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OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

#248 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

We're back to the big numbers today. We're at 8,928,200 cases, on target to hit nine million tomorrow if we have another day like today. There were 80,200 new cases reported today, a 0.9% increase. This was only our 4th-worst day in this pandemic, and all but seven states, the District of Columbia, and three territories show at least escalating spread. None show declining new-case numbers. We have passed the summer's peak, and our seven-day new-case average has increased 41% in the past two weeks; today it set a record. Dr. Jessica Justman, associate professor of medicine in epidemiology at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, says, "The trend line looks quite vertical. It looks like this third surge is on track to be higher than the one in late July. It's a lot of states that have very brisk rises in their cases."

Most of the increase is still being driven by the middle of the country—Upper Midwest and Mountain West. North Dakota and South Dakota lead the nation in per capita new-case numbers, followed by Wisconsin and Montana. The rate of infections in rural areas is at record levels, close to double what we're seeing in metro areas. Ohio has set a record for seven-day new-case average for 18 days running. We are seeing growth in other regions too. Daily infections have risen by 41% in the West and 48% in the Northeast in the past two weeks.

More than half of states (27) are at or near record new-infection numbers in the past week, and more than a half-million cases were reported in the past week. The number of people hospitalized for the virus has increased 46% from a month ago and stands at more than 45,000 today. We're starting from a higher baseline, and so the experts pretty much agree this next peak will be higher and last longer than anything we've seen yet. There's a lot more virus in a lot more communities; people are being a lot less careful; and they're starting to spend a lot more time indoors. These factors are all problems for us. With a more widespread outbreak this time, there's going to be less flexibility in the health care system to move patients around a cases surge and capacity is strained because everywhere's going to be in a similarly difficult situation. Some experts are predicting we're going to have to go to a "crisis standard of care," where care is rationed favoring those with a higher chance of survival. We are not yet, however, in a place where there's nothing we can do to prevent some of these outcomes. Dr. Bruce Siegel, president of America's Essential Hospitals, says, "We still have some weeks where we could change this picture, where we can blunt it." You already know what he recommends we do: wear masks, socially distance, limit crowds in public and indoor settings. That part is not rocket science.

There were 1037 deaths reported today, a 0.5% increase. We've lost 227,667 lives to the pandemic to this point. So far, death rates have stayed below the spring and summer numbers; while improvements in clinical care have kept them lower and likely will continue to blunt their rise, it is likely these are going to increase following the swelling case numbers we've been seeing. Deaths lag new cases, but they can't be put off forever.

I've been reading analysis of the outbreaks in North and South Dakota. Of course, living in one of these states, I have what you might call a special interest in the South Dakota portion of this program; but they are also of wider interest because for several weeks they have been the site of what is, per capita, the worst outbreak in the country—not just the worst at the moment, but the worst in the entire pandemic. Remember New York and New Jersey at the height of the spring wave, how we all watched in horrified fascination as that disaster rolled over them? Well, we're worse off today. To date, their total per capita case rate is in the neighborhood of 2500-2600 per 100,000 residents; the Dakotas' total per capita rate is 4600-5000/100,000. This means that, despite a slow start, we have managed to catch up and sprint past both of these worst-ever outbreaks that happened back in the early days when we didn't understand how this was transmitted or what we could do to stop it. We don't have that excuse any longer. I'll add that no other state has a per capita rate over 4000, even today.

In the past week, the country overall has averaged daily new cases at 22/100,000. South Dakota has 95 and North Dakota, the first state to pass 100, is at 105. This is not an artifact of more testing; North Dakota's testing average actually fell in the past week; South Dakota's increased, but by about half as

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much as the new cases did. Something that's not sensitive to the number of tests performed is hospitalizations, and those are increasing as well. Death rate is also not sensitive to testing rates, and we also have the nation's highest and second-highest per capita death rates in the past week. Another indication our problem isn't simply that we're doing a lot more tests is our test positivity rate. Here's a category where South Dakota finally moves out ahead of North Dakota with a quite astonishing seven-day average 40% positivity rate. North Dakota, by comparison, is in putz territory with 11%, still well over the benchmark 5% or the 3% that indicates you're getting things under control. When positivity rate, the percentage of individuals tested who test positive, is high, this is an indication testing is missing a lot of cases and the outbreak in the state is worse than the official figures indicate. South Dakota's positivity rate has been above 5% for 94 days running and above 20% for almost three weeks. There's no sign things are really looking up either; today's positivity rate was 59.6%, we set a new-case record (again!) today, and currently, 1.4% of all South Dakotans are active cases. It's bad here.

You would, however, not guess this walking around your average North Dakota or South Dakota town. COVIDcast, a project from Carnegie Mellon University that track data shows these two states have some of the lowest levels in the US (ranking 49th and 50th among states) for both masking and social distancing and are also among the most likely to leave their homes every day. A large proportion of shoppers in the stores are not wearing masks. Restaurants and bars are doing a brisk business. High school sporting events continue apace. Schools and businesses and public gatherings are, for the most part, not showing much evidence of awareness there even is a coronavirus drifting about. A few places—colleges and universities, some (but very few) businesses, the occasional church—are requiring masks and distancing, but not so much overall.

So what went wrong here? These are states which didn't get hit until months after other states, so there was time to educate our citizens, time to work out a mitigation plan, time to prepare our public health system, time to stockpile PPE for health care workers, time for the health care system to make plans, and importantly, the benefit of knowing in advance all the things other states learned the hard way before us. We also have very low population density and low amounts of travel into and out of the states, both of which help to inhibit transmission. And yet, with all of those built-in advantages, here we are.

I mentioned one factor above—the failure of the population to get serious about preventing transmission. Neither state ever fully shut down; there were no stay-at-home orders. Bars, restaurants, gyms, festivals, fairs, celebrations, rodeos, motorcycle rallies, fireworks extravaganzas over Mouth Rushmore all proceeded as though no one had ever heard of a coronavirus, mostly without social distancing or masking or any precautions, really, at all. Mask requirements are few and far between, enacted by a city here or a business there, but nothing state-wide or even region-wide. I have heard numerous reports of mask-wearing people being harassed in public by folks calling them ugly names, even acting in a threatening manner. Most of the public does not see this virus as a major threat. A public official in one of our cities said in a public meeting about old people dying from this virus, "Well, they were going to die anyway." I don't expect this to change until more of us have a friend or family member or ourselves sick, in the hospital, dying. Because we can't, apparently, be bothered to care about something that is only hurting other people. Paul Carson, infectious disease expert at North Dakota State University, warned, "I fear we won't see behavioral changes until people have been personally affected, or can't get medical care because our hospitals are being overrun—which may not be too far off." That's pretty much what I've been thinking, but I'm not the expert. Now you have it from someone who is.

Further, now it's cold outside, so there will be no more picnics in the park, backyard barbecues, or outdoor gatherings. Those things are likely to move indoors—with the windows closed. School's in session. Sports have moved from outdoor baseball and soccer to close-contact basketball and wrestling in packed gyms. The holidays are coming with their family parties. Flu season's getting underway. So there are a lot of indications things aren't getting better soon.

Here's the problem: Once you have the kind of momentum we do, it is incredibly difficult to drag this thing to a halt. If we went all-out now, a highly unlikely event, it would likely take weeks at best, months

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at worst, to slow it down. It looks very much as though we don't have the public will to take measures for mitigation, the resources to test adequately, or the public health structure or funding to contact-trace our way out of this. And so far we have not exhibited much interest in trying. Living here as I do, I find this most disquieting.

A new excess deaths report has been released by the CDC. You may recall from our earlier conversations that excess deaths is a concept that enables more accurate assessment of deaths caused by an event like a natural disaster or a pandemic. The basic principle is that you look at the number of deaths which occurred over the past (usually) five years during the same time period as the event under study. These are averaged and adjusted for things like population growth and background trends to give us a number called expected deaths. Then you can compare actual deaths reported during the event to the expected number. Deaths in excess of the expected number are what we call excess deaths. (If you've recently joined us and want more reading on the subject, check out my Update #79 posted on May 12 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3587274557955591>, #101 posted June 3 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3649991181683928>, and #136 posted on July 8 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3753580371325008>. In them you will find expanded explanations of the concept, examples, and numbers from various points in the pandemic.)

This new excess deaths study, like one in my July 8 Update linked above, is particularly interesting for its look at the excess deaths not directly caused by this virus, but which would not have occurred if not for the pandemic. There were nearly 100,000 of these. In addition to those, some takeaways include that the biggest percentage in excess deaths occurred in adults ages 25 to 44, where there was a 26.5% increase while there was only a 14.4% increase in over-85s. Now, the percentages look worse than the situation is in terms of raw numbers because, in normal times, there aren't very many deaths among 25- to 44-year-olds compared to over-85s. That means it doesn't take a huge number of additional deaths to drive a hefty percentage increase. Let's say, for example, that in a normal August in the fictional country of Pandemia, there are 100 deaths in this younger age group and 2100 deaths in the older group; that's around the ratio you'd see in normal times in the real country of the United States. So a 14.4% increase in over-85 deaths amounts to a hefty 302 additional deaths. That's a lot. But the 26.5% increase in the 25 to 44 group is only 26 people. Now, that doesn't mean we don't care about those 26 people, but the 302 is the kind of number that gets your attention. Another notable finding, one that isn't much of a surprise, is that excess deaths among Black and Hispanic people in all age groups were greater, showing increases of 33% and 54% respectively, whereas for white people it was just 12%.

I also looked at an interesting study of suicides during shutdowns; I will note here that this is available in preprint, which means the work has not yet been peer-reviewed. There has been an ongoing narrative that these shutdowns were going to be dangerous to people's mental health and drive up suicide rates; I've quoted someone or other offering that particular chestnut a few times myself. It seems self-evident that shutdowns would worsen mental health symptoms and lead to increased suicide rates. Good thing someone did the research because it appears the conventional wisdom wasn't so wise after all, at least the part about suicides. This study, conducted by researchers at Harvard and Yale Universities, looked at suicide rates during Massachusetts' long stay-at-home advisory back in the spring. Comparing suicide rates from March to May when the state was shut down with the same months in prior years and adjusting for background trends and the numbers of deaths still under investigation as possible suicides, the team found rates of suicide were pretty much unchanged throughout, neither increasing nor decreasing—just under one suicide a month per 100,000 people. Their conclusions stated, "Our data are reassuring that an increase in suicide deaths in Massachusetts during the stay-at-home advisory did not occur. Moving forward, effective prevention efforts will require comprehensive attention to the full spectrum of mental health services." Turns out even now, some news is good news.

I've been in a lot of jewelry stores over the years—I really like sparkly things—and so I have a pretty fair idea of the kinds of items you're going to find in them. That's why I thought it was unusual that a guy named Aaron Wiley went to a jewelry store and came home (sort of) with a new kidney. That is, he didn't actually get the kidney until a couple of months later, but it came from the jewelry store for sure.

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What happened was he went to Jennifer Pratt's business to get his wife's old necklace updated. He likes to buy his wife jewelry for every holiday, so he'd been in the place quite a lot over the years. Pratt is the jewelry designer, and so she met with the couple to discuss what they wanted done. She offered them a glass of water, and Wiley's wife said, "He can't have any more water—he's on dialysis and has to restrict his intake." Wiley had received a kidney from her in 2008, and all went well until 2017 when the kidney failed as his body rejected it. So he went back on dialysis and added his name to a waiting list with about 250,000 other people needing a kidney. He said, "I knew I'd be on that waiting list for five or six years. It was very discouraging."

He continued his work as an attorney, scheduling his travel around the dialysis schedule and had the four-hour treatments at night so they wouldn't interfere with his work. They had to give up things like taking vacations, but they were making the best of things while they waited. Then they walked into this jewelry store with a necklace and met Pratt.

Upon hearing about his restrictions, she asked a few questions and learned how long it takes to get a cadaver kidney. She thought about that and decided to go through the needed testing to determine whether she would be a match for him; if so, she wanted to donate. She said, "I went home and told my husband, 'I'm going to try and give Aaron my kidney.' We were living a peaceful life, drinking wine and enjoying the pool in our backyard, and Aaron was in dialysis three or four times a week. I thought, 'This is something I can do to fix that problem. I can make life better for him.'"

After all the screening and typing and counseling, when the donation and transplant were approved, it happened. On the morning of August 25 before their surgery, he told her he couldn't find the words to express his gratitude. That's OK; she figured it out. "He didn't have to say anything—I knew what it meant to him. I wasn't even nervous." And when she visited him in his room the morning after, "He looked so much better—there was color in his face." Pretty fast return on her investment, I'd say.

As they recover and wait out this pandemic, they both look forward to going out for a proper celebration. "Jennifer is proof that there truly are angels on Earth," Wiley's wife, Erleigh, said. "She's a person of action who never wavered. We'll never be able to thank her enough." I think we should all thank her. To borrow a phrase from Seth Meyers, the late-night comedian, this is the kind of story we need right now.

You certainly don't have to donate a kidney, but those of us who are enjoying a peaceful life, drinking a glass of wine in our cozy homes while others suffer might have a look around us to see whether there is somewhere we could stick in an oar to change the direction of things for someone who needs a hand. Jennifer Pratt said, "This is something I can do to fix that problem." We can all do that.

Take care. I'll see you tomorrow.

Tigers win 7 of 8 sets at Deuel

Groton Area's volleyball teams traveled to Clear Lake on Monday and came home with a 7-1 win over the Deuel Cardinals.

All matches were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, with varsity sponsors Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Mike Nehls for BC Commission, Bahr Spray Foam, Milbrandt Enterprises Inc. and S & S Lumber/Hardware Hank. The White House Inn sponsored the C and JV matches.

Groton Area won the C games, 25-15 and 25-20. Anna Fjeldheim had 11 ace serves and three kills; Lydia Meier had five kills and two ace serves; Emma Schinkel had four kills and three ace serves; Hollie Frost had two kills and a block, Elizabeth Fliehs had two kills, Marlee Tollifson had a kill and an ace serve and Carly Guthmiller had an ace serve.

The Tigers won the junior varsity games, 25-17 and 25-16. Stella Meier had six kills, two ace serves and a block; Aspen Johnson had six kills; Anna Fjeldheim had three kills and two ace serves; Riley Leicht had five ace serves; Megan Fliehs had three kills; Lydia Meier had two ace serves and a kill; Brooke Gengerke had an ace serve and Carly Guthmiller had two ace serves.

In the varsity match, Deuel won the first set, 25-19, but then the Tigers rallied to win the next three, 25-13, 25-15 and 25-22. The second set was tied eight times with seven lead changes before Groton Area scored seven straight points to take a 17-10 lead. Groton Area scored the last three points of the final set to come from behind to win that set.

Sydney Liecht had 13 kills and 14 digs, Madeline Fliehs had 10 kills and one block, Kenzie McInerney had seven kills and two blocks, Maddie Bjerke had eight kills, Jasmine Gengerke had five kills, Allyssa Thaler had three ace



Kenzie McInerney
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Madeline Fliehs
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

serves and 12 digs, Allyssa Locke had three kills, 32 assists and 12 digs and Trista Keith had two ace serves.

- Paul Kosel

Tigers end regular season with loss to Redfield

Groton Area's volleyball teams won four of seven sets in the regular season finale held Tuesday in Groton. The C team and junior varsity team defeated Redfield, 2-0, but lost the varsity match, 3-0.

All matches were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, with the JV/C matches sponsored by the White House Inn and the varsity match sponsored by Blocker Construction, Milbrandt Enterprises Inc., Bary Keith at Harr Motors and Grand Slam Computers.

In the C match, the first set was tied 13 times and there were eight lead changes before the Tigers pulled out a 28-26 win. Groton won the second set, 25-21. Anna Fjeldheim had eight kills and one ace serve; Emma Schinkel had four kills and four ace



Allyssa Locke

(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

serves, Lydia Meier had four kills, Hollie Frost and Elizabeth Fliehs each had two kills, Shallyn Foertsch had two ace serves and Marlee Tollifson had one ace serve.

The Tigers won the junior varsity match by identical game scores of 25-20. Sarah Schuster was a guest commentator on GDILIVE.COM for both the JV and varsity match.

Aspen Johnson had five kills and an ace serve, Stella Meier had five kills, Megan Fliehs had four kills, Anna Fjeldheim had two kills, an ace serve and a block, Lydia Meier had three kills and an ace serve, Riley Leicht had an ace serve and Brooke Gengerke had a kill.

Redfield won the varsity games, 25-20, 25-16 and 25-6. Sydney Leicht had five kills and an ace serve, Madeline Fliehs had four kills, a block and an ace serve, Kenzie McInerney had two kills and two blocks, Jasmine Gengerke and Allyssa Locke each had a kill and an ace serve and Maddie Bjerke had a kill.

The Tigers finish the regular season with a 6-14 record and will enter the regional action on Tuesday. The way it looks, Groton Area will travel to Sisseton for the first round match.

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- ✓ 30 year law enforcement veteran with city and county government experience
- ✓ Progressive thinker/ Conservative spender
- ✓ Common sense approach to solving issues



I pledge

- ✓ to put taxpayers first by no wasteful spending
- ✓ to increase transparency to taxpayers
- ✓ to maintain roads and bridges
- ✓ to the creation of a criminal justice task force addressing Meth, Opioid and other drug addictions

Your vote will be much appreciated!



Vote with an absentee ballot!



Representation from eastern Brown County is long overdue! (35 years)

Vote for Michael Nehls for Brown County Commission
(your vote **only** for Mike could make a difference)

Paid for by the committee to elect Mike Nehls to Brown County Commission



That's Life by Tony Bender

Who did you kill today?

You're killing me. I'm not saying it's intentional, but in the end, dead is dead. Many of you just don't get it. After seven months and 230,000 dead Americans, nearly four times as many as we lost in Vietnam, I still hear people say they won't wear a mask because they don't care if they die. Well, I don't care either, but I do care if you take my mother with you. Or my brother. Or me.

After all this time, and all this science, don't you understand that this deadly virus spreads even when people are asymptomatic? So when you walk into a store unmasked, you don't know who you might infect and in turn, who they might infect. You may never know who you've killed, but that doesn't make you any less culpable.

When you chose to gather recklessly in large groups you're showing indifference and disdain for your community. That's what you're advertising when you walk into public places without a mask. You're no hero.

If you're a CNA who goes bar-hopping with friends, you're playing Russian roulette with those you're supposed to care for. If you get sick, who are you bumping out of a hospital bed? A stroke or heart attack victim? A cancer patient? Think, people.

When you drag the virus into the workplace you're endangering your coworkers and the business. You bet this virus is killing our economy. Ignoring it isn't the answer. Facing reality and being smart is. Even if you care more about the economy than people's lives, the answer is the same. Wear a mask. The economy won't thrive if people lack confidence and fear for their safety.

I get it. What should be a simple matter of medical science has become a political dividing line because of the unconscionable lack of leadership in this country. Masks work, imperfectly, yes, but they do make a difference. They do save lives. Maybe yours. Maybe your grandmother's.

Still, even though North and South Dakota infection rates are the highest in the country and hospitals are filling up, our governors have failed to implement a mask mandate. It's political malpractice. We'll never know how many lives that will cost.

It's science. Medicine. Logic. Doctors and nurses wear masks because they work. If you have an infection, you take antibiotics. If you have a pandemic, you wear a mask until there's a vaccine. It will come, and this pandemic will pass, but in the meantime we have to patient and remember that our decisions have the potential to kill or save lives. There's not one of you reading this who wouldn't help a neighbor in need. That's what this is about. Your neighbors.

I wore a mask into the drug store recently—I was the only one in a mask except for the employees—and another customer opined that I must not have been "behaving" if I was wearing a mask. "No," I said, "I just want to respect those come in contact with. Plus, there's a sign on the door asking customers to wear masks." Seriously, you won't wear a mask to the pharmacy? Where do you think the sick people go?

I won't stigmatize those who get this virus. I know victims that were very careful. It's a sneaky, highly-infectious disease. I'm certainly not batting 1.000. But I'm trying. And I take no satisfaction from those who behave recklessly and get infected. Even if this virus doesn't kill you, it can devastate your organs and take years off your life.

Ironically, the most at risk to COVID-19 are the generations who sacrificed time and time again to build this nation, surviving depressions, recessions, and wars. There was rationing. Uncertainty. Hunger. Poverty. And your message to them? "Stay home, if you're scared, Grandpa." The grandpa that walked point in Vietnam. Or lost his buddies in Korea. No, Grandpa's not scared. He just knows there's a difference between stupidity and fearlessness. Guess which one describes you.

And wearing a mask is too much of a sacrifice for you, snowflake?

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While we're at it, let's put to rest this whole "freedom" argument. Abraham Lincoln is credited (among others) with saying, "Your liberty to swing your fist ends just where my nose begins." Please, let's just keep each other's germs out of our respective noses.

If you still don't want to wear a mask, fine. You stay home. You.

© Tony Bender, 2020

About Tony Bender

Columnist and publisher and author Tony Bender came to the print industry in 1991 "from the dark side," he says, referencing a career as a professional smart aleck disc jockey spanning 15 years and much of the continent from the Dakotas to Denver to Alaska to Myrtle Beach, SC, where he, newsman Robert Kessler and other staffers at WBPR, refused to evacuate for Hurricane Hugo and kept the station on the air by generator, providing the lone source of information to hundreds of thousands of terrified citizens along the coastline unable to evacuate in time.

Bender grew up in Frederick, SD, a tiny community on the North Dakota/South Dakota border, with a population of 400 that provided Bender with a "Tom Sawyer" existence that surfaces in his writing as he tells the tales of the characters he grew to love. The community and his experiences there serve as a springboard for his novel, *The Last Ghost Dancer*. (Thomas Dunne/St. Martins 2010)

Bender, who published three best-selling collections of his newspaper columns, *Loons in the Kitchen*, *The Great and Mighty Da-Da* and *Prairie Beat*, sold his first novel, *If Every Month Were June*, released in 2008 by Fulcrum Publishing.

Bender has also provided editorial direction to national syndicated radio talker Ed Schultz on his books, *Killer Politics*, *Hyperion*, *Straight Talk From the Heartland*, published by Harper Collins, and for Senator Byron Dorgan, D-ND, and his 2007 release, *Take This Job and Ship It*, by St. Martins Press, which spent five weeks on the New York Times Hardcover Nonfiction list. He and Dorgan also collaborated on Dorgan's book, "Reckless."

Bender says he always planned to write, when he was "too old to be cool on the radio." Bender began writing a regionally syndicated column in 1991 which since has won two National Newspaper Association first place awards for humor writing. In 1999 Bender won the first ever NDNA First Amendment Award, which he says is the one he treasures the most. The Adams County Record also won two NDNA General Excellence awards during his tenure. He is a former president of the North Dakota Newspaper Association.

He is the president of Redhead Publishing, the parent company of the *Ashley Tribune* and *Wishek Star*. Both newspapers are located in McIntosh County, North Dakota.

Bender has two children, Dylan and India. They also have two cats, Squirrel, The World's Grumpiest Cat and Orange, The Outside Cat, a dog, Gust The Wonder Pug, millipedes in the spring, crickets in the fall, and a recurring vet bill. They reside near Venturia, ND.

The Life of Doug Harms

The funeral service for Doug Harms, 81, of Groton, SD, was held Tuesday, October 27, 2020, at Groton Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, with Pastor Josh Jetto officiating. Burial at Sunset Memorial Gardens, Aberdeen. Doug died Thursday, October 22, at his home in Groton.

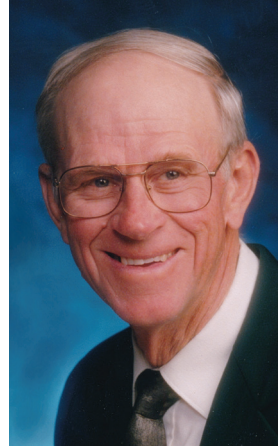
Douglas Harold Harms was born to Harold and Thelma (Bixler) Harms in Huron, SD, on November 17, 1938. He attended grade school in rural Spink County. Doug graduated from Hitchcock High School in 1956 without honors. He attended Miltonvale Wesleyan College one year and SDSU for three years, graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science.

On June 14, 1960, Doug was united in marriage to Arlis Miller in Brookings, SD. He worked for Geo A Hormel and Co. for 13 plus years as a hog buyer before returning to Arlis's family farm in 1973. Doug retired from farming in 2004.

Doug served on Groton Farmer's Elevator board for nine years, Wesleyan Church board 34 years, and Wesleyan Church District board for six years. Doug enjoyed spending time with his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, always intentionally giving them his full presence. His greatest concern was for future generations to know and grow in Jesus and marry godly mates.

Grateful for having shared Doug's life are his wife of 60 years, Arlis; two sons: Lowell (Marie) Harms, and Craig (Patty) Harms, all of Groton; ten grandchildren: Nichole (Seth) Rosenthal, Caleb (Krista) Harms, Arionna (Jeff) Carrillo, Logan Harms, Ryley, Bradley, and Bentley Harms, Micah (Marissa) Harms, Jacob (Nicole) Harms, and Ellie (Nathan) Sanborn; three great-grandchildren: Marshall Harms, Conagher Harms, and Miles Harms; one sister: Jan (Bob) FitzSimmons; and one brother: Lyle (Tina) Harms.

Preceding Doug in death are his parents, two grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, and a nephew, Curtis FitzSimmons.





S.D. election officials take new approaches to voting amid pandemic

By: Nick Lowrey and Bart Pfankuch

Editor's note: This article was produced through a partnership between South Dakota News Watch and the Solutions Journalism Network, a national non-profit group that supports rigorous journalism about responses to problems.

South Dakota election officials are taking a wide range of steps — and implementing some creative measures — to ensure easy access to voting and provide for an accurate ballot count during a time of unprecedented electoral challenges.

The 2020 general election is being held amid a deadly pandemic, is attracting record numbers of absentee and early votes and is drawing high voter turnout.

County election officials who run ground-level electoral operations in South Dakota have been working for months to manage early voting and prepare for safe, orderly in-person voting on Election Day on Nov. 3.

Many strategies have focused on processing absentee ballots, which by law cannot be counted until Election Day.

Election officials have recruited more poll workers as some older workers sought to avoid the risk of COVID-19. Some counties have formed absentee ballot review panels to sort and certify ballots and created new, absentee-only voting precincts to simplify the vote-counting process. Temporary ballot boxes have been installed in some areas so voters do not have to send in their ballots by mail. The state has also held several mock elections to test its voting systems and prepare county auditors for a long, busy Election Day.

Auditors have also found ingenious ways to overcome electoral challenges. One auditor held a voter education session through the windows of a nursing home to reach elderly voters who could not leave



Auditor Sue Ganje of Fall River County purchased this surplus military tent and is using it to host early voting and voter registration in a safe, socially distanced manner outside the cramped county courthouse, which was built in 1893. The tent is one example of how South Dakota elections officials have found unique solutions to challenges during an unprecedented election. Photo: Courtesy Fall River County Auditor's Office

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the facility. Another bought and erected a surplus military tent to create a safe, socially distanced early voting site. And a few auditors have taken advantage of a rarely used state law that allows high school students to get excused absences to fill in as temporary poll workers on Election Day.

As with any vote, the stakes are high, but may be higher this election, especially for those tasked with running them. Electoral processes, especially mail-in voting, have come under scrutiny by President Donald Trump. The U.S. Postal Service has battled to keep up with a nationwide flood of mail-in ballots. Record numbers of voters are casting absentee ballots, many for the first time. Some polling locations have been shut down due to the pandemic, and many in-person polling sites will be partially staffed with first-time workers and must focus on maintaining cleanliness and social distancing. Many South Dakota counties are using new ballot-counting machines and technology.

The number of polling locations in South Dakota will be down in 2020. The state had 508 polling sites during the 2016 general election, and as of mid-October, the state had only 474 polling sites secured for the 2020 general election at a time when voter turnout could be as high as 70%, according to Kea Warne, elections director in the Secretary of State's Office.

Warne, who has worked on South Dakota elections off and on since 1993, said preparing for the 2020 election has been challenging, but rewarding.

"Every election cycle brings its own challenges, but this cycle has definitely been unique in the challenges being faced by election officials," Warne said. "This has led to most likely the busiest election cycle I have been a part of."

In the 2020 general election, South Dakota voters can vote for president, seats in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House, a spot on the Public Utilities Commission, three statewide ballot measures on legalizing medical and recreation marijuana and sports betting in Deadwood, and numerous local legislative offices.

The chance for human or mechanical error is present in every election, and may be higher than normal during the 2020 election cycle. Voter errors on absentee ballots cast in the June primary election in South Dakota resulted in 1.4% of the ballots being rejected, about 1,200 of the roughly 88,000 cast. In the 2018 general election, only 307 of about 90,000 absentee ballots were rejected, and only 378 of about 102,000 absentee ballots cast in the 2016 general election were rejected.

Errors in processing of absentee ballots led to different final results in two primary races in South Dakota, with one mistake in Douglas County changing the reported outcome of a legislative election after a recount.

On Oct. 19, with more than two weeks to go before the Nov. 3 general election, 125,552 South Dakotans had returned absentee ballots to their county auditors, said Secretary of State Steve Barnett. Another 41,811 voters had requested absentee ballots but had not returned them, he said. In the 2016 general election, voters cast 102,390 absentee ballots.

The sharp rise in the number of absentee voters, especially first-time absentee voters, has some election experts worried that there could be a corresponding increase in human errors and honest mistakes by both election officials and voters.

Such errors and the aftermath could undermine public confidence in the electoral process when faith in the system is badly needed.

"I think one of the biggest concerns everybody should have is the degree to which people are going to make honest mistakes; voters and election officials alike," said Michael Hanmer, research director at the Center for Democracy and Civic Engagement at the University of Maryland. "These are human processes, and we know that we're going to make mistakes, and certainly, the risk goes up when we're doing something new."

Barnett said he is confident that South Dakota's election will be safe and accurate. County election officials learned a lot from the June primary election and have taken many steps to improve the voting process,



Steve Barnett

including preparing for early voting and tabulation of high numbers of absentee ballots, he said.

"We're looking forward to a good turnout on Election Day for this year and a safe and smooth election," Barnett said.

Barnett and Warne said they expect some long-term positive outcomes from the 2020 electoral process, including greater public interest in how elections are run, more involvement of young people either in voting or in helping run elections, and continued higher absentee voting which could increase turnout in the future.

"Efforts from local election officials have resulted in first-time poll workers, including younger workers," Warne said. "From the [high] absentee numbers, the pandemic has also led many of our voters to consider utilizing that method of voting, which I think may continue into the future."

Preparing for an unusual election cycle

By mid-October in Brookings County, about 4,700 absentee ballots had been cast, said county Election Supervisor Jenna Byrd. She expected to see more than 7,000 total absentee ballots returned by the Nov. 2 deadline. In 2016, Brookings County voters returned 4,654 absentee ballots.

To handle the extra workload, Byrd recruited 25 people solely to sort and certify absentee ballots. The new election workers will be split into eight, three-person boards and there will be one superintendent in charge of the operation. The boards will check that each signature on absentee envelopes and ballots match signatures on driver's licenses or that ballots have been notarized. They will also check to make sure the name on the ballot envelope is on the list of registered voters who requested and returned absentee ballots. Once certified, each ballot will be stamped and placed in a sealed ballot box until counted on Election Day.

Byrd said she is confident her absentee boards will handle the workload and deliver a fair and accurate result. "It's a well thought out process, we've got integrity here, and we do the best that we can," Byrd said.

