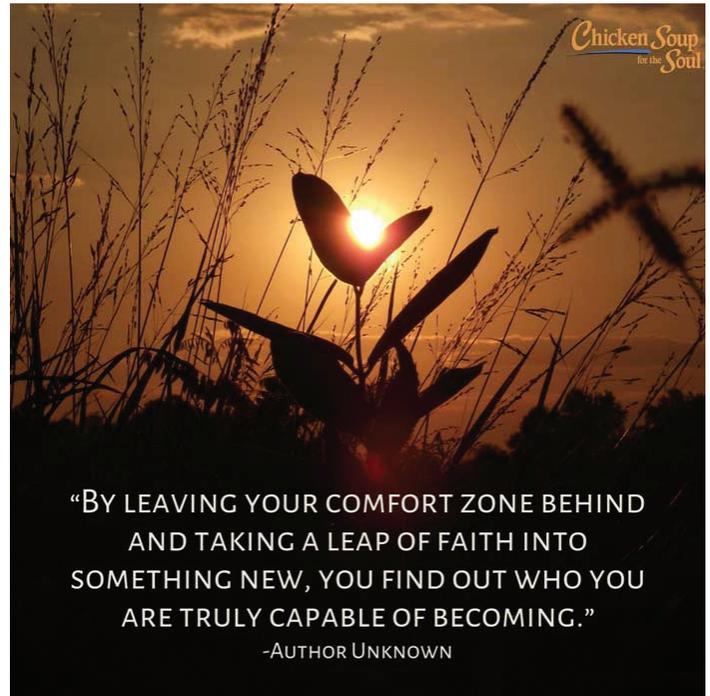


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“BY LEAVING YOUR COMFORT ZONE BEHIND
AND TAKING A LEAP OF FAITH INTO
SOMETHING NEW, YOU FIND OUT WHO YOU
ARE TRULY CAPABLE OF BECOMING.”

-AUTHOR UNKNOWN



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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



The Life of Alan Townsend

Funeral services for Alan Townsend, 58 of Conde, SD will be held at 11:00am, November 2nd at the United Methodist Church, Groton, SD with Pastor Brandon Dunham officiating. Burial will follow at the Scotland Cemetery, just north of his farm, under the direction of Paetznick-Garnes Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held in Groton, at the United Methodist Church on Sunday, November 1st from 5 to 7 pm with a prayer service at 7pm. Family will be present and will be following all CDC guidelines. Masks are strongly encouraged and will be available.

Alan passed away unexpectedly, October 28, 2020 at his Conde farm mending fences, preparing to move cattle home from the pasture.

Alan James Townsend was born December 17, 1961 in Webster, SD to Russell and Marjory (Murray) Townsend. He was the 6th of 8 children. He attended Groton School, with Sandi Oliver as his first teacher. Alan graduated from Groton High School in 1980 where he was part of the Wrestling team, wrestling at a weight of 145lbs. Alan fondly reminded his grandchildren, that he rode the school bus every day from kindergarten through his senior year.

Alan's favorite part of school, each year, was when the farm children could go home for 7 to 10 days in the spring to help their parents plant the crops

and again in the fall for harvesting. He knew then, that farming would be his lifelong passion.

His love of farming began at an early age, creating a farm by utilizing rocks as his cattle herd and various gadgets pretending to be his equipment playing from dawn to dusk. He rode horses bareback and practiced his preaching to all that would listen while baptizing his sisters many, many times. Through Sunday School, he learned to love the Lord and shared this blessing with his family.

Alan farmed and raised Black Angus cattle alongside his father, Russell, for 30 years in the Andover and Conde areas. This was referred to as on-the-job training, and he loved going to this job every day. Each day was a new adventure on the farm. Alan and Zach, shared a special bond, tilling the soil, picking rocks, planting beans and corn, putting up hay, planting trees, expanding and making improvements to the farms, and raising and tending to the cattle. We will remember the sparkle in his eyes, as his efforts were rewarded with the harvesting of the crops and the birth of the new baby calves. Our hearts will be filled with these memories as each season passes.

Farmers always pray for sunshine and rain; Alan was no different. Rain brought Alan and the love of his life, Jolene (Olson) Barton, together when they met on a rainy weekend. This treasure of sunshine and rain united the two in marriage on February 10, 1996 at the Groton United Methodist Church.

Alan will be remembered for his strong faith, his love for his mother, wife, family and his many friends in the community, his humble beginning, his love for the land, and most for his sense of humor.

In his free time, if he had any, but always finding it for his grandchildren, would travel to watch them play ice hockey and softball. Family and friends would gather at their home on Lake Kampeska, Watertown, SD where they would relax on or in the water, where many stories and memories were made.

Celebrating his life is his wife, Jolene of Conde, his mother, Marjory of Andover, his family, Zachary, Stephanie and Henry Townsend of Conde; Chad, Tashia, and Madison, Trey, CJ Barton, Gage Weeks (Maci Bradly), Dustin, Chantel Engel and great-grandchildren, Aubrie, Easton and Laikyn Engel all of Watertown. Alan is also survived by his 7 siblings, David (Judy) Townsend of Denver, CO; Gary (Julie) Townsend of Sioux Falls, SD; Janell (Larry) Little of Madison, SD; Bonnie Townsend of Santa Fe, NM; Janet Deuel of Aberdeen, SD; Dona (John) Schulte of Derby, KS; Laura (Gene) Soukup of Wagner, SD, and many nieces and nephews. Special friends Robert Pigors and Alex Doran.

Preceding him in death was his father, Russell and his brother-in-law, Dean Deuel.

Pallbearers are Dan Krueger, Travis McGannon, Dan Schinkel, Ron Kroll, Dennis Marske and Roni Dobberpuhl. Honorary Pallbearers, who he loved dearly, are his grandchildren, great-children, nieces and nephews. Ushers are Lon Gellhaus, Brad Morehouse and Lars Hanson.

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Downtown businesses hosts trick and treaters

Downtown was buzzing with costumes and children as the businesses handed out goodies to the trick and treaters. The photos on this page and the next were taken by Bruce Babcock.



Two year old Scarlet Stubbs of Groton.

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Julianna Kosel was handing out bags of goodies to trick and treaters Friday evening. Businesses in downtown Groton were host to many, many trick and treaters. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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#250 in a series ~ Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

I knew today was going to be a busy one, and so I had planned from the start only a brief check of the high points from the news tonight; but the numbers are so discouraging that I'm not sure I have the heart to deal with more news at all. I have found, since we started this way back in February, that the sheer scale of the disaster sometimes becomes simply overwhelming; we're at one of those points tonight. As a result, I'm going to provide the calamitous numbers, a piece I've been planning for a while on immunity, the usual story, and a good-night. I'll pick up today's other news one day soon. I expect tomorrow's Update to be light on news as well; I'm still busy, and so I'm giving myself a break.

I feel sort of like Chicken Little: I've been running around hollering about how the sky is falling for some weeks now. Sadly, unlike Chicken Little, for whom sky just kept hanging up there where it belongs, I'm looking more like I was right. Now I usually like being right—quite a lot, but this is a situation when wrong would've been nice. Things are a great deal worse today than yesterday, and they were worse yesterday than the day before. There's a trend here, and it is not a good one.

My data source was late updating tonight, and as a result, there are a few more hours' data here than usual. That may account for a slightly higher number of new cases and deaths than you'll see from other sources; tomorrow will be slightly smaller because I'll get back on schedule with a shorter-than-usual reporting period. Nonetheless, this is very bad. I have us into six figures again for new cases at 105,600, a 1.2% increase from yesterday's total cases. We now stand at 9,123,000 cases reported in the US.

Twenty-four states are reporting weekly new-case records, and zero states are showing improvement. Fourteen states set single-day new-case records today: Oregon, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, North Dakota (second consecutive day), South Dakota, Kansas, Minnesota, Illinois (second consecutive day), Ohio (second consecutive day), Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Maine. Utah reports nearly every county is a high-transmission area. Michigan's showing a sharp rise in new case average, an increase of 91% from two weeks ago; in Illinois, new cases have increased 70% in two weeks. The Northeast is sliding back into trouble as well. It keeps adding states to the red zone. New Hampshire and Maine are ticking upward; Maine has seen three of its four highest new-case days this week. Nationwide, hospitalizations have increased 25% over two weeks. Florida passed 800,000 cases today. I am not looking forward to Sunday's two-week round-up.

This surge is different from what we were seeing in the spring and again over the summer where one or another part of the country was dealing with spiking numbers, but others were relatively calm. Dr. Michael Osterholm, infectious disease expert at the University of Minnesota, said, "I don't see any location in the United States that's going to be free of a major increase in cases. And I think we're just getting started," adding, "We're going to see much less evidence of regionalization of this virus over the course of the next several weeks. I think this is going to ultimately end up being an entire country on fire."

We dipped just below 1000 new death reports today at 999, a 0.4% increase. There have now been 229,671 deaths reported. Three states reported record numbers of deaths today: Montana, New Mexico, and Tennessee. Nationwide, average daily deaths have gone up to 800 from 700 in the past month. And we're seeing days over 1000 deaths with more like that expected.

As the number of cases around me rises and my luck holds in that all of the people I personally know who've gotten sick are also getting better, I am receiving more and more questions about what happens with recovered individuals. Are they immune? Can they just go wherever they want and do whatever they want now because they're immune? Can my friend who's recovered come over for the evening now because she can't spread it to me? How about going to visit Grandpa? What about those studies that show people's antibodies just go away in a few weeks? I've been reading about reinfections: How likely is that?

All of these questions hinge on immunity—how it develops, who has it, what that means, how long it lasts. And the first thing we need to get straight is that there's a whole bucketful of I-don't-know on that subject: This is a new virus, and we haven't had much experience with it or time to study it yet. For example, we can't say that your immunity lasts for years because it hasn't been years since the first infections happened. Most of what we have to say about immunity to Covid-19 includes a lot of "probably" and

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“maybe” and “apparently,” but almost no “certainly.” The second thing I want to be clear about is that the immune system is an incredibly complex thing I’m not going to be able to explain to you in even a very long Update (although I’m going to try), not because you’re too dumb to get it, but because this stuff is so complicated people spend their careers figuring it out. Any explanation I provide is going to run the risk of being so oversimplified that it’s not precisely accurate anymore. I’m going to try to walk a fine line here between getting the science right and not overwhelming you with layers and layers of complexity. So let’s set out.

Here’s the basic job of the immune system: to identify what’s yours (self) and distinguish it from what’s not yours (nonself), then to attack and destroy the nonself stuff and leave alone and protect the self stuff. The principle is that it will protect you from invading organisms—bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites—without bothering your own tissues. That means it will recognize as nonself the random bacterium that wanders into, say, your lungs, and destroy it before it can cause trouble, but it will also recognize as self your healthy lung cells and leave them alone. Because some of the defenses built into the immune system take a while to get cranked up and into action, sometimes your first encounter with a pathogen will give it time to make you sick, but eventually the system will respond and knock the bad guys off. And because the system has memory, once you’ve encountered a particular pathogen and defeated it, subsequent encounters will generate a much larger and faster response that prevents any illness at all. The infections that kill people would be the ones which get to work hurting you so fast that your immune system doesn’t have enough time to mount a protective response.

There are layers to this response, some of them nonspecific, the innate immune response, and some of them specific and specialized, the adaptive or acquired response. In the adaptive immune responses, there are two arms, the humoral which depends on chemicals called antibodies to tag for destruction or directly inactivate pathogens and the cell-mediated which destroys infected cells along with the pathogens which invaded them. When everything goes according to plan, an immune response to an invader will produce responses from both. Some pathogens elicit a stronger response from one arm or the other. When the response is humoral, the result is antibodies that, one way or another, lead to the destruction of the pathogen, and also memory B cells that, in a subsequent encounter with the same pathogen, will respond quickly to produce loads of antibody to take care of the problem. When the response is cell-mediated, the result is activated T cells which directly target and destroy the pathogen in infected cells and also memory cells that, in a subsequent encounter with the same pathogen, will respond quickly to generate more activated T cells to target and destroy the invader.

We’ve talked about all of this before, and if you’re interested in the specifics and missed it the first time around, check out my Update #150 posted July 22 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3796230603726651>. This all seems straightforward enough, but it gets complicated fairly fast in the real world.

For example, what about a pregnant woman? She has a whole other organism inside her, one which is genetically foreign to her, so would be recognized as nonself. Unhindered, her immune system should recognize this foreign “invader” and go to work destroying it. So turns out we need a way to protect fetuses from their moms’ immune systems, and there is a fairly sophisticated series of modifications designed to do just that. For example, the placenta prevents the fetus’s cells from mixing directly with mom’s bloodstream where her immune cells hang out; this helps prevent alerting her immune system to the presence of this nonself organism. Also, women’s immune responses are suppressed to some extent during pregnancy. Things like that. And as a result, during the vast majority of pregnancies, the mom’s immune system pretty much ignores the “foreign invader” and lets it grow to getting-born size without hindrance. Handy, even if you’re not interested in a specific pregnancy, but only in the future of the human race as a general thing.

And how about dinner? The immune system responds to foreign proteins; these are the trigger molecules most of the time. But we need protein in our diets, right? Foreign proteins. So why aren’t you busy attacking and attempting to destroy that pork chop you had for dinner? This would also be inconvenient since it would probably mean big inflammatory responses to a lot of the things we eat. We need another

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layer of immune-system-foiling processes to avoid having massive unfavorable reactions every time we enjoy a meal. And we have those, among them, stomach acid which denatures most of the proteins we eat into a form our immune system pretty much ignores. When that all goes wrong, we might develop food allergies, something folks who suffer them can attest are not all that much fun.

Most of the time, this whole thing works brilliantly, carefully deciding to ignore the corned beef sandwich and a "foreign" embryo, distinguishing between an invading bacterium and our own muscle tissue, fending off dangerous infections day after day, all in exquisite balance. This is how we swim through a stew of pathogens every day while thriving. I don't think I can emphasize enough how remarkable this whole thing is in enabling us to not only survive childhood, but live to 70 and 80 and more years of age.

But, as with any system this complex, sometimes things go wrong. We don't respond quickly enough to something dangerous and we succumb to an overwhelming infection; a mom destroys her fetus's red blood cells and the fetus doesn't survive; we turn our response against our own joint linings and develop crippling arthritis. One of the ways things can go wrong that is relevant to Covid-19 is the cytokine storm, that overwhelming rush of immunological chemical messengers creating unchecked inflammation and resulting tissue damage. We've talked about those too, and if you're interested in more details there, check out Update #39 posted April 2 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3479312205418494>.

So, when things go right and you recover, we're left with questions about whether the particular response you had to the particular infection you had was of a kind that leaves you with that valuable memory, the kind that will protect you the next time you encounter the same pathogen. The answers to those questions are different for each pathogen. For some you're not really protected at all; for others you are, maybe for a few weeks or months, occasionally for life. For Covid-19, here's what we know:

(1) People who've recovered generally have fairly high levels of antibodies to the virus after recovery. We can look for them in the bloodstream and along mucous membranes in the respiratory tract.

(2) As with any infection, the antibodies produced are of a bunch of different types. Some of those are more long-lived than others, and some of them are more protective than others. Turns out some of your immune system's energies are directed at parts of the virus that aren't very important in making you sick; that means those antibodies don't do much to protect you. Others, usually called neutralizing antibodies, are directed at a part of the virus important in establishing infection; those may be far more beneficial in protecting you.

(3) Within some weeks after infection, the overall levels of anti-Covid-19 antibodies tapers off relatively quickly. But importantly, it appears neutralizing antibodies don't taper off very fast at all, and if these guys turn out to be protective, you won't need huge numbers of them to get the job done, so the fact that these are present at lower levels may not be very important.

(4) In addition to the antibodies themselves, it is quite possible you will also have longer-lived antibody-making memory cells. This means, even if the antibody levels drop dramatically, you could still be poised to make a bunch more very quickly upon demand.

(5) And the other arm of the adaptive response, the cell-mediated one, also appears to be getting in on the act here. There's some pretty good evidence of a strong cell-mediated response too, and some likelihood there is memory there too.

So that's what we know. What don't we know? Quite a lot at this early stage in the game. For starters:

(1) We do not know for sure that the antibodies you produce against this virus protect you from subsequent infections. We think they do for a number of reasons, among them the fact that, with some 46 million cases worldwide so far, we've identified only a handful of potential reinfections. You'd think, if your responses did not protect you, we'd have people getting sick again and again all over the place, and we do not.

(2) As a result, we do not know how to interpret an antibody test that says you have antibodies to this virus. That is, we know it means you've had an infection, but not whether you could get it again.

(3) We do not know how long these antibodies will last. They appear to last a few weeks to a few months, but we don't have enough experience yet to put a number on it. (CDC says 90 days, but I'm going to guess that was some sort of estimate, not an indication three months is surely the magic number.

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(4) We do not know how strong or protective the cell-mediated response to this virus is for sure. We think pretty strong and pretty protective, but again, because we don't have much experience with this, we can't really know.

(5) We do not know how long-lived any memory cells in either arm of the response will turn out to be.

(6) We do not know whether a person who has antibodies might be able to carry the virus to others, acting as an agent of transmission, even if they are protected themselves.

The upshot of all of this is the best anyone can give you is a whole lot of probably, as in we think your immune response to this coronavirus does yield protective immunity of at least some weeks to months duration, maybe longer, even maybe much longer, but no one knows for sure. We think you will have reasonable immunological memory so that you will have protection of some duration. Some people who recovered from SARS, which is caused by a close relative of today's virus, appear to still be protected all these years later; but those infected with the more common cold-causing coronaviruses appear to be protected only for a few months. Hard telling where this one comes in along that continuum. Getting an antibody test won't tell you much except whether you have antibodies (and even that is questionable because many of the available tests don't do a very good job of that either); what it can't tell you is what that means. Because we don't know that for sure.

So if you've recovered from Covid-19, where does that leave you? The smart money is on operating from the assumption that you are susceptible to infection and you are capable of transmitting the virus. In other words, don't get the bright idea that it would be OK to spend Thanksgiving weekend at Grandma's house, don't start hitting the bars to sing karaoke on Saturday nights, and don't stop practicing all of the precautions you should have been practicing all along. I think you're probably protected for a while and probably safe to be around vulnerable people for a while, but I'm not sure and I don't know how long it will last. I'm certainly not willing to bet anyone's life on it.

Derlin Newey delivers pizzas for a little extra income—you know, to make ends meet. His customers really love him: He's charming and genuinely enjoys meeting them all. One said, "He was just so friendly, really talkative, and just super sweet and genuine." He likes to get to know people a little bit as he delivers their pizzas. He's worked around 30 hours per week for over a year so far, even though he's 89 years old because his Social Security income doesn't cover his living expenses. A retired salesman with an MBA, he just needs a little more income each month, and pizza delivery is his means to pay the bills. He's been physically active, only giving up skiing a few years ago, so he's well able to take care of himself in his mobile home and drive his pizza route five or six nights per week.

Customer Carlos Valdez was so impressed with Newey's friendliness and the fact that he was delivering pizzas at 89 that he took his doorbell camera footage showing an interaction with him and posted it on TikTok. Newey was an instant hit, generating tens of thousands of reactions and comments. Valdez ordered a few more pizzas, requesting Newey as his delivery man each time, and posted two more videos, one of which got 2.5 million views. Newey was TikTok-famous, and he'd never even seen TikTok before.

Which gave Valdez an idea: He set up a Venmo link on his TikTok page to crowdfund a little extra spending money for Newey.

