballot drop boxes or early in-person voting.

The postal district that covers the eastern third of Michigan, including Detroit and its suburbs, has consistently been one of the worst performing regions. It had the nation's slowest deliveries in the opening days of October, with just 70.9% of mail arriving on time.

Michigan has sent every registered voter a ballot application, but mail-in votes must arrive by Election Day to count, following a court order that blocked a 14-day extension backed by Democrats. Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson has told voters who have not yet mailed in their ballots to skip the Postal Service altogether and put ballots in a drop box or take them to their local clerk's office.

Other battleground areas also showed problems in early October, with delivery rates of first-class mail below the national average. That includes all of Ohio and districts that encompass major urban areas in Wisconsin, Georgia and North Carolina.

Postal delays also could compound existing issues that have cropped up in recent weeks as election officials manage the unprecedented surge in mail voting with deadlines looming.

In Ohio earlier this month, a machine error led to 50,000 incorrect absentee ballots being sent. Then hundreds of thousands of absentee ballots were delayed when the company printing them became overwhelmed by the volume of ballots requested.

While Ohio allows ballots to be counted if they arrive up to 10 days after the election, they must be postmarked no later than the day before Election Day.

Izaguirre reported from Lindenhurst, New York. Data editor Meghan Hoyer in Washington, D.C., and data journalist Pia Deshpande in Chicago contributed to this report.

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Hospitalization data flawed in Missouri, perhaps elsewhere

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

O'FALLON, Mo. (AP) — With the number of coronavirus patients requiring hospitalization rising at alarming levels, Missouri and perhaps a handful of other states are unable to post accurate data on COVID-19 dashboards because of a flaw in the federal reporting system.

Since Tuesday, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Service's coronavirus dashboard has posted a message that the total number of patients hospitalized for COVID-19 has been underreported since Oct. 17. The note blamed "challenges entering data" to the portal used by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for collecting daily hospitalizations around the country.

It wasn't immediately clear on Friday how many states are impacted since some states rely on their own hospitalization counts, not HHS data collection. HHS did not immediately respond to phone and email messages seeking comment.

But The COVID Tracking Project said in a blog post that it has "identified five other states with anomalies in their hospitalization figures" that could be tied to the HHS reporting problem.

The project noted that the number of reported intensive care unit patients in Kansas had decreased from 80 to one without explanation. It said Wisconsin's hospitalization figures stayed unexpectedly flat while other indicators worsened. And it said Georgia, Alabama, and Florida reported only partial updates to hospitalization data.

Kansas Department of Health and Environment spokeswoman Kristi Zears confirmed that the "ICU admission data displayed on our website is not current. We did post a notice on our dashboard today to convey that as well. We anticipate the issue will be resolved for our Monday update."

A spokeswoman for the Wisconsin Department of Health Services said the state's reporting was accurate, with the number of hospitalizations holding steady for one day, Wednesday, before rising again on Thursday. A Georgia Department of Public Health spokeswoman said the department was unaware of any problems with its data. Health department representatives in the other states mentioned in the blog didn't immediately respond to Associated Press requests for comment.

In Missouri, the loss of accurate hospitalization data comes as confirmed cases continue to rise. On Friday, Missouri reported 1,811 new cases of COVID-19, and 31 additional deaths. Since the onset of the pandemic, Missouri has cited 164,534 confirmed cases and 2,688 deaths.

Missouri also has seen a steady rise in COVID-19 hospitalizations since September. The state reached record levels of hospitalizations several times earlier this month, with every region except St. Louis seeing record or near-record spikes. Since July 7, when 375 people were hospitalized statewide, that number has nearly quadrupled to a peak of 1,465 hospitalizations on Oct. 14.

The problem is especially worrisome in rural areas, where some hospitals are nearing capacity. Others are using makeshift buildings or previously vacant hospital wings to serve overflow patients. Some are simply redirecting people to larger hospitals.

State health department spokeswoman Lisa Cox said the federal hospital reporting system, known as TeleTracking, went down. "As a result they experienced underreporting – so hospitalization numbers were lower than they should've been," Cox said in an email.

Missouri Hospital Association Senior Vice President Mary Becker said HHS recently implemented changes; some measures were removed from the portal, others were added or renamed. Some reporting hospitals were able to report using the new measures, but others were not, and as a result, the system crashed, she said.

"This change is impacting hospitals across the country," Becker said in an email. "Some states collect the data directly and may not yet be introducing the new measures to their processes. Missouri hospitals use TeleTracking and did not have control over the introduction of the changes to the template."

The last day with accurate data, Oct. 16, showed 1,439 people hospitalized in Missouri, down slightly from the record of 1,465 set two days earlier.

Trump: Sudan to join UAE, Bahrain in recognizing Israel

By DEB RIECHMANN and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump announced Friday that Sudan will start to normalize ties with Israel, making it the third Arab state to do so as part of U.S.-brokered deals in the run-up to Election Day.

The announcement came after the North African nation agreed to put \$335 million in an escrow account to be used to compensate American victims of terror attacks. The attacks include the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania by the al-Qaida network while its leader, Osama bin Laden, was living in Sudan. In exchange, Trump notified Congress on Friday of his intent to remove Sudan from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism.

It was foreign policy achievement for Trump just 11 days before Election Day. Previously, the Trump administration engineered diplomatic pacts between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain — the first since Jordan recognized Israel in the 1990s and Egypt in the 1970s.

Trump said at least five other countries want to come into the deal, which is collectively called the Abraham Accords.

The new recognitions of Israel unify Arab nations around their common enemy, Iran. They also upend the traditional Arab strategy of refusing to normalize relations with Israel before an independent Palestinian state is created.

The Palestinians say the recognitions amount to betrayal.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas condemned and rejected the agreement, saying a lasting peace in the region depends on ending the Israeli occupation and creating a Palestinian state. Wasel Abu Yousef, a senior Palestinian official, called the agreement a “stab in the back” of the Palestinian people and their cause. The Islamic militant group Hamas, which rules Gaza, also condemned the agreement.

Israel said the recognitions signal that the Palestinians have lost their “veto” over regional peace efforts.

Trump invited reporters to the Oval Office while still on the phone with Israeli and Sudanese leaders. Trump said Sudan had demonstrated its commitment in battling terrorism.

“This is one of the great days in the history of Sudan,” Trump said, adding that Israel and Sudan have been in a state of hostilities for decades, even if they had not been in direct conflict.

In a statement released in Jerusalem, Netanyahu noted that in 1967, Khartoum hosted a conference where the Arab League called for no recognition, negotiations or peace with Israel.

“Today, Khartoum is saying yes to peace with Israel, yes to recognition of Israel and yes to normalization with Israel,” Netanyahu said. “This is a new era, an era of true peace — peace that is proceeding and widening with additional Arab countries. Three in the last few weeks.”

He said Israeli and Sudanese teams will meet soon to discuss cooperation in agriculture, trade and other areas. Sudan also is opening its skies to Israeli flights, which will shorten trips to Africa and South America, he said.

In a separate but related development, Netanyahu and Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz announced that Israel had consented to American sales of “advanced weapons” to the UAE. The arms sales was part of the deal the U.S. earlier brokered between the Israel and UAE.

Gantz and Netanyahu said Defense Secretary Mark Esper has assured Israel that the U.S. would maintain Israel’s qualitative military edge. Israel is currently the only country in the Mideast to possess the cutting-edge fighter jets. Gantz’ office refused to identify the weapons, but Trump has said that the UAE is interested in buying F35 warplanes.