Some county auditors are thinking outside the box to assist citizens in voting. In Hand County, Auditor Doug DeBoer came up with a unique solution to help residents vote at the two assisted-living facilities in the county seat of Miller. Both buildings were locked down due to the COVID-19 pandemic and were not allowing visitors inside, but their residents still wanted to vote.

State law allows auditors to temporarily set up an in-person early voting booth inside nursing homes or assisted-living centers in order to help seniors vote. But the pandemic-related lock downs meant DeBoer could not access either facility inside, leaving voting absentee by mail as the only option.

Voting absentee by mail is more complicated than voting in-person. First, a voter must apply for an absentee ballot and wait for it to arrive in the mail. The voter then has to fill out the ballot and sign a declaration saying the ballot is theirs. The ballot must then be notarized, or the voter can attach a copy of their driver's license to it. The voter then has to place the ballot in its official return envelope, sign the envelope and mail it back to the county auditor.

Any missed step or inconsistent signature can cause an absentee ballot to be rejected and go uncounted.

Under state law, ballots can be rejected for several reasons, including: multiple ballots in an envelope; no signature on a ballot envelope; a non-matching signature on the envelope or ballot; the ballot is not returned on time; the ballot was returned in an unofficial envelope without a signature; or because the voter died before election day.

The South Dakota Secretary of State's Office does not track the reasons why poll workers reject ballots, said Rachel Soulek, the Help America Vote Act coordinator for the office. In the past, most ballots were rejected because they are not returned by 5 p.m. the day before an election, she said.

DeBoer said he worked with the staff at the Courtyard Villa Assisted Living Center and the Good Samaritan Society assisted-living center to help residents vote.



Sue Ganje

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At Courtyard Villa, DeBoer set up a temporary auditor's office in an entryway and was separated from residents by a set of large, glass doors. DeBoer was able to verify identifications and answer questions through the glass doors while a facility staff member in personal protective equipment shuttled ballot envelopes between voters and DeBoer. A total of 13 Courtyard Villa residents were able to vote with DeBoer's help.

At the Good Samaritan building, lock down measures were more extreme. DeBoer was not allowed into the building; instead, he had to go window to window verifying identifications and sliding ballots through small openings for 16 voters.

"Luckily, some of the residents had large picture windows, others had small windows, but I could effectively verify who they were," DeBoer said.

Trying to provide space for social distancing during voter registration and early voting was impossible in Fall River County, where the elections office is in the cramped courthouse built in Hot Springs in 1893.

Auditor Sue Ganje and a county emergency management official searched the state of South Dakota government surplus site and found a large military tent valued at \$15,000 for sale for just \$1,500.

They bought the tent, set it up on county property next door to the courthouse and began to house staff of the elections office and welcome visitors in the tent that allowed for social distancing and easy cleaning. The county spent a bit more money to provide the tent with electricity and lighting.

In-person voting on Election Day will be held at the local community center as usual, but having the tent next to the auditor's office has made it safe and easy to host early voting and other election activities with limited time spent transporting people or equipment, she said.

"It's a daily pack in and pack out of equipment, but it's working quite smoothly," Ganje said. "People can drop off voter registrations or absentee ballots, and they're just making it happen out there. It's been a real lifesaver this year."

Like other county auditors, Ganje had some of her regular poll workers decline to work the 2020 primary or general election, mostly because they were older and at high risk of complications from the coronavirus.

Ganje was aware of a state law that allows South Dakota high school students to get an excused absence from school to help out at the polls, but she had never faced a shortage of workers before.

Suddenly in need of more staff on Election Day, Ganje approached a government teacher at the local high school and is now set to receive help from eight students who will be let out of school to work the election. Those who are 18 or older can perform all electoral duties; those under 18 can perform tasks such as guiding voters through the polls, running errands or disinfecting voting equipment.

"We hope it's a super experience for them," Ganje said. "I think it's exciting to see the interest from the younger ones to pitch in and help, and hopefully we'll hold to them in the future, getting them interested early in voting and elections."

Ganje said she's seen some silver linings to what she described as a "weird election season," including educating more people about how to successfully vote early or by absentee, and a rallying of the community to learn about and support the electoral process.

"I've seen that people are really resilient, and people are pitching in any way they can.," she said.

In the June primary, when many government buildings were closed, Butte County Auditor Elaine Jensen arranged for the county to move a trailer home to the county administrative property for use as a temporary election facility. Once equipped with electricity, a heater and computers, that trailer worked well.

Jensen said she now knows that the temporary building can work if needed in the future. "It kind of takes the election wherever we want it to go," she said.

After some planning, Jensen has decided to run the fall election from the permanent administration building and open all four county polling sites.

In the week leading up to the Nov. 3 election, Jensen said that rapidly increasing COVID-19 cases in the region led eight poll workers to call and say they were unavailable to work Election Day.

Jensen was trying to recruit local high school students to fill in, but was confident she could adequately staff the polling locations in Belle Fourche, Nisland, Newell and Castle Rock.

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Like other auditors, Jensen is focused on maintaining the safety of voters and poll workers amid the pandemic. Pens, voting booths and equipment will be sanitized before each use, and hand sanitizers and disinfectants will be omnipresent at the polls, she said.

"It's a trying time, a very trying time and it's been difficult for auditors across the state," Jensen said. "But I am so passionate about elections; I just feel that it's so important for everybody to have the right to cast their ballot."

Challenges remain; transparency important

Voters in Native American communities and reservations around South Dakota face a unique set of challenges when participating in elections. Counties that include Native American reservations have been accused of not having enough polling places to adequately serve widely dispersed populations. Poverty also plays a role in limiting access to polling places. Many Native Americans do not have access to reliable transportation, which makes traveling to polling places that can be 60 or more miles from their homes nearly impossible.

Many Native Americans don't have the same type of address with street names and house numbers typically found in other communities. Instead, extended families rely on post office boxes located in towns that can be dozens of miles from their homes to receive mail. Such arrangements make voting absentee by mail more difficult.

The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to make voting in the 2020 general election even more difficult for Native Americans. Tribal communities tend to have higher rates of chronic diseases such as diabetes and have less access to advanced medical care, so large gatherings of people such as those found inside polling places can be doubly dangerous to Native communities. Tribal governments have recognized the danger posed by crowds and instituted lockdowns to protect vulnerable populations.

For the most part, Native American voters have the same access to absentee and early voting as every other South Dakotan, Barnett said. Any registered voter can apply for an absentee ballot or vote early in person at their county courthouse.

In recognition of the unique challenges Native American voters can face, tribal communities have worked with Barnett's office to set up satellite absentee voting locations in five counties with large Native American populations. The five counties are Buffalo, Dewey, Jackson, Oglala Lakota and Todd.

The satellite locations are funded through grants awarded to states under the 2002 federal Help America Vote Act. Each satellite location must be located in a place that is easier for most community members to access than the county courthouse.

"We feel it's important that they take advantage of those satellite sites," Barnett said. "There are some challenges there ... I think it is important that anybody can get access (to voting)."

Yet at least two South Dakota tribal governments and a Native American voter rights group, Four Directions, say the state has not done enough to enfranchise indigenous voters.

In September, the Oglala Lakota and Rosebud Sioux tribes, along with Four Directions, sued several state agencies, including the Secretary of State's Office, in federal court. The organizations claim the state departments of Public Safety, Social Services and Labor and Regulation broke federal law by not offering adequate voter registration services to Native Americans as required by federal law. The suit is pending.

No matter how well trained poll workers are or how many absentee voting guides are published, Hanmer said, errors can and do happen during elections.

"There's never been an election without errors," Hanmer said. "We have to recognize that it doesn't mean that they weren't fair. Because, again, I think a lot of the mistakes are honest mistakes, and we'll learn from them."

Phyllis Barker had served as auditor in Douglas County, South Dakota for about seven years on June 2, 2020, when she made a mistake that changed the reported result of the District 19 Republican primary election for state representative.

The 2020 primary saw 525 voters cast absentee ballots in Douglas County, a huge increase over the 2018 primary when 70 absentee ballots were cast. For the first time, Barker had to recruit a separate,

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three-person absentee board to sort and verify absentee ballots. The ballots were then counted by two DS200 tabulating machines.

Once the polls closed, the ballots cast in-person at each of the county's five voting precincts were counted. Barker then had to add the absentee votes to the in-person votes by hand to get final election results and upload them to the state website.

When Barker was uploading results, she failed to include the votes on 86 absentee ballots from one precinct. As a result, the election results displayed on the Secretary of State's website showed that the wrong candidate had won the election. The mistake was discovered when one of the candidates asked for a recount; ultimately incumbent Rep. Marty Overweg was declared the winner of the primary over challenger Jessica Bahmuller by 21 votes.

"We recounted all of the votes on one machine, and that's when I noticed the vote totals didn't match what I had reported," Barker said.

For the 2020 general election, Barker has created a new absentee voter precinct in Douglas County.

"I'll have my five regular precincts, plus an absentee precinct, so all those absentee voters will be treated as their own precinct and will be reported in the state system that way," Barker said. "There won't be any human adding before the numbers are put in."

Reducing the opportunity for human error is critical for election officials, said Thessalia Merivaki, an American politics professor at Mississippi State University who researches the impact of election administration on voters. Publicly acknowledging an error is important, Merivaki said.

Election officials must be transparent when errors occur, she said. Voters should be told what happened, how the error occurred, and what will be done to prevent the mistake from happening again in order to maintain confidence in the election system, Merivaki said.

"For the broader public, transparent procedures and honesty from election officials are very important to maintain a level of trust," Merivaki said.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Oct. 21	Oct. 22	Oct. 23	Oct. 24	Oct. 25	Oct. 26	Oct. 27
Minnesota	125,531	126,591	128,152	129,863	132,122	133,802	135,372
Nebraska	59,409	60,308	61,285	62,510	63,215	63,797	64,499
Montana	24,093		25,640	26,503	27,142	27,880	28,501
Colorado	87,582	88,849	90,222	91,572	93,400	95,089	97,300
Wyoming	8,070	8,305	8,537	8,918	9,177	9,396	9,783
North Dakota	33,666	34,165	35,052	35,939	36,874	37,719	38,241
South Dakota	33,836	34,031	34,977	36,109	36,972	37,979	38,504
United States	8,275,093	8,338,413	8,411,259	8,497,011	8,578,175	8,636,995	8,705,127
US Deaths	221,083	222,220	223,059	224,005	224,903	225,239	225,739
Minnesota	+1,092	+1,060	+1,561	+1,711	+2,259	+1,680	+1,570
Nebraska	+592	+899	+977	+1,225	+705	+582	+702
Montana	+703		+1,547	+863	+639	+738	+621
Colorado	+1,208	+1,267	+1,373	+1,350	+1,828	+1,689	+2,211
Wyoming	+146	+235	+232	+381	+259	+219	+387
North Dakota	1,036	+516	+1,038	+886	+935	+851	+527
South Dakota	+562	+558	+948	+1,132	+852	+1017	+525
United States	+59,515	+63,320	+72,846	+85,752	+81,164	+58,820	+68,132
US Deaths	+949	+1,137	+839	+946	+898	+336	+500
	Oct. 28	Oct. 29					
Minnesota	137,536	139,444					
Nebraska	65,376	66,545					
Montana	29,346	29,966					
Colorado	98,733	100,208					
Wyoming	10,035	10,288					
North Dakota	39,130	39,907					
South Dakota	39,494	40,589					
United States	8,779,794	8,859,432					
US Deaths	226,728	227,703					
Minnesota	+2,164	1,908					
Nebraska	+877	1,169					
Montana	+845	+620					
Colorado	+1,433	1,475					
Wyoming	+252	+253					
North Dakota	+896	+781					
South Dakota	+984	+1,095					
United States	+74,667	+79,638					
US Deaths	+989	+975					

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October 28th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

North Dakota had 12 deaths and South Dakota had nine recorded. In South Dakota, three were females and six were males. There were six in the 80+ age group and one each in their 50s, 60s and 70s. Campbell County recorded its first death while Walworth and Codrington each had two and Brookings, Lake, Minnehaha and Oglala Lakota each having one. Brown County is 81 percent recovered, but the state figure continues to decline and is now down to 72 percent, which used to be over 80 percent.

South Dakota's positive cases were 984 today with 505 in Minnehaha County alone. Those recovered was 862. Those currently hospitalized increased by 17 to 412 with Brown County has 19 (+1) in COVID-19 occupied hospital beds with 4 (-1) in ICU beds and one on a ventilation unit.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +31 (2,007) Positivity Rate: 11.1%

Total Tests: +279 (17,560)

Recovered: +29 (1,624)

Active Cases: +2 (386)

Ever Hospitalized: +2 (109)

Deaths: +0 (4)

Percent Recovered: 80.9

South Dakota:

Positive: +1095 (40,589 total) Positivity Rate: 17.5%

Total Tests: 6,243 (415,689 total)

Hospitalized: +62 (2,545 total). 412 currently hospitalized (+17)

Deaths: +9 (384 total)

Recovered: +516 (29,683 total)

Active Cases: +745 (11,933)

Percent Recovered: 71.6%

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 15% Covid, 54% Non-Covid, 31% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 26% Covid, 40% Non-Covid, 34% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 8% Covid, 22% Non-Covid, 71% 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.

Brown (4): +31 positive, +29 recovered (386 active cases)

Clark: +12 positive, +3 recovered (54 active cases)

Clay (8): +16 positive, +8 recovered (161 active cases)

Codrington (12): +36 positive, +17 recovered (333 active cases)

Davison (8): +42 positive, +16 recovered (324 active cases)

Day (2): +3 positive, +1 recovered (38 active cases)

Edmunds (1): +3 positive, +0 recovered (30 active cases)

Faulk (1): +3 positive, +7 recovered (74 active cases)

Grant (2): +14 positive, +4 recovered (80 active cases)

Hanson (1): +4 positive, +1 recovered (32 active cases)

Hughes (6): +3 positive, +16 recovered (162 active cases)

Lawrence (6): +47 positive, +12 recovered (284 active cases)

Lincoln (18): +98 positive, +35 recovered (804 active cases)

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

McCook (1): +9 positive, +3 recovered (71 active cases)

McPherson: +2 positive, +2 recovery (18 active case)

Minnehaha (107): +284 positive, +117 recovered (2948 active cases)

Potter: +4 positive, +0 recovered (29 active cases)

Roberts (4): +6 positive, +6 recovered (71 active cases)

Spink (1): +10 positive, +0 recovered (86 active cases)

Walworth (4): +1 positive, +1 recovered (74 active cases)

COVID-19 Daily Report, October 28:

- 11.1% rolling 14-day positivity
- 781 new positives
- 7,626 susceptible test encounters
- 178 currently hospitalized (+17)
- 6,247 active cases (-68)
- 488 total deaths (+12)

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity
Aurora	176	126	702	0	Substantial	16.67%
Beadle	1240	947	3925	13	Substantial	22.32%
Bennett	183	111	947	5	Substantial	14.36%
Bon Homme	920	166	1610	1	Substantial	54.53%
Brookings	1426	1057	6352	5	Substantial	21.65%
Brown	2014	1624	8631	4	Substantial	19.69%
Brule	282	191	1395	2	Substantial	37.09%
Buffalo	249	211	811	4	Substantial	30.70%
Butte	355	195	2076	3	Substantial	23.05%
Campbell	74	47	158	1	Moderate	17.86%
Charles Mix	391	269	2974	0	Substantial	12.03%
Clark	114	60	671	0	Substantial	18.30%
Clay	817	648	3304	8	Substantial	22.08%
Codington	1479	1134	6369	12	Substantial	20.86%
Corson	176	123	777	1	Substantial	56.06%
Custer	315	242	1706	3	Substantial	26.02%
Davison	915	583	4462	8	Substantial	19.09%
Day	159	119	1206	2	Substantial	26.67%
Deuel	184	135	782	0	Substantial	26.73%
Dewey	327	210	3355	0	Substantial	13.72%
Douglas	165	117	692	4	Substantial	8.13%
Edmunds	142	111	734	1	Substantial	5.83%
Fall River	203	141	1780	6	Substantial	19.53%
Faulk	206	131	522	1	Substantial	29.41%
Grant	304	222	1476	2	Substantial	10.63%
Gregory	224	157	799	10	Substantial	26.05%
Haakon	96	52	418	1	Substantial	9.71%
Hamlin	198	149	1211	0	Substantial	16.20%
Hand	121	77	568	1	Substantial	36.25%
Hanson	93	60	452	1	Substantial	30.30%
Harding	52	22	109	0	Substantial	52.00%
Hughes	846	678	3769	6	Substantial	17.08%
Hutchinson	229	163	1565	2	Substantial	10.08%

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Hyde	42	32	297	0	Moderate	25.81%
Jackson	121	72	774	1	Substantial	23.91%
Jerauld	158	131	383	12	Minimal	4.76%
Jones	32	27	127	0	Moderate	22.73%
Kingsbury	186	110	1038	2	Substantial	11.58%
Lake	378	263	1860	9	Substantial	28.24%
Lawrence	896	606	5427	6	Substantial	23.39%
Lincoln	2759	1937	13162	18	Substantial	24.91%
Lyman	267	205	1412	5	Substantial	24.85%
Marshall	64	50	766	1	Moderate	13.33%
McCook	234	162	1098	1	Substantial	15.74%
McPherson	69	51	398	0	Moderate	6.33%
Meade	944	733	5071	10	Substantial	18.78%
Mellette	80	56	562	1	Substantial	44.44%
Miner	142	78	418	1	Substantial	21.57%
Minnehaha	11281	8226	51932	107	Substantial	22.14%
Moody	213	138	1088	2	Substantial	35.85%
Oglala Lakota	907	442	5539	6	Substantial	28.08%
Pennington	4381	3186	24829	49	Substantial	18.51%
Perkins	78	53	470	0	Substantial	20.34%
Potter	103	74	610	0	Substantial	8.44%
Roberts	342	267	3163	4	Substantial	25.49%
Sanborn	99	60	433	0	Substantial	26.32%
Spink	272	185	1668	1	Substantial	15.88%
Stanley	90	65	524	0	Substantial	21.95%
Sully	41	32	169	0	Moderate	16.00%
Todd	453	306	3352	6	Substantial	31.68%
Tripp	269	218	1140	2	Substantial	13.41%
Turner	475	278	1821	11	Substantial	17.91%
Union	747	555	4065	11	Substantial	15.70%
Walworth	268	190	1281	4	Substantial	11.18%
Yankton	842	548	5731	5	Substantial	20.13%
Ziebach	92	69	562	2	Moderate	18.92%
Unassigned	0	0	1818	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	1290	0
10-19 years	4434	0
20-29 years	8718	2
30-39 years	7078	7
40-49 years	5939	12
50-59 years	5922	31
60-69 years	4552	54
70-79 years	2331	73
80+ years	1736	205

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	21570	179
Male	20430	205

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Brown County



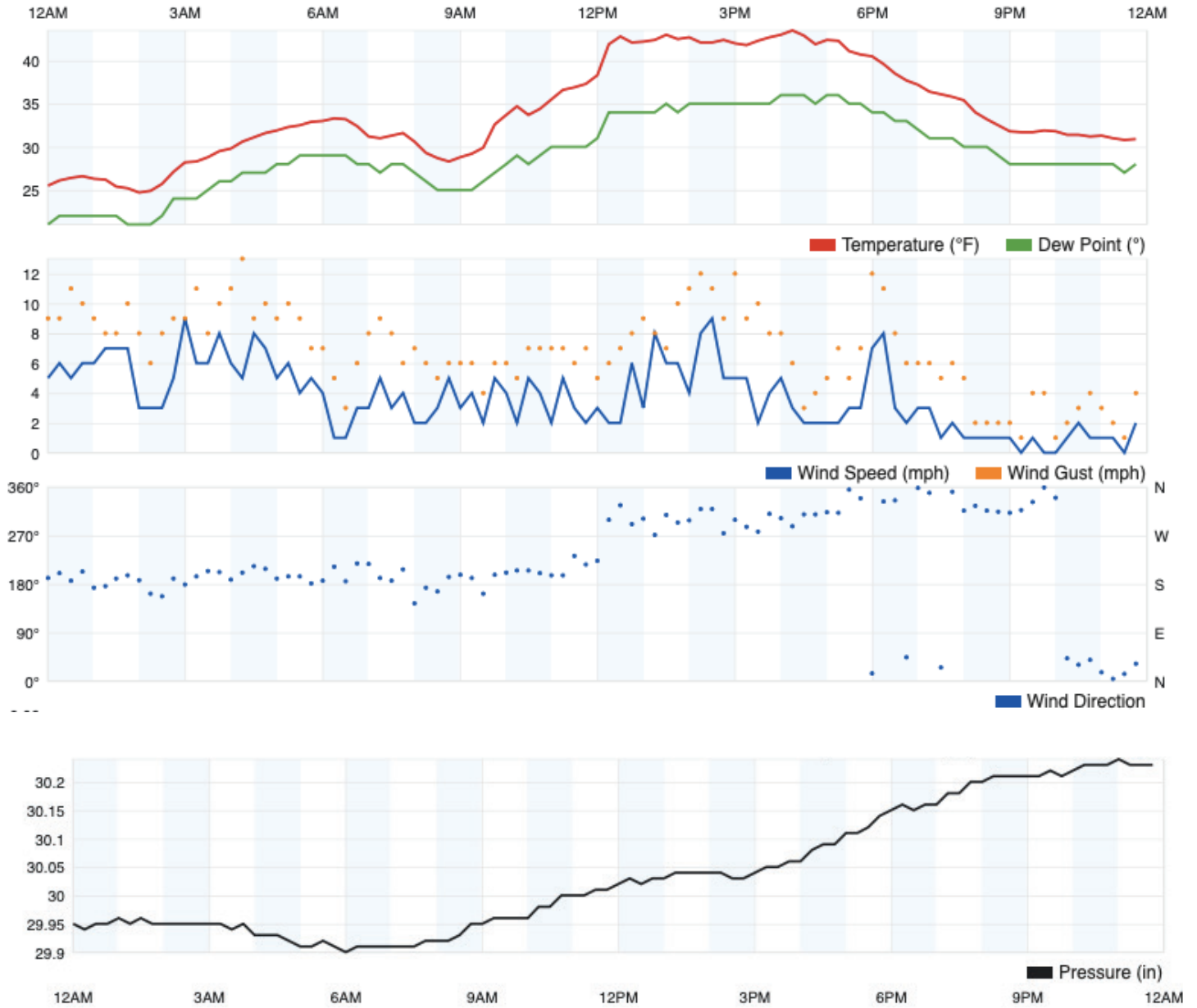
Day County



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Patchy Fog
then Chance
Snow

High: 34 °F

Tonight



Slight Chance
Rain/Snow
then Mostly
Cloudy

Low: 25 °F

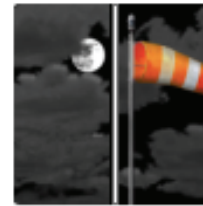
Friday



Mostly Cloudy

High: 38 °F

Friday
Night



Mostly Cloudy
then Partly
Cloudy and
Breezy

Low: 31 °F

Saturday



Mostly Sunny
then Sunny
and Breezy

High: 44 °F

A large background image showing a variety of pumpkins and gourds in different colors (orange, green, black, and white) arranged on wooden crates.

Today:
*Mostly cloudy with chc rain/snow north
Highs 30-49°F*

Tonight:
*Mostly cloudy with chc rain/snow early
Lows 23-34°F*

Friday:
*Mostly cloudy
Highs 34-52°F*

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Updated: 10/29/2020 3:49 AM Central

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Today in Weather History

October 29, 1925: Record cold occurred across the area on this date in 1925. The record lows were 9 at Wheaton, Minnesota, 2 degrees below zero at Watertown, 5 degrees below zero at Aberdeen, 7 degrees below zero southeast of McInstosh, and a frigid late October 19 degrees below zero at Kennebec.

1693: From the Royal Society of London: "There happened a most violent storm in Virginia which stopped the course of ancient channels and made some where there never were any." Known as the Accomack Storm, this event likely caused changes to the Delmarva shoreline, and coastal inlets.

1948: An historic smog event occurred in the town of Donora, Pennsylvania. The smog killed 20 people and sickened 7,000 more.

1917 - The temperature at Denver, CO, dipped to zero, and at Soda Butte, WY, the mercury plunged to 33 degrees below zero, a U.S. record for the month of October. (David Ludlum)

1942 - A tornado struck the town of Berryville in northwest Arkansas killing 20 persons and causing half a million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1956 - A violent tornado, or series of tornadoes, moved along a path more than 100 miles in length from south of North Platte NE into Rock County NE. It was an unusually late occurrence so far north and west in the U.S. for such a storm. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Severe thunderstorms in Arizona produced wind gusts to 86 mph at the Glendale Airport near Phoenix, baseball size hail and 70 mph winds at Wickenburg, and up to an inch of rain in fifteen minutes in Yavapai County and northwest Maricopa County. Arizona Public Service alone reported 2.5 million dollars damage from the storms. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Wintry weather prevailed in the Upper Midwest. South Bend, IN, equalled their record for October with a morning low of 23 degrees. International Falls MN reported a record low of 11 degrees in the morning, then dipped down to 8 degrees above zero late in the evening. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather in Oklahoma and north central Texas during the late afternoon and evening hours. Thunderstorms in Oklahoma produced weak tornadoes near Snyder and Davidson, and produced hail two inches in diameter at Altus. Large hail damaged 60 to 80 percent of the cotton crop in Tillman County OK. Nine cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 70s. For Marquette MI it marked their fifth straight day of record warmth. Arctic cold invaded the western U.S. Lows of 7 degrees at Alamosa CO and 9 degrees at Elko NV were records for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

2011 - New York City received one inch of snow, the earliest they had received that much snow since records began. It was also only the fourth times since the Civil War snow had fallen in New York City in October. The storm also left over three million people without power including 62% of the customers of Connecticut Light and Power.

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GIVING AND RECEIVING

It was well past midnight. There were few travelers, and the weather was nearly unbearable with driving rains and freezing temperatures. A woman stood beside her broken-down car, trying to flag down someone going into the city.

Finally, a motorist stopped and invited the woman, who was soaking wet and trembling with chills, into his car. He took her to a taxi stand, and as she hurriedly exited from his car, she took time to ask him to write down his name and address.

A week later, he received a giant TV and stereo with a note that read: "Thank you for assisting me. Because of your kindness, I was able to make it to my dying husband's bedside just before he passed away. God bless you. Mrs. Nat King Cole."

Nearly a thousand years before Jesus was born, Solomon wrote, "Give generously, for your gifts will return to you later." In his wisdom, he summarized an essential fact of life for all of us: Life involves risk and opportunity and has no guarantees.

However, Solomon encouraged us to seize the moment to do good for others. He certainly did not support a stingy, self-centered lifestyle. Even though we do not know what may happen tomorrow, he would urge us to share with others whatever we have "at the moment," and learn to trust in God for tomorrow.

We show our love for and trust in God when we give to others.

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to realize we have so much we do not deserve. May our hearts be as open to meet the needs of others as much as Your heart is open to us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Give generously, for your gifts will return to you later. Ecclesiastes 11:1

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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

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

02-12-20-23-24

(two, twelve, twenty, twenty-three, twenty-four)

Estimated jackpot: \$307,000

Lotto America

04-14-35-41-43, Star Ball: 9, ASB: 2

(four, fourteen, thirty-five, forty-one, forty-three; Star Ball: nine; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.95 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$118 million

Powerball

11-28-37-40-53, Powerball: 13, Power Play: 2

(eleven, twenty-eight, thirty-seven, forty, fifty-three; Powerball: thirteen; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$116 million

The Latest: China says latest outbreak appears contained

By The Associated Press undefined

BEIJING — Officials in the northwestern China region of Xinjiang say they believe they have contained the country's latest coronavirus outbreak.

Xinjiang reported 23 new confirmed cases Thursday, all involving people who had initially tested positive but displayed no symptoms. It was the second consecutive day in which newly confirmed cases emerged entirely among such people.

Officials say that development appears to show new infections have been curbed in Kashgar prefecture, where the outbreak appeared Saturday. They say all the cases seem to be linked to a garment factory that employs 252 people and has since being sealed off.

More than 4.7 million people in Kashgar have been tested for the virus.

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

- US plans to buy initial antibody doses from Eli Lilly
- Task force member Giroir: Cases, hospitalizations, deaths up in US - not just testing
- President Emmanuel Macron announces second national lockdown in France starting Friday. German officials agreed four-week partial lockdown.
- Belgium and Czech Republic top Europe's highest number of coronavirus cases per 100,000 citizens, ahead of hotbeds France and Spain.
- Love blossoms amid pandemic for two TikTok creators in Los Angeles, using goofy dance videos, heartfelt vlogs and affirmations.

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Officials in Anchorage, Alaska, say the city is on a "dangerous path" as coronavirus cases rise and are urging people to avoid gatherings and follow orders to wear masks in public.

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Acting Mayor Austin Quinn-Davidson says she has been meeting with business leaders, health officials and others to make decisions that protect health but also impose minimal restrictions so businesses can stay open.

The mayor says that "none of us wants another hunker-down" order.

The city's health director says that after months of dealing with the pandemic, some people may have let down their guard. She says people should stay home except to get food, exercise outside or go to work. She says it is important to wear masks and social distance in public and to avoid contact with those at higher risk for severe illness.

MINNEAPOLIS — Minnesota health officials are warning against traditional Halloween festivities amid the recent rise in coronavirus cases statewide.

Officials say that instead of traditional trick-or-treating and indoor haunted houses, people should look to lower risk activities like carving pumpkins and decorating homes or holding virtual gatherings.

The state's infectious diseases director said Wednesday that warmer weather this weekend may encourage outdoor gatherings, but cautioned against disregarding health guidelines with virus infections rising steadily.

Officials reported 1,916 new coronavirus cases and 19 new COVID-19 deaths. Daily case counts statewide have exceeded 2,000 three times in the past two weeks, and the state has reported more than 1,000 new daily cases for the last 21 days.

DES MOINES, Iowa — Medical professionals in Iowa are expressing concerns that a surge in coronavirus infections and hospitalizations could overwhelm medical facilities if no action is taken to slow the virus' spread.

Hospitals had 596 coronavirus patients Wednesday, the highest number so far for the state. The 113 patients admitted in the past 24 hours also was the most since the virus surfaced in Iowa last March.

Doctors and hospital officials say they are talking about how to transfer COVID-19 patients between hospitals and enacting surge plans that could turn non-hospital facilities into spots to handle any overflow.

One hospital CEO said that "what we know is if the last four weeks are indicative of what happens over the next four weeks, we will have the system overwhelmed."

WELLINGTON, New Zealand: The Marshall Islands has reported its first cases of the coronavirus after two people who flew from Hawaii to a U.S. military base tested positive.

The small Pacific nation had been among the last places in the world to have no reported cases of the virus.

The Office of the Chief Secretary says a 35-year-old woman and a 46-year-old man tested positive this week after flying directly from Honolulu to the base on Kwajalein Atoll. The office says that the two cases weren't connected and that both people are in quarantine. The office says all businesses and government operations will continue as normal.

Home to about 78,000 people, the Marshall Islands maintains close military and civilian ties with the U.S. under a compact of free association.

RICHMOND, Va. — Virginia's governor and top health officials say the state's southwest is seeing a sustained, troubling increase in coronavirus cases driven partly by family gatherings.

Gov. Ralph Northam addressed the spike in cases at a news conference Wednesday, saying further restrictions on the area are possible if the numbers keep climbing.