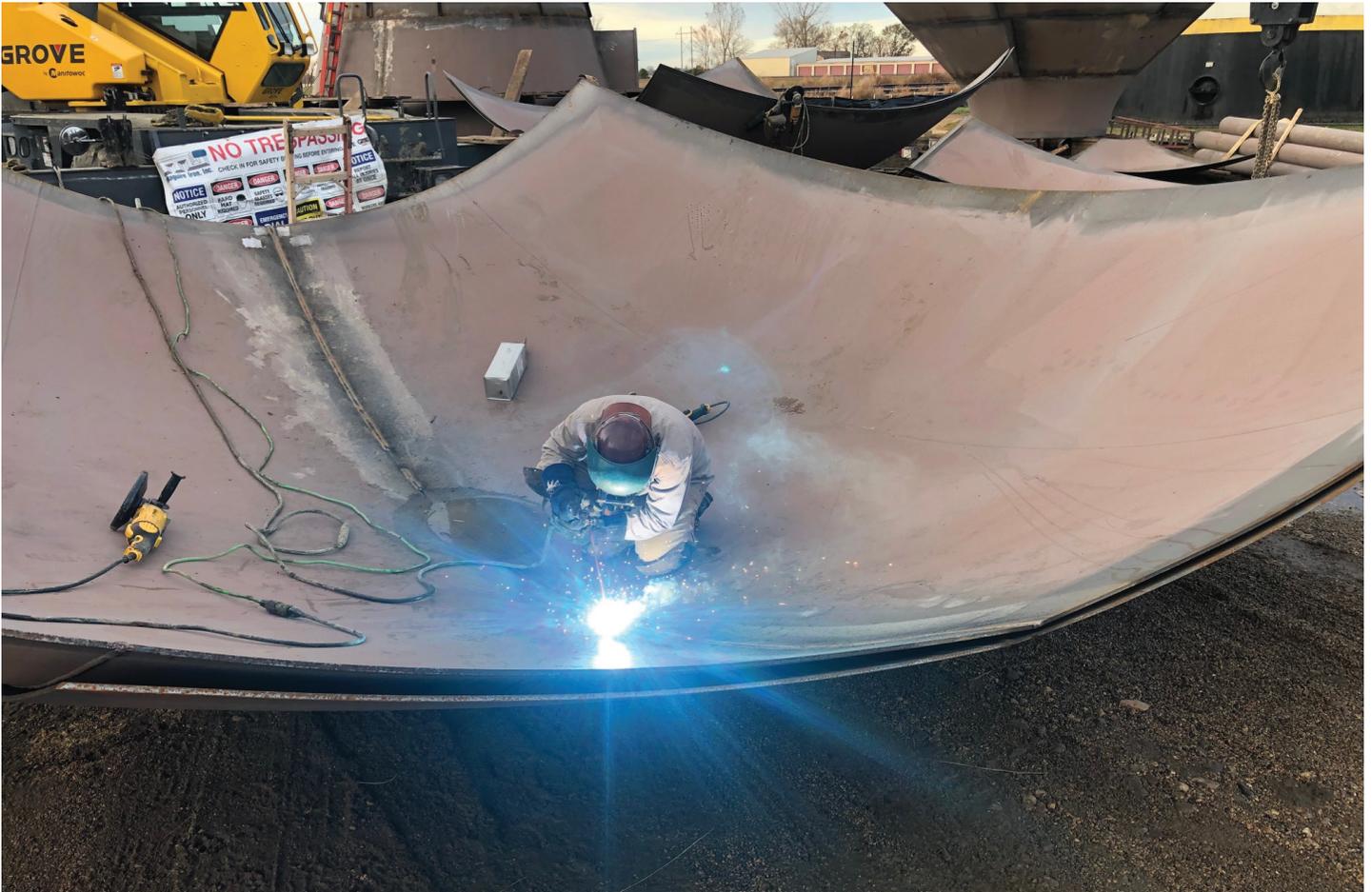
Thousands of people gave, many of them a dollar or less, but it all added up pretty quickly. Valdez soon had over \$12,000 collected. So he called and ordered the cheapest thing on the delivery menu, requesting Newey as usual, and then when the delivery arrived, gave him a \$20 tip and explained to him how popular he was on the Internet and that the TikTok community had a surprise for him. He arranged to go to Newey's house to deliver the surprise.

Newey figured he was getting something cool like a t-shirt, and so he was surprised to see Valdez pull up and come to his door with a pizza box. He was a whole lot more surprised to open the box and find \$12,069.71 inside. Needless to say, his reaction went viral on TikTok. Since then, money has continued to roll in—another \$8000 so far. Valdez set up a new Venmo account so the money could go directly to Newey. What does the pizza guy have to say about all of this? "It's beautiful. I mean, who makes that kind of tip?" Valdez says he hopes this story inspires people to spread kindness to others.

Is it working? I hope so. Keep yourself healthy. We'll talk again.

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Welding has started on the assembly of the main bowl for the new water tower. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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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

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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	Oct. 30	Oct. 31			
Minnesota	137,536	139,444	142,311	145,465			
Nebraska	65,376	66,545	68,150	69,645			
Montana	29,346	29,966	30,853	31,916			
Colorado	98,733	100,208	102,014	104,426			
Wyoming	10,035	10,288	10,589	11,020			
North Dakota	39,130	39,907	41,130	42,483			
South Dakota	39,494	40,589	41,507	44,559			
United States	8,779,794	8,859,432	8,947,862	9,048,430			
US Deaths	226,728	227,703	228,675	229,711			
Minnesota	+2,164	1,908	+2,867	+3,154			
Nebraska	+877	1,169	+1,605	+1,495			
Montana	+845	+620	+887	+1,063			
Colorado	+1,433	1,475	+1,806	+2,412			
Wyoming	+252	+253	+301	+431			
North Dakota	+896	+781	1,222	+1,353			
South Dakota	+984	+1,095	+918	+1,560			
United States	+74,667	+79,638	+88,430	+100,568			
US Deaths	+989	+975	+972	+1,036			

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October 30th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Happy Halloween Eve - it's definitely a spooky time this year. There are 1,389 new positive cases state-wide. Not included in the tally is 171 probable cases. According to the case definition, a confirmed cases includes persons with a positive RT-PCR test. A probable case includes persons with a positive antigen test for the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19. Brown County is up to 62 cases.

Brown County has two more cases currently hospitalized in a COVID-19 occupied hospital bed - 18 total. Three are on ICU and 1 on a ventilation. Statewide, there are 403 in COVID-19 occupied hospital beds (100 in the Black Hills region, 62 in the Glacial Lakes, 189 in the Sioux Empire and 52 in the South Central Plains. There are 80 on ICU beds (19 in Black Hills, 10 in Glacial Lakes, 41 in Sioux Empire and 10 in South Central Plains. Those on a ventilation system are 38 (9 in Black Hills, 4 in Glacial Lakes, 22 in Sioux Empire and 3 in South Central Plains). Locally, at Avera St. Luke's, 14 beds are COVID-19 occupied with 3 on ICU and 1 on Ventilation. Sanford Aberdeen had four beds being used for COVID-19 patients, none in ICU or using a ventilator.

There are 12 more deaths, 8 females and 4 males. Ten were 80+ of age or older, 1 was in their 70s and 1 was in their 40s. County Death Count: Beadle-1, Brown-1, Codrington-2, Minnehaha-1, Oglala Lakota-1, Turner-2, Walworth-3, Yankton-1.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +62 (2,088) Positivity Rate: 23.6%
Total Tests: +263 (17,982)
Recovered: +14 (1,654)
Active Cases: +47 (435)
Ever Hospitalized: +2 (112)
Deaths: +1 (6)
Percent Recovered: 79.2

South Dakota:

Positive: +1389 (42,896 total) Positivity Rate: 21.0%
Total Tests: 6,606 (426,219 total)
Hospitalized: +58 (2,660 total). 403 currently hospitalized -10)
Deaths: +12 (415 total)
Recovered: +489 (30,624 total)
Active Cases: +529 (12,462)
Percent Recovered: 71.3%
Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 15% Covid, 55% Non-Covid, 31% Available
ICU Bed Capacity: 27% Covid, 36% Non-Covid, 37% Available
Ventilator Capacity: 9% Covid, 19% Non-Covid, 72% Available
Brown (6): +62 positive, +14 recovered (435 active cases)
Clark: +13 positive, +3 recovered (66 active cases)
Clay (8): +23 positive, +6 recovered (186 active cases)
Codrington (15): +58 positive, +18 recovered (379 ac-

tive cases)

Davison (9): +42 positive, +9 recovered (389 active cases)

Day (2): +7 positive, +1 recovered (44 active cases)

Edmunds (1): +3 positive, +1 recovered (33 active cases)

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

Grant (2): +5 positive, +1 recovered (71 active cases)

Hanson (1): +3 positive, +2 recovered (36 active cases)

Hughes (7): +21 positive, +2 recovered (184 active cases)

Lawrence (6): +57 positive, +7 recovered (344 active cases)

Lincoln (20): +123 positive, +28 recovered (942 active cases)

Marshall (1): +0 positive, +0 recovered (14 active cases)

McCook (1): +9 positive, +2 recovered (90 active cases)

McPherson: +0 positive, +0 recovery (19 active case)

Minnehaha (111): +409 positive, +118 recovered (3365 active cases)

Potter: +9 positive, +2 recovered (39 active cases)

Roberts (5): +14 positive, +4 recovered (85 active cases)

Spink (1): +7 positive, +2 recovered (95 active cases)

Walworth (8): +6 positive, +0 recovered (75 active cases)

NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, October 30:

- 11.7% rolling 14-day positivity
- 1,357 new positives
- 11,217 susceptible test encounters
- 191 currently hospitalized (+7)
- 7,275 active cases (+504)
- 512 total deaths (+13)

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity
Aurora	188	127	709	0	Substantial	16.67%
Beadle	1324	967	3980	15	Substantial	22.32%
Bennett	204	114	953	5	Substantial	14.36%
Bon Homme	969	252	1619	1	Substantial	54.53%
Brookings	1492	1089	6496	5	Substantial	21.65%
Brown	2095	1654	8701	6	Substantial	19.69%
Brule	298	201	1402	2	Substantial	37.09%
Buffalo	261	218	805	4	Substantial	30.70%
Butte	396	200	2111	3	Substantial	23.05%
Campbell	75	48	160	1	Moderate	17.86%
Charles Mix	410	274	2993	0	Substantial	12.03%
Clark	131	65	677	0	Substantial	18.30%
Clay	852	658	3369	8	Substantial	22.08%
Codington	1560	1166	6455	15	Substantial	20.86%
Corson	225	134	768	1	Substantial	56.06%
Custer	324	253	1735	3	Substantial	26.02%
Davison	999	601	4509	9	Substantial	19.09%
Day	167	121	1217	2	Substantial	26.67%
Deuel	195	141	789	1	Substantial	26.73%
Dewey	387	214	3374	0	Substantial	13.72%
Douglas	169	118	704	4	Substantial	8.13%
Edmunds	147	113	743	1	Substantial	5.83%
Fall River	224	145	1804	6	Substantial	19.53%
Faulk	219	147	518	1	Substantial	29.41%
Grant	310	237	1496	2	Substantial	10.63%
Gregory	240	164	807	10	Substantial	26.05%
Haakon	101	51	420	1	Substantial	9.71%
Hamlin	204	153	1225	0	Substantial	16.20%
Hand	137	78	573	1	Substantial	36.25%
Hanson	99	62	450	1	Substantial	30.30%
Harding	56	24	110	0	Substantial	52.00%
Hughes	875	684	3822	7	Substantial	17.08%
Hutchinson	240	166	1581	2	Substantial	10.08%

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Hyde	46	33	299	0	Moderate	25.81%
Jackson	132	76	775	1	Substantial	23.91%
Jerauld	164	131	391	12	Minimal	4.76%
Jones	32	27	129	0	Moderate	22.73%
Kingsbury	201	118	1057	2	Substantial	11.58%
Lake	403	271	1890	9	Substantial	28.24%
Lawrence	982	632	5505	6	Substantial	23.39%
Lincoln	2953	1991	13315	20	Substantial	24.91%
Lyman	283	209	1414	5	Substantial	24.85%
Marshall	65	50	774	1	Moderate	13.33%
McCook	259	168	1095	1	Substantial	15.74%
McPherson	72	53	407	0	Moderate	6.33%
Meade	995	749	5125	10	Substantial	18.78%
Mellette	85	60	565	1	Substantial	44.44%
Miner	143	80	428	1	Substantial	21.57%
Minnehaha	11904	8428	52739	111	Substantial	22.14%
Moody	226	144	1100	2	Substantial	35.85%
Oglala Lakota	990	470	5596	7	Substantial	28.08%
Pennington	4633	3293	25149	49	Substantial	18.51%
Perkins	81	53	473	0	Substantial	20.34%
Potter	116	77	608	0	Substantial	8.44%
Roberts	362	272	3185	5	Substantial	25.49%
Sanborn	108	62	445	1	Substantial	26.32%
Spink	285	189	1668	1	Substantial	15.88%
Stanley	99	70	528	0	Substantial	21.95%
Sully	43	34	170	0	Moderate	16.00%
Todd	486	335	3364	6	Substantial	31.68%
Tripp	276	222	1152	2	Substantial	13.41%
Turner	504	293	1843	18	Substantial	17.91%
Union	773	568	4116	11	Substantial	15.70%
Walworth	277	194	1295	8	Substantial	11.18%
Yankton	908	564	6058	6	Substantial	20.13%
Ziebach	100	69	562	2	Moderate	18.92%
Unassigned	0	0	1802	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	1366	0
10-19 years	4670	0
20-29 years	9188	2
30-39 years	7521	7
40-49 years	6310	13
50-59 years	6316	32
60-69 years	4851	57
70-79 years	2484	77
80+ years	1853	227

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	22897	198
Male	21662	217

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Brown County



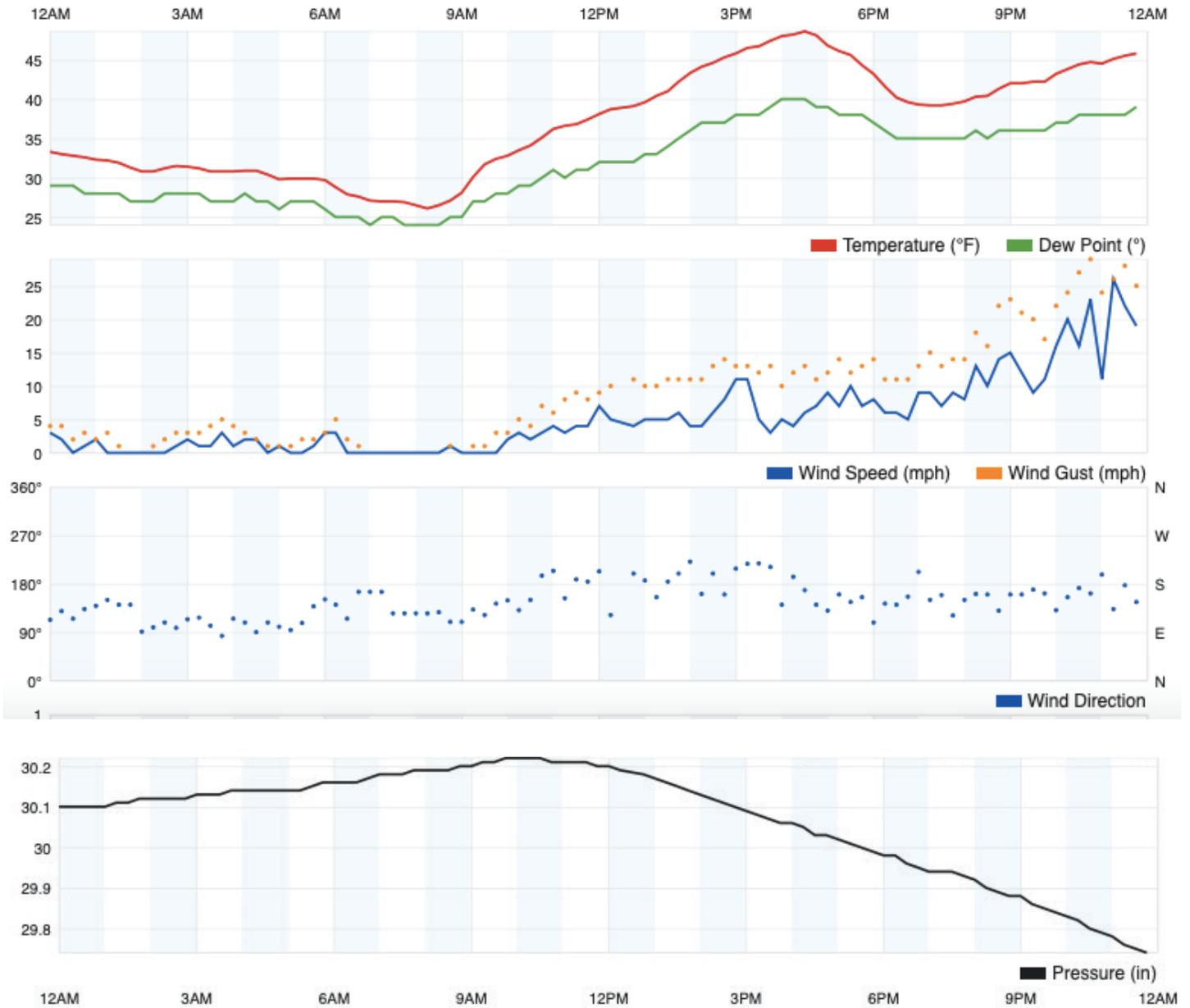
Day County



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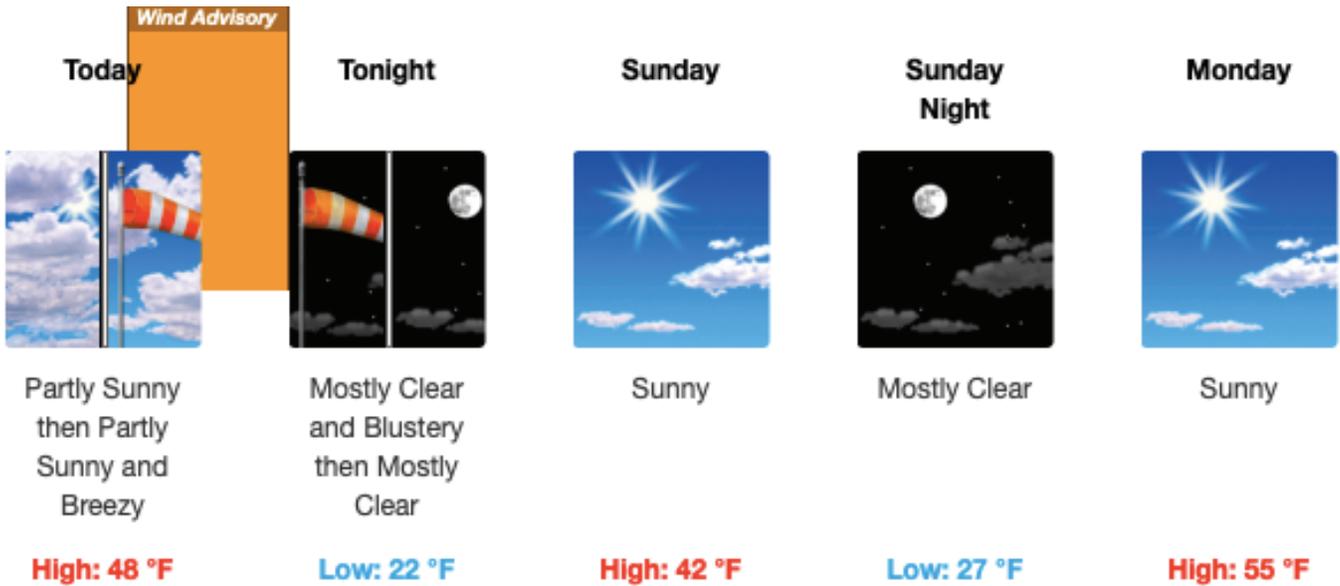
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



