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Church Services

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church: Worship in the church at 8:30 a.m. (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/215332349572015/>)

Groton Christian & Missinary Alliance Church: Worship in the church at 10:30 a.m.: (<https://www.facebook.com/GrotonCMA/>)

St. John's Lutheran Church: Worship in the church at 9 a.m. (<https://www.facebook.com/stjohnsgroton/>)

Emmanuel Lutheran Church - Worship inside at 9 a.m.

(<https://www.facebook.com/Emmanuel-Lutheran-Church-GrotonSD-ELCA-636505039852208/>)

United Methodist Church: Worship in the Sanctuary at 11 a.m. (<https://www.facebook.com/grotonsdumc>)

Buffalo Lake Lutheran Church, rural Eden, 10:30 a.m. Worship inside or stay in vehicle and listen on the FM.

Heaven Bound Ministries of Pierpont has worship on Saturdays at 5:30 p.m. in the basement.

Heaven Bound Ministries of Pierpont / Buffalo Lake Lutheran Church, rural Eden - will have a podcast posted. <https://anchor.fm/paul-irvin-kosel>



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

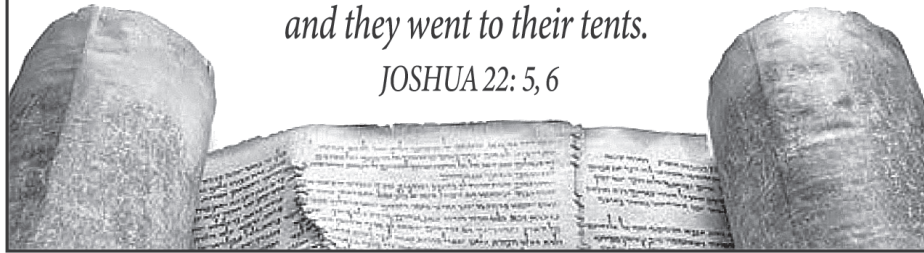
Sunday Extras



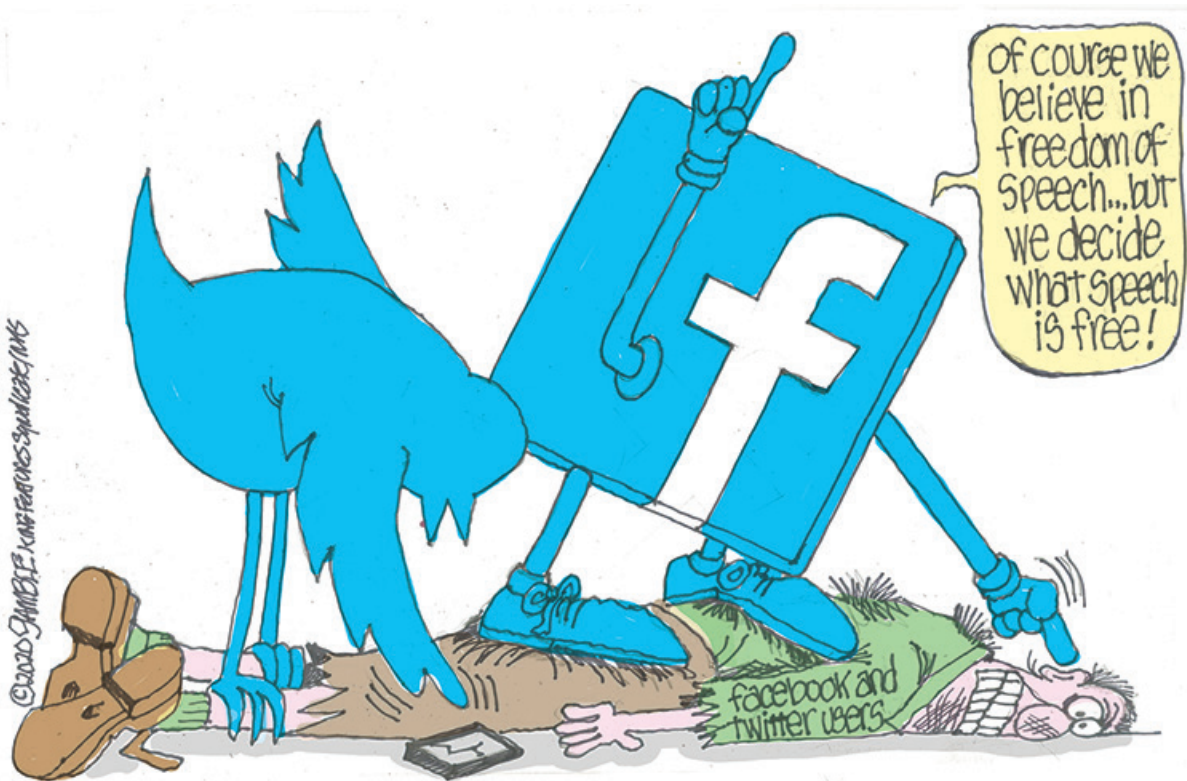
THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

"...Take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.

JOSHUA 22: 5, 6



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BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Beelzebub in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. From Matthew 12, when an evil spirit returns to a person, how many companions does it bring? 2, 3, 7, 16

3. In which book's 22:18 does it state, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"? *Exodus, Numbers, Isaiah, Hebrews*

4. From 1 Samuel 16, what king of Israel was tormented by an evil spirit? *Solomon, David, Elah, Saul*

5. Who called the city of Nineveh the mistress of witchcraft? *Ahab, Nahum, Lucifer, Peter*

6. What mark of the beast number comes from Revelation 13? 7, 333, 490, 666

ANSWERS: 1) Neither; 2) 7; 3) Exodus; 4) Saul; 5) Nahum; 6) 666

Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson's Casey's latest book, "Test Your Bible Knowledge," available in bookstores and online.

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Comfort foods

Made fast
and
healthy



by Healthy Exchanges

Chicken Spaghetti

A chicken in every pot! I'm not running for elected office — but if I was, this is the dish I'd be sharing on the campaign trail. It would ensure a landslide victory for me!

- 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 full cup diced cooked chicken breast
- 1/2 cup (one 2.5-ounce jar) sliced mushrooms, drained
- 1/4 cup sliced ripe olives
- 1 3/4 cups (one 15-ounce can) Italian stewed tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (10 3/4-ounce) can reduced-fat cream of chicken soup
- 2 cups hot cooked spaghetti, rinsed and drained
- 1/4 cup grated reduced-fat Parmesan cheese

1. In a large skillet sprayed with olive oil-flavored cooking spray, saute onion for 5 minutes or just until tender. Add chicken, mushrooms, olives, stewed tomatoes and chicken soup. Mix well to combine. Stir in spaghetti.

2. Lower heat and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. When serving, top each dish with 1 tablespoon Parmesan cheese. Makes 4 (1 1/2 cups each) servings.

• Each serving equals: 264 calories, 4g fat, 20g protein, 37g carb., 816mg sodium, 4g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 2 Meat, 1 1/2 Starch, 1 Vegetable.

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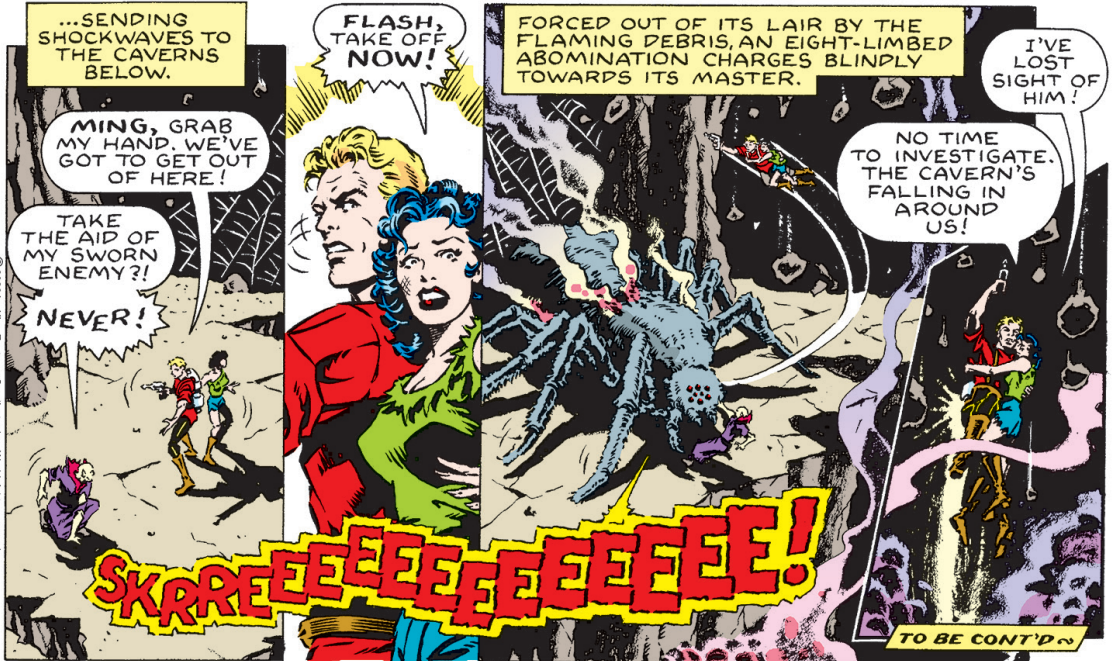
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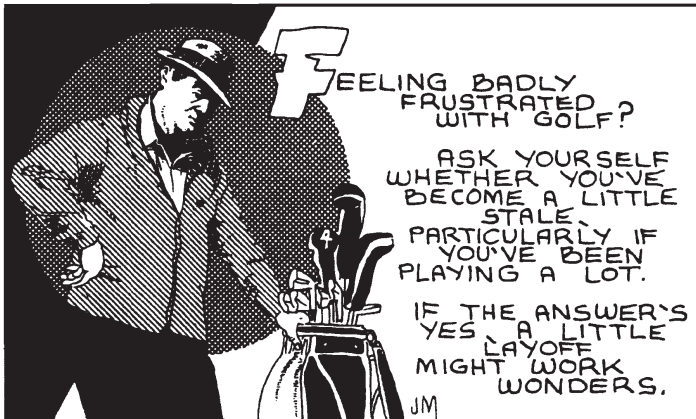
FLASH GORDON

10-18 BY JIM KEEFE

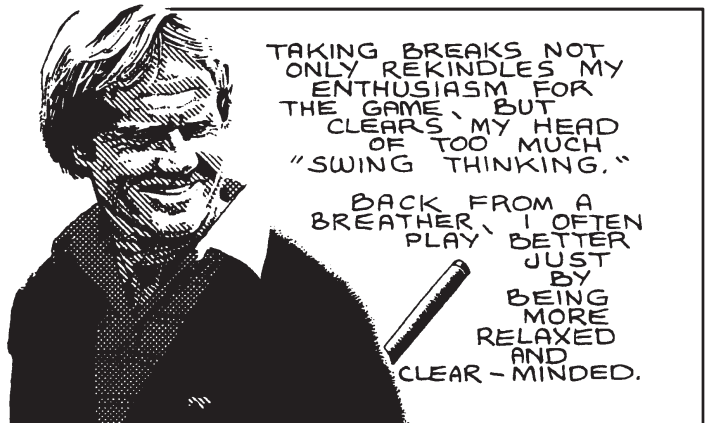
WITH NO ONE AT THE CONTROLS, THE SPACE PORTAL IN MING'S FORTRESS CONTINUES ON ITS COURSE OF DESTRUCTION...



Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



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The Weight-Loss Battle Continues

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am looking for advice on diet pills. I have tried everything. I eat well, go to the gym and walk, but my meniscus problem limits my walking speed. Since menopause, I have gained 30 pounds. I am sure there is something out there that will kick-start my metabolism. I am so depressed, and my doctor has no sympathy. —A.R.

ANSWER: Difficulty losing excess weight is one of the greatest public health problems in industrial countries, and I'm not going to solve it here, but I'll try to discuss principles of drug treatment for weight.

One critical issue is to look at any medications you are taking: Many can cause weight gain, and some, like beta blockers, often used for high blood pressure, are unrecognized by many doctors. Stopping medicines that predispose to weight gain is critical.

Depression itself is a predisposing factor to weight gain. Some people lose weight with depression, but my experience is that weight gain is much more common. Many anti-depression medicines cause weight gain. One, bupropion, commonly causes weight loss.

Among medicines specifically for weight loss, most work either by decreasing fat absorption or by reducing appetite. They don't really increase metabolism, with the exception of phentermine, which does increase resting energy expenditure somewhat and may be useful in preventing weight regain in people who have lost weight, for whom metabolism does often slow down.

Orlistat (called Xenical by prescription, Alli over-the-counter) prevents

the body from absorbing some of the fat in the diet. The fat is then excreted through stool. This may cause many people to have gastrointestinal side effects, which are diminished when on a low-fat diet. Orlistat caused people to lose about 7 pounds more than placebo.

There are several drugs that work on appetite. Liraglutide is a diabetes medicine that has been found to be helpful in overweight people even without diabetes. Metformin is another diabetes medicine that is sometimes used for weight loss, although it does not have a Food and Drug Administration indication for this. Both of these diabetes drugs often have gastrointestinal side effects. Lorcaserin (Belviq) is about as effective as orlistat, but with fewer side effects (headache was the most common).

Some weight loss experts use combination drugs, including phentermine/topiramate (Qsymia) and bupropion/naltrexone (Contrave). These have more significant risks. I don't prescribe these drugs, but I do refer my patients who are interested in medication treatment to a weight loss expert. Look for a doctor who is board certified in obesity management.

It's important to remember that medications are not a cure for being overweight. Once the medicines stop, weight is expected to rise, unless a person makes significant changes in diet and exercise.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a female, 16 years old. My white blood cell count is 16.6. I am suffering from so much weakness and pain in my legs, arms and shoulder area. I also have a cough and cold. Is it dangerous? What should I do for it? —K.C.

ANSWER: I don't have enough information to help much. A white blood cell count that high suggests an infection. At your age, those symptoms are most likely a viral infection, but acute mononucleosis and even pneumonia are possible, so you need to see your doctor.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.



1. Name the group that released the album titled "The Royal Scam."
2. What instrument does Herb Alpert play?
3. What country is Air Supply from?
4. Which Chambers Brothers song was 11 minutes long on the album?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Looks like it's over, you knew I couldn't stay, She's comin' home today."

Answers

1. Steely Dan, in 1976. The album cover was originally meant for a Van Morrison album that was never released. Some considered the cover to be hideous, with beasts hovering over a sleeping man.
2. The trumpet. Alpert came from a musical family. He played in his college's marching band and then in the Army before starting "Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass."
3. Australia. It's shocking, but the group has never had a No. 1 single in Australia. They did, however, make it into The Australian Recording Industry Association Hall of Fame in 2013.
4. "Time Has Come Today," in 1968.
5. "Sad Eyes," by Robert John in 1979. That was the year disco reigned, but the mellow "Sad Eyes" managed to climb the charts anyway. (Not to be confused with Bruce Springsteen's song of the same name in 1999.)

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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



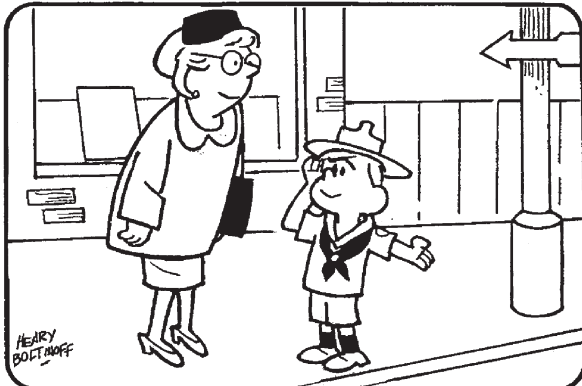
GRIN and BEAR IT



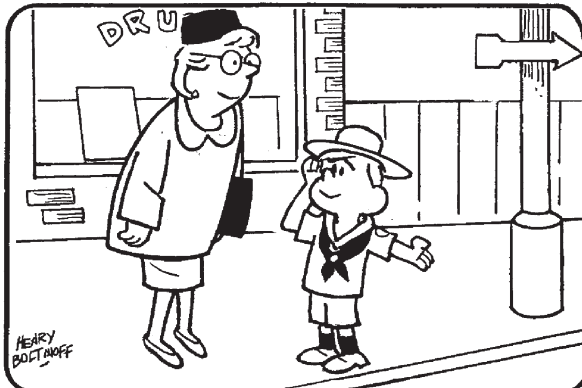
"You fatten up nicely."

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Window sign is missing. 2. Boy's hat is different. 3. Arrow points in opposite direction. 4. Woman's hair is different. 5. Bricks are added to building. 6. Woman's shoes are flats.



- Remember to turn off bathroom fans after 10 minutes. In the winter, if your house is on the dry side, don't use the fan at all: Open the door so the humidity from the shower or bath reaches into the house.

- “To remove the skin from salmon, I freeze it and skin it while frozen. The skin comes off much easier, and I waste less of the fish. I buy a large piece and parcel it into several smaller pieces, since it's just me. I like salmon, and it's healthy for me!” — *L.A. in Florida*

- Need extra dishware or serving-ware for a holiday meal? Try looking at secondhand stores for large dishes, serving utensils and more. It's sometimes cheaper than getting throw-aways, and it's better for the environment! You can always donate them again after the holidays.

- Here's a makeup tip from Captain Obvious: Wet your beauty blender. I didn't know this and had been using it for about a month before my sister told

me. So much better! — *V.A. in Florida*

- Freeze fruit that is on the verge of spoiling rather than letting it go to waste. You don't even have to use it for smoothies. Chuck a handful of frozen fruit in water or iced tea for added flavor. And it's a superb addition to fancy cocktails.

- “Quick sewing tip: Check your fabric's stretch direction before you lay out your pieces. You'll thank me later.” — *E.F. in Missouri*

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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PUZZLE CARD

fig. 1

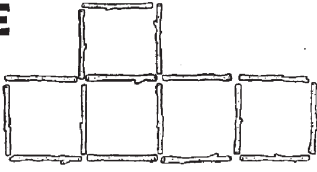
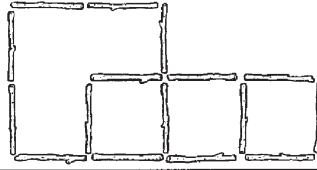


fig. 2



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LAY OUT 16 STICKS, as shown in figure 1, and challenge your friends to move two of them to new positions so that four squares will be formed. Figure 2 gives our solution.

A MATH QUICKIE! You have one minute to arrange the numbers 1 through 9 so that they add up to 99,999.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Answer: 1234 + 98765 = 99,999

'EAR' TODAY, 'CORN' TOMORROW! In this puzzle all of the words get progressively longer, and they all contain an EAR. Use the following definitions:

1. Ear (given).
2. Rip Van Winkle had one.
3. Starts off as grit.
4. Related to a straight line.
5. Secondhand knowledge.
6. All gas cars have them.
7. A well-known flavoring.

1. EAR
2. _EAR_
3. _EAR_
4. _ _EAR
5. _EAR_ _
6. _EAR_ _ _
7. _ _EAR_ _ _



Answers: 1. Ear (given). 2. Ear (given). 3. Beard. 4. Pearl. 5. Linear. 6. Hearsay. 7. Spearmint.

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

Illustrated by David Coulson



A FOOTBALL VOCABULARY DRILL!

In the grid above, there is room to enter five five-letter words pertaining to football. The following definitions should help you:

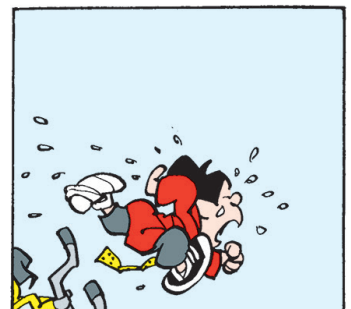
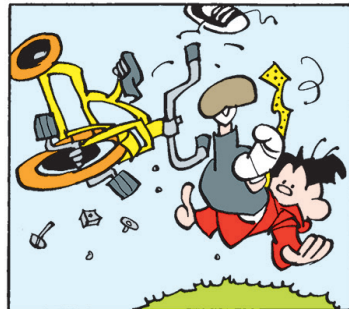
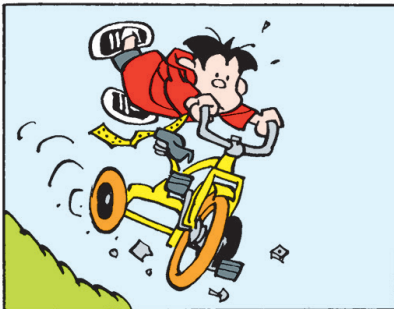
1. Part of football shoe.
2. Type of player.
3. What ends must do.
4. What the fans must do.
5. What the linesman measures.

There is a dark frame around the center column of letters. If you correctly solve the puzzle, the letters in this frame, top to bottom, will spell out what a "tackle" must be.

Answers: 1. Cleat. 2. Guard. 3. Catch. 4. Cheer. 5. Yards. The center column word denotes a big "eater."

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



BUD BLAKE

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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Cracker spread
- 5 Easter entree
- 8 "The Thin Man" dog
- 12 Verve
- 13 Past
- 14 Use scissors
- 15 Sudden temperature drop
- 17 — Christian Andersen
- 18 Dueler's ally
- 19 Pass by
- 21 Watch chain
- 22 Foolish
- 23 Andrews or Edwards, for ex.
- 26 Path
- 28 Gaggle members

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15				16					17			
18								19	20			
			21					22				
23	24	25		26		27		28			29	30
31			32		33		34		35			
36				37		38		39		40		
		41			42		43		44			
45	46						47			48	49	50
51					52	53						
54					55				56			
57					58				59			

- 31 Conks out
- 33 Joke
- 35 Paint crudely
- 36 "Yes we can" man
- 38 Oft-tattooed word
- 40 Kan. neighbor
- 41 Mr. Gingrich
- 43 Tear
- 45 Curvy-horned antelope
- 47 Time of the mammoths
- 51 Churlish one
- 52 Guiding principle
- 54 Not working
- 55 Under the weather
- 56 Takeout phrase
- 57 Start a garden
- 58 Nutritional qty.
- 59 Health centers
- 5 Purse
- 6 Khan title
- 7 Motorized bike
- 8 Embarrassed
- 9 Crisp-pod legume
- 10 Supermarket stack
- 11 Church section
- 16 Winter forecast
- 20 Drag along
- 23 Commotion
- 24 Little white lie
- 25 Tall thin person
- 27 Thanksgiving
- 29 Seek damages
- 30 "Chicago" lyricist
- 32 Slandered
- 34 Ape
- 37 Piercing tool
- 39 Cinderella's horses, really
- 42 Long-snouted critter
- 44 Nuisances
- 45 Wading bird
- 46 Fashion
- 48 On
- 49 Infatuated
- 50 Cupid's alias
- 53 Antiquated

DOWN

- 1 Chest muscles, for short
- 2 Lotion additive
- 3 Body powder
- 4 The — the line

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.

P	A	T	E		H	A	M		A	S	T	A
E	L	A	N		A	G	O		S	N	I	P
C	O	L	D	S	N	A	P		H	A	N	S
S	E	C	O	N	D		E	L	A	P	S	E
		F	O	B			D	U	M	B		
A	F	B		W	A	Y		G	E	E	S	E
D	I	E	S		G	A	G		D	A	U	B
O	B	A	M	A		M	O	M		N	E	B
		N	E	W	T		R	I	P			
I	M	P	A	L	A		I	C	E	A	G	E
B	O	O	R		P	O	L	E	S	T	A	R
I	D	L	E		I	L	L		T	O	G	O
S	E	E	D		R	D	A		S	P	A	S

LAFF - A - DAY



"I'm making a last-minute change to my wedding list...there'll be a different groom."