Also Wednesday, one area hospital system issued a warning that its resources are being stretched thin, with 88.5% of its ICU beds full.

Virginia has so far reported nearly 177,000 coronavirus infections and just over 3,600 deaths from COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic.

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — Hospitalizations from COVID-19 in South Dakota reached new heights for the

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fourth straight day on Wednesday.

The number of daily new cases also set a record, with 1,270 people testing positive for the virus. The virus has surged in the state and region, sending South Dakota to the nation's second-worst ranking in new cases per capita over the last two weeks. Johns Hopkins researchers report that one out of roughly every 77 people in the state has tested positive in the last two weeks.

The wave of cases has resulted in 412 people being hospitalized with the virus.

Health officials also reported nine new deaths. October has become the state's deadliest month of the pandemic, with 189 deaths so far.

TOPEKA, Kan. — Kansas doesn't appear to be containing the coronavirus, reporting nearly 3,400 new cases over just two days.

The state health department's data showed that the rolling average for new confirmed and probable coronavirus cases was 1,084 a day for the seven days ending Wednesday. That's 33% higher than the previous record for the seven-day rolling average of 815 for the seven days ending Monday.

The health department said it switched this weekend to a new, automated system that allows new cases to be added to its count more quickly. It said the change accounted for about 1,500 of the 3,369 cases reported since Monday, but even with those cases factored out, the state had a record rolling seven-day average.

The health department said Kansas has had 82,045 cases since the pandemic began.

Kansas had another 106 hospitalizations to bring the pandemic total to 3,752. The state averaged a record 35 new hospitalizations a day over the seven days ending Wednesday.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Areas of Tennessee where people aren't required to wear masks in public have experienced increases of hospitalized coronavirus patients in recent weeks.

Researchers from Vanderbilt University Medical Center and Vanderbilt University School of Medicine announced the results of a study. It categorized each Tennessee hospital based on what percentage of its typical patient population lives in counties with a mask requirement.

Republican Gov. Bill Lee is allowing counties to decide whether to require masks rather than making masks a statewide mandate. He has argued it's a matter of people taking personal responsibility.

WOONSOCKET, R.I. — CVS Health says it will add nearly 1,000 rapid coronavirus testing sites around the country by the end of the year.

The drugstore chain says it plans to have about 100 sites running this week in 22 states. Customers can usually get results within 30 minutes.

CVS Health says it will provide rapid-result tests at no cost for people who meet the criteria established by the CDC — which include symptoms and contact with someone who has the coronavirus. Those customers must register in advance for the test through the company's website.

Insurers will pick up the bill for people with coverage who meet the CDC criteria, while a federal government program will pay for the uninsured, the company says.

The test that delivers results in a few days would cost \$139 for those who don't meet the CDC criteria. The company didn't provide the cost of a rapid test for those who don't meet the criteria.

The chain plans to start offering the rapid tests in California, Florida, New Jersey and Texas, among other states.

ROME — Italy reached a new daily record of nearly 25,000 confirmed coronavirus cases and added 205 deaths on Wednesday.

Nearly 1,000 people were admitted to hospitals nationwide and 125 more in intensive care.

Interior Minister Lucia Lamorgese briefed the Senate on protests following Italy's latest anti-virus restrictions, which shuttered restaurants and bars at nightfall, closed movie theaters and in some regions

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imposed overnight curfews.

While daytime protests by restaurant owners and taxi drivers have been largely peaceful, Lamorgese accused a variety of fringe anti-government and virus-negating groups of using the crisis as an excuse for violence, vandalism and looting.

Italy has nearly 590,000 confirmed coronavirus cases and nearly 38,000 deaths, the second highest in Europe after Britain.

MADRID – Authorities in Spain announced more than 19,700 daily confirmed cases of the coronavirus on Wednesday.

The Health Ministry says nearly 2,300 coronavirus patients were admitted to hospital in the previous 24 hours. Just over 25% of Spain's ICU beds are currently occupied by COVID-19 patients, slightly up from Tuesday.

The Murcia region of southeastern Spain announced it will close its borders with neighboring regions, just as four other regions have done this week. Three more regions, including Madrid, were expected to follow suit in coming days.

Spain has 1.1 million cases, the second highest in Europe after France. Another 761 deaths in the past week brought the confirmed death total to more than 35,400.

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey reported 77 more coronavirus deaths, pushing the death toll past 10,000 deaths.

Health Minister Fahrettin Koca reported 2,305 new coronavirus cases, raising the confirmed total to 368,513. Ankara has been reporting only the number of patients being treated for the coronavirus, leading to accusations that it is concealing the true extent of the outbreak.

Koca says 40% of coronavirus cases in Turkey were recording in Istanbul, a city of 16 million.

The minister urged residents to limit their movement and called on employers to offer workers flexible hours or the possibility of working from home. He says there's no plan to reintroduce lockdowns or to restrict travel to and from the city.

BEIRUT — Lebanon has registered a daily record of 1,850 coronavirus cases.

The Health Ministry says 11.8% of every 100 tests are positive. Partial lockdowns have been implemented on selected localities, but it has failed to curb the spike.

Lebanon's health sector is reeling under the pressure of the pandemic. The economic crisis was compounded by the massive deadly blast in the capital's port nearly three months ago. It knocked out three hospitals.

Lebanon has a total of 75,845 confirmed cases and 602 deaths.

WASHINGTON — The U.S. government has agreed to buy initial doses of an experimental COVID-19 antibody drug from Eli Lilly that patients could receive if federal regulators allow it on an emergency basis.

Lilly has asked the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to allow use of the drug in mild to moderately ill patients, based on partial results from a mid-stage study suggesting it may help them clear the virus sooner. There were hints the drug might help avoid hospitalization, but more study is needed.

Under the agreement, the government will spend \$375 million to buy 300,000 vials of the drug. How many doses that would provide is unclear. Each vial contains 70 milligrams and that dose proved ineffective in the early results. It took four times that amount -- 2,800 milligrams -- to show any effect.

Earlier this week, the government stopped a study of Lilly's drug in hospitalized patients after it seemed the drug was not helping those more seriously ill patients.

Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc. is also seeking emergency use for its experimental two-antibody treatment. President Donald Trump received it when he was ill with the coronavirus earlier this month.

(This item has been corrected to 300,000 vials in third paragraph.)

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BOSTON — Boston's Logan International Airport has a coronavirus testing site. The site opened in Terminal E and is operated by health and wellness company XpresSpa Group. It's available for airport and airline employees at first but will test travelers in mid-November. The facility will offer three types of tests -- quick test that returns results within 15 minutes; a nasal swab test; and a blood antibody test. The company says it will process about 400 tests a day. It already operates coronavirus testing facilities at Kennedy International Airport in New York and Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey.

Noem names Myren as next South Dakota Supreme Court pick

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem on Wednesday announced she will appoint Scott P. Myren to the state's Supreme Court.

Myren will take Chief Justice David Gilbertson's spot on the court after he retires in January. "Judge Myren is a highly-qualified, senior jurist who respects the separation of powers and the role of a judge to interpret the law as written," Noem said.

Myren has been a judge on South Dakota's Fifth Circuit since 2004 and presided over the circuit since 2013. He has worked in South Dakota's judicial system since 1990.

The South Dakota Supreme Court announced earlier this year that Justice Steven R. Jensen will succeed Gilbertson as chief justice when he retires.

South Dakota sees record virus hospitalizations, cases

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Hospitalizations from COVID-19 in South Dakota reached new heights for the fourth straight day on Wednesday.

The number of daily new cases also set a record, with 1,270 people testing positive for the virus. The virus has surged in the state and region, sending South Dakota to the nation's second-worst ranking in new cases per capita over the last two weeks. Johns Hopkins researchers report that one out of roughly every 77 people in the state has tested positive in the last two weeks.

The wave of cases has resulted in 412 people who are currently hospitalized with the virus. Health officials also reported nine new deaths. October has become the state's deadliest month of the pandemic, with 189 deaths so far.

The outbreak has been particularly severe in the state's prisons, where one out of roughly every three people incarcerated statewide has an active coronavirus infection.

Gov. Kristi Noem has made it clear she will not issue any requirements to wear masks in public. She has cast her approach to the pandemic — foregoing government restrictions to keep economic activity humming — as an example of Republican leadership. She spent the day at several Trump campaign events in Maine and New Hampshire.

Meanwhile, South Dakota health officials attempted to offer some hope to the state's virus outlook, saying they will be ready by the middle of next month to distribute coronavirus vaccinations. But it is not clear when coronavirus vaccinations will receive regulatory approval and actually arrive in the state.

Health experts are hoping that several candidates for vaccines could be ready for distribution by year's end, maybe sooner. President Donald Trump has pushed for a faster timeline.

South Dakota Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said she is following federal instructions to have a vaccine distribution system in place by Nov. 15.

"If the vaccine shows up at our doorstep on that day, it will be getting out to folks immediately," she said.

South Dakota's plan prioritizes health care workers and people who are vulnerable to the virus before vaccines are made widely available to the public.

The Food and Drug Administration has pledged that any vaccine it approves will meet clear standards for its safety and effectiveness.

Man arrested at Trump rally with South Dakota's Noem

BANGOR, Maine (AP) — Police in Maine on Wednesday arrested a man who displayed a knife and a wooden baton at a campaign rally for President Donald Trump where South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem was appearing.

Noem spokeswoman Maggie Seidel said Noem's security detail engaged the man and the Republican governor "was not in harm's way" at any point.

Peter Beitzell, 58, of Bangor, allegedly exchanged words and harassed those at the rally and at one point brandished a wooden baton and a large fixed-blade knife, said Sgt. Wade Betters of the Bangor Police Department.

Beitzell, who eventually returned to his vehicle and put the weapons away, was charged with criminal threatening with a dangerous weapon and disorderly conduct. He posted \$200 bail.

Beitzell, who said he doesn't like Trump, said things went sideways after he flipped off the Trump bus from a distance of about 50 yards (45 meters).

He said he displayed the weapons because he felt threatened by three men who approached him. One turned out to be a South Dakota police officer, but the man refused requests to show a badge, he said.

"Yes, I was an idiot," Beitzell said. "I was a dummy who pulled a weapon, but there were three of them marching over toward me," he added.

Noem was part of a Trump campaign tour with stops planned in Maine and New Hampshire. She was traveling with a security detail from the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Rapid City man pleads not guilty to killing girlfriend

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City man has pleaded not guilty to fatally shooting his girlfriend in a death that police say was staged to look like a suicide.

Dion Bordeaux, 25, entered the plea this week to first-degree murder in the death of 22-year-old Jeanette Jumping Eagle, a mother of three found fatally shot in a hotel room on New Year's Day.

The defendant's 24-year-old brother, Giovanni Bordeaux, is charged with being an accessory to the crime and pleaded not guilty earlier this month.

If convicted, Dion Bordeaux could receive the death penalty or life in prison. He's being held on \$1 million cash bond. His brother faces up to five years in prison upon conviction and is detained at the Pennington County Jail on a \$50,000 surety bond, the Rapid City Journal reported.

The victim's sister, Paulina Ghost, says the father of Jumping Eagle's children are raising them with the help of relatives.

Ghost says her sister met and began dating Dion Bordeaux shortly before she died. She says Bordeaux may have been jealous because her sister was thinking about returning to the father of her children.

Road trip: In Mississippi, love in the time of coronavirus

By TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Her voice cracked as she spoke from her hospital bed. "I want to go home," she pleaded.

More than 40 miles away, her husband sat in their living room, looking intently into his phone as they spoke on a video call, trying to soothe her. Bonnie Bishop had been in the hospital since early July. She'd been on a ventilator. She'd had surgery to put a tube down her throat. She'd been in a coma for six weeks. Sometimes, it was just too much, and on this October evening, she started to weep silently.

"You are coming home," Mike Bishop, 63, said firmly. He seemed to be speaking as much to himself as to his wife. "You know you are."

This is a love story.

It's a story about coronavirus, the people it strikes down, and a big quiet house outside of Jackson,

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Mississippi. It's about those who take COVID-19 seriously, those who don't, and how that divide breaks uncomfortably along racial lines.

Mostly it's about Bonnie and Mike Bishop, an African American couple who met more than 25 years ago when she was organizing a basketball game to support an adopt-a-school program run by AT&T. She worked there until retiring a couple years ago. He still works there as a digital technician.

We met Mike on an Associated Press road trip across America that three of us are taking to try to make sense of a year like no other, with a global illness, protests over race and virulent politics. We went to talk to a pastor in Jackson about election issues. He told us about Mike and Bonnie.

Mike is tall and handsome, with a beard going grey and a gentle voice that's almost musical. He radiates decency. It's impossible not to like him.

For him, Bonnie is everything. She's the woman in oversized sunglasses who hates to have her picture taken. She loves to read and can sometimes be quiet, Mike says, but once she knows you she's a talker. In photos, it's obvious from how she looks at him that she adores Mike.

In early July, Mike began to feel run down. It was just a minor dry cough, but he took a coronavirus test and it came back positive.

Soon, Bonnie also tested positive.

A couple days later, she woke him up at 3 a.m. "I cannot breathe," she gasped. "911."

Mike, whose own case of COVID-19 meant he couldn't go with her to the hospital, helped strap her onto a stretcher. He held her hand as they walked out to the ambulance.

Then, with lights flashing, the ambulance took her away up Woodlee Drive. He watched it disappear into the night.

"I was empty. Scared. Terrified," he said. "And I was praying."

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

Bonnie was management when they met. Mike is fiercely union. He's also friendly and outgoing and likes to do the right thing. Plus he has the gargantuan hands of a man who was palming basketballs when he was barely a teenager. So he agreed when she asked if he'd join the AT&T team.

At the game, a friend of Mike's nodded toward Bonnie: "Man, she's checking you out," he said.

"She hates it when I tell this story," Mike said.

A week or so later, there was an office party at her house for the people who played in the basketball game. The jury is still out on whether that was a setup to see him again.

"We have been together ever since," he said. "The Sunday (after the party) she invited me over for lunch. I went over for lunch. Monday, on the way to work, I had coffee. That weekend we did something. About a month later I moved in. And about 8, 10 months later we were married."

They'd both been married and divorced. Neither had kids. But their relationship stuck. Hard.

They've been married now for a quarter-century.

They bought a house together, which she has decorated with oversized furniture and leopard print cushions. They went to the Caribbean; they went to New Orleans. They spend time with his mother, who still lives on the small farm west of here where he grew up. Her ailing mother moved in with them for a couple years until she died. There are friends and relatives and a deep wellspring of Christian faith that runs through their lives.

And now?

"I am so empty and lost without her being here," he said. "It is the worst I've ever felt. The most alone I've felt in all my life."

But in his own gentle, self-controlled way, he's also angry.

"Red-blooded American people say they're patriotic but don't care nothing about their fellow man because they don't want to wear a mask!" he said.

Mike is shocked at how lightly many politicians take the disease, and the way mask-wearing has become

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politicized.

"When I see people say that it's a hoax? This is real! I took every protection in the world. I washed my hands so much I joked to the guys at work: 'Pretty soon I'm going to be as white as y'all.'"

He stumbled for the right words: "I go to a bad place if I allow myself to."

Across the country, racial minorities, especially Black people, have been hit hard by COVID-19. They are more likely to live in crowded housing and work essential jobs, whether in grocery stores or hospitals, and have a long history of second-rate health care. African Americans have also long struggled with chronic health problems that can cause more deaths from COVID-19.

The virus ripped through Mississippi's Black community early in the pandemic. About 60% of infections and deaths were among African Americans, who make up 38% of the state's population.

Go to a Black church service now and there are often carefully enforced mask mandates, multiple disinfectant stations, parishioners sitting far apart, and pastors who don't let anyone forget the disease is serious.

"If folks didn't know it, now they know it's not a hoax," Bishop Ronnie Crudup said during a service on the Sunday after President Donald Trump tested positive for the virus, speaking from the pulpit of New Horizon Church International in Jackson.

"I don't agree with Donald Trump," he said. "But that doesn't mean we can't pray for his life."

By late October, with a surge in U.S. cases also hitting Mississippi, white people finally outnumbered Black Mississippians in both cases and deaths. Yet masks remain a rarity in many white neighborhoods.

At the annual Mississippi State Fair, the contrast is jarring. Amid the carnival rides, pig races and stalls selling gator-on-a-stick, the vast majority of Black people were wearing masks on an October evening. Most white people were not, even as their infection rates increased.

"Big parts of the white community, especially in areas that weren't as hard affected, have not been as compliant or engaged actively with social distancing and masking," Dr. Thomas Dobbs, the Mississippi state health officer, told reporters a couple weeks ago.

Mike pauses repeatedly as he talks about how race plays into the response to the virus.

"I think that if it had hit the white community like it hit the African-American community, it'd be a whole different ballgame," he said.

He seems surprised to find himself seeing the virus through the lens of race, which he doesn't normally dwell on much. But the killings of Black people by police and the nationwide protests for racial justice, along with increasingly racist murmurs on social media, have unsettled him.

"I thought that a lot of that stuff that we were supposed to be beyond, we are truly not," he said.

Still, he's a relentless optimist: "It'll get better - it HAS gotten better."

For months, he had to fight to be optimistic about Bonnie, who is in her late 60s.

"Had it not been for family, friends and faith I just don't think I would have made it," he said. "You lose your will to do stuff. It's almost like it's a daily struggle: 'Why am I doing this?'"

When Bonnie arrived at the hospital doctors quickly put her on a ventilator. Then into a medically induced coma.

For weeks, Mike called the hospital continually: 6 a.m.; mid-morning for the hospital shift change, early afternoon; mid-afternoon; dinnertime; just before he went to bed.

Nurses insisted they'd call him if there was news, but he told them that wasn't enough: "I know I might be a pest, but I can't talk to her. She can't talk to me. Y'all guys are my eyes and ears," he said.

After about six weeks, doctors took Bonnie out of the coma. She awoke disoriented and scared, with a breathing tube down her throat that made her feel as if she was choking. They quickly sedated her again. To make her more comfortable, they cut a hole in her windpipe for the breathing tube.

Back home, Mike had returned to work, after taking a month off to recover from COVID-19 and follow Bonnie's progress. He was living alone, in their big suburban house with pillars out front, a perfectly kept lawn, well-trimmed hedges and magnolia and juniper trees.

He'd wake up confused at 2 a.m. when she wasn't beside him. He was alone when he left for work. No one was home when he came back.

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"All this was for her!" he said, gesturing around at the house. "This was hers, and it's empty without her."

In normal times he loves to cook, but these days meals are a chore. Dinners are often leftovers and frozen vegetables that he eats in front of the television, watching the news or a football game. Ten minutes later he's finished and washing the dishes at the kitchen sink.

He avoids things that remind him too much of Bonnie. Her purse sits untouched in their bedroom, along with her iPad. He won't sleep on her side of the bed.

At night, he sleeps with the TV on.

"If I don't have the TV on I hear the clock all night. I hear the 'tick-tock, tick-tock.'" he said. "If it rains, I can hear the rain dripping."

He comes from a large, tightly knit family. He'd felt the pain of losing two brothers and two sisters. He couldn't imagine losing Bonnie, even if he always believed she'd survive.

"But I also had to keep praying that whatever God's will, I got to be able to accept it."

"There were nights that I just prayed and prayed that she'd just make it to the next day," he said. "Make it to the next day. Just make it to the next day."

Medical problems continued even after she was brought out of the coma. She needed regular dialysis. Fevers would spike. She was disoriented and sleepy from all the drugs.

Mike saw her a couple times when she was in the Intensive Care Unit, though she didn't know he was there.

At home, he still spoke to her, speaking aloud into the silence

"I'd have these conversations just like I'm talking to you," he said.

Very slowly she started to get better. She couldn't feed herself for weeks because she was so weak. The breathing tube meant she could only speak with the help of a small electronic voicebox.

Day by day, though, they communicated more. FaceTime became a lifeline.

By that point he was emotionally spent. His friends could see it.

"It's kind of hard to fake strength when you feel like you're on the verge of a nervous breakdown," he said.

There were sparks of hope: when the fevers stopped; when she could hold a conversation; when she first spoke without the electronic voicebox.

But it was not until late September, maybe early October, that Mike's fear began subsiding, as he and Bonnie spoke multiple times a day. After more than three months in bed, she'd be going into a rehab facility soon, to re-learn how to walk and care for herself.

In mid-October, he hoped she'd be back by late November. He was already planning the Thanksgiving meal: a small turkey, gravy, creamed corn, salad. His mother would bake a cake.

"The usual," he said happily.

This week, he got even better news.

Bonnie's recovery was going far faster than expected. The weeks of rehabilitation could be done at home, doctors said.

She'll be home this weekend.

"She's not 100 percent, but she's close enough," he said in a phone call.

Mike was almost giddy. He could take care of her, protect her, cook for her. Finally, her voice would fill the quiet of the big house again.

"I love that woman."

Follow Sullivan on Twitter at @ByTimSullivan

3 dead in knife attack in French church; terrorism suspected

By LORI HINNANT Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — An attacker armed with a knife killed three people at a church Thursday in the Mediterranean city of Nice, French authorities said. It was the third attack in two months in France, which has

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grown increasingly tense during a furor over caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad that were re-published by the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo.

Other confrontations and attacks were reported Thursday in the southern city of Avignon and in the Saudi city of Jeddah, but it was not immediately clear if they were linked to the attack in Nice.

Thursday's assailant in Nice was wounded by police and hospitalized after the killings at the Notre Dame Basilica, less than a kilometer (half-mile) from the site in 2016 where another attacker plowed a truck into a Bastille Day crowd, killing dozens of people.

France's anti-terrorism prosecutor's office opened an investigation into the Nice killings, which marked the third attack since the September opening of the trial of 14 people linked to the January 2015 killings at Charlie Hebdo and a kosher supermarket. The gunmen in the 2015 attacks claimed allegiance to the Islamic State group and al-Qaida.

Thursday's attacker was believed to be acting alone and police are not searching for other assailants, said two police officials, who were not authorized to be publicly named.

"He cried 'Allah Akbar!' over and over, even after he was injured," said Nice Mayor Christian Estrosi, who told BFM television that two women and a man had died, two inside the church and a third who fled to a nearby bar but was mortally wounded. "The meaning of his gesture left no doubt."

French media showed the Nice neighborhood locked down and surrounded by police and emergency vehicles. Sounds of explosions could be heard as sappers exploded suspicious objects.

In the southern city of Avignon later in the morning, an armed man was shot to death by police after he refused to drop his weapon and a flash-ball shot failed to stop him, one police official said. And a Saudi state-run news agency said a man stabbed a guard at the French consulate in Jiddah, wounding the guard before he was arrested.

The French Council of the Muslim Faith condemned the Nice attack and called on French Muslims to refrain from festivities this week marking the birth of Muhammed "as a sign of mourning and in solidarity with the victims and their loved ones."

Islamic State extremists issued a video on Wednesday renewing calls for attacks against France.

The lower house of parliament suspended a debate on France's new virus restrictions and held a moment of silence Thursday for the victims. The prime minister rushed from the hall to a crisis center overseeing the aftermath of the Nice attack. French President Emmanuel Macron was headed to Nice later in the day.

Less than two weeks ago, an assailant decapitated a French middle school teacher who showed caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad for a class on free speech. Those caricatures were published by Charlie Hebdo and cited by the men who gunned down the newspaper's editorial meeting in 2015.

In September, a man who had sought asylum in France attacked bystanders outside Charlie Hebdo's former offices with a butcher knife.

Typhoon, landslides leave 35 dead, dozens missing in Vietnam

By HAU DINH Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — A typhoon that officials said was the most powerful to hit Vietnam in 20 years blew away from the country on Thursday after setting off landslides, sinking boats and knocking out power to at least 1.7 million people. At least 35 people were killed and more than 50 were missing, state media said.

The immediate focus for rescuers was on three villages in the country's central region where landslides killed at least 19 people and are suspected of burying more than 40 others in thick mud and debris.

Deputy Prime Minister Trinh Dinh Dung traveled to the site of one landslide where soldiers were working to clear debris with bulldozers and he ordered officers to urgently send more troops to help with the efforts.

"We must reach the landslide site the fastest way. First, send in more soldiers before we can get the big machine there. We have to reach the area by all means, including by using helicopters," he said.

Also among the dead were 12 fishermen whose boats sank Wednesday as Typhoon Molave approached with winds of up to 150 kilometers (93 miles) per hour. Another 14 fisherman were still missing.

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Officials said the death toll across the country may rise as some regions have been unable to report details of damage and casualties.

Rescuers dug up eight bodies Thursday morning in Tra Van village in Quang Nam province where a hillside collapsed on houses. The victims had taken shelter in the community as the typhoon approached, the official Vietnam News Agency reported.

In Tra Leng village, about 45 kilometers (28 miles) from Tra Van, another landslide buried a community with several houses occupied by about 45 people. Four people escaped, while rescuers recovered eight bodies and later pulled out four villagers alive, including two children, who were trapped in a buried house, Vietnam News said.

The survivors pulled from the thick brown debris were brought to a hospital with arm and leg fractures and other injuries. Rescuers continued a frantic search for at least 33 others believed to be buried.

Tra Leng was initially inaccessible due to damaged roads, flooding and other landslides but by Thursday afternoon government disaster-response teams were able to open up a road with bulldozers and excavators and brought in more rescuers and heavy equipment.

As troops scrambled to rescue those buried alive in Tra Leng, another part of a rain-soaked mountain-side cascaded down in a torrent of mud in nearby Phuoc Loc district, killing three people and trapping 11, Vietnam News said.

Other villagers in Phuoc Loc were advised to flee to safety given the unstable mountain slope.

The three landslide-hit areas lie in the mountains of hard-hit Quang Nam province in a coastal region still recovering from floods that killed 136 people and destroyed hundreds of houses earlier this month.

Quang Nam, a tourist draw for an ancient town and Hindu temples, is about 800 kilometers (500 miles) southeast of Hanoi.

Elsewhere, four people were killed by falling trees and collapsed houses in Quang Nam and Gia Lai provinces when the typhoon slammed into the coast Wednesday.

Navy search and rescue boats found the bodies of 12 of 26 fishermen whose boats sank Wednesday off Binh Dinh province, state media said.

The typhoon blew off roofs of about 56,000 houses and caused a massive blackout in Quang Ngai province, where 1.7 million people endured the onslaught of the typhoon overnight in darkness, according to Vietnam News.

At least 40,000 people were evacuated to emergency shelters and authorities shut down offices, factories and schools to prevent casualties.

The typhoon left at least 16 people dead in the Philippines before moving across the South China Sea to Vietnam.

Associated Press writer Jim Gomez in Manila, Philippines, contributed to this report.

Zeta barrels northeast after battering storm-weary coast

By REBECCA SANTANA and KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A fast-moving Zeta weakened to a tropical storm as it barreled northeast Thursday morning after ripping through Louisiana and Mississippi where storm-weary residents were advised to stay indoors overnight while officials assessed the havoc the storm had wrought.

The storm raged onshore Wednesday afternoon in the small village of Cocodrie in Louisiana as a strong Category 2 and then moved swiftly across the New Orleans area and into neighboring Mississippi, bringing with it both fierce winds and storm surge. There was heavy rain at times but since the storm was so fast-moving, rain related flooding wasn't as much of a concern.

Zeta weakened over central Alabama but its strong winds continued across portions of the state and the Florida Panhandle. The storm was about 65 miles (104 kilometers) west northwest of Atlanta, Georgia, with maximum sustained winds of 60 mph (96 kph). Zeta is moving quickly toward the northeast at 39 mph (62 kph).

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The storm killed at least one person, a 55-year-old man who a Louisiana coroner said was electrocuted by a downed power line in New Orleans, and officials said life-threatening conditions would last into Thursday.

Before dawn Thursday, about 1.8 million customers across Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia were without power, according to the website PowerOutage.us.

Waveland Mayor Mike Smith told WLOX-TV that his Mississippi Gulf Coast city, which was part of the area most heavily damaged by 2005's Hurricane Katrina has maybe taken the worst hit since then from Zeta.

"We're going to see a whole lot of damage in the morning," Smith said. Among the many trees blown down was one that fell on Smith's own house. "It was my next-door neighbor's and he wanted to give it to me, apparently," Smith said.

In Louisiana, Gov. John Bel Edwards was expected Thursday to tour the coastal regions hardest hit by the storm. During a radio interview Wednesday evening, Edwards said the wind had caused extensive structural damage. And as neighbors and church groups started reaching out to help those affected, he also highlighted the need to protect against the coronavirus at the same time.

"Offer the help but do it with a mask on," he said.

Much of New Orleans and the surrounding area was without power Wednesday night. The storm packed a punch as it whipped through the city. Signs outside bars and restaurants swayed back and forth in the wind and palm trees along Canal Street whipped furiously. Officials said a person was hospitalized with minor injuries after a structure collapsed.

More than 200 trees were reported down in the city. Echoing a plea made by officials across the Gulf Coast in the dark hours after the storm passed, New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell implored residents to stay home and let city officials assess the damage.

"Although we have made it through, we have been damaged, we have been hit," she said.

Along coastal Louisiana, there were reports of some trailers flipped over, a gas station destroyed, and downed power lines and trees.

Zeta had top sustained winds of 110 mph (177 kph) as a Category 2 hurricane at landfall and is the 27th named storm of a historically busy Atlantic hurricane season — with over a month left to go. It set a new record as the 11th named storm to make landfall in the continental U.S. in a single season, well beyond the nine storms that hit in 1916.

Zeta weakened to a Category 1 hurricane with winds of 90 mph (144 kph) as it moved into southern Mississippi a few hours after landfall.

As much as 5 feet of Gulf water surrounded a casino in Biloxi, Mississippi, and deputies in Harrison County, Mississippi, received multiple calls from people who had remained in mobile homes that were threatened by winds.

In the small coastal town of Bay St. Louis in Mississippi, former mayor Les Fillingame said the storm was "very intense" when it blew through.

"It was a noisy storm. It was a truly howling wind," he said, but said thankfully it was also fast-moving. "It was a lot of wind for several hours which is enough."

Tropical storm warnings were issued as far away as southern Virginia, highly unusual for the region. Forecasters issued a string of tornado warnings for as far east as the Florida Panhandle. And Atlanta, Georgia, was under a tropical storm warning for the second time ever. Its first warning was in 2017 when Hurricane Irma roared into Florida as a deadly Category 4 storm.

New Orleans was in the warning areas of six previous storms that veered east or west this season. This time, Zeta stayed on course. Officials had been worried about the loss of a power from a turbine that helps power the city's aging drainage infrastructure and whether that would leave the city vulnerable to flooding but Zeta's swift movement meant flooding wasn't an issue.

On Tuesday, Zeta raked across Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, toppling trees and briefly cutting power to more than 300,000 people but causing no deaths.

It then regained strength over the Gulf of Mexico along a path slightly to the east of those of Hurricane Laura, which was blamed for at least 27 deaths in Louisiana in August, and Hurricane Delta, which exac-

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erabated Laura's damage in the same area weeks later.

The deteriorating weather prompted early voting sites to close for hours in the western Florida Panhandle. One voter in Mississippi worried about how long felled trees and debris might block roads.

"With the election I just kind of hope the city gets the roads clear by November 3rd so everybody can get out and vote," said Mackenzie Umanzor, of D'Iberville, Mississippi.

An average season sees six hurricanes and 12 named storms. This extraordinarily busy season has focused attention on climate change, which scientists say is causing wetter, stronger and more destructive storms.