The removal of the terror designation opens the door for Sudan’s fragile transitional government to get international loans and aid needed to revive its battered economy and rescue the country’s transition to democracy. A senior U.S. official said Sudan had borrowed the money needed to set up the escrow ac-

count for terror victims.

Sudan is on a fragile path to democracy after a popular uprising last year led the military to overthrow the longtime autocrat, Omar al-Bashir. Thousands have protested in the country's capital Khartoum and other regions in recent days over dire economic conditions.

Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok thanked Trump for signing the executive order to remove Sudan from the terrorism list and said in a statement that he hoped to complete the deal in a "timely manner."

Unmentioned in the joint statement was that Sudan has agreed, according to the senior U.S. official, to designate Lebanon's Hezbollah movement as a terrorist organization, something that Israel has long sought from its neighbors and others in the international community.

Not everyone in Sudan, however, appears happy with recognizing Israel. Some Islamist politicians, sidelined after the ouster of autocrat Omar al-Bashir, said they expect to receive renewed public support.

"I expect anger. I expect demonstrations," said Mohammed El Hassan, one of the leaders of al-Bashir's disbanded National Congress Party. "As Muslims, we stand with the Palestinians. It is not the transitional government's role to take this kind of decision."

But others say that normalization is worth the price for Sudan to come off the U.S. terrorism list.

"Because of the economy, Sudanese don't see this as normalization with Israel but normalization with the international community," said Osman Mirgany, a prominent Sudanese columnist and editor of the daily al-Tayar. "After years of isolation, we want normal relations."

The normalization agreement had been in the works for some time but was finalized when Trump's Mideast peace team, led by Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner and Avi Berkowitz, assistant to the president and special representative for international negotiations, visited the region to mark the first commercial flight between Israel and Bahrain and then went on to the United Arab Emirates, according to U.S. officials.

The officials were not authorized to discuss the announcement and spoke only on condition of anonymity.

Associated Press writers Jonathan Lemire in Washington, Josef Federman in Jerusalem and Isabel DeBre in Dubai contributed to this report.

Nigeria says 51 civilians, 18 security forces dead in unrest

By SAM OLUKOYA and LEKAN OYEKANMI Associated Press

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — At least 51 civilians have been killed in Nigeria's unrest following days of peaceful protests over police abuses, the president said Friday, blaming "hooliganism" for the violence while asserting that security forces have used "extreme restraint."

President Muhammadu Buhari's comments are expected to further inflame tensions in Africa's most populous country after Amnesty International reported that soldiers shot and killed at least 12 demonstrators Tuesday night as a large crowd sang the national anthem. The deaths sparked international condemnation.

In a statement, Buhari also said 11 policemen and seven soldiers had been killed by "rioters" as of Thursday, and "the mayhem has not stopped." He said another 37 civilians were injured in some of Nigeria's worst turmoil in years.

The president said the well-intentioned protests were hijacked by thugs.

But many Nigerians are upset by what the president hasn't said. Buhari in a national address Thursday night didn't mention the shootings, instead warning protesters against "undermining national security and law and order." On Friday he said the government "will not fold its arms and allow miscreants and criminals continue to perpetrate acts of hooliganism."

Resentment lingered with the smell of charred tires Friday in Nigeria's relatively calm streets. Soldiers remained in parts of Lagos, Nigeria's largest city, as a 24-hour curfew remained in place.

A witness of Tuesday night's shooting, 33-year-old Isaiah Abor, ventured out anyway to visit the scene where soldiers had opened fire. He managed to escape the chaos.

"When (the soldiers) were making comments that the flag is not bulletproof, that's when I knew this was going to go out of hand," Abor said. Empty ammunition shells still littered the ground.

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The president's speech annoyed him. "The blood that stained a whole Nigerian flag, those youths were not even mentioned," Abor said. He added: "We are not cowards. We will always come to this ground, and we will always feel for those that are gone."

Another protester, Olatunde Joshua Oluwanifemi, said simply: "The speech killed our spirit."

The president's comments, "devoid of sympathy," were worrying, said Okechukwu Nwanguma with the Rule of Law and Accountability Advocacy Center. Shielding those behind the shootings will only lead to abuses by the police and military, he said: "If those who carried out the killings did so and nothing happens, it will encourage them and others to do the same thing next time."

But citing the president's comments, one influential group behind the protests, the Feminist Coalition, urged youth to stay at home, saying that "we need to stay alive to pursue our dreams to build the future."

Others disagreed. If the protests have been hijacked, then Nigerian youth should not give up the struggle and instead should "go back and re-strategize," said Seriki Muritala with the National Youth Parliament.

This week's scenes have touched a chord with Black Lives Matter supporters in the United States, while the U.S. government has strongly condemned the "use of excessive force by military forces who fired on unarmed demonstrators in Lagos, causing death and injury."

The protests turned violent Wednesday after the military's shooting as mobs vandalized and burned police stations, courthouses, TV stations and a hotel. Police battled angry crowds with tear gas and gunfire. The looting and gunfire continued Thursday.

The demonstrations began early this month with calls for Nigeria's government to shut down the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, a police unit known as SARS. The squad was launched to fight crime, but it carried out torture and killings, according to Amnesty International.

The #EndSARS campaign spread across the country and Buhari's government announced that it would disband the SARS unit. The protest persisted with demonstrators calling for more widespread reforms of the police and an end to corruption.

In one attempt at calming tensions, the Lagos state government on Friday shared a list of ongoing prosecution against police officers accused of human rights abuses.

"Today seems like a good day to get on to the work of rebuilding Lagos and ending police brutality," Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu said.

But an angry crowd shouted at him over the unrest as officials toured burned-out vehicles and the sacked palace of a Lagos ceremonial leader. The leader, or oba, isn't popular with some Nigerians who see him as a product of the country's often corrupt politics.

Opulence and grinding poverty are in close contact in Lagos, a city of some 20 million, and the inequality sharpens Nigerians' grievances.

After touring the battered city, the governor told reporters he was "very traumatized" and that "we lost people in several parts of the city." He didn't give details.

"Enough is enough," he said. "We need to heal ourselves." He said the curfew would begin easing Saturday morning and a panel looking into the unrest would begin receiving petitions on Monday.

And yet nerves were frayed. Near the scene of Tuesday's shooting, police shouted, then fired into the air, to stop a convoy carrying the body of a Muslim who had died overnight; the cause of death was not clear.

After questioning by police, the mourners were allowed to continue, to go on and bury the dead.

Bashir Adigun in Abuja, Nigeria contributed.

Confederate monument removed from Alabama courthouse

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (AP) — A 115-year-old Confederate monument that was the subject of protests in Alabama this year was removed from outside a county courthouse early Friday.

News outlets reported that a small group of onlookers cheered at the Madison County Courthouse in Huntsville as crews took away the stone memorial, which was topped by the likeness of a soldier, in pieces. Music blasted during part of the work.

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"I'm speechless, literally speechless. It's an amazing time for our culture and for people of all colors. I'm excited that I'm able to watch this event happen during this time," said Joretha Wright.

Demonstrators sought its removal amid nationwide protests against racial injustice following the police killing of George Floyd in Minnesota in May. City and county officials went back and forth over legal authority to take it down.

Madison County Commissioner JesHenry Malone, in a statement, said the county finally took action after a state commission created in 2017 to protect historic monuments failed to respond in a timely way to the commission's request to remove the memorial.