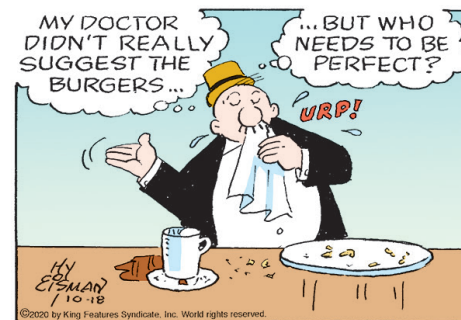
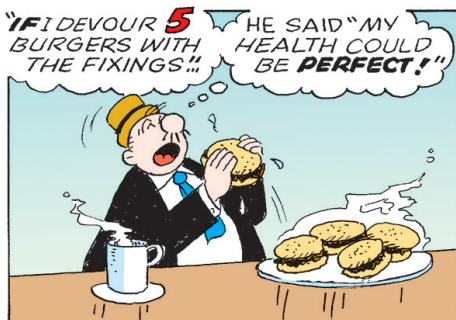
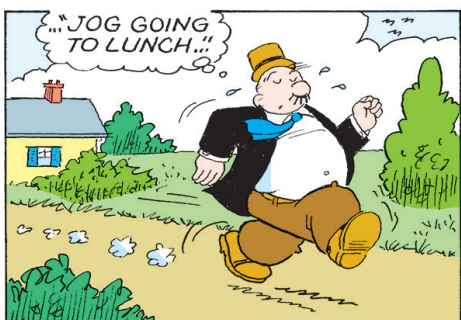
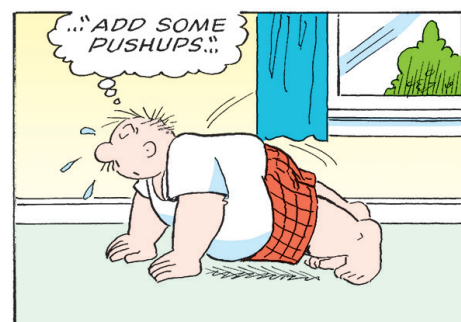
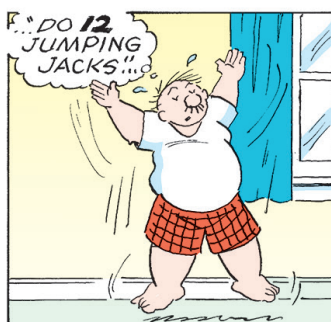
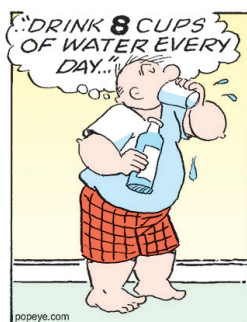
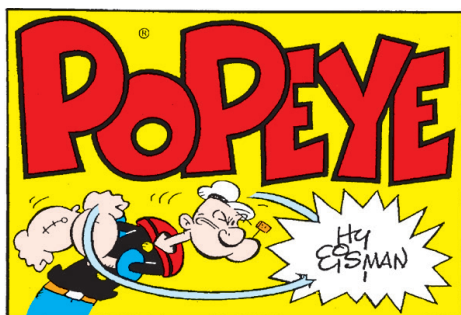
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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Hal Foster's GIANNI AND SCHULTZ
Prince Valiant

Our Story:

WITH THE MENACE OF THE DRAGON RESOLVED, GAWAIN GROWS UNCOMFORTABLE AS THE FAMILY VALIANT ERUPTS INTO A SPAT.

"LET THIS BE A LESSON, OLD BOY, THE NEXT TIME THE PHANTOM GLOW OF CONNUBIAL BLISS BECKONS..."

IT IS THE YOUNG REGENT, ARN, WHO IS MOST AGGRIEVED. "IT ISN'T EASY MINDING THE KINGDOM, BUT I TRY. WHILE YOU GO ADVENTURING ABOUT, I TAKE MY RESPONSIBILITIES SERIOUSLY..."

"... AND THEN YOU TWO MEANDER BACK HOME, BRINGING SHEER CHAOS!" VAL AND ALETA DO NOT LIKE THEIR SON'S ATTITUDE, BUT THEY KNOW THERE IS TRUTH IN HIS WORDS.

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AND SO IT GOES, ALL THE WAY BACK TO CAMELOT. EVENTUALLY, GAWAIN TAKES REFUGE IN THOUGHTS OF THE LADY HE HASTILY ABANDONED, ARN RIDES IN BITTER SILENCE, AND VAL WHISPERS TO ALETA: "TELL ME, HOW DID WE MANAGE TO RAISE SUCH A PETTY CLERK?"

Next: *The consequences*

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering

PEOPLE IN GLASS HOUSES SHOULDN'T THROW STONES.

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AND THEY ALSO SHOULDN'T WALK AROUND THE HOUSE NAKED.

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Online Scammers Eye Holiday Shoppers

Holiday shopping online is one of our annual rituals, at least for a portion of the gifts we want to buy, but with COVID making in-person shopping too risky, a much larger percentage of us are likely to shop online. That's what the scammers and thieves are hoping, anyway. The biggest threat this year is likely to be emails.

You'll often receive an email from the retailer saying your purchase has been shipped, and there might be a link in the email about that delivery. Beware clicking it. It could be a scammer hoping to install malware on your computer to capture any future credit card or account numbers you type in. Or they might ask you outright to type in personal information such as your name and credit card number.

Instead of clicking any link in any email supposedly from a retailer, go to the merchant's website to look for

information on your purchase or call them directly. Take the phone number from your bill or their website, not from any email.

You might also receive emails about items you didn't order and worry that your account has been hacked. Again, that is one way for the scammers to get you to click a link. Don't do it. Call the merchant instead.

Just ordering online isn't the end of your steps to being safe. There are the porch pirates, those awful people who dash up to the house and steal packages right at the door. They often follow delivery trucks to see where the parcels are being left. Keep an eye out for your delivery. Or track it online.

A final warning: Merchants often ask you to download their app to make purchases. You don't have to. You can still make online purchases without adding yet another potentially unsecure form of communication.

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1. An ancient Grecian messenger named Pheidippides is believed to be the progenitor of what modern Olympic sport?

2. What Pro Football Hall of Famer and Chicago Bears great was known as the “Kansas Comet” for compiling 4,020 all-purpose yards while playing for the Kansas Jayhawks?

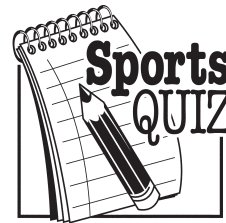
3. Name the Oklahoma State Cowboys football coach who blasted the media in a 2007 press conference, declaring, “Come after me! I’m a man! I’m 40!”

4. What combat sport was developed in the 1920s by brothers Carlos, Oswaldo, Gastao Jr., George and Helio Gracie?

5. University of Maryland basketball standout Len Bias was selected by what team in the 1986 NBA Draft?

6. Name the IndyCar driver who won the Indianapolis 500 in 2017 and 2020.

7. Who scored the winning touchdown for the Baltimore Colts in over-



by Ryan A. Berenz

time of the 1958 NFL Championship Game (a.k.a. “The Greatest Game Ever Played”) vs. the New York Giants?

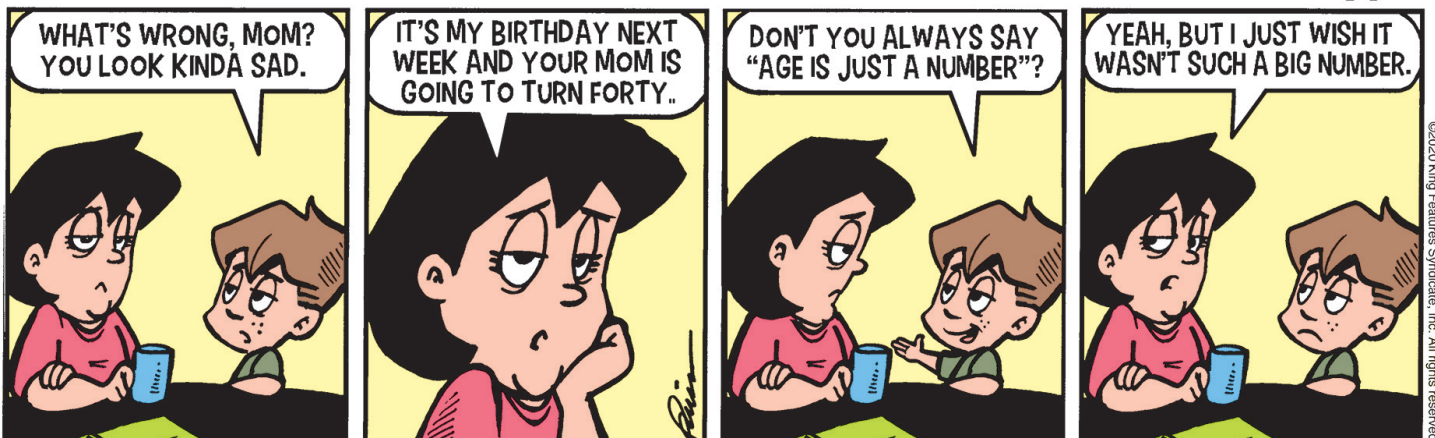
Answers

1. The marathon.
2. Gale Sayers.
3. Mike Gundy.
4. Brazilian jiu-jitsu.
5. The Boston Celtics.
6. Takuma Sato.
7. Alan Ameche.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



No Substitute for In-Classroom Learning

Earlier this week, I put on my shirt and tie, but instead of roaming the halls of Congress, I spent the day substitute teaching for Mrs. Pierson's middle school English classes. Amid the debate on if, when, and how to open our nation's schools, I decided to get a firsthand look at the challenges.

Serving as "sub" reinforced my view we need to do everything we can to keep our kids in school and keep them safe while they are there. Once I got to the classroom, it became obvious to me I was substituting for a dedicated and organized educator. She had prepared a five-page memo for me, outlining the things I needed to keep in mind when dealing with specific students and specific assignments. Many of the instructions related to how best to integrate technology into the day and how best to engage those students who were "e-learning" or learning from home.

There were a few key takeaways from the day as a substitute. First, the students were great. People warn about America's bleak future, but these kids have a ton of potential. Second, I've always known teaching isn't an easy profession but teaching during a pandemic is a different beast. These educators aren't teaching one class at a time. They are teaching the typical in-person class, simultaneously teaching students online, and still focusing extra attention on students who may have limited English proficiency or students who have fallen behind. And third, our nation has embraced remote learning as an option during this pandemic, but that doesn't mean it's easy. It comes with technical challenges, and frankly, there's no substitute for the experience of teaching and connecting with a student in-person.

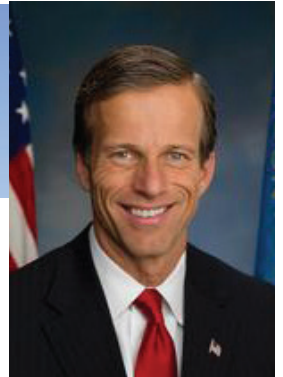
Substitute teaching for the day was a valuable experience. Our students are happy to be back in the classroom, even with masks and amidst extra precautions. Precautions like wiping down tables and desks between each period – another thing added to teachers already very full plates.

Even if you don't have a child attending school right now, I hope you'll take this opportunity to thank your local teachers and to thank the substitutes who are stepping up to fill in the gaps. It's going to take all of us to get through this pandemic and to keep our kids in school as much as we can. If you do have school-aged children in South Dakota, tell them to keep an eye out. They may just have their Congressman in their classroom someday.



Photo by the Mitchell Daily Republic – **Rep. Johnson teaches middle school English class.**

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Character Matters

Anyone who tuned in for Judge Amy Coney Barrett's confirmation hearing saw why she is held in such high regard by her colleagues, students, and peers – and why she will make an extraordinary Supreme Court justice. She's extremely intelligent and possesses a comprehensive command of the law. She has been described as "a jurist of formidable intellect," a "brilliant and conscientious lawyer," and "a staggering academic mind." Even several Democrats on the Judiciary Committee couldn't hide the fact that they were impressed with Judge Barrett.

One of the most important qualities I see in Judge Barrett is that she understands the proper role of a judge in our system of government. As Judge Barrett made clear, she understands that the job of a judge is to interpret the law, not make the law. To rule based on the the Constitution, not rewrite the rules of the game. Or as Judge Barrett said to senators at her hearing, "I apply the law, I follow the law, you make the policy."

Judge Barrett has made it clear that when cases come before her on the Supreme Court, she will consider the facts, the law, and the Constitution – and nothing else. Not her personal beliefs. Not her political opinions. Just the law and the Constitution. That's the kind of justice all of us – Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative – should want.

I could spend a considerable amount of time highlighting all the extraordinary tributes to Judge Barrett that have poured in since her nomination – from lawyers and scholars of every background and political persuasion. There was one piece of testimony that struck me in particular, though.

The chairman of the American Bar Association's (ABA's) Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary testified before the Judiciary Committee during Judge Barrett's hearing. He said, "Lawyers and judges uniformly praised [Judge Barrett's] integrity. Most remarkably, in interviews with individuals in the legal profession and community who know Judge Barrett, whether for a few years or decades, not one person uttered a negative word about her character." In her line of work, character matters. And while I have not always agreed with the ABA's rankings, they certainly got it right with Judge Barrett when they rated her "well-qualified."

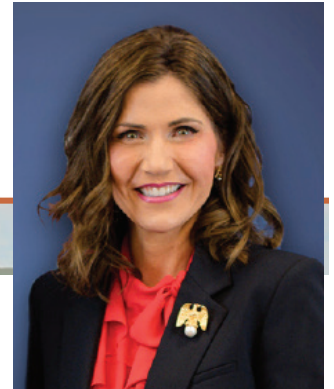
Since it's hard – if not impossible – for my Democrat colleagues to attack Judge Barrett's qualifications to serve on the Supreme Court, many on the left resorted to attacks, distractions, and distortions. It's shameful, but the fact that Judge Barrett's opponents deployed these kinds of tactics is just further evidence that they know how qualified she truly is. In fact, she's one of the most qualified candidates I've ever met, and I'm honored to have supported her throughout this process. She will make a terrific Supreme Court justice, one of which we all can be proud.

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SOUTH DAKOTA GOVERNOR
KRISTI NOEM



Election Day and the Consent of the Governed

When Thomas Jefferson laid out America's founding ideal in the Declaration of Independence, he made clear that government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed. Put differently, government only has the powers that it does because we the people have consented to it. And we provide that consent every year on Election Day.

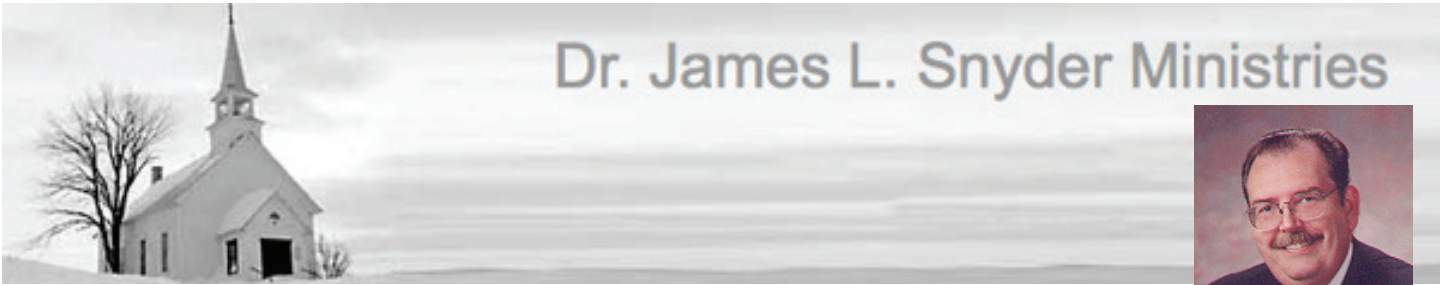
November 3rd is just a few days away. On election day, the people of South Dakota will vote to elect the government that they want to represent them. They'll voice their consent to that government. In fact, many South Dakotans have already cast their ballots. This year, all 105 seats in the state legislature will be up for election. We'll elect our at-large member of Congress and one of our senators. And we'll vote for who will be our president.

On election days past, South Dakotans honored me with the tremendous privilege of serving them first as a state representative from Hamlin County, then in the United States House of Representatives, and now as your Governor. I am thankful each and every day for the trust and confidence that you've shown in me by putting me in these positions to serve you. The fact of the matter is that I work for you, not the other way around. It's an important point, and one that all too many politicians forget.

We are truly blessed to live in this country. America respects the freedoms of its citizens and has a government that exists to protect their rights, not infringe on them. It is my sincere hope that that our kids and grandkids grow up in an America that continues to cherish freedom, equality, and opportunity.

Every election is important, but this particular election carries extra weight because of the crossroads that we are at in American politics. There are widely differing visions for where our state and country will go. It used to be that we had similar goals, just a difference in ideas for how to get there. Sadly, that may no longer be the case. Tensions are high in the run-up to this election. Regardless of the results, I hope that our country can come together in the following days and remember that we are stronger when we are united, not divided.

I hope that this election day, every citizen engages in their constitutionally guaranteed right to vote. We may not all agree on what direction we hope the country will take depending on the results of the election, but I am hopeful that we all agree in our love for this great country. God bless you all, and may God continue to bless the great state of South Dakota and the United States of America.



Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



The Alleged Warrant For My Arrest

This past week was one of the best weeks I've had in a long time. I got everything completed, as well as some overdue projects.

There's no feeling quite like the feeling of having accomplished your goals for the week. As far as I was concerned, this called for an Apple fritter celebration. Just keep this between us and don't let you-know-who hear.

Driving home from my office, I was whistling and just enjoying myself while I was nibbling on my Apple fritter. My goal was to get it finished before I got home, and because of the week I was having, I finished that goal as well.

When I walked into the house, I was met by the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, and I noticed a rather serious look on her face. I thought maybe she had a bad day, and I was not going to let her bad day influence my good day.

So I said, "Hello, my dear. How has your day been?"

I wanted to tell her how my day had been and how excited I was to complete all my projects. I was excited, but that excitement kind of went south.

"What have you been up to?" She said as serious as I've ever heard her.

I have heard this kind of question before. And it's very important how you answer that question. You might tell something they don't know, and that will get you into more trouble. My job is to find out what they think they know and hide what they don't know.

As you can see, I'm a veteran husband, and I did not know what was coming my way.

She then repeated herself, "What have you been up to lately?"

At this point, I was a little worried because I could see there was something very serious she was talking about. I didn't quite know how to take the next step because I didn't know how serious the situation was from her point of view.

Of course, I wanted to make sure that I didn't spill any beans that she didn't know about at the time. I wouldn't have known what they were either, but that's a different story.

"Listen to this phone message."

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She picked up the phone, pressed the button and I heard the message.

"This is a Social Security Officer letting you know that a warrant for your arrest has been established. They will be at your home tomorrow around 4 o'clock to facilitate the warrant unless you call this number."

I was speechless, which is not unusual for me. Then my wife said, "Do you want to tell me what this is all about?"

It's not enough that I'm in trouble with a Social Security Officer, but I'm also in trouble with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. To be truthful about this, I'd rather be in trouble with a Social Security Officer. But I have to take my trouble one step at a time.

I did not know what to say to my wife. I never heard of a Social Security Officer or what they do. Why would the Social Security come after me? I'm certainly not going to call that number.

"Are you keeping something from me?" My wife queried.

I did not know how to answer because I have never found how to keep anything from her as long as I have been married. She knows what I'm doing three weeks before I'm actually doing it. How could I keep anything from her?

Certainly, I can keep things away from me. So when I do something, I forget about it and have to be reminded that I did it. But as for keeping secrets, that is not one of my strong suits.

"If you're in trouble," my wife said in a very sympathetic voice, "we can get through this together."

At that point, I only wished I knew some trouble that I could talk about that we could work through together. The problem was, my week had been so wonderful, and everything that needed to be done, I was able to do it.

Trouble? I can't think about any trouble that would necessitate a Social Security Officer to come and arrest me.

We sat in the living room and tried to figure out what kind of trouble would necessitate an arrest warrant. We couldn't come up with anything. And believe me, if my wife can't come up with the definition of trouble, it just doesn't exist.

Believe me, the next afternoon, we were very nervous, not knowing what to do. But the afternoon led into the evening, and then we went to bed.

That was four weeks ago. I have not received any more phone calls. No Social Security Officer has shown up at my door with a warrant for my arrest.

As it turns out, those four weeks of nervous anticipation were a complete waste. As far as we can understand, it must've been a scam to rattle our cage. We were careful for nothing at all.

The other night as I was thinking of this, a verse of Scripture came to mind. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (I John 4:18).

I have a choice that I can surrender my fear for love. That love that only God can give.

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#244 in a series

Covid-19 Update:by Marie Miller

Saturday's supposed to be low; this week it isn't. We're deeper in than yesterday—by a lot. I have us in six figures for new cases for the first time ever. Yesterday's almost 83,000 new cases is eclipsed by today's 107,500, which is almost a third higher and terrifying. This represents a 1.3% increase over yesterday's pandemic total. And so we're at 8,652,700 total cases in the US.

Our seven-day average of new cases passed 63,000 yesterday on the way to much, much more; it has been steadily increasing since last month. We continue to see reports of record new-case numbers. Six states reported records; they were Alaska, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Illinois, and Ohio. We've been seeing surges recently in more rural areas; now some cities are getting into the act, including Anchorage, Oklahoma City, Minneapolis, El Paso, and Chicago, all of whom set single-day records. We are near record new-case numbers in Arkansas, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania. These steep increases follow the reopening of schools and colleges across the country and have been driven primarily by small family gatherings which have been moving indoors where spread is more likely as the weather cools.

At least 42 states and territories reported more new cases in the past week than the prior week, while only nine are improving, with five holding steady. Georgia had their highest new-case number since early last month; Ohio reported a record number of new cases for the third day in a row; and Oklahoma had more than 1000 cases for the fourth consecutive day. New Jersey had its highest new-case total since May. Florida and Pennsylvania had spikes in cases, Michigan too. We have been seeing surges and recessions in cases here and there across the country throughout this pandemic. Right at this moment, nearly half of states are currently at or have been at their peaks in the past few days. The top per capita daily new-case rates over the summer when we experienced our last surge were Florida and Arizona with over 50/100,000 residents, followed by 35/100,000 residents in Texas. Now we're looking at the following: North Dakota - 102/100,000; South Dakota - 83/100,000; Montana - 65/100,000; and Wisconsin - 61/100,000. Three of the four show no signs of leveling off yet either; Montana may be bringing things under control, although we need more data to be sure of that. Other states scoring bigger rates than Texas had over the summer include Idaho at 51/100,000; Nebraska at 44/100,000; Wyoming at 43/100,000; Utah at 43/100,000; and Iowa at 35/100,000. That's a lot of states in worse trouble than when we were all getting nervous a few months ago.

Of the top 10 counties in the country for cases per capita, three are in South Dakota, two are in Kansas, and one is in each of Wisconsin, Montana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Kentucky. Rural states all. And that's a sign of the shift in this pandemic in the US from densely-populated places to those with more sparse populations, a worry because of the breadth of spread.