And the fact that so many of the storms have been concentrated in such a small piece of Gulf Coast real estate has meant repeated damage for some places. On Dauphin Island, Alabama, Mayor Jeff Collier said residents and workers had nearly finished cleaning up from Hurricane Sally when the wind started blowing and the water started rising yet again.

"This is going to put his back to square one again," Collier said.

Plaisance reported from Laffite, Louisiana. Associated Press contributors include Gerald Herbert in New Orleans; Jay Reeves, in Birmingham, Alabama; Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Seth Borenstein in Kensington, Maryland; Jeff Martin in Marietta, Georgia; Sophia Tulp and Jeff Amy in Atlanta; and Gabriel Alcocer in Cancun, Mexico.

Trump paints apocalyptic portrait of life in US under Biden

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The suburbs wouldn't be the suburbs anymore, the economy would sink into its worst depression ever and police departments would cease to exist. Even America's older adults would be left to figure out how to get by without heat, air conditioning or electricity.

This is the apocalyptic version of American life that President Donald Trump argues would be the dire consequence of turning over the White House to Democrat Joe Biden.

"He'll bury you in regulations, dismantle your police departments, dissolve our borders, confiscate your guns, terminate religious liberty, destroy your suburbs," Trump said in one of many over-the-top pronouncements about Biden in the campaign's final weeks. Trump typically makes his warning about the fate of suburbia as he showcases his own decision to end federal regulations that govern the placement of low-income housing in the suburbs.

Campaign rhetoric can often become heated and hyperbolic as candidates scrap for every last advantage before the votes are counted.

Experts say instilling fear in one's opponent is usually the primary motivating factor behind such talk as candidates seek to give voters a reason to put a checkmark next to their name on the ballot.

"It's pure fear and fear based on a particular kind of ignorance that only works if your hearers have that particular kind of ignorance," Robin Lakoff, professor emerita of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley, said of Trump's claims about Biden.

Trump made fear — particularly the fear of immigrants — a major theme of his 2016 campaign. Now, he is giving voters a laundry list of mostly implausible reasons to fear a Biden presidency.

"This election is a choice between a TRUMP RECOVERY or a BIDEN DEPRESSION," the president tweeted, echoing what he tells supporters at rallies. "It's a choice between a TRUMP BOOM or a BIDEN LOCKDOWN. It's a choice between our plan to Kill the virus — or Biden's plan to kill the American Dream!"

Trump has criticized Biden for saying he'd follow the scientists, and the president claims the Democrat would shut the country down. In fact, Biden hasn't said whether he'd endorse large-scale shutdowns of the nation's economy, if things get drastically worse, like much of the country did in March.

"If you vote for Biden, it means no kids in school, no graduations, no weddings, no Thanksgiving, no Christmas and no Fourth of July together," Trump said at a rally Wednesday in Goodyear, Arizona. "Other than that, you have a wonderful life."

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania,

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said Trump's rhetoric is effective with people who are already disposed to believe such things about Biden. But to a person who is not in the audience, she said, such talk is a "sign of desperation."

"The problem with the rhetoric is it's an alienating rhetoric for people who hear it as extreme and improbable," Jamieson said. It's also problematic, she said, "because you expect a president of the United States to calibrate his rhetoric to reality in at least some plausible way."

Last week in Florida, Trump sought to boost his standing among older Americans angered by his response to the coronavirus by portraying Biden as the one who would do them harm. Trump falsely said Biden's energy plan "would mean that America's seniors have no air conditioning during the summer, no heat during the winter and no electricity during peak hours."

During a summer of unrest that followed the police killings of Black men, Trump sought to portray Biden as beholden to the "radical-left" forces Trump claimed were behind the protests. He also argued that Biden wouldn't be able to keep such unrest from spreading to the suburbs.

David Zarefsky, who teaches courses about presidential rhetoric at Northwestern, said close examination shows the weakness in Trump's argument about Biden and the suburbs.

"I think most people would not put it together as being a sound argument," said Zarefsky, a past president of the Rhetoric Society of America.

Leading Democrats have deployed their own dire talk.

In July, Biden said Trump was the country's first racist president, which glossed over the presidents before Trump who had held slaves.

"We've had racists, and they've existed. They've tried to get elected president," Biden said. "He's the first one that has."

And in his Democratic National Convention speech, former President Barack Obama said four more years of the Republican in the White House would jeopardize American democracy.

"That's what's at stake right now. Our democracy," Obama said.

Jamieson said that claim is different because it is grounded in the president's own norm-busting behavior, such as his attacks on the Justice Department and on the press, or his unfounded challenges to voting by mail and the legitimacy of Tuesday's election.

"Those who are making the argument about Trump are offering evidence from his rhetoric and actions," she said, adding that the attacks on Biden are "not justified by what he's said or done."

Vanessa Beasley, a professor of communication studies at Vanderbilt University, said all presidents fall back on "us versus them" rhetoric during campaigns, but that once in office the rhetoric is tempered by the reality of having to govern for all.

She cited Obama as an example, noting the disappointment among some of his supporters after he was elected and the aspirational "hope and change" rhetoric that helped power his political rise gave way to more measured discourse.

"The difference with Trump," she added, "is that he never stops the 'us versus them.'"

Beasley added that hyperbolic rhetoric can be optimistic, citing President Ronald Reagan's "Morning in America" campaign from the 1980s as a classic example.

"Hyperbole doesn't always have to go to fear," she said.

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/>.

Letters, texts, caravans, parades: Advocates mobilize voters

By JOCELYN NOVECK and CLAIRE GALOFARO Associated Press

Sometimes her hand hurt, but Nancy Gehman kept writing. Every evening from July until mid-October, the 85-year-old retiree sat with a gel pen, writing notes imploring fellow Americans to find a way to vote. Then she mailed them: All 1,260 letters.

"It was comforting to know that I was doing something productive," she says.

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Gehman, who lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is one of 182,000 people who have participated in Vote Forward, a 50-state letter-writing campaign to more than 17.5 million homes. The grassroots effort is one of countless ways in which individuals and organizations are working to get people to the polls in an election where, it's safe to say, nothing is normal.

In the best of times, it's a massive logistical challenge to get millions out to vote. In 2020, the difficulty has been compounded: by fear of the coronavirus, by complications and confusion over mail-in ballots, by palpable anxiety over the bitter divisions in the country.

As early voting has surged dramatically, with more than 73 million people estimated to have cast ballots, advocates have been mobilizing in myriad ways, from neighborhood groups to national movements, from block associations to college marching bands to lone violinists. Voters have been ushered to the polls by fleets of minivans, with bicycle parades and on horseback in Indian Country. When they get there, they're sometimes welcomed by a cello performance or a choreographed dance party.

Often unable to knock on doors or chat in person because of virus concerns, advocates have had to adapt. They've been texting and phone banking, holding drive-in rallies and organizing caravans.

What unites these efforts is the certainty that this is an election year like no other, and that voting is essential.

In Native American tribal communities devastated by the coronavirus, from job losses to sickness and death, advocates are mindful of causing further stress.

"As much as we know voting is important and necessary ... people are struggling," says advocate Ahtza Dawn Chavez. "In some ways, a lot of it can come off as just being insensitive."

In a normal election cycle, Chavez, who lives in Albuquerque and is Navajo and Kewa, and colleagues would knock on doors and sit down for coffee. Now, they're relying on ambassadors within communities to talk with their neighbors. They're also using robocalls, phone banking and mass texting. Of special concern are older adults.

"Our elderly are basically our library, they are our encyclopedia, our historical and cultural knowledge holders," Chavez said. "Making sure people have a safe way to cast their votes and access their polling locations was something we were very concerned about." In Arizona's Indian Country, "Ride to the Polls" has targeted younger voters with organized groups on horseback.

It's not only the coronavirus that's been an obstacle. In North Carolina, civil rights leader the Rev. William Barber II and others have been training clergy members to mobilize their congregations and make sure they know their options and rights, and to push back against any misinformation that might prevent them from voting.

"Don't let anybody suppress, stop, stymie, deter, detract your right to vote," Barber recently told attendees of a get-out-the-vote event.

In 2016, Patrisse Cullors, one of the creators of Black Lives Matter, hadn't thought about how she could leverage the platform to get out the vote. Now, after an unprecedented surge of Black Lives Matter-themed protests in recent months, Cullors and the foundation are hosting pandemic-safe drive-in rallies, text-banking voters and leveraging the millions of dollars in donations to run ads focused on the Black vote, Cullors said.

In Louisville, Kentucky, a city that has been rocked by demonstrations over the killing by police of Breonna Taylor, community groups, voters and activists have joined together in a parade of cars, trucks and buses through the city's predominantly Black West End in an effort to get out the vote. The effort, called "Protest to the Polls," is led by the Louisville Urban League and aims to take the summer's demands for racial and social justice to the ballot box, said Sadiqa Reynolds, president and CEO.

"We are reclaiming our votes," she said.

Some get-out-the-vote efforts have involved large-scale planning; others have been the work of one or two people with a sudden idea.

On the larger side is the nonprofit Neighborhood Assistance Corporations of America, which has deployed a fleet of vans in southwest Texas and Atlanta, and recently expanded to Charlotte, North Carolina. The

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vans have carted 25,000 people to the polls, said media coordinator Tim Trumble.

The community justice organization hopes it sends a message: Voter suppression efforts in minority communities will backfire. The 15-passenger vans, which accommodate six people with social distancing, get going as the sun comes up and drive all day, and are sanitized between each trip.

On the smaller side: "Play for the Vote," a nonpartisan effort by Boston cellist Mike Block that organized musicians to play for voters while they wait to cast their ballots. Block came up with the idea while practicing his instrument the morning after the chaotic first presidential debate.

"I thought, 'The music is helping me — maybe I should just go down to my polling location and play.' It became obvious how great it would be if every musician did that," he said.

So Block, 38, has since enlisted several hundred musicians from 39 states and the District of Columbia who will perform classical, folk, bluegrass, country, hip hop or rock — but nothing with a political bent — for voters stuck standing in long lines. Participants range from musicians with New York's Metropolitan Opera orchestra to a high school orchestra in Wyoming.

Also on the musical front, "Joy to the Polls" seeks to make a memorable experience of waiting in line to vote. A recent video on social media showed voters in Philadelphia dancing joyfully as they waited, alongside members of the Resistance Revival Chorus.

In Cincinnati, Diane Cunningham Redden, an official with the Hamilton County Republican Party, has been holding small, socially distanced patio gatherings, on the theory that "if 28 people each go home and talk to five friends, those are votes."

Redden heads a group called SHELeads, which identifies and supports female candidates. She has also helped organize bring-your-own-sign events supporting President Donald Trump and others at busy intersections.

Some voters are wary of catching the virus by voting in person, but they're also concerned about the mail-in option. In Columbus, Ohio, 80-year-old Carol Tonkins requested an absentee ballot this year for the first time, but didn't totally trust the mail.

So she called Katie Beaumont, who directs a program, At Home on High, that helps older adults like Tonkins stay home by providing transportation, yardwork, shopping and other services. Beaumont dropped Tonkins' ballot off last Wednesday. "We don't care the way you vote. We just want you to vote," Beaumont said.

In some cases, new strategies have yielded unexpected benefits.

In Sacramento, California, advocate Nichole Rice can't knock on doors because of the coronavirus, and she can't make phone calls because of her two small, sometimes loud, children.

Instead, she's texting hundreds of people every day from an app on her phone. She says that when she can convince them she's not a robot -- which takes some doing in 2020 -- she can have extended conversations with many more voters than she ever would have knocking on doors.

It's led to some vulnerable moments. Rice said one voter said her priorities had changed because her husband had just undergone bypass surgery. Another person revealed her husband was cheating on her.

"People are way more willing to disclose things ... than they ever did in person," she said.

In Mississippi, which has some of the country's most restrictive voting regulations — rules that historically have kept African Americans from voting — retired educator Fran Bridges has been volunteering with several neighborhood associations in Jackson to conduct street-by-street registration.

The idea was that people might be more inclined to register if contacted by their neighbors. She enlisted one person to be the point person for each street. They covered at least 100 streets that way.

Like Gehman in New Mexico, Rhada Pyati in Philadelphia has devoted untold hours to writing letters as part of Vote Forward.

"I don't want to wake up on the morning of Wednesday, Nov. 4, and feel I didn't try as hard as I possibly could," she said.

There's at least some evidence that her efforts and those of fellow letter writers have had an impact. One recipient, Carlos Flores in Miami, said he'd already been planning to vote, but the passionate letter he received from Portland, Oregon, on Tuesday got him fired up.

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A bakery owner, Flores, 34, voted this week in his first presidential race since gaining citizenship in 2018. "Lots of people in the world can't vote," Flores said. "This is a privilege. Every vote counts."

Noveck reported from New York and Galofaro from Louisville, Kentucky. Also contributing to this report were Associated Press writers Adam Beam in Sacramento, Calif.; Piper Hudspeth Blackburn in Louisville, Ky.; Felicia Fonseca in Albuquerque, N.M.; William J. Kole in Boston; Aaron Morrison in New York; Andrew Welsh-Huggins in Columbus, Ohio; and Leah Willingham in Jackson, Miss.

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/>.

Trump, Biden to appeal to last-minute voters in Florida

By ZEKE MILLER, AAMER MADHANI and TAMARA LUSH Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump and Democratic rival Joe Biden are set to chase votes in Florida, a state all but essential to the Republican's pathway to another term as both nominees turn their focus to encouraging voters to turn out on Election Day.

More than 73 million Americans have already voted, absentee or by mail, and Trump and Biden are trying to energize the millions more who will vote in person on Tuesday. While the Election Day vote traditionally favors Republicans and early votes tend toward Democrats, the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 227,000 people in the United States, has injected new uncertainty about the makeup of the electorate.

Trump and Biden will appear in Tampa hours apart on Thursday, visiting the western end of the state's Interstate 4 corridor, the area known for its rapid residential growth, sprawling suburbs and status as an ever-changing, hard-fought battleground during presidential elections.

The visit comes as Biden has framed his closing argument to voters on responsible management of the COVID-19 pandemic and Trump promises that the nation is on course to "vanquish the virus" even as it sets records for confirmed new infections.

"Even if I win, it's going to take a lot of hard work to end this pandemic," Biden said Wednesday during a speech in Wilmington, Delaware. "I do promise this: We will start on day one doing the right things."

Trump spent Wednesday in Arizona, where relaxed rules on social distancing made staging big rallies easier. Thousands gathered in close proximity without wearing masks — a trend that was expected to continue through more than a dozen events in the final sprint to Election Day.

Biden, meanwhile, heads later in the week to three more states Trump won in 2016: Iowa, Wisconsin and Michigan, where he'll hold a joint Saturday rally with former President Barack Obama.

The pandemic's consequences were escalating, with deaths climbing in 39 states and an average of 805 people dying daily nationwide — up from 714 two weeks ago. The sharp rise sent shockwaves through financial markets, causing the Dow Jones Industrial Average to drop 900-plus points.

Trump, who frequently lauds rising markets, failed to mention the decline on Wednesday. But he promised that economic growth figures for the summer quarter, due Thursday, would be strong, declaring during a rally in Bullhead City, Arizona, "This election is a choice between a Trump super-recovery and a Biden depression."

Trump is betting on the GOP's vast field and data operations, and efforts known as "poll flushing" — monitoring precinct lists for who has and has not yet voted — to provide a late boost of votes on Election Day. The Republican National Committee, which has more than 3,000 field staff and claims more than 2.5 million volunteers, will use that information to reach out to Trump supporters who have not voted throughout Election Day to ensure they get to the polls.

"We will continue our historic voter outreach efforts by knocking on over 4.5 million doors and making 15 million more calls to ensure voters turn out to the polls and vote for President Trump and Republicans up and down the ballot," party spokesperson Mandi Merritt said.

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Nowhere may those efforts be more important than in Florida. Without the battleground state's 29 electoral votes, Trump's path to victory is exceptionally difficult.

Trump is banking on local news coverage of his visit to overcome a substantial advertising deficit stemming from a late cash crunch. Biden and his allies are outspending Trump and his backers by more than 3-to-1 in Florida — about \$23 million to about \$7 million — in the final push to Election Day, according to data from ad tracking firm Kantar/CMAG.

In both Hillsborough County, which includes Tampa, and the adjacent Pinellas County, Democrats are crushing vote by mail. As of Wednesday morning, more than 53,000 Democrats had voted by mail in Hillsborough than Republicans. In Pinellas, the largest of the four counties in the state to switch from Obama to Trump in 2016, that number was just shy of 30,000 more Democrats voting by mail than Republicans.

Republicans in both counties have a slight edge in the state's in-person early voting, which began last Saturday as Trump himself voted in Palm Beach County downstate, and the GOP will likely need a strong showing on Tuesday to overcome Democratic leads.

Because of concerns about submission deadlines, Postal Service backlogs and the potential for drawn-out legal challenges, Democrats are pressing their backers who have yet to return a ballot to head to the polls in person. Trump, meanwhile, is banking on enthusiasm among his Election Day supporters to overcome indicated Democratic strength in some early returns.

Miller reported from Washington and Madhani from Bullhead City, Ariz. Associated Press writers Alexandra Jaffe in Wilmington, Del.; Michelle Price in Bullhead City, Ariz.; Kathleen Ronayne in Phoenix; and Will Weissert in Washington contributed to this report.

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

Merkel warns Germans of a 'difficult winter' as virus surges

BERLIN (AP) — Chancellor Angela Merkel told Germans to expect a "difficult winter" as the number of newly reported coronavirus cases in the country hit a new high.

Merkel spoke Thursday in Parliament a day after she and the governors of Germany's 16 states agreed upon far-reaching restrictions to curb the spread of the virus, including the closure of bars and restaurants, limits on social contacts and bans on concerts and other public events.

Germany's disease control agency said local health authorities reported 16,774 new positive tests for COVID-19 in the past day, pushing the country's total since the start of the outbreak close to half a million. The Robert Koch Institute also recorded 89 additional deaths, taking the country's total to 10,272. That is still one-fourth the death toll in Britain.

Merkel told lawmakers that Germany is in a "dramatic situation" as it goes into winter, which she said would be "four long, difficult months. But it will end."

The long-time German leader said authorities had no choice but to drastically reduce social contacts as three-quarters of infections in Germany now can't be traced anymore.

"If we wait until the ICUs are full, then it will be too late," she said.

Merkel said democratic debate about the virus restrictions was important, but blasted some critics who have claimed the German government is exaggerating the threat of the virus.

"Lies and disinformation, conspiracies and hatred damage not just the debate but also the battle against the virus," she said. "It's not just democratic debate that depends on our relationship to facts and information, human lives depend on it."

Opposition leader Alexander Gauland of the far-right Alternative for Germany party responded to Merkel's speech by accusing the government of "wartime propaganda" and likened the pandemic to motorized traffic, arguing that society accepts a certain number of car deaths too.

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

France braces for monthlong lockdown as virus deaths mount

PARIS (AP) — French doctors expressed relief but business owners were in despair as France prepared Thursday to shut down again for a month to try to put the brakes on a fast-moving fall coronavirus outbreak.

Shoppers at a Paris farmers' market said Thursday they were ready to restrict their freedoms given the rising number of virus-related deaths and COVID-19 patients filling French hospitals.

The new lockdown is gentler than what France saw in the spring, but still a shock to restaurants and other non-essential businesses that have been ordered to close their doors in one of the world's biggest economies.

French schools will stay open this time, to reduce learning gaps and allow parents to keep working. Farmer' markets, parks and factories can also continue operating, officials said.

French lawmakers are voting Thursday on the new restrictions announced by President Emmanuel Macron, which are set to come into effect at midnight. The lower house of parliament is dominated by Macron's centrist party, so approval is virtually guaranteed. The prime minister will lay out details of the virus-fighting plan Thursday evening.

Dr. Eric Caumes, head of the infectious and tropical disease department at Paris' Pitie-Salpetriere Hospital, said Thursday on BFM television that the new restrictions are "an admission of failure" of the government's prevention efforts. He urged tougher restrictions.

The head of France's main business lobby MEDEF, Geoffroy Roux de Bézieux, said on Europe-1 radio Thursday that "shutting businesses that are not responsible for contamination is a mistake" that could drive many into bankruptcy. He claimed it was a gift to internet retailer Amazon, "the big winner from confinement."

COVID patients now fill 60% of French intensive care units, and France is reporting tens of thousands of new cases daily. Authorities reported 244 virus-related deaths in a single day Wednesday, for a total of 35,785 since the pandemic began, the third-highest toll in Europe after Britain and Italy.

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Short of medics as virus surges, central Europe sounds alarm

By KAREL JANICEK and VANESSA GERA Associated Press

KYJOV, Czech Republic (AP) — Soldiers in Poland are giving coronavirus tests. American National Guard troops with medical training are headed to the Czech Republic to work alongside doctors there. A Czech university student is running blood samples to labs, and the mayor of the capital is taking shifts at a hospital.

With cases surging in many central European countries, firefighters, students and retired doctors are being asked to help shore up buckling health care systems.

"This is actually terrifying," Dr. Piotr Suwalski, the head of the cardiac surgery ward at a Polish hospital said on a day when daily COVID-19 cases rose 20% nationwide. "I think if we continue to gain 20% a day, no system can withstand it."

Even before the pandemic, many countries in the region faced a tragic shortage of medical personnel due to years of underfunding in their public health sectors and an exodus of doctors and nurses to better paying jobs in Western Europe after the nations joined the European Union in 2004. Now, with the virus ripping through their hospitals, many health workers have been sickened, compounding the shortfall.

Over 13,200 medical personnel across the Czech Republic have been infected, including 6,000 nurses and 2,600 doctors, according to the doctors' union.

It's not just clinicians these countries need. Both Poland and the Czech Republic are building field hos-

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pitals as beds fill up on wards, and authorities say there are only 12 ventilators left in all hospitals taking COVID-19 patients in the region around Warsaw, the Polish capital.

This may sound familiar, but not for these countries. Many in the region imposed tough restrictions in the spring — including sealing borders and closing schools, stores and restaurants — and saw very low infection rates even as the virus killed tens of thousands in Western Europe.

But now many central European countries are seeing an onslaught similar to the one their western neighbors experienced — and the same dire warnings.

As he announced new restrictions last week, Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis put a date on when his country's health system would collapse, if the new regulations were not imposed to slow the virus's spread: between Nov. 7 and 11.

With one of the highest infection rates in Europe, the Czech Republic's hospitals are desperately looking for volunteers. The government is deploying thousands of medical students to hospitals and other students to testing sites.

In the capital of Prague, Mayor Zdenek Hrib, who has a degree in medicine, volunteered to help do initial exams of possible coronavirus patients at a university hospital. Soon, 28 medical personnel from the Nebraska and Texas national guards are expected to arrive to help treat patients at Prague's military hospital and a new field hospital at the city's exhibition ground.

Croatia has asked former doctors to come out of retirement to help in hospitals, while Slovenia has put retired physicians and current medical students on standby in case its situation deteriorates.

Poland, meanwhile, is mobilizing soldiers to conduct COVID-19 testing, so medical professionals can focus on helping patients, as Warsaw's National Stadium and other spaces are being transformed into field hospitals. Twice this week, the country has reported a record number of daily new infections, and on Wednesday it also announced a record number of daily deaths, at 236.

At the Interior Ministry Hospital in Warsaw, the capital's main coronavirus hospital, deaths among people with cancer and other illnesses are also rising because doctors and nurses simply cannot keep up with their care, said Suwalski, the head of the cardiac surgery ward.

"The numbers of victims of this pandemic are not just the patients dying directly from COVID-19," Suwalski said. "There are also (patients) who die because of the change of conditions, and even the collapse of the medical system."

The problem is felt especially keenly in small town hospitals that don't have the resources of university medical centers, such as the one in Kyjov, a southeastern Czech town of 11,000.

The director of the hospital there, Lubomir Wenzl, says staffing became critical in October as the number of COVID-19 patients doubled over three weeks to almost 60, and 75 of the medical staff fell ill.

He appealed for volunteers on social media and got so many offers that the hospital could pick who it needed. Mostly, the hospital chose people who have some medical training. They keep a roster of others they can call if they need them.

"I have healthy hands and legs, and this is something as a firefighter I can do," said Antonin Kuchar, the deputy mayor and a volunteer firefighter who has helped move patients around the hospital.

Vojtech Coufal, a mechanical engineering student at a university in Brno, also answered the call. The 20-year-old has first-aid training and was couriering blood samples around the hospital campus.

While the volunteers' help is vital, their roles are obviously limited, said Dr. Jiri Vyhnal, chief of the intensive care unit in Kyjov that treats COVID-19 patients in serious condition.

"It's impossible to replace those doctors by anyone else, because you need a long time to gain experience to become a good intensive care specialist," Vyhnal said. "The problem is that a small group of doctors and nurses will have to take care of a high number of patients treated with lung ventilation."

As the number of coronavirus patients rises, the hospital has closed several wards: ones for ear, nose and throat, neurology, rehabilitation and orthopedics.

"We have been forced to stop doing planned operations, but we have to go on with urgent ones," Wenzl, the hospital director, said.

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The intensive care ward, meanwhile, has 11 patients and can accept up to 18, according to Vyhna. He said he and his staff are ready to work on their days off "to prevent an Italian scenario," referring to how hospitals there became overwhelmed.

"We will do everything," he said. "But of course we are afraid, who wouldn't be?"

Gera reported from Warsaw, Poland. Associated Press writer Dusan Stojanovic contributed from Belgrade, Serbia.

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India's coronavirus cases cross 8 million, behind US

By ASHOK SHARMA Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India's confirmed coronavirus caseload surpassed 8 million on Thursday with daily infections dipping to the lowest level this week, as concerns grew over a major Hindu festival season and winter setting in.

India's trajectory is moving toward the worst-hit country, the United States, which has over 8.8 million cases.

The Health Ministry reported another 49,881 infections and 517 fatalities in the past 24 hours, raising the death toll to 120,527.

Life in India is edging back to pre-virus levels with shops, businesses, subway trains and movie theaters reopening and the country's third-largest state of Bihar with a population of about 122 million people holding elections.

But health experts warn that mask and distancing fatigue is setting in and can lead to a fresh wave of infections.

India saw a steep rise in cases in July and added more than 2 million in August and another 3 million in September. But it is seeing a slower pace of coronavirus spread since mid-September, when daily infections touched a record of 97,894 with the highest number of deaths at 1,275. According to the Health Ministry, more than 7.3 million Indians have recovered from COVID-19.

Dr. T. Jacob John, a retired virologist, said that in most parts of India the infection curve was never flattened and the number of people who are now susceptible to the virus had decreased.

He warned that the ongoing festival season was likely to increase the speed of the viral spread, resulting in localized outbreaks where people gathered without masks and didn't adhere to social distancing.

Even as new cases are on a decline nationwide, the Indian capital appears to be heading toward another surge in infections. It reported its worst day with 4,853 cases on Wednesday, after falling to less than 1,000 new cases per day last month.

"I am shocked, but not surprised," said Arvind Kumar, a New Delhi doctor. "There seems to be a sense of complacency in adhering to mask and distancing norms."

Kumar warned that the rising air pollution during winter months in the capital could have "a deleterious effect on the incidence (of virus) and the mortality rate."

Winters have become a time of health woes in New Delhi, with a toxic haze obscuring the sky and blocking sunlight. Pollution levels soar to severe levels, which worsen respiratory illnesses.

Dr. Ashish Jha, dean of Brown University's School of Public Health and a leading infectious disease expert, said a research has shown that a combination of cooler and drier air spreads the virus more efficiently.

"In drier air, those droplets tend to be smaller and can linger in the air," Jha said.

India, with a population of 1.4 billion, aims to provide a coronavirus vaccine to 250 million people by July 2021. The government said it was planning to receive 450 million to 500 million vaccine doses and would ensure "equitable access."

Associated Press writers Aniruddha Ghosal and Sheikh Saaliq contributed to this report

MLB says Turner violated protocols when he returned to field

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Justin Turner violated coronavirus protocols when he celebrated with his Los Angeles Dodgers teammates and he refused instructions from security to leave the field, behavior that Major League Baseball said risked the safety of others.

The commissioner's office said Wednesday it is starting a full investigation of the 35-year-old third baseman.

The Dodgers won their first World Series championship since 1988 with a 3-1 victory over Tampa Bay in Game 6 on Tuesday night at Globe Life Field.

Turner was pulled from the game following the seventh inning after MLB was notified that he had tested positive for COVID-19. He was quarantined in a doctor's office off to the side, Dodgers president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman said.

Turner later returned to the field with a mask to celebrate the Dodgers' title. He then took down his mask and posed for a team photo on the field.

"Immediately upon receiving notice from the laboratory of a positive test, protocols were triggered, leading to the removal of Justin Turner from last night's game," MLB said in a statement Wednesday. "Turner was placed into isolation for the safety of those around him. However, following the Dodgers' victory, it is clear that Turner chose to disregard the agreed-upon joint protocols and the instructions he was given regarding the safety and protection of others.

"While a desire to celebrate is understandable, Turner's decision to leave isolation and enter the field was wrong and put everyone he came in contact with at risk. When MLB Security raised the matter of being on the field with Turner, he emphatically refused to comply."

Turner became a free agent when his \$64 million, four-year contract expired following the victory.

Turner's agent, Greg Genske, did not immediately respond to a text from The Associated Press seeking comment.

"Last night, nasal swabs were conducted on the Dodgers' traveling party," MLB said. "Both the Rays and Dodgers were tested again today and their travel back to their home cities will be determined after being approved by the appropriate authorities."

Both teams traveled home from the Dallas area on Wednesday in coordination with their local health authorities, a person familiar with the arrangements said, speaking on condition of anonymity because no announcement was made.

No additional players received positive results from rapid PCR tests early Wednesday, the person said, but the wife of one Rays player tested positive, the person said. The wife and the player did not travel with the team and were to travel on their own, the person said.

A private plane was being arranged for Turner's travel, the person said.

One of the Rays' two charter planes had a lengthy mechanical delay in Dallas that caused one of the aircraft to be switched, and team said shortly after midnight that both planes had arrived back home.

The commissioner's office said it will consult with the players' association as part of its investigation. The union was in the process of gathering facts on the events.

Turner hit .307 with four homers and 23 RBIs in the pandemic-shortened season and .293 (17 for 58) with three homers and six RBIs in the postseason, including .320 with a pair of solo homers in the World Series.

"Having a mask on and staying socially distanced, he wanted to come out and take a picture with the trophy, which can't state strongly enough how big of a role he's played in the success of this organization," Friedman said.

"But I think for him, just being a free agent, not knowing exactly how the future is going to play out, I don't think there was anyone that was going to stop him from going out," he said. "I think from at least my

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perspective and not watching it super closely with everything going on, but I think he was mindful of other people, especially other people that he hadn't already been in contact with. This is something that we're going to wrap our arms around tonight and in the morning and figure out where we're going from here."

Turner, however, was visible on the field without a mask during the celebration. And Dodgers manager Dave Roberts was nearby, also not wearing a mask.

"I haven't seen the pictures," Friedman said. "If there are people around them without masks, that's not good optics at all. I haven't seen them, so it's hard for me to speak to it specifically."

"But I think from our standpoint, I think the people who were around him were people that would be in the contact tracing web, anyway, with just how closely a lot of us have been around each other," he said. "And so now I think the subsequent tests we're going to take are really important to figure out what we do and to make sure that any of us that are potentially positive do not spread it to other people."