"The staff of the Madison County Commission executed the plan outlined in my June 2020 resolution for the legal removal of the Confederate Monument," he said.

Hours after its removal, the monument was reassembled at its new home in the Confederate burial section of a city-owned cemetery.

First erected in 1905 by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the monument went up at a time when Confederate descendants were trying to portray the South's cause in the Civil War as noble rather than linked to slavery.

It's unclear whether the county will have to pay a \$25,000 state fine imposed in 2017 to discourage the removal of Confederate memorials.

Trump, Biden lawyer up, brace for White House legal battle

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's and Democratic rival Joe Biden's campaigns are assembling armies of powerful lawyers for the possibility that the race for the White House is decided not at the ballot box but in court.

They have been engaging in a lawyer's version of tabletop war games, churning out draft pleadings, briefs and memos to cover scenarios that read like the stuff of a law school hypothetical more than a real-life case in a democracy.

Attorneys for the Republicans and the Democrats are already clashing in courts across the U.S. over mailed-in ballot deadlines and other issues brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. And as Trump tries to sow doubt in the legitimacy of the Nov. 3 election, both sides have built massive legal operations readying for a bitterly disputed race that lands at the Supreme Court.

"We've been preparing for this for well over a year," Republican National Committee Chief Counsel Justin Riemer told The Associated Press. "We've been working with the campaign on our strategy for recount preparation, for Election Day operations and our litigation strategy."

On the Democratic side, the Biden campaign's election protection program includes a special national litigation team involving hundreds of lawyers led by Walter Dellinger, acting solicitor general in the Clinton administration, and Donald Verrilli, a solicitor general under President Barack Obama, among others. Bob Bauer, a former White House counsel to Obama, and Biden campaign general counsel Dana Remus are focused on protecting the rights of voters, who have been enduring long lines at polling places around the country on the belief that the presidential election will be decided by their ballots.

Both sides are informed by the experience of the 2000 election, which was ultimately decided by the Supreme Court in *Bush v. Gore*. But this year, because Trump has pushed unsubstantiated claims about the potential for voter fraud with increased voting by mail, sowing doubt about the integrity of the result, lawyers are preparing for a return trip before the high court.

And, in an extraordinary twist, the president has pushed for his nominee to the Supreme Court, Judge Amy Coney Barrett, to be seated as soon as possible if she is confirmed as expected on Monday, saying it's important to have a ninth justice to decide any election disputes.

The race is already thought to be the most litigated in American history, with some 260 lawsuits arising from the coronavirus by one tally.

Behind the scenes, Trump and Republicans have been putting together a legal team that includes Jay

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Sekulow, one of the president's lead attorneys during the impeachment trial and the special counsel's Russia investigation and an experienced litigator before the Supreme Court. Republicans have hired dozens of attorneys and retained prominent national firms to challenge Democratic efforts to expand ballot access in key battleground states.

Thousands of volunteer lawyers are prepared to assist with Election Day operations and poll watching and other issues, Riemer said. A group called Lawyers for Trump, whose advisory board includes Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton and Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani, is recruiting retired lawyers and law students. Jones Day is among the prominent global law firms expected to play a role. Attorney Will Consovoy, who has represented Trump in such cases as his long-running fight to prevent a top New York prosecutor from getting his tax returns, is also likely to be a key player in any election legal fights.

Riemer said it's not as though the party is going to call up a random attorney on Election Day and say, "Hey, are you busy? Do you want to litigate a recount?"

That's close to what happened in 2000. Barry Richard, who represented Bush in the 2000 Florida recount, got a call the morning after the election asking if he could help and had to scramble to quickly pull a team together, he said.

"Things were much different then. We had no history of candidates lawyering up for presidential elections, so everything hit the fan the night of election night," Richard said.

Another team that's fighting voter access issues in courts across the country is headed by well-known election lawyer Marc Elias of the law firm Perkins Coie, who is prominent in Democratic circles and has become a bête noire of Republicans.

"When Democrats want to tilt elections in their favor outside the ballot box, who do they call? Marc Elias and Perkins Coie," an RNC website says.

Republicans accuse Elias and Democrats of trying to use the coronavirus pandemic to rig the election by doing away with safeguards against fraud.

Elias and his team at have filed lawsuits seeking to force states to extend mailed-in ballot collection deadlines and other things. In one case, the Supreme Court this week allowed Pennsylvania to count mailed-in ballots received up to three days after the Nov. 3 election, rejecting a Republican bid to block the extension.

Elias has long been the public face of Democratic legal contests, serving as general counsel to Hillary Clinton's campaign in 2016 and John Kerry's in 2004. He pushes regular updates about developments in his lawsuits to nearly 150,000 followers on Twitter, as well as guidance for voting and the occasional jibe at the president and his Republican counterparts.

"Being called a 'partisan hack' by a lawyer for Donald Trump is a badge of honor I will wear proudly for a lifetime," he wrote in a tweet this week.

But lawyers on both sides say they are preparing to be ready for much more than a fight on Twitter.

Richer reported from Boston.

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

AP FACT CHECK: Trump's skewed indictment of wind power

By SETH BORENSTEIN and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's dismissal of wind power as a glitchy, pricey, bird-slaughtering way to make electricity is out of step with the times.

He slammed the technology in his debate with Democrat Joe Biden on Thursday night, falsely contending wind power is dirtier and far pricier than natural gas. Here's a look at what he said:

TRUMP to Biden: "I know more about wind than you do. It's extremely expensive."

THE FACTS: No it isn't. His point is outdated.

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Wind-energy costs hit all-time lows as of 2019, averaging less than 2 cents per kilowatt-hour for newly built projects, making it increasingly competitive with other generation sources, according to a report by the Energy Department's Lawrence Berkeley National Lab. "Land-based utility-scale wind is one of the lowest-priced energy sources available today," the department says.

Wind and solar have become much cheaper as their industries grow and technology improves.

It's why solar and wind are expanding, along with cheap natural gas, while coal plants and nuclear plants are closing. This, despite regulatory rollbacks by the Trump administration to benefit the oil, gas and coal industries and undo Obama-era efforts against climate change and air pollution.

TRUMP: "It's very intermittent. It's got a lot of problems."

THE FACTS: He's exaggerating the downsides.

Trump's opinion about wind power being unreliable isn't shared by many big energy users. By next year, renewables such as wind and solar will be providing more of Americans' electricity than nuclear- and coal-fired power plants do, says the government's Energy Information Administration.

And it says that by 2045, renewables will surpass even natural gas in powering U.S. electricity plants.

TRUMP: "The fumes coming up to make these massive windmills is more than anything that we're talking about with natural gas."

THE FACTS: That's false. (Also, they're called wind turbines. Windmills mill grain.)

Wind turbines produce pollution when they are manufactured and little to none when in operation, federal scientists say. Even taking manufacturing emissions into account, wind power is far cleaner than natural gas.

Scientists in the Energy Department's Natural Renewable Energy Laboratory calculate that wind turbines produce an average of 0.4 ounces of carbon dioxide per kilowatt hour generated, over their lifetime. That includes emissions from manufacturing. Natural gas produces 58 times more carbon dioxide — at least 22.6 ounces per kilowatt-hour.

TRUMP: Wind power "kills all the birds."

THE FACTS: That's obviously not true. But turbines do kill many.

Studies find that wind turbines kill an average of 230,000 birds a year in North America, says the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The number will grow as more turbines are deployed.