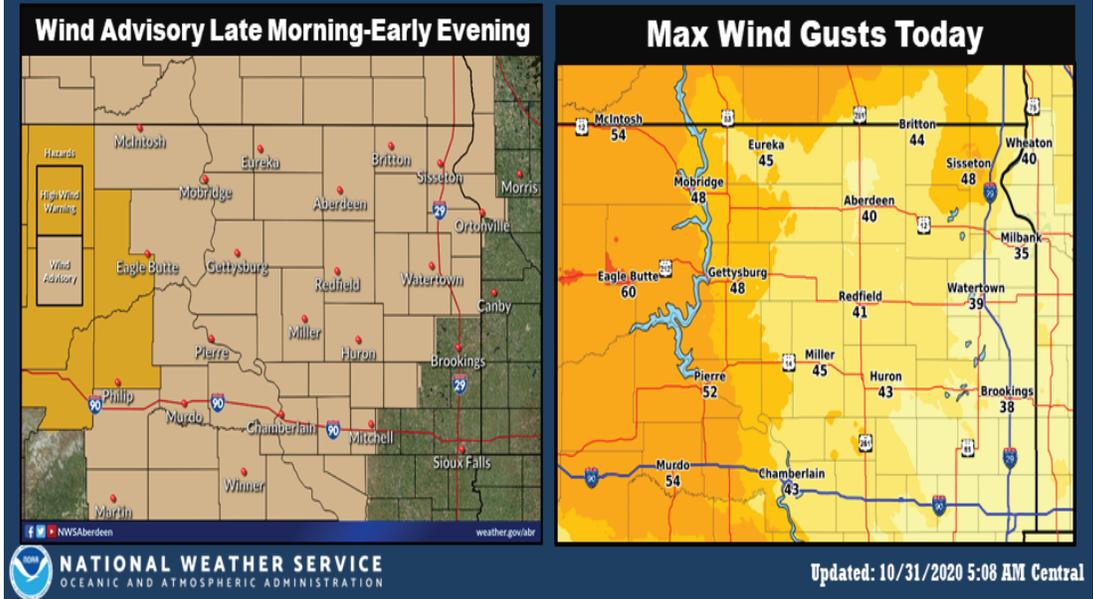
Broton Daily Independent

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Strong Winds Developing Today

A frontal system will push through the area this morning and then exit east into Minnesota toward the midday and afternoon hours. Strong northwesterly winds will develop behind the front by mid-late morning West River and then spread eastward by midday and early afternoon. Gusts between 45-55 mph will be possible with a few locally higher gusts in some spots west of the Missouri Valley.



A cold front will sweep through the area this morning and leave strong northwesterly winds in its wake. Sustained winds between 25-40 mph with gusts between 45-55 mph will be possible across the entire area. A few locales West River could see a brief period this afternoon of locally higher gusts approaching 60 mph. Temps will remain relatively mild today despite the strong winds. A ridge of high pressure will gradually build in across the central and eastern Dakotas late tonight through Sunday morning. Slightly cooler conditions will be possible for some on Sunday before a more significant warm up returns next week.

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Today in Weather History

October 31, 1979 A narrow band of heavy wet snow developed around midnight from Winner to Leola and produced from three to six inches of snow before ending in the afternoon of 31st. The wet snow stuck to power poles and combined with 30 to 50 mph winds broke up to 600 poles. Estimated damage was around \$400,000 dollars. The counties affected were Tripp, Lyman, Buffalo, Hyde, Hand, Faulk, and Edmunds Counties.

October 31, 1991: A blizzard swept through southeastern South Dakota, dropping over 16 inches of snow in places. The snow combined with winds gusting to 60 mph at times, thus producing blizzard conditions. Interstates 29 and 90, as well as most other roads east and south of Sioux Falls were closed due to blowing and drifting snow. There were hundreds of traffic accidents in the Sioux Falls area alone. The hospital emergency rooms were swamped with victims of automobile accidents and injuries sustained while shoveling heavy snow. Two men died from heart problems while shoveling the snow.

1876: The Great Backerganj, also known as the Bengal cyclone of 1876 struck Bangladesh, then part of the province of Bengal in British India on this day. A maximum wind speed of 137 mph along with a storm surge of 10 to 45 feet inundated the coastal region. This storm likely caused 200,000 casualties along with displacing thousands of other individuals.

1991: A severe winter storm, dubbed the Great Halloween Mega Storm, struck the upper Midwest. Minnesota bore the brunt of this storm. Blizzard conditions occurred with winds gusting frequently to 40 and 50 mph. By the time it was all over on November 2nd, Duluth recorded 37 inches, Minneapolis 28 inches, International Falls 18 inches and 11.2 inches in 24-hours at Sioux Falls, SD, their earliest heavy snowfall of 6 inches or more and snowiest October on record. For Duluth and Minneapolis, the snow amounts set new all-time records for the greatest amount of snow in a single storm. The storm gave these two cities nearly half of their average seasonal snowfall.

1846 - Eighty-seven pioneers were trapped by early snows in the Sierra Nevada Mountains that piled five feet deep, with 30 to 40 foot drifts. Just 47 persons survived the "Donner Pass Tragedy". (The Weather Channel)

1950 - Unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the central U.S. for Halloween. The temperature soared to 83 degrees at Minneapolis MN, their warmest reading of record for so late in the season. (The Weather Channel)

1965 - Fort Lauderdale, FL, was deluged with 13.81 inches of rain, which brought their rainfall total for the month of October to an all-time record of 42.43 inches. (30th-31st) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Halloween was a wet one in the southwestern U.S. Heavy rain in southern California resulted in numerous mudslides. Weather-related auto accidents resulted in three deaths and twenty-five injuries. Mount Wilson CA received 3.14 inches of rain in 24 hours. Yakima WA reported measurable rainfall for the first time since the 18th of July. The 103 day long dry spell was their longest of record. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Twenty-two cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. The low of 19 degrees at Cleveland OH was a record for October, and morning lows of 21 degrees at Allentown PA and Bridgeport CT tied October records. Nine cities in the southwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Phoenix AZ with a reading of 96 degrees. Showers made Halloween a soggy one in the southeastern U.S. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Halloween night was a soggy one in New England. Showers in the northeastern U.S. produced more than an inch and a half of rain in six hours at some locations. An invasion of cold arctic air brought an abrupt end to a week of "Indian Summer" type weather in the Great Lakes Region, and brought snow and subzero wind chill readings to the Northern Plains. In Colorado, Alamosa was the cold spot in the nation with a record low of two degrees above zero, and a Halloween night storm brought 3 to 6 inches of snow to the Front Range, and 5 to 10 inches to the nearby foothills. Icy streets around Denver the next morning made for a rather spooky commute. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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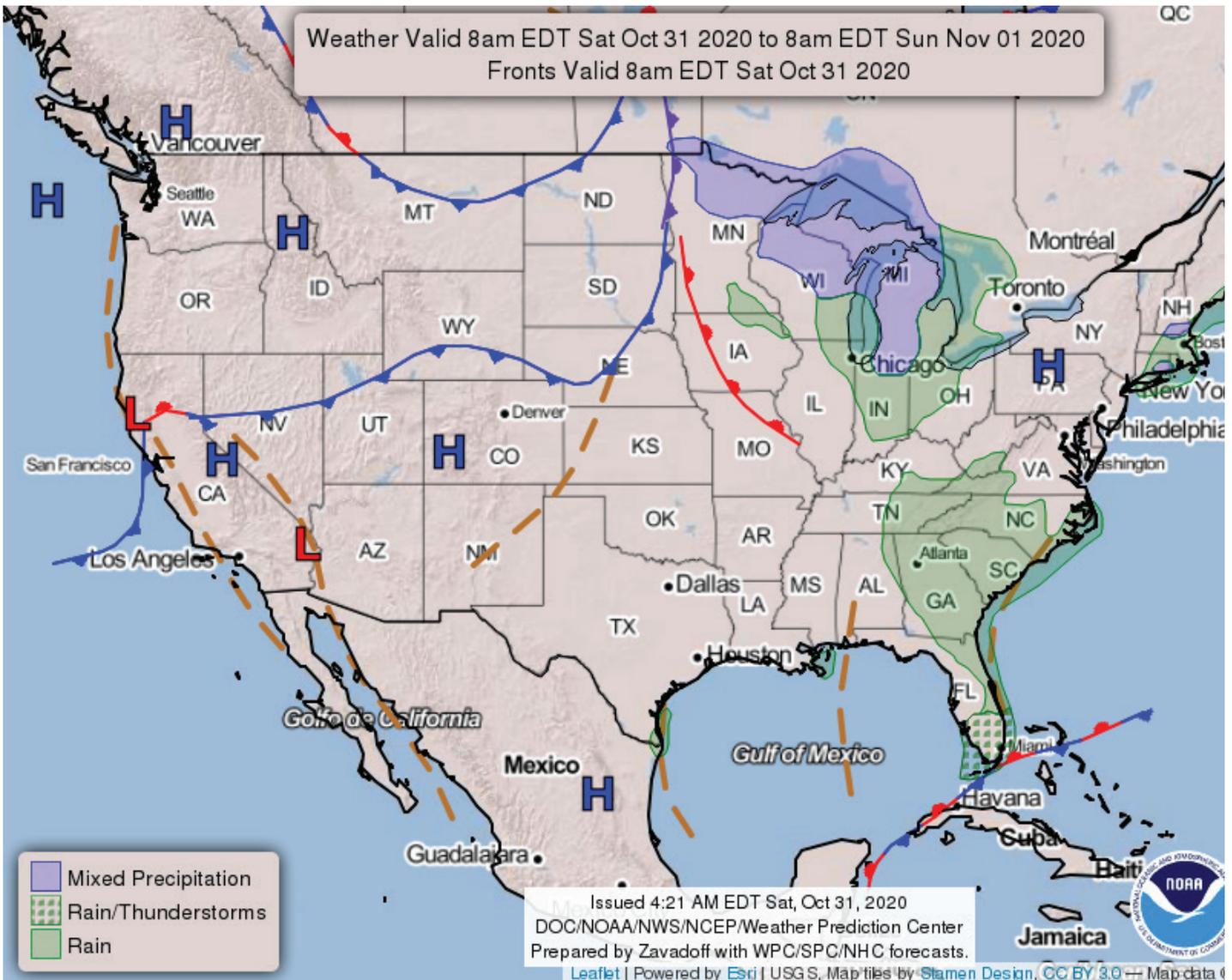
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 49 °F at 4:37 PM
Low Temp: 26 °F at 8:14 AM
Wind: 29 mph at 10:37 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 78° in 1933
Record Low: 8° in 2006
Average High: 49°F
Average Low: 27°F
Average Precip in Oct.: 1.95
Precip to date in Oct.: 1.06
Average Precip to date: 20.43
Precip Year to Date: 16.34
Sunset Tonight: 6:22 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:14 a.m.



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THE VALUE OF A "DEAF EAR"

Matt came home from school with a note from his teacher. He had misbehaved in class, and the teacher wanted his mother to know what he had done.

After reading the note, his mother said, "Son, why did you trip James as he was walking to his desk?"

"It wasn't my idea, Mom. It was Donald's," he responded quickly.

"Now, Matt, you know that Donald can't make you do anything," replied his mother.

"Well," he said after a moment's thought, "it must have been the devil that made me do it."

"Son, shame on you. You know that when the devil tempts you, it is important to turn a deaf ear," she admonished him.

He put one finger in his left ear and listened to the sound coming from the TV and shook his head. Then he put a finger in his right ear and listened to the sound once again. After a moment, he looked up at his Mom and said smilingly, "Mom, I don't have a deaf ear."

Temptation comes at us from every direction all of the time. It could be something we see or hear or think we would enjoy. But James had the best answer and the surest way to end being tempted: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw close to God and God will draw close to you." Such a simple solution that it is almost unbelievable!

But it is neither simple nor unbelievable. Getting close to God requires time, effort, and energy. And God knows, the devil will fight us for each of them.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to take control of our time and our lives by "seeking first the Kingdom of God." May we begin each day with Your Word and prayer. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw close to God and God will draw close to you. James 4:7-8

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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

Rapid City Civic Center took huge steps to keep hockey team

By NATHAN THOMPSON Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Civic Center Director Craig Baltzer said he knew the former owners of the Rush were in serious financial trouble in 2017, but the extent of circumstances surrounding the problem were not as evident.

"I remember it distinctly that in December 2017, (former Rush owner) Scott (Mueller) called me while I was with my family for Christmas and told me that it was going to be tough keeping the Rush here because he was going broke and needed financial help," he told the Rapid City Journal.

Baltzer said he then did what any manager would do for its largest tenant.

"I began to look for solutions, and one of those solutions was to come to some sort of a financial concession between the Civic Center and the Rush, and I knew Scott was looking at getting the team under new ownership," he said. "We were looking to do what was best to save the team."

In 2017, the Civic Center Board of Directors began negotiating an agreement with the previous owners of the Rush.

The agreement guaranteed the Rush and its affiliated league, the ECHL, a \$250,000 line of credit required of teams. Further, a \$108,000 rent discount was extended to Rush hockey for the 2017-18 season and the Civic Center agreed to fund potential cash calls and financial losses over the next three seasons.

However, new revelations of the Rush's financial problems came to light when the team's former financial manager, Jennifer Durham, was recently sentenced to three years in federal prison after she admitted to stealing \$700,000 from the Rush over a decade.

Rapid City Mayor Steve Allender said he was somewhat "relieved" the Rush's financial problems were not all attributed to a loss of interest in the team.

"Now, at least we know that a substantial part of the problem was an employee of the Rush was stealing significant amounts from the team," he said. "It's disappointing that a team thought their financial losses were almost all attributed to lower audience and lower performance on the ice. We now know that wasn't the full story."

Durham was hired as the Rush's finance manager in 2008, began stealing in February 2010, and was laid off in June 2019 after the new team owner, Spire Hockey, brought in their own chief financial officer, IRS special agent Brian Pickens testified at the sentencing hearing.

Over the course of nearly 10 years, Durham admitted she embezzled the money through multiple methods and under-reported her income by \$688,867.

At the same time, the Rush began struggling with lower attendance at games and a losing record. During testimony, it was revealed Mueller paid \$660,000 out of his own pocket to keep the team afloat.

Additionally, it was disclosed the Rush had poor financial accounting procedures under the previous ownership, which allowed Durham to embezzle and other questionable payments to be made.

Pickens testified the Rush gave under-the-table bonuses to players from 2010-2013, and the Rush's previous ownership group had not completed a full audit since 2010.

Spire Sports + Entertainment took over ownership of the Rush in January 2019. The new owners began an in-depth look at the team's finances, when it was reportedly \$2 million in the hole.

As the investigation and audits into the Rush's finances commenced, suspicion began that there was embezzlement occurring in the organization. In October 2019, Spire Sports contacted law enforcement.

The investigation into the missing money pointed back to Durham. In July 2020, she admitted to the embezzlement scheme and pleaded guilty to tax evasion and two counts of wire fraud.

Following that Christmas 2017 phone call from Mueller about the Rush's financial woes, Baltzer said the Civic Center Board of Directors began looking at ways to help their largest tenant survive.

"We had to act quickly, because the situation was dire," Baltzer said. "The Rush are a huge asset for

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Rapid City and the economic impact of having the team here is substantial. We didn't want to lose them."

As Baltzer was negotiating the \$350,000 agreement on behalf of the Civic Center, he said a high-level accountancy review of the Rush's finances was completed — but not a full audit.

"Unfortunately, there was no time for a full audit and it would have been expensive, but we did hire an independent accountant to look things over from a general perspective," he said. "Remember, at the time, we had no suspicion of theft. We knew that audience numbers had dropped, expenses had gone up. So, the high level overview of the finances wasn't looking at clues of theft."

Baltzer said the accountants did find one financial item of concern, an undocumented payment on a credit card.

"We went to Jennifer (Durham) and asked her what that was for, and she said it was for hockey equipment," he said. "It was a fairly insignificant amount and, again, we weren't looking at theft at that point.

"Well, we came to find out later that the credit card was not from the Rush business, and we know now that it was part of what Jennifer was doing with stealing money. It turned out to be a red flag in the end, and that's one of the items the new team owners started to look at," he said.

The three-year agreement had an annual cash limit of \$350,000, equal to the approximate annual revenue the Civic Center would have normally received from the Rush, Baltzer said.

The financial agreement with the Rush came out of the Civic Center's budget, not the city's general fund budget, Baltzer said. The Civic Center receives 70% of its funding through fees, rentals, ticket sales and concession sales. The other 30% is funded through the city's municipal gross receipts tax, often referred to as the 1% BBB tax imposed on alcoholic beverage sales, eating establishments, lodging and admissions.

As part of the financial agreement with the Rush, the Civic Center paid the team \$174,547 in January 2019 to help offset losses from the previous two months. Testimony at Durham's sentencing hearing revealed the Rush transferred that money to Mueller, who later paid it back.

"We wrote that check to the Rush and I didn't know they then gave that money to Scott," Baltzer said. "I'm not surprised, though, that it happened. I knew Scott had significant personal losses to keep the team afloat, but once we made the check out to the team, it was out of our hands as to where the money went."

Baltzer said the full scope of the Rush's financial losses were not apparent until 2019 and the part Durham's theft played in those losses was shocking to him.

"It is devastating what happened. Obviously, a lot of trust was placed in Jennifer during that time frame," he said.

The city, Civic Center and the Rush were all victims of Durham's actions, Baltzer said. Now that the team is under new ownership, the future is brighter since Spire has created safeguards to prevent future mismanagement.

"We have every confidence in the new owners and their principles of operating business. They have proven it through this outcome," he said. "The Rush are an important part of what we have here in Rapid City and with these new oversights with Spire and the level of engagement we have with them for their financial health, we have a very positive future. Undoubtedly, though, we have learned lessons from the past."

Friday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Christian def. Faulkton

Canistota def. Hanson, 25-27, 25-12, 26-24, 25-7

Clark/Willow Lake def. Deuel, 25-7, 25-16, 25-12

Garretson def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 25-14, 25-19, 27-25

Hamlin def. Britton-Hecla, 25-14, 25-10, 25-16

Hankinson, N.D. def. Waubay/Summit, 25-18, 25-10, 25-19

Lemmon def. Timber Lake, 25-21, 25-23, 25-23

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Miller def. Mt. Vernon/Plankinton, 15-25, 25-18, 25-22, 25-18
North Central Co-Op def. Leola/Frederick, 25-15, 25-20, 26-28, 27-25
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland def. Wilmot
Parker def. Parkston
Pierre def. Yankton, 25-7, 25-13, 25-14
Potter County def. Sully Buttes, 25-6, 25-20, 25-16
Redfield def. Milbank, 25-12, 25-22, 25-20
Sioux Valley def. Baltic, 25-21, 22-25, 26-24, 29-27
Viborg-Hurley def. Freeman Academy/Marion, 25-17, 25-21, 25-21
Wagner def. Scotland, 25-23, 25-20, 22-25, 25-15
Watertown def. Brandon Valley, 25-17, 24-26, 25-17, 25-14
Waverly-South Shore def. Sisseton, 20-25, 25-18, 25-18, 25-16

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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

14-19-34-39-59, Mega Ball: 11, Megaplier: 2

(fourteen, nineteen, thirty-four, thirty-nine, fifty-nine; Mega Ball: eleven; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$118 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$127 million

South Dakota breaks daily virus case record

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota broke its record for new coronavirus infections reported in one day on Friday as 1,560 people tested positive.