With respect to test positivity rates, the number of positive tests per unique individuals tested in the past week, the rate is increasing by 16%. Public health experts tell us we are testing sufficient numbers of people and we have tamped down community spread when this number is below 5% and that we are nearing control at 3%. The top 12 states are well above these levels: Mississippi and Puerto Rico at 100%, South Dakota at 38%, Idaho at 34%, Wyoming at 29%, Alabama at 25%, Iowa at 24%, Kansas at 20%, Nebraska at 20%, Nevada at 18%, Utah at 17%, and Wisconsin at 15%. Another 24 states and territories are above that 5%; three more are above 3%.

Hospitalizations are increasing as well, about 40% since last month, and they continue to rise. Twenty-four per cent of hospitals have more than 80% of their ICU beds filled; this was more like 17 – 18% during the summer peak. On the basis of population, the top states for hospitalizations per population are South Dakota with 41/100,000, a 21% increase from last week; Montana with 33/100,000, a 75% increase; Indiana with 25/100,000, a 24% increase; Oklahoma with 24/100,000 (which set a record on Tuesday), a 21% increase; Missouri with 24/100,000, a 1% decrease (and the only decrease on this list); Mississippi with 23/100,000, a 12% increase; Arkansas with 23/100,000, a 2% increase; Nebraska with 22/100,000, a 32% increase; North Dakota with 22/100,000, a 12% increase; and Wisconsin with 21/100,000, a 12% increase. Tennessee set a record for hospitalizations on Tuesday.

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There were 913 deaths reported today, high for a weekend and a 0.4% increase. We have lost 224,819 lives to this virus thus far. Wisconsin set a record for deaths today, and Kentucky reported its second-highest daily fatality rate this week. So did North Carolina. Dr. Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, warns, "And the deaths are going to go up precipitously in the next three to four weeks, following usually new cases by about two to three weeks." We're in a world of hurt.

We need to consider large gatherings of people. They are simply not a good idea. The problem has been that most large gatherings have had political overtones so that it appears anyone speaking for or against them can be dismissed as anti-whatever-the-event-was-about instead of pro-public health. Do not be fooled. The folks warning against getting together in closely-packed groups—outdoors or in—are simply being straight with you about the public health risks. Those rallies? Dangerous, more so indoors, especially as folks generally do not wear masks or distance. Those protests? Could be dangerous too, although less so since they are outdoors and folks generally do wear masks and distance. Science doesn't care who you're voting for; it cares only for facts.

Let's look at some recent events, recognizing that outdoor gathering are 20 to 30 times safer than indoor events. There is an expectation that cases and hospitalizations will lag superspreader events by around two to four weeks. That said, on June 20, the day of a large indoor gathering, Tulsa, Oklahoma, had around 197 people hospitalized. On July 8, two and a half weeks later, they were up to 500 hospitalized. On June 23, Phoenix hosted a large indoor event. There were 2000 hospitalizations in Phoenix before the event and 3000 ten days later with an increase carrying on to the third week. An outdoor event in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, on August 17 drove hospitalizations by 20%, an increase that continued up to five weeks later.

On the other hand, 0.99% of protesters in Minneapolis back in June tested positive for the virus, well below the state positivity rate for the period. New York City, which was the site for many protests in the summer, did not see an increase in cases associated with the demonstrations. The District of Columbia actually experienced a decrease in test positivity rates and cases during the busiest period of demonstrations last summer. What matters isn't so much who or what you're voting for as where you're gathering and what precautions you use.

A model for holding gatherings safely emerges from the almost-finished Major League Baseball season. After a fairly rocky start, players and team personnel managed to put together a shortened season with minimal disruption from this virus. I recall listening to a springtime interview with Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, who, it turns out, is a big baseball fan, when he said he did not see a season happening with fans in the stands, but could envision one without them if proper precautions were taken. There were no fans until now, proper precautions were taken most of the time, and the season did, indeed, happen.

And on the subject of big-time professional sports, I'm a person who grew up and still lives in a place where there aren't any home teams; there aren't enough people here to support one. We borrow teams from neighboring—or semi-neighboring—states as our "home" teams. And I never paid any attention to the National Basketball Association because I grew up in a baseball family, not that any of my many sisters or I played baseball or anything else back in the pre-Title IX days when girls—and only the cute ones—were cheerleaders, not athletes. And yet basketball, specifically the NBA, gave me my best sports memory, even though it didn't happen at an actual game. In 2017, I was sitting up to the bar in an Oakland neighborhood dive bar, surrounded by Golden State Warriors fans, as the home team clinched the NBA championship after I'd sat in that same bar watching them piss it away in the prior season's final game. That is an experience I hope to repeat someday somewhere—not fussy about the sport or the town—although baseball and the Twins would be very cool.

Even though I still don't follow the NBA, I do recognize the name of Klay Thompson; he was, after all, an important element in that victory I experienced back at the Kingfish Tavern. So my ears perked up at this mention of his name: It seems Deborah Wright is a big, big fan of the Warriors and, more specifically, Mr. Thompson, one might even say an obsessive fan. And she is dying—soon, within weeks. Her

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husband, Randall, wanted to make a wish of hers come true—to meet this guy. And so he put out a plea on social media last week, probably with the same expectation of a result as most of us have if we buy the random lottery ticket—like it would be nice, but

After he described Deborah’s medical situation, here’s what he said: “My Bride loves Klay Thompson of the Warriors. I was wondering if at all possible, if maybe he could FaceTime her (or Zoom or whatever). I ask for nothing else . . . no gifts, money, or anything . . . just for the possibility of a visit from Mr. Thompson.” He wisely tagged Frank Somerville, the evening news anchor at the Bay Area’s KTVU and, by what I can see online, a helluva good guy. Viewers took it from there because a guy knew another guy, etc., and so the message reached the Warriors public relations staff who got in touch with Thompson, who’s been rehabbing a torn ACL for a year.

A staff member said, “Klay doesn’t reply to things quickly. He responded withing five minutes.” And on Monday, Thompson video-called the Wrights and spent a half-hour with them talking about her family, pets, and the Warriors.” They even met Thompson’s dog.

Deborah Wright said, “He made me feel like we’ve been friends forever. It was just a down-to-earth conversation.” Thompson had become her favorite player when, in a TV interview, asked about his accomplishments in a game, instead talked about his teammates and how ‘d won a game together as a team. It reminded her of the pure joy in the game she’d seen in high school kids and made her a solid fan. She said the call “gave me a positive to think about.” A nice gift to a dying woman.

Then a couple of days ago, Deborah received a swag package from the team: blanket, cap, t-shirts, bobblehead. And a jersey with her name and Thompson’s number on it, with a lovely note and signature from the man himself right on the jersey, tucked onto that #11. In case you were wondering, there are still people in the world we consider “big” people who have—make—time for regular folks. Folks like us. And that means this is still a world worth saving. Let’s go to work to make that happen; it’s going to take all of us.

Keep yourself healthy. I’ll be back tomorrow.

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COVID CASES OVER THE WEEKS WORLDWIDE

3 Weeks Ago

2 Weeks Ago

Last Week

This Week

Global Cases

34,791,855

Global Cases

37,246,627

Global Cases

39,721,801

Global Cases

42,738,662

7,379,614 US

6,473,544 India

4,880,523 Brazil

1,198,663 Russia

848,147 Colombia

821,564 Peru

790,818 Argentina

789,932 Spain

757,953 Mexico

679,716 South Africa

7,719,254 US

7,053,806 India

5,082,637 Brazil

1,291,687 Russia

902,747 Colombia

883,882 Argentina

861,112 Spain

846,088 Peru

814,328 Mexico

732,434 France

8,107,404 US

7,494,551 India

5,224,362 Brazil

1,390,824 Russia

979,119 Argentina

952,371 Colombia

936,560 Spain

876,342 France

862,417 Peru

847,108 Mexico

8,578,175 US

7,864,811 India

5,380,635 Brazil

1,503,652 Russia

1,130,081 France

1,081,336 Argentina

1,046,132 Spain

1,007,711 Colombia

886,800 Mexico

883,116 Peru

Global Deaths

1,031,528

Global Deaths

1,073,377

Global Deaths

1,110,467

Global Deaths

1,151,056

209,335 deaths
US

145,388 deaths
Brazil

100,842 deaths
India

78,880 deaths
Mexico

42,407 deaths
United Kingdom

35,968 deaths
Italy

214,379 deaths
US

150,198 deaths
Brazil

108,334 deaths
India

83,642 deaths
Mexico

42,850 deaths
United Kingdom

36,140 deaths
Italy

219,311 deaths
US

153,675 deaths
Brazil

114,031 deaths
India

86,059 deaths
Mexico

43,669 deaths
United Kingdom

36,474 deaths
Italy

224,906 deaths
US

156,903 deaths
Brazil

118,534 deaths
India

88,743 deaths
Mexico

44,835 deaths
United Kingdom

37,210 deaths
Italy

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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	132,122
Nebraska	59,409	60,308	61,285	62,510	63,215
Montana	24,093		25,640	26,503	27,142
Colorado	87,582	88,849	90,222	91,572	93,400
Wyoming	8,070	8,305	8,537	8,918	9,177
North Dakota	33,666	34,165	35,052	35,939	36,874
South Dakota	33,836	34,031	34,977	36,109	
United States	8,275,093	8,338,413	8,411,259	8,497,011	8,578,175
US Deaths	221,083	222,220	223,059	224,005	224,903

Minnesota	+1,092	+1,060	+1,561	+1,711	+2,259
Nebraska	+592	+899	+977	+1,225	+705
Montana	+703		+1,547	+863	+639
Colorado	+1,208	+1,267	+1,373	+1,350	+1,828
Wyoming	+146	+235	+232	+381	+259
North Dakota	1,036	+516	+1,038	+886	+935
South Dakota	+562	+558	+948	+1,132	
United States	+59,515	+63,320	+72,846	+85,752	+81,164
US Deaths	+949	+1,137	+839	+946	+898

	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 24th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

South Dakota's cases dropped to 852 for yesterday. Deaths were at 10 with six females and four males. There were five in the 80+ age group, two in their 70s and three in their 60s. Jerauld County had four deaths, Minnehaha County had three and Todd, Meade and Lincoln each had one.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +22 (1,901) Positivity Rate: 11.9%

Total Tests: +185 (16,914)

Recovered: +38 (1,525)

Active Cases: -17 (380)

Ever Hospitalized: +2 (101)

Deaths: +0 (4)

Percent Recovered: 80.2

South Dakota:

Positive: +852 (36,972 total) Positivity Rate: 15.6%

Total Tests: 5,366 (397,274 total)

Hospitalized: +42 (2,336 total). 356 currently hospitalized +7)

Deaths: +10 (366 total)

Recovered: +573 (27,557 total)

Active Cases: +356 (10,218)

Percent Recovered: 74.5%

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 13% Covid, 54% Non-Covid, 33% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 25% Covid, 39% Non-Covid, 35% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 8% Covid, 19% Non-Covid, 73% Available

We are just listing a few counties and our local ones. If you have a county of request, let me know and I can add this to the daily report.

Day (2): +1 positive, +5 recovered (34 active cases)

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

Grant (2): +4 positive, +6 recovered (80 active cases)

Hughes (5): +18 positive, +7 recovered (174 active cases)

Marshall (1): +2 positive, +0 recovered (16 active cases)

McPherson: +1 positive, +0 recovery (20 active case)

Spink (1): +6 positive, +2 recovered (73 active cases)

Minnehaha (105): +235 positive, +142 recovered (2,326 active cases)

Spink (1): +6 positive, +2 recovered (73 active cases)

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	1193	0
10-19 years	4138	0
20-29 years	7912	2
30-39 years	6390	7
40-49 years	5343	12
50-59 years	5371	30
60-69 years	4115	53
70-79 years	2110	71
80+ years	1569	191

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	19946	173
Male	18195	193

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity
Aurora	164	119	696	0	Substantial	21.05%
Beadle	1181	909	3881	13	Substantial	21.38%
Bennett	154	92	924	5	Substantial	23.44%
Bon Homme	493	147	1488	1	Substantial	36.19%
Brookings	1344	985	6170	4	Substantial	22.18%
Brown	1909	1525	8487	4	Substantial	21.21%
Brule	254	175	1386	2	Substantial	26.85%
Buffalo	222	189	812	4	Substantial	27.78%
Butte	293	162	2047	3	Substantial	28.50%
Campbell	73	41	156	0	Substantial	39.39%
Charles Mix	360	251	2918	0	Substantial	10.39%
Clark	97	52	669	0	Substantial	18.42%
Clay	757	617	3196	8	Substantial	20.29%
Codington	1387	1049	6287	10	Substantial	21.63%
Corson	156	113	768	1	Substantial	45.95%
Custer	298	225	1668	3	Substantial	30.00%
Davison	824	516	4369	5	Substantial	18.58%
Day	148	112	1190	2	Substantial	19.78%
Deuel	172	119	767	0	Substantial	22.31%
Dewey	291	204	3357	0	Substantial	17.28%
Douglas	157	109	685	4	Substantial	15.09%
Edmunds	133	109	702	1	Moderate	4.53%
Fall River	185	127	1746	6	Substantial	21.60%
Faulk	195	111	517	1	Substantial	28.00%
Grant	284	202	1457	2	Substantial	15.69%
Gregory	204	145	786	10	Substantial	18.10%
Haakon	79	46	413	1	Substantial	9.16%
Hamlin	179	135	1187	0	Substantial	10.55%
Hand	108	72	559	1	Substantial	13.33%
Hanson	80	52	439	1	Moderate	16.42%
Harding	44	15	109	0	Substantial	68.75%
Hughes	811	632	3705	5	Substantial	17.12%
Hutchinson	210	142	1534	2	Substantial	11.15%

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Hyde	37	25	293	0	Moderate	21.05%
Jackson	105	59	744	1	Substantial	19.77%
Jerauld	155	127	375	11	Moderate	10.53%
Jones	31	27	126	0	Moderate	43.75%
Kingsbury	162	94	1016	2	Substantial	16.20%
Lake	339	245	1818	8	Substantial	26.32%
Lawrence	814	549	5343	6	Substantial	18.91%
Lincoln	2526	1806	12896	18	Substantial	24.32%
Lyman	234	193	1394	5	Substantial	9.64%
Marshall	62	45	758	1	Moderate	17.78%
McCook	213	149	1077	1	Substantial	10.30%
McPherson	63	43	391	0	Moderate	7.30%
Meade	885	683	4960	10	Substantial	15.69%
Mellette	65	48	562	1	Moderate	16.67%
Miner	136	69	408	1	Substantial	34.78%
Minnehaha	10204	7773	50824	105	Substantial	17.86%
Moody	194	125	1072	2	Substantial	23.15%
Oglala Lakota	797	373	5497	5	Substantial	21.47%
Pennington	4042	2977	24360	49	Substantial	12.98%
Perkins	73	50	455	0	Moderate	19.44%
Potter	98	67	585	0	Substantial	10.26%
Roberts	322	246	3187	4	Substantial	16.87%
Sanborn	84	55	418	0	Substantial	25.64%
Spink	244	170	1653	1	Substantial	11.48%
Stanley	87	61	519	0	Substantial	21.74%
Sully	40	26	165	0	Substantial	38.71%
Todd	400	260	3340	6	Substantial	25.00%
Tripp	252	200	1116	2	Substantial	13.15%
Turner	436	247	1803	9	Substantial	23.53%
Union	708	530	3964	11	Substantial	18.67%
Walworth	262	177	1272	2	Substantial	20.89%
Yankton	739	491	5682	5	Substantial	8.42%
Ziebach	86	68	559	1	Moderate	13.64%
Unassigned	0	0	1832	0		

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South Dakota



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Brown County



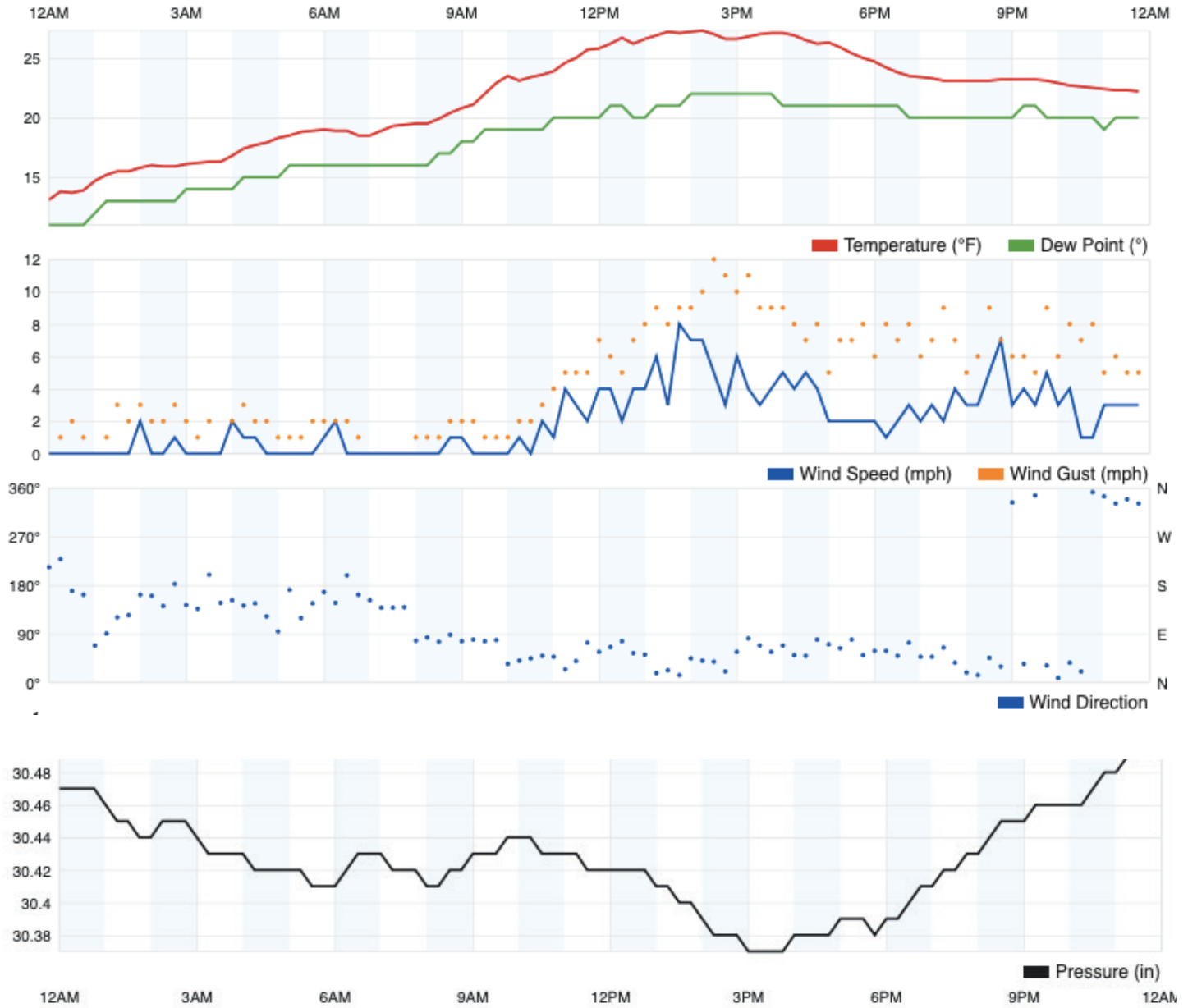
Day County



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today

Tonight

Monday

Monday
Night

Tuesday



Chance Snow
then Mostly
Cloudy

High: 23 °F



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 6 °F



Sunny

High: 16 °F



Mostly Clear

Low: 2 °F



Mostly Sunny

High: 29 °F

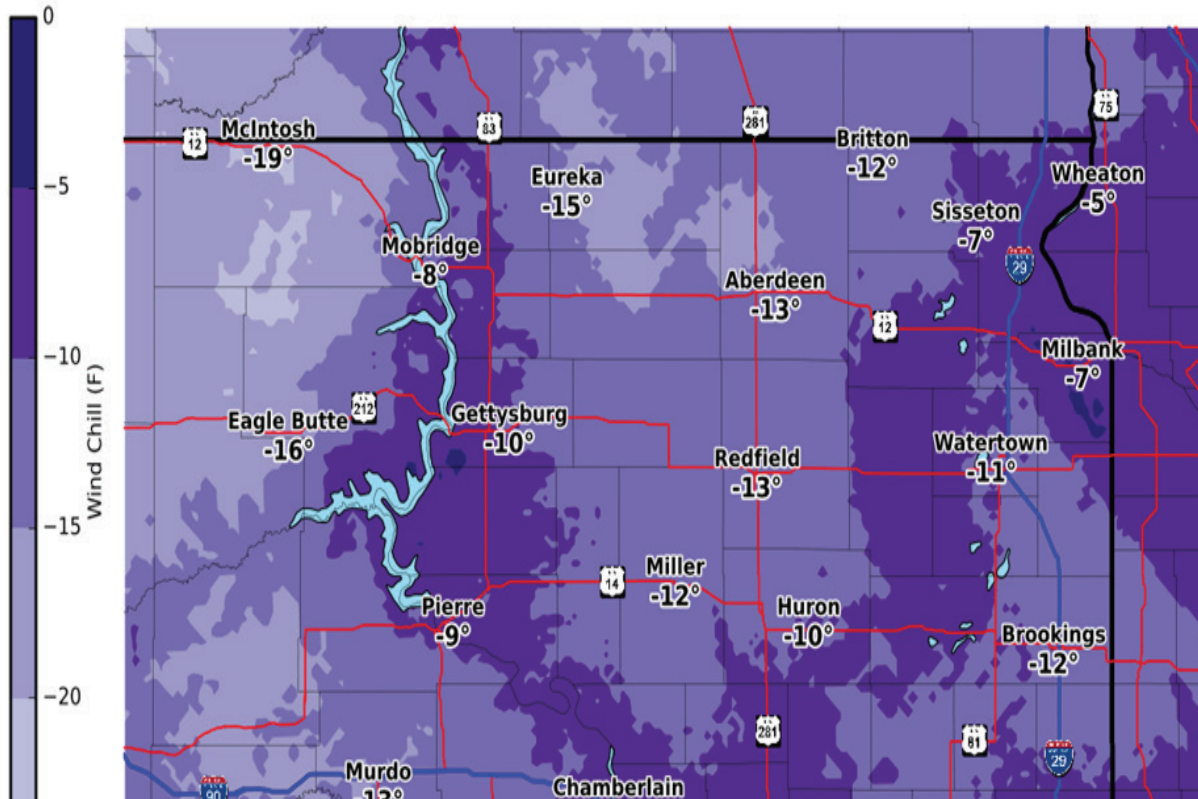


Coldest Wind Chills Through Monday Night

National Weather Service

Aberdeen, SD

Updated: 10/25/2020 5:02 AM CT



While the light snow will end today, unseasonably cold temperatures will continue through at least Monday night. On Monday, highs will only reach the teens and low 20s, or 30 to 35 degrees below normal. Wind chill values from the single digits below, to the teens below zero, will be possible tonight and Monday night.

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All-Time Coldest October High Temperature Possible on Monday, 26th

Location	Forecast High Oct 26th	Record Low High Temperature
Aberdeen	17°	18 – 29 th , 1925
Watertown	19°	17 – 28 th , 1925
Mobridge	19°	17 – 30 th , 1991
Pierre	21°	18 – 30 th , 1991
Sisseton	20°	22 – 30 th , 1991
Wheaton, MN	20°	16 – 29 th , 1925

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Today in Weather History

October 25, 1954: A storm dumped snow over the region with the highest snowfall amounts at Devils Tower with sixteen inches. Other snowfall totals from the area included four inches in Colony and Faith, eight inches in Custer and Lead, and eleven inches in Spearfish.