Glass windows in buildings kill an estimated 599 million per year and vehicles, about 214 million a year, the agency says. Altogether, the agency estimates that wind turbines are responsible for 1 in 14,000 bird deaths. So turbines are an additional threat to birds, if a comparatively small one.

EDITOR'S NOTE — A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

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Census takers fall short of target goal in areas of US

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

From tribal lands in Arizona and New Mexico to storm-battered Louisiana, census workers who go door to door were unable to reach all the households they needed for a complete tally of the U.S. population, a count that ended abruptly last week after a Supreme Court ruling.

Community activists, statisticians and civil rights groups say racial and ethnic minorities are historically undercounted, and shortcomings in the 2020 census could set the course of life in their communities for years to come.

The count determines the number of congressional seats each state gets, where roads and bridges are built, how schools and health care facilities are funded, and how \$1.5 trillion in federal resources are al-

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located annually.

"An undercount in our community means schools are overcrowded, hospitals are overcrowded, roads are congested," said John Yang, president and executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice.

The census ended last week after the Supreme Court sided with President Donald Trump's administration and suspended a lower court order allowing the head count to continue through Oct. 31.

The U.S. Census Bureau says that overall, it reached more than 99.9% of the nation's households, but in a nation of 330 million people, the remaining .1% represents hundreds of thousands of uncounted residents. And in small cities, even handfuls of undercounted residents can make a big difference in the resources the communities receive and the power they wield.

Also, a high percentage of households reached does not necessarily translate to an accurate count: The data's quality depends on how it was obtained. The most accurate information comes from people who "self-respond" to the census questionnaire online, by phone or mail. Census officials say 67% of the people counted in the 2020 census responded that way.

In any case, census takers, who go door to door, fell short of reaching all the households that hadn't filled out the census form in many pockets of the country.

In large parts of Louisiana, which was battered by two hurricanes, census takers didn't even hit 94% of the households they needed to reach. In Window Rock, the capital of the Navajo Nation on the Arizona-New Mexico border that was ravaged by COVID-19, census takers only reached 98.9%.

According to the Census Bureau, census takers reached 99.9% of the households they needed to contact in most of the 248 census areas the bureau designated across the U.S. They fell short of 99.9% in Quincy, Massachusetts; New Haven, Connecticut; Asheville, North Carolina; Jackson, Mississippi; Providence, Rhode Island, and Manhattan, where neighborhoods emptied out in the spring because of the coronavirus.

Rhode Island is one of about 10 states projected to lose a congressional seat, based on anticipated state population figures in the 2020 census. It could take as few as 30,000 overlooked people for the nation's physically smallest state to revert back to having a single House district, said John Marion, executive director of Common Cause Rhode Island, a nonprofit watchdog.

The early conclusion of the census "is really going to stymie our efforts, not only to maintain that second district but also to have fair representation in our state legislature," Marion said.

Jackson, Mississippi, Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba blamed the coronavirus, which curtailed in-person outreach efforts that could have made a difference in hard-to-count neighborhoods. The mayor isn't sure having an extra two weeks would have made a huge difference, but he says not having a complete count is significant: Jackson loses \$1,000 each year for every person not counted.

"All of this has long-term implications for city planning, for how we address our needs, and for ensuring that we are fairly represented in the state house and in Congress," Lumumba said.

There are also concerns about the quality of the data obtained. The second-most accurate information after self-responses comes from household members being interviewed by census takers. When census takers can't reach someone at home, they turn to less-accurate information from neighbors, landlords and administrative records, the latter of which have been in widespread use for the first time this year. Information was obtained by these methods for almost 40% of the census takers' caseload, according to the Census Bureau.

"Do not be fooled by the Census Bureau's 99% myth. If there was ever fake news, this is it," said Marc Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League, one of the civil rights groups that challenged the Trump administration's census schedule in court.

Census Bureau director Steven Dillingham said Monday that a first look at the data collection operation indicates "an extremely successful execution." He noted that the 67% self-response rate this year was higher than the 66.5% reached during the 2010 census.

How much time the Census Bureau has to crunch the numbers is still being fought in courts and in Congress. Civil rights groups and others are pushing Congress to extend the bureau's deadline for turning in apportionment numbers for congressional seats from Dec. 31 to the end of next April.

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The Trump administration said the Census Bureau needed to end the count early to meet the Dec. 31 deadline. But top officials at the Census Bureau said as recently as July that it would still be impossible to process all of the data by the end of the year. They've since changed their tune, and on Wednesday said in a conference call with the news media that the deadline can be met by working around the clock and with technological advances in computer processing.

In areas that were not counted, Census Bureau officials said they will use a statistical technique called imputation, which uses the characteristics and size of neighboring households to fill in the gaps of homes with missing data.

Groups suing the administration over the timetables said the deadline for turning in apportionment numbers was moved up to accommodate an order from Trump to exclude people in the U.S. illegally from the numbers used to divvy up congressional seats among the states. Sticking to a Dec. 31 deadline ensures that data processing remains under the administration's control, regardless of who wins the presidential election.

A panel of federal judges in New York ruled that Trump's order was unlawful, but the administration has appealed to the Supreme Court. A second panel of federal judges in California on Thursday ruled that the order was also unconstitutional, and the Trump administration on Friday said it planned to appeal.

"This census isn't over," Morial said. "We will continue to fight in the courts, Congress and the court of public opinion."

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

Fiasco over pope's cut civil union quote intensifies impact

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — The world premiere of a documentary on Pope Francis was supposed to have been a bright spot for a papacy locked down by a pandemic and besieged by a corruption scandal, recalling Francis' glory days traveling the world to bless the oppressed.

But the red carpet rollout of "Francesco" has been anything but bright, with evidence that the Vatican censored the pope last year by deleting his endorsement of same-sex civil unions from an interview, only to have the footage resurface in the new film.

Aside from the firestorm the remarks created, the "Francesco" fiasco has highlighted the Vatican's often self-inflicted communications wounds and Francis' willingness to push his own agenda, even at the expense of fueling pushback from conservative Catholics.

That pushback was swift and came from predictable corners: Cardinal Raymond Burke, Francis' frequent nemesis on matters of doctrine, said the pope's comments were devoid of any "magisterial weight." But in a statement, Burke expressed concern that such personal opinions coming from the pope "generate great bewilderment and cause confusion and error among Catholic faithful."

The kerfuffle began Wednesday with the world premiere of "Francesco," a feature-length film on Francis and the issues he cares most about: climate change, refugees and social inequality. Midway through, Francis delivers the bombshell quote that gays deserve to be part of the family and that he supported civil unions, or a "ley de convivencia civil" as he said in Spanish — to give them legal protections.

Christopher Lamb of Britain's The Tablet magazine, noted Friday that in some countries, the rights of gays are a life and death matter, and that Francis was merely positioning the church to defend LGBT Catholics from perhaps deadly discrimination.

"The pope is willing to 'break a few plates' to ensure he communicates this Gospel-based message of compassion," he tweeted.

But the contents of the pope's words were almost lost in the controversy that ensued over their origin.

At first, film director Evgeny Afineevsky claimed Francis made them directly to him. Then one of Francis' media advisers said they came from a 2019 interview with Mexican broadcaster Televisa, and were old news as a result.

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Televisa confirmed the origin of the quotes, but said they never aired. A source in Mexico said the Vatican, which used its own cameras to shoot the interview and provided raw footage to Televisa afterward, had deleted the civil union quote in question. The source spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

The Vatican has refused to comment and imposed something of a media blackout on the matter. None of the Vatican's in-house media has reported on the cut quote, and on Friday the *Il Fatto Quotidiano* daily quoted an email from a staffer in the Vatican's communications ministry to other staff saying there wouldn't be any comment, but that "talks are underway to deal with the current media crisis."