Turner has served as a player representative on the union executive board and spoke about the protocols on Sept. 29, a day ahead of the Dodgers' postseason opener.

"Obviously there's a lot of protocols and things that we're allowed to do and not allowed to do in getting tested every day, and I would say it's been a pretty successful season getting to this point and getting to the playoffs," he said then.

"I was probably in that category where I was optimistic that we were going to have a season, but there was definitely some doubt whether or not it was going to happen. So to be sitting here today watching playoff baseball as the American League kind of kicks off their wild-card round, I would say that we did a good job and I commend everyone for taking it serious and being responsible and making good choices and allowing us to get to this point."

He addressed the success of reaching the World Series despite the pandemic on Oct. 19, a day before Game 1.

"I think it's ultimately a testament to the players for being responsible and making good choices and doing everything that we had to do to ensure that the season was able to go on," he said. "So I tip my cap to every player who put the uniform on and took that risk of playing and was responsible about it and did it the right way and enabled us to have a full season and now be able to participate in a World Series."

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

Analysis: Iran frets over US vote it insists doesn't matter

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Top officials in Iran say the upcoming U.S. election doesn't matter, but nearly everyone else there seems to be holding their breath.

The race for the White House could mean another four years of President Donald Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign. Or it could bring Joe Biden, who has raised the possibility of the U.S. returning to Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

In the upper levels of Iran's Islamic Republic, overseen by 81-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, anti-Americanism is as deeply entrenched as at any time since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, with presidents from both parties seen as equally repugnant.

"America has a deep-rooted enmity against the Iranian nation and whether Trump is elected or Biden, it will not have any impact on the U.S. main policy to strike the Iranian nation," parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf said in September, according to the semi-official Fars news agency.

But noticeably, Khamenei himself hasn't commented on the election, even as public interest has soared. State-run radio rebroadcast a BBC Farsi-language service simulcast of the presidential debates live — even as Iran continues to target journalists for the British broadcaster.

That interest allegedly includes Iran's security apparatus as well. U.S. officials accuse the Islamic Republic of sending emails to voters seeking to intimidate them into voting for Trump. It may have been an attempt to link the president to apparent election interference in order to sow chaos, like Russia's interference in

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America's 2016 election. Tehran denies being involved.

The Iranian public is paying attention. The state-owned polling center ISPA said this month that 55% of people believe the outcome of the election will affect Iran "a lot." Over half expected Trump would win, while a fifth said Biden. ISPA said it surveyed over 1,600 people by telephone, and did not provide a margin of error.

Trump's re-election would mean the extension of his pressure campaign, including sanctions on Khamenei and other senior officials. Some of the sanctions are largely symbolic — Khamenei has only once traveled to America and doesn't hold any U.S. bank accounts — but others have devastated the economy and sent the local currency into freefall. As a hedge, Iranians have poured money into foreign currency, real estate, precious metals and the stock market — which hit a record high in August.

Trump on the campaign trail has hit on that and his decision to launch a drone strike that killed a top Iranian general in January — a move that led Tehran to launch a retaliatory ballistic missile strike, wounding dozens of American troops.

To cheers, Trump has described the general, Qassem Soleimani, as "the world's No. 1 terrorist," likely due to him being blamed for the improvised explosive devices that maimed U.S. troops in Iraq and for supporting Syria's President Bashar Assad. Many Iranians revered Soleimani for fighting against the Islamic State group and in the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, and millions flooded the streets for his funeral processions.

"The first call I get when we win will be from the head of Iran, let's make a deal. Their economy is crashing," Trump told a campaign rally in Allentown, Pennsylvania, on Monday. "They will call and I want them to do well, but they cannot have a nuclear weapon."

Biden has left open the possibility of returning to the nuclear deal, in which Tehran agreed to limit its uranium enrichment in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. The other signatories — Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China — have remained committed to the agreement and allowed a U.N. arms embargo to expire as part of the deal, despite a White House push to keep it in place.

After Trump withdrew from the deal in 2018 and restored crippling sanctions, Iran began publicly abandoning the agreement's limits on enrichment. It now has at least 2,105 kilograms (2.32 tons) of low-enriched uranium, according to a September report by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Experts typically say 1,050 kilograms (1.15 tons) of low-enriched uranium is enough material to be re-enriched for one nuclear weapon.

Iran insists its nuclear program is peaceful and still allows IAEA inspectors to monitor its atomic sites. But experts say the "breakout time" needed for Iran to build one nuclear weapon if it chooses to do so has dropped from one year under the deal to as little as three months.

Iran in the past also has threatened to abandon a nuclear nonproliferation treaty or expel international inspectors. It recently began construction at an underground nuclear site, likely building a new centrifuge assembly plant after a reported sabotage attack there earlier this year.

"America First' has made America alone," Biden said at a televised ABC town hall this month, playing on a longtime Trump slogan. "You have Iran closer to having enough nuclear material to build a bomb."

What a return to the deal means, however, is in question. Biden's campaign website says he would use "hard-nosed diplomacy and support from our allies to strengthen and extend it." One criticism of the accord was its narrow focus on the nuclear program, despite concerns by the U.S., Israel and its Gulf Arab allies over Iran's ballistic missile program and its presence in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria.

Iran maintains that its ballistic missile program is vital for deterring potential attacks and non-negotiable. It is also unlikely to cease its military activities in Syria and Iraq, where it spent considerable blood and treasure in the war against the Islamic State group.

But ensuring the survival of the Islamic Republic, particularly amid the coronavirus pandemic, may require the same flexibility that saw Iran agree to negotiations with the U.S. in the first place. Iran will hold a presidential election in June, but any decision to re-engage with Washington would have to be made by the supreme leader.

"Khamenei's revolutionary path actually leads to America — that is, by seeking a stable, safe, and meticulously measured relationship with the United States, he believes he can guarantee the survival of

both the regime and its revolutionary content and orientation," wrote Mehdi Khalaji, a Qom-trained Shiite theologian who is an analyst at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"Tehran's objective is therefore a scandalous paradox: Deal with America to remain anti-American."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jon Gambrell, the news director for the Gulf and Iran for The Associated Press, has reported from each of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Iran and other locations across the world since joining the AP in 2006. Follow him on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP.

Philadelphia pledges better response after Black man's death

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Philadelphia police pledged to release 911 tapes and police body camera footage "in the near future" in the shooting death of a Black man with a history of mental health problems, a death that prompted protests, widespread vandalism and an overnight curfew days before Election Day.

Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw pledged to release the video evidence once the department shares it with the family of Walter Wallace Jr. Outlaw, who came to Philadelphia less than a year ago from Portland, Oregon, lamented at a news conference Wednesday that her department lacks a mental health unit or consistent way to coordinate police calls with specialists.

"We don't have a behavioral health unit, which is sorely needed," said Outlaw, when asked about reports that police had been called to the home twice before that day. "There's clearly a disconnect on our end in terms of knowing what's out there " at the scene.

Police say they fatally shot Wallace on Monday after he ignored orders to drop a knife, a death that intensified already heightened tensions in the presidential battleground state. Wallace's mother said she warned police Monday afternoon that her son was in the throes of a mental health crisis.

In the days since, more than 90 people have been arrested and about 50 police officers injured in clashes with protesters and vandals, including the 1,000 or so who suddenly swarmed a shopping center Tuesday night, breaking windows and stealing merchandise. That scene erupted on the other side of the city, miles from Wallace' neighborhood, where protests were underway.

"We had zero information to warn us of this," Deputy Commissioner Melvin Singleton said. "By that time ... the damage was done."

The clashes come as Pennsylvania emerges as a key focus of the contentious 2020 election, with President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden, a native son, locked in a battle for the state's 20 electoral votes. Both candidates have made frequent campaign stops in the state.

More than 9 million Pennsylvanians have registered to vote, and many in Philadelphia waited in line for hours this week to request a mail-in ballot by Tuesday's deadline, as news of the police shooting spread.

City officials announced Wednesday they would enact a curfew in the city from 9 p.m. until 6 a.m., as business owners cleaned up damage from the melee and boarded up windows.

Mayor Jim Kenney told reporters the Pennsylvania National Guard would also be deployed to help protect property and assist the police. The first troops were expected Friday and Saturday.

The unrest started Monday evening, shortly after Wallace, 27, was killed, and set off protests elsewhere, including in Washington, D.C., the Brooklyn borough of New York City and Portland, where demonstrators held their hands in the shape of a "W" in his honor.

His family's lawyer said the family had called for an ambulance to get him help with a mental health crisis.

Wallace's wife, Dominique, is pregnant and was scheduled to be induced Wednesday, according to the family's attorney, Shaka Johnson. Johnson said Wallace had nine children, two of whom briefly spoke at a news conference late Tuesday, along with Wallace's mother and father.

"When you come to a scene where somebody is in a mental crisis, and the only tool you have to deal with it is a gun ... where are the proper tools for the job?" Johnson said, arguing that Philadelphia police officers are not properly trained to handle mental health crises.

Police officials said they could not confirm what information had been given to the responding officers, whether they were told about a possible mental illness or how many calls they had received for help at

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Wallace's address Monday.

Outlaw said earlier the officers involved in the shooting were taken off street duty as they investigate. She said the officers' names and other identifying information, including their race, would be withheld until the department could be sure releasing the information would not pose a threat to their safety.

Neither had a Taser or similar device at the time of the shooting, Outlaw said, noting the department had previously asked for funding to equip more officers with those devices.

The two officers each fired at least seven rounds — at least 14 total shots — but police could not say how many times Wallace was struck.

Wallace's father, Walter Wallace Sr. said Tuesday night that he is haunted by the way his son was "butchered."

"It's in my mind. I can't even sleep at night. I can't even close my eyes," he said.

In video filmed by a bystander and posted on social media, officers could be seen yelling for Wallace to drop a knife. In the video, Wallace's mother and at least one man followed Wallace, trying to get him to listen to officers, as he briskly walked across the street and between cars.

Wallace advanced toward the officers, who then fired several times, said police spokesperson Officer Tanya Little. Wallace's mother could be seen screaming and throwing something at an officer after her son was shot and fell to the ground.

The video does not make it clear whether he was in fact holding a knife, but witnesses said he was.

Wallace was hit in the shoulder and chest, Little said. One officer drove him to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead a short time later, she said.

Lawyer Robert Trimble represented Wallace in a 2016 robbery case that led him to spend about a year in jail. His sentence, according to court records, included mental health supervision and six years of probation.

"I ran into him about a year ago by City Hall. He stopped me on the street and thanked me for helping him," Trimble said. "I remember him being a decent guy."

In March, Wallace was arrested and charged with making terroristic threats, according to court records. A status hearing was scheduled for Dec. 2.

Both Outlaw and the mayor pledged to address the lack of coordinated mental health services.

"We have limited resources and we have a large number of people with problems," Kenney said. "We need to do a better job."

___ Associated Press writer Claudia Lauer in Philadelphia contributed to this report.

Philly shooting brings policing, racism back into campaign

By CLAUDIA LAUER, AAMER MADHANI and ROBERT BUMSTED Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The fatal shooting of another Black man on America's streets by police — with subsequent unrest — has brought the fraught issues of policing and racism in the nation back to the fore of the presidential election in its closing days.

Philadelphia police say Walter Wallace Jr., 27, was shot earlier this week in the throes of a mental health crisis after he ignored officers' repeated orders to drop a knife.

The encounter, caught on video, spurred violent unrest in Philadelphia, and now has both President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden calibrating how to address some of the same questions that roiled American cities — and the presidential campaign — earlier this year as they negotiate the end game for a race in which Pennsylvania is a critical battleground.

In Philadelphia and its suburbs, voters are weighing how to factor the issue into their election calculations.

Trump, while campaigning Wednesday in Arizona, expressed outrage over the violent protests in Philadelphia and attempted to use it to court suburban voters outside Philadelphia and elsewhere.

"I can tell you, Biden and Harris stand with the rioters and the vandals," Trump said of the former vice president and his running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris, during a campaign rally. "I stand with the heroes of law."

In a separate exchange with reporters earlier in the day, Trump spoke about the shooting in purely

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partisan tones, noting that the unrest had happened again in a "Democrat-run city."

"They should be able to handle it themselves," Trump said, even as he suggested that he stood ready to deploy federal troops to Philadelphia if asked.

Biden, who has tried to keep his campaign squarely focused on the pandemic, tread carefully. He initially skipping any direct mention of the Philadelphia shooting as he spoke at a drive-in rally in Atlanta on Tuesday, even as he intoned the names of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Jacob Blake — all Black Americans killed in high-profile encounters with police — promising they "will not soon be forgotten." Later Tuesday, the Biden campaign issued a joint statement in which Biden and Harris said that Wallace's was "a black life that mattered."

Biden and Harris spoke strongly in condemning the unrest.

"We cannot accept that in this country a mental health crisis ends in death," they said.

Biden reiterated his opposition to the violent protests in remarks to reporters on Wednesday, saying that "there is no excuse whatsoever for the looting and the violence."

He also said he'd set up a commission, if elected, to study "how you diminish the prospect of lethal shootings in circumstances like the one we saw." Biden's criminal justice plan would increase oversight of police departments and offer funds to support police reforms at the local level.

In West Philadelphia, Bishop Dwayne Royster, interim executive director of POWER Interfaith, a group of Pennsylvania religious leaders focused on social justice issues, said he "can't stand the rhetoric coming out of the White House."

But Royster, who is Black, also said Biden and Harris have work to do to show their support for the Black community. Harris, who served as California's attorney general and San Francisco's district attorney before being elected to the Senate, is viewed by some in the Black community with some suspicion because of her prosecutorial background.

"I think the community wants healing, but they are also desperate for a change," Royster said.

Amid this summer's protests, Trump repeatedly sounded a "law and order" mantra. He received the support of several police unions, while repeatedly warning that the suburbs would disappear if he's not reelected because of some Democrats' support for building low-income housing in suburban communities.

Trump also faced bipartisan outrage after Attorney General William Barr ordered protesters forcibly expelled from Lafayette Park near the White House in June. The park was cleared shortly before Trump walked to nearby St. John's Church to pose for cameras while holding up a Bible. The church had been damaged earlier by a fire amid the protests over police brutality.

In Delaware County, one of the suburban Philadelphia areas where Trump needs to win over voters to keep Pennsylvania in his column, there's been mixed response to Trump's hard-edged law-and-order message.

Kevin Hayes, a sales representative who is white, had a handful of Trump campaign signs in the yard of his Springfield home and a "Cops for Trump" sign in his window. He said he "absolutely" agrees with Trump's characterization of the Philadelphia protests.

"I think it's terrible the way they're treating police in Philadelphia right now. They're not getting any support from the politicians, from the public," Hayes said. "If they have issues with the police, they should give them more money for training, not defund them."

Scott Brady, 49, another white Springfield resident and Trump supporter, voted for Democrats for most of his adult life, but backed Trump in 2016. He plans to again this year, and says Trump's statements about Philadelphia are spot on.

"He's right. He is," Brady said, adding that he disagrees with the policies and criminal justice changes advanced by some of the city's Democratic leaders.

Rick Pierce, a south Philadelphia native who moved to the suburbs a few years ago, was a rock-ribbed Republican but says Trump has tried his patience over the past year. The 65-year-old retiree said he voted for Trump in 2016, but he's had a change of heart this year.

Pierce, who is white, said he understood why people were upset by Wallace's shooting.

"By now the police should know better," he said. "He didn't have a gun, he had a knife."

Madhani reported from Phoenix. Associated Press writers Alexandra Jaffe in Wilmington, Delaware, and Kathleen Ronayne in Phoenix contributed to the report.

Follow Madhani on Twitter at @AamerISMAd

At least 1 dead as Hurricane Zeta hammers Gulf Coast

By KEVIN MCGILL, STACEY PLAISANCE and REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Hurricane Zeta slammed into the storm-weary Gulf Coast on Wednesday, pelting the New Orleans metro area with rain and howling winds that ripped apart buildings and knocked out power to thousands before rapidly making its way through Mississippi and Alabama with strong gusty winds, heavy rains and dangerous storm surge.

Zeta weakened to a Category 1 hurricane with winds of 80 mph (128 kph) as it moved into southern Mississippi few hours after landfall, but forecasters said it remained a life-threatening storm. The storm was about 45 miles (72 kilometers) northeast of Hattiesburg early Wednesday. A 91 mph (146 kph) wind gust blew through Mobile, Alabama, Tuesday and a NOAA gauge reported a 10-foot storm surge in Waveland, Mississippi.

Even as Zeta battered the south, the upcoming election was still on the mind of some residents.

"A lot of roads are blocked off right now cause the trees and other debris that have fallen. With the election I just kind of hope the city gets the roads clear by November 3rd so everybody can get out and vote," said Mackenzie Umanzo, 19. "Hopefully everybody can show up who wants to show up," the D'Iberville, Mississippi, resident said.

The storm killed at least one person, a 55-year-old man who a Louisiana coroner said was electrocuted by a downed power line in New Orleans, and officials said life-threatening conditions would last into Thursday in a region already pounded by multiple storms this year.

St. Bernard Parish President Guy McInnis said emergency workers were doing their best to respond to reports of people in distress after their roofs were blown off.

"Guys, we received the brunt of Zeta, and Zeta gave us a good punch," McInnis told WDSU-TV.

Roads were flooded near the coast, where forecasters said Zeta made landfall around Terrebonne Bay near Cocodrie, an unincorporated fishing village at the end of a highway with few if any full-time residents and a marine laboratory where a building was inundated.

Streams of rainfall ran off roofs in New Orleans' famed French Quarter, signs outside bars and restaurants swayed back and forth in the wind and palm trees along Canal Street whipped furiously. Officials said a person was hospitalized with minor injuries after a structure collapsed, but further details weren't available.

With much of the city in the dark and more than 200 trees reported down, New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell implored residents to stay home and let city officials assess the damage instead of going out and doing it themselves.

"Although we have made it through, we have been damaged, we have been hit," she said.

More than 875,000 customers were without electricity in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, including about 350,000 in metro New Orleans. Outages were mounting quickly as the storm moved northeastward across the Deep South.

Zeta had top sustained winds of 110 mph (177 kph) as a Category 2 hurricane at landfall and is the 27th named storm of a historically busy Atlantic hurricane season — with over a month left to go. It set a new record as the 11th named storm to make landfall in the continental U.S. in a single season, well beyond the nine storms that hit in 1916.

As much as 5 feet of Gulf water surrounded a casino in Biloxi, Mississippi, and deputies in Harrison County, Mississippi, received multiple calls from people who had remained in mobile homes that were threatened by winds.

"It's bad, it really is," Peterson told WLOX-TV.

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President Donald Trump approved an emergency declaration for Mississippi Wednesday evening. Tropical storm warnings were issued as far away as southern Virginia, highly unusual for the region. Forecasters issued a string of tornado warnings for as far east as the Florida Panhandle.

New Orleans was in the warning areas of six previous storms that veered east or west this season. This time, Zeta stayed on course.

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards said in a radio interview that boats broke loose and struck a bridge in Lafitte. He said blackouts were extensive, including 94% without power in Plaquemines Parish.

"The wind has caused extensive structural damages to businesses, to homes, to electrical infrastructure," Edwards said.

Officials had urged people to take precautions, and a business-as-usual atmosphere in the morning in New Orleans diminished as the storm neared and grew stronger. Traffic slowed, and restaurants and coffee shops shut down.

"This year, the storms have been coming back-to-back. They've been avoiding New Orleans but finally decided to come," cookie shop worker Curt Brumfield said.

Winds picked up and water rose above the docks in Jean Lafitte, a small fishing town south of New Orleans that takes its name from a French pirate. Workers drove truckloads of sand to low-lying areas where thousands of sandbags were already stacked for previous storms.

"We're going to get a lot of water fast," said the mayor, Tim Kerner Jr.

Zeta's wind, rain and storm surge reached more than 150 miles (241 kilometers) east of New Orleans. In Mississippi, streetlights swayed in Biloxi and the city of Pass Christian ordered all boats out of the harbor. Dauphin Island, Alabama, shut off water and sewer service in areas that typically are swamped in storms.

New Orleans officials announced that a turbine that generates power to the city's aging drainage pump system broke down Sunday, with no quick repair in sight. There was enough power to keep the pumps operating if needed, but little excess power to tap if other turbines fail, officials said.

Forecasts called for anywhere from 2 to 6 inches (5 to 15 centimeters) of rain to fall in the New Orleans area.

Before landfall, Zeta's top winds had risen to just shy of a major, Category 3 storm, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center.

On Tuesday, Zeta raked across Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, toppling trees and briefly cutting power to more than 300,000 people but causing no deaths.

It then regained strength over the Gulf of Mexico along a path slightly to the east of those of Hurricane Laura, which was blamed for at least 27 deaths in Louisiana in August, and Hurricane Delta, which exacerbated Laura's damage in the same area weeks later.

"I'm physically and mentally tired," a distraught Yolanda Lockett of Lake Charles, one of about 3,600 evacuees from Laura and Delta still sheltering, said outside her New Orleans hotel.

The deteriorating weather prompted early voting sites to close for hours in the western Florida Panhandle.

Tropical storm warnings were issued for a large swath of the South, from Mississippi into Alabama and Georgia, including all of the Atlanta area, where winds could gust up to 55 mph (89 kph) early Thursday. Winds could be "especially severe" in the southern Appalachian Mountains, where flash flooding is possible, the hurricane center said.

Large school systems in Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina planned to close Thursday or open late.

An average season sees six hurricanes and 12 named storms. This extraordinarily busy season has focused attention on climate change, which scientists say is causing wetter, stronger and more destructive storms.

After Hanna, Isaias, Laura, Sally and Delta, Zeta will tie a record set in 1886 and repeated in 1985 for six hurricanes smacking the continental U.S., according to Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach.

Plaisance reported from Laffite, Louisiana, and Santana from Shell Beach, Louisiana. Associated Press contributors include Gerald Herbert in New Orleans; Jay Reeves, in Birmingham, Alabama; Melinda Deslatte

in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Seth Borenstein in Kensington, Maryland; Jeff Martin in Marietta, Georgia; Sophia Tulp in Atlanta and Gabriel Alcocer in Cancun, Mexico.

FBI warns ransomware assault threatens US healthcare system

By FRANK BAJAK AP Technology Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Federal agencies warned that cybercriminals are unleashing a wave of data-scrambling extortion attempts against the U.S. healthcare system designed to lock up hospital information systems, which could hurt patient care just as nationwide cases of COVID-19 are spiking.

In a joint alert Wednesday, the FBI and two federal agencies warned that they had “credible information of an increased and imminent cybercrime threat to U.S. hospitals and healthcare providers.” The alert said malicious groups are targeting the sector with attacks that produce “data theft and disruption of healthcare services.”

The cyberattacks involve ransomware, which scrambles data into gibberish that can only be unlocked with software keys provided once targets pay up. Independent security experts say it has already hobbled at least five U.S. hospitals this week, and could potentially impact hundreds more.

The offensive by a Russian-speaking criminal gang coincides with the U.S. presidential election, although there is no immediate indication they were motivated by anything but profit. “We are experiencing the most significant cyber security threat we’ve ever seen in the United States,” Charles Carmakal, chief technical officer of the cybersecurity firm Mandiant, said in a statement.

Alex Holden, CEO of Hold Security, which has been closely tracking the ransomware in question for more than a year, agreed that the unfolding offensive is unprecedented in magnitude for the U.S. given its timing in the heat of a contentious presidential election and the worst global pandemic in a century.

The federal alert was co-authored by the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Health and Human Services.

The cybercriminals launching the attacks use a strain of ransomware known as Ryuk, which is seeded through a network of zombie computers called Trickbot that Microsoft began trying to counter earlier in October. U.S. Cyber Command has also reportedly taken action against Trickbot. While Microsoft has had considerable success knocking its command-and-control servers offline through legal action, analysts say criminals have still been finding ways to spread Ryuk.

The U.S. has seen a plague of ransomware over the past 18 months or so, with major cities from Baltimore to Atlanta hit and local governments and schools hit especially hard.

In September, a ransomware attack hobbled all 250 U.S. facilities of the hospital chain Universal Health Services, forcing doctors and nurses to rely on paper and pencil for record-keeping and slowing lab work. Employees described chaotic conditions impeding patient care, including mounting emergency room waits and the failure of wireless vital-signs monitoring equipment.

Also in September, the first known fatality related to ransomware occurred in Duesseldorf, Germany, when an IT system failure forced a critically ill patient to be routed to a hospital in another city.

Holden said he alerted federal law enforcement Friday after monitoring infection attempts at a number of hospitals, some of which may have beaten back infections. The FBI did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

He said the group was demanding ransoms well above \$10 million per target and that criminals involved on the dark web were discussing plans to try to infect more than 400 hospitals, clinics and other medical facilities.

“One of the comments from the bad guys is that they are expecting to cause panic and, no, they are not hitting election systems,” Holden said. “They are hitting where it hurts even more and they know it.” U.S. officials have repeatedly expressed concern about major ransomware attacks affecting the presidential election, even if the criminals are motivated chiefly by profit.

Mandiant’s Carmakal identified the criminal gang as UNC1878, saying “it is deliberately targeting and disrupting U.S. hospitals, forcing them to divert patients to other healthcare providers” and producing

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prolonged delays in critical care.

He called the eastern European group "one of most brazen, heartless, and disruptive threat actors I've observed over my career."

While no one has proven suspected ties between the Russian government and gangs that use the Trickbot platform, Holden said he has "no doubt that the Russian government is aware of this operation — of terrorism, really." He said dozens of different criminal groups use Ryuk, paying its architects a cut.

Dmitri Alperovitch, co-founder and former chief technical officer of the cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike, said there are "certainly lot of connections between Russian cyber criminals and the state," with Kremlin-employed hackers sometimes moonlighting as cyber criminals.

Neither Holden nor Carmakal would identify the affected hospitals. Four healthcare institutions have been reported hit by ransomware so far this week, three belonging to the St. Lawrence County Health System in upstate New York and the Sky Lakes Medical Center in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

Sky Lakes acknowledged the ransomware attack in an online statement, saying it had no evidence that patient information was compromised. It said emergency and urgent care "remain available" The St. Lawrence system did not immediately return phone calls seeking comment.

Increasingly, ransomware criminals are stealing data from their targets before encrypting networks, using it for extortion. They often sow the malware weeks before activating it, waiting for moments when they believe they can extract the highest payments, said Brett Callow, an analyst at the cybersecurity firm Emsisoft.

A total of 59 U.S. healthcare providers/systems have been impacted by ransomware in 2020, disrupting patient care at up to 510 facilities, Callow said.

Carmakal said Mandiant had provided Microsoft on Wednesday with as much detail as it could about the threat so it could distribute details to its customers. A Microsoft spokesman had no immediate comment.

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker in Washington, D.C., Lisa Baumann in Seattle and Deepti Hajela in New York City contributed to this report.

Asian shares lower, US futures up after S&P 500 sinks 3.5%

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

Asian shares declined Thursday and U.S. futures turned higher after the S&P 500 slid 3.5% overnight for its biggest drop since June.

The selling in U.S. markets followed broad declines in Europe, where the French president announced tough measures to slow the virus' spread and German officials agreed to impose a four-week partial lockdown.

So far, the measures are not as stringent as shutdown orders that swept the world early this year, but the worry is they could still hit the already weakened global economy.

In Asia, some countries appear to be keeping the pandemic in check, while caseloads surge in others. India is on track to surpass 8 million confirmed COVID-19 cases, Indonesia and the Philippines are struggling to keep outbreaks in check, and fresh clusters of cases are being reported in Japan.

"When it rains, it pours, particularly if you are following today's COVID-19 headlines," Edward Moya of Oanda said in a commentary. "An overvalued stock market was ripe for a pullback, but when you focus on COVID-19 headlines, it looks more like panic-selling."

The Bank of Japan kept its ultra-loose monetary policy unchanged in a policy meeting that ended Thursday. But it downgraded its outlook for the economy, saying that while conditions will eventually improve, "risks to both economic activity and prices are skewed to the downside, mainly due to COVID-19."

Retail sales in Japan, the world's third largest economy, fell 8.7% from a year earlier in September, according to data reported Thursday. While purchases of goods has recovered somewhat, services remain weak.

The Japanese central bank has been pumping tens of billions of dollars into the economy every year,

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trying to restore stable growth as the country's population shrinks and ages. Japan was already in recession when the pandemic began.

In Thursday trading, Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 1% to 24,452.65 while the Nikkei 225 in Japan fell 0.5% to 23,294.51. In South Korea, the Kospi lost 1.7% to 2,305.70, while the Shanghai Composite index recovered from early losses, gaining 0.1% to 3,271.72. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 declined 1.7% to 5,952.40. Shares also fell in Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

The future for the S&P 500 rebounded, gaining 0.9% to 3,293.80 while the future contract for the Dow industrials added 1% to 26,668.00.

In the U.S., cases are increasing in just about every state and the number of deaths and hospitalizations due to COVID-19 are on the rise. Even if the most restrictive lockdowns don't return, investors worry people will limit their spending and activities, hurting businesses. The U.S. economy could lose momentum just as prospects for more economic support from Washington have dwindled as Tuesday's Election Day nears.

"Many people had come to believe we were at least stable, and now we're having a second uptick, which throws potential GDP and everything else up in the air," said Randy Frederick, vice president of trading and derivatives at Charles Schwab. "I did not expect this level of volatility or this degree of a sell-off."

Uncertainty about the upcoming presidential election has also been pushing markets around.

The S&P 500 lost 119.65 points to 3,271.03. The Dow lost 943.24 points, or 3.4%, to 26,519.95. The Nasdaq composite slumped 3.7% to 11,004.87. The selling was widespread, and 96% of stocks in the S&P 500 fell.

Crude oil slipped further, with U.S. benchmark crude giving up 5 cents to \$37.35 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It tumbled 5.7% Wednesday on worries that an economy already weakened by the virus would consume even less energy and allow excess supplies to build higher.

Brent crude, the international standard, gave up 13 cents to \$39.51 per barrel. It fell 5.4% to \$39.64 per barrel on Wednesday.

A measure of fear in the stock market touched its highest level since June, when the market suddenly tumbled amid concerns that a "second wave" of coronavirus infections had arrived. The VIX measures how much volatility investors expect from the S&P 500, and it climbed 20.8% Wednesday.

As usual whenever volatility spikes, investors headed into the safety of U.S. government bonds. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note was at 0.79%, down from as high as 0.87% last week.

Even a parade of better-than-expected reports on corporate profits for the summer has failed to shift the momentum.

Microsoft, the second-biggest company in the S&P 500, reported stronger profit and revenue for its latest quarter than expected but still sank 5%.

UPS fell 8.8% after also reporting better-than-expected earnings, though it said the outlook for its business is too cloudy due to the pandemic to offer any forecasts for its revenue or profits in the current quarter.

Investors' hopes that Congress and the White House could soon offer more big support for the economy as it struggles through the pandemic have largely faded. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin have continued their talks, but investors see little chance of a deal happening before Election Day next week.

Economists say the economy likely needs such aid after the expiration of the last round of supplemental unemployment benefits and other stimulus approved by Washington earlier this year.

In currency dealings, the dollar strengthened to 104.46 Japanese yen from 104.34 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1752 from \$1.1747.

AP Business writers Alex Veiga, Stan Choe and Damian J. Troise contributed.