The new virus cases brought the number of cases statewide to 13,520, according to the Department of Health. That means that roughly one out of every 65 people currently has an active infection. The state has ranked second in the nation for new cases per person over the last two weeks, according to Johns Hopkins researchers. There were about 1,359 new cases per 100,000 people.

The Department of Health also reported 12 new deaths, bringing the tally of COVID-19 deaths to 415 since the pandemic began. October has been the state's deadliest month as health officials reported 192 of those deaths this month.

The number of hospitalizations declined by 10 people to 403, breaking a run where hospitalizations hit new highs for five days in a row. About 31% of general-care hospital beds and 37% of ICU beds remained available in the state.

Confirmed cases nationwide surged past 9 million on Friday, with infections on the rise in 47 states.

Amazon announces packing, shipping facility in Fargo

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Online retailing and tech giant Amazon announced Friday that it will build a packing and shipping facility in Fargo that will add more than 500 jobs in the city.

The Seattle-based retailer will build the 1-million-square-foot facility north of the city.

Amazon also announced this month that it is building a similar facility in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The company said that facility would create about 1,000 jobs.

North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum said in a statement that more than 2,000 businesses "and independent authors" in the state sell products through Amazon.

The Fargo facility is expected to open in 2021.

Gov. Noem's campaign war chest tops \$1 million

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem has gotten more campaign donations in the last two weeks than she received in the first five months of the year. And, the governor isn't up for reelection for two more years.

Noem's time in the national political spotlight likely has helped her amass more than \$1 million in contributions in the last six months, including \$224,000 in the last 10 days, according to filings with the South Dakota Secretary of State.

The Republican governor has spent time on the road campaigning on behalf of President Donald Trump this political season. And, her hands-off approach to managing the coronavirus pandemic in South Dakota has earned her praise from conservatives in the state and across the country.

Noem received donations between \$100 and \$4,000 from individuals residing in at least 42 states, the Argus Leader reported. And of the 141 campaign contributions made in the last 10 days, 84 were from out-of-state donors, together giving nearly \$168,000.

The Latest: Italy leader Conte considers more restrictions

By The Associated Press undefined

ROME -- Premier Giuseppe Conte says his government is deciding if more restrictions are needed to rein in the spread of coronavirus infections.

"The contagion curve is so rapid now it puts in-class schools at risk," says Conte, five days after closing restaurants in the evening and closing down gyms, cinemas and theaters.

Elementary and middle school children can still attend class. However, 75% of high school instruction must be done remotely, in accordance with nationwide rules that started this week.

On Monday, Lombardy's governor will consult with the local mayors, including of its main city Milan, before deciding whether to lock down the region.

Some citizens have participated in anti-lockdown protests this week to vent their anger about the restrictions. In Florence on Friday night, four demonstrators were detained.

Italy has more than 647,000 confirmed cases and more than 38,000 deaths.

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

- UK government mulls lockdown for England.
- Germany's Merkel pledging financial help for companies hit by partial shutdown
- Greece tightens restrictions as virus spreads
- Italian nurse sees the nightmare return of the coronavirus. The 54-year-old nurse saw the virus in the unmasked faces of fellow vacationers this summer and her worry grew.
- Australia will spend \$351 million to secure coronavirus vaccines for the Pacific and Southeast Asia as part of a shared recovery for the region.
- A multi-state coronavirus surge in the countdown to Election Day has exposed a clear split between President Donald Trump's bullish embrace of a return to normalcy and urgent public warnings from the government's top health officials.

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

ATLANTA — Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp has tested negative for coronavirus after having exposure to someone who tested positive.

A statement on his Twitter account says the Republican governor is quarantining as a precaution. It says first lady Marty Kemp also tested negative.

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In a separate announcement Friday, U.S. Rep. Drew Ferguson says he tested positive for coronavirus and is working from home while in quarantine. Ferguson appeared with Kemp at a rally on Thursday.

Kemp was among the earliest to allow businesses to reopen. He has avoided a statewide mask mandate, including this summer, when Georgia recorded the highest per capita infections nationwide.

Georgia has 360,000 confirmed cases of the virus and more than 7,950 deaths, according to the state Department of Public Health.

ATHENS, Greece — Greece will shut down restaurants, bars, cafes, cinemas and gyms across a large part of the country, including the capital Athens, after a surge in coronavirus cases.

Outlining the measures in a televised address, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said the changes will take effect Tuesday morning and last for the whole of November.

The areas affected are most of northern Greece and the Athens region.

Though closed for sitting customers, restaurants in these areas will be able to offer food for takeaway and deliveries.

In other measures, Mitsotakis said masks will become mandatory across the whole of Greece and a curfew will come into force from midnight to 5 a.m. University classes across the country will have to be conducted online.

In contrast to the spring lockdown, travel within the country will not be affected and retail shops will stay open.

Like other countries in Europe, Greece is in the grip of a resurgence of the virus. Daily infections surged over 1,000 this week, peaking at 1,690 Friday.

LONDON — The British government is considering imposing a new national lockdown in England after scientific advisers warned hospitalizations and deaths from the resurgence of the coronavirus could soon surpass the levels seen at the outbreak's spring peak.

Epidemiologist John Edmunds, a member of the government's scientific advisory group, say cases were running "significantly above" a reasonable worst-case scenario drawn up by modelers this month.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has introduced a system of local restrictions for England based on levels of infection. But scientists say it hasn't been enough.

The Times of London says Johnson could announce a month-long lockdown as soon as Monday, though the government says no decisions have been made.

Any new lockdown would likely see non-essential businesses close and people told to stay mostly at home, though schools would remain open.

The U.K. is recording more than 20,000 new coronavirus infections a day, and government statisticians say the actual figure is likely far higher. On Saturday, the country is likely to surpass 1 million confirmed cases.

The U.K. has Europe's highest coronavirus death toll at more than 46,000.

BERLIN — Chancellor Angela Merkel is pledging to help companies hit by a new German partial shutdown "quickly and unbureaucratically" as the country reports the latest in a string of daily coronavirus infection records.

German officials decided this week to shut down bars, restaurants and leisure facilities for four weeks starting Monday and impose new contact restrictions. The aim is to curb a rapid rise in new infections and prevent an overwhelmed health system.

The government plans to spend up to 10 billion euros (\$11.7 billion) to compensate companies hit by the latest shutdown.

Merkel said in her weekly video message, "we will not leave companies that face difficulties because of the current crisis through no fault of their own alone. We want to help quickly and unbureaucratically."

On Saturday, the national disease center, the Robert Koch Institute, reported 19,059 confirmed cases in the last 24 hours and 103 deaths. That's up from the previous record set Friday of 18,681.

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Germany's total cases since the pandemic started has increased to 518,753 and its death toll to 10,452.

BRÁTISLAVA, Slovakia — A national rapid-testing program for the coronavirus has launched in Slovakia. The government aims to test anyone over 10 in the next two weekends.

The results of the free tests, which look for antigens, will be available within minutes. Those testing negative won't have to abide by strict limits on movement imposed on citizens in the country of 5.4 million.

Some 5,000 testing sites have been established by the armed forces. Long lines of cars have already formed at the sites. Despite help from volunteers, some sites didn't have enough medical personnel on Saturday, authorities say.

BEIJING — China has reported six new confirmed cases of coronavirus in an outbreak in Xinjiang, bringing the total in the far-west region to 51.

Six were in serious condition, Xinjiang health authorities said Saturday. Another 161 people have tested positive but show no symptoms.

The outbreak in Shufu county, near the city of Kashgar, appears to be linked to a garment factory that employs 252 people. It has been sealed off.

China has largely curbed the spread of the coronavirus but continues to see localized outbreaks with infections in the hundreds. The National Health Commission also reported 27 new cases among people who had arrived recently from overseas.

The total confirmed cases has reached 85,973 and 4,634 deaths. China does not include people without symptoms in its confirmed case count.

NEW DELHI — India has registered 48,268 confirmed coronavirus cases in the past 24 hours, continuing a downward trend.

The Health Ministry on Saturday reported 551 more deaths, taking total confirmed deaths to 121,641. The figure raises the country's total virus tally to more than 8.1 million, behind only the U.S., which has 9 million cases.

The slowdown in daily infections has held for more than a month, with fewer than 60,000 cases for nearly two weeks. Some experts say the trend suggests the virus may have finally reached a plateau in India. But others question the testing methods and warn a major festival due in a few weeks and the winter season could result in a new surge.

The capital of New Delhi, which recently became the worst-hit city in India, is already witnessing high air pollution levels. That may make fighting COVID-19 — a respiratory disease that effects the lungs — more complicated in months ahead.

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — For the first time, Sri Lanka police have arrested dozens of people for not wearing masks and failing to maintain social distancing, under the new laws imposed to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Police spokesman Ajith Rohana says 39 people were detained and another 221 were held for violating a curfew.

Since Thursday, the government has imposed the curfew in the entire Western province where new outbreaks at a garment factory and a main fish market were discovered in early October. It includes the capital Colombo, where nearly 30% of the 22 million population live.

Infections from the two clusters have grown to 6,945 by Saturday, including 633 in the last 24 hours. That brings the confirmed total to more than 10,000 cases and 19 deaths on the island nation.

CANBERRA, Australia — Australia has announced it will spend 500 million Australian dollars (\$351 million) to secure coronavirus vaccines for the Pacific and Southeast Asia "as part of a shared recovery for our region from the pandemic."

The government says it would use a range of advance purchase agreements with manufacturers via the

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global COVAX Facility plan, which aims to ensure virus vaccines are shared with all nations.

"A fast, safe vaccine rollout ... will mean we are able to return to more normal travel, tourism and trade with our key partners in the region."

Meanwhile, officials in Victoria state reported just one new coronavirus case on Saturday as Melbourne residents head into a weekend of greater social freedom.

Figures from the state's Health Department show an average of just 2.4 new cases per day for the past 14 days.

The easing of restrictions means families can visit each other at home. A 25-kilometer (15-mile) travel limit remains in place and outdoor gatherings are still capped at 10 people.

FRANKFORT, Ky. -- Kentucky reported a near-record number of coronavirus cases Friday as the surging outbreak sent more people to hospitals, Gov. Andy Beshear said.

"This is a dangerous time. We're moving the wrong way," the Democratic governor said as he urged Kentuckians to wear masks in public to protect themselves and others.

Beshear reported 1,941 new coronavirus cases — the second-highest statewide daily total since the pandemic began — and 15 more virus-related deaths. The state's positivity rate reached 6.19% — the highest level since May 6, he says.

The recent surge has led to rising hospitalizations. On Friday, there were 974 patients hospitalized in Kentucky due to the virus and 241 patients in ICU with COVID-19.

Total statewide cases surpassed 105,000, and the virus-related death toll reached at least 1,476. The latest deaths included people ranging in age from 39 to 91.

ORLANDO, Fla. — Walt Disney World says it plans to lay off more than 11,000 unionized workers because of the new coronavirus, bringing the total number of pandemic-related job casualties at the Florida resort to almost 18,000 positions.

Disney World said in a letter to state and local leaders Thursday that the 11,350 union workers — mostly part-timers — will be laid off at the end of the year. Company officials previously had said that another 6,400 nonunion Disney employees in Florida would lose their jobs.

Earlier this week, 720 Disney World actors and singers were laid off since many of the live entertainment shows at the Florida resort have gone dark, according to Actors' Equity Association, the labor union representing the performers.

The layoffs are part of a decision by The Walt Disney Co. last month to eliminate 28,000 positions in its parks division in California and Florida because of the pandemic.

Disney's parks closed last spring as the coronavirus began spreading in the U.S. The Florida parks reopened this summer with restrictions on how many people could be in the parks at any given time and new requirements for social distancing and mask-wearing. The California parks have yet to reopen because of restrictions by the state of California.

TOPEKA, Kan. — Kansas counties that require masks have seen about half as many new coronavirus infections as counties that don't mandate face coverings, a study has found, as cases statewide surged again to record levels.

"Do Masks Matter in Kansas" produced by the Institute for Policy and Social Research at the University of Kansas found that counties that require masks saw a decrease in their seven-day rolling average of daily cases per 100,000 population starting 14 days after the mandate was issued.

"Masks, it is important to note, do not eliminate COVID, but they significantly slow the spread of the disease — at least here in Kansas," said Donna K. Ginther, the institute's director, in a video presenting the study's findings. The Institute for Policy and Social Research at the University of Kansas has been tracking the impact of COVID-19 on the state, The Kansas City Star reported.

Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly tried over the summer to issue a statewide mask mandate, but most of the

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state's 105 counties opted out. This week, Kelly and top Republicans agreed to try to persuade counties that are coronavirus hot spots to impose mask requirements rather than having the state step in. But she said she could still call the Republican-controlled Legislature into special session to impose a statewide rule.

Counties without mask mandates have seen the seven-day rolling average of daily cases per 100,000 steadily increase. And in September, those counties started to have higher case rates compared to counties with a mask mandate, Ginther said.

"We found a 50% reduction in the spread of COVID-19 in counties that had a mask mandate compared to those without," Ginther said.

NEW YORK CITY — The coronavirus can spread more extensively in households than previous research suggests, and kids can transmit it at about the same rate as adults do, according to a new study.

The study shows how important it is for people who test positive to isolate themselves within a home, and for them and everyone else to wear masks when they are in common areas, researchers said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released the study Friday. The researchers focused on 101 households in Tennessee and Wisconsin.

In each home, after a person was diagnosed, other household members agreed to undergo nasal swab or saliva tests and kept symptom diaries. Nearly 300 people participated. About 100 were identified as the first to be infected and the other 200 people lived with them.

About 53% of the household members tested positive, and most were diagnosed within five days of the time the first person got sick. Previous studies have estimated the secondary infection rate at around half that.

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Three tigers at a Tennessee zoo are in quarantine after one tested positive for the coronavirus, according to the Zoo Knoxville.

The United States Department of Agriculture's national veterinary lab confirmed the positive test for Bashir, an 11-year-old male Malayan tiger, the Knoxville News Sentinel reported.

Two other tigers, 11-year-old male Tanvir and 6-year-old female Arya, are presumed positive while their tests are being processed. All three animals have experienced mild coughing, lethargy and decreased appetite.

SIoux FALLS, S.D. — South Dakota broke its record for coronavirus infections reported in one day on Friday with 1,560 positive tests.

That brought the number of cases statewide to 13,520, according to the Department of Health. That means nearly one out of every 65 people currently has an active infection.

The state has ranked second in the nation for new cases per capita over the last two weeks, according to Johns Hopkins researchers. There were about 1,359 new cases per 100,000 people.

The Department of Health also reported 12 more deaths, bringing the total coronavirus deaths to 415. October has been the state's deadliest month with 192 deaths.

The number of hospitalizations declined by 10 people to 403, breaking a run where hospitalizations hit new highs for five straight days. About 31% of general-care hospital beds and 37% of ICU beds remained available in the state.

BALTIMORE — The U.S. reached 9 million confirmed cases of the coronavirus, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

Confirmed U.S. cases are on the rise in 47 states on Friday.

It took two weeks to reach the mark from 8 million cases, the fastest increase of 1 million yet. It had taken more than three weeks to rise from 7 million to 8 million.

Deaths are up 14% in the past two weeks, averaging more than 800 every day. The coronavirus has killed more than 229,000 Americans.

Actor Sean Connery, the 'original' James Bond, dies at 90

By JILL LAWLESS and HILLEL ITALIE Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Sean Connery, the charismatic Scottish actor who rose to international superstardom as suave, fearless secret agent James Bond and then abandoned the role to carve out an equally successful, Oscar-winning career playing a variety of leading and character roles, has died. He was 90.

Bond producers EON Productions confirmed his death. Producers Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli said they were "devastated" by the news.

"He was and shall always be remembered as the original James Bond whose indelible entrance into cinema history began when he announced those unforgettable words — 'The name's Bond... James Bond,'" they said in a statement Saturday.

The producers said Connery's "gritty and witty portrayal of the sexy and charismatic secret agent" was largely responsible for the success of the series.

Connery's son Jason said his father died peacefully in his sleep overnight in the Bahamas where he lived, having been "unwell for some time."

"A sad day for all who knew and loved my dad and a sad loss for all people around the world who enjoyed the wonderful gift he had as an actor," Jason Connery told the BBC.

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said she was "heartbroken" at the news.

"Our nation today mourns one of her best loved sons," she said.

A commanding screen presence for some 40 years, Connery was in his early 30s and little known when he starred in the first Bond thriller, 1962's "Dr. No," based on the Ian Fleming novel.

Condemned as immoral by the Vatican and the Kremlin, but screened at the White House for Bond fan John F. Kennedy, "Dr. No" was a box office hit and helped Bond become a franchise that long outlasted its Cold War origins.

For decades, with actors from Connery to Daniel Craig in the leading role, filmgoers have loved the outrageous stunts, vicious villains and likable, roguish hero who enjoyed a life of carousing, fast cars, gadgety weapons, elegant clothes and vodka martinis (always shaken, not stirred).

For many, Connery was the definitive James Bonds, his character's introduction among the most famous in movie history. He is seated at the blackjack table of an upscale casino, seen first from the side and the back. After he wins a couple of hands against a glamorous young woman, she asks for more money to gamble. "I admire your courage, Miss, uh ..." we hear him tell her as the camera shows his hands removing a cigarette from a slender case. She introduces herself as "Trench, Sylvia Trench," tells him she admires his luck and asks his name. His reply remains a catchphrase decades later. "Bond," he says, his face finally revealed as he lights a cigarette. "James Bond."

United Artists couldn't wait to make more Bond movies, with ever more elaborate stunts and gadgets, along with more exotic locales and more prominent co-stars, among them Lotte Lenya and Jill St. John.

Connery continued as Bond in "From Russia With Love," "Goldfinger," "Thunderball," "You Only Live Twice" and "Diamonds Are Forever," often performing his own stunts.

"Diamonds Are Forever" came out in 1971 and by then Connery had grown weary of playing 007 and feared he wasn't being taken seriously despite his dramatic performances in Alfred Hitchcock's "Marnie" and Sidney Lumet's "The Hill."

"I'd been an actor since I was 25, but the image the press put out was that I just fell into this tuxedo and started mixing vodka martinis," he once complained.

When he walked away at age 41, Hollywood insiders predicted Connery would soon be washed up. Who would hire a balding, middle-aged actor with a funny accent?

Connery fooled them all, playing a wide range of characters and proving equally adept at comedy, adventure or drama. And age only heightened the appeal of his dark stare and rugged brogue; he set a celebrity record of sorts when at age 59 he was named People magazine's "Sexiest Man Alive."

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He won the affection of fans of the "Indiana Jones" franchise when he played Indy's father opposite Harrison Ford in the third picture, 1989's "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade." He turned in a poignant portrayal of an aging Robin Hood opposite Audrey Hepburn in "Robin and Marian" in 1976 and, 15 years later, was King Richard to Kevin Costner's Robin Hood in "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves."

He was the lovable English con man who joined Michael Caine in swindling tribal people everywhere in "The Man Who Would Be King" and the bold Russian submarine commander in "The Hunt for Red October."