It wasn't the first time that the Vatican's communications office has gone into crisis over apparently manipulated images. In 2018, Francis fired the first head of the office, Monsignor Dario Viganò, after he mischaracterized a private letter from retired Pope Benedict XVI, then had a photo of it digitally manipulated and sent out to the media.

In both cases, journalists, who must play by Vatican rules in accepting handout footage of events covered exclusively by Vatican cameras, were misled into assuming the Holy See would abide by traditional journalistic ethics and provide them with unaltered images.

Coincidentally, it was Viganò who first entertained a pitch for a documentary on Francis by Afineevsky, who was nominated for an Oscar for his 2015 documentary "Winter on Fire: Ukraine's Fight for Freedom," which opened the Venice Film Festival that year.

In an Oct. 14 interview with *The Associated Press*, Afineevsky said he had asked the head of the Venice festival, Alberto Barbera, to help him make inroads with the Vatican, and that Barbera had provided an email of introduction to Viganò in late 2017.

Afineevsky said Viganò, a known movie buff, was already familiar with his work and was open to the idea. "But he said, 'Go. Start. Do it. I'm not promising you anything. We will see,'" Afineevsky said.

After Viganò was ousted, his replacement, Paolo Ruffini, kept the line of communications open, as well as the doors to the Vatican television archives.

Afineevsky had free range, and used them to tell the heart-lifting story of Francis' seven-year papacy, largely through the eyes of the people he impacted. Coming out in the midst of a Vatican corruption scandal dominating Italian headlines for months, the film provided a nostalgic profile of a once globe-trotting papacy that in some ways ended with COVID-19.

About midway through the film, Afineevsky recounts the story of Andrea Rubera, a married gay Catholic who wrote Francis asking for his advice about bringing into the church his three young children with his husband.

It was an anguished question, given the Catholic Church teaches that gay people must be treated with dignity and respect but that homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered." The church also holds that marriage is an indissoluble union between man and woman, and that as a result, gay marriage is unacceptable.

In the end, Rubera recounts how Francis urged him to approach his parish transparently and bring the children up in the faith, which he did. After the anecdote ends, the film cuts to Francis' civil union comments in the Televisa interview.

While it wasn't clear in the documentary, Francis was merely recounting his position when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires: Then, the former Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio endorsed extending legal civil union protections to gay couples as an alternative to moves to approve same-sex marriage, which he firmly opposed.

As Francis' biographer Austen Ivereigh recounts in "The Great Reformer," Bergoglio had ministered to many gay Catholics in Argentina. "He knew their stories of rejection by their families," Ivereigh wrote, and told gay activists that "he favored gay rights as well as legal recognition for civil unions, which gay couples could also access."

The hitch for the pope is a 2003 document from the Vatican's doctrine office, which states the church's respect for gay people "cannot lead in any way to approval of homosexual behavior or to legal recognition of homosexual unions."

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That document was issued after Rome criticized Bergoglio for refusing to speak up strongly when Buenos Aires extended civil union protections to gay couples within the capital region in 2002, Ivereigh wrote.

As pope, Francis had never come out publicly in favor of legal protections for civil unions, and no pontiff before him had, either.

In fact the closest Francis had come before — a 2014 interview with *Corriere della Sera* in which he spoke in general terms about the need to evaluate such legislation — was followed by a clarification the next day by a Vatican media liaison.

The Rev. James Martin, one of the leading priestly advocates for LGBT Catholics, said the controversy over the pope's comments would in the end be helpful.

"The intrigue over the video's origin, and the explosive reaction to the pope's ongoing support for LGBT people, make the pope's words look more dangerous, and therefore more powerful," he said.

Veggie burgers are still burgers, at least in Europe

BRUSSELS (AP) — It's a meaty issue but the EU has taken a stance: veggie burgers are in fact burgers. European lawmakers said Friday that plant-based products that do not contain meat, including veggie burgers, soy steaks and vegan sausages, can continue to be sold as such in restaurants and shops across the European Union's 27 countries.

Europe's largest farmers' association, Copa-Cogeca, had supported a ban, arguing that labelling vegetarian substitutes with designations bringing meat to mind was misleading for consumers.

On the opposite side of the debate, a group of 13 organizations including Greenpeace and WWF urged lawmakers to reject the proposed amendments, arguing that a ban would have not only exposed the EU "to ridicule," but also damaged its environmental credibility.

They said promoting a shift toward more plant-based diet is in line with the EU Commission's ambition to tackle global warming. Losing the ability to use the terms steak or sausage might make those plant-based products more obscure for consumers.

After the vote, the European Consumer Organization, an umbrella group bringing together consumers' associations, praised the MEPs for their "common sense."

"Consumers are in no way confused by a soy steak or chickpea-based sausage, so long as it is clearly labelled as vegetarian or vegan," the group said in a statement. "Terms such as 'burger' or 'steak' on plant-based items simply make it much easier for consumers to know how to integrate these products within a meal."

Together with Greenpeace, the group regretted that lawmakers accepted further restrictions on the naming of alternative products containing no dairy. Terms like 'almond milk' and 'soy yogurt' are already banned in Europe after the bloc's top court ruled in 2017 that purely plant-based products can't be marketed using terms such as milk, butter or cheese, which are reserved for animal products.

Final count gives leftist big victory in Bolivia election

By CARLOS VALDEZ Associated Press

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — A final official vote count released Friday gave leftist Luis Arce a smashing victory in Bolivia's presidential election, a vindication for the Movement Toward Socialism party of ousted President Evo Morales, who was barred from running.

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal said Arce won 55% of the votes against six rivals on the ballot, easily avoiding the need for a runoff. The runnerup was centrist former President Carlos Mesa with just under 29%.

Conservative Luis Fernando Camacho, one of the leaders of the protest movement that helped drive Morales out of the country a year ago, received only 14% of the vote.

The Movement Toward Socialism also won majorities in both houses of congress, though that fell short of the two-thirds majorities it would need to modify the constitution without consent by opposition parties.

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Arce served as economy minister for a dozen years under Morales, Bolivia's first Indigenous president, as the country's mineral exports boomed and poverty was sharply reduced.

Since winning election, Arce has downplayed speculation of a major role in his administration for Morales, whose popularity was dented in his final years as president by a refusal to accept term limits and by perceived growing authoritarianism.

Last year's presidential election was annulled after protests broke out over alleged fraud by Morales, who had claimed a narrow first-round victory. The political convulsion that preceded and followed his resignation — at military prompting — caused at least 36 deaths.

The new election was organized by a revamped electoral tribunal under a deeply conservative interim government that has tried to reverse many of Morales' economic, cultural and foreign policies. It suffered economic setbacks in part due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Morales, who faces a series of charges lodged by the interim administration, was barred from seeking office. He has been living in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Trump, Biden fight over the raging virus, climate and race

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, MICHELLE L. PRICE, DARLENE SUPERVILLE and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden fought over how to tame the raging coronavirus during the campaign's closing debate, largely shelving the rancor that overshadowed their previous face-off in favor of a more substantive exchange that highlighted their vastly different approaches to the major domestic and foreign challenges facing the nation.

The Republican president declared the virus, which killed more than 1,000 Americans on Thursday alone, will "go away." Biden countered that the nation was heading toward "a dark winter."