FBI warns ransomware assault threatens US healthcare system

By FRANK BAJAK AP Technology Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Federal agencies warned that cybercriminals are unleashing a wave of data-scrambling

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extortion attempts against the U.S. healthcare system designed to lock up hospital information systems, which could hurt patient care just as nationwide cases of COVID-19 are spiking.

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The offensive by a Russian-speaking criminal gang coincides with the U.S. presidential election, although there is no immediate indication they were motivated by anything but profit. "We are experiencing the most significant cyber security threat we've ever seen in the United States," Charles Carmakal, chief technical officer of the cybersecurity firm Mandiant, said in a statement.

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Associated Press writers Eric Tucker in Washington, D.C., Lisa Baumann in Seattle and Deepti Hajela in New York City contributed to this report.

AP Explains: Trump pushes questions about Joe Biden’s son

By ERIC TUCKER and STEPHEN BRAUN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Looking to undermine Democratic rival Joe Biden, President Donald Trump’s campaign is pushing a familiar line of attack: unverified allegations about Biden’s son and his foreign business ties.

But reporting in the New York Post, and the emergence of a man who says he worked with Hunter Biden, have raised more questions than answers, including about the authenticity of emails at the center of the story.

The renewed allegations trace back to Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani, who has repeatedly pushed unfounded claims about the Bidens. Even if the emails in the Post are legitimate, they do not validate claims that Biden’s actions were influenced by his son’s business dealings.

A look at developments:

HOW DID BIDEN’S SON BECOME A CAMPAIGN ISSUE?

Hunter Biden joined the board of the Ukrainian gas company Burisma in 2014, around the time his father, then vice president, was helping conduct the Obama administration’s foreign policy with Ukraine.

Senate Republicans said in a recent report that the appointment may have posed a conflict of interest, but they did not present evidence that the hiring influenced U.S. policies.

Trump and his supporters, meanwhile, have advanced a widely discredited theory that Biden pushed for the firing of Ukraine’s top prosecutor to protect his son and Burisma from investigation. Biden did indeed press for the prosecutor’s firing, but that’s because he was reflecting the official position of not only the Obama administration but many Western countries and because the prosecutor was perceived as soft on corruption.

WHAT DOES THE NEW YORK POST SAY?

The main email highlighted by the Post is an April 2015 message that the newspaper said was sent to Hunter Biden by Vadym Pozharskyi, an adviser to Burisma’s board. In it, he thanks the younger Biden “for inviting me to DC and giving an opportunity to meet your father and spent (sic) some time together. It’s realty (sic) an honor and pleasure.”

The wording makes it unclear if he actually met Joe Biden. The Biden campaign said in a statement that it

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reviewed Biden's schedules from the time and that no meeting as described by the newspaper took place.

HOW DID THE POST OBTAIN THE EMAILS?

It's a tangled saga. The Post says it received a copy of a hard drive containing the messages from Giuliani, who has pushed the idea that Ukraine was trying to interfere with the 2016 election and that the younger Biden may have enriched himself by selling his access to his father.

The Post says the emails were part of a trove of data recovered from a laptop that was dropped off at a computer repair shop in Delaware in April 2019. It says the customer, whom the shop owner could not definitively identify as Hunter Biden, never paid for the service or retrieved the computer, and the owner made a copy of the hard drive that he provided to Giuliani's lawyer.

The owner of the Wilmington shop declined to comment to The Associated Press, but in news media interviews he has said he contacted the FBI through an intermediary and provided agents with a copy of the hard drive's contents.

ARE THE NEW EMAILS AUTHENTIC?

Hunter Biden himself has not spoken publicly in recent weeks, including to confirm whether the laptop is his. The Biden campaign has also not addressed that question, though a lawyer for Hunter Biden, George Mesires, said in a statement that "we have no idea where this came from, and certainly cannot credit anything that Rudy Giuliani provided to the NY Post."

Some former national security officials and other experts said the episode raised multiple red flags about the repair shop story, especially given the involvement of Giuliani and his active role in promoting an anti-Biden narrative on Ukraine.

But John Ratcliffe, the director of national intelligence, knocked down the possibility of a Russian disinformation campaign, saying, "The intelligence community doesn't believe that because there's no intelligence that supports that."

The FBI appeared to endorse Ratcliffe's position in a letter to a Senate committee that requested information on the laptop.

"Regarding the subject of your letter, we have nothing to add at this time to the October 19th public statement by the Director of National Intelligence about the available actionable intelligence," wrote Jill Tyson, director of the office of Congressional Affairs, in the letter to Sen. Ron Johnson, the Republican chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

Tyson also said she could not confirm or deny the existence of any investigation, in keeping with Justice Department practice.

IF AUTHENTIC, ARE THESE EMAILS DAMAGING TO BIDEN?

The suggestion that Joe Biden might have met with a Burisma representative is consequential, because he has repeatedly insisted that he never discussed his son's business with him.

But the emails provide no details on whether Pozharskyi and Biden actually met and, if so, what they discussed.

If Biden did meet with Pozharskyi, he was not the only U.S. official who may have done so. Pozharskyi was part of a Burisma delegation that lobbied congressional officials in 2014 in an attempt to show that the firm was not a corruption risk.

The Trump campaign also organized a press event featuring Tony Bobulinski, a man who said he was Hunter Biden's former business partner. Bobulinski made unproven allegations that the vice president's son consulted with his father after he left office on potential business dealings in China that ultimately never came to fruition.

He was to have been interviewed by a Senate committee last week, but the panel postponed it after learning from Bobulinski's lawyers that the FBI planned to question him on that same day.

Bobulinski, a Navy veteran, said in an interview that aired Tuesday on Fox News that he was motivated to speak out because he was offended by the insinuation from the Biden campaign and some Democratic lawmakers that the emails and the narrative were associated with Russian disinformation, and was upset.

As part of its interview, Fox News aired audio of a conversation it said was between Bobulinski and some-

one who Bobulinski said was a business associate of Hunter Biden's in which the man, Rob Walker, can be heard saying that if Bobulinski spoke out publicly against Biden, "You're just gonna bury all of us, man."

Biden campaign spokesman Andrew Bates disputed any close ties between Joe Biden and Walker, saying in a statement that "it is totally inaccurate to describe him as a representative of the Biden campaign or any member of the Biden family."

Bobulinski said in the interview that he had a sit-down meeting with Joe Biden in May 2017, after Biden left office, and that Hunter Biden introduced him to his father as "the individual I told you about that's helping us with the business that we're working on and the Chinese." He said it was a "high-level" meeting that did not delve into details.

He also said that he raised concerns to Biden's brother, Jim, that Chinese business dealings could put his brother's political ambitions at risk, but that Biden responded, "Plausible deniability."

The Associated Press could not independently verify Bobulinski's allegations, and Biden has said he has never taken any money from any foreign countries.

WHAT'S THE POLITICAL IMPACT?

With Election Day near and with polls showing him trailing Biden, Trump is returning to the subject of his opponent's family in an apparent effort to energize his base.

But in an election dominated by concerns about the coronavirus pandemic, it's less certain Trump's strategy will appeal to the voters he needs to win back, including moderate Republicans and suburban women.

Trump sprinkled allegations against Biden and his son in the second and last presidential debate.

Biden's campaign, meanwhile, pointed to the recent Republican-led Senate investigation that found no evidence of wrongdoing on Biden's part with regard to Ukraine. It also pointedly noted the involvement of Giuliani, saying his "discredited conspiracy theories and alliance with figures connected to Russian intelligence have been widely reported."

Associated Press writers Amanda Seitz in Chicago, Jonathan Lemire in New York, Alexandra Jaffe in Washington, Barbara Ortutay in Oakland, Calif., and Bill Barrow in Wilmington, Del., contributed to this report.

Former DHS official says he wrote 'Anonymous' Trump critique

By KEVIN FREKING and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A former Trump administration official who penned a scathing anti-Trump op-ed and book under the pen name "Anonymous" revealed himself Wednesday as a former chief of staff at the Department of Homeland Security.

The official, Miles Taylor, came forward six days before Election Day to criticize President Donald Trump as "a man without character." He said he hoped other former administration officials will "find their conscience when they wake up tomorrow" and speak up, too.

Taylor has been an outspoken critic of Trump's in recent months and had repeatedly denied he was the author of the column and subsequent book — even to colleagues at CNN, where he has a contributor contract. He left the Trump administration in June 2019 and endorsed Democrat Joe Biden for president this summer.

Trump and White House officials moved quickly to describe Taylor as someone with little standing and clout.

"This guy is a low-level lowlife that I don't know. I have no idea who he is, other than I got to see him a little while ago on television," Trump told a campaign rally crowd in Arizona. As he belittled Taylor as a "sleazebag" and called for his prosecution, the crowd broke into cheers of "drain that swamp."

But as DHS chief of staff, Taylor was in many White House meetings with the president on his border policy and other major Homeland Security issues. During Taylor's time as chief of staff, Trump threatened to shut down the border and his administration developed the policy to force asylum seekers to wait across the U.S.-Mexico border.

White House chief of staff Mark Meadows called Taylor's revelation "a monumental embarrassment,"

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tweeting, "I've seen more exciting reveals in Scooby-Doo episodes."

During a CNN appearance with Chris Cuomo Wednesday night, Taylor said he didn't unmask himself earlier because the story would have disappeared within 48 hours.

"No one would pay attention and they wouldn't care," he said. "Right now, Americans are reviewing the president's resume, his record and his character and it is mission critical that people like me, but others, come out now when the voters are listening and tell them who this man really is."

Taylor's anonymous essay was published in September 2018 by The New York Times, infuriating the president and setting off a frantic White House leak investigation to try to unmask the author.

In the essay, the person, who identified themselves only as a senior administration official, said they were part of a secret "resistance" force out to counter Trump's "misguided impulses" and undermine parts of his agenda.

The author wrote, "Many Trump appointees have vowed to do what we can to preserve our democratic institutions while thwarting Mr. Trump's more misguided impulses until he is out of office."

The Times identified the author as a "senior official" in the administration and received some criticism online Wednesday for inflating Taylor's credentials. The newspaper, which said it had granted Taylor anonymity because his job would be jeopardized if his identity was revealed, on Wednesday confirmed Taylor was the author because he has waived his right to confidentiality, and had no other comment.

The allegations incensed the president, bolstering his allegations about a "deep state" operating within his government and conspiring against him. The president, who had long complained about leaks in the White House, also ordered aides to unmask the writer, citing "national security" concerns to justify a possible Justice Department investigation.

Instead, the author pressed forward, penning a follow-up book published last November called "A Warning" that continued to paint a disturbing picture of the president, describing him as volatile, incompetent and unfit to be commander in chief.

To a certain extent, he's since been overshadowed by other former government officials, both during the impeachment hearings and after, who went public condemning Trump's behavior with their names attached.

Taylor's behavior also leaves questions for CNN. He was asked directly by the network's Anderson Cooper in August whether he was "Anonymous" and answered: "I wear a mask for two things, Anderson, Halloween and pandemics. So, no."

Josh Campbell, a national security correspondent for CNN, tweeted that he had also asked Taylor if he was "Anonymous" and was told no.

Taylor said Wednesday that he owed Cooper a beer and a mea culpa. He said he wrote in his book that he would deny being "Anonymous" if asked, because he wanted to keep the focus on his arguments, instead of who was writing them.

"You know what the problem is with having lied is: Now you're a liar, and people will be slow to believe you," Cuomo said.

But he continued with a half-hour interview where Taylor denounced Trump. CNN said Taylor would remain a network contributor.

Taylor said he believed Trump would double down on damaging policies, particularly the separation of families at the southern border, if he won a second term.

"They want to turn this country into fortress America rather than a shining city on the hill," he said.

He said he considered resigning from the Trump administration a year before he did and wishes now that he had.

Former GOP consultant Reed Galen, one of the founders of the anti-Trump group The Lincoln Project, tweeted that Taylor "isn't a hero." He added: "He sat in those rooms, in those councils of power and allowed the banality of evil to work. ... Heroism isn't silence until it's convenient and personally advantageous to stand up."

AP Media Writer David Bauder in New York contributed to this report.

Australia's pandemic travel ban brings family heartbreak

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Astrid Magenau wasn't able to keep a promise to hold her father's hand at his deathbed in Germany because of Australia's extraordinary pandemic restrictions that make her feel like a prisoner in her adopted country.

Australia has sought to prevent new coronavirus cases from reaching its shores by banning most of its residents from leaving in the first place. But the ban on overseas travel creates a heartbreaking burden on a multicultural nation such as Australia, where around half the people were born abroad or have an immigrant parent.

"I always wanted to move to Australia because it felt like a free country," said German-born Magenau, who became an Australian citizen this year. "It makes the whole feeling of living in Australia quite different because, personally, it makes me feel like I'm trapped ... because I can't travel as I want to."

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has held up Australia's travel ban as an example to the world of how to avoid severe coronavirus spikes caused by citizens who are infected while on vacation.

Still, Australia is the only member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development — a group of 37 developed nations — that has banned its citizens from leaving during the pandemic.

Morrison has described the ban as "uncontroversial." But with Australia becoming one of the most successful countries in containing the spread of the virus, some are questioning how long the ban can be justified.

Australia, with a population of 26 million, had recorded 27,541 virus cases, including 907 deaths, as of Wednesday — with 74% of the cases and 90% of the fatalities coming in the city of Melbourne and surrounding Victoria state. But Melbourne came out of lockdown on Wednesday, with authorities confident they have contained community transmission.

Government lawmaker Dave Sharma, who has represented constituents seeking his help to be allowed to travel, describes the ban as a "pretty extraordinary restriction on people's liberty" that cannot continue "for the long term."

While some exemptions are allowed under strict criteria, critics argue that the process lacks transparency and consistency, and that the process can be too slow.

Magenau, a 42-year-old cancer research scientist, was given an exemption to travel with her 5-year-old son, Hendrix, from their home in Sydney to Stuttgart, Germany. But the weeklong process to get the exemption was too slow for a medical emergency. She didn't reach Germany until after her 76-year-old father, Horst Magenau, had already been cremated after dying from metastatic melanoma.

"He became worse. We thought he was stable," she said. "He lived for about five or six days and I thought I could make it out (of Australia), but that didn't work," Magenau said.

The funeral could not be delayed until she arrived.

"I wasn't actually able to say goodbye to his body," Magenau said. "It sounds silly, but that's what I had wanted."

She described the ordeal as "traumatic as it was unnecessary."

Sydney lawyer Adam Byrnes said by far the majority of clients who come to him to fight travel exemption refusals had applied, like Magenau, on "compassionate or humanitarian" grounds. Applicants must persuade Australian Border Force officials that their reasons are "compelling."

"We've had clients come to us where they wanted to say goodbye to their parent who is terminally ill and has been given a prognosis of a short time to live, and they've been refused a couple of times for immediate travel," Byrnes said. "That in my eyes is a very compelling reason, but not in Australian Border Force's eyes."

Byrnes, who did not represent Magenau, said the major flaws in the system are a lack of public policy information, inconsistent results and a lack of explanation of the reasons for refusals.

Donna Burton had already reached Sydney Airport when she was advised that Border Force had denied her an exemption to fly to London for her only daughter's wedding in July. She had made a second appli-

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cation for a travel exemption after the first was rejected because of a lack of supporting documentation.

Burton has sympathy for the health outcomes that Australian authorities are trying to achieve. But she said it would be easier to accept if Border Force's decisions were more timely.

"A lot easier than going to the airport with lots of wedding presents in a bag — yes, without a doubt," she said.

Many would-be travelers don't have the time or the means to fight exemption refusals in the courts.

Esther and Charles Baker, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish couple from Melbourne, were twice refused exemptions to fly to New Jersey to attend their youngest son's wedding on June 23.

They appealed to the Federal Court, citing religious and cultural reasons among their exceptional circumstances. But a judge dismissed their case and ordered the couple to pay Border Force's legal costs for their challenge.

Some categories of Australian citizens and residents automatically qualify for permission to travel.

U.S. citizen Michelle Parker is a flight attendant, and Australia considers her an essential worker who flies between her Sydney home and San Francisco.

But New South Wales state's added layer of strict quarantine rules meant that when she was returning to her husband and children in Sydney for days, she was no longer considered an essential worker but a traveler who was expected to pay 3,000 Australian dollars (\$2,100) to quarantine in a Sydney hotel for two weeks.

This meant Parker spent her layover at friends' homes in San Francisco for weeks. The New South Wales state government recently gave her a one-month permit to self-isolate at her Sydney home when she isn't working, rather than at a hotel.

"It's really ironic that I was working flights repatriating people and I was pretty much unable to repatriate myself," Parker said, referring to her home in Australia, where she has permanent residency.

Data is vague on how many Australians have requested permission to leave and how many have been refused.

Border Force said more than 55,200 Australian citizens and permanent residents had been given exemptions to depart Australia from when the travel ban began on March 25 through the end of September. More than 20,149 were denied exemptions in that time.

The tally of denials does not include requests that were disregarded because they lacked sufficient information, or ones that were withdrawn because the bar was set too high or the need to travel had passed.

Australia's extreme response to the pandemic reflects an island nation that has some of the world's toughest border controls and lacks the interconnections with its neighbors that many other countries around the world share.

"We just have much, much stronger border controls than almost anywhere else," Griffith University law expert Susan Harris Rimmer said. "I think we think they're normal, but they're just not normal."

Harris Rimmer said it would be "very difficult" for the European Union to follow Australia's example because of its strong human rights protections and its focus on free travel. But some Middle Eastern and Asian countries with weak human rights protections could, she said.

Magenau is surprised that so many of her fellow Australians seem to accept the extraordinary travel restrictions.

"In Germany, people have the authority to make their own decisions. They can use their own common sense. They're treated like adults," she said. "And in Australia, all that decision-making seems to be taken away from you."

Pandemic politics: Biden shuns 'false promises' of fast fix

By WILL WEISSERT, AAMER MADHANI and ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

BULLHEAD CITY, Ariz. (AP) — Focused firmly on COVID-19, Joe Biden vowed Wednesday not to campaign in the election homestretch "on the false promises of being able to end this pandemic by flipping a switch." President Donald Trump, under attack for his handling of the worst health crisis in more than a

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century, breezily pledged on his final-week swing to “vanquish the virus.”

The Democratic presidential nominee also argued that a Supreme Court conservative majority stretched to 6-3 by newly confirmed Justice Amy Coney Barrett could dismantle the Obama administration’s signature health law and leave millions without insurance coverage during the pandemic. He called Trump’s handling of the coronavirus an “insult” to its victims, especially as cases spike dramatically around the country.

“Even if I win, it’s going to take a lot of hard work to end this pandemic,” Biden said during a speech in Wilmington, Delaware. “I do promise this: We will start on day one doing the right things.”

His comments reflected an unwavering attempt to keep the political spotlight on the pandemic. That was a departure from the president, who downplayed the threat and spent his day in Arizona, where relaxed rules on social distancing made staging big rallies easier.

The pandemic’s consequences were escalating, with deaths climbing in 39 states and an average of 805 people dying daily nationwide — up from 714 two weeks ago. Overall, about 227,000 Americans have died. The sharp rise sent shockwaves through financial markets, causing the Dow Jones Industrial Average to drop 900-plus points.

Trump, who frequently lauds rising markets, failed to mention the decline. But he promised that economic growth figures for the summer quarter, due Thursday, would be strong, declaring during a rally in Bullhead City, Arizona, “This election is a choice between a Trump super-recovery and a Biden depression.”

As Trump spoke, an Air Force fighter thundered nearby and released a flare to get the attention of a non-responsive private aircraft that was flying in the restricted airspace. North American Aerospace Defense Command said the plane was escorted out by the F-16 “without further incident.” Trump was at first caught off guard but later cheered the fighter, proclaiming, “I love that sound” as it roared overhead.

The president also condemned violence that occurred during some protests in response to the police shooting of Walter Wallace Jr., a Black man, in Philadelphia saying Biden stands “with the rioters and the vandals.”

But Biden said in Wilmington, “There is no excuse whatsoever for the looting and the violence.”

Bullhead City is just across the border from Nevada, a state Trump is hoping to flip during Election Day next Tuesday. A Trump Nevada rally last month attracted thousands and led to the airport that hosted it being fined more than \$5,500 for violating pandemic crowd restrictions.

Rather than curb his crowd, Trump moved just across the border and used his rally Wednesday to scoff at Democratic leaders in states like Nevada for trying to enforce social distancing rules. The event’s crowd looked to be mostly from Arizona, though there were attendees from Nevada. Few wore masks.

The weather was far milder than during a Tuesday night Trump rally in Omaha, Nebraska. After Trump left that one, hundreds of attendees at Eppley Airfield spent hours waiting in the cold for transportation to cars parked far away. Several people were taken to hospitals amid concerns about exposure.

“Because of the sheer size of the crowd, we deployed 40 shuttles – double the normal allotment – but local road closures and resulting congestion caused delays,” Trump spokeswoman Samantha Zager said in a statement.

Trump is trailing Biden in most national polls. Biden also has an advantage, though narrower, in the key swing states that could decide the election.

Biden voted early in Wilmington on Wednesday and received a virtual briefing from health experts. One, Dr. David Kessler, director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, warned, “We are in the midst of the third wave, and I don’t think anyone can tell you how high this is going to get.”

Trump was nonetheless defiant, declaring, “We will vanquish the virus and emerge stronger than ever before.”

In a campaign sidelight, the president lashed out after news that Miles Taylor, former chief of staff at the Department of Homeland Security, was revealed as the author of a scathing anti-Trump op-ed and book under the pen name “Anonymous.”

“This guy is a low-level lowlife that I don’t know,” he said. “I have no idea who he is.”

Trump views Nevada favorably, despite it not backing a Republican for president since 2004. Hillary Clinton won it by less than 2.5 percentage points in 2016.

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And Biden wants to flip Arizona, which hasn't voted Democratic for president since 1996. His running mate, California Sen. Kamala Harris, was in Arizona on Wednesday, meeting with Latina entrepreneurs and African American leaders as well as holding two drive-in rallies.

On Friday, Harris will visit Fort Worth, Houston and the U.S.-Mexico border town of McAllen in Texas -- a state that hasn't backed a Democrat for president since 1976 or even elected one to statewide office since 1994. Texas was long so reliably red that top national Democrats visited only to hold fundraisers.

"I am really grateful for the attention that they have given Texas because it has been so long since a presidential campaign gave this state a look," said Beto O'Rourke, a former Texas congressman and one-time presidential hopeful. But he declined to predict that Biden would win the state, saying only "There is a possibility," contingent on turnout breaking records.

Biden heads later in the week to three more states Trump won in 2016, Iowa, Wisconsin and Michigan, where he'll hold a joint Saturday rally with former President Barack Obama.

Democrats point to a larger number of their party members returning absentee ballots — results that could be decisive since more people are likely to vote by mail during the pandemic. Trump's campaign argues that enough of its supporters will vote on Election Day to overwhelm any early Biden advantage.

Around 71.5 million people nationwide have so far voted in advance, either by casting early, in-person ballots or voting by mail, according to an Associated Press analysis. That's already far more than the total advance ballots cast before the 2016 presidential election.

"We're talking to people everywhere," Harris said. "And there's no area that's off limits."

Weissert reported from Washington, Jaffe from Wilmington. Associated Press writers Michelle Price in Bull City, Arizona, Kathleen Ronayne in Phoenix and Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this report.

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

Justices deny fast, new look at Pennsylvania ballot deadline

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it would not grant a quick, pre-election review to a new Republican appeal to exclude absentee ballots received after Election Day in the presidential battleground state of Pennsylvania, although it remained unclear whether those ballots will ultimately be counted.

The court's order left open the possibility that the justices could take up and decide after the election whether a three-day extension to receive and count absentee ballots ordered by Pennsylvania's high court was proper.

The issue would take on enormous importance if Pennsylvania turns out to be the crucial state in next week's election and the votes received between Nov. 3 and Nov. 6 are potentially decisive.

The Supreme Court ruled hours after Pennsylvania's Department of State agreed to segregate ballots received in the mail after polls close on Tuesday and before 5 p.m. on Nov. 6.

President Donald Trump's campaign suggested that those ballots will never be counted.

"We secured a huge victory when the Pennsylvania Secretary of State saw the writing on the wall and voluntarily complied with our injunction request, segregating ballots received after the Nov. 3 deadline to ensure they will not be counted until the Supreme Court rules on our petition," Justin Clark, a deputy campaign manager, said in an interview.

The court, Clark said, deferred "the most important issue in the case, which is whether state courts can change the time, place and manner of elections, contrary to the rules adopted by the Legislature."

Pennsylvania's Department of State could not immediately say Wednesday night whether it would revise its guidance to the counties about whether to count those ballots.

The Alliance for Retired Americans, which had sued in Pennsylvania state courts for an extended deadline, said the ruling means that ballots arriving during the three-day period after Election Day will be counted.

"This is an enormous victory for all Pennsylvania voters, especially seniors who should not have to put their health at risk during the pandemic in order to cast a ballot that will be counted," Richard Fiesta, the alliance's executive director, said in a statement.

New Justice Amy Coney Barrett did not take part in the vote "because of the need for a prompt resolution of it and because she has not had time to fully review the parties' filings," court spokeswoman Kathy Arberg said in an email.

Justice Samuel Alito, writing for three justices, indicated he would support the high court's eventual review of the issue. But, he wrote, "I reluctantly conclude that there is simply not enough time at this late date to decide the question before the election."

Last week, the justices divided 4-4, a tie vote that allowed the three-day extension ordered by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to remain in effect.

Justice Department ramps up inquiry into NY care home deaths

By BERNARD CONDON and MATT SEDENSKY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. Justice Department vastly expanded an inquiry Wednesday that could determine whether New York is undercounting coronavirus deaths among nursing home residents, demanding detailed data from hundreds of private facilities.

The demand ratchets up pressure on Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo after months of bipartisan criticism that the state's official tally of 6,722 dead at long-term care facilities is probably off by thousands. That's because New York, unlike nearly every other state, counts only residents who died on a nursing home's property and not those who died after being taken to a hospital.

Cuomo's administration has repeatedly refused to release such nursing home data to lawmakers and the media, including a public-records request from The Associated Press dating back to May.

His spokesman, Rich Azzopardi, called the Justice Department's latest request just days before the presidential election a politically motivated "sham" and a "scummy abuse of power."

An AP analysis in August found New York is probably undercounting nursing home deaths by thousands, noting that a separate federal count since May that included resident deaths in hospitals was 65 percent higher than the comparable state count.

Cuomo, who has generally been praised for flattening the curve in a state hit with a nation-topping 33,400 deaths, has nonetheless faced unrelenting criticism over his handling of nursing homes, particularly a controversial March 25 order that sent thousands of recovering COVID-19 patients from hospitals into nursing homes at the height of the pandemic.

New York's method of counting allows Cuomo to boast that his state has a lower percentage of nursing home deaths compared to other states.

"In this hyper-political environment ... everybody wants to point fingers," Cuomo said in an appearance on CBS' "This Morning" earlier this month to promote his new book on his handling of the crisis. "New York, actually, we're number 46 out of 50 in terms of percentage of deaths in nursing homes — 46 out of 50. So, yes, people died in nursing homes. Yes, we've learned a lot of lessons, but 46 out of 50, it's not a predominantly New York problem."

The letter from the Justice Department's civil rights division asks the state to hand over a breakout of hospital deaths that its health department has been collecting since at least April but not made public. It broadens to more than 600 nursing homes a similar request it made in August that was aimed only at a few dozen publicly run facilities.

The same data was promised to state lawmakers at a fiery forum in August in which some members of Cuomo's own party accused him of a cover-up. They are still waiting.

Asked about the delay Wednesday, the state health department repeated what it has been saying for months, that it needs more time to doublecheck the figures for accuracy.

Assemblyman Ronald Kim, a Democrat from an area of New York City where hundreds of nursing home residents have died, said he welcomes the federal inquiry and hopes it gets results.

"This is a necessary step ... for families to get a sense of closure from the traumatic experience that they had to go through," he said.

Vivian Zayas, whose 78-year-old mother died in April after contracting COVID-19 at a nursing home in West Islip, New York, said the delay was unacceptable.

"We're really hurt and we don't have to add to people's pain by them being elusive," said Zayas, who founded the advocacy group Voices for Seniors after her mother's death. "We believe the numbers are so significantly higher and they're trying to find ways of massaging the numbers so they don't reflect the devastation."

Separately, the Justice Department also sent a letter to Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy of New Jersey questioning its nursing home death count and announced it is launching a formal investigation of the state's veterans homes after receiving what it described as incomplete answers to an earlier request for data.

The Murphy administration wouldn't comment on the substance of the investigation but called the new inquiries politically motivated.

Said spokesman Michael Zhadanovsky: "The fact that this request from the Department of Justice was announced a week before Election Day speaks volumes about the nature of the review."

Sedensky reported from Philadelphia. AP reporters Jim Mustian and Marina Villeneuve in New York and Mike Catalini in New Jersey contributed to this report.

Lawsuit says census takers were pressured to falsify data

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

The U.S. Census Bureau was able to claim it had reached 99.9% of households when the 2020 census ended two weeks ago because census takers were pressured to falsify data as the statistical agency cut corners and slashed standards, according to an amended lawsuit from advocacy groups and local governments.

In Baltimore, Southern California and the states of Massachusetts, North Carolina and Texas, some households were marked as completed after only one attempt to reach residents living there, according to the revised lawsuit filed by the National Urban League; the city of San Jose, California; and others.

Elsewhere, census takers were pressured by supervisors to close cases as quickly as possible, and they did this by guessing the number of people living in a household, claiming an address was too dangerous to visit or falsely saying residents of a household had refused to answer questions during door-knocking, said the lawsuit filed in federal court in San Jose.

"Instructions such as those identified above suggested to enumerators that they should falsify data to close cases quickly," the lawsuit said.

The lawsuit argues the disregard for accuracy was done to end the count early so that census numbers could be processed while President Donald Trump was still in the White House, regardless of who wins the presidential race. That would allow the Trump administration to enforce a presidential order seeking to exclude people living in the U.S. illegally when congressional seats are divvied up among the states.

According to the lawsuit, the Census Bureau also relied heavily on methods other than directly interviewing households during its door-knocking phase in order to achieve its high completion rate. Those less accurate methods relied on administrative records like IRS returns, interviewing neighbors or landlords and just getting a head count rather than getting details about residents' race, sex, age, Hispanic origin and relationship to each other, the lawsuit said.

In the race to finish field operations for the 2020 census, "Defendants cut many corners and made decisions that do not bear a reasonable relationship to the accomplishment of an actual enumeration," the amended complaint said. "Such non-direct enumeration methods are less accurate and have a profound effect on immigrants and minorities — the hard-to-count populations."

The revised lawsuit was filed late Tuesday, two weeks after the Supreme Court sided with the Trump administration and suspended an order from a district judge allowing the head count to continue through

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the end of the month. The coalition of local governments and advocacy groups had sued the Trump administration to keep the count from ending a month early and to extend the deadline for turning in apportionment numbers from Dec. 31 to the end of April 2021.

The Supreme Court decision allowed the Census Bureau to end field operations and start the process of crunching numbers ahead of the year-end deadline for turning in numbers used for divvying up congressional seats by state in a process called apportionment.

The Trump administration said in court papers last week that the courts should not interfere with efforts to meet the year-end deadline for turning in apportionment numbers now that the Supreme Court has ruled. Besides deciding how many congressional seats each state gets, in a process known as apportionment, the census helps determine the distribution of \$1.5 trillion in federal spending annually.