He delivered a charming performance as a reclusive writer who mentors a teenage prodigy in 2000's "Finding Forrester."

He won his Oscar for supporting actor in 1987 for his portrayal of a tough Chicago cop who joins Elliot Ness' crime-fighters in "The Untouchables."

By then he was at peace with James Bond, and when he arrived onstage at the Oscar ceremony he declared, "The name's Connery. Sean Connery."

He kept his promise not to play Bond again until 1983, when he was lured back by an offbeat script about a middle-aged 007. Based on the only Fleming story that hadn't been nailed down by the film empire Broccoli and Saltzman created, Connery took the role and helped produce the film. The result was "Never Say Never Again," a title suggested by his wife, Micheline Roquebrune.

Even as the 007 films made him a millionaire, Connery tried often to separate his own personality from that of Bond. "I'm obviously not Bond," he once said. "And Bond is obviously not a human being. Fleming invented him after the war, when people were hungry for luxury, gourmet touches, exotic settings. Those were the things the English loved to read about following the privations of the war."

The "real" Sean Connery had a troubled first marriage and a history of comments justifying domestic violence. In 1962, he married Diane Cilento, an actress best known for her role as Molly in "Tom Jones." They had a son, Jason, who also became an actor, but the union proved tempestuous and ended in 1974.

Its impact lasted long after. Cilento would allege that he had physically abused her and Connery defended his behavior in interviews. In 1965, he told Playboy magazine that he did not find "anything particularly wrong about hitting a woman — although I don't recommend doing it in the same way that you'd hit a man. An openhanded slap is justified — if all other alternatives fail and there has been plenty of warning."

When Barbara Walter brought up those remarks in a 1987 interview, he said his opinion hadn't changed because "sometimes women just won't leave things alone."

Connery was widely criticized, but still received numerous honors, including being chosen as commander (the same rank as Bond) of France's Order of Arts and Literature and a Kennedy Center honoree in 1999. The following year Queen Elizabeth II proclaimed him a British knight.

In 2005 he was chosen for a lifetime achievement award by the American Film Institute. Thomas Sean Connery was born Aug. 25, 1930, in Edinburgh, Scotland, the first of two sons of a long-distance truck driver and a domestic worker.

He left school at age 13 during World War II to help support his family.

"I was a milkman, laborer, steel bender, cement mixer— virtually anything," he once said.

Weary of day labor, he joined the British navy and was medically discharged after three years. The ailment: stomach ulcers.

Back in Edinburgh, he lifted weights to build his body and compete in the Mr. Universe contest. He came in third, and briefly considered becoming a professional soccer player, but chose acting because he reasoned his career would last longer.

He got his first big break singing and dancing to "There is Nothing Like a Dame" in "South Pacific" on the London stage and in a road production before going on to act in repertory, television and B movies. He went to Hollywood for two early films, Disney's "Darby O'Gill and the Little People" and "Tarzan's Greatest Adventure."

When he decided to become an actor, he was told that Thomas Sean Connery wouldn't fit on a theater marquee so he dropped his first name.

Then came the audition that changed his life. American producers Albert "Cubby" Broccoli and Harry Saltzman had bought the film rights to a string of post-World War II spy adventure novels by Fleming.

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Connery was not their first choice for "Dr. No."

The producers had looked to Cary Grant, but decided they wanted an actor would commit to a series. The producers also realized they couldn't afford a big-name star because United Artists had limited their film budget to \$1 million a picture, so they started interviewing more obscure British performers.

Among them was the 6-foot-2 Connery. Without a screen test, Broccoli and Saltzman chose the actor, citing his "dark, cruel good looks," a perfect match for the way Fleming described Bond. When Connery started earning big money, he established his base at a villa in Marbella on the Spanish coast.

He described it as "my sanitarium, where I recover from the madness of the film world." It also helped him avoid the overwhelming income tax he would have paid had he remained a resident of Britain.

As his acting roles diminished when he reached his 70s, Connery spent much of his time at his tax-free home at Lynford Cay in the Bahamas. He played golf almost every morning, often with his wife. He announced in 2007 that he had retired when he turned down the chance to appear in another "Indiana Jones" movie.

"I thought long and hard about it, and if anything could have pulled me out of retirement it would have been an 'Indiana Jones' film," he said.

"But in the end, retirement is just too damned much fun."

Italie contributed from Los Angeles. Bob Thomas also contributed from Los Angeles.

'Obamacare' sign-ups begin as millions more are uninsured

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Millions of Americans who have lost health insurance in an economy shaken by the coronavirus can sign up for taxpayer-subsidized coverage starting Sunday.

It's not a new COVID relief program from the government but the return of annual sign-up season under the Affordable Care Act, better known as "Obamacare." Open enrollment lasts through Dec. 15.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which runs HealthCare.gov, says premiums are down slightly on average for 2021 and most people will have at least three insurers from which to pick plans. Lower-income people and even middle-class families may qualify for tax credits that can greatly reduce what they pay monthly for premiums.

But President Donald Trump, unrelenting in his opposition to President Barack Obama's signature domestic program, is asking the Supreme Court to overturn the entire law.

Trump has been promising a much better replacement since before taking office, but never came out with his plan. The justices are scheduled to hear the case Nov. 10, and the administration is doing little to promote sign-ups, having previously slashed the program's ad budget.

"Affordable health coverage is more essential than ever during the pandemic," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., who's urging people to enroll even if Trump keeps trying to do away with the law.

Hard numbers on how virus-related job losses have affected health coverage are not available because the most reliable government surveys will not be out until next year. Estimates range from 5 million to 10 million newly uninsured people. That's on top of 26 million uninsured last year, before the pandemic, or about 8% of the U.S. population.

"There is a coverage crisis happening," said Stan Dorn, a health policy expert now with Families USA, a liberal advocacy group. "And there are fewer resources available to help, thanks to the Trump cuts."

Dorn worries that's "a setup for epic failure," and many people will remain uninsured even as states across the country are seeing alarming increases in coronavirus cases.

Administration officials say HealthCare.gov is open for business and ready to handle sign-ups online or via its call center. "We'll be working through the upcoming open enrollment period...to ensure a smooth user experience," CMS Administrator Seema Verma said.

More than 11 million people currently have coverage through HealthCare.gov and state-run health insurance markets offering subsidized private plans. The health law also covers another 12 million people

through its Medicaid expansion, adopted by all but 12 states.

Medicaid enrollment has gone up by nearly 4 million people since March, but it's still unclear how many laid-off workers are coping after the loss of employer coverage in the coronavirus economy.

Those who are healthy most likely have other priorities, such as finding another job. Workers who were furloughed, but not laid off, may have been able to keep their coverage. Some appear to have switched to a spouse's plan, and those age 65 and older can get on Medicare.

The nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that 80% of those who lost workplace health insurance are eligible for coverage under the law, either through the insurance markets or Medicaid.

Some private businesses, such as HealthSherpa.com, have created a niche market helping people enroll in HealthCare.gov plans. Former Obama administration officials are trying to promote sign-ups through GetAmericaCovered.org. Community organizations also play a role helping people with paperwork.

But, Dorn said, "a lot of people who need health insurance may not know there this is there chance to sign up."

Space station marking 20 years of people living in orbit

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The International Space Station was a cramped, humid, puny three rooms when the first crew moved in. Twenty years and 241 visitors later, the complex has a lookout tower, three toilets, six sleeping compartments and 12 rooms, depending on how you count.

Monday marks two decades of a steady stream of people living there.

Astronauts from 19 countries have floated through the space station hatches, including many repeat visitors who arrived on shuttles for short-term construction work, and several tourists who paid their own way.

The first crew — American Bill Shepherd and Russians Sergei Krikalev and Yuri Gidzenko — blasted off from Kazakhstan on Oct. 31, 2000. Two days later, they swung open the space station doors, clasping their hands in unity.

Shepherd, a former Navy SEAL who served as the station commander, likened it to living on a ship at sea. The three spent most of their time coaxing equipment to work; balky systems made the place too warm. Conditions were primitive, compared with now.

Installations and repairs took hours at the new space station, versus minutes on the ground, Krikalev recalled.

"Each day seemed to have its own set of challenges," Shepherd said during a recent NASA panel discussion with his crewmates.

The space station has since morphed into a complex that's almost as long as a football field, with eight miles (13 kilometers) of electrical wiring, an acre of solar panels and three high-tech labs.

"It's 500 tons of stuff zooming around in space, most of which never touched each other until it got up there and bolted up," Shepherd told The Associated Press. "And it's all run for 20 years with almost no big problems."

"It's a real testament to what can be done in these kinds of programs," he said.

Shepherd, 71, is long retired from NASA and lives in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Krikalev, 62, and Gidzenko, 58, have risen in the Russian space ranks. Both were involved in the mid-October launch of the 64th crew.

The first thing the three did once arriving at the darkened space station on Nov. 2, 2000, was turn on the lights, which Krikalev recalled as "very memorable." Then they heated water for hot drinks and activated the lone toilet.

"Now we can live," Gidzenko remembers Shepherd saying. "We have lights, we have hot water and we have toilet."

The crew called their new home Alpha, but the name didn't stick.

Although pioneering the way, the three had no close calls during their nearly five months up there, Shepherd said, and so far the station has held up relatively well.

NASA's top concern nowadays is the growing threat from space junk. This year, the orbiting lab has had

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to dodge debris three times.

As for station amenities, astronauts now have near-continuous communication with flight controllers and even an internet phone for personal use. The first crew had sporadic radio contact with the ground; communication blackouts could last hours.

While the three astronauts got along fine, tension sometimes bubbled up between them and the two Mission Controls, in Houston and outside Moscow. Shepherd got so frustrated with the "conflicting marching orders" that he insisted they come up with a single plan.

"I've got to say, that was my happiest day in space," he said during the panel discussion.

With its first piece launched in 1998, the International Space Station already has logged 22 years in orbit. NASA and its partners contend it easily has several years of usefulness left 260 miles (400 kilometers) up.

The Mir station — home to Krikalev and Gidzenko in the late 1980s and 1990s — operated for 15 years before being guided to a fiery reentry over the Pacific in 2001. Russia's earlier stations and America's 1970s Skylab had much shorter life spans, as did China's much more recent orbital outposts.

Astronauts spend most of their six-month stints these days keeping the space station running and performing science experiments. A few have even spent close to a year up there on a single flight, serving as medical guinea pigs. Shepherd and his crew, by contrast, barely had time for a handful of experiments.

The first couple weeks were so hectic — "just working and working and working," according to Gidzenko — that they didn't shave for days. It took awhile just to find the razors.

Even back then, the crew's favorite pastime was gazing down at Earth. It takes a mere 90 minutes for the station to circle the world, allowing astronauts to soak in a staggering 16 sunrises and 16 sunsets each day.

The current residents — one American and two Russians, just like the original crew — plan to celebrate Monday's milestone by sharing a special dinner, enjoying the views of Earth and remembering all the crews who came before them, especially the first.

But it won't be a day off: "Probably we'll be celebrating this day by hard work," Sergei Kud-Sverchkov said Friday from orbit.

One of the best outcomes of 20 years of continuous space habitation, according to Shepherd, is astronaut diversity.

While men still lead the pack, more crews include women. Two U.S. women have served as space station skipper. Commanders typically are American or Russian, but have also come from Belgium, Germany, Italy, Canada and Japan. While African-Americans have made short visits to the space station, the first Black resident is due to arrive in mid-November on SpaceX's second astronaut flight.

Massive undertakings like human Mars trips can benefit from the past two decades of international experience and cooperation, Shepherd said.

"If you look at the space station program today, it's a blueprint on how to do it. All those questions about how this should be organized and what it's going to look like, the big questions are already behind us," he told the AP.

Russia, for instance, kept station crews coming and going after NASA's Columbia disaster in 2003 and after the shuttles retired in 2011.

When Shepherd and his crewmates returned to Earth aboard shuttle Discovery after nearly five months, his main objective had been accomplished.

"Our crew showed that we can work together," he said.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump's voting wrongs; Biden's trade miss

By HOPE YEN and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The actual crisis of the coronavirus pandemic and a manufactured crisis over voting fraud featured heavily in President Donald Trump's misstatements during the 2020 campaign's final

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week. Democrat Joe Biden went astray on trade as he assailed the president's record on China.

A sampling from the week:

VIRUS

TRUMP: "In California, you have a special mask. You cannot under any circumstances take it off. You have to eat through the mask." — Arizona rally on Wednesday.

THE FACTS: Those statements are false.

California residents are not required to wear "special" masks Nor are they required to wear them all the time and "eat through the mask."

Gov. Gavin Newsom's statewide mask order allows Californians to wear basic coverings such as home-made ones and people are not required to wear them when at home, outdoors more than 6 feet from others or when eating and drinking.

His office this month did tweet out a graphic advising people to "keep your mask on in between bites" when going out to eat at restaurants. That was mocked because Californians were also advised to minimize the amount of times they touch their masks. Newsom told reporters that one of his staffers had sent out the tweet, which the governor said was intended to indicate that if people start to read a book at the table, they may want to put their mask back on.

TRUMP: "We have a spike in cases ... And you know why we have so many cases? Because we test more." — Michigan rally Tuesday.

THE FACTS: No, increased testing does not fully account for the rise in recorded cases, and Trump is contradicted by his own top health officials. People are also infecting each other more than before as distancing rules recede, some shun masks and community spread picks up.

Adm. Brett Giroir, the Health and Human Services Department official overseeing the nation's coronavirus testing efforts, stressed anew that the increases can't be explained by just additional testing.

"We do believe and the data show that cases are going up," Giroir told NBC's "Today" show on Wednesday. "Yes, we're getting more cases identified, but the cases are actually going up. And we know that, too, because hospitalizations are going up."

More testing actually does not mean more infections at all; people are getting sick regardless of whether their illness is recorded. More testing can help prevent the disease's spread by letting people know COVID-19 is rising in their area.

Practically every state is now seeing a rise in cases. The virus has now killed over 228,000 in the U.S., according to the count kept by Johns Hopkins University.

Giroir warned that local governments may be forced to take "draconian measures" if Americans don't take safety precautions seriously. "Cases will go up if we don't make a change," he said.

TRADE

BIDEN, comparing Trump's record on trade with that of the Obama administration: "We have a trade deficit that's larger with China than when we were there." — interview on "60 Minutes," Oct. 25.

THE FACTS: Biden's claim is outdated and no longer true. The U.S. deficit in the trade of goods and services with China fell last year to \$308 billion — the lowest since 2013 — as Trump slapped taxes on most Chinese imports to the United States. And the gap is down again so far this year.

In the first two years of the Trump presidency, however, the United States ran higher trade deficits with China — \$380 billion in 2018 and \$337 billion in 2017 — than any recorded during the Obama administration. The deficit was \$310 billion in 2016, the last year of the Obama presidency.

2020 ELECTION

TRUMP: "It would be very, very proper and very nice if a winner were declared on November third, instead of counting ballots for two weeks, which is totally inappropriate and I don't believe that that's by our laws." — remarks to reporters Tuesday.

THE FACTS: "Our laws" don't require the immediate reporting of all election results in the country on

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election night. Delayed counting is unavoidable.

Apart from the usual lags in rounding up and reporting totals from every precinct in the country, the U.S. is seeing unprecedented numbers of early votes, and some battleground states won't even start counting them until Election Day votes have been tallied.

Indeed, the Supreme Court is allowing Pennsylvania to count mailed ballots that are not even received by elections officials for three days after the election, as long as there's no evidence that such ballots were filled out after Nov. 3. The decision isn't final: Justices left open the possibility of reviewing the matter after the election.

The court is also allowing absentee ballots in North Carolina to be received and counted up to nine days after Election Day.

Earlier in the campaign, Trump asserted that the winner should be declared on election night, another outcome no one can guarantee and one that may elude the country Tuesday. There is no requirement that the winner be determined Election Day.

He once raised the question of delaying the election, then dropped the thought, but has persisted in groundless allegations that the election is certain to be plagued by fraud.

TRUMP: "Strongly Trending (Google) since immediately after the second debate is CAN I CHANGE MY VOTE? This refers changing it to me. The answer in most states is YES. Go do it. Most important Election of your life!" — tweet Tuesday.

THE FACTS: Not so fast. Some states allow voters to switch their early vote, but laws vary and many have restrictions.

Minnesota, for instance, allows voters to "claw back" their vote and change it, but the deadline for that has passed. Wisconsin allows people to change their vote up to three times, though it doesn't happen often. Florida allows voters who received mail ballots to choose to vote in person instead, but they cannot vote more than once.

If a voter has already sent his or her mail-in ballot and then goes to vote in person, "the (mail) ballot is deemed cast and the voter to have voted," according to Florida law.

David Becker of the Center for Election Innovation said changing a vote in states where that is possible is "extremely rare" and very complicated.

"It's hard enough to get people to vote once — it's highly unlikely anybody will go through this process twice," he said.

Trump's suggestion that he did so well in the debate that people who already voted for Biden wished they could switch to him is not borne out by the search engine's statistics.

Google searches for "change my vote" did not crack the top 20 searches that night or after. Jill Biden was the subject of Google's 20th most popular search that day. On Friday, the new "Borat" movie, presidential polls and college football were among the subjects drawing top 20 attention.

TRUMP: "Big problems and discrepancies with Mail In Ballots all over the USA." — tweet Monday.

THE FACTS: No, the catastrophe Trump has warned darkly about for months in mail-in voting has not materialized.

There have been sporadic reports of voters receiving mail ballots that were incorrectly formatted and other localized hitches in the record early turnout, but large-scale disenfranchisement has not been seen.

Trump has conspiratorially inflated local incidents, contending, for example, that mail-in ballots filled out for him are being dumped in rivers or creeks. This is a fabrication.

Three trays of mail were found by the side of a road and in a ditch — not a river or creek — in Greenville, Wisconsin, in mid-September. The sheriff initially said "several absentee ballots" were in the mix. The state's elections officer later said no Wisconsin ballots were in the lost mail after all. No one said ballots marked for Trump were thrown out in the incident.

Trump's motive for challenging votes by mail is plain: Democrats are dominating that segment of voting.

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Registered Democrats have also outnumbered registered Republicans in early voting in person at polling places, though the gap is narrower than with mailed ballots.

In short, Trump may need supporters to show up in huge numbers Tuesday if not before, and his baseless allegations of early-voting irregularities are designed to motivate them to do so as well as to portray the result as illegitimate if Biden wins.

VOTING FRAUD

TRUMP, suggesting that Nevada's Democratic Gov. Steve Sisolak will add fraudulent votes: "We're worried about the governor. ... Some of these people, in Nevada, they want to have the election. They want to have the count weeks after November 3rd. So let's all wait for the governor to count them up good, and how many is he going to add during that two weeks, right?" — Arizona rally Wednesday.

TRUMP, on Pennsylvania's Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf: "The governor counts the ballots. ... This is the guy that's counting our ballots? It doesn't work. It doesn't work." — remarks Monday in Pennsylvania.

THE FACTS: To be clear, governors don't count the votes, and they can't just manufacture votes in the election.

Local county officials in Pennsylvania send out the ballots and count the votes. The state's top elections official is Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar, a Wolf appointee.

In Nevada, Sisolak has been a target of Trump's ire after Sisolak in September criticized Trump's indoor rally in a Las Vegas suburb for violating the state's large-scale ban on indoor gatherings. But Sisolak doesn't tally the votes himself, and Trump makes a baseless assertion that he can add fraudulent votes to the count.

Nevada's secretary of state oversees that state's new all-mail election. That office is held by Barbara Cegavske and she is a Republican.