"Anyone who is responsible for that many deaths should not remain as president of the United States of America," Biden said.

With less than two weeks until the election, Trump portrayed himself as the same outsider he first pitched to voters four years ago, repeatedly saying he wasn't a politician. Biden, meanwhile, argued that Trump was an incompetent leader of a country facing multiple crises and tried to connect what he saw as the president's failures to the everyday lives of Americans, especially when it comes to the pandemic.

The president, who promised a vaccine within weeks, said the worst problems are in states with Democratic governors, a contention at odds with rising cases in states that voted for Trump in 2016. Biden, meanwhile, vowed that his administration would defer to scientists on battling the pandemic and said that Trump's divisive approach on suffering states hindered the nation's response.

"I don't look at this in terms of the way he does — blue states and red states," Biden said. "They're all the United States. And look at all the states that are having such a spike in the coronavirus — they're the red states."

After a first debate defined by angry interruptions, the Thursday event featured a mostly milder tone. And in a campaign defined by ugly personal attacks, the night featured a surprising amount of substantive policy debate as the two broke sharply on the environment, foreign policy, immigration and racial justice.

When Trump repeatedly asked Biden if he would "close down the oil industry," the Democratic standard-bearer said he "would transition from the oil industry, yes," and that he would replace it by renewable energy "over time." Trump, making a direct appeal to voters in energy producing states like Texas and the vital battleground of Pennsylvania, seized upon the remark as "a big statement."

Perhaps sensing that the comment could soon appear in Trump campaign ads, Biden did a little clean-up boarding his plane after the debate, declaring, "We're not going to ban fossil fuels. We'll get rid of the subsidies of fossil fuels but not going to get rid of fossil fuels for a long time."

As the debate swept to climate change, Trump explained his decision to pull the U.S. out of the Paris climate accord negotiated in 2015, declaring it was an unfair pact that would have cost the country trillions of dollars and hurt businesses.

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Trump repeatedly claimed Biden's plan to tackle climate change and invest in green industries was developed by "AOC plus three," referring to New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Biden chuckled during much of Trump's answer and said, "I don't know where he comes from."

On race, Biden called out Trump's previous refusals to condemn white supremacists and his attacks on the Black Lives Matter movement, declaring that the president "pours fuel on every single racist fire."

"You know who I am. You know who he is. You know his character. You know my character," Biden said. The rivals' reputations for "honor and for telling to truth" are clear, he said.

Trump countered by pointing out his efforts on criminal justice reform and blasting Biden's support of a 1990s Crime Bill that many feel disproportionately incarcerated Black men. Staring into the crowd, he declared himself "the least racist person in this room."

Turning to foreign policy, Biden accused Trump of dealing with a "thug" while holding summits with the leader of North Korea, Kim Jong Un. And closer to home, the former vice president laced into the Trump administration's policy of separating children from their parents trying to illegally cross the southern border.

Biden said that America has learned from a New York Times report that Trump paid only \$750 a year in federal taxes while holding "a secret bank account" in China. The former vice president then noted he's released all of his tax returns going back 22 years and challenged the president to release his returns, saying, "What are you hiding?"

Trump said he closed his former account in China and claimed his accountants told him he "prepaid tens of millions of dollars" in taxes. However, as he has for the past four years after promising to release his taxes, he declined to say when he might do so.

Trump said that when it comes to health care, he would like "to terminate" the Obama-era Affordable Care Act, even amid a pandemic, and come up "with a brand new beautiful health care," that protects coverage for preexisting conditions. Biden said the president has been talking about making such a move for years but "he's never come up with a plan."

He also denounced Trump's claim that Biden wanted to socialize medicine, creating daylight between himself and the more liberal members of his party whom he defeated in the Democratic primaries.

"He thinks he's running against somebody else," the former vice president said. "He's running against Joe Biden. I beat all those other people because I disagreed with them."

It remained to be seen if Trump, who is trailing in the race, managed to change the trajectory of the campaign. More than 47 million votes already have been cast, and there are fewer undecided voters than at this point in previous election years.

The debate, moderated by NBC's Kristen Welker, was a final chance for each man to make his case to a television audience of tens of millions. And questions swirled beforehand as to how Trump, whose hectoring performance at the first debate was viewed by aides as a mistake that turned off viewers, would perform amid a stretch of the campaign in which he has taken angry aim at the news media and unleashed deeply personal attacks on Biden and his adult son.

When he feels cornered, Trump has often lashed out, going as negative as possible. In one stunning moment during the 2016 campaign, in an effort to deflect from the release of the "Access Hollywood" tape in which he is heard boasting about groping women, Trump held a press conference just before a debate with Hillary Clinton during which he appeared with women who had accused Bill Clinton of sexual assault. He then invited them to watch as audience members.

In a similar move, Trump's campaign held another surprise pre-debate news conference, this time featuring Tony Bobulinski, a man who said he was Hunter Biden's former business partner and made unproven allegations that the vice president's son consulted with his father on China-related business dealings.

Trump made similar, if vague, accusations from the debate stage, but exchanges about Hunter Biden did not dominate the night as aides on both campaigns thought might happen. Biden declared the discussion about family entanglements "malarkey" and accused Trump of not wanting to talk about the substantive issues.

Turning to the camera and the millions of people watching at home, Biden said, "It's not about his family

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and my family. It's about your family, and your family is hurting badly."

Lemire reported from Washington, Price from Las Vegas. Additional reporting from Steve Peoples in Nashville, Bill Barrow in Atlanta, Alexandra Jaffe, Stephen Braun and Zeke Miller in Washington and Amer Madhani in Chicago.

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

Analysis: Debate is brief interlude of normalcy in 2020 race

By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — The second and final presidential debate, it turns out, was actually a debate — a brief interlude of normalcy in an otherwise highly abnormal year, and a reprieve for voters turned off by the candidates' noxious first faceoff.

President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden spent 90 minutes Thursday sparring over their approach to the coronavirus pandemic, the future of the nation's health insurance system and who is best positioned to de-escalate nuclear tensions with North Korea. There were heated clashes but far fewer of the angry interruptions and crosstalk that made the opening debate nearly unwatchable.

A mute button mandated by the debate commission helped enforce decorum, clearing the way for Trump and Biden to make their closing arguments to the nation less than two weeks from Election Day. Both men have argued with pride throughout the campaign that there is little overlap between their visions for America, and that was abundantly clear in Thursday's debate.

It was the Republican president more so than Biden who entered the night needing to spark a shift in the race, given the public polls that have for weeks showed him trailing both nationally and in some key battleground states. But with nearly 50 million ballots already cast through advance voting, and views of the president long ago hardened among most voters, it appeared unlikely that a more civilized debate alone would significantly recalibrate the contest.

Trump has struggled throughout the year to shift the political terrain, unable to convince Americans that they should look past a coronavirus pandemic that has killed nearly 225,000 people in the United States and infected more than 8 million. Instead, he's been saddled by sharply negative assessments of his handling of the public health crisis, including his own COVID-19 illness earlier this month. Trump was briefly hospitalized, then quickly returned to the campaign trail for rallies that feature little mask-wearing and no attempts at social distancing.

Trump, who was the chief interrupter and aggressor in the first debate, insisted in Thursday's debate that the country needed to "learn to live" with the virus and suggested his rival would damage the economy by taking drastic steps to shut down the country. Biden warned of a "dark winter" to come, with cases already on the rise in the U.S. as the weather cools and more activities move indoors, where the virus spreads faster.