1918: The Canadian steamship Princess Sophia carrying miners from the Yukon and Alaska becomes stranded on Vanderbilt Reef. A strong northerly gale hampers rescue attempts the day before. The ship sinks on this day, killing the 268 passengers and 75 crewmen on board.

1921: A devastating category 3 hurricane struck near Tarpon Springs, Florida. The storm caused 8 fatalities and is the latest in the calendar year a category 3 hurricane or stronger made landfall in the US.

1975: GOES-1, which was launched on October 16th, produced its first image of the earth on this day.

1977: Dutch Harbor in Alaska reported a barometric pressure reading of 27.31 inches (925 millibars) to establish an all-time record for the state.

2003: A fire began in the Cuyamaca Mountains spread quickly due to Santa Ana Winds. As of 2017, this fire, called Cedar Fire, remains the largest recorded wildfire in California history, burning 273,246 acres.

2008: A storm packing winds of more than 60 mph hits central Alberta. In Edmonton, the strongest October wind ever recorded reaches 64 mph, cutting power to 4,000. The winds blow free sheet metal, parts of billboards, garbage cans, and pieces of trees around the city.

2017: The high temperatures in Denver, Colorado was 84 degrees. By the morning hours on the 27th, the temperature fell to 13 degrees, a 71-degree change.

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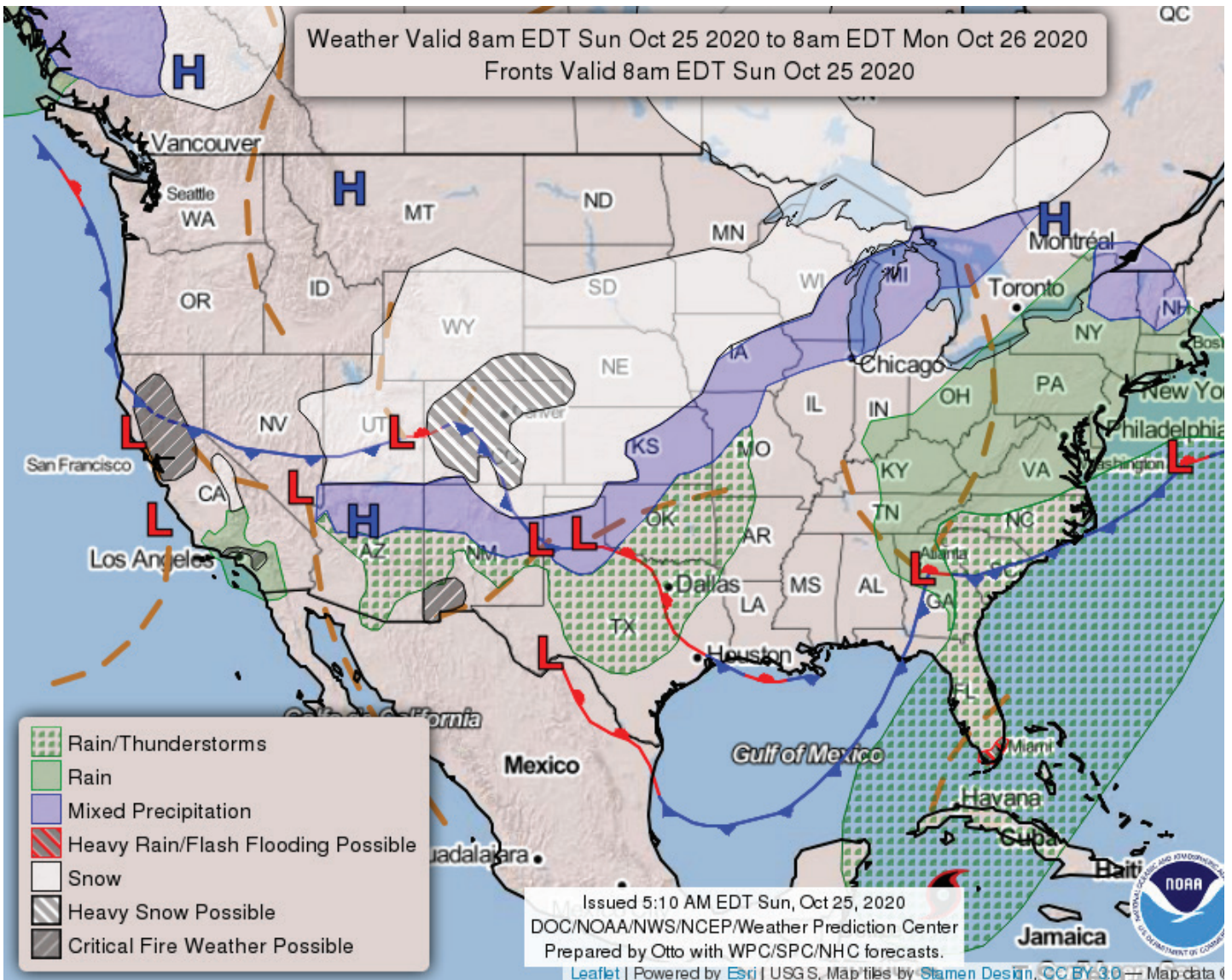
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 27 °F at 1:41 PM
Low Temp: 13 °F at 12:00 AM
Wind: 12 mph at 2:26 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 81° in 1989
Record Low: 10° in 1942
Average High: 53°F
Average Low: 29°F
Average Precip in Oct.: 1.66
Precip to date in Oct.: 1.06
Average Precip to date: 20.14
Precip Year to Date: 16.34
Sunset Tonight: 6:31 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:06 a.m.



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THE VALUE OF COMMITMENT

There once was a jockey who lost his first race and felt humiliated. But he did not give up. In fact, he lost his next 250 races before he enjoyed his first victory. His name? Eddie Arcaro and he became one of the most famous jockeys of his day.

There once was a baseball player who struck out 1,330 times. But he is not remembered for striking out. He is remembered for being one of the greatest home run hitters of all time. His name? Babe Ruth, a true legend in the history of "the game."

There once was a man who failed 99 times while doing the same experiment before it turned out right. But he is not remembered for his failures. Thomas Edison is remembered for being one of the world's greatest inventors. He is credited with 1,093 patents and his famous "trial and error" or "Edisonian Approach" to research: work until "you get the results you are seeking."

Failure need not be fatal. It can be an essential part of our learning process and lead us to ultimately discover the plan that God has in store for each of us.

There was a man who abandoned his Lord. He often spoke without thinking, was brash and impulsive, turned his back on Jesus at His trial, and denied Him three times. Yet, he became the recognized leader among the disciples, was one of the "inner three," a remarkable preacher and writer, and became one of the greatest voices of the Gospel Message. His name? Peter!

Prayer: We are grateful, Lord, that You will not give up on us as long as we stay close to You and seek Your will for our lives. May we always do our best for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not trust in your own understanding. Agree with Him in all your ways, and He will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:1-6

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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
- **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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

02-14-18-20-28

(two, fourteen, eighteen, twenty, twenty-eight)

Estimated jackpot: \$295,000

Lotto America

22-26-43-50-51, Star Ball: 3, ASB: 2

(twenty-two, twenty-six, forty-three, fifty, fifty-one; Star Ball: three; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.9 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$109 million

Powerball

18-20-27-45-65, Powerball: 6, Power Play: 2

(eighteen, twenty, twenty-seven, forty-five, sixty-five; Powerball: six; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$102 million

Saturday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Central def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 25-15, 25-15, 25-17

Canistota def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-11, 25-19, 25-20

Castlewood def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 25-15, 25-16, 25-19

Great Plains Lutheran def. Waubay/Summit, 25-22, 25-17, 25-17

Herreid/Selby Area def. North Central Co-Op, 25-18, 25-22, 25-22

Iroquois def. Freeman Academy/Marion, 0-0

Northwestern def. Langford, 25-10, 25-9, 25-7

Sioux Valley def. Milbank, 25-23, 25-15, 25-11

Warner def. Hitchcock-Tulare, 22-25, 25-19, 21-25, 25-17, 15-10

East-West Tournament=

Brandon Valley def. Sturgis Brown, 25-11, 25-8

Brookings def. Sturgis Brown, 25-14, 25-18

Harrisburg def. Douglas, 25-16, 25-8

Harrisburg def. Rapid City Central, 25-21, 25-9

Harrisburg def. Spearfish, 25-15, 25-16

Rapid City Stevens def. Brandon Valley, 25-23, 29-27

Rapid City Stevens def. Brookings, 25-22, 20-25

Watertown def. Rapid City Stevens, 25-19, 25-14

Watertown def. Sturgis Brown, 25-13, 25-22

Yankton def. Douglas, 25-15, 25-23

Yankton def. Rapid City Central, 25-21, 25-15

Yankton def. Spearfish, 25-15, 25-18

SESD Conference=

Final=

Winner def. Burke, 25-13, 25-8

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Pool A=

Chamberlain def. Mt. Vernon/Plankinton, 25-22, 15-25, 25-23

Winner def. Chamberlain, 25-6, 25-10

Winner def. Mt. Vernon/Plankinton, 25-18, 25-17

Pool B=

Burke def. Gregory, 25-17, 25-17

Burke def. Platte-Geddes, 20-25, 25-21, 25-20

Gregory def. Platte-Geddes, 25-18, 25-13

Pool C=

Bon Homme def. Parkston, 25-18, 25-10

Bon Homme def. Wagner, 25-22, 25-17

Parkston def. Wagner, 26-24, 25-23

Semifinal=

Burke def. Parkston, 25-23, 19-25, 25-23

Winner def. Platte-Geddes, 25-16, 25-15

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

Active virus cases push past 10,000 in South Dakota

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota surged past 10,000 active cases of coronavirus on Saturday as the number of COVID-19 hospitalizations reached an all-time high.

The state has reported the country's second-highest number of new cases per capita over the last two weeks, according to Johns Hopkins researchers. There were 1,132 new cases per 100,000 people, meaning that roughly one out of every 88 people in the state has tested positive in the last two weeks.

Health officials reported 939 new infections on Saturday, bringing the total number of active cases to 10,218.

The surge has strained the state's hospital systems. The two largest hospitals have altered the logistics of elective procedures to free up space and staff. The Department of Health reported that there are 356 people hospitalized with COVID-19. About 33% of general-care hospital beds and 35% of Intensive Care Units are available.

Meanwhile, the Oglala Sioux Tribe has initiated a seven-day lockdown on the Pine Ridge Reservation in an effort to stem outbreaks.

Health officials reported ten more people have died from COVID-19. October has been the deadliest month of the pandemic for South Dakotans, with 143 of the state's 366 deaths recorded this month.

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

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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 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."

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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.

Spain PM declares national state of emergency over outbreak

By JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has declared a second nationwide state of emergency in hopes of stemming a resurgence in coronavirus infections.

The Socialist leader told the nation in a televised address that the extraordinary measure will go into effect on Sunday.

Sánchez had called a Cabinet meeting to prepare a new state of emergency, a move that could impose curfews and other restrictions across the country

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

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez called a Cabinet meeting Sunday to prepare a new state of emergency to stem surging coronavirus infections, a move that could impose curfews and other restrictions across the country.

Sánchez's government said Saturday night that a majority of Spain's regional leaders have agreed to a new state of emergency and the meeting Sunday was to study its terms.

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The state of emergency gives the national government extraordinary powers, including the ability to temporarily restrict basic freedoms guaranteed in Spain's Constitution such as the right to free movement.

Spain's government has already declared two state of emergencies during the pandemic. The first was declared in March to apply a strict home confinement across the nation, close stores and recruit private industry for the national public health fight. It was lifted in June after reigning in the contagion rate and saving hospitals from collapse.

The second went into effect for two weeks in Madrid to force the capital's reluctant regional leaders to impose travel limits on residents to slow down an outbreak in which new infections were growing exponentially. It lasted until Saturday.

Spanish Health Minister Salvador Illa has said his agency and regional health officials are studying how to apply nightly curfews, perhaps like the 9 p.m. ones already in place in France's major cities.

The state of emergency would make it easier for authorities to take swift action, avoiding having to get many of the restrictions approved by a judge. Some judges have rejected efforts to limit movement in certain regions, causing confusion among the public.

Government officials on all levels are reticent to impose another complete home lockdown and industry shutdown, given the weakened state of Spain's economy, which has plunged into a recession and seen its unemployment rolls skyrocket in recent months.

Spain this week became the first European country to surpass 1 million officially recorded COVID-19 cases. But Sánchez admitted Friday in a nationally televised address that the true figure could be more than 3 million, due to gaps in testing and other factors.

Spain on Friday reported almost 20,000 new daily cases and 231 more deaths, taking the country's death toll in the pandemic to 34,752.

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

Pence to keep up travel despite contact with infected aide

By ZEKE MILLER and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Mike Pence plans to maintain an aggressive campaign schedule this week despite an apparent outbreak of the coronavirus among his senior aides, the White House said Saturday.

Pence chief of staff Marc Short and "a couple of key staff surrounding the vice president" have tested positive for the virus, White House chief of staff Mark Meadows said Sunday. Pence, who thus far has tested negative, is considered a "close contact" of the aides under Centers for Disease Control and Prevention criteria but will not quarantine, his spokesman Devin O'Malley said.

O'Malley said Pence decided to maintain his travel schedule "in consultation with the White House Medical Unit" and "in accordance with the CDC guidelines for essential personnel." Those guidelines require that essential workers exposed to someone with the coronavirus closely monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and wear a mask whenever around other people.

O'Malley said Pence and his wife, Karen, both tested negative on Saturday "and remain in good health."

President Donald Trump commented on Short early Sunday after his plane landed at Joint Base Andrews, outside Washington. "I did hear about it just now," he said. "And I think he's quarantining. Yeah. I did hear about it. He's going to be fine. But he's quarantining."

Saskia Popescu, an infectious disease expert at George Mason University, called Pence's decision to travel "grossly negligent" regardless of the stated justification that Pence is an essential worker.

"It's just an insult to everybody who has been working in public health and public health response," she said. "I also find it really harmful and disrespectful to the people going to the rally" and the people on Pence's own staff who will accompany him.

"He needs to be staying home 14 days," she added. "Campaign events are not essential."

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After a day of campaigning in Florida on Saturday, Pence was seen wearing a mask as he returned to Washington aboard Air Force Two shortly after the news of Short's diagnosis was made public. He is scheduled to hold a rally on Sunday afternoon in Kinston, NC.

Pence, who has headed the White House coronavirus task force since late February, has repeatedly found himself in an uncomfortable position balancing political concerns with the administration's handling of the pandemic that has killed more than 220,000 Americans. The vice president has advocated mask-wearing and social distancing, but often does not wear one himself and holds large political events where many people do not wear face-coverings.

By virtue of his position as vice president, Pence is considered an essential worker. The White House did not address how Pence's political activities amounted to essential work.

Short's diagnosis comes weeks after the coronavirus spread through the White House, infecting Trump, the first lady, and two dozen other aides, staffers and allies.

Short, Pence's top aide and one of his closest confidants, did not travel with the vice president on Saturday. Top Pence political adviser Marty Obst tested positive for the coronavirus earlier this week, a person familiar with the matter said.

Pence's handling of his exposure to a confirmed positive case stands in contrast to how Democratic vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris responded when a close aide and a member of her campaign plane's charter crew tested positive for the virus earlier this month. She took several days off the campaign trail citing her desire to act out of an abundance of caution.

This version corrects in the news summary that Pence tested negative.

Black contractor braves threats in removing Richmond statues

By SARAH RANKIN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Devon Henry paced in nervous anticipation, because this was a project like nothing he'd ever done. He wore the usual hard hat — and a bulletproof vest.

An accomplished Black businessman, Henry took on a job the city says others were unwilling to do: lead contractor for the now-completed removal of 14 pieces of Confederate statuary that dotted Virginia's capital city. There was angry opposition, and fear for the safety of all involved.

But when a crane finally plucked the equestrian statue of Gen. Stonewall Jackson off the enormous pedestal where it had towered over this former capital of the Confederacy for more than a century, church bells chimed, thunder clapped and the crowd erupted in cheers.

Henry's brother grabbed him, and they jumped up and down. He saw others crying in the pouring rain. "You did it, man," said Rodney Henry.

Success came at some cost. Devon Henry faced death threats, questions about the prices he charged, allegations of cronyism over past political donations to the city's mayor and an inquiry by a special prosecutor. But he has no regrets.

"I feel a great deal of conviction in what we did and how it was done," Henry, 43, told The Associated Press in the only interview he has given.

As recently as a few years ago, the removal of Richmond's collection of Confederate monuments seemed nearly impossible, even as other tributes to rebel leaders around the U.S. started falling.

It was a particularly charged issue in a historic city with a central role in the Civil War. And the statues, especially along historic Monument Avenue, were breathtaking in size and valued for their artistic quality, drawing visitors like Winston Churchill and Dwight Eisenhower.

The tide turned after the death of George Floyd in police custody, which ignited a wave of Confederate monument removals. Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney and the city council committed to removing the statues, something the Democrat-led General Assembly had authorized earlier in the year.

Stoney, who is Black and has also faced backlash to his role in the monument removals, including racist and threatening voicemails, said in a debate in early October that "what we did was legal, it was appro-

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priate, and it was right.”

Henry “put his life on the line, put his family’s lives on the line, he put his business on the line. And we removed those monuments,” the mayor said.

The man who oversaw the statue removals is a Virginia native with an easy laugh and warm smile, the son of a single mother who had him at 16 and worked her way up from a crew member at McDonald’s to the operator of five stores. He, his college sweetheart and their two kids live in suburban Richmond. People who have worked with him describe him as humble and immensely likeable.

Records show his Newport News-based Team Henry Enterprises has won more than \$100 million in federal contracts in the past decade. The company has handled projects ranging from invasive species removal to crane services for the U.S. Army to general construction. Team Henry was the general contractor on the recently completed Memorial to Enslaved Laborers at the University of Virginia.

He serves on several boards, including those of a bank and a health system foundation, and is a member of the Board of Visitors at his alma mater, Norfolk State University, where he endowed a scholarship.

Henry said the city’s Department of Public Works asked him in mid-June if he would be interested in the statue project. A contractor who turned the city down gave them his name, he said.

Henry huddled with his family to make sure everyone was on board. His son and daughter “started Googling” and “there was most definitely a level of concern” when they read about what happened in Charlottesville (where plans to remove a Robert E. Lee statue sparked a deadly white supremacist rally in 2017) and New Orleans (where a contractor had his car firebombed).

Ultimately, they all agreed to take the job. This was an opportunity to be a part of history.

For safety, he said, he sought to conceal his company’s identity, creating a shell entity, NAH LLC, through which the \$1.8 million contract was funneled.

Stoney’s administration initially declined to say who was behind the company, but the arrangement eventually came to light through public records requests and reporting by local news outlets. One blog ran a story headlined, “The Gory Details of Levar Stoney’s Statue Contract.” It was also reported that Henry had donated a total of \$4,000 to Stoney and his political action committee.

Since his name and company became public, Henry said he’s received death threats. He’s added extra cameras to both his home and office security systems, he’s gotten a concealed carry permit, taken defensive shooting classes and now carries a weapon wherever he goes.

He said he’s also faced business repercussions. Some subcontractors have declining to work with him, he said, or doubled their prices.

An ongoing inquiry by a special prosecutor into the contract was initiated after Kim Gray, a city councilwoman who formerly opposed removing the monuments and is one of Stoney’s opponents in the November election, raised concerns about the deal.

Some of the mayor’s critics have questioned whether the price tag for the project, which included the removal of both large figures and smaller plaques, was reasonable. The statues are gone, but their enormous pedestals remain in place.

Some U.S. cities have paid more, like New Orleans, where it cost more than \$2.1 million to remove four monuments. Others, like Baltimore, have paid far less. That city paid under \$20,000 for four statues, according to the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

Andrew Baxter, a nationally known conservator of outdoor sculpture who has worked on projects at the White House and the National Gallery of Art and has conducted extensive restoration work in the past on several of Richmond’s largest Confederate monuments, was critical of the mayor’s handling of the situation. Stoney acted without the city council’s formal sign-off and before completing procedural steps in the new law.

Still, Baxter said the amount the city paid seemed reasonable.

Henry said the safety considerations of the job were a consideration in setting the price.

“It’s not a situation where you’re just putting in a crane on the street and you’re putting an air conditioner on top of a unit,” he said.

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There was trouble finding subcontractors. Even a company he worked with on the UVA memorial gave him a resounding “hell no” when asked to participate, Henry said. A representative of another company suggested he should go take down a statue of Martin Luther King Jr. Truckers involved didn’t want their vehicle logos showing. Workers ended up traveling in from Wisconsin and Connecticut.

Henry negotiated the security plans, eventually working with the city sheriff’s department because he said the police department was not willing to participate. (A police department spokesman declined comment.) He also hired private security.

In the end, the project went on without incident.

In an interview a block away from the pedestal that once held Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart’s statue, Henry mused about his participation in two very different projects reflecting this moment in the story of race and America.

He helped build the UVA memorial, two nested granite rings, one with a timeline of the history of slavery at the school — a tribute to the enslaved people who built and maintained one of the country’s most prestigious public universities but had long gone unrecognized.

And he helped remove the Richmond statues, which he called tools of oppression against Black Americans. “To be a Black man in the middle to do it, it felt pretty good,” he said.

Afghanistan claims killing an al-Qaida leader wanted by FBI

By RAHIM FAIEZ, TAMEEM AKHGAR and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Afghanistan claimed Sunday it killed a top al-Qaida propagandist on an FBI most-wanted list during an operation in the country’s east, showing the militant group’s continued presence there as U.S. forces work to withdraw from America’s longest-running war amid continued bloodshed.

The reported death of Husam Abd al-Rauf, also known by the nom de guerre Abu Muhsin al-Masri, follows weeks of violence, including a suicide bombing by the Islamic State group Saturday at an education center near Kabul that killed 24 people. Meanwhile, the Afghan government continues to fight Taliban militants even as peace talks in Qatar between the two sides take place for the first time.

The violence and al-Rauf’s reported killing threaten the face-to-face peace talks and risk plunging this nation beset by decades of war into further instability. They also complicate America’s efforts to withdraw, 19 years after it led an invasion targeting the Taliban for hosting al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Details over the raid that led to al-Rauf’s alleged death remained murky hours after Afghanistan’s intelligence service, the National Directorate of Security, claimed on Twitter to have killed him in Ghazni province. The agency released a photograph late Sunday afternoon it described as al-Rauf’s corpse, which resembled FBI images of the militant leader.

Al-Qaida did not immediately acknowledge al-Rauf’s reported death. The FBI, the U.S. military’s Central Command and NATO did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The Afghan raid happened last week in Kunsaf, a village in Ghazni province’s Andar district some 150 kilometers (90 miles) southwest of Kabul, two government officials said.

Amanullah Kamrani, the deputy head of Ghazni’s provincial council, told The Associated Press that Afghan special forces led by the intelligence agency raided Kunsaf, which he described as being under Taliban control. On the village’s outskirts, they stormed an isolated home and killed seven suspected militants in a firefight, including al-Rauf, Kamrani said.

Neither Kamrani nor the intelligence agency offered details on how authorities identified al-Rauf, nor how they came to suspect he was in the village.