TRUMP: "In Nevada, they want to have a thing where you don't have to have any verification of the signature." -- New Hampshire rally Oct. 25.

THE FACTS: Not true, despite his frequent assertions to the contrary. The state's existing law requires signature checks on mail ballots. A new law also spells out a process by which election officials are to check a signature against the one in government records.

In Nevada's June primary, nearly 7,000 ballots were thrown out due to mismatched or missing signatures.

TRUMP: "I say the biggest risk we have are the fake ballots." — New Hampshire rally.

THE FACTS: His claim, frequently made in the last days before the election, is overblown.

It's true that many states are expecting a surge in mail-in voting because of the coronavirus pandemic, which may lead to longer times in vote counting. The Supreme Court, for instance, will allow Pennsylvania to count mailed-in ballots received up to three days after the election; it also will allow North Carolina to count votes received nine days after the election so long as ballots are postmarked by Nov. 3.

But there is no evidence to indicate that massive fraud is afoot. Any delay in declaring a winner of the presidential race after Tuesday would not in itself be illegal.

Broadly speaking, voter fraud has proved exceedingly rare. The Brennan Center for Justice in 2017 ranked the risk of ballot fraud at 0.00004% to 0.0009%, based on studies of past elections.

In the five states that regularly send ballots to all voters who have registered, there have been no major cases of fraud or difficulty counting the votes.

Even if the election is messy and contested in court, the country will have a president in January — and not have vote counting going on "forever" as he asserts — because the Constitution and federal law ensure it.

Associated Press writers Paul Wiseman and Darlene Superville in Washington; Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, California; Michelle L. Price in Las Vegas and Nicholas Riccardi in Denver contributed to this report.

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

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Exorcism: Increasingly frequent, including after US protests

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

In popular culture, exorcism often serves as a plot device in chilling films about demonic possession. This month, two Roman Catholic archbishops showed a different face of exorcism – performing the rite at well-attended outdoor ceremonies to drive out any evil spirits lingering after acrimonious protests.

The events' distinctive character gave a hint of how exorcism — with roots in ancient times — has evolved in some ways as it becomes more commonplace in many parts of the world.

In Portland, Oregon, Archbishop Alexander Sample led a procession of more than 200 people to a city park on Oct. 17, offered a prayer, then conducted a Latin exorcism rite intended to purge the community of evil. The event followed more than four months of racial justice protests in Portland, mostly peaceful but sometimes fueling violence and riots.

On the same day, 600 miles to the south, San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone performed an exorcism ceremony outside a Catholic church in San Rafael, where protesters had earlier toppled a statue of Father Junipero Serra.

"We pray that God might purify this place of evil spirits, that he might purify the hearts of those who perpetrated this blasphemy," Cordileone said.

Serra was an 18th-century Spanish missionary priest, long praised by the church for bringing Roman Catholicism to what is now the western United States. His critics say that Serra, in converting Native Americans to Catholicism, forced them to abandon their culture or face brutal punishment.

Cordileone said the exorcism prayers in Latin, remarking that "Latin tends to be more effective against the devil because he doesn't like the language of the church." The prayers were different from those offered when a person is believed to be the subject of demonic possession.

Two experts on exorcism -- religious studies professor Andrew Chesnut of Virginia Commonwealth University and the Rev. Pius Pietrzyk of St. Patrick's Seminary and University in California -- recalled no other recent exorcisms in the U.S. similar to those in Oregon and California.

Chesnut noted that in Mexico, some high-ranking Catholic clergy performed an exorcism in 2015 seeking to expel demons nationwide. Participants said they were responding to high levels of violence, the practice of abortion and the crimes of the drug cartels.

More broadly, Chesnut said exorcism, in its traditional form as a demon-chaser, is increasingly widespread around the world, though there are no official statistics.

"The Exorcist," the memorable horror film of 1973, depicts exorcism as a relatively rare and secretive endeavor. But it's now so common that some exorcists combat demons remotely using their cell phone, according to Chesnut.

He says the driving force behind the surge since the 1980s has been the spread of Pentecostal churches that highlight the conflict between demons and the Holy Spirit, especially in Latin America, Africa and parts of Asia, including the Philippines.

Brazil is a particular hot spot for exorcisms, sometimes featured on televised broadcasts of church services. Pastors wave their hands over a person deemed to be possessed, shout orders for the devil to depart, then hold their hand to the person's forehead and push them backwards, occasionally resulting in their collapse.

The Catholic church is not ceding the practice of exorcism to these other faiths. Pope Francis has acknowledged the legitimacy of the practice, and a Vatican-approved university in Rome has been conducting exorcism training sessions during Francis's papacy for priests from around the world.

In September, Francis named three new auxiliary archbishops for the archdiocese of Chicago; one of them was Jeffrey Grob, one of the top exorcism experts in the archdiocese.

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In the United States, one of the premier Catholic entities focused on exorcism is the Pope Leo III Institute in the Chicago suburb of Libertyville. Though operating with approval of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, it is independent and privately funded, with a focus on training and educating priests about exorcism.

In a statement on its web site, the institute acknowledges there is some skepticism about exorcism and demonic possession.

"Many Catholics are even among those who don't believe in the devil or his influence upon them," it says. "It is important to recall that Pope Francis has never been shy about speaking about the devil, and has warned many times against naiveté in the fight against Satan, even in the 21st century."

One perennial challenge for modern-day exorcists is to determine if a person potentially possessed by the devil is in fact suffering problems better addressed by mental health professionals.

In light of this, the institute says its curriculum "is devoted to the importance of knowing how to discern whether someone is truly possessed, or whether they have some sort of psychiatric or psychological illness."

The institute says it agrees with those who say exorcisms have increased in recent years, but adds that "there is no serious statistical study of the practice."

The U.S. bishops conference has placed a detailed Q-and-A about exorcism on its web site, "in hopes that clear information is brought to bear on a topic that is often shrouded in mystery or misinformation."

Some of the basic points in the Q-and-A:

--There are two kinds of exorcisms: minor and major. The minor form is performed routinely during baptisms; the major form entails the expulsion of demons and should be performed only by a bishop or a priest who has a bishop's permission.

--A person should be referred to an exorcist only after undergoing a thorough examination including medical, psychological, and psychiatric testing.

-- It's permissible, under certain circumstances, for a Catholic priest to perform exorcism on a Christian who is not Catholic.

—In cases involving demonic possession of an individual, the identity of the exorcist should be kept secret or at most known only to the other priests of the diocese so as not to overwhelm the exorcist with random calls and inquiries.

—When the person undergoing the exorcism is female, there should be at least one other female present "for the sake of propriety and discretion."

Associated Press writer Mauricio Savarese in Sao Paulo, Brazil, contributed to this report.

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Election 2020 Today: The path to 270 and a focus on Michigan

By The Associated Press undefined

Here's what's happening Saturday in Election 2020, three days until Election Day:

ON THE TRAIL: Joe Biden is in Michigan for two stops. President Donald Trump is in Pennsylvania for four events.

HOW TO VOTE: AP's state-by-state interactive has details on how to vote in this election.

TODAY'S TOP STORIES:

ROAD TO 270: Trump and Biden each has a path to the 270 Electoral College votes needed to win the 2020 election. Biden's is appreciably wider. The former vice president is competitive in all the battleground states Trump carried in 2016 and has put a handful of traditional Republican states, including Georgia and Arizona, in play. That has Trump scrambling to defend a wide swath of territory and putting his hopes for reelection on two of the most populous swing states, Florida and Pennsylvania. Election Day is Tuesday.

BIDEN, OBAMA HEAD TO MICHIGAN: Biden — with help from his old boss Barack Obama — is focusing

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on Black voters in Michigan as the Democrat looks to head off a repeat of 2016 nominee Hillary Clinton's epic collapse in the state. Biden and Obama will hold a pair of drive-in rallies Saturday in Flint and Detroit, predominantly Black cities whose turnout will play a large factor in whether Biden turns the state back to the Democrats' column.

BIDEN ON THE ISSUES: Biden is promising to take the country on a very different path from what it has seen over the past four years under Trump, on issues ranging from the coronavirus and health care to the environment, education and more. The Democratic presidential nominee is promising to reverse Trump policy moves on things such as withdrawing the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement and weakening protections against environmental pollution.

TRUMP ON THE ISSUES: Expect to see a lot more of the same if there's a second Trump administration. President Donald Trump has consistently pointed to tax cuts and regulatory relief as key successes of his first four years in office. He has repeatedly pushed for the end of the Obama-era health law, but hasn't yet delivered a plan to replace it. There's no indication of any big policy switch if he gets another four years in office.

AP FACT CHECK: An AP Fact Check finds that Trump has persistently warned about a catastrophe in mail-in voting that hasn't materialized. He also makes a false point that the big rise in virus cases is simply the result of increased testing. His own officials have refuted him on that. Meantime, Biden got it wrong when he said the trade deficit with China is worse now than during the Obama administration. That trade deficit has shrunk under Trump.

AP EXPLAINS: As it has for more than 170 years, The Associated Press will count the nation's vote in real time on Election Day and report the results of presidential, congressional and state elections on Nov. 3 and beyond. Read more about how that's done.

ICYMI:

If 2020 is like 2000, Trump believes he's got the votes

Race for Texas intensifies amid surging turnout, COVID cases

Sen. Lindsey Graham and Democratic challenger Jaime Harrison clash on criminal justice, health care

Road to 270: Biden has options, Trump walks narrow path

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden each has a path to the 270 Electoral College votes needed to win the White House. Biden's is appreciably wider.

The former vice president is competitive in all the battleground states Trump carried in 2016 and has put a handful of traditional Republican states, including Georgia and Arizona, in play. That has Trump scrambling to defend a wide swath of territory and putting the incumbent's hopes for reelection on two of the most populous swing states, Florida and Pennsylvania.

A look at the most likely roads to victory:

BIDEN

TRUE NORTH

Biden can win an electoral majority most simply by carrying the three states where Trump stunned Democrat Hillary Clinton in 2016: Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Those states were carried by Democrats for decades before 2016. They would give Biden 279 electoral votes, as long as he wins all the other states in Clinton's column. Under this scenario, Biden would not need to win any other states Trump won in 2016.

The three northern industrial states have been Biden's sharpest target for advertising dollars. He spent almost \$150 million — 30% of his total national ad spending since June — in the three, according to Kantar/CMAG's review for The Associated Press.

The fiercest struggle among the three is in Pennsylvania. Biden has had a slight advantage in most polls, while some suggest Trump remains within striking distance. Biden, who was born in Scranton, claims some favorite-son status in the state. Trump's hopes have been boosted by Biden's recent call for phasing out

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fossil fuels, though Biden has said he would not ban fracking.

SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST

If Biden loses Pennsylvania, it would require him to find 11 electoral votes elsewhere.

Once reliably Republican Arizona, offering exactly 11, and North Carolina, with 15, are states Trump won four years ago that are well within Biden's reach.

Democrats are particularly bullish about Arizona, last carried by a Democrat in 1996. Trump won the state in 2016 by 3.5 percentage points, the smallest margin in 20 years, and this year, the Democrats' Senate candidate, former astronaut Mark Kelly, is running a strong race.

The Arizona alternative supposes, as most of Biden's paths do, that he also wins Nevada, last carried by a Republican in 2004. Trump has campaigned in the state, though Democrats say they are comfortable with their prospects there.

The race for North Carolina appears tighter, but there is recent precedent for a Democrat carrying the state. In 2008, Barack Obama was the first Democrat to take it in 32 years. Although he narrowly lost there in 2012, as did Clinton in 2016, waves of college-educated newcomers are swelling its booming suburbs, a boost to Biden's chances.

THE REST IS EXTRA

There's another scenario for Biden: a more comfortable Electoral College victory.

Should Biden win Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, and either Arizona and North Carolina, he would capture at least 290 electoral votes.

He's also competing for Ohio, which Trump won by 8 percentage points in 2016; Iowa, which Trump won by nearly 10 percentage points; and Georgia, which Trump carried by 5 percentage points. Victories in those states would boost Biden's electoral total above 300.

Biden made two stops in Georgia this past week and on Friday had his first fall campaign visit to Iowa. He's spent almost \$5 million but hasn't visited Iowa since the state's caucuses in February. Biden has campaigned lightly in Ohio but has spent almost \$7 million in advertising. Surveys and operatives in both parties said the two states were very close heading into the campaign's final weekend.

Oh, and remember Florida? The perennial battleground offers 29 electoral votes and is, per usual, exceedingly close.

There's one more big prize on the table: Texas. Democrats have been eyeing the state for years, but this is the first year in decades where it may really be within reach for the party.

The state's new battleground status highlights not just Trump's struggles in the suburbs, which are booming outside Texas' major cities, but also his weaknesses in nearly every state with a diverse electorate.

"Biden has more of an opportunity to win by a larger electoral number than Trump does," said Republican pollster Glen Bolger, who is surveying in several battleground states but not for Trump's campaign. "It doesn't mean Trump can't win."

TRUMP

FLORIDA OR BUST

Trump almost certainly cannot reach 270 electoral votes without carrying Florida, where polls show a tight race. Some have suggested a slight Biden advantage.

Trump's rally Thursday in Florida was his third campaign trip to the state this month, underscoring why Florida is so important to his reelection. He plans to return before Tuesday's election.

His stop Thursday was in swing-voting Hillsborough County, where Clinton beat him by about 41,000 votes. Hillsborough is next to — and shares a media market with — Pinellas County, the most populous county in the state to flip from Democratic in 2012 to Republican in 2016.

Trump won some counties in the surrounding area by more than 60% of the vote, and his campaign hopes it can further run up the score with first-time and less regular voters in these places.

Trump planned to accompany first lady Melania Trump when she votes Tuesday near Palm Beach County.

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The Trumps moved their residence from reliably Democratic New York to Florida last year.

PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

Even if Trump nets Florida and holds battlegrounds he won in the South and Southwest, he would still be short of 270 electoral votes.

The president is wagering much on Pennsylvania as the best chance of moving within striking distance of that threshold. After a trio of rallies this past week, Trump was set to hold four more in the state on Saturday.

He's been making stops across Pennsylvania, from counties outside Philadelphia, the largest metro area, to the rural northwest corner of the state.

Among his upcoming stops: Bucks County. It was once Philadelphia's most GOP-heavy suburb but has been trending Democratic and is an example of the obstacles Trump is facing. He lost the county by less than 2 percentage points in 2016 and has seen his standing in the suburbs steadily erode since then.

Trump's argument to Pennsylvania voters was recharged after Biden, during their Oct. 22 debate, called for phasing out fossil fuels. That created an opportunity for Trump in a state with a robust natural gas industry.

"Biden's plan to abolish the entire U.S. oil industry — you saw that?" Trump noted at a rally last week in Lansing, Michigan, recalling Biden's call for phasing renewable fuels in and fossil fuels out over time. "Will cripple our nation and send us into an absolute deep depression."

THE REST ISN'T THE BEST

Even if Trump wins Florida and Pennsylvania, he would still be short of the magic number if he can't carry most of the states he won in 2016.

He could nose ahead in Ohio, long one of his strongest states, but would still need to cobble together a series of states he won in 2016, such as Iowa, and some he lost narrowly and continues to trail.

That more complicated path would include flipping Minnesota, Nevada and New Hampshire. That, however, would defy political logic for an incumbent to lose in places won four years ago and win in places lost back then.

Grasping for every vote he can, Trump has even campaigned in Maine and Nebraska, where electoral votes are awarded by congressional district and to the overall state winner. A week ago, Trump was in Levant, Maine, near the hub of the state's GOP leaning north, Bangor, hoping to hold the single electoral vote in its 2nd District, and in Omaha, Nebraska, on Tuesday, hoping to hold that metropolitan district's single vote.

Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa.

Expect a lot more of the same if Trump wins a second term

By The Associated Press undefined

Expect to see a lot more of the same if there's a second Trump administration.

President Donald Trump has consistently pointed to tax cuts and regulatory relief as key successes of his first four years in office. He has repeatedly pushed for the end of the Obama-era health law but has yet to deliver a plan to replace it. And he has spent most of this year defending his response to the coronavirus pandemic while fighting openly with scientists and medical experts about vaccines, treatments and more.

If he gets another four years in office, there's no indication of any big policy shift.

A glimpse at how a second Trump term might look:

ECONOMY, TAXES AND THE DEBT

Low unemployment and a soaring stock market were Trump's calling cards before the pandemic. While the stock market clawed its way back after cratering in the early weeks of the crisis, unemployment stands

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at 7.9%, and the nearly 10 million jobs that remain lost since the pandemic began exceed the number that the nation shed during the entire 2008-09 Great Recession.

And by Friday, Wall Street had closed out another punishing week with the S&P 500 posting its first back-to-back monthly loss since the pandemic first gripped the economy in March. Much of the market's focus has been on what's to come for the economy when coronavirus counts are rising at troubling rates across Europe and the United States.

Trump has predicted that the U.S. economy will rebound in late 2020 and take off like a "rocket ship" in 2021. He promises that a coronavirus vaccine or effective therapeutics will soon be available, allowing life to get back to normal. His push for a payroll tax cut over the summer was thwarted by stiff bipartisan opposition. But winning a second term — and a mandate from voters — could help him resurrect the idea.

An analysis from the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget estimates that Trump's plan would increase the debt by about \$5 trillion over 10 years. That's on top of the \$13 trillion in deficits the country is already expected to run up during that time.

The national debt now stands at more than \$20 trillion.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Trump insists that the country is "rounding the corner" on the pandemic and has stepped up calls on Democratic governors to lift coronavirus restrictions in their states. But Trump's sunny outlook belies the ground truth in many states — including several critical to his path to 270 Electoral College votes — that have seen a surge in the virus.

The president has often disputed medical experts in his own administration, among them infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci, on key issues surrounding the virus, including the timing of a vaccine, the need for social distancing and the importance of masks to contain the virus. His campaign rallies were filled with people gathered less than 6 feet apart without masks. His announcement of the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court was widely regarded to be a super spreader event after he and several other people in attendance were diagnosed with the virus.

Trump spent three days at Walter Reed National Medical Center after his diagnosis. One of the drugs he received, remdesivir, has since been approved by the Food and Drug Administration for treatment of COVID-19.

Trump also says he's "pretty damn certain" that vaccines and new treatments for the virus are coming in the not-so-distant future. Scientists are more cautious about the timing.

Congress passed and Trump signed into law a more than \$2 trillion coronavirus relief package earlier this year, but the two sides have been unable to agree on an additional aid package.

HEALTH CARE

As a candidate for the White House, Trump promised that he would "immediately" replace former President Barack Obama's health care law with a plan of his own that would provide "insurance for everybody" with lower costs. Americans are still waiting for a plan that Trump has been teasing for many months.

He may be counting on the Supreme Court, which is scheduled to hear a case challenging "Obamacare" soon after the election. The court now has a solid conservative majority with the confirmation of Barrett as a justice.

Trump officials say the administration has made strides by championing transparency on hospital prices, pursuing a range of actions to curb prescription drug costs and expanding lower-cost health insurance alternatives for small businesses and individuals. But those incremental steps fall far short of the sweeping changes he promised.

The number of uninsured people has gone up on Trump's watch, from 27.6 million people under age 65 in 2017 to 29.2 million last year, according to the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation. There are no solid statistics on uninsured Americans this year, after millions lost job-related coverage in the pandemic.

On prescription drugs, Trump came into office promising change so Americans would see the lower costs common in other economically advanced countries. But he backed away from a 2016 campaign promise

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to authorize Medicare to negotiate prices. And a big, bipartisan deal with Congress to reduce costs for Medicare recipients and restrain price increases eluded him.