"Anyone who's responsible for that many deaths should not remain as president of the United States," Biden said. "I will end this. I will make sure we have a plan."

Some of Trump's advisers and allies had urged him in the lead-up to the debate to take a more traditional approach, focusing less on badgering Biden and more on drawing his rival out on their policy contrasts. Few had expected he would actually abide by that advice.

And though Trump was more measured than in the first contest, his more controversial impulses indeed flared at times. His answers were often filled with falsehoods, from his descriptions of initial COVID-19 death projections to his statements about the risks wind turbines pose to birds. He also made repeated references to unverified corruption allegations against Biden's son Hunter for business dealings in Ukraine and China.

Trump's campaign signaled in recent days that it planned to make the charges against the younger

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Biden a centerpiece of their closing argument to voters. In the hours before the debate, the campaign orchestrated a media appearance for a man who claims to have been one of Hunter Biden's business partners — an attempt to create the kind of made-for-TV drama that worked for Trump in his 2016 race against Hillary Clinton.

But Biden isn't Clinton, a candidate whose own negative standing with many Americans rivaled Trump's, and the Trump campaign's efforts to cast him as a corrupt and money-hungry politician don't appear to resonate widely outside of Trump's base.

If anything, Trump's attempts to push the allegations in front of a wider audience in Thursday's debate only appeared at times to ricochet back to him. After the president claimed without evidence that Biden has received money from foreign governments, the former vice president noted that his finances are detailed in more than 20 years of tax records he has made public. Trump has repeatedly refused to release his taxes, insisting he can't do so while he is under an audit by the Internal Revenue Service.

For some frustrated Republicans, the exchanges over Hunter Biden were a prime example of what has put Trump at risk of defeat in November: a campaign that still appears to be grasping for a clear message and approach to taking on the Democratic challenger with just a handful of days before the election.

"Throwing everything at the wall to see what sticks was a fine strategy six months ago, but they're still doing it twelve days from the election with 40 million votes already cast," said Erick Erickson, a conservative writer.

The real number of votes cast is even higher: By the time Trump and Biden took the debate stage, more than 47 million people had already cast ballots.

Editor's Note: Julie Pace has covered the White House and politics for the AP since 2007. Follow her at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>.

Croatia accused of brutality, sexual abuse against migrants

By SABINA NIKSIC Associated Press

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — Danish aid workers stationed in the Balkans say dozens of migrants have alleged they were brutalized by Croatian law-enforcement officers when they tried to cross into the European Union nation, before being summarily expelled back to Bosnia.

Nicola Bay, the head of the Danish Refugee Council in Bosnia, told The Associated Press Friday that 149 migrants of varying nationalities, independently interviewed by his staff in the country over the past 10 days, reported being exposed to "extremely abusive" treatment by Croatian police.

The testimonies include allegations of brutal and prolonged beatings, of people being stripped naked and being forced to lie like logs stacked on top of each other, Bay said, adding: "In two cases, we have reports of severe sexual abuse."

Bosnia, which has never truly recovered from its brutal 1992-95 war, became a bottleneck for thousands of Europe-bound migrants from the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa three years ago when other nations closed their borders and disrupted migration paths through the Balkans.

Upon entering Bosnia, most migrants walk northwest to the country's highly porous 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) border with Croatia, one of the last gateways to northern Europe.

Bay said that testimonies collected from groups who had not been in contact with each other included the same descriptions of violence.

"The similarities between these accounts are really chilling in that they point to systematic patterns of abuse... (by) men in black uniforms and with black balaclavas" hiding their faces, he added.

Describing the testimonies as "horrifying," the DRC's secretary general, Charlotte Slente, urged in a written statement for immediate action "to put a stop to the systematic use of violence."

"Treating human beings like this ... irrespective of their migratory status, cannot and should not be accepted by any European country, or by any EU institution," Slente added.

Human rights organizations have been accusing Croatia's police for years of brutality and illegal pushbacks

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of migrants, which Croatia has consistently denied.

Calls to the Croatian police press office went unanswered Friday. Croatia's Interior Ministry said earlier this week it was investigating the DRC allegations with the goal of "removing any doubt about the behavior of Croatian police officers or sanctioning and eliminating all irregularities if any occurred."

Migrants interviewed by the DRC in Bosnia bore visible injuries that were also documented in a series of disturbing photographs shared with the AP.

Separately on Friday, in a makeshift camp in northwestern Bosnia, numerous other migrants were nursing injuries they said were inflicted on them by the Croatian police after they managed to cross into the country this month.

"When they catch us, they start beating us with sticks and kicking us as if we were animals ... before taking us back" to Bosnia, a young man from Bangladesh said in the camp close to the border with Croatia where hundreds of migrants are stranded.

The man, who asked not to be identified out of fear of repercussions, said Croatian police also confiscated migrants' belongings such as mobile phones and money.

Another migrant, who identified himself as Muhammed from Pakistan, claimed Croatian police set dogs on him after he crossed into the country two weeks ago. He showed healing wounds on his arms and legs.

Dunja Mijatovic, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, voiced concern over the latest allegations, noting that the Croatian government's customary reaction "has been to dismiss reports published by NGOs or resulting from investigative journalism."

Mijatovic said in a written statement that despite the Croatian government asserting that all allegations are investigated, "credible reports of such violations continue."

"Disturbingly, these reports suggest that violence and de-humanizing acts accompanying pushbacks are increasing, and it seems that Croatian law enforcement officers continue to enjoy impunity for such serious human rights violations," Mijatovic said.

In hard-hit Peru, worry mounts over both COVID-19 and dengue

By RODRIGO ABD Associated Press

PUCALLPA, Peru (AP) — Two of Lidia Choque's close family members had already gotten sick with the new coronavirus when the mosquitos arrived.

The 53-year-old woman lives in a wooden house near the airport of a Peruvian city in the Amazon rainforest. City fumigators usually visit several times during the rainy season to eliminate the pests, but this year, because of the pandemic, they were absent.

When she went to a hospital after coming down with a fever and body aches, doctors delivered a double diagnosis: COVID-19 and dengue.

"I couldn't even walk," she said.

As Peru grapples with one the world's worst SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks, another virus is starting to raise alarm: dengue.

Health officials have reported over 35,000 cases this year, concentrated largely in the Amazon. The rise comes amid an overall dip in the number of new daily coronavirus infections, though authorities worry a second wave could strike as dengue cases rise.

In the city of Pucallpa, where Choque lives, doctors say they are already encountering patients with both illnesses. Two physicians said dengue symptoms like fever and muscle aches tend to dominate, though the combination with COVID-19 can prove deadly.

"There is more risk," said Dr. Rosmery Rojas, a physician at a public hospital she said is seeing 120 dengue patients a day.

The Ucayali region located along a muddy river has long seen periodic dengue outbreaks, though Rojas and others said this year's figures are already three times that seen in 2019. Throughout the Americas, there were more than 3.1 million dengue cases last year, the highest number on record, according to the Pan American Health Organization.

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The Americas branch of the World Health Organization reports there has been an overall decrease in a dengue cases during the pandemic — with a little more than 2 million recorded so far this year, including 845 deaths. Nearly 1.4 million of those cases have been in Brazil.

It is unclear whether the reduction is related to COVID-19, though a spokeswoman said public health measures aimed at preventing the new virus may have played a role.

Nonetheless, in the Peruvian Amazon a mounting number of dengue patients are filling hospital beds that months before were overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients. Some, like Choque, are told they have both illness when they arrive at the hospital.