The amended lawsuit argues that the Trump administration is pushing to finish data processing for the 2020 census by Dec. 31 so that the numbers used for apportionment are completed while Trump is still in office. That would allow the Commerce Department, which oversees the Census Bureau, to enforce a Trump directive seeking to exclude people living in the country illegally from the apportionment count, the lawsuit said.

Federal courts in New York and California have ruled Trump's order unlawful and unconstitutional. Trump is appealing the New York case to the Supreme Court.

The coalition of local governments and advocacy groups says the Census Bureau doesn't have enough time to crunch the numbers by Dec. 31, and the apportionment deadline should be moved to the end of next April.

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

Europe and US facing new round of shutdowns amid virus surge

By TODD RICHMOND and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

A new wave of lockdowns and business closings swept across France, Germany and other places in Europe on Wednesday as surging coronavirus infections there and in the U.S. wipe out months of progress against the scourge on two continents.

The resurgence and the resulting clampdown sent a shudder through Wall Street. The S&P 500 fell 3.5%, its biggest drop since June, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 943 points, or 3.4%.

French President Emmanuel Macron declared a new nationwide lockdown starting Friday, saying the country has been "overpowered by a second wave." Many doctors had urged the move, given that 58% of the nation's intensive care units are now taken up by COVID-19 patients.

In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel announced a four-week shutdown of bars, restaurants and theaters. "We must act, and now, to avoid an acute national health emergency," she said.

Countries such as Switzerland, Italy, Bulgaria and Greece have closed or otherwise clamped down again on nightspots and imposed other restrictions such as curfews and mandatory mask-wearing. Madrid and other parts of Spain banned all but essential travel in and out of their regions.

"We are deep in the second wave," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said. "I think that this year's Christmas will be a different Christmas."

In the U.S., where practically every state is seeing a rise in cases, Democratic Gov. Tony Evers of hard-hit Wisconsin has been reduced to pleading with people to stay home, after an order he issued in the spring was overturned by the courts. Illinois' governor banned indoor dining and drinking in Chicago this week. Other states are likewise considering reimposing restrictions.

The virus has killed more than 250,000 people in Europe and over 227,000 in the U.S., according to the count kept by Johns Hopkins University.

The long-feared surge is blamed in part on growing disregard for social distancing and mask-wearing, as well as the onset of cold weather, which is forcing people indoors, where the virus can spread more easily.

Dr. David Letzer, an infectious-disease specialist who doubles as chairman of the Wisconsin Medical

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Society's COVID-19 task force, is getting swamped with patients. He said he was incensed to see people without masks going into a restaurant as he was driving between hospitals.

"I'm just coming from a place with ventilators and people are just going to an indoor restaurant," he said. "Those are the things that are frustrating and take their toll."

In the U.S., more than 71,000 people a day are testing positive on average, up from 51,000 two weeks ago. Cases are on the rise in all but two states, Hawaii and Delaware, and deaths are climbing in 39 states, with an average of 805 people dying in the U.S. per day, up from 714 two weeks ago.

Wisconsin, one of the worst hot spots of them all, set records Tuesday for the number of daily infections at nearly 5,300 and deaths with 64. About 12% of the state's intensive care beds were available on Tuesday, according to the Wisconsin Hospital Association.

"It is absolutely exhausting right now," said Dr. Jeff Pothof, chief quality officer at UW Health, the University of Wisconsin-Madison's hospital and medical arm. Nearly a third of its COVID-19 patients are in intensive care, filling all three wings of the ICU, he said. Some require one-on-one care around the clock.

"We're throwing everything we've got at them to keep them alive," he said.

The hospital has started training doctors and nurses in dealing with the virus and is trying to persuade retired physicians to return to work, he said. Pothof said he is working 12- to 15-hour days himself and is constantly on call.

In the Northeast, which seemed to have brought the virus under control over the summer, Rhode Island Gov. Gina Raimondo said the state is seeing record numbers of new infections and might have to bring back restrictions on businesses that were loosened months ago.

"We're in a bad place. This data is not encouraging. It's headed in the wrong direction in every metric," she said.

After a devastatingly lethal spring, Europe seemed to have beaten back the virus over the summer. Its success was seen as a reproach to the United States and an example of what the U.S. could accomplish if Americans would just stop their political infighting and listen to the scientists.

But more than 2 million new confirmed coronavirus cases have been reported globally in the past week, the shortest time ever for such an increase, and 46% of those were in Europe.

Both Italy and Germany set records for new infections Wednesday, with Italy reporting nearly 25,000 in a single day and Germany logging almost 15,000. France, Belgium, the Netherlands, most of Spain and the Czech Republic are also seeing alarming rates of infection.

Deaths are also on the rise in Europe, with about a 35% spike from the previous week, the World Health Organization said. France reported 523 virus-related deaths in 24 hours Tuesday, the highest daily count since April.

The European Commission's von der Leyen said Europe is being confronted with "two enemies."

"We're dealing with the coronavirus — the virus itself — and also corona fatigue," she said. "That is, people are becoming more and more fed up with the preventive measures."

In Italy, where the Lombardy and Campania regions are hardest hit, officials have accused right-wing extremists, soccer hooligans and anarchists of using widespread discontent over new anti-virus restrictions on restaurants, gyms, pools and theaters as a pretext to wage "urban guerrilla" violence during recent protests.

Talk of new lockdowns also prompted unrest in Germany, where thousands staged a protest at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate to demand more financial support from the government.

Even Sweden, which avoided a national lockdown and generally imposed far lighter measures than other European countries, is now urging people to avoid stores and public transportation.

Associated Press writers from across the globe contributed to this report.

2021 Boston Marathon postponed at least until the fall

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Boston Marathon organizers said Wednesday that the 2021 race won't be run on Patri-

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ots Day because of the coronavirus pandemic, the second straight year that it has been moved from the April weekend that was its home for more than a century.

About six months before the scheduled April 19 date, the Boston Athletic Association said it was postponing next year's race until "at least the fall of 2021," conceding that the state won't have sufficiently emerged from the pandemic to allow as many as 30,000 runners and a half-million fans to gather on the streets from Hopkinton to Copley Square in the spring.

"We are unable to host the Boston Marathon this coming April," BAA CEO Tom Grilk said in a statement. "We are optimistic that the Boston Marathon will continue its tradition of celebrating the spirit of community and athletic excellence next fall."

Organizers said they hope to work with state and local officials to "determine if a fall 2021 date is feasible." The BAA said it hopes to select a fall date by the end of the year.

The 2020 Boston Marathon was originally postponed from April to September, but it was canceled outright two months later — the first time since 1897 that there was no in-person Boston Marathon of any sort.

A total of 15,972 people ran a "virtual" race this year, completing the 26.2-mile distance on their own over a 10-day period. In 1918, the format was modified to a relay due to World War I; the 2013 race was stopped when two bombs exploded at the finish line, several hours after the winners had finished but while many recreational runners were still on the course.

"There is a pretty rich history of accommodation and addressing reality," Grilk said at the time. "This is this year's reality."

Massachusetts' reopening plan doesn't allow road races until Phase 4, which would require the widespread availability of a vaccine or treatment.

Divided Belgium among Europe's worst virus hotspots

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

BUIZINGEN, Belgium (AP) — Small, yet so divided, Belgium has been hit hard again by the pandemic, and now presents some of the most worrying statistics in a continent reeling under a coronavirus resurgence.

If ever there was a common enemy for the rival Dutch- and French-speaking citizens and regions to fight, this would surely be it. But even now cooperation goes against the grain in Belgium, to the extent that the prime minister had to intervene with a special address to the nation Wednesday, pointing out that exceptional circumstances demand exceptional measures — namely: total unity.

"As of midnight, with immediate effect, just about everywhere the same measures will apply. The last thing we need today is division and a scattered order of battle," Alexander De Croo told Belgians. "We should not let ourselves be divided."

His appeal came after talks with regional leaders, who so often bicker and stall and leave rudderless a nation with a federal and three regional governments which are responsible for an area barely 300 kilometers (185 miles) at its widest reach.

After protracted disagreements between the linguistic groups that left Belgium without a fully functioning government for nearly 500 days until De Croo became prime minister of a 7-party coalition one month ago and now, it was time to stand together.

"The only battle we have to fight is with the virus, which knows no bounds of language or color, age or gender," De Croo said.

This week, news struck that the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control had recorded Belgium — shoehorned in between Germany, France and the Netherlands — as having the highest 14-day cumulative number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 citizens, just surpassing the Czech Republic.

On Wednesday, the top two reversed roles again with the Czechs standing at 1,448.7 compared to Belgium's 1,424.2 in a standings nobody wants to lead. Both far outstrip even hotbeds like France or Spain. In all in Belgium, 11,038 people have died so far in the pandemic.

All this in a wealthy nation of 11.5 million people where no fewer than nine ministers — national and regional — have a say on health issues. The dictum "less is more" never reached the Belgian high ech-

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elons of power.

"A great many politicians can claim power but, in the end, no one is ever responsible," historian and former member of the European Parliament Luckas Vander Taelen said. He called Belgium's system of multiple layers of government to serve the 6.5 million Dutch-speaking Flemings in the north and the 5 million Francophones "institutional lasagna."

The pandemic finds in Belgium one of the most densely populated countries in Europe, a crossroad of international trade. Its capital, Brussels, hosts the headquarters of the 27-nation European Union with its steady stream of international visitors. But Belgium's political makeup, with its multiple regional authorities, also creates a kaleidoscope of different government health measures.

Throughout the crisis, the Belgian population was unified in one thing: The general sense of bewilderment about the ever-changing rules imposed by the different layers of government and a growing confusion caused by clumsy communication. For someone living near Brussels, a bar closing hour or a maximum cap on attending a funeral might face different rules within just 20 kilometers (12 miles).

Late Tuesday, the regional government of Flanders finally considered adapting its coronavirus curfew to match that of the francophone region and Brussels, but then thought better of it. While it stays at midnight in the north of the country, it is at 10 p.m. in other areas, complicating life for everyone who travels from one region to the other.

Underscoring the threat, authorities said on Tuesday, 689 people were rushed to the hospital with COVID-19, 60 more than the record during the March peak. "And admissions continue to rise," said crisis center virologist Steven Van Gucht. He added that ICU admissions are doubling every eight days and, if it continued unabated, would reach the saturation level of 2,000 patients around Nov. 6.

Even during the health crisis, linguistic strife has raised its head, something which has never been fully contained during almost two centuries and two World Wars, when the whole nation faced one common enemy.

Christoph D'Haese, the mayor of Aalst in Flanders, recently said he would no longer accept patients from Brussels, Belgium's largely francophone capital.

"Medical solidarity has limits and borders," he said. Hospital authorities disagreed and insisted that the essence of medical solidarity was the lack of borders.

When the Brussels UZ hospital, with Flemish roots, warned that the capital needed to take tougher action to contain the crisis, the Francophone Brussels Health Minister Alain Maron sniped back that "when a Flemish hospital in Brussels raises a problem, it is a major issue, and when six of 14 hospitals in (Flemish) Antwerp are in the same situation, nobody talks about it."

Vander Taelen has seen it all before. "So fast, you get to the level of village politics. Even when lives are at stake," he said.

As Belgium hobbled through the first wave of the pandemic without a fully functioning government, one of the last measures De Croo's predecessor took in September was to relax restrictions — against the advice of many medical experts. That relaxation is now partly blamed for the record surge this fall.

Charles Michel, the European Union Council President, was groomed in Belgian politics but now says against such a foe as the coronavirus only a continent-wide approach is effective.

"This crisis has already demonstrated that no single country can tackle the situation on its own," he said Tuesday. "Any management of this epidemic on a patchwork basis, whereby some would emerge better off than others, would serve only to exacerbate the economic imbalances."

And when it comes to the patchwork of rules in Belgium, the country's Roman Catholic bishops urged everyone in a letter ahead of All Saints Day Sunday to apply one rule of thumb: "Go for the safest measure, the safest figure. In the short term it is the toughest approach. In the long term, the most secure."

And most of all, they said, "We can win the battle against the coronavirus only if we do it together."

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

Turkish leaders condemn Charlie Hebdo cartoon of Erdogan

By SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkish officials on Wednesday railed against French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo over its cover-page cartoon mocking Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and accused the publication of sowing “the seeds of hatred and animosity.”

The cartoon could further heighten tensions between Turkey and France over French President Emmanuel Macron’s firm stance against Islamism following the beheading of a teacher who showed caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad for a class lesson on free speech.

Leaders from around the Muslim world added their criticism of what they see as attacks on Islam in the West, while France vowed not to back away from defending freedom of expression.

The cartoons that led to the teacher’s death were the same drawings that were at the center of a deadly 2015 extremist attack on Charlie Hebdo’s staff.

The Prophet Muhammad cartoons upset many in the Muslim world. But it was Erdogan who led the charge against France and questioned Macron’s mental state. France then recalled its ambassador to Turkey for consultations, a first in French-Turkish diplomatic relations.

“We strongly condemn the publication concerning our president of the French magazine, which has no respect to faith, the sacred and values,” Erdogan’s spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, wrote on Twitter.

The Ankara Chief Prosecutor’s office launched an investigation into Charlie Hebdo managers over the cartoon, Turkey’s state-run Anadolu news agency reported. Insulting the president is a crime in Turkey punishable by up to four years in prison.

Turkey’s Foreign Ministry later summoned the French charge d’affaires to protest the cartoon and to demand that the French authorities “take the necessary political and legal steps” against the drawings, which the ministry said “exceed the boundaries of freedom of expression,” Anadolu reported.

Erdogan himself said he had not looked at the drawing and had nothing to say about the “dishonorable” publication.

“My sadness and anger does not stem from the disgusting attack on my person but from the fact that the same (publication) is the source of the impertinent attack on my dear Prophet,” Erdogan told his ruling party’s legislators in parliament.

He went on to criticize France and other Europe nations’ colonial past saying: “You are murderers!”

Tensions between France and Turkey have mounted in recent months over Turkish actions in Syria, Libya and the Caucasus Mountains region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The cartoon depicted Erdogan in his underwear holding a drink and lifting the skirt of a woman wearing an Islamic dress.

“I condemn this incorrigible French rag’s immoral publication concerning our president,” Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay wrote on Twitter.

Macron’s stance sparked anti-France protests in Turkey and in other Muslim countries as well as calls for the boycott of French goods.

French government spokesman Gabriel Attal said the country would not back down in the face of what he called “efforts of destabilization, of intimidation.”

“France will never renounce its principles and values, and notably the freedom of expression and freedom of publication” Attal said.

“It was hateful comments toward journalists, toward a newsroom, that led to the bloodshed we have seen in recent years in our country,” he said, referring to the 2015 attack on Charlie Hebdo attack that killed 12 people and was the first in a series of extremist attacks on France.

In Egypt, the country’s top Muslim cleric called on the international community to adopt universal legislation criminalizing anti-Muslim discrimination and activities.

At a gathering celebrating Prophet Muhammad’s birthday, Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, Al-Azhar’s Grand Imam, also condemned the slaying of the French teacher in Paris as “an odious and painful murder.”

He said that offending Islam and Muslims has become a tool to mobilize votes. He called the “offensive cartoons” depicting Muhammad “a blatant hostility against this noble religion and its prophet.”

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Egypt's President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi said that offending the prophet undermines "high values" many Muslims believe in. "We, too, have rights; right of not to hurt our feelings and not to offend our values," he said.

Speaking at a Cabinet meeting, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani also weighed in on the debate.

"If Europe and France are after rights, ethics and culture they have to withdraw from intervention in Muslim affairs," Rouhani said.

Scores of people gathered in front of the French Embassy in Tehran, setting the French flag on fire and chanting "Death to France."

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan meanwhile, wrote letters to the heads of Muslim states, expressing his concern over the "ridicule and mockery" of Islam's Prophet Muhammad and desecration of the Quran in the Western world, especially in Europe.

Khan wrote that "covert and overt discrimination" against Muslims is widespread in Europe.

"I believe the leadership in these countries, often acts out of lack of understanding of the intrinsic deep passion, love and devotion Muslims all over the world have for their Prophet," he wrote. He urged Muslim leaders to take the initiative to call for an end to this cycle of hate and violence.

About 300 members of Pakistan's radical Jamaat-e-Islami party rallied in the port city of Karachi to denounce Macron. The demonstrators wanted to march toward the Consulate of France but police stopped them.

In the biblical town of Bethlehem in the West Bank, Muslim and Christian leaders led a rare interfaith demonstration to denounce Macron's defense of the publication of the cartoons. About 50 people, including dozens of local officials and dignitaries, gathered in front of the Church of the Nativity, where tradition says Jesus was born.

Greek Orthodox Archbishop Atallah Hanna said the gathering was meant "to send a strong message from the Holy Land that we Palestinians, Christians and Muslims, reject hate speech and racist speeches and call always for brotherhood, peace and love."

Associated Press writers Angela Charlton in Paris, Samy Magdy in Cairo, Nasser Karimi and Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Munir Ahmed in Islamabad and Mohammed Daraghmech in Bethlehem, West Bank contributed.

Migrants quickly expelled by Trump try repeatedly to cross

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

TECATE, Calif. (AP) — Edgar Alexis Lopez looks well-rested in photos he took before crossing the border illegally in mountains east of San Diego, flashing a wide grin in clean jeans.

Six hours later, the 24-year-old Mexican construction worker was out of water, exhausted after climbing over the border wall and convinced he would faint. Abandoned by his smuggling guide, he and his father called for help.

A rescue helicopter couldn't land in the steep terrain, but authorities dropped water before border agents arrived and whisked them back to Tijuana, Mexico. Lopez quickly recovered and began planning another attempt to reach San Diego, where he hopes to earn a more steady living. He tried twice more in the following days, turning around before he got caught.

"You enter and leave, enter and leave, enter and leave," Lopez said during a lunch break at his job in a Tijuana supermarket, where he was saving money for a fourth attempt. "You have nothing to lose besides the physical strain."

After a slew of profound changes by the Trump administration to limit asylum, the coronavirus brought it to a halt. With immigration laws largely suspended at the border since March, Mexicans and people from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador who enter the U.S. illegally are immediately expelled without even a piece of paper, generally within two hours and with no chance to plead for asylum — the post-Holocaust system to protect people around the world from torture and persecution at home. Facing no consequences, migrants are more determined to keep trying until they succeed.

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The suspension of asylum combined with the introduction of “express deportations,” as migrants call them, accelerated a shift in who is crossing the border illegally: more Mexican men who come for economic reasons and far fewer from Central America, Africa and elsewhere seeking asylum.

Dismantling asylum may be the most significant way President Donald Trump has reshaped the immigration system, which he has arguably done more to change than any U.S. president. He’s thrilled supporters with an “America first” message and infuriated critics who call his signature domestic issue insular, xenophobic and even racist.

Before the election, The Associated Press is examining some of Trump’s immigration policies, including restrictions on international students, a retreat from America’s humanitarian role and now a virtual shutdown of asylum.

Under the rapid expulsions that began in March, 37% of those caught had been picked up in the previous year, up from 7% in the 2019 fiscal year. The annual figure hasn’t topped 14% since the Border Patrol began keeping track seven years ago.

Recidivism hit 48% among Mexican adults over recent a two-week period in the Border Patrol’s San Diego sector, said Chief Rodney Scott. Rates are highest in San Diego; El Paso, Texas; and Texas’ Rio Grande Valley because large cities are on the Mexican side.

“They can get a night’s rest and try again,” Scott said in a recent interview.

To discourage repeat crossers, the administration has been flying Mexican citizens farther into the country — to Mexico City and distant provincial capitals. Mexican officials support the flights as a way to ease pressure on border cities like Tijuana.

A small group of Mexican men walked two days through brush and boulder-strewn mountains near Tecate, planning to take four days this month to reach Interstate 8, where a driver would take them to San Diego. But agents caught up and rushed them to the border crossing with Tijuana.

For Jose Luis Bello, 37, it was his eighth expulsion since March, having been flown to Mexico City once, and he’s still determined to reach his U.S. citizen children in Columbus, Ohio. Jose Magana, 35, in the same group, was caught eight times in five months. He’s been flown to midsize cities Villahermosa and Queretaro but is eager to return to Tijuana on his way to try to reunite with his wife and children in San Francisco.

“I’m still in for it 100%,” Bello said.

It is a throwback to the 1970s through 2000s, when Mexican men coming for jobs tried to evade agents. Asylum was almost an afterthought to policymakers until families — many from Central America — helped make the U.S. the world’s top destination for asylum-seekers in 2017. Many simply surrendered to agents.

“It’s a little bit more of the revolving door than it used to be,” said Scott, the Border Patrol chief.

Asylum is for people fleeing persecution for their race, religion, nationality, political beliefs or membership in a social group. It isn’t intended for people who migrate for economic reasons.

Trump has repeatedly called asylum “a scam,” largely undoing it before the pandemic. He virtually ended the practice of releasing asylum-seekers in the U.S. with notices to appear in court.

“The single greatest threat to the integrity of U.S. borders is the tactic of lodging frivolous asylum claims for the sole purpose of gaining admission to the country,” Stephen Miller, a Trump senior adviser, told the AP. “A general policy of granting any person who shows up unlawfully at the border admission into the country and a work permit pending a future asylum hearing is not tantamount to open borders. It is open borders.”

Critics say halting asylum, which is being challenged in court after Trump relied on a little-used public health law amid the pandemic, is a gross abdication of legal and moral obligations to protect people fleeing human rights abuses. Border Patrol agents may refer people for screening under the U.N. Convention Against Torture, but the bar is extremely high.

There were nearly 200,000 pandemic-related expulsions from March through September, but the administration’s attack on asylum goes back to its early days, when thousands of parents were separated from their children to face criminal charges under a “zero tolerance” policy on illegal crossings. Other key orders:

— About 70,000 asylum-seekers from dozens of countries have been returned to Mexico since January 2019 to wait for court hearings. It’s subjected asylum-seekers to extreme violence and made it even more

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difficult to find attorneys. Less than 1% have won claims, far below rates for all those seeking asylum.

Democrat Joe Biden has pledged to end the policy, called "Migrant Protection Protocols."

— The administration struck agreements with Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras last year for people to be flown to seek asylum there instead of in America. That's despite the U.S. State Department finding significant human rights abuses in all three countries, including violent targeting of minority groups.

From November to March, when the virus halted flights to Guatemala, only 20 of 939 Hondurans and Salvadorans sent there sought asylum in Guatemala. Nearly all went home.

Miller said Trump would seek similar arrangements with countries worldwide if he's reelected, creating a global network that would spread asylum cases more widely.

— U.S. Customs and Border Protection late last year began keeping Mexicans and Central Americans in custody through initial asylum screenings, ideally done within three days. CBP facilities lack beds and other basics, and asylum-seekers face extraordinary challenges finding attorneys.

Only 13 of more than 2,000 Mexicans subject to the policy since it took effect got lawyers, and just 18 of more than 2,700 people from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras got representation, according to U.S. Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, an Arizona Democrat. The administration hasn't released figures on legal representation but hasn't disputed her numbers.

— The administration also has generally ruled out domestic and gang violence as grounds for asylum, allowed judges to decide cases without a hearing and denied asylum to people from countries with widespread communicable disease or who go through another country on their way to the U.S.-Mexico border.

Many of those trying to get to America use Tijuana, a Mexican city of about 2 million across from San Diego, as a jumping-off point. They take taxis or get rides to the outskirts of Tecate, a Mexican town of 100,000 with a namesake brewery.

Migrants pay \$8,000 to \$10,000 to be guided through the mountains and picked up by a driver once they reach a road, Border Patrol Agent Justin Castrejon said.

On a cool September evening, a voice over a Border Patrol radio said a suspicious vehicle was spotted on a two-lane highway near Tecate, California, which is little more than a gas station. Five people bailed out, with agents in pursuit, and hid in the brush before being caught. Around the same time, groups of seven and three people got picked up, along with a single man.

Migrants who are caught give fingerprints and have a photo taken, Scott said. They are held for charges only if they have serious criminal records in the U.S.

The Border Patrol began reporting recidivism rates annually to Congress in 2014 and uses them in performance reviews for top officials, said Michael Fisher, the agency's chief from 2010 to 2015. Agents flag routes attracting repeat crossers as weak spots.

"Recidivism rates told us how sick the patient was," Fisher said. "If something wasn't working, then we could drill down."

It took two tries for Jose Luis Zarate to cross the border from Tijuana. Zarate, who recently finished nursing studies but couldn't find a well-paid job, hopes to make enough money in Alabama to eventually build a basketball court in his hometown of Oaxaca, Mexico. He and his girlfriend decided it was too dangerous for her to follow with her 6-year-old son.

"It's frustrating, but I'm happy that I will begin to make money," he said by text message. "I will begin a new life here, starting with nothing."

Jose Edgar Zuleta, whose business selling religious jewelry in the Mexican city of Puebla dried up during the pandemic, climbed Trump's 30-foot (9-meter) wall with a special ladder. He moved through brush in a heavily patrolled area for about a half-hour with two women before getting caught. His 21-year-old son, who cleared the wall ahead of him, got picked up hours later.

Zuleta, 43, agreed to pay smugglers \$19,000 for him and his son but only if they made it to the U.S., where they hope to work as landscapers in Southern California. He returned home to his wife and mother and plans to try again.

Without the threat of being jailed on criminal charges, Zuleta said the pandemic-related expulsions make

it a good time to go to the U.S.

"It's a good thing for us because we can keep trying many times," he said.

Black men's votes courted as some search for political home

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — For Phillip Agnew, engaging Black male voters ahead of the general election isn't just about persuading them to choose former Vice President Joe Biden over incumbent Donald Trump.

As an activist and organizer who gained acclaim after leading protests in Florida over the 2012 shooting death of Trayvon Martin, Agnew sees an opportunity to keep the 14.4 million Black men of voting age politically engaged well beyond 2020.

That effort begins with keeping it real about this year's candidates. Trump's positions on race and Biden's decades-old controversial record on criminal justice make neither candidate particularly attractive to Black men.

"You don't lie, you acknowledge the truth, and admit that the choices before Black people in the year 2020 are abysmal," said Agnew, an organizer with Black Men Build, a group created to empower Black men.

His group has paid to run targeted ads on TV and music-streaming services such as Hulu and Spotify, supplemented by mailers and organizers on the ground. The message is geared toward Black men who feel politically homeless.

"We are not choosing a champion, we are choosing an opponent," Agnew said, adding that he is also telling Black men that "a Biden presidency allows for terrain to organize under that is more favorable."

Following an unprecedented surge of protests against racial injustice and the killing of Black people by law enforcement, partisan and nonpartisan organizations have poured significant resources into increasing Black men's participation in the election.

And they're doing so with an acknowledgement that no major political party can lay claim to being a consistently loyal advocate for Black men and women. Whoever comes out ahead among Black men, advocates say, will have succeeded in reaching more of those who are apathetic or feel politically left out.

Iraq War veteran Leo Dunson is a 35-year-old Black conservative activist and former Democrat who feels both parties have forgotten Black men. Dunson said he's not planning on voting for Biden or Trump, and is disappointed with how both major parties handled providing relief for Black Americans during the coronavirus pandemic.

Black men "would be job creators too, if you gave us \$100 million," he said, criticizing the relief funding that went mostly to large, white-owned corporations.

In a political party, Dunson said he now wants "to find something that is going to work for us."

There's evidence that get-out-the-vote campaigns targeting Black men have worked. As of Wednesday, more than 67.1 million votes had been cast in the 2020 general election, with Black voters making up about 9% of that total — a proportion that is similar to the number of registered voters who are Black.

And 39% of those votes were by Black men — a similar gender breakdown to numbers reported in the 2016 general election. Turnout has been boosted by traditional grassroots organizing within venues like Black churches, where "souls to the polls" campaigns have stressed voting early, in-person or absentee.

Energizing Black men as a voting bloc has been important to both campaigns. While 81% of Black men voted for former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2016, that's still less than the 98% of Black women who did so, according to a Pew Research Center analysis.

Biden's campaign has regularly hosted virtual roundtable discussions, called "Shop Talk," tapping Black celebrities, athletes, political leaders, activists and historically Black fraternities to parse the challenges faced by Black men across the country.

And in more than a dozen Black Voices for Trump Community Centers placed in African American neighborhoods, the president's campaign has been drawing contrasts with Biden and Sen. Kamala Harris on issues of criminal justice and economics.

"In 2016, President Trump asked Black Americans, 'What the hell do you have to lose?' The answer was

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everything," Kamau Marshall, director of strategic communications for the Biden campaign, said in a statement to The Associated Press.

"Trump has shown us who he is and the American people, along with Black men, won't fall for more empty promises."

But Biden isn't particularly popular among Black men, largely because of his role in passage of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, federal legislation that lengthened sentences for violent crimes, helped fill prisons and flooded Black communities with police officers. Harris's tenure as a top prosecutor in California includes the disproportionate incarceration of Black men for drug offenses.

Trump's appeals to Black men have included touting economic policies early in his administration that led to historic lows in their unemployment rates, funding for historically Black colleges and universities, and setting up so-called opportunity zones for economic redevelopment in distressed Black communities.

"That's what every Black man wants for his own family," said Paris Dennard, senior communications adviser for Black media affairs with the Republican National Committee. "To have generational wealth to pass on, to create a business, whether it's a barbershop or a clothing line."

But these have been eclipsed by Trump's overtures to white supremacists and denunciation of Black Lives Matter, as well as his response to the coronavirus pandemic, which has disproportionately killed Black people and left many Black men jobless.

In 2008 and 2012, at least nine in 10 Black men and women voted for former President Barack Obama, according to the American National Election Studies surveys of the electorate.

But Black men's overall election participation has mostly been in decline since 2012, when 61% turned out to vote, according to an AP analysis of the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey data. Turnout fell to 54% in 2016.

In addition, one in 16 Black people of voting age are without the right to vote because of a felony conviction — a disenfranchisement rate 3.7 times higher than that of other races, according to a recent Sentencing Project report. Not only are Black men more likely to be stopped, searched and arrested by police, they were about 2.5 times more likely than white men to be killed by law enforcement between 2013 and 2018, according to a 2019 study published by the National Academy of Sciences.

But, advocates point out, Black men of voting age care about many issues beyond criminal justice and economic prosperity. Health care, education and housing are also on the list.

That's why some desire a new political home where they don't feel taken for granted or ignored, said Wes Bellamy, national co-chair of the newly launched political platform, Our Black Party.

"We know that there are a lot of Black folks, and Black men in particular, who feel politically homeless," said Bellamy, who also serves as chairman of the political science department at Virginia State University.

"What we want to say is that, 'Yes, this is a home for you,'" he said. "We want to endorse and support candidates. And even if we get to the point of getting ballot status later on, we want to make sure we are running folks who put Black first."

AP data journalist Angeliki Kastanis in Los Angeles contributed. Morrison is a member of the AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Follow him on Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/aaronlmorrison>.

Media election planners prepare for a night of mystery

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — This coming weekend, CNN's Sam Feist will distribute to his staff copies of the testimony news executives gave to Congress when they tried to explain how television networks got 2000's disputed election so spectacularly wrong.

It's required reading — perhaps never more than this year. Media planners are preaching caution in the face of a surge in early voting, high anxiety levels overall and a president who raises the specter of another disputed election.

"We need to prepare ourselves for a different kind of election night," said Feist, CNN's Washington bu-

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reau chief, "and the word I keep using is 'patience.'"

Nearly half of people polled recently by the Pew Research Center said they intend to follow election night returns closely. It's easy to see this year eclipsing 2008's record of 71.5 million people who watched for results, and many will have laptops, tablets or smartphones ready for a multi-screen experience.