Wahidullah Jumazada, a spokesman for the provincial governor in Ghazni, said Afghan forces killed six suspected militants in the raid, without acknowledging al-Rauf had been killed.

Kamrani alleged, without providing evidence, that the Taliban had been offering shelter and protection to al-Rauf. The Taliban told the AP on Sunday they are investigating the incident.

If the Taliban had provided protection for al-Rauf that would violate the terms of its Feb. 29 deal with

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the U.S. that jump-started the Afghan peace talks. That deal saw the Taliban agree “not to cooperate with groups or individuals threatening the security of the United States and its allies,” which includes al-Qaida.

The Afghan presidential palace issued a statement Sunday saying al-Rauf had been killed and warning it “proved that the threat of terrorism and the Taliban’s links to terrorist networks are still in place.”

“The Taliban should prove to the people, the government of Afghanistan and the international community that they are ending their links with terrorist groups, including al-Qaida,” the statement said. They “should stop the war and violence and facilitate a dignified and sustainable peace in the country.”

Federal prosecutors in the Southern District of New York filed a warrant for al-Rauf’s arrest in December 2018, accusing him of providing support to a foreign terrorist organization and being part of a conspiracy to kill U.S. citizens. The FBI put him on the bureau’s “Most Wanted Terrorists” list, which now includes 27 others.

The red-headed al-Rauf, believed to be born in 1958, is an Egyptian national. An al-Qaida-issued biography said he joined the mujaheddin fighters who battled the Soviet Union in 1986.

He has served for years as al-Qaida’s media chief, offering audio statements and written articles backing the militant group. After years of remaining silent following the acknowledgement of Taliban founder Mullah Mohammad Omar’s death, al-Rauf reemerged in 2018 in an audio statement in which he mocked President Donald Trump and those who preceded him the White House.

“I name him ‘Donald T-Rambo’ who tries to copy the famous American fictional character ‘Rambo,’ who, with only a Kalashnikov, was able to liberate the entire Afghanistan from the Soviet Union,” al-Rauf said, according to the SITE Intelligence Group.

The Afghan presidential palace described al-Rauf as “al-Qaida’s leader for the Indian subcontinent.” The National Directorate of Security referred to al-Rauf as having a close relationship with both bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian now leading al-Qaida. It said he lived for years in hideouts in both Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan.

Meanwhile Sunday, authorities raised the death toll in Saturday’s suicide attack on an education center near Kabul. The suicide bomber, who was stopped by guards from entering the center, killed 24 and wounded 57 — many of them young students.

The Islamic State group’s local affiliate claimed credit for the attack in a heavily Shiite neighborhood of western Kabul’s Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood, saying one of its fighters used a suicide bomb vest in the assault. The Sunni extremists of the Islamic State group view Shiites as heretics and have repeatedly targeted them in attacks in Afghanistan, even after losing the territory of their so-called caliphate once spanning parts of Iraq and Syria.

Mourners later gathered on a dusty hillside to bury the youths killed by the bombing. An Afghan flag whipped in the wind above their heads as they prayed for, buried and quietly remembered those lost.

“They had no guns on hand,” said one mourner named Azizullah, who like many Afghans uses one name. “They wanted to study and have a bright future for themselves and the country.”

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writer Maamoun Youssef in Cairo contributed to this report.

Italy closes gyms, shuts eateries early to fight COVID-19

By FRANCES D’EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Italy’s leader imposed at least a month of new restrictions across the country on Sunday to fight rising coronavirus infections, insisting that people outdoors wear masks, shutting down gyms, pools and movie theaters and putting an early curfew on cafes and restaurants.

Worried about crippling Italy’s stagnant economy, especially after 10 weeks of a severe lockdown earlier in the pandemic, Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte ruled against another heavy nationwide lockdown.

The decree Conte signed Sunday exempts children younger than six and those exercising outdoors

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from wearing masks and also made ski slopes off-limits to all but competitive skiers. It goes into effect Monday and lasts until Nov. 24.

A day earlier, Italy surpassed the half-million mark in the number of confirmed coronavirus cases since February, when it became the first country to be stricken in Europe. The last two days have seen daily new caseloads creep close to 20,000.

Restaurant and bar owners had lobbied hard against the new measures, which orders them to close at 6 p.m. daily. Most restaurants in Italy usually don't even start to serve dinner before 8 p.m., so the restriction seriously cuts into revenues. Cafes and restaurants were allowed in recent months to re-open after the spring lockdown for outdoor dining or limited indoor seating.

Several Italian regions and cities recently slapped on overnight curfews to cut down on young people congregating outdoors, especially to drink.

On Friday, demonstrators in Naples protesting a 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew clashed with police. On Saturday night, far-right and neo-fascist political groups led a similar protest in Rome against that city's curfew.

Conte's latest decree keeps elementary and middle schools open but says 75% of high school students must have remote classes. Crowding on public transit, especially since schools reopened last month, has concerned health authorities.

Masks were already required on public transit and in indoor venues like supermarkets and other stores.

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

Pope names 13 new cardinals, includes WDC Archbishop Gregory

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis on Sunday named 13 new cardinals, including Washington D.C. Archbishop Wilton Gregory, who would become the first Black U.S. prelate to earn the coveted red hat.

In a surprise announcement from his studio window to faithful standing below in St. Peter's Square, Francis said the churchmen would be elevated to a cardinal's rank in a ceremony on Nov. 28.

Other new cardinals include an Italian who is the long-time papal preacher at the Vatican, the Rev. Raniero Cantalamessa, a Franciscan friar; the Kigali, Rwanda, Archbishop Antoine Kambanda; the Capiz, Philippines, Archbishop Jose Feurte Advincula, and the Santiago, Chile, Archbishop Celestino Aros Braco.

Another Franciscan who was tapped is Friar Mauro Gambetti, in charge of the Sacred Convent in Assisi. The pope, when elected in 2013, chose St. Francis of Assisi as his namesake saint. Earlier this month, the pontiff journeyed to that hill town in Umbria to sign an encyclical, or important church teaching document, about brotherhood.

In a reflection of the pope's stress on helping those in need, Francis also named the former director of the Rome Catholic charity, Caritas, the Rev. Enrico Feroci, to be a cardinal.

Wilton, 73, was picked by Francis to lead the prestigious diocese in the U.S. capital last year. The prelate has his pulse on factions in the U.S. Catholic Church, which has both strong conservative and liberal veins since he served three times as the head of the U.S. Conference of Bishops.

Nine of the new cardinals are younger than 80, and thus eligible to elect the next pontiff in a secret conclave. Some cardinals head powerful Vatican offices, and pontiffs frequently turn to cardinals for advice.

No details were immediately given by the Vatican about the conclave, as the formal ceremony to make the churchmen cardinals is known, especially in view of travel restrictions involving many countries during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As he has in other groups of cardinals he tapped in his papacy, Francis in this selection reflected the global nature of the Catholic Church and his flock of 1.2 billion Catholics.

Others named cardinals include a Maltese prelate, Monsignor Mario Grech; Monsignor Marcello Semeraro, an Italian serving as prefect of the Vatican office which runs the saint-making process; Bishop Cornelius Sim, a Brunei native who serves as apostolic vicar of Brunei; the Italian archbishop of Siena and nearby

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towns in Tuscany, Augusto Lojudice; the retired bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas, Mexico, Monsignor Felipe Arizmendi Esquivel; and an Italian former Vatican diplomat, Archbishop Silvano Tomasi.

Churchmen over 80 who are named cardinals are chosen to honor their life of service to the church. Those in this batch too old to vote in a conclave are Cantalamessa, Tomasi, Feroci and Arizmendi Esquivel.

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Malaysia's king rejects PM's proposal to declare emergency

By EILEEN NG Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysia's king on Sunday rejected a proposal by embattled Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin to declare a state of emergency to fight a new outbreak of the coronavirus.

The plan by Muhyiddin, which involves suspending Parliament, has sparked national outrage, with critics slamming the move as an undemocratic means for him to hang on to power amid challenges to his leadership.

The palace said in a statement that Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah "is of the opinion that there is currently no need for His Majesty to declare a state of emergency in this country or any part of Malaysia."

Muhyiddin met with the monarch on Friday to seek royal assent but hasn't made any public comment.

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The palace's statement came after the king conferred with other royal households earlier Sunday to discuss the prime minister's proposal.

Sultan Abdullah said the government has handled the pandemic well and believes that Muhyiddin is capable of implementing measures to cope with the crisis. But the monarch called for a halt to "all politicking" that could disrupt the government's stability.

The king can declare a state of emergency that allows the country to be governed through ordinances that cannot be challenged in court.

Muhyiddin took power in March after instigating the cause of the former reformist alliance, but his government is shaky, with only a two-seat majority in Parliament.

Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim has alleged that he has the support of a majority of lawmakers to topple Muhyiddin, but hasn't managed to secure the monarch's support.

Still, Muhyiddin faces a key test early next month when his government is due to seek approval for its 2021 budget in Parliament. If he is unable to pass the bill, pressure will build for him to resign or call new elections. A state of emergency could allow him to delay that vote and consolidate support.

The king said there was "no need for MPs to continue with irresponsible actions that can affect the stability of the government." He stressed that the budget is crucial in the fight against COVID-19 and to restore the economy, and urged Malaysians to unite to stem the virus's spread.

Malaysia's coronavirus cases doubled to more than 26,000 in just three weeks following a new outbreak, mainly in Sabah state on Borneo island.

Politicians from both sides of the divide as well as the Bar Council, the medical association and other groups have said there is no need for an emergency decree because there are sufficient laws to curb public movement and impose penalties to curb the virus. Some also have warned that declaring an emergency could plunge the country into a dictatorship and ruin the economy.

Some media outlets have cited sources as saying that Muhyiddin wanted an "economic emergency" to merely suspend Parliament, without any curfew. The last time emergency laws were invoked nationally was in 1969 during deadly racial riots.

Muhyiddin withdrew his party from Anwar's reformist alliance that won 2018 elections and joined with the opposition to form a Malay-centric government in March. Then-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad resigned in protest, saying he wouldn't work with the corruption-tainted opposition that he ousted in 2018 polls.

Apart from Anwar, Muhyiddin also faces threats from the key ally in his ruling coalition, which is angry about being sidelined despite being the biggest party.

Thai protesters rally ahead of parliamentary debate

BANGKOK (AP) — Thousands of pro-democracy protesters gathered in Thailand's capital again on Sunday, seeking to keep up pressure on the government a day ahead of a special session of Parliament called to try to ease political tensions.

The rally took place at the busy Rajprasong intersection, in the heart of Bangkok's shopping district. Few protesters turned out in the first hour of the rally, but their numbers later swelled to several thousand, who listened to rude denunciations of the government in chants, speeches and even songs.

The rally was called Saturday night after Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha ignored the protesters' deadline to step down.

The protesters' core demands also include a more democratic constitution and reforms to the monarchy. Public criticism of the monarchy is unprecedented in a country where the royal institution has been considered sacrosanct.

The demonstrators charge that Prayuth, who led a coup in 2014 as the army chief, 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 the constitution, written and enacted under military rule, is undemocratic.

Prayuth's government last week called the Parliamentary session, expected to last two days, to seek to defuse weeks of almost daily protests.

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"The only way to a lasting solution for all sides that is fair for those on the streets as well as for the many millions who choose not to go on the streets is to discuss and resolve these differences through the parliamentary process," he said last week.

Prayuth also lifted a state of emergency that he had imposed a week earlier that made the protest rallies illegal.

The protesters were not impressed by his efforts to appease them, declaring them insincere.

They noted on social media that the points of discussion submitted by the government for debate dealt not with their concerns but were thinly disguised criticisms of the protests themselves.

They concern the risk of the coronavirus spreading at rallies, the alleged interference with a royal motorcade by a small crowd earlier this month, and illegal gatherings and the destruction of images of the royal family.

Protest organizers have called for a Monday afternoon march to the German Embassy in central Bangkok, far from the Parliament complex on the outskirts of the city.

The apparent rationale for the march is to bring attention to the protesters' contention that King Maha Vajiralongkorn spends much of his time in Germany.

Protesters' criticism of the royal institution has irked conservative Thais because it traditionally has been treated as sacrosanct.

Self-proclaimed "defenders of the monarchy" mobilized last week online and in rallies in several cities, in many cases led by local civil servants. On Wednesday, a small royalist rally in Bangkok broke into violence when a few attendees attacked anti-government student activists.

The Latest: New US virus cases top 83,700 for 2nd day in row

By The Associated Press undefined

BALTIMORE — A day after the U.S. set a daily record for new confirmed coronavirus infections, it came very close to doing it again.

Data published by Johns Hopkins University shows that 83,718 new cases in the U.S. were reported Saturday, nearly matching the 83,757 infections reported Friday. Before that, the most cases reported in the United States on a single day had been 77,362 on July 16.

Close to 8.6 million Americans have contracted the coronavirus since the pandemic began, and about 225,000 have died. Both statistics are the world's highest. India has more than 7.8 million infections but in recent weeks its daily number have been declining.

U.S. health officials have feared the surge of infections to come with colder weather and people spending more time indoors, especially as many flout guidelines to protect themselves and others such as mask-wearing and social distancing.

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington currently forecasts that the country's COVID-19 death toll could exceed 318,000 by Jan. 1.

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

- Europe's restaurants and bars are being walloped by new virus curfews and restrictions
- Spain gets ready to impose a new state of emergency to tamp down surging virus infections
- Surging coronavirus colors White House race in closing days
- Europe, US watch case totals grow, debate new restrictions
- Colombia reaches 1 million confirmed coronavirus cases
- Police in England will try to stop people from leaving Wales, which has started a 17-day lockdown to slow a surging rate of coronavirus infections.

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HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

ROME — For at least the next month, most people outdoors in Italy now must wear masks, the country's gyms, cinemas and movie theaters will be closed, ski slopes are off-limits to all but competitive skiers and cafes and restaurants must shut down in the early evenings.

The latest restrictions came via a decree signed Sunday by Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte, who ruled against another severe lockdown despite Italy's current surge in COVID-19 infections. In several regions of the country, mask-wearing outdoors was already mandatory.

A day earlier, Italy surpassed the half-million mark in the number of confirmed coronavirus infections since its outbreak began in February, the first country to be stricken in Europe. The last two days have seen daily new caseloads creep close to 20,000.

Italy has the second-most confirmed virus deaths in Europe after Britain, with 37,210 dead.

BERLIN — Several people attacked Germany's national disease control center with incendiary devices early Sunday, Berlin police reported.

A security guard noticed the attack on the Robert Koch Institute in the German capital and was able to quickly extinguish the flames. Nobody was injured, but one window was destroyed. Criminal police has taken over the investigation on suspicion that the attack may have been politically motivated.

Among other things, the institute keeps track of Germany's coronavirus outbreak. It publishes daily new infection figures and also advises the government and the public on how to keep the pandemic from getting out of control.

While most Germans support the country's handling of the pandemic, some have tried to downplay the dangers of the virus.

On Sunday, the institute reported 11,176 new daily infections, almost double the number reported a week ago Sunday. Another 29 people died of COVID, bringing Germany's overall death toll to 10,032.

NEW DELHI — India's daily coronavirus cases have dropped to nearly 50,000, maintaining a downturn over the last few weeks.

The Health Ministry says 50,129 new cases have taken the overall tally to nearly 7.9 million on Sunday. It also reported 578 deaths in the past 24 hours, raising total fatalities to 118,534.

The ministry also said India's active coronavirus cases were below 700,000 across the country and almost 7.1 million people had recovered from COVID-19.

India is second to the United States with the largest outbreak of the coronavirus. Last month, India hit a peak of nearly 100,000 cases in a single day, but since then daily cases have fallen by about half and deaths by about a third.

Some experts say the decline in cases suggests that the virus may have finally reached a plateau but others question the testing methods. India is relying heavily on antigen tests, which are faster but less accurate than traditional RT-PCR tests.

MELBOURNE, Australia — A COVID-19 outbreak in the north of Melbourne has led health authorities in Australia's Victoria state to hold off on any further easing of restrictions in the beleaguered city.

Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews withheld any announcement on an easing on Sunday as the state awaits results on 3,000 people who were tested in the city's north in the past 24 hours.

He described it as a "cautious pause" - not a setback - to rule out there wasn't widespread community transmission linked to the cluster.

Among the current restrictions are mandatory wearing of masks and no traveling beyond 25 kilometers (15 miles) from home. At the start of the second wave of cases two months ago, Andrews instituted an overnight curfew and shut down most businesses.

"I know it is frustrating," Andrews said. "I know people are keen to have a long and detailed list of changes to the rules. It is not appropriate for us to do that now."

Victoria reported seven new coronavirus cases on Sunday, with six linked to the latest outbreak, which

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involves 39 people across 11 households.

No additional deaths kept the state toll at 817 and the national toll at 905.

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Sri Lankan authorities have terminated a number of passenger trains and widened the curfew as COVID-19 cases related to a new cluster at a garment factory continue to surge.

The Railway Department canceled at least 16 trains — mostly ran through busy office hours — after the number of commuters declined due to the curfew imposed in many parts of the country.

More than a dozen villages are isolated in densely populated Western province, which includes capital Colombo.

Authorities last week closed the island's main fish market on Colombo's outskirts after 49 traders tested positive for the coronavirus. By Sunday, the number of cases from the fish market went up to nearly 900.

Authorities say the outbreak is linked to a cluster in a garment factory early this month, which has grown to 4,052 cases, more than half the country's total of 7,521. During the last 24 hours, 368 new cases have been detected.

In a bid to contain the spread, health authorities also closed three fishery harbors and many fish stalls around the country.

BOGOTA, Colombia — Colombia reached 1 million confirmed coronavirus cases on Saturday, its health ministry says, becoming the second country in Latin America to report that number in less than a week.

The nation of 50 million saw cases peak in August and has seen a decline since but still continues to register around 8,000 new infections a day.

Eight countries now have more than 1 million confirmed cases, and three are in Latin America. Argentina hit 1 million confirmed cases on Monday. Brazil ranks third worldwide in the number of virus cases, with more than 5 million, and passed 1 million infections back in June. Peru and Mexico are expected to reach 1 million cases each in the coming weeks.

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan has reported more than 3,000 new confirmed cases of the coronavirus — the highest daily count yet during the pandemic.

The 3,338 new COVID-19 cases reported Saturday by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services surpassed the state's previous single-day record of 2,030 new cases set on Oct. 15. That earlier record had topped the previous record of 1,953 from early April.

The state agency also reported Saturday 35 more deaths from COVID-19, raising Michigan's pandemic toll to 7,182 deaths.

Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, Michigan's chief medical executive, said that it's "now more important than ever that people take this seriously." She urged Michigan residents to wear a face mask every time they are around someone outside of their own household, to practice social distancing and avoid large gatherings.

EL PASO, Texas — The surge in coronavirus in the Texas border city of El Paso continued Saturday with a record 1,216 new cases, nearly 20% of the state's 6,125 new cases, according to city-county health officials.

There have been 3,346 cases in the city during the past three days, according to city-county health reports. El Paso has reported 38,554 total cases since the pandemic began in March.

"Today's spike is part of an unfortunate national surge that we have been planning and preparing for," public health director Angela Mora said. "Now, we need our community to help us by doing their part and staying home, if and when possible, for the next two weeks in order to stop the rapid the spread of the virus."

Gov. Greg Abbott has sent medical equipment and about 500 medical personnel to the region to help fight the virus. There have been more than 858,000 reported cases in Texas and nearly 17,500 deaths, 81 reported Saturday, since the pandemic's start.

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COLUMBIA, Tenn. — A Tennessee hospital is suspending all elective procedures requiring an overnight stay due to a surge in patients hospitalized with COVID-19, The Daily Herald of Columbia, Tennessee, reported.

As of Friday evening, Columbia's Maury Regional Medical Center was treating 50 COVID-19 inpatients, 20 of whom were in the medical center's 26-bed intensive care unit. In response, the hospital said Friday it is suspending elective surgical procedures that require an overnight stay for two weeks, beginning on Monday.

"The time has long passed for our community to take this virus seriously," said Alan Watson, CEO of Maury Regional Health.

On Thursday, the Tennessee Department of Health reported that statewide hospitalizations had reached a new record of 1,300 patients with COVID-19 and had an ICU bed availability of just 11%.

Martin Chaney, Maury Regional's chief medical officer, said small home gatherings have become the emerging threat.

"In our homes, we all let our guard down," Chaney said. "You think it is safe to not socially distance, and you take your masks off. That is spreading the disease very rapidly."

He said Maury Regional has consistently seen a surge in cases about two weeks after each major holiday.

Tennessee recorded 2,574 new cases of the coronavirus on Saturday and 24 new deaths, bringing the total number of deaths in the state to 3,100.

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis met with the Spanish prime minister at the Vatican, but neither man wore a mask during the public part of their meeting.

That's despite 13 Swiss Guards and someone staying at the same Vatican City guest house where Francis lives recently testing positive for the coronavirus.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez wore a mask when he arrived in a Vatican courtyard, but everyone sat unmasked immediately before and after his closed-door talks with Francis.

Spain this week became the first country in Western Europe with more than 1 million confirmed virus cases.

Virus is pummeling Europe's eateries — and winter is coming

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

HEIKRUIS, Belgium (AP) — As the Friday night dinner service began earlier this month at the De Viering restaurant outside Brussels, it seemed the owners' decision to move the operation into the spacious village church to comply with coronavirus rules was paying off. The reservation book was full and the kitchen was bustling.

And then Belgium's prime minister ordered cafes, bars and restaurants to close for at least a month in the face of surging infections.

"It's another shock, of course, because — yes, all the investments are made," said chef Heidi Vanhasselt. She and her sommelier husband Christophe Claes had installed a kitchen and new toilets in the Saint Bernardus church in Heikruis, as well as committing to 10 months' rent and pouring energy into creative solutions.

Vanhasselt's frustration is Europe's as a resurgence of the virus is dealing a second blow to the continent's restaurants, which already suffered under lockdowns in the spring. From Northern Ireland to the Netherlands, governments have shuttered eateries or severely curtailed how they operate.

More than just jobs and revenue are at stake — restaurants lie at the heart of European life. Their closures are threatening the social fabric by shutting the places where neighbors mix, extended families gather and the seeds of new families are sown.

A restaurant remains "a place where very special moments are celebrated," said Griet Grassin of the Italian restaurant Tartufo on the outskirts of Brussels. "It's not just the food, but it's the well-being."

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This time, the closures are particularly painful because they might stretch into the Christmas season, nixing everything from pre-holiday office drinks to a special meal on the day.

When it comes to purely calories and vitamins, "of course we can live without restaurants," said food historian professor Peter Scholliers.

But, he asked: "We can live without being social? No, we can't."

Successful restaurants have always had to adapt quickly — but never has there been a challenge like this.

The European Union said the hotel and restaurant industry suffered a jaw-dropping 79.3% decline in production between February and April. Try bouncing back from that.

Summer, with its drop in COVID-19 cases and a hesitant return to travel, brought some respite, especially in coastal resorts.

But then came fall. Any giddiness that the fallout from the pandemic could somehow be contained faced the sobering reality of relentlessly rising coronavirus cases and hospitalizations. Overall, COVID-19 has killed over 250,000 people across Europe, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Leaders are now warning that things will get worse before they get better.

But many restaurant owners have bristled at the new restrictions and some are openly challenging them.

In London last week, the preeminent chef Yotam Ottolenghi banged pots on the street to protest restrictions that include earlier closing times.

"It's really hard, we've got a great industry with lots of heart," Ottolenghi said. "And there's so many people who depend on it."