His administration did reach a narrower, yet significant agreement with drug companies and insurers to limit out-of-pocket costs for insulin for seniors to \$35 a month. A series of regulations to try to curb drug costs remains a work in progress.

IMMIGRATION

Trump worked through his first term to sharply curtail both legal and illegal immigration. Expect that to continue if he wins a second term.

One of his top priorities would be to use agreements with Central American governments as models to get countries around the world to field asylum claims from people seeking refuge in the United States, a top adviser, Stephen Miller, recently told The Associated Press. He said the agreements would help stop "asylum fraud, asylum shopping and asylum abuse on a global scale."

Miller also forecast a broader offensive against so-called "sanctuary" jurisdictions that limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities, saying the administration would use its "full power, resources and authority." He vowed more efforts toward legal immigration "based on merit."

Trump's pledge to build a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico was a hallmark of his first presidential campaign and four years in office. Trump is expected to continue to trumpet progress after having completed nearly 400 miles of wall construction, though most of that replaced existing smaller barriers.

Trump has yet to outline second-term immigration priorities in detail, though he has openly toyed with trying to repeal a constitutional right to citizenship for anyone born in the United States.

His administration has long pursued a zero-tolerance policy to crack down on illegal immigration, and thousands of children were separated from their parents after crossing the border illegally. The administration was roundly criticized for its actions.

Administration officials also sought to restrict legal immigration, including higher fees and increased scrutiny for people seeking to legally emigrate to the U.S. The administration slashed the number of refugees allowed in the country by about three-quarters to its lowest level in decades.

Trump has also sought to end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, a program that allowed people brought to the United States illegally as children to remain as legal residents, though his effort was halted, at least temporarily, by the courts.

FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Trump's foreign policy centers on his mantra of "America First," but in the months leading up to the election, he engaged in diplomacy.

The Trump administration scored a big win in recent weeks by nudging three Arab states — Bahrain, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates — to normalize relations with Israel. Trump officials also brokered an economic cooperation agreement between Serbia and Kosovo, bitter foes in the Balkan wars.

He counts as another major achievement his efforts to cajole more NATO members to fulfill their pledge to spend 2% of their gross domestic product on defense.

Trump also pulled the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal, saying it was one-sided in favor of Iran. He's announced that the U.S. is withdrawing from the intermediate-range nuclear missile treaty with Russia and the Open Skies Treaty, which permits 30-plus nations to conduct observation flights over each other's territory. He later said he might reconsider pulling out of that treaty.

The president has reduced to about 3,000 the number of troops in Iraq. The U.S. plans to reduce the number of troops in Afghanistan to at least 4,500 in November, although Trump wants them all withdrawn by the end of the year. He also counts his engagement with North Korea's Kim Jong Un as a foreign policy victory, yet he's been unable to prod Kim to give up his nuclear program.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

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A Trump second term would begin to see a U.S. transformed by the scores of public health and environment rollbacks in Trump's first term, when the administration weakened protections in landmark pollution laws that had stood for a half-century.

Trump's biggest environmental rollbacks include removing federal protections for millions of miles of wetlands and waterways. That means mining companies and other industries will be freer to dump waste into the fragile habitats or destroy them outright, removing buffers against storms and flooding and making it harder for cities downstream to clean public water supplies, environmental groups say.

Another major rollback means neighborhoods nationwide will find themselves having less say about highways or other big projects tearing through their communities. Other rollbacks enacted in Trump's first term — in regulations ranging from endangered species to oil and gas and mining in federal wilderness to power plant pollution to water-thrifty dishwashers — will take effect.

On climate change, Trump's withdrawal of the United States from the Paris global climate accord would become official Nov. 4, the day after the presidential election. Trump is still fighting California and other Western states over his plans to ease future vehicle mileage standards, undoing another legacy climate effort of the Obama administration.

A Supreme Court made more conservative by Trump's appointments will decide pending court challenges by states and environmental groups to many of the rollbacks.

The Trump administration says it wants to focus on helping minority communities that are disproportionately harmed by polluting industries in a second term. Environmental groups point to the administration's efforts to slash funding for such programs, and call it an empty election-year promise.

EDUCATION

Trump believes that a key to economic recovery from the virus is fully reopening schools, though Americans are wary. Only about 1 in 10 think day care centers, preschools or K-12 schools should open this fall without restrictions, according to a recent poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs.

He is calling for the expansion of charter schools and school choice programs, including a proposed tax credit for people who contribute to scholarships sending students to private schools and other education options. Under his watch, the federal government has also increased funding for historically Black colleges and universities — an effort he often cites as one of the things he has achieved for Black Americans.

Trump frequently rails against what he has described as "radical left indoctrination" in schools. He is pledging to create a commission to promote "patriotic education" in schools. Amid complaints that conservative voices are stifled on college campuses, he also sought to cut federal funding to colleges that do not protect speech rights.

Trump's administration has revoked several Obama-era initiatives, including guidance intended to curb racial disparities in school discipline and a rule that sought to cut federal funding to for-profit colleges that left students with heavy debt.

The Education Department under Trump has also created rules telling schools and universities how to respond to sexual misconduct, with more protection for the accused.

ABORTION

Before becoming a presidential candidate, Trump described himself as a strong abortion-rights proponent. But after coming to Washington, he pushed for overturning Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court ruling that 47 years ago established a constitutional right to abortion.

Anti-abortion groups hope the addition of Barrett to the Supreme Court will provide a majority to overturn Roe. Barrett has declined to characterize Roe as a "super-precedent" that must not be overturned, although she says that she sets her personal views aside when weighing cases.

Trump also has barred federally funded family planning clinics from referring women for abortions. He supports the Hyde Amendment, a series of federal laws that ban the use of taxpayer money to pay for abortions except in cases of rape or incest or to save the woman's life.

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SOCIAL SECURITY

Even before the coronavirus shutdown sent the economy on a roller coaster ride, government experts estimated that Social Security would be unable to pay full benefits starting in 2035. The program's insolvency date is now likely closer than that, because layoffs have cut into Social Security tax collections from workers and employers.

Trump kept his promise not to cut Social Security benefits, but this summer he sent confusing signals with a plan to temporarily suspend collection of certain taxes that fund the program. While the White House staff said it was a limited measure that would have no lasting impact, Trump kept hinting to reporters that he had much bigger tax cuts in mind. Early in the year, he told an interviewer he wanted to tackle "entitlements," or benefit programs, in a second term.

GUNS

Trump has flirted at times with tighter gun laws. After the Parkland school shooting in Florida two years ago, Trump chided Republican lawmakers for being too "scared" of the National Rifle Association to tighten gun laws. And after back-to-back mass shootings in Ohio and Texas in 2019, he embraced calls for "strong background checks." He backpedaled quickly in each instance.

In the campaign, the president has repeatedly promised to "defend our Second Amendment." The NRA's political action committee has endorsed Trump.

VETERANS

Trump frequently touts an expanded program at the Department of Veterans Affairs passed by Congress in 2018 that allows veterans to choose a private physician outside of the government-run VA system and still receive taxpayer-paid medical care.

The program, first passed as a temporary measure during the Obama administration, was spurred by a 2014 scandal in which veterans died while waiting months for appointments at the Phoenix VA medical center. Trump supports giving veterans wide access to private-sector care if they are dissatisfied with VA treatment, and he has suggested he may issue additional regulations in a second term that will make it even easier.

Trump has boosted telehealth services at the VA and broadly promises an improved U.S. economy in a second term that will reduce veterans' unemployment. He created a federal task force last year to address veterans suicide. In October, he signed into law a bipartisan bill that creates a new three-digit 988 phone line — similar to 911 — that will be reserved for mental health emergencies. It becomes active in fall 2021.

About 20 veterans die by suicide each day, a rate basically unchanged during the Trump administration.

TRADE

Trump views the signing of two major trade deals — an updated pact with Mexico and Canada and the first phase of a China agreement — as signature achievements. The U.S. and China signed in January, less than two months before the pandemic put an enormous strain on U.S.-China relations. Trump says the first phase would lead to China buying roughly \$200 billion over two years in U.S. agricultural products, energy and other American products.

In return, the U.S. canceled or reduced tariffs on an array of China imports. So far, China is significantly behind in meeting its purchasing commitments, according to tracking from the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

The second phase of the deal is expected to focus on tougher issues between the countries, including Trump's wish to get China to stop subsidizing its state-owned enterprises. But for Trump, who has come to frequently refer to the coronavirus as the "China virus," it remains to be seen whether he will be able to effectively reengage Beijing on trade. Trump recently said he's "not interested" in talking to China.

Associated Press writers Kevin Freking, Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Ben Fox, Deb Riechmann, Collin Binkley and Hope Yen contributed to this report.

Biden looks to restore, expand Obama administration policies

By The Associated Press undefined

Stop and reverse. Restore and expand.

Joe Biden is promising to take the country on a very different path from what it has seen over the past four years under President Donald Trump, on issues ranging from the coronavirus and health care to the environment, education and more.

The Democratic presidential nominee is promising to reverse Trump policy moves on things such as withdrawing the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement and weakening protections against environmental pollution.

While Trump wants to kill the Affordable Care Act, Biden is proposing to expand "Obamacare" by adding a public option to cover more Americans.

Here's what we know about what a Biden presidency might look like.

ECONOMY, TAXES AND THE DEBT

Biden argues that the economy cannot fully recover until COVID-19 is contained.

For the long-term recovery, the former vice president is pitching sweeping federal action to avoid an extended recession and to address long-standing wealth inequality that disproportionately affects non-white Americans.

He would cover the cost of some of his big ticket environmental and health insurance proposals by rolling back much of the 2017 GOP tax overhaul. He wants a corporate income tax rate of 28% — lower than before but higher than now — and broad income and payroll tax increases for individuals with more than \$400,000 of annual taxable income. All that would generate an estimated \$4 trillion or more over 10 years.

Biden also frames immigration as an economic matter. He wants to expand legal immigration slots and offer a citizenship path for about 11 million people who are in the country illegally but who, Biden notes, are already economic contributors as workers and consumers.

An analysis from the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget estimates that Biden's campaign proposals would increase the national debt by about \$5.6 trillion over 10 years.

The national debt now stands at more than \$20 trillion.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Biden draws some of his sharpest contrasts with Trump on the pandemic, arguing that the presidency and federal government exist for such crises. Unlike Trump, he doesn't believe the leading role in the virus response should belong to state governors, with the federal government in support.

Biden endorses generous federal spending to help businesses and individuals, along with state and local governments, deal with the financial cliffs of the pandemic slowdown. He's promised aggressive use of the Defense Production Act, the wartime law a president can use to direct manufacture of critical supplies. Trump has used that law on such things as ventilator production.

Biden promises to elevate the government's scientists and physicians to communicate a consistent message to the public, and he would have the United States rejoin the World Health Organization.

He has promised to use his transition period before taking office to convene meetings with every governor and ask those leaders to impose what would be a nationwide mask mandate because the federal government doesn't have that power. Biden says he would go around holdouts by securing such rules from county and local officials — though enforcement of all such orders may be questionable.

HEALTH CARE

The health care law known as "Obamacare" was a hallmark of the Obama administration, and Biden wants to build on that to provide coverage for all. He would create a "Medicare-like public option" to compete alongside private insurance markets for working-age Americans, while increasing premium subsidies that

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many people already use. Solid middle-class households would have access to subsidized health insurance.

Biden estimates his plan would cost about \$750 billion over 10 years. That positions Biden between Trump, who wants to scrap the 2010 health law, and progressives who want a government-run system to replace private insurance altogether. Biden sees his approach as the next step toward universal coverage and one he could get through Congress.

The Supreme Court, which now has a solid conservative majority, is scheduled to hear a case challenging the law soon after Tuesday's election. If Biden wins, he would have to deal with the fallout from that eventual decision.

On prescription drugs, Biden supports legislation allowing Medicare to negotiate prices for government programs as well as private payers. He would prohibit drug companies from raising prices faster than inflation for people covered by Medicare and other federal programs. He would also limit the initial prices for "specialty drugs" to treat serious illnesses, using what other countries pay as a yardstick.

Biden would put a limit on annual out-of-pocket drug costs for Medicare enrollees, a change that Trump sought but was unable to get through Congress. Also similar to Trump, Biden would allow importation of prescription drugs, subject to safety checks.

IMMIGRATION

Biden has called Trump's actions on immigration an "unrelenting assault" on American values and says he would "undo the damage" while continuing to maintain border enforcement.

Biden says he would immediately reinstate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, which allowed people brought to the U.S. illegally as children to remain as legal residents, and end the restrictions on asylum imposed by Trump.

He also said he would end the Trump administration's "public charge rule," which would deny visas or permanent residency to people who use public services such as Medicaid, food stamps or housing vouchers. Biden would support a 100-day freeze on all deportations while his administration studied ways to roll back Trump policies. But Biden would eventually restore an Obama-era policy of prioritizing the removal of immigrants who have come to the U.S. illegally and who have been convicted of crimes or pose a national security threat, as opposed to all immigrants who have come to the country illegally — Trump's approach. Biden has said he would halt all funding for construction of new walls along the U.S.-Mexico border.

FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Biden supports a strategy of fighting extremist militants abroad with U.S. special forces and airstrikes instead of planeloads of U.S. troops. He wants to see the U.S. close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. He has backed some U.S. military interventions, including the 2003 invasion of Iraq that he now says was a mistake, but he leans toward diplomacy and trying to achieve solutions through alliances and global institutions.

He is a strong supporter of NATO. He warns that Moscow is chipping away at the foundation of Western democracy by trying to weaken NATO, divide the European Union and undermine the U.S. electoral system. He also alleges that Russia is using Western financial institutions to launder billions of dollars to use to influence politicians.

Biden calls for increasing the Navy's presence in the Asia-Pacific and strengthening alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia and Indonesia. He joins Trump in wanting to end the wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan, but thinks the U.S. should keep a small force in place to counter terrorism.

He says Trump's decisions to exit bilateral and international treaties such as the Iran nuclear deal and the Paris climate accord have led other nations to doubt Washington's word. Biden wants to invite all democratic nations to a summit to discuss how to fight corruption, thwart authoritarianism and support human rights.

Biden, who claims "ironclad" support for Israel, wants to curb annexation and has backed a two-state solution in the long conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. He says he would keep the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem after Trump moved it from Tel Aviv.

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Biden criticizes Trump's diplomacy with Kim Jong Un, saying Trump's one-on-one diplomacy gave legitimacy to the North Korea leader and has not convinced Kim that he should give up his nuclear weapons.

ENVIRONMENT

Biden is proposing a \$2 trillion push to slow global warming by throttling back the burning of fossil fuels, aiming to make the nation's power plants, vehicles, mass transport systems and buildings more fuel efficient and less dependent on oil, gas and coal.

Biden says his administration would ban new permits for oil and gas production on federal lands, although he says he does not support a fracking ban.

Biden's public health and environment platform also calls for reversing the Trump administration's slow-down of enforcement against polluters, which in several categories has fallen to the lowest point in decades. That would include establishing a climate and environmental justice division within the Justice Department.

Biden emphasizes environmental justice, which is about addressing the disproportionate harm to lower-income and minority communities from corporate polluters. Biden says he would support climate lawsuits targeting fossil fuel-related industries.

He said he would reverse Trump's plan to exit the Paris climate accord.

EDUCATION

Education is a family affair for Biden. His wife, Jill, has taught in high school and community college, and she delivered her speech to the Democratic National Convention this year from her old classroom.

Biden has proposed tripling the federal Title I program for low-income public schools, with a requirement that schools provide competitive pay and benefits to teachers. He wants to ban federal money for for-profit charter schools and to provide new dollars to public charters only if they show they can serve needy students. He opposes voucher programs, where public money is used to pay for private school education.

He has pledged to restore Obama-era policies that were rolled back by the Trump administration, including rules on campus sexual misconduct and a policy that aimed to cut federal money to for-profit colleges that left students with heavy debt and unable to find jobs to pay it back.

Biden supports legislation to make two years of community college free and to make public colleges free for families with incomes below \$125,000. His proposed student loan overhaul would not require repayment for people who make less than \$25,000 a year, and would limit payments to 5% of discretionary income for others.

He is proposing a \$70 billion increase in funding for historically Black colleges and universities, and other schools that serve underrepresented students.

ABORTION

Biden supports abortion rights and has said he would nominate federal judges who would uphold *Roe v. Wade*.

He would rescind Trump's family planning rule, which has prompted many clinics to leave the federal Title X program that provides birth control and basic medical care for low-income women.

In a switch from his previous stance, Biden now says he supports "repeal" of the Hyde Amendment, opening the way for federal programs such as Medicaid to pay for abortions.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Biden has a Social Security plan that would expand benefits, raise taxes for upper-income people, and add some years of solvency.

He would revamp Social Security's annual cost-of-living adjustment by linking it to an inflation index that more closely reflects changes in costs for older people, particularly health care. That's been a priority for advocates. He would also increase minimum benefits for lower-income retirees, addressing financial hardship among the elderly.

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Biden would raise Social Security taxes by applying the payroll tax to earnings above \$400,000 a year. The 12.4% tax, equally distributed among employees and employers, currently only applies to the first \$137,700 of a person's earnings. The tax increase would pay for Biden's proposed benefit expansions and also extend the life of program's trust fund by five years, to 2040, according to the nonpartisan Urban Institute.

GUNS

Biden led efforts as a senator to establish the background check system now in use when people buy guns from a federal licensed dealer. He also helped pass a 10-year ban on a group of semi-automatic guns, or "assault weapons," during the Clinton presidency.

Biden has promised to seek another ban on the manufacture and sale of assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. Owners would have to register existing assault weapons with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. He would also support a program to purchase assault weapons.

Biden supports legislation restricting the number of firearms an individual may purchase per month to one and would require background checks for all guns sales with limited exceptions, such as gifts between family members.

Biden would also support legislation to prohibit all online sales of firearms, ammunition, kits, and gun parts.

VETERANS

Biden says he would work with Congress to improve health services for women, the military's fastest-growing subgroup, such as by placing at least one full-time women's primary care physician at each Department of Veterans Affairs' medical center.

He promises to provide \$300 million to better understand the impact of traumatic brain injury and toxic exposures, hire more VA staff to cut down office wait times for vets at risk of suicide to zero as well as continue the efforts of the Obama-Biden administration to stem homelessness.

TRADE

Like Trump, Biden accuses China of violating international trade rules, subsidizing its companies and stealing U.S. intellectual property. But he doesn't think Trump's tariffs have worked and wants to join with U.S. allies to form a bulwark against Beijing.

Biden has joined a growing bipartisan embrace of "fair trade" abroad — a twist on decades of "free trade" talk as Republican and Democratic administrations alike expanded international trade. Biden wants to juice U.S. manufacturing by directing \$400 billion of federal government purchases to domestic companies (part of that for buying pandemic supplies) over a four-year term.

He wants \$300 billion in new support for U.S. technology firms' research and development. Biden says the new domestic spending must come before he enters into any new international trade deals.

He pledges tough negotiations with China, the world's other economic superpower, on trade and intellectual property matters. China, like the U.S., is not yet a member of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the multilateral trade agreement that Biden advocated for when he was vice president. As a senator, Biden voted for the North American Free Trade Agreement that the Trump administration renegotiated. The replacement went into effect on July 1.

Associated Press Writers Kevin Freking, Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Ben Fox, Deb Riechmann, Collin Binkley and Hope Yen contributed to this report.