CBS News built a new studio where pop stars once visited MTV's "Total Request Live," and Fox News hired the makers of the "Fortnite" video game to design whiz-bang graphics, an illustration of the money and planning that goes in to the quadrennial event.

Live television coverage will extend into the early morning of Nov. 4 and perhaps beyond. NBC News has mapped out a schedule to stay on the air for days if necessary, said Noah Oppenheim, NBC News president.

Besides the traditional broadcast and cable news networks, there will be live-stream options from the likes of The Washington Post and others, including websites filled with graphics and raw numbers.

"There is an odd combination of anticipation and uncertainty about this election night, more than any other election night I can remember," said David Bohrman, a television veteran who this year is producing the CBS News coverage.

Election nights always have surprises, but the worry this year is being driven by the large number of people voting early or by mail, in part driven by the coronavirus. By many estimates, the early vote will eclipse the number of people going to polling places on Election Day for the first time.

That's an extraordinary change: In 1972, only 5 percent of votes were cast prior to Election Day, and by 2016 it was 42.5 percent. That profoundly affects how the results are reported.

Some states begin counting early votes as they come in. Some wait until Election Day or even after polls close. Some key states count absentee ballots only if they are postmarked by Election Day. Elsewhere, ballots can arrive as late as Nov. 13, as is the case in Ohio.

Some states have enough experience that their counts usually go quickly and smoothly. Other counts are more problematic. Florida and North Carolina are two battleground states that have, historically, done well at counting and posting the results of mail ballots on election night.

Pennsylvania and Wisconsin are prohibited by state law from processing mail ballots until Election Day. It can be a cumbersome process, and since neither state has experience counting as many ballots as are expected this year, it may be days before their results are known.

With more Democrats than Republicans voting early, the pace of how votes are reported is also important. Some states will release early votes before the Election Day tallies. That can make the first numbers shown on the screen appear deceptive, said Steve Kornacki, elections guru at MSNBC.

The challenge is knowing all those idiosyncrasies and communicating them clearly, he said.

"When I say I want a few more days (to study), that's why," he said.

Instead of listing how many voting precincts are reporting, ABC News will tell viewers the percentage of expected votes that are in so far, said Marc Burstein, senior executive producer who's been in charge of ABC election coverage since 2000.

"Our byword of the night is transparency," Burstein said. "We will tell people what we know. We will tell people what we don't know, and we will tell them why."

News organizations will still declare winners in individual states much as they have done in the past, using a combination of poll results and actual vote totals. Again, the expectation is these calls may be slower than in past years.

Producers say viewers should look to Florida as an early bellwether, because of its importance, efficiency in counting and early poll closing time. Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight blog said last week that if Democrat Joe Biden wins Florida, his chances of winning the presidency shoot up to 99 percent. If President Donald Trump wins the state, his reelection chances jump to 39 percent, what Silver calls essentially a tossup.

North Carolina and Ohio are other states where relatively early results could give an indication of how the night is going.

Perhaps.

"If 2020 has taught us anything, it's to expect the unexpected," said Alan Komissaroff, Fox News senior

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vice president of news and politics.

More reporting from outside of studios will likely be on display, with news organizations placing greater emphasis on voter integrity issues and the possibility of legal challenges. PBS is tapping a dozen public broadcasting reporters from across the country to contribute to its coverage. The Washington Post is stationing reporters in 36 states.

Networks are hiring election law experts in case those issues need to be addressed.

Because of the coronavirus, CBS' Bohrman said people who will be on the network's new set are being tested every day.

ABC News' Manhattan set isn't big enough for everyone to be 6 feet apart, so the network will operate out of three different studios on election night, including the set of "The View," Burstein said.

At some point, after months of pontificating and speculating, the conclusion of the 2020 election will be known. Four years ago, The Associated Press declared Trump the next president at 2:29 a.m. the day after the election.

"We're going in prepared but without preconceptions," Oppenheim said.

AP's Election Decision Editor Stephen Ohlemacher in Washington contributed to this report.

Ahead of the election, a landslide of documentaries

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The election has unleashed an avalanche of documentaries like no season before it.

Dozens of films, exploring issues from gerrymandering to white supremacists, have sought to illuminate the many issues and trends voters are confronting at the polls on Tuesday. In a presidential election of enormous stakes, filmmakers have rushed to finish their films before Election Day, to try to inform, sway and entertain the electorate.

A sense of urgency, in particular, drives many of the films which have streamed, aired on TV and played in theaters in the weeks ahead of Nov. 2. The woeful state of movie theaters due to the pandemic hasn't enabled a box-office breakout like Michael Moore's 2004 election-year documentary "Fahrenheit 9/11," but the sheer deluge of docs this year has put politics at the top of countless streaming-service queues.

Here's a rundown of highlights from an election-year documentary landslide.

— "All In: The Fight for Democracy": Liz Garbus and Lisa Cortés' film details the contested election of Georgia's governor in 2018, with potentially relevant lessons about voter suppression for 2020. Stacey Abrams, the Democratic candidate and a producer of "All In," relates her experience in her razor-thin loss to Brian Kemp, a Republican, who as Georgia's secretary of state had a pivotal role overseeing the election. (Kemp, who won by 50,000 votes, put more than 53,000 voter registrations, most of them from minorities, on hold ahead of voting.) "All In" uses Abrams as an entry point for a larger history of disenfranchisement in America. (On Amazon Prime)

— "Agents of Chaos": Alex Gibney's two-part HBO documentary returns to the 2016 election of Donald Trump to investigate claims of Russian interference. Gibney struggles to come to firm conclusions on Trump's alleged collusion or how much of an effect Russian trolls had. But he makes a powerful argument that Russian's meddling in American democracy is undeniable and remains cause for alarm. The prolific Gibney also this month released "Totally Under Control" (Hulu), a highly critical portrait of the White House's management of the pandemic.

— "537 Votes": Like several of this fall's documentaries, the lesson of Billy Corben's "537 Votes" is clear: Vote. The "Cocaine Cowboys" filmmaker's HBO movie returns to Florida 2000 to chronicle the divergent paths of strategy employed by high-minded, outfoxed Democrats and more rough-and-tumble, win-at-all-costs Republicans in the historic recount between George W. Bush and Al Gore. The film, produced by Adam McKay, throbs with a Miami beat, outlining the crucial context of the Elián González saga on the all-important Cuban-American vote in Florida. "537 Votes" is a reminder of how much your vote can matter, and how politized counting it can get.

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— “Kill Chain: The Cyber War on America’s Elections”: Simon Ardizzone, Russell Michaels and Sarah Teale’s documentary may lead all others in its ability to keep you up at night. The HBO film, relying on cyber-security experts and experienced hackers, details how hackable U.S. voting technology really is. One interviewed hacker describes how he broke into Alaska’s 2016 election system just to see if he could. Another, an election-security expert named Harri Hursti, tracks down supposedly unbreachable voting machines to tinker with their vulnerabilities. He finds a widely used model on eBay, on sale for about \$80 each.

— “Slay the Dragon”: In a voting landscape where district maps take strange, misshapen forms, “Slay the Dragon” is expert at reading between the lines. Barak Goodman and Chris Durrance’s film is about gerrymandering, the partisan drawing up of districts to make more elections virtually uncontested. “Slay the Dragon,” streaming on Hulu, clearly explains the often-complicated manipulations of districts. But it does more than that, tracing how redrawn electoral maps have affected things as disparate as the Flint Water crisis and the election of Trump. Most of all, it shows how gerrymandering has helped fuel our heated politics, removing incentive for compromise.

— “The Fight”: The American Civil Liberties Union, which has filed 20 lawsuits this year over voting by mail and more than 400 legal actions against the Trump administration, figures to play a role in any legal challenges in a disputed tally. In “The Fight,” streaming on Hulu, documents the ACLU in its battles against the Trump administration, giving an intimate look at the attorneys on the front lines in cases including LGBTQ rights, immigrant rights and reproductive rights. Elyse Steinberg, Josh Kriegman and Eli Despress, the makers of the excruciatingly entertaining Anthony Weiner doc “Weiner,” captures a legal bulwark in motion, trailing both how cases are built and how their crusading lawyers keep up with the frantic pace.

— “Not Done: Women Remaking America”: Sara Wolitzky’s documentary, which premiered Tuesday on PBS, looks back on the last few years of the women’s movement, starting with the Women’s March the day after the inauguration of Trump -- still the largest demonstration in American history. With interviews including Gloria Steinem, #MeToo founder Tarana Burke, Shonda Rhimes and Time’s Up co-founder Tina Tchen, “Not Done” surveys four turbulent years in an expansive women’s movement that kicked off #MeToo and Black Lives Matter, and is sure to dramatically affect the election.

— “Boys State”: How are younger generations processing the politics they’ve been raised in? Jesse Moss and Amanda McBaine’s wildly entertaining documentary, a prize-winner at Sundance now streaming on Apple TV+, answers that question by filming the Boys State camp in Texas, where some 1,100 17- and 18-year-old boys annually gather to create a mock government with two parties, established platforms and fast-moving campaigns. It’s a microcosm of American politics, where some teenagers have gleaned dirty tricks from today’s Washington and others believe idealistically in change.

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

Mississippi city may be left in dark over unpaid power bill

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press/Report for America

ITTA BENA, Miss. (AP) — A decade ago, the sole grocery store in the city of Itta Bena shuttered. The last bank left a few years later, followed by the pharmacy — lifelines for a small, rural community.

Now, the lights may go out for all 1,800 residents.

Because of long-standing debt with its wholesale electrical provider, the city faces complete disconnection Dec. 1. As of August, Itta Bena owed more than \$800,000. That’s equal to one-third of the annual budget for the whole city — located in the Mississippi Delta, a region along the Mississippi River known for its long history of cotton farming and deep impoverishment.

The news is devastating for the community, where 40% of people live below the poverty line and 90% are Black. Itta Bena has long struggled with a decreasing tax base, white flight and job loss. The coronavirus pandemic has sparked more worry.

“It just feels like we keep losing and losing. There’s no growth,” said Patricia Young, a day care owner

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who submitted a petition signed by 300 residents asking the state auditor to investigate the city's electrical department. "We just can't take the hurt anymore. You start to wonder, 'Do they really want us to survive?'"

Itta Bena's electric system is city-run and owned, and unregulated by the state. Mississippi's Public Service Commission, which oversees utilities, opened an investigation anyway and invited the state auditor, citing safety and quality-of-life concerns. State officials are organizing meetings among the city, wholesale electrical provider Municipal Energy Agency of Mississippi, and other providers to find coverage for Itta Bena.

Brandon Presley, a public service commissioner, said he's never seen an electric provider threaten to pull out of a city in Mississippi — or any other state. He said it's a "failure of the city government" and that residents "deserve better than to be left in the dark."

Itta Bena Mayor J.D. Brasel said some of the debt — more than \$300,000 — stems from residents' unpaid bills that the city now must cover. As a middleman of sorts between residents and MEAM, the city purchases electricity from the wholesaler to sell residents and is responsible for the bill.

Former Mayor Thelma Collins, who left office in 2017, said officials have long known about the debt but prioritized other projects. She said lack of vision and planning exacerbate problems.

Itta Bena was founded around 1850 by plantation owner, Confederate general and former Gov. Benjamin Grubb Humphreys. He chose the name, which means "forest camp" in the language of the Choctaw people, who were forcibly removed from the land. Humphreys brought slaves to help turn the Delta into the South's cotton-producing capital.

After the Civil War, slaves were freed into a sharecropping system that resulted in generational poverty. Black families were blocked from educational and political opportunities. Industrialization led to fewer jobs in the fields. And after the Civil Rights movement made strides for racial equity and integration, white families began leaving, taking tax dollars with them.

From 2000 to 2010, white population decreased from 20% to 10% of Itta Bena. Total population has decreased by one-third — from around 3,000 to 1,800 — since 1980.

Birdia and John Williams bought their home 23 years ago from a white family moving away. She remembers driving through and seeing a beautiful neighborhood of nice, clean houses.

"While we moved in, they were all moving out," said Williams, 64, a Black woman. "It's not the same city today as it used to be. We have good people here, lovely people. But there's nothing here anymore."

Emma Harris, 66, was raised 10 miles away, where her parents worked on a white-owned plantation. She said her husband was born and worked on the plantation, until they married and moved to the Itta Bena area in 1978. Growing up, she remembers traveling the country road to shop in Itta Bena and seeing the "city lights" downtown.

Today, 20 downtown storefronts are abandoned. Remaining are a laundromat, a used-car seller, a clinic run by a nurse practitioner, a bar, a credit union. The corner store sells canned food, bread, fishing gear - with a small food menu from a kitchen in back.

The nearest grocery store is 10 miles away; a Dollar General sells some fruits and vegetables. Some folks, like Williams, travel 45 miles to a bargain store in Grenada for groceries.

Businesses and city offices will lose power if MEAM leaves. Some businesses purchased generators as backup. Only institutions like the historically Black Mississippi Valley State University, whose utility system is separate from the city's, will be unaffected.

Itta Bena's financial woes aren't new. In 2014, the federal government placed a tax lien on city assets after officials failed to pay \$200,000 in payroll taxes. In 2016, a former city clerk was convicted of embezzlement. The power debt dates back to 2009.

MEAM didn't answer a request for comment, but in a letter shared with the Public Service Commission, President and CEO Geoffrey Wilson said the company has exercised "extraordinary patience" trying to collect.

"The situation brought about by the City's failure to pay its MEAM invoices in full is regrettable, but it is a situation of Itta Bena's own making," Wilson wrote.

Residents said they were surprised to learn the city was so in debt. Itta Bena light bills are notoriously

high.

Williams said monthly bills for her one-story home sometimes exceed \$650. Kathy Gee, who's lived in Itta Bena for 40 years and is on disability for lupus, said her income is about \$500 monthly, and she's received bills over \$400. The mayor said he's aware of high bills, and that rates are calculated correctly.

Harris said she's tried approaching City Hall with partial payments, in hopes her power wouldn't be shut off. "My lights have been out many, many, many times because I didn't have the money," she said. "Knowing they are the ones in debt, you feel used. You work so hard for so long, and it feels like you get nothing in return."

Leah Willingham is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues.

QAnon's 'Save the Children' morphs into popular slogan

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

MORRIS, Ill. (AP) — At a busy intersection in this small Illinois town, Lynn Vermillion smiles at passing drivers who honk their support for the colorful posters she and friends wave: "Save Our Children. Save their Children. Save ALL the Children."

As the U.S. presidential campaign heated up in recent months, the 57-year-old mother of two and others like her took to city and suburban streets nationwide to join rallies calling for an end to child trafficking.

The "Save the Children" effort emerged earlier this year as a splinter movement from QAnon, the group of internet conspiracy theorists who believe without evidence that President Donald Trump is secretly fighting a supposed network of celebrities and government officials who are running a child trafficking ring.

The movement's rise has complicated the efforts of the humanitarian organization called Save the Children and other nonprofits that work to help the world's needy children.

Vermillion, who works in home health, said she is not a QAnon supporter and tries hard to filter out conspiracy theories that enter her Facebook feed. She said she supports the "Save the Children" movement because she wants to protect children and believes Trump is the only candidate taking the issues of child sex abuse and trafficking seriously.

"Why are we finally talking about it? Because we have a president who's talking about it," she said last month as she and about 30 others sought to bring attention to the movement in Morris, a conservative stronghold of about 15,000 people 60 miles (about 100 kilometers) from Chicago.

She promoted her event on Facebook, as many other women are doing. Some also use the platform to launch private groups where they swap tips, rumors and stories about child trafficking.

Mentions of #SavetheChildren on Twitter began climbing in June and peaked in August when the hashtag was used more than 800,000 times during the first week of that month, according to an analysis by the media intelligence firm Signal Labs conducted for The Associated Press.

The movement gained popularity as posts about QAnon spiked on Facebook and Instagram this year, prompting millions of likes, shares and comments on the platforms, a separate AP review of public social media posts found.

While Trump has not made "Save the Children" part of his campaign, he has twice publicly praised QAnon's mission. Under his administration, however, federal prosecutors have less aggressively prosecuted child sex trafficking cases.

"I do know they are very much against pedophilia," Trump said during his televised town hall this month, when asked about QAnon. "They fight it very hard."

As the movement's popularity grows, Save the Children — a century-old, London-based humanitarian organization that aided 144 million children worldwide last year with a mission of ensuring kids grow up healthy, educated and safe — found its trademarked name coopted on social media. The charity has repeatedly said it is not associated with the SavetheChildren hashtag used to spread conspiracy theories.

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The conspiracies also distort the reality of how people become victims of human trafficking, experts have said.

Washington-based Polaris, the nonprofit group that runs the National Human Trafficking hotline, created a myth-busting resource page on its website focused on debunking some misinformation that surfaced from QAnon after receiving hundreds of calls about human trafficking conspiracy theories over the summer.

Some social media users have been introduced to QAnon through posts about child sex trafficking that use #SaveTheChildren. Facebook and Instagram tried to squelch those QAnon recruitment efforts last month by directing people who search for #SaveTheChildren to the official website for the humanitarian organization.

But the connections among "Save the Children," QAnon, and Trump still permeate social media.

Instagram, Facebook and Twitter accounts regularly use #SaveTheChildren to promote memes and conspiracy theories about Democrats.

One such Instagram post that was liked nearly 12,000 times includes pictures of former President Barack Obama, his wife Michelle, former President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

It asks: "How much would you pay-per-view to see the FBI raid their homes and take them out in handcuffs at 3 a.m."

A video viewed more than 5,000 times on a QAnon account features images of Trump giving a thumbs up to the #SaveTheChildren and photos of abused women, with dramatic music in the background.

Under the guise of benefiting children, many of the posts seek to lure people into the QAnon conspiracy theory circle and encourage support for Trump, said Sophie Bjork-James, an anthropology professor at Vanderbilt University who studies the religious right and QAnon.

The movement is particularly attractive to conservative religious women, Bjork-James said. Her research on small, evangelical churches in Colorado Springs more than a decade ago found that human trafficking was one of the few political causes the congregations organized around.

"The core of QAnon is that Trump is the hero. It assembles a narrative to justify any of (Trump's) actions as valiant and heroic," she said.

Social media posts about QAnon and the "Save the Children" movement have also increased in Instagram communities focused on health, wellness and yoga that are popular with women, said Melanie Smith, the head of analysis for social media research firm Graphika.

QAnon and "Save the Children" have become such a force in the online yoga community that influencers including yoga teacher Seane Corn posted letters on Instagram last month warning followers not to "be fooled" by slickly crafted posts spreading misinformation about human trafficking.

Smith has studied QAnon for two years and said the conspiracy theory reached new audiences in recent months through hashtags like #SaveTheChildren.

"The way in which people encounter QAnon, now, is through relatively mainstream, non-absurd topics," Smith told the U.S. House Intelligence Committee during a hearing this month. "We're seeing a huge explosion in content around child sex trafficking and child exploitation through the Save the Children movement."

Vermillion hands out homemade leaflets with statistics and online resources for combatting child sex abuse. She said she avoids "Save the Children" Facebook groups promoting misinformation, QAnon and white supremacy symbols.

But there was some QAnon support at her event. One woman held a sign reading, "Hollywood loves adrenochrome," a reference to a QAnon conspiracy theory claiming baselessly that celebrities traffic children to harvest adrenaline from their blood to create a drug.

Vermillion insisted: "This rally today is not about Hollywood and drinking blood."

Love blossoms amid pandemic, TikTok turmoil for two creators

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — With love and pranks, Ian Paget and Chris Olsen are among millions of U.S. newbies looking to soak up social media stardom on TikTok.

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The Los Angeles boyfriends have amassed a steady stream of fans, with more than 4 million followers laughing and encouraging them in comments on their goofy dance videos, heartfelt vlogs, and affirmations during a tumultuous time for the world and for the popular platform.

While Paget and Olsen, along with millions of other creators, aren't breakout stars like dancer Charli D'Amelio or Nathan Apodaca (the guy with the cranberry juice and long board), they symbolize something else on TikTok. Their care for each other shines through for a range of supporters, from middle-age moms to LGBTQ youth struggling to come out.

And they've grabbed their chunk of success after meeting last year and moving in together just a few months ago to wait out the coronavirus crisis as their new love blossomed.

Paget, 33, is an actor thrown out of work by the pandemic. Olsen, 22, is a college senior finishing school on Zoom. Paget is the wildly articulate one who's endlessly surprised by Olsen, the deadpan trickster. They've made more of the platform than the average TikToker, sharing their coming-out stories and milestones, their daily lives and kisses, along with some tears and rough times, like Olsen's hard-fought victory over alcohol.

You'll find no maskless "Karens" on their account, @olsennchris, or police confrontations, natural disasters or bullying neighbors. What you'll discover are two guys who have become the two gay dads to many of their "bloomers," as they've nicknamed their tribe. And they often do it with shirts off and sculpted six-packs on display.

"We're going to make the most of it and enjoy doing what we do," Paget told The Associated Press.

Added Olsen: "We're letting people into our lives. It's something new that people hadn't seen, especially from two gay men."

Adorable uncles would be more like it. And politically engaged ones at that. They recently chatted on Instagram about the need to vote with Rep. Katie Porter, the California Democrat who loves her white boards.

For the record, Olsen and Paget don't have kids or plans to marry any time soon, to the chagrin of some diehard followers. Other fans fret that TikTok will pull them apart. They make it clear to their audience that they're still getting to know each other after celebrating their first anniversary in September.

In 2018, TikTok had more than 11 million active users in the U.S. By this August, more than 100 million Americans were on the platform, according to legal documents filed by the company. Globally, it went from about 55 million users at the start of 2018 to nearly 700 million this July.

Olsen and Paget arrived on TikTok in April, considering it a fun distraction in lockdown. By July, they were gaining about 120,000 new followers a day, with their count now at more than 4.3 million and climbing. After President Donald Trump threatened to shut down TikTok in the U.S., the pair added YouTube about two months ago and hit 100,000 in a month. With admirers following them over from TikTok, they have more than 134,000 YouTube subscribers (find them at Chris & Ian) and continue to draw more.

Their audience is a bit surprising, Olsen said. It's mostly women and girls in a range of ages and ethnicities. The couple's support and advice for LGBTQ young people has landed on grateful ears, reflected in the mostly positive comments left under their minute-long videos.

"I thought when we started it as two gay men, maybe our following was going to be mostly gay people," Olsen said. "Part of it is that we are not playing into our gayness, in a way. Not that there's anything to play into. We are just being ourselves. That just is. With our comfortability with each other, it's kind of just showing people these are people that you know."

Paget is in it for that, but also for the art and theater of it all. His stream-of-consciousness reactions to Olsen's pranks (stock-in-trade on TikTok) just might make him one of the planet's most patient people. After Olsen flicked his hand away to gauge his reaction in one video, Paget thought-traveled to homophobic hydrangeas that can't focus on their blooming because they're filled with hate, leading to one of the catchphrases — "focus on your blooming" — that adorn the thousands of dollars in merch they sell.

"I just want to say what I want to say and be real. There was no pretense. That's how I talk. This is how I passionately convey what I'm feeling in a sometimes loving and sometimes emphatic way," Paget said.

His at times edited reactions have led some fans to wonder whether scripts are involved, especially as Olsen continues to ensnare Paget with crazy couples challenges that have him fake sniping at his loved one or hopping in his boyfriend's shower, clothes and all.

Is Paget truly surprised all these challenges later?

"Certain ones, yes. Sometimes I get a morning briefing," he admits.

Whether dancing, vlogging or pranking, they're a pandemic success story no matter where the coronavirus and TikTok lead them.

"Ian and I found each other at a perfect time in each other's lives, I think," Olsen said. "There was an instant attraction."

And they found TikTok at the perfect time as well. Now, they're soaking up product placements like Timberland boots and the meal prep service Hello Fresh, and companies are dropping into their comments in search of collaborations.

"TikTok really found its way into everyone's life during the pandemic," Paget said. "It was like a medicine everyone needed. The way Instagram makes you compare yourself in a sort of perfect world, TikTok was not that. TikTok is like silly, fun, quirk, enjoy, imperfection, support. There's a lot of rooting for the stranger who's a great singer who lives in Ohio. It just came at the right time and brought people a lot of joy."

Strong typhoon slams Vietnam; at least 2 dead, 26 missing

By HAU DINH Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — Typhoon Molave slammed into Vietnam with destructive force Wednesday, killing at least two people and sinking two fishing boats with 26 crew members in what was feared to be the most powerful storm to hit the country in 20 years.

Winds of up to 150 kilometers (93 miles) per hour killed a man by knocking him off his roof as he was trying to reinforce it in south-central Quang Ngai province. Another man was pinned to death by a fallen tree in the coastal province, the official Vietnam News Agency reported.

The navy deployed two rescue boats to search for the 26 fishermen off Binh Dinh province, according to state-run VTV network. It was not immediately clear if anyone was saved in the storm-tossed waters.

TV footage showed ferocious wind rattling roofs and toppling trees in Quang Ngai. In the nearby coastal province of Phu Yen, key roads were littered by fallen electric posts, trees and billboards, and the wind ripped off roofs from many houses and ravaged fish farms.

At least 40,000 people were evacuated to emergency shelters farther inland from coastal villages.

VTV showed displaced villagers huddled in classrooms that were converted into an evacuation center, where they spent the night.

Provincial authorities shut down offices, factories and schools and asked people to remain indoors to prevent casualties. Vietnam is still recovering from severe flooding and landslides that killed 136 people and left dozens missing in three provinces.

More than 310,000 houses were damaged or destroyed in recent floods, leaving more than a million people in severe danger and in need of shelter, food, sanitation and safe drinking water even before the typhoon hit Vietnam, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said.

"The people of Vietnam are tough, yet this is among the worst destruction ever seen in many areas. The relentless storms and flooding are taking a devastating human toll," Vietnam Red Cross Society president Nguyen Thi Xuan Thu said in a statement.

"All our hard work in containing the social and economic fallout of COVID-19 is being undone by these massive storms hitting us one after the other," she said.

At least five airports were closed as the typhoon approached Wednesday, with more than 200 flights canceled. Train services were also suspended Wednesday and will resume when the weather improves, the VTV network reported.

The typhoon left at least nine people dead in the Philippines before blowing toward Vietnam. Most of the thousands who took shelter during the storm have returned home, leaving those whose homes were

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destroyed remaining in evacuation camps.

Associated Press writer Jim Gomez in Manila, Philippines, contributed to this report.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Oct. 29, the 303rd day of 2020. There are 63 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 29, 1929, "Black Tuesday" descended upon the New York Stock Exchange. Prices collapsed amid panic selling and thousands of investors were wiped out as America's "Great Depression" began.

On this date:

In 1901, President William McKinley's assassin, Leon Czolgosz (CHAWL'-gahsh), was electrocuted.

In 1940, a blindfolded Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson drew the first number — 158 — from a glass bowl in America's first peacetime military draft.

In 1956, during the Suez Canal crisis, Israel invaded Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. "The Huntley-Brinkley Report" premiered as NBC's nightly television newscast.

In 1960, a chartered plane carrying the California Polytechnic State University football team crashed on takeoff from Toledo, Ohio, killing 22 of the 48 people on board.

In 1967, Expo 67 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, closed after six months.

In 1987, following the confirmation defeat of Robert H. Bork to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court, President Ronald Reagan announced his choice of Douglas H. Ginsburg, a nomination that fell apart over revelations of Ginsburg's previous marijuana use. Jazz great Woody Herman died in Los Angeles at age 74.

In 1994, gunman Francisco Martin Duran fired more than two dozen shots from a semiautomatic rifle at the White House. (Duran was later convicted of trying to assassinate President Bill Clinton and was sentenced to 40 years in prison.)

In 1998, Sen. John Glenn, at age 77, roared back into space aboard the shuttle Discovery, retracing the trail he'd blazed for America's astronauts 36 years earlier.

In 2004, four days before Election Day in the U.S., Osama bin Laden, in a videotaped statement, directly admitted for the first time that he'd ordered the September 11 attacks and told Americans "the best way to avoid another Manhattan" was to stop threatening Muslims' security.

In 2012, Superstorm Sandy slammed ashore in New Jersey and slowly marched inland, devastating coastal communities and causing widespread power outages; the storm and its aftermath were blamed for at least 182 deaths in the U.S.

In 2017, all but 10 members of the Houston Texans took a knee during the national anthem, reacting to a remark from team owner Bob McNair to other NFL owners that "we can't have the inmates running the prison."

In 2018, a new-generation Boeing jet operated by the Indonesian budget airline Lion Air crashed in the Java Sea minutes after takeoff from Jakarta, killing all 189 people on board; it was the first of two deadly crashes involving the 737 Max, causing the plane to be grounded around the world as Boeing worked on software changes to a flight-control system.

Ten years ago: Authorities on three continents said they had thwarted multiple terrorist attacks aimed at the United States, seizing two explosive packages addressed to Chicago-area synagogues and packed aboard cargo jets from Yemen.

Five years ago: Paul Ryan was elected the 54th speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. Owen Labrie, a graduate of the exclusive St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire, was sentenced to a year in jail for sexually assaulting a 15-year-old freshman girl as part of a competition among upperclassmen to rack up sexual conquests. Florida executed Jerry Correll nearly three decades after he was convicted of fatally stabbing his ex-wife, young daughter and two in-laws. China said it would allow all married couples

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to have two children, signaling the end after 35 years to its drastic and unpopular "one-child" policy. American Simone Biles won her third straight world gymnastics title at the competition in Glasgow, Scotland.

One year ago: Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, an Army officer serving with President Donald Trump's National Security Council, defied White House orders and testified to impeachment investigators that he had twice raised concerns over the administration's push to have Ukraine investigate Democrats and Joe Biden. (Following the Senate's acquittal vote, Vindman was reassigned from the NSC; his twin brother, an NSC lawyer, was pushed out with him.) Masked gunmen opened fire at Iraqi protesters in the Shiite holy city of Karbala; security officials said 18 people were killed and hundreds wounded. The NCAA took a major step toward letting college athletes cash in on their fame, voting to permit them to "benefit from the use of their name, image and likeness."

Today's Birthdays: Bluegrass singer-musician Sonny Osborne (The Osborne Brothers) is 83. Former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is 82. Country singer Lee Clayton is 78. Rock musician Denny Laine is 76. Singer Melba Moore is 75. Actor Richard Dreyfuss is 73. Actor Kate Jackson is 72. Country musician Steve Kellough (Wild Horses) is 64. Actor Dan Castellana (TV: "The Simpsons") is 63. Comic strip artist Tom Wilson ("Ziggy") is 63. Actor Finola Hughes is 61. Singer Randy Jackson is 59. Rock musician Peter Timmins (Cowboy Junkies) is 55. Actor Joely Fisher is 53. Rapper Paris is 53. Actor Rufus Sewell is 53. Actor Grayson McCouch (mih-KOOCH') is 52. Rock singer SA Martinez (311) is 51. Actor Winona Ryder is 49. Actor Tracee Ellis Ross is 48. Actor Gabrielle Union is 48. Actor Trevor Lissauer is 47. Olympic gold medal bobsledder Vionetta Flowers is 47. Actor Milena Govich is 44. Actor Jon Abrahams is 43. Actor Brendan Fehr is 43. Actor Ben Foster is 40. Rock musician Chris Baio (Vampire Weekend) is 36. Actor Janet Montgomery is 35. Actor India Eisley is 27.