If the mood of any nation is set by its stomach, surely France's is. And it is turning as sour as a rhubarb tartlet. The streets of Paris, the culinary capital of Lyon and several other French cities were eerily empty at night during the first week of a 9 p.m. curfew scheduled to last for at least a month.

Xavier Denamur, who owns five Parisian cafes and bistros that employ around 70 workers, said the French government is unfairly punishing the industry.

"It's a catastrophic measure," he said, arguing any curfew should be pushed to at least 11 p.m. to allow for a proper dinner service.

In Italy, just such a late-night curfew went into effect in Milan — and even that triggered protests.

Still, highlighting how the world is feeling its way in the near darkness, restaurant and food delivery business owner Matteo Lorenzon argued the opposite. "Having a curfew starting at 11 p.m., it's too late."

Already in September, more than 400,000 employees of restaurants and cafes in Italy, a nation of 60 million, were unemployed, according to an estimate by Fipe, the restaurant lobby group. Its prediction for the coming months was even more dire: "Hundreds of thousands of jobs risk being erased definitively."

In the Netherlands, which has one of the highest virus infection rates in Europe, more than 60 Dutch bars and restaurants sought to overturn a monthlong closure order but failed. Lawyer Simon van Zijll, representing the bars and restaurants, warned that the Dutch hospitality industry faces "a tidal wave of bankruptcies."

The first lockdown in the spring caught the owners of Tartufo, the restaurant on the outskirts of Brussels, off guard.

This time, Grassin and her husband chef Kayes Ghourabi, were ready: They will ramp up their takeaway service and even offer their own gin with Mediterranean spices. Still, income will drop by about 70% to 80%.

"We lose, but it helps the costs. The electricity, the insurance that keep on going, even in a lockdown," she said.

Across Europe, the stories are the same — of chefs thinking creatively, making something of a bad situation, showing resilience to save something they often built from scratch.

"I have a son, and I always say to my husband, 'the restaurant was our first child.' And you want to fight for it," Grassin said.

Takeout is also a lifeline for Paolo Polli, who owned five bars and restaurants in Milan before closing four recently. His staff was cut from 60 to six. He said he made more money during the lockdown with his pizza-delivery service than when he reopened for regular service.

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Down south, a balmy fall offered some reprieve, allowing restaurants to serve on outside terraces. Despite this, in Portugal, the AHRESP restaurant association said restaurants lost more than half of their revenue. Now the chilly weather, stronger winds and rain are forcing everyone back indoors, where the virus spreads most easily.

"It will be impossible," said Artur Veloso, who manages the Risca restaurant in Carcavelos. "Winter will bring more ruin."

Associated Press writers Barry Hatton in Lisbon, Fran D'Emilio in Rome, Andrea Rosa in Milan, Thomas Adamson in Paris and Mike Corder in The Hague contributed.

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

Ukraine's local elections test leader and his young party

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainians were voting Sunday in local elections that are considered a test for President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, a former comedian who took office last year vowing to bring peace, uproot endemic corruption and shore up a worsening economy.

Zelenskiy was elected president by a landslide in April 2019 after campaigning on promises to end fighting between Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed separatists in the country's east. Despite his lack of prior political experience, he quickly cemented his grip on power by calling a parliamentary election that resulted in his party winning a strong majority.

But Zelenskiy, 42, has seen his popularity dwindle steadily as living standards have continued to plummet, corruption has remained widespread and international efforts to negotiate a settlement to the separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine have failed to yield tangible progress.

While the president's approval ratings are dropping, other political groups regrouped and worked to mount a challenge to his Servant of the People party, which was named after a popular TV series in which Zelenskiy played a school teacher who unexpectedly becomes president.

Opinion surveys have indicated that candidates from Zelenskiy's party will likely perform poorly in Sunday's local races for mayors and municipal councils across the country. Servant of the People's approval ratings were hovering around 16% heading into the election. During Ukraine's July 2019 parliamentary election, the party came out on top with 43% support.

"The time is working against the government, because a miracle promised by Zelenskiy never happened, and Ukrainians felt that they can't live like in a TV series and have to further tighten their belts," Tatiana Furs, a 58-year-old sales clerk said.

The parties of former President Petro Poroshenko and former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko are expected to win most of the mayoral and council seats in the western part of the country. A pro-Russia party, Opposition Platform for Life, is positioned to make a strong showing in the mostly Russian-speaking east and south of Ukraine.

Balloting will not be held in areas of eastern Ukraine that are controlled by Russia-backed separatists.

In a move widely seen as an attempt by Zelenskiy to shore up his sagging popularity, he coupled the local elections with a survey asking voters for their views on issues that include legalizing cannabis for medical use, introducing life sentences for corruption convictions and creating a free economic zone in the country's east.

"Zelenskiy is well aware of a sharp drop in the government's approval ratings and is trying to fix the situation by trying to attract the young and liberal voters to the polls with the question about cannabis," said Vadim Karasev, an independent political expert based in Kyiv.

Zelenskiy says the survey results will help shape the government's agenda but many voters shrugged it off as irrelevant.

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"Most Ukrainians may need cannabis to forget about the main problem — broad poverty," Ihor Dryhailo, 48, an engineer in Kyiv who voted for Zelenskiy last year but expressed disappointment with his performance as president. "The government's words differ from its deeds, and it has been unable to stop a majority of Ukrainians from sliding into poverty."

Observers predicted political pressure will continue to mount on Zelenskiy after the municipal election, with political rivals likely to press for an early parliamentary vote.

"The local elections will set the stage for an attack on Zelenskiy from all sides," said Volodymyr Fesenko, the director of Penta Center, an independent think tank. "The right-wing and the left-wing forces will rock the boat and try to provoke a new political crisis, seeking to at least challenge the parliament majority."

Zelenskiy also faces growing pressure from a one-time ally. Billionaire Ihor Kolomoyskyi, who owned the TV station that aired the sitcom that made Zelenskiy famous, hoped to have the 2016 nationalization of his PrivatBank reversed, but Zelenskiy has refused to overturn the decision.

"In retaliation, Kolomoyskyi began to methodically ruin Zelenskiy's majority in parliament, fielding several new parties," political expert Karasev said.

Karasev observed that recent decentralization efforts that gave broad authority to local mayors and councils would make the outcome of Sunday's local elections particularly significant.

"The results of the local elections could come as a cold shower for Zelenskiy, who will have to counter both the parties controlled by the oligarchs and the strengthening regional elites," he said.

India's festive season spawns fears of renewed virus surge

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Just weeks after India fully opened up from a harsh lockdown and began to modestly turn a corner by cutting new coronavirus infections by near half, a Hindu festival season is raising fears that a fresh surge could spoil the hard-won gains.

"I'd be very worried about what we are going to see in India," said Dr. Ashish Jha, the dean of Brown University's School of Public Health and a leading infectious disease expert.

The festivals draw tens and thousands of people, packed together shoulder-to-shoulder in temples, shopping districts and family gatherings, leading to concerns among health experts who warn of a whole new cascade of infections, further testing and straining India's battered health care system.

The Hindu festival season is traditionally laced with an unmatched fanfare and extravaganza, with socializing being the hallmark of the celebration. But this year's festivities have started on a pale note.

So far, the colorful and elaborate rituals for Durga Puja and Dussehra have been scaled down. The celebrations, bereft of all the grandiose, have been muted. The towering displays of religious sculptures are rare, and at many places, prayers have gone virtual, with organizers livestreaming the sessions for the devotees.

In many states, police barricades have been erected around the usually buzzing places of worship to avoid large gatherings.

But this could change.

Nearly 1 billion Indians will soon celebrate Diwali, the Hindu festival of light, and the country's biggest. Socializing is key part of the most highly anticipated event of the year, with malls and markets buzzing with shoppers. It also traditionally brings in a massive increase in consumer spending across India.

Even though the government is expecting the festival to help resuscitate the ailing economy, it is also worried about people packing together, foregoing social distancing and masks.

Such concerns prompted Prime Minister Narendra Modi to address the nation in a televised speech earlier this week, warning people of "any laxity" during the festive season that "could strain India's health system."

India is second to the United States with the largest coronavirus outbreak. Last month, the country hit a peak of nearly 100,000 cases in a single day, but since then daily infections have fallen by about half and deaths by about a third.

Some experts say the decline in cases suggests the virus may have finally reached a plateau but oth-

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ers question the testing methods. India's testing rate has remained constant but it is relying heavily on antigen tests, which are faster but less accurate than traditional RT-PCR tests.

Even as the reasons behind the decline are not fully clear, India is still clocking more than 50,000 cases a day, making any new surge all the more important.

These fears stem largely from India's initial success story — until it wasn't.

In June, the southern coastal state of Kerala was cheered for flattening the curve, generating worldwide appreciation, even from the United Nations. But in a stunning reversal, it now fares as the second-worst state in active coronavirus cases in the country.

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan blamed "gross negligence" during the 10-day Onam festival celebrations in late August for Kerala's virus surge. Since then, reported infections there have jumped by five times, far outpacing the nationwide trend.

Kerala's story has alarmed health experts who fear similar problems in the runup to Diwali that could reverse the gains.

"If we don't avoid socializing during the upcoming festival season, I fear we will be back to where we started," said Dr. T. Jacob John, a retired virologist. "There is a significant risk ahead of us."

For the many faithful, scaled-down celebrations aren't bringing home festival cheer and the urge to step out is only growing.

Sumita Chaterjee's family has avoided outdoor gatherings for months after the 64-year-old resident of New Delhi and her granddaughter survived the virus in late June.

But now the family is planning to forego the restraint and take part in a ritual where the idol of goddess Durga will be immersed in a community pool on Sunday. The entire neighborhood is expected to take part in the ritual.

"This is a matter of faith," said Chaterjee. "I know there are risks but we can't make the gods angry." _____

Associated Press journalists Annirudha Ghosal and Rishi Lekhi contributed to this report.

Surging coronavirus colors White House race in closing days

By JILL COLVIN, WILL WEISSERT, ZEKE MILLER and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WAUKESHA, Wis. (AP) — President Donald Trump assured supporters packed shoulder to shoulder at weekend rallies that "we're rounding the turn" on the coronavirus and mocked challenger Joe Biden for raising alarms about the pandemic, despite surging cases around the country and more positive infections at the White House.

Trump's remarks came Saturday, hours before the White House announced that a top aide to Vice President Mike Pence had tested positive for the virus. Pence has been in close contact with the adviser, the White House said, but still planned to keep traveling and holding rallies around the country.

The revelation of another high-ranking administration official testing positive for the virus coupled with the administration's decision to continue business as usual punctuated a day that marked the starkly different approaches that Trump and Biden are taking to campaigning in the age of the novel coronavirus.

Pence's office confirmed late Saturday that his chief of staff, Marc Short, had tested positive — the public announcement coming just as Trump was wrapping up a day of big rallies in North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin, three battleground states that will have enormous impact on deciding the Nov. 3 election.

Trump commented on Short early Sunday after his plane landed at Joint Base Andrews, outside Washington. "I did hear about it just now," he said. "And I think he's quarantining. Yeah. I did hear about it. He's going to be fine. But he's quarantining."

Pence is considered a "close contact" under Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, but will continue to campaign, his spokesman said. "In consultation with the White House Medical Unit, the Vice President will maintain his schedule in accordance with the CDC guidelines for essential personnel," Pence spokesman Devin O'Malley said. The guidelines require that essential workers exposed to someone with the coronavirus closely monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and wear a mask whenever around other people.

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O'Malley added that Pence and his wife, Karen Pence, both tested negative for the virus on Saturday "and remain in good health." Pence, who held campaign events in Florida on Saturday, is set to campaign in North Carolina on Sunday.

The revelation bookended a day in which Biden and Trump demonstrated remarkably different attitudes about what they saw as safe behavior in the homestretch of a campaign that, as with all aspects of American life, has been upended by the pandemic.

"We don't want to become superspreaders," Biden told supporters at a "drive-in" rally Saturday in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, picking up a term that has been used to describe the Rose Garden event in late September in which Trump announced his latest Supreme Court nominee. More than two dozen people linked to the White House have contracted COVID-19 since that gathering, as have campaign aides. Trump spent more than three days hospitalized at Walter Reed Military Medical Center after becoming stricken.

Biden pressed his case that Trump was showing dangerous indifference to the surging virus on a day he looked to boost his candidacy with the star power of rock legend Jon Bon Jovi, who performed before Biden took the stage at a second drive-in rally in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania.

Meanwhile, in Lumberton, North Carolina, his tongue firmly in cheek, Trump called Biden "an inspiring guy" for raising alarm about the pandemic. The president said that he watched Biden's Bucks County rally as he flew to North Carolina and sarcastically observed that it appeared attendees, who were in their cars, weren't properly socially distancing.

Trump at his rallies repeatedly criticized the news media for focusing on the virus, which has killed about 224,000 people in the United States and more than 1 million across the globe.

"It's always cases, cases, cases. They don't talk about deaths," Trump complained to a crowd of several thousand at an outdoor rally in Circleville Ohio, where few wore masks even as they stood and sat shoulder to shoulder. "They're trying to scare everybody," he said.

Trump emerged from his own illness with even greater certitude that the nation has gone too far with efforts to stem the virus, and has spoken out repeatedly that children should be in school and healthy Americans should get back to normal life with limited restrictions.

Pence has generally been more measured in public commentary about the virus. Still, he has echoed Trump's impatience at times and sought to contrast Trump's push to reopen the economy with Biden's caution, including during a campaign stop in Lakeland, Florida. just hours before the White House confirmed his top adviser had test positive.

"When Joe Biden is talking about shutting down our economy, we are opening up America again," Pence said.

Saskia Popescu, an infectious disease expert at George Mason University, called Pence's decision to continue campaign travel "grossly negligent" and suggested that campaigning was a stretch of the CDC's guidance for essential worker.

"It's just an insult to everybody who has been working in public health and public health response," she said. "I also find it really harmful and disrespectful to the people going to the rally" and the people on Pence's own staff who will accompany him.

In North Carolina on Saturday, Trump questioned the value of testing, taking a stance in opposition to public health experts across the globe.

"You know why we have cases?" Trump asked. "Cause we test so much. And in many ways, it's good. And in many ways, it's foolish. In many ways, OK? In many ways it's very foolish."

The rise in coronavirus cases is 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 say hospitals are running out of space in areas where the pandemic seemed remote only months ago. And in addition to the spike in cases, in many parts of the country, the percentage of people who are testing positive for COVID-19 is up as well.

Trump went further, pushing a conspiracy theory that hospitals are over-classifying coronavirus deaths because "doctors get more money and hospitals get more money" — even though there is no evidence of that and experts say the count is likely under-reported.

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The U.S. and its reporting systems, "are really not doing it right," he claimed. "They have things a little bit backwards."

As he dug in on his defense on the panic, Trump also criticized Biden for saying that the country was headed for a "dark winter" because of the pandemic — the scenario of a surge in infections that health experts have warned about for months.

"I thought Sleepy Joe was very dark," he told his biggest crowd of the day at a night-time rally in Waukesha, Wisconsin. "How dark was that? How horrible was that?" he asked.

A record of more than 83,000 infections were reported on Friday alone.

Biden in his stop in Luzerne reminded supporters that Trump had suggested the COVID-19 mortality rate was lower outside predominantly Democratic states.

"Where does this guy come from?" Biden said.

The president has repeatedly accused Biden and other Democrats of pushing measures that are worse than the coronavirus itself by advocating for social distancing and limits on gatherings that Trump says wreak havoc on the economy.

Biden, in an interview with Pod Save America aired Saturday, said his first priority was to "get control of the virus" because the economy can't move forward without stemming the disease.

"As I said before, I will shut down the virus, not the economy," Biden said in Bucks County. "We can walk and chew gum at the same time, and build back better than before."

Weissert reported from Dallas, Pennsylvania, and Madhani from Washington. Associated Press writer Nancy Benac in Washington contributed to this report.

Surging coronavirus colors White House race in closing days

By JILL COLVIN, WILL WEISSERT, ZEKE MILLER and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

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Saskia Popescu, an infectious disease expert at George Mason University, called Pence's decision to continue campaign travel "grossly negligent" and suggested that campaigning was a stretch of the CDC's guidance for essential workers.

"It's just an insult to everybody who has been working in public health and public health response," she said. "I also find it really harmful and disrespectful to the people going to the rally" and the people on Pence's own staff who will accompany him.

In North Carolina on Saturday, Trump questioned the value of testing, taking a stance in opposition to public health experts across the globe.

"You know why we have cases?" Trump asked. "Cause we test so much. And in many ways, it's good. And in many ways, it's foolish. In many ways, OK? In many ways it's very foolish."

The rise in coronavirus cases is 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 say hospitals are running out of space in areas where the pandemic seemed remote only months ago. And in addition to the spike in cases, in many parts of the country, the percentage of people who are testing positive for COVID-19 is up as well.

Trump went further, pushing a conspiracy theory that hospitals are over-classifying coronavirus deaths because "doctors get more money and hospitals get more money" — even though there is no evidence of that and experts say the count is likely under-reported.

The U.S. and its reporting systems, "are really not doing it right," he claimed. "They have things a little bit backwards."

As he dug in on his defense on the panic, Trump also criticized Biden for saying that the country was headed for a "dark winter" because of the pandemic — the scenario of a surge in infections that health experts have warned about for months.

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"I thought Sleepy Joe was very dark," he told his biggest crowd of the day at a night-time rally in Waukesha, Wisconsin. "How dark was that? How horrible was that?" he asked.

A record of more than 83,000 infections were reported on Friday alone.

Biden in his stop in Luzerne reminded supporters that Trump had suggested the COVID-19 mortality rate was lower outside predominantly Democratic states.

"Where does this guy come from?" Biden said.

The president has repeatedly accused Biden and other Democrats of pushing measures that are worse than the coronavirus itself by advocating for social distancing and limits on gatherings that Trump says wreak havoc on the economy.

Biden, in an interview with Pod Save America aired Saturday, said his first priority was to "get control of the virus" because the economy can't move forward without stemming the disease.

"As I said before, I will shut down the virus, not the economy," Biden said in Bucks County. "We can walk and chew gum at the same time, and build back better than before."

Weissert reported from Dallas, Pennsylvania, and Madhani from Washington. Associated Press writer Nancy Benac in Washington contributed to this report.

Murkowski's nod gives Barrett extra boost for Supreme Court

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett won crucial backing when one of the last Republican holdouts against filling the seat during an election season announced support for President Donald Trump's pick ahead of a confirmation vote expected Monday.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, declared her support Saturday during a rare weekend Senate session as Republicans race to confirm Barrett before Election Day. Senators are set Sunday to push ahead, despite Democratic objections that the winner of the White House on Nov. 3 should make the choice to fill the seat of the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Barrett's nomination already appeared to have enough votes for confirmation from Senate Republicans who hold the majority in the chamber. But Murkowski's nod gives her a boost of support. Only one Republican, Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, is now expected to vote against the conservative judge.

"While I oppose the process that has led us to this point, I do not hold it against her," Murkowski said.

The fast-track confirmation process is like none other in U.S. history so close to a presidential election. Calling it a "sham," Democrats mounted procedural hurdles to slow it down. But the minority party has no realistic chance of stopping Barrett's confirmation, which is set to lock a 6-3 conservative court majority for years to come.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., noted the political rancor, but defended his handling of the process.

"Our recent debates have been heated, but curiously talk of Judge Barrett's actual credentials or qualifications are hardly featured," McConnell said. He called her one of the most "impressive" nominees for public office "in a generation."

Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York warned Republicans the only way to remove the "stain" of their action would be to "withdraw the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett until after the election."

With the nation experiencing a surge of COVID-19 cases, Democrats made several unsuccessful attempts to force the Senate to set aside the judicial fight Saturday and instead consider coronavirus relief legislation, including the House-passed Heroes Act that would pump money into schools, hospitals and jobless benefits and provide other aid.

Majority Republicans turned aside those efforts and kept Barrett's confirmation on track.

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

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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.

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.

Murkowski noted she doesn't believe moving forward a week before "a pitched presidential election — when partisan tensions are running about as high as they could — I don't think this will help our country become a better version of itself."

But she said, "I've lost that procedural fight." She said she will vote against the procedural steps in the days ahead, but ultimately join Republicans in confirming Barrett.

Collins, who faces a tight reelection in Maine, is now the only Republican who has said she won't vote for the nominee so close to the election.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, 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.

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.

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.

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

UN: Nuclear weapons ban treaty to enter into force

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations announced Saturday that 50 countries have ratified a U.N. treaty to ban nuclear weapons triggering its entry into force in 90 days, a move hailed by anti-nuclear activists but strongly opposed by the United States and the other major nuclear powers.

As of Friday, the treaty had 49 signatories, and the United Nations said the 50th ratification from Honduras had been received.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres commended the 50 states and saluted "the instrumental work" of civil society in facilitating negotiations and pushing for ratification, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

The U.N. chief said the treaty's entry into force on Jan. 22 culminates a worldwide movement "to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons" and "is a tribute to the survivors of nuclear explosions and tests, many of whom advocated for this treaty," he said,

Guterres said the treaty "represents a meaningful commitment towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which remains the highest disarmament priority of the United Nations," Dujarric said.

Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize-winning coalition whose work helped spearhead the nuclear ban treaty, said: "This moment has been 75 years coming since the horrific attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the founding of the U.N. which made nuclear disarmament a cornerstone."

"The 50 countries that ratify this Treaty are showing true leadership in setting a new international norm that nuclear weapons are not just immoral but illegal," she said.

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The 50th ratification came on the 75th anniversary of the ratification of the U.N. Charter which officially established the United Nations and is celebrated as UN Day.

"The United Nations was formed to promote peace with a goal of the abolition of nuclear weapons," Fihn said. "This treaty is the U.N. at its best — working closely with civil society to bring democracy to disarmament."

The treaty requires that all ratifying countries "never under any circumstances ... develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices." It also bans any transfer or use of nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices — and the threat to use such weapons -- and requires parties to promote the treaty to other countries.

Once it enters into force all countries that have ratified it will be bound by those requirements.

The United States had written to treaty signatories saying the Trump administration believes they made "a strategic error" and urging them to rescind their ratification.

The U.S. letter, obtained by The Associated Press, said the five original nuclear powers -- the U.S., Russia, China, Britain and France -- and America's NATO allies "stand unified in our opposition to the potential repercussions" of the treaty.

It says the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, known as the TPNW, "turns back the clock on verification and disarmament and is dangerous" to the half-century-old Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, considered the cornerstone of global nonproliferation efforts.

"The TPNW is and will remain divisive in the international community and risk further entrenching divisions in existing nonproliferation and disarmament fora that offer the only realistic prospect for consensus-based progress," the letter said. "It would be unfortunate if the TPNW were allowed to derail our ability to work together to address pressing proliferation."

Fihn has stressed that "the nonproliferation Treaty is about preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and eliminating nuclear weapons, and this treaty implements that. There's no way you can undermine the Nonproliferation Treaty by banning nuclear weapons. It's the end goal of the Nonproliferation Treaty."

The NPT sought to prevent the spread of nuclear arms beyond the five original weapons powers. It requires non-nuclear signatory nations to not pursue atomic weapons in exchange for a commitment by the five powers to move toward nuclear disarmament and to guarantee non-nuclear states' access to peaceful nuclear technology for producing energy.