"Many people are arriving co-infected," said Dr. Mariano Alarcón.

Dengue is a mosquito-borne disease also known as "breakbone fever" for its severely painful symptoms. Southeast Asian countries like Singapore and Indonesia have also dealt with dual dengue and virus outbreaks this year as lockdowns put prevention activities on hold.

Dengue is not usually fatal but severe cases can require hospitalization. Removing trash, old tires and other objects containing standing water can help curb the disease — actions officials in Peru are now carrying out in hopes of quashing the uptick in dengue cases.

Choque said she went to the hospital after her symptoms didn't go away. A rapid virus antibody test — which can indicate a prior infection — came back negative, but a doctor saw spots on a chest X-ray that led her to diagnose COVID-19. The mother of three is still skeptical of whether she had the virus.

She stayed nearly two weeks in a ward with eight female dengue patients, riddled with anxiety over her condition.

"I felt desperate," she said.

Looking back, Choque believes the absence of fumigation likely contributed to her coming down with dengue. She set up cans filled with lit charcoal and dried eucalyptus leaves to drive the mosquitos away, but she said they were still rampant when she fell sick.

"There's been more focus on COVID," she said. "They've neglected dengue."

France surpasses 1 million confirmed virus cases amid spike

PARIS (AP) — French health authorities say France has recorded over 1 million confirmed coronavirus cases since the start of the pandemic, becoming the second country in Western Europe after Spain to reach that number of known infections.

The national health agency released new figures showing that tests had confirmed at least 1,041,075 cases in France this year, including 42,032 new cases reported in the past 24 hours.

Experts say the real numbers of infections are probably much higher than the ones governments around the world are reporting because of a lack of tests early in the pandemic, asymptomatic cases and other issues.

Like other countries in Europe, France has seen its daily case counts rise sharply in recent weeks as the virus rebounds in Europe. COVID-19 patients now occupy more than 42% of ICU beds nationally, and 64% in the Paris region.

More than 11,000 new COVID-19 patients have been hospitalized in the past week, including 1,714 who are in intensive care, according to the national health agency.

Speaking earlier Friday after visiting a hospital in Pontoise, a suburb north of Paris, French President Emmanuel Macron said "the epidemic is very strongly accelerating."

The French government has expanded an overnight curfew it imposed in eight urban areas of France last week to encompass 38 more regions and Polynesia. The 9 p.m.-6 a.m. curfews and other public health measures will last for "at least six weeks," Macron said.

The extension means that 46 million of France's 67 million people will be under curfews that prohibit them from being out and about during those hours except for limited reasons, such as walking a dog, traveling to and from work and catching a train or flight.

France has reported over 34,000 virus-related deaths, one of the highest tolls in Europe.

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Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Oct. 24, the 298th day of 2020. There are 68 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 24, 1972, Hall of Famer Jackie Robinson, who'd broken Major League Baseball's modern-era color barrier in 1947, died in Stamford, Connecticut, at age 53.

On this date:

In 1537, Jane Seymour, the third wife of England's King Henry VIII, died 12 days after giving birth to Prince Edward, later King Edward VI.

In 1861, the first transcontinental telegraph message was sent by Chief Justice Stephen J. Field of California from San Francisco to President Abraham Lincoln in Washington, D.C., over a line built by the Western Union Telegraph Co.

In 1931, the George Washington Bridge, connecting New York and New Jersey, was officially dedicated (it opened to traffic the next day).

In 1940, the 40-hour work week went into effect under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

In 1945, the United Nations officially came into existence as its charter took effect.

In 1952, Republican presidential candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower declared in Detroit, "I shall go to Korea" as he promised to end the conflict. (He made the visit over a month later.)

In 1962, a naval quarantine of Cuba ordered by President John F. Kennedy went into effect during the missile crisis.

In 1992, the Toronto Blue Jays became the first non-U.S. team to win the World Series as they defeated the Atlanta Braves, 4-3, in Game 6.

In 1996, TyRon Lewis, 18, a Black motorist, was shot to death by police during a traffic stop in St. Petersburg, Florida; the incident sparked rioting. (Officer James Knight, who said that Lewis had lurched his car at him several times, knocking him onto the hood, was cleared by a grand jury and the Justice Department.)

In 2002, authorities apprehended John Allen Muhammad and teenager Lee Boyd Malvo near Myersville, Maryland, in the Washington-area sniper attacks. (Malvo was later sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole; Muhammad was sentenced to death and executed in 2009.)

In 2005, civil rights icon Rosa Parks died in Detroit at age 92.

In 2018, authorities said they had intercepted pipe bombs packed with shards of glass that had been sent to several prominent Democrats, including Hillary Clinton and former President Barack Obama; none of the bombs went off, and nobody was hurt. (Cesar Sayoc, a Florida amateur body builder who admitted sending the bombs to Democrats and to CNN, was sentenced to 20 years in prison by a judge who concluded that the bombs were not designed to explode.)

Ten years ago: Following the latest release of secret U.S. military documents by WikiLeaks, British Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg told BBC television that allegations of prisoner abuse and civilian killings in Iraq were extremely serious and needed to be investigated. Playwright Joseph Stein, who wrote the book for the classic Broadway musical "Fiddler on the Roof," died in New York at age 98.

Five years ago: A motorist plowed into a crowd during the Oklahoma State University homecoming parade, killing four people and injuring dozens more. (Adacia Chambers pleaded no contest to second-degree murder; she was sentenced to life in prison.) In a video released on Facebook, President Barack Obama called for capping standardized testing at 2 percent of classroom time, saying, "Learning is about so much more than just filling in the right bubble." Actor Maureen O'Hara, 95, died in Boise, Idaho.

One year ago: Fast-growing fires throughout California forced thousands of people to flee their homes; the dramatic fires and evacuations near Los Angeles and in the wine country of Northern California came amid power shutoffs that utility companies said were needed to stop high winds from blowing debris into power lines and starting fires. Democratic Rep. Tim Ryan of Ohio dropped out of the presidential race

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after failing to qualify for debates. Spain exhumed the remains of dictator Gen. Francisco Franco from a grandiose mausoleum outside Madrid and reburied them in a small family crypt north of the capital; the mausoleum had been considered by many Spaniards to be an insult to the hundreds of thousands who died in the country's 1936-39 civil war, and those who were persecuted under his regime.

Today's Birthdays: Rock musician Bill Wyman is 84. Actor F. Murray Abraham is 81. Movie director-screenwriter David S. Ward is 75. Actor Kevin Kline is 73. Congressman and former NAACP President Kweisi Mfume (kwah-EE'-see oom-FOO'-may) is 72. Country musician Billy Thomas (Terry McBride and the Ride) is 67. Actor Doug Davidson is 66. Actor B.D. Wong is 60. Actor Zahn McClarnon is 54. Singer Michael Trent (Americana duo Shovels & Rope) is 43. Rock musician Ben Gillies (Silverchair) is 41. Singer-actor Monica Arnold is 40. Actor-comedian Casey Wilson is 40. R&B singer, actor and "The Real" co-host Adrienne Bailon Houghton is 37. Actor Tim Pocock is 35. R&B singer-rapper-actor Drake is 34. Actor Shenae Grimes is 31. Actor Eliza Taylor is 31. Actor Ashton Sanders (Film: "Moonlight") is 25. Olympic gold medal gymnast Kyla Ross is 24. Actor Hudson Yang is 17.