Rebecca Johnson, a co-founder and first president of the International Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons, said: "The ban treaty is as much about just making it much more possible for people all around the world to see nobody needs nuclear weapons, and they're actually an impediment, an obstacle -- they're in the way of dealing with the real security threats we have on the ground from COVID to climate."

She said in an AP interview that nuclear weapons can't prevent or deal with conflicts like the most recent war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. "They're just in the way, and they're highly expensive, and the governments that have them are distracted from the real security issues by trying to constantly pay for these arms races that they're still obsessed with."

Francesco Rocca, president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, said: "The simple reality is that the international community could never hope to deal with the consequences of a nuclear confrontation. No nation is prepared to deal with a nuclear confrontation. What we cannot prepare for, we must prevent."

There are over 14,000 nuclear bombs in the world, thousands of which are ready to be launched in an instant, Rocca said. The power of many of those warheads is tens of times greater than the weapons dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

Secretary-General Guterres said in an Associated Press interview on Wednesday: "It is clear for me that we will only be entirely safe in relation to nuclear weapons the day where nuclear weapons no longer exist. We know that it's not easy. We know that there are many obstacles."

He expressed hope that a number of important initiatives, including U.S.-Russia talks on renewing the New Start Treaty limiting deployed nuclear warheads, missiles and bombers and next year's review

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conference of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, "will all converge in the same direction, and the final objective must be to have a world with no nuclear weapons."

The treaty was approved by the 193-member U.N. General Assembly on July 7, 2017 by a vote of 122 in favor, the Netherlands opposed, and Singapore abstaining. Among countries voting in favor was Iran. The five nuclear powers and four other countries known or believed to possess nuclear weapons — India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel — boycotted negotiations and the vote on the treaty, along with many of their allies.

Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor of the 1945 bombing of Hiroshima, who has been an ardent campaigner for the treaty, said: "When I learned that we reached our 50th ratification, I was not able to stand."

"I remained in my chair and put my head in my hands and I cried tears of joy," she said in a statement. "I have committed my life to the abolition of nuclear weapons. I have nothing but gratitude for all who have worked for the success of our treaty."

The Latest: Pence's top aide tests positive for coronavirus

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on the presidential campaign (all times local):

10:50 p.m.

A spokesman says Vice President Mike Pence will continue with his aggressive campaign schedule after his chief of staff, Marc Short, tested positive for the coronavirus Saturday.

Pence spokesman Devin O'Malley says Pence and his wife, Karen Pence, both tested negative for the virus on Saturday and remain in good health.

Short is Pence's closest aide and the vice president is considered a "close contact" under Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. O'Malley says that "in consultation with the White House Medical Unit, the Vice President will maintain his schedule in accordance with the CDC guidelines for essential personnel."

Those guidelines mandate that essential workers exposed to someone with the coronavirus closely monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and wear a mask whenever around other people.

After a day of campaigning Saturday, Pence was seen wearing a mask as he returned to Washington aboard Air Force Two once the news of Short's diagnosis was made public.

10 p.m.

Joe Biden will travel to Georgia next week, making a late push in a state that hasn't voted Democratic for president since 1992.

Biden's campaign says he will be in Warm Springs, Georgia, on Tuesday, the first time he's visited the state since clinching the Democratic presidential nomination. Biden's running mate, California Sen. Kamala Harris, made several stops across Atlanta on Friday.

Biden's campaign has for months said it is focusing on re-establishing the Democratic "blue wall" in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania that crumbled when all three went for President Donald Trump in 2016. But the former vice president's top advisers have been equally bullish about "expanding the electoral map" to traditionally Republican states like Arizona and Georgia.

Biden visited Arizona earlier this month. His Georgia swing just one week before Election Day indicates he sees what he calls the Trump administration's bungled federal response to the coronavirus pandemic as a chance to gain more ground.

7:20 p.m.

President Donald Trump is making sure Ohioans remember that he pushed the Big Ten to play football after the season had initially been canceled amid concerns about the coronavirus pandemic.

Trump held a big rally about 30 miles from the Ohio State University campus, not long after the Buckeyes won their delayed season opener over Nebraska Saturday afternoon.

The Big Ten had initially scuttled fall sports but did an about face last month on football amid pressure

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from Trump as well as athletes, coaches, fans and college towns that rely on football Saturdays to fill restaurants and hotels and provide much-needed tax revenue.

Trump told supporters, "I know that life in Ohio is not complete without the glory of Ohio State football."

The crowd watched the Nebraska-OSU game on large screens set up by the Trump campaign before the president's arrival. Trump joked later that he worried they would have been in a foul mood had the Buckeyes lost.

The Big Ten includes schools clustered in some of the battleground states critical to his reelection effort, including Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

6:25 p.m.

President Donald Trump says he voted "straight Republican" when he voted early in Florida on Saturday.

Trump had been asked whether he voted for House nominee Laura Loomer, a far-right Republican candidate who has been banned from social media sites because of her racist and anti-Muslim speech.

She is facing incumbent congresswoman Lois Frankel, who has been a political fixture for decades in the Palm Beach County district, where the only Republican to ever run against her, in 2016, lost by 27 percentage points.

Trump also said he used a passport as identification.

An aide to first lady Melania Trump says she plans to vote on Election Day.

Trump changed his residency from New York to Florida last year.

5:25 p.m.

Rock star Jon Bon Jovi gave a small concert at a drive-in rally in eastern Pennsylvania for Joe Biden on Saturday, performing three songs and praising Biden's response to the coronavirus.

The rocker took the stage in Dallas, Pennsylvania, wearing a black face mask that he peeled off to play acoustic versions of "Who Says You Can't Go Home?," "Livin' on a Prayer" and "Do What You Can," which was recently released and dedicated to those on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic.

Bon Jovi also pulled out notes to praise Biden, saying, "I wrote my comments down because I've never played at a drive-in with all the horns honking, so it's a little different."

The rocker added that "Joe knows that masks are not a sign of weakness, they're a sign of strength."

Delivering a speech a short time later as hundreds of cars honked their horns in approval, Biden said that Bon Jovi has "always gone wherever I've asked him" and called him a friend and "national treasure."

Biden held two drive-in rallies in Pennsylvania on Saturday and has said for months he expects to win a state that could play a critical role in deciding next month's election.

4:20 p.m.

Former President Barack Obama says that Donald Trump's decision to abruptly end an interview earlier this week with a "60 Minutes" correspondent underscores that Trump isn't up to being president.

Obama, speaking at a drive-in rally in Miami on Saturday, said he was perplexed that Trump became ruffled after journalist Lesley Stahl pressed him on a series of issues and "got mad and walked out of the interview."

"Miami, listen, if he can't answer a tough question like 'what would you like to do in a second term,' then it's our job to make sure he doesn't get a second term," Obama said.

Obama added that Trump's behavior in the interview demonstrated he "ain't all that tough."

After cutting short the interview, Trump posted a White House recording of the interview on his Facebook page.

CBS News said the interview will air Sunday, along with a separate one with Biden.

3 p.m.

Vice President Joe Biden called Trump supporters gathered outside his drive-in rally "chumps," but said

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he'd work hard for them if he win's next month's presidential election.

Biden was holding a socially distanced rally at a parking lot in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, on Saturday when the Trump supporters could be heard making a ruckus from a short distance away.

"I'll work as hard for those who don't support me as those who do, including those chumps out there with a microphone," Biden said of the Trump supporters, who appeared to be using a megaphone.

Trump during his own rally in Lumberton, North Carolina, mocked Biden's rally because most of his supporters listened while sitting in their cars. The president jokingly said the cars were "too close together, I think."

"They weren't socially distanced," Trump added.

2:30 p.m.

President Donald Trump is continuing to criticize Joe Biden for saying during their debate that the country is headed for a dark winter because of the pandemic — something health experts have been warning for months.

"We're rounding the turn ... our numbers are incredible," Trump told supporters in Lumberton, North Carolina, even as the country's daily coronavirus tally reached record heights with more than 83,000 infections reported on Friday.

The U.S. death toll 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.

1 p.m.

Joe Biden is repeating that he has no plans to ban hydraulic fracturing in Pennsylvania, a critical battleground state where many jobs depend on the industry.

Speaking at a drive-in rally on the grounds of a community college in Bristol, near Philadelphia, he said: "Let me be clear, I'm not banning fracking in Pennsylvania or anywhere else."

People in about 100 cars blared their horns.

Still, Biden noted that climate change could lead to more catastrophic floods in places like along the nearby Delaware River.

"We can do something about it," he said. "But we've got to come together."

President Donald Trump has repeatedly accused Biden of supporting a ban on fracking. Biden mistakenly suggested during a Democratic presidential primary debate that he did, but his campaign quickly corrected that. The former vice president has promised to end fracking on federal land.

Biden also said during this week's debate with Trump that the country would have to "transition away from the oil industry" to combat climate change -- something he didn't mention Saturday. Biden has since clarified that the process would be gradual and not cost people who rely on the energy sector their jobs.

12:15 p.m.

Joe Biden tells supporters in Pennsylvania that he misses up-close campaigning, but doesn't want his events to "superspreaders." That's a barb seemingly aimed at President Donald Trump, who's set to hold a trio of big rallies later Saturday at a time of rising coronavirus cases.

At a drive-by rally in the Philadelphia suburb of Bristol, Biden said: "I don't like the idea of all this distance, but it's necessary."

He added, "We don't want to become superspreaders."

Trump's events in North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin come as the U.S. has hit a daily record of coronavirus cases with more than 83,000 reported infections. 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.

Trump said in a tweet said the rise in positive cases is overblown.

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A Rose Garden event in late September has been labeled a “superspreader” for the virus. More than two dozen people linked to the White House have contracted COVID-19 since the president’s Sept. 26 event announcing Amy Coney Barrett as his nominee to the Supreme Court.

HERE’S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE:

President Donald Trump and his Democratic challenger, Joe Biden, are framing their closing messages in the sprint to the Nov. 3 election. Trump voted Saturday in Florida before rallies in North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin. Biden has events in Pennsylvania.

Read more:

- Work already underway for presidential inauguration
- As Trump casts doubt on election, new agency contradicts him
- The Needle goes away as probability experts assess 2020 race
- Reid says Biden should end Senate filibuster after 3 weeks
- Four years in, Trump has plenty of unfinished business

HERE’S WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON:

10:30 a.m.

President Donald Trump has cast his ballot Saturday morning in West Palm Beach, Florida, and he tells reporters afterward: “I voted for a guy named Trump.”

West Palm Beach is near his private Mar-a-Lago club. He used to vote in New York but changed his residency to Florida last year.

There were several hundred supporters gathered with flags and signs outside the library where he voted. And there were chants of “Four more years.”

The president wore a mask while voting but he took it off as he approached reporters afterward in the building.

He called it “a very secure vote. Much more secure than when you send in a ballot, I can tell you that.”

Democrat Joe Biden hasn’t voted yet and it likely to do so in person in Delaware on Election Day, Nov. 3. Delaware doesn’t offer early, in-person voting like Florida.

Trump said at a Florida rally on Friday that he likes being able to vote in person. “I’m old fashioned, I guess,” he said.

The president has a busy Saturday, with rallies scheduled in North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin.

9:20 a.m.

Joe Biden is holding two drive-in rallies in all-important Pennsylvania on Saturday as he works to shore up support in his native state.

The Democratic presidential nominee is a Scranton native. He’s set to campaign in Bucks County, south-east of Allentown, which voted narrowly Democratic in 2016.

Biden also plans a stop in Luzerne County, which went easily Republican four years ago. It’s northwest of Bucks County and close to Scranton.

The former vice president angered some oil industry advocacy groups by suggesting during this week’s presidential debate that the U.S. will have to transition away from fossil fuels eventually if it is going to get serious about climate change.

Biden says that process would be very gradual and that he has a post-coronavirus pandemic economic plan that can create “millions” of new jobs by retrofitting key infrastructure to be more environmentally friendly.

Jon Bon Jovi is set to perform at Biden’s drive-in rally in Luzerne County. His appearance is reminding some of Election Day eve in 2016, when he was part of a huge outdoor concert with the Obamas and then-Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton in Philadelphia. That event came mere hours before Clinton lost to Donald Trump.

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9 a.m.

Joe Biden says climate change is “the No. 1 issue facing humanity” but he’s pledging to protect energy industry jobs that could amid federal efforts to combat it.

The Democratic presidential nominee is campaigning Saturday in Pennsylvania, where parts of the state are heavily dependent on the energy sector. Biden has faced criticism from some in the oil industry for suggesting during this week’s debate that the U.S. would have to transition away from fossil fuels eventually for environmental reasons.

Here’s what Biden said about climate change during an episode of “Pod Save America” that was released Saturday: “Unchecked, it is going to actually bake this planet.”

He added: “We cannot discount the concerns of people, what it means for their well-being and not only in the future and now, but what about how they make a living?”

Biden noted on the podcast that some unions have endorsed his economic plan to retrofit infrastructure to make it more environmentally friendly. He said that can create “millions” of new, green jobs.

This Biden item from 9:20 a.m. has been corrected to reflect that he will hold events in Bucks County and Luzerne County, not Bucks County and Lancaster County, and that Bon Jovi will appear only in Luzerne County.

California girds for most dangerous fire weather of year

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — California, which has endured its worst wildfire season in history, is bracing for the most dangerous winds of the year, a forecast that prompted the largest utility to announce plans to cut power Sunday to nearly 1 million people to guard against its equipment sparking new blazes.

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. said the outages would start in far Northern California and ultimately could affect 386,000 customers in 38 counties, with many of the shutoffs concentrated in the San Francisco Bay Area. At a Saturday night briefing, utility officials said high winds were expected to arrive midday Sunday and reach 40 to 60 mph (64 to 97 kph) with higher gusts in the mountains. Winds that strong can topple trees and send branches into power lines.

Some of the largest and deadliest fires in recent years were started by utility equipment being damaged by high winds, so PG&E has been aggressive about pre-emptively cutting power when fire conditions are most dangerous. This will be the fifth time PG&E has cut power to customers this year and by far the largest shutdown.

“We obviously recognize that power outages present hardships. That’s why we try to make it as small as we can,” PG&E incident commander Mark Quinlan said, noting that the planned shutdown had been reduced from 466,000 customers.

Cities throughout the region planned to open emergency operations centers and add police officers and firefighters to patrol high-risk areas. Officials also were encouraging people to have their cellphones fully charged or, if they have a landline, to connect an older model phone that doesn’t depend on electricity.

In Berkeley, just east of San Francisco, officials recommended residents consider leaving the hills before Sunday afternoon, especially if they would have trouble getting out quickly during a fire. In neighboring Oakland, where a blaze in the city’s hills in October 1991 killed 25 people, at least 10 parks will close Sunday and Monday.

“I would ask all of the people who live in high-impact areas mimic us and plan ahead of time and do the planning with their neighbors, with their families and within their own households so that if they are asked to evacuate they’re ready and not just then starting to figure it out,” Oakland Assistant Fire Chief Robert Lipp said.

While about one-third of the affected customers will be in the Bay Area, cuts are predicted to encompass parts of the Sacramento Valley, the northern and central Sierra Nevada, the Santa Cruz Mountains,

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

Scientists say climate change has made California much drier, meaning trees and other plants are more flammable. Traditionally October and November are the worst months for fires, but already this year California has seen more than 8,600 wildfires that have scorched a record 6,400 square miles (16,576 square kilometers) and destroyed about 9,200 homes, businesses and other structures. There have been 31 deaths.

Four of the five largest fires in state history occurred since mid-August, when a massive series of lightning strikes sparked hundreds of fires. All of the largest fires have been fully or significantly contained. But more than 6,000 firefighters remain committed to 19 blazes, including a dozen major incidents, according to state fire officials.

Almost all of Northern California is in moderate to extreme drought. The combination of high winds, very low humidity and a parched landscape has the region on edge.

The National Weather Service issued red flag warnings for many areas, meaning fire danger is extremely high. It said the conditions could equal those during devastating fires in the Bay Area's wine country in 2017 and last year's Kincade Fire that burned a large swath of Sonoma County.

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

"Given that vegetation is now at or near record dryness levels — much as it was prior to the North Bay firestorm in October 2017 — this is a very concerning forecast," Daniel Swain, climate scientist with UCLA and the National Center for Atmospheric Research, wrote in a blog post.

At Silverado Ace Hardware store in Calistoga, people were buying generators, electrical cords, flashlights, batteries, gas cans and other items, said Kathleen Collins, the store's assistant manager.

The Napa County town of 5,000 people has been affected by many of the power outages this year. But in the previous outage, the PG&E brought in temporary generators to provide electricity.

"The generators are still set up out there, so I'm hoping they're going to keep our power up," Collins said.

She said losing power is becoming a common occurrence, and people are having to live without electricity for days at a time.

"There's not much we can do about it," Collins said. "We've already been devastated so much by these fires. Being without power seems the only solution right now."

Southern California, which enjoyed several days of cool temperatures and higher humidity, will see the return of warm, dry Santa Ana winds. A fire weather watch is in effect for much of Los Angeles and Ventura counties from late Sunday through Tuesday. Relative humidity levels will plummet, and winds could top 55 mph (88 kph) in valleys, with gusts of 75 mph (120 kph) possible in mountain areas.

Europe, U.S. watch case totals grow, debate new restrictions

CHICAGO (AP) — Confirmed coronavirus infections continued to soar Saturday in many parts of the U.S. and Europe. In some cases, so did anger over the restrictions governments put in place to try to stem the tide.

Oklahoma, Illinois, New Mexico and Michigan were among states announcing new record highs in daily confirmed cases Saturday, a day after a nationwide daily record of more than 83,000 reported infections, according to Johns Hopkins University.

Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, Michigan's chief medical executive, said it's "now more important than ever that people take this seriously." The 3,338 new COVID-19 cases in her state topped the old record by more than 1,300.

German authorities reported a record one-day total of new coronavirus cases this weekend while leaders in Spain and Italy debated how to control the resurgent virus amid public pushback to curfews despite a

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global death toll topping 1.1 million people.

In Italy, officials huddled with regional authorities on Saturday to determine what new restrictions could be imposed as confirmed cases surpassed half a million.

Premier Giuseppe Conte has said he doesn't want to put Italy under severe lockdown again, as he did at the pandemic's start. In past days, several governors ordered overnight curfews in their regions to stop people from congregating at night outside bars and other venues.

One such curfew fueled anger in Naples, triggering a violent clash by protesters with police. Italian media said protesters hurled rocks, pieces of broken ceramic tiles and smoke bombs at police while they battled back with tear gas. Elsewhere in Europe, police in Warsaw, Poland, used tear gas and pepper spray to disperse protesters angry over new virus restrictions, and anti-lockdown demonstrators gathered in London's Trafalgar Square.

Interior Minister Luciana Lamorgese on Saturday branded the Naples protests "unacceptable" and said prosecutors were investigating.

According to Health Ministry figures, Italy's one-day new caseload of confirmed infections crept closer to 20,000 on Saturday, a slightly bigger daily increase than Friday. The nation's confirmed death toll, second-highest in Europe after Britain's, rose to 37,210 after 151 more deaths.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez plans to meet with his Cabinet Sunday morning in Madrid to prepare a new state of emergency, a strategy used twice since the start of the pandemic.

The first in March ordered strict home confinement across the nation, closed stores, and recruited private industry for the national public health fight. The second went into effect two weeks ago, focused on transit limits in the Madrid area.

In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel urged citizens again to reduce their number of social contacts as the nation recorded a new daily high for infections.

The 14,714 cases reported on Saturday includes cases from both Friday and Thursday because of a three-hour data outage at the country's disease control agency Thursday. Forty-nine more people died, bringing the overall death toll past 10,000.

The chancellor said in her weekly podcast "if we all obey (to social distancing) we will all together survive this enormous challenge posed by the virus."

Other European countries have tightened restrictions hoping to cope with their own rising case counts.

Slovenia closed down hotels, shopping malls and other non-essential shops as authorities reported a record high of both new daily infections and deaths in the small country of 2 million people. Greece unveiled a mask requirement and a mandatory nightly curfew for Athens and other areas deemed high risk.

In South America, Colombia became the eighth country to reach 1 million confirmed coronavirus cases on Saturday, according to the Colombian Ministry of Health. Two of the others are also in Latin America: Argentina, which hit that mark on Monday, and Brazil, which has more than 5 million confirmed cases.

In the U.S., the virus has claimed about 240,000 lives, according to the COVID-19 Dashboard published by Johns Hopkins. The total U.S. caseload reported Friday was 83,757, topping the 77,362 cases reported on July 16.

Many rural communities are bearing the brunt. In Columbia, Tennessee, Maury Regional Medical Center said Friday it was suspending elective surgical procedures that require an overnight stay for two weeks, beginning on Monday. The Daily Herald reported that it was treating 50 COVID-19 inpatients, 20 of whom were in the medical center's 26-bed intensive care unit.

Martin Chaney, Maury Regional's chief medical officer, said small home gatherings have become the emerging threat through which the disease is being spread in the six-county region the medical center covers.

"In our homes, we all let our guard down," Chaney said. "You think it is safe to not socially distance, and you take your masks off. That is spreading the disease very rapidly."

Eyes turn to Texas as early voting surge surpasses 2016

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By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas has already cast nearly 7 million votes, more than anywhere in America, and Glen Murdoch couldn't get his ballot in fast enough after becoming a U.S. citizen this summer.

"I was champing at the bit," said Murdoch, who moved to Austin from Australia shortly after President Donald Trump took office, and cast a ballot last week to vote him out.

It's a rush to the polls in Texas like seldom seen before.

Ten days before Election Day, Texans have already cast as many early votes as they did in 2016 and are nearly 80% of the way toward hitting the total — both early and on Election Day — counted four years ago. The voting bonanza has some Democrats optimistic that decades of low turnout and undisputed Republican dominance may soon be a thing of the past.

But what that it all means for Texas is far from clear. Voters don't register by party in the state, making it difficult to know which party or presidential candidate has an edge. Polls are unusually close in Texas, but neither President Donald Trump or Democrat Joe Biden has swung through Texas, focusing on clear battleground states instead like Arizona and Florida.

The striking numbers are across the board — in big cities that are solidly Democrat, in tipping-point suburbs where Republicans are losing ground and, to a lesser extent, in heavily Latino counties along the border. In Harris County, home to Houston, more than 1 million votes have already been cast.

Democrats have long believed a breakthrough was only a matter of rousing millions of nonvoters, particularly within the state's booming Latino population. Roughly 50% of voters currently registered to vote in Texas have never voted or vote infrequently, according to the voter information firm L2.

A turnout surge could come with major political consequences. Democrats believe they have a shot at winning control of the statehouse, a half-dozen competitive U.S. House races and a Senate seat, not to mention 38 electoral votes that could seal the deal for Biden.

Republicans say Democrats are getting way ahead of themselves as usual, but are also clear-eyed that the final turnout will likely be historic.

Derek Ryan, a GOP data analyst, predicted this week that Texas turnout would likely surpass 12 million, or roughly 3 million more voters than 2016 — more than the population of neighboring New Mexico.

"It's hard to say, 'Yes, if we reach 12 million then Democrats win,' because you never know," said Abhi Rahman, a spokesman for the Texas Democratic Party. "But on balance, yes, if we reach 12 million voters we'll win this election."

Republicans don't buy it. In Austin's fast-growing suburbs, Williamson County went for Trump by 9 percentage points four years ago. GOP county chairman Steve Armbruster said most of the county's nearly 370,000 registered voters now have no recent primary history. He feels confident the GOP will win a good chunk of them.

"I haven't seen any kind of support or excitement or enthusiasm on the Democrat side," Armbruster said after returning from a local Trump rally Saturday.

The surge has unfolded at a moment when cases of the novel coronavirus, blamed for more than 17,000 deaths in Texas, are rising again and a wave of lawsuits over voting rules continue. Whereas the vast majority of states are allowing widespread mail-in voting because of coronavirus fears, Texas is only one of five that refused, choosing instead to expand early voting by one week. That extended period helps explain Texas' huge numbers so far with still a week of early voting to go. With most voters ineligible to submit ballots by mail, the outcome in Texas may be revealed sooner than other states on Election Night.

"We know from 2018 there at least a half-million people that don't mind switching back and forth between parties as they go down the ballot. And that's a significant number," said Steve Munisteri, a GOP strategist and adviser to Republican Sen. John Cornyn, who is in a close reelection battle against Democrat MJ Hegar.

More than 56 million voters have already cast their ballot across the country, and election experts are suggesting that as many as 150 million Americans may vote.

In Texas, the focus is on suburbs where Democrats made significant inroads in 2018. A major battleground is Collin County, outside Dallas, which has more than 1 million residents and backed Trump by

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17 percentage points in 2016. Two years later, Democratic congressman Beto O'Rourke came within 5 percentage points of winning the booming county during his close but failed U.S. Senate run.

More than half of the county's voters have already gone to the polls, the highest rate in Texas. The same is true in neighboring Denton County, another traditional GOP stronghold. On Saturday, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott made a second campaign swing this week through the North Texas area that will be decisive in whether Democrats claim a majority in the Texas House for the first time in 20 years.

In heavily Latino counties along the border, turnout has not been as high as elsewhere. In Hidalgo County, the percentage of registered voters who've already cast a ballot is slightly down from the same point four years ago.

In Houston, Bob Bailey cast his vote early for Trump with only the economy in mind. He hadn't cut his shaggy hair in months, but what worried him most about the pandemic was his job at a gymnastics center. Half his co-workers — roughly two dozen people — have been laid off, and he said the business is only breaking even since reopening.

"My job, everybody's job," said Bailey, 60, ticking off his worries outside one of the more than 100 early voting centers around Houston, which is three times as many as a normal election year. "We're not making a lot of money."

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/>

Murkowski's nod gives Barrett extra boost for Supreme Court

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett won crucial backing Saturday when one of the last Republican holdouts against filling the seat during an election season announced support for President Donald Trump's pick ahead of a confirmation vote expected Monday.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, declared her support during a rare weekend Senate session as Republicans race to confirm Barrett before Election Day. Senators are set Sunday to push ahead, despite Democratic objections that the winner of the White House on Nov. 3 should make the choice to fill the seat of the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Barrett's nomination already appeared to have enough votes for confirmation from Senate Republicans who hold the majority in the chamber. But Murkowski's nod gives her a boost of support. Only one Republican, Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, is now expected to vote against the conservative judge.

"While I oppose the process that has led us to this point, I do not hold it against her," Murkowski said.

The fast-track confirmation process is like none other in U.S. history so close to a presidential election. Calling it a "sham," Democrats mounted procedural hurdles to slow it down. But the minority party has no realistic chance of stopping Barrett's confirmation, which is set to lock a 6-3 conservative court majority for years to come.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., noted the political rancor, but defended his handling of the process.

"Our recent debates have been heated, but curiously talk of Judge Barrett's actual credentials or qualifications are hardly featured," McConnell said. He called her one of the most "impressive" nominees for public office "in a generation."

Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York warned Republicans the only way to remove the "stain" of their action would be to "withdraw the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett until after the election."

With the nation experiencing a surge of COVID-19 cases, Democrats made several unsuccessful attempts to force the Senate to set aside the judicial fight Saturday and instead consider coronavirus relief legislation, including the House-passed Heroes Act that would pump money into schools, hospitals and jobless benefits and provide other aid.

Majority Republicans turned aside those efforts and kept Barrett's confirmation on track.

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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.

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.

Murkowski noted she doesn't believe moving forward a week before "a pitched presidential election — when partisan tensions are running about as high as they could — I don't think this will help our country become a better version of itself."

But she said, "I've lost that procedural fight." She said she will vote against the procedural steps in the days ahead, but ultimately join Republicans in confirming Barrett.

Collins, who faces a tight reelection in Maine, is now the only Republican who has said she won't vote for the nominee so close to the election.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, 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.

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.

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.

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

Reid says Biden should end Senate filibuster after 3 weeks

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Senate leader Harry Reid says if Democrats win the presidency and the Senate, Joe Biden should take "no more than three weeks" to test bipartisanship before ending the filibuster so Democrats can overcome what they call Republican obstruction and pass bills.

The retired Nevada Democrat told The Associated Press in an interview that he understands Biden wants to work with Republicans, as the former vice president and Delaware senator has in the past. But Reid said there is just too much that needs to be done in the country to wait around trying to reach agreements under the decades-old Senate practice of requiring 60 votes to advance legislation.

"Biden — who wants always to get along with people — I understand that," Reid said by telephone from Nevada.

"We should give the Republicans a little bit of time, to see if they're going to work with him," he said. "But the time's going to come when he's going to have to move in and get rid of the filibuster."

Asked how long Biden should wait it out before changing the rules, Reid said: "No more than three weeks."

The 80-year-old Reid, who retired in 2017, has been among the most high-level political voices in favor of ending the 60-vote threshold for legislation. Critics of the filibuster argue it has outlived its purpose in

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the partisan era and only serves to grind business to a halt.

From afar, the onetime majority leader has made his views known before but rarely has he suggested a deadline for action. It is both a warning sign and road map for senators contemplating a 2021 agenda with a potentially new power dynamic in Washington after the election.

The 100-member Senate, where Republicans now hold a 53-47 edge, is expected to remain narrowly divided after the Nov. 3 election, regardless of which party wins control, making the 60-vote tally tough to reach.

Reid said if Biden thinks he can cut bipartisan deals with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the GOP leader, as they did in earlier years, "more power to him."

But Reid warned that he knows McConnell better than any other Democratic and "Joe ought to be very careful."

This is well-traveled terrain for the long-serving former senator, who helped sparked today's procedural battles by partially ending the filibuster when Democrats had the majority. The rules change that Reid engineered allowed Democrats to confirm President Barack Obama's administrative and most federal judicial nominees despite Republicans roadblocks.

When Republicans took control, McConnell pushed it to the next level with President Donald Trump, eliminating the filibuster for Supreme Court picks — a daring move that stunned Washington. McConnell's critics say he is breaking the Senate, but Trump has been able to seat two Supreme Court justices on majority-only votes, and the Senate is poised to confirm a third, Amy Coney Barrett, on Monday.

The filibuster has been in place since the early 20th century, but is absent from the Constitution. Its supporters say it keeps the Senate from becoming just another version of the House, with majority rule. The higher vote threshold forces the parties to slow down and find bipartisan compromise.

But critics say the filibuster has become a recipe for legislative paralysis, empowering a minority of senators to thwart popular public opinion. They note it has been used to stall some of the nation's most landmark laws, notably civil rights legislation.

Obama has since joined the effort for change. During the funeral this year for Rep. John Lewis, a civil rights leader, Obama announced his support for ending the filibuster, calling it a Jim Crow-era relic that was used to stall voting advances for Black people.

"That's true," said Reid, who was majority leader during Obama's first term and helped pass the Affordable Care Act and other landmark legislation. "Once he did that, of course I let him know I appreciated it."

Reid's influence continues to be felt across Democratic political landscape, in ways large and small. He talks often to Biden and regularly keeps in touch with others, including Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York— and even some Republicans.

Reid suggests that Democrats are unwilling to sit by and allow Republicans to potentially block their agenda.

"We want to get something done," he said, mentioning climate change and renewable energy investment as an example. "There's so much more to do and we can't do it if it takes 60 votes to get it done."

Facebook demands academics disable ad-targeting data tool

By FRANK BAJAK AP Technology Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Academics, journalists and First Amendment lawyers are rallying behind New York University researchers in a showdown with Facebook over its demand that they halt the collection of data showing who is being micro-targeted by political ads on the world's dominant social media platform.

The researchers say the disputed tool is vital to understanding how Facebook has been used as a conduit for disinformation and manipulation.

In an Oct. 16 letter to the researchers, a Facebook executive demanded they disable a special plug-in for Chrome and Firefox browsers used by 6,500 volunteers across the United States and delete the data obtained. The plug-in lets researchers see which ads are shown to each volunteer; Facebook lets advertisers tailor ads based on specific demographics that go far beyond race, age, gender and political preference.

The executive, Allison Hendrix, said the tool violates Facebook rules prohibiting automated bulk collec-

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tion of data from the site. Her letter threatened "additional enforcement action" if the takedown was not effected by Nov. 30.

Company spokesman Joe Osborne said in an emailed statement Saturday that Facebook "informed NYU months ago that moving forward with a project to scrape people's Facebook information would violate our terms." The company has long claimed protecting user privacy is its main concern, though NYU researchers say their tool is programmed so the data collected from participating volunteers is anonymous.

The outcry over Facebook's threat was immediate after The Wall Street Journal first reported the news Friday considering the valuable insights the "Ad Observer" tool provides. It has been used since its September launch by local reporters from Wisconsin to Utah to Florida to write about the Nov. 3 presidential election.

"That Facebook is trying to shut down a tool crucial to exposing disinformation in the run up to one of the most consequential elections in U.S. history is alarming," said Ramya Krishnan, an attorney with the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, which is representing the researchers. "The public has a right to know what political ads are being run and how they are being targeted. Facebook shouldn't be allowed to be the gatekeeper to information necessary to safeguard our democracy."

"The NYU Ad Observatory is the only window researchers have to see microtargeting information about political ads on Facebook," Julia Angwin, editor of the data-centric investigative tech news website The Markup, tweet in disappointment.

The tool lets researchers see how some Facebook advertisers use data gathered by the company to profile citizens "and send them misinformation about candidates and policies that are designed to influence or even suppress their vote," Damon McCoy, an NYU professor involved in the project, said in a statement.

After an uproar over its lack of transparency on political ads Facebook ran ahead of the 2016 election, a sharp contrast to how ads are regulated on traditional media, the company created an ad archive that includes details such as who paid for an ad and when it ran. But Facebook does not share information about who gets served the ad.

The company has resisted allowing researchers access to the platform, where right-wing content has consistently been trending in recent weeks. Last year, more than 200 researchers signed a letter to Facebook calling on it to lift restrictions on public-interest research and journalism that would permit automated digital collection of data from the platform.

Beyond the Needle: 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.

There's no sign that the Needle will be making a reappearance on Nov. 3, which would be 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

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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 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 or any other editor available for an interview, so the Needle's fate is shrouded in some mystery. Times media writer Ben Smith quoted a top editor in August as saying the paper was looking at a "range of tools" as alternatives to what Smith described as "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.

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

This story has been corrected to show that comments about alternatives to the Needle were in an August column, not a blog post last week, and that Times editors have stopped short of confirming the Needle will not return for the election.

Crews vacuum 'murder hornets' out of Washington nest

BLAINE, Wash. (AP) — Heavily protected crews in Washington state worked Saturday to destroy the first nest of so-called murder hornets discovered in the United States.

The state Agriculture Department had 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.

The nest found in the city of Blaine near the Canadian border is about the size of a basketball and contained an estimated 100 to 200 hornets, according to scientists who announced the find Friday.

Crews wearing thick protective suits vacuumed the invasive insects from the cavity of a tree into large canisters Saturday. The suits prevent the hornets' 6-millimeter-long stingers from hurting workers, who also wore face shields because the trapped hornets can spit a painful venom into their eyes.

The tree will be cut down to extract newborn hornets and learn if any queens have left the hive already, scientists said. Officials suspect more nests may be in the area and will keep searching. A news briefing was planned Monday on the status of the nest.

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.

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.

The nest was found after the state Agriculture Department trapped some hornets this week and used dental floss to attach radio trackers to some of them.

Boat parades, road rallies buoy Trump and his supporters

By JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — When a flotilla of pontoon and fishing boats decked out with "Trump 2020" flags cruised past him this summer, Dale Fullenkamp got an idea.

"I figured I don't have a boat, but I do have a tractor," he said.

Soon he was leading nearly 300 combines and tractors pulling hay wagons and manure spreaders through the western Ohio village of Fort Recovery, one of many parades nationwide organized by a swell of grassroots supporters for President Donald Trump.

"I've never done anything like this before," said Fullenkamp, a 19-year-old who graduated from high school just last spring. "I thought it'd be just me and my buddies."

These Trump parades — whether by boat, pickup truck or tractor — have become a show of strength for the president's supporters and a way to make themselves visible in a year when the coronavirus pandemic has upended traditional campaigning and put a stop to huge arena rallies and picnic fundraisers.

Thousands of cars, minivans and motorcycles on Saturday jammed the interstate circling Cincinnati and many more road rallies were held around the U.S. Another dozen are on tap for the campaign's final

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week in Ohio alone.

Campaign strategists and analysts say the parades are a reflection of the president's populist appeal, but they have varying thoughts on whether they will help his chances of winning.

Some think they're revealing an underestimated amount of enthusiasm for the president and buoying his fans in the face of polls showing him trailing in many battleground states, while others dismiss the parades as window dressing.

"They are enthusiastic in ways I haven't seen," said Pennsylvania-based Republican political strategist Charles Gerow. "These are people who feel they haven't been taken seriously, and they want to make a strong and visible statement."

Trump campaign officials say they've had almost no involvement in the parades, but they gleefully point out that their Democratic opponents aren't seeing the same groundswell when it comes to parades for Joe Biden — much like Trump himself likes to mock and contrast the size of his rallies with Biden's socially distanced gatherings.

Campaign field offices have seen that the parades are bringing in new volunteers to help with get-out-the-vote efforts, said Daniel Lusheck, a spokesman for the Trump campaign in Ohio.

"It's very organic in nature, but it's really driving the enthusiasm on the ground," he said.

Trump, too, has noticed, saying at a rally in Florida this summer that "nobody has seen anything like it, ever. And we have that in many other states with boaters and bikers and everybody."

Parades and marches in the streets have had a place in American politics since the nation's earliest days. Once a staple of campaigning in the 1800s, they eventually gave way to more effective ways of reaching the masses.

But campaigns big and small have been challenged to come up with anything clever this year because of the limitations imposed by the pandemic, said Brandon Scholz, a veteran GOP strategist in Wisconsin.

He thinks the parades are good for keeping Trump's core supporters engaged but doubts they're driving votes.

And they do get a lot of attention although it's not always positive — like the time in September when five boats sank during a Trump rally on a lake near Austin, Texas.

David Niven, a University of Cincinnati political scientist, agreed that the parades aren't about spreading the message as much as they are reassuring the president's backers with "a sea of Trump flags whether they're on the road or the river."

"If this were a normal election year we would have stadium rallies. There'd be so many different outlets for people to express themselves," he said. "In the world of COVID, it's bumper stickers, tweets and boat parades."

There's definitely a high school pep rally feel to the Trump parades, with participants flying their colors and chanting in unison.

In eastern Tennessee, spectators in mid-October lined a 4-mile stretch of road through the town of Rutledge to cheer dozens of tractors, antique cars, motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles decorated with flags and banners celebrating the conservative cause.

"It was bigger than any Christmas parade we ever had," said Mike Cameron, Grainger County's GOP chairman. "And that's the biggest thing that happens in Rutledge."

Biden's supporters have countered with a few car rallies of their own, but his campaign has stayed away from such events to avoid spreading the virus, running an almost entirely virtual strategy of reaching voters. The difference has been notable to Trump's fans who are hosting and attending the parades.

"It's really got to deject the other side," said Blaise Greco, who organized a Trump parade near Hazleton, Pennsylvania, that drew more than 400 cars and motorcycles in early October. "Where's their enthusiasm? Where's their flags? Where's their cars?"

Attack in Kabul kills 18; al-Qaida leader killed in Ghazni

By TAMEEM AKHGAR Associated Press

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KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The death toll from the suicide attack Saturday in Afghanistan's capital has risen to at least 18 killed and 57 people wounded, including students, the interior ministry said.

Afghan security officials separately announced on Saturday that a senior al-Qaida commander had been killed in a recent operation in the country's east.

Saturday's explosion in the capital struck outside an education center in a heavily Shiite neighborhood of western Kabul, Dasht-e-Barchi.

Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian says that the attacker was trying to enter the center when he was stopped by security guards.

According to Arian, the casualty toll may rise further as family members of victims of the suicide bombing are still searching the several different hospitals where the wounded have been taken.

No group claimed immediate responsibility for the bombing. The Taliban rejected any connection with the attack.

An Islamic State affiliate claimed responsibility for a similar suicide attack at an education center in August 2018, in which 34 students were killed. Within Afghanistan, IS has launched large-scale attacks on minority Shiites, Sikhs and Hindus, whom it views as apostates.

Hundreds of Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan fled the country in September after a gunman loyal to the militant group killed 25 members of the shrinking community in an attack on their share a place of worship in Kabul.

Meanwhile, the Afghan intelligence service said in a tweet that special forces killed al-Qaida's number two commander for the Indian sub-continent, Abu Muhsin al-Masri, in a recent operation in eastern Ghazni. The National Directorate of Security did not immediately share more details about the operation.

Al-Masri was listed among the most wanted terrorists by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2018.

The U.S. signed a peace deal with the Taliban in February, opening up a path toward withdrawing American troops from the conflict. U.S. officials said the deal also aimed refocus security efforts on fighting the Islamic State, which is a rival of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

There has been an upsurge in violence between Taliban and Afghan forces in the country recently, even as representatives from the two warring sides begin their own peace talks in Doha to end the decades-long war in Afghanistan.

Earlier Saturday a roadside bomb killed nine people in eastern Afghanistan after it struck a minivan full of civilians, a local official said.

Ghazni province police spokesman Ahmad Khan Sirat said that a second roadside bomb killed two policemen, after it struck their vehicle that was making its way to the victims of the first explosion.

Sirat added that the bombings had wounded several others, and that the attacks were under investigation.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks. The provincial police spokesman claimed the Taliban had placed the bomb.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Oct. 25, the 299th day of 2020. There are 67 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 25, 1910, "America the Beautiful," with words by Katharine Lee Bates and music by Samuel A. Ward, was first published.

On this date:

In 1760, Britain's King George III succeeded his late grandfather, George II.

In 1854, the "Charge of the Light Brigade" took place during the Crimean War as an English brigade of more than 600 men charged the Russian army, suffering heavy losses.

In 1881, artist Pablo Picasso was born in Malaga, Spain.

In 1957, mob boss Albert Anastasia of "Murder Inc." notoriety was shot to death by masked gunmen in

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a barber shop inside the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York.

In 1962, American author John Steinbeck was named winner of the Nobel Prize in literature.

In 1971, the U.N. General Assembly voted to admit mainland China and expel Taiwan.

In 1983, a U.S.-led force invaded Grenada (greh-NAY'-duh) at the order of President Ronald Reagan, who said the action was needed to protect U.S. citizens there.

In 1986, in Game 6 of the World Series, the New York Mets rallied for three runs with two outs in the 10th inning, defeating the Boston Red Sox 6-5 and forcing a seventh game; the tie-breaking run scored on Boston first baseman Bill Buckner's error on Mookie Wilson's slow grounder. (The Mets went on to win the Series.)

In 1994, Susan Smith of Union, South Carolina, claimed that a Black carjacker had driven off with her two young sons (Smith later confessed to drowning the children in John D. Long Lake, and was convicted of murder). Three defendants were convicted in South Africa of murdering American exchange student Amy Biehl. (In 1998, all three were granted amnesty by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.)

In 1999, golfer Payne Stewart and five others were killed when their Learjet flew uncontrolled for four hours before crashing in South Dakota; Stewart was 42.

In 2002, U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone, D-Minn., was killed in a plane crash in northern Minnesota along with his wife, daughter and five others, a week and a-half before the election. Actor Richard Harris died in London at age 72.

In 2014, the World Health Organization said more than 10,000 people had been infected with Ebola and that nearly half of them had died as the outbreak continued to spread. Jack Bruce, 71, the bassist and lead vocalist of the 1960s power trio Cream, died in London.

Ten years ago: Afghan President Hamid Karzai (HAH'-mihd KAHR'-ze) acknowledged receiving millions of dollars in cash from Iran, adding that Washington was giving him "bags of money" as well because his office lacked funds. In Indonesia, an earthquake triggered a tsunami off western Sumatra that killed hundreds and destroyed homes, mosques and other buildings.

Five years ago: Declaring that "today is a time of mercy," Pope Francis closed a historic meeting of bishops that approved an important new direction in welcoming divorced and civilly remarried Catholics into the church. Six people were killed when a Canadian whale-watching boat capsized off Vancouver Island. Flip Saunders, 60, who rose from the backwaters of basketball's minor leagues to become one of the most powerful men in the NBA as coach, team president and part owner of the Minnesota Timberwolves, died in Minneapolis.

One year ago: A 40-day strike that crippled General Motors' U.S. production came to an end as workers approved a new contract. Maria Butina, a Russian woman convicted in the United States of being a Russian agent, was deported to her home country after serving a prison sentence; the gun-rights activist had sought to infiltrate conservative U.S. political groups and promote Russia's agenda around the time Donald Trump rose to power. The Pentagon awarded Microsoft a \$10 billion cloud computing contract, snubbing early front-runner Amazon, whose competitive bid had drawn criticisms from President Donald Trump. (The start of the work was delayed as Amazon challenged the bidding process as flawed.) The Houston Astros won Game 3 of the World Series, the first to be played in Washington, D.C. in 86 years. Actor Felicity Huffman was released from a federal prison in California two days before the end of her two-week sentence for her role in the college admissions scandal.

Today's Birthdays: Former American League president Dr. Bobby Brown is 96. Actor Marion Ross is 92. Basketball Hall of Famer Bob Knight is 80. Author Anne Tyler is 79. Rock singer Jon Anderson (Yes) is 76. Political strategist James Carville is 76. Singer Taffy Nivert (Starland Vocal Band) is 76. Rock musician Glenn Tipton (Judas Priest) is 73. Actor Brian Kerwin is 71. Actor Mark L. Taylor is 70. Movie director Julian Schnabel is 69. Rock musician Matthias Jabs is 64. Actress Nancy Cartwright (TV: "The Simpsons") is 63. Country singer Mark Miller (Sawyer Brown) is 62. Rock musician Chad Smith (Red Hot Chili Peppers; Chickenfoot) is 59. Actor Tracy Nelson is 57. Actor Michael Boatman is 56. Actor Kevin Michael Richardson is 56. Actor Mathieu Amalric is 55. Singer Speech is 52. Actor-comedian-TV host Samantha Bee is 51. Actor

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Adam Goldberg is 50. Actor-singer Adam Pascal is 50. Rock musician Ed Robertson (Barenaked Ladies) is 50. Actor Persia White is 50. Country singer Chely (SHEL'-ee) Wright is 50. Actor Leslie Grossman is 49. Violinist Midori is 49. Actor Craig Robinson is 49. Actor Michael Weston is 47. Actor Zachary Knighton is 42. Actor Mariana Klaveno is 41. Actor Mehcad (muh-KAD') Brooks is 40. Actor Ben Gould is 40. Actor Josh Henderson is 39. Rhythm-and-blues singer Young Rome is 39. Pop singer Katy Perry is 36. Rock singer Austin Winkler is 36. Singer Ciara is 35. Actor Krista Marie Yu (TV: "Dr. Ken") is 32. Actor Rachel Matthews is 27. Actor Conchita Campbell is 25.