Sudan deal plunges migrants in Israel into new uncertainty

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Usumain Baraka speaks impeccable Hebrew, considers Israelis among his best

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friends and can quote passages from the Old Testament. But as a Sudanese asylum seeker, Baraka has no legal status in Israel and lives a precarious life tethered to the whims of the Israeli government.

Now, after Israel and Sudan agreed to normalize ties, Baraka is among 6,000 Sudanese in Israel once again fearing for their fate. Israel already has indicated it will seek to settle the migrant issue in upcoming talks with Sudan, whipping up trepidation in the community that Israel might forcibly return them to Sudan, a place they say they fled because of conflict or persecution.

"If I return tomorrow or the day after when there is the official peace they are talking about, something awaits me there, and that's danger," said Baraka, 25, who fled Janjaweed militia attacks on his village in Darfur at the age of nine.

Israel and Sudan announced earlier this month they would normalize ties, making Sudan the third Arab country to do so in as many months.

The announcement brought satisfaction to Israelis. But after years of failed Israeli attempts to remove the migrants, it has renewed fears among the Sudanese who have long had an insecure existence in their adopted home.

African migrants, mainly from Sudan and Eritrea, began arriving in Israel in 2005 through its porous border with Egypt after Egyptian forces violently quashed a refugee demonstration and word spread of safety and job opportunities in Israel. Tens of thousands crossed the desert border in often dangerous journeys.

Israel initially turned a blind eye to their influx and many took up menial jobs in hotels and restaurants. But as their numbers swelled, there was a backlash, with growing calls to expel the new arrivals.

Israel considers the vast majority of the migrants to be job seekers and says it has no legal obligation to keep them. The Africans say they are asylum seekers who fled for their lives and face renewed danger if they return. Many come from Darfur and other conflict-ridden regions.

Sudan's former leader, Omar al-Bashir, has been charged with genocide for a campaign of mass killings that took place in Darfur under his watch. The area still experiences tribal clashes and rebel violence.

Under international law, Israel cannot forcibly send migrants back to a country where their life or liberty may be at risk. Critics accuse the government instead of trying to coerce them into leaving.

Over the years, Israel has detained thousands of migrants in remote desert prisons, left thousands of asylum requests open and offered cash payments to those who agreed to move to third African countries.

It also has built a barrier along the border with Egypt that stopped the influx and reached a deal with the U.N. to resettle thousands of migrants in Western countries while allowing thousands of others to remain in Israel — though the deal was quickly scrapped under pressure from anti-migrant activists and hard-line legislators.

The migrants' presence has long divided the country. Their supporters say Israel, a country founded upon the ashes of the Holocaust and built up by Jewish refugees, should welcome those seeking refuge. Opponents claim the migrants have brought crime to the low-income south Tel Aviv neighborhoods where they have settled. Some Israeli politicians have labeled them infiltrators, with one calling them "a cancer" threatening the country's Jewish character.

"I believe they are economic migrants and they act as if they own the place," said Sheffi Paz, a prominent anti-migrant activist.

Publicly, Israeli leaders have been guarded about their plans. On Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israeli and Sudanese delegations would soon meet to "discuss cooperation in many fields, including in the field of migration." A spokeswoman for Israel's Interior Ministry declined to comment.

A top Sudanese military official with direct knowledge of the early contacts with Israel said the matter of returning the migrants has not yet been discussed. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the matter in public.

Israel deported about 1,000 migrants back to South Sudan in 2012 after an Israeli court determined they were no longer at risk in their home country, which had just gained independence. But activists say some died there from disease and others fled renewed conflict.

Israel has acknowledged in recent court proceedings that the situation in Sudan remains volatile, and

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advocacy groups that work with the migrants say that deporting them will come up against stiff legal challenges.

"If Israel will dare to deport Sudanese with open asylum claims it will be a grave violation of the most fundamental principle of the refugee convention," said Sigal Rozen, public policy director at the Hotline for Refugees and Migrants.

She said Israeli leaders may nonetheless be raising the issue to prompt some Sudanese to leave voluntarily.

Migrants have already been hard-hit by the coronavirus pandemic, their jobs in restaurants and hotels threatened by repeated lockdowns. Without proper status in Israel, they are not entitled to claim unemployment insurance. Rozen said some sympathetic employers have kept on migrant workers just to give them a lifeline.

In the south Tel Aviv neighborhood where many migrants live, a pedestrian street typically lively with shops and restaurants was dreary on a recent day. Grey shutters sealed the entrances to many businesses and some mask-wearing migrants lingered on stoops.

Baraka fled Darfur after his father was killed in front of him. He settled in a displacement camp along the border with Chad before departing on a precarious journey north, through Libya and Egypt, to be smuggled through the desert into Israel, where he has lived for more than a decade.

He submitted an asylum request to Israel in 2013 and it remains open. While he welcomes any deal that stabilizes relations between Sudan and Israel, he doesn't believe that opens the door for his return.

"I do believe in what they're talking about now, normalization between Sudan and Israel," Baraka said. "I support it, but we need to know who it's being done with, when to do it and how to do it."

Tanzania, once envy of the region, watches democracy slide

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Vote-counting was far from over when Tanzanian opposition leader Seif Sharif Hamad was frustrated enough to call people onto the streets. As thwarted observers alleged the most blatant election fraud in the country's history, and with no way to challenge the results in court, there was little to do but protest.

But Hamad and others didn't get far. As they walked toward a roundabout in the semi-autonomous region of Zanzibar on Thursday, police fired tear gas, then arrested them — Hamad's second arrest in a week. A party official, Ismail Jussa, was badly beaten by soldiers and hospitalized. On the eve of the vote, at least 10 people in Zanzibar were killed.

"We were a cradle of peace," their colleague, ACT Wazalendo party campaign manager Emmanuel Mvula, told The Associated Press after describing the events. But after witnessing Tanzania's sharp turn away from democratic ideals, "I'm worried for our future as a nation."

That populist President John Magufuli late Friday was declared the overwhelming winner of Wednesday's election was no surprise. But the ruling party's victory in almost all parliament seats has shocked even critics who had warned of creeping repression under Magufuli's first five years in power.

Now the Chama Cha Mapinduzi party, a version of which has ruled since independence, has enough seats to change the constitution and perhaps extend the presidency's two-term limit, a goal of some party leaders and a much-criticized trend in parts of Africa.

Tanzania's events may be overlooked globally amid the U.S. election and COVID-19 pandemic, but many in Africa are watching in dismay as a country once praised for promoting freedoms is said to be dismantling them one by one.

"Irregularities and the overwhelming margins of victory raise serious doubts about the credibility of the results announced," the United States said, later noting credible reports of "the use of force against unarmed civilians."

Tanzania's main opposition parties, CHADEMA and ACT Wazalendo, on Saturday called for a fresh election and an "endless peaceful demonstration" starting Monday. Top opposition candidate Tundu Lissu has rejected the vote and urged the world not to recognize the results.

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The two main opposition parties' chairmen lost their parliament seats by "astounding margins" considering the consistently large campaign rallies they drew, Dan Paget, a lecturer in politics at the University of Aberdeen, wrote Friday. Magufuli banned opposition political gatherings in 2016, not long after taking office.

Tanzania's electoral commission has called all the votes legitimate. It denied fraud allegations ranging from ballot box-stuffing to a massive internet slowdown to the rejection of thousands of election observers from polling stations. Few international observers were allowed.

Spokesmen for the government and commission did not respond to requests for comment.

For Frederick Ssempebwa, watching has been painful. As a young man in the 1960s, he arrived in Dar es Salaam from neighboring Uganda to study and found himself in a vibrant "hub of activity for liberation groups" across the continent. Tanzania, under first president Julius Nyerere, was one of Africa's most influential countries.

"Tanzania was the envy of the region," Ssempebwa, a prominent lawyer, recalled in an interview.

The East African nation at the time was a single-party system, but Nyerere was highly respected and "agitation for opening the political space came much later," Ssempebwa said.

Now, he said as chair of Tanzania Elections Watch, a regional group of eminent persons monitoring the vote, "this time around, it's an unwelcome one-party state."

Everything has been done by the ruling party to make sure the opposition doesn't return, Ssempebwa said. "They'll play around with the constitution the way they want."

He doubts that opposition demonstrations will be allowed, leaving quiet resentment, "which means no reason for the international community to intervene."

With several other high-profile elections across Africa in the coming months, including in Uganda, he says the events in Tanzania likely will have a negative effect on regional leaders. The idea of non-interference in other states' matters remains strong.

"It's sad for the continent," he said.

The African Union has not issued a statement since the vote. The East African Community, a rare observer mission, said the vote was generally "conducted in a credible manner."

On the streets of Tanzania, some people speak carefully. Magufuli's administration has targeted dissenting voices in the media, civil society and elsewhere, at one point trying to make it illegal to publish any data not approved by the government.

But the president has won many supporters for his corruption-fighting and his push to develop the economy.

"Like any other African leader, he found the powerful machinery from colonial era intact and ready to implement what he wishes. He used it for various purposes, some progressive and others regressive," Sabatho Nyamsenda, who teaches political science at the University of Dar es Salaam, said in an email.

Progressive ones include "reclaiming Tanzania's permanent sovereignty over natural wealth and resources," he said. Regressive ones include "the extreme use of the state in quashing political dissent."

If there are flaws in the electoral process, Tanzanians should find solutions themselves, Nyamsenda said.

"I would say the elections were fair enough," one resident of the capital, Jenifa Mahinige, said Friday. Another Dodoma resident, Wilson Samson, said the vote had some hiccups but none that could be said to undermine the results. He urged opposition parties to learn from past mistakes.

The mistakes weren't ours, said Mvula, the opposition ACT Wazalendo campaign manager. He is compiling election reports from every constituency, and with party observers blocked from polling stations, kicked out or arrested, "I can say confidently that 98% of polling agents didn't participate fully."

Even the official forms to report suspected wrongdoing weren't handed out, he said. "So, this was a total sham."

At age 43, Mvula is already looking to Tanzania's younger generation for optimism: "They question things." Reversing the past five years can happen, he said, though it will take time.

"In a country of 60 million people, we cannot just give hope to a few individuals who are not democratic and bring in dictatorial tendencies," he said.

Unrest erupts over police killing of Black man near Portland

By GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

VANCOUVER, Wash. (AP) — Tensions boiled over into unrest late Friday following a vigil for a Black man shot and killed by law enforcement in a city near Portland, Oregon, in southwestern Washington state.

Mourners gathered in Hazel Dell, an unincorporated area of Vancouver, Washington, where family and friends say Kevin E. Peterson Jr., 21, was shot Thursday night. The city is about 12 miles (19 kilometers) north of Portland.

Hundreds of people gathered for the vigil Friday evening, with some holding signs reading, "Honk for Black lives. White silence is violence" and "Scream his name."

Nearby, tensions flared between left- and right-wing protesters. Video recorded by journalists in a parking lot showed two groups of people shouting at each other. Also, some armed demonstrators gathered near a building they told reporters they were protecting.

The crowds ultimately fizzled out near the vigil but a group of hundreds of protesters later marched through downtown Vancouver. Windows were shattered, flags were burned and federal agents clothed in riot gear surrounded a building — warning people that trespassing on federal property would be subject to arrest.

Multiple videos showed two vehicles facing each other just after midnight on a downtown street. Two shots were heard but reporters at the scene said it didn't appear anyone was hit.

Authorities declared an unlawful assembly and ordered protesters to disperse. At least one person appeared to have been detained, according to video posted online by a journalist.

Family and friends had described Peterson as a former high school football player and the proud father of an infant daughter.

In a statement, Clark County Sheriff Chuck Atkins said a joint city-county narcotics task force was conducting an investigation just before 6 p.m. Thursday and chased a man into the parking lot of a bank, where he fired a gun at them. A firearm was recovered at the scene, Atkins said.

Authorities have not named the person who was shot, but Kevin E. Peterson Sr. told The Oregonian/OregonLive the person was his son, Kevin E. Peterson Jr. Atkins referenced the Peterson family in his remarks but did not confirm Peterson was the person who was killed.

"I can say that our agency is grieving as is the Peterson family and the community," Atkins said. "As the community grieves, I call for there to be a respectful and dignified observance of the loss of life in this matter. There is always the potential for misinformation, doubt and confusion — and there may be those who wish to sow seeds of doubt."

The investigation has been referred to the Southwest Washington Independent Investigation Team, and the Camas Police Department is taking the lead, Atkins said.

Investigators said Friday evening that the narcotics task force had contacted a man suspected of selling illegal drugs in a motel parking lot and that he fled on foot with officers following. The man produced a handgun and the officers backed off, investigators said. A short time later, the man encountered three Clark County deputies, all of whom fired their pistols at the man, they added. They did not say the man fired a handgun found at the scene, making it unclear what happened just before the shooting.

The community is a short drive north across the Columbia River from Portland, where racial justice protests have played out nearly every night since George Floyd's killing by police in May. Southwest Washington is also home to the right-wing group Patriot Prayer, which has held rallies for President Donald Trump in Portland in recent months that ended in violence.

Earlier Friday, several people paid their respects to Peterson at the site of the shooting.

Mac Smiff, an organizer of Black Lives Matter protests in Portland, said he knows Peterson's sister and spent more than five hours at the scene.

"There was a ton of grief, a ton of grief. He's 21 and has a baby, an infant," Smiff said. "They're not sure what happened, why the encounter took place. Everyone was extremely disheveled and confused."

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Jake Thompson, a high school acquaintance of Peterson, said he took photos at the wedding of Peterson's parents in Portland in 2018. On Friday, he posted a black-and-white photo of Peterson in a suit and bow tie as he flashed a big grin.

"I didn't sleep much last night," he said Friday.

Peterson played football at Union High School in Vancouver, Washington, loved sports of any kind and was a big personality who was known and liked by everyone at school, Thompson said.

Follow Gillian Flaccus on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/gflaccus>

Italian nurse on coronavirus duty sees the nightmare return

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — A 54-year-old nurse became convinced the coronavirus "hated" her during the first seven months of Italy's outbreaks. Those are Cristina Settembrese's words for it.

Settembrese, who specializes in treating patients with infectious diseases, faced huge risks during the long hours she spent in close contact with sick and dying COVID-19 patients. She was careful to scale her precautions to match and always tested negative despite getting exposed multiple times.

The nurse's encounters with the coronavirus started Feb. 21, the day Italy's first domestic cases were confirmed in the country's north. Nurses and doctors were among the newly infected, so Settembrese immediately volunteered to care for people in Codogno, home to Italy's patient zero and just an hour's drive away from where she worked at Milan's San Paolo Hospital.

Soon, her own hospital was under siege as the virus spread in the Lombardy region, its first foothold beyond Asia. Settembrese, a single mother, immediately sent her 24-year-old daughter to live with her parents. Alone at home, the nurse slept on the couch, partly to be ready in case she was called in to work, partly as a response to a trauma that took her by surprise.

When case numbers finally decreased and her hospital emptied of COVID-19 patients, she found it hard to share the relief she observed in other people, those who had not seen the trauma of her ward. On a short summer break, she saw the virus' fall return in the unmasked faces of fellow vacationers. And her worry grew.

Still, the resurgence came quicker -- and earlier -- than even Settembrese feared. This week alone, the number of cases in her hospital surged by one-third. It also showed up closer to home.

Here, in her words, is her journey through the pandemic, so far.

ITALY'S BRIEF VIRUS RESPITE

"By August, we had no more admissions for COVID. We had almost a month without any cases. And from September, instead we started to see again some pneumonia, then some patients with COVID, still not serious cases, and we closed the ward for patients with meningitis, tuberculosis, our usual patients.... Then as the cases increased and the hospital admissions went up, the pneumonia got more aggressive, forcing them to reopen the intensive ward upstairs. The switch has happened: The virulence is much stronger, and we see it in the patients."

THE MID-OCTOBER SURGE

"I can say on a numeric level, the numbers have soared....Nurses have been recalled from the wards they had gone back to. We are calling them back to help us, because alone we cannot keep up. There are just a few of us, and we cannot keep up with people who are wearing helmets (to assist breathing)."

THE NIGHTMARE RETURNS

"I am experiencing this very badly. I didn't honestly expect to. I cried a lot, four months ago, I cried really a lot. I lost many young people, who I still carry with me. I hadn't yet overcome these deaths.... All of us nurses, we are feeling a psychological damage. I am experiencing this as a second wave, and I think we still have seen nothing.

"There are not the terrible deaths this time. Now, with the treatments, you manage to avoid these intensive therapies. We have found a pseudo-palliative treatment, let's say. We know how to manage the

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cases better.

"But I am experiencing it inside exactly like before. For us, it is like reliving a nightmare."

LOOKING BACK AT ITALY'S REMARKABLY RELAXED SUMMER

"I had seven or eight days of vacation and I joined my mother in Riccione (on the Adriatic Sea), and I was an alien. I was seeing everyone without masks, this beach full of people. Crowds in the bars. And the only ones with masks were the Lombards, and the others, all without.

"I told them all off. It was as if I was in a frenzy. I would say, 'Move apart and put on the masks.' I was extremely worried. I would watch and think about October, and I would say to my mother and daughter, 'With the free-for-all that is happening, we will be facing disaster.' Everyone told me I was an alarmist, even friends. I told them: 'I am not an alarmist. I have worked in the infectious diseases ward for 12 years, and the virus will return. Because all viruses return in October. And this one won't be missing, for sure.'"

FLASHBACKS FROM A PANDEMIC

"This young man still pulls at my heart. It is a terrible, terrible story. He was a 42-year-old guy. When he arrived, he was in pretty good shape, then we had to intubate him, with the anesthesiologist. I held his hands, and he said, 'Cristina, swear to me that I will wake up, because I have two small children.' And to help him go to sleep calmly, I promised him. It is a promise I could not keep, because after four or five days, the patient died. I was a mess. I am still carrying this.

"Often, when I go into a room, I see the people who were there before. All the beds have faces. They have faces that I remember. Sometimes I have nightmares, I am not ashamed to say. I am having flashbacks that are heavy psychologically.... I still cannot go to sleep in a bed because I associate it with illness, something I never felt in 35 years working as a nurse. Slowly, I will get over it. But I have been sleeping on the sofa since March. I cannot get in a bed."

HITTING HOME

"The other day I was destroyed, as if I had spent the whole day doing backbreaking work in the fields. When I couldn't smell or taste anything, I went and got tested. Damn! I can say I am positive, but I don't have major symptoms. I don't have a fever, just some coughing and aches everywhere, like a terrible, terrible flu.

"In the end, the virus doesn't hate me. My defenses were down. I worked too many hours, always wearing a mask and maintaining a distance. I have no idea where I got it. Now my daughter, who came here a few times to eat between shifts, has a fever, with a headache. She had a test yesterday. I am very worried, and feel very guilty."

Nearly 3 months after vote, Belarus protests still go strong

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Nearly three months after Belarus' authoritarian president's re-election to a sixth term in a vote widely seen as rigged, demonstrators keep swarming the streets of Belarusian cities to demand his resignation in the most massive and sustained wave of protests the ex-Soviet nation has ever seen.

While President Alexander Lukashenko has relied on massive arrests and intimidation tactics to hold on to power, the continuing rallies have cast an unprecedented challenge to his 26-year rule.

Authorities have responded to protests triggered by Aug. 9 election that gave Lukashenko a landslide victory over Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya by unleashing a violent post-election crackdown. Police dispersed peaceful demonstrators with stun grenades and rubber bullets, detained thousands and beat hundreds, which caused protests to swell and prompted the U.S. and the European Union to introduce sanctions against Belarusian officials.

Tsikhanouskaya, who went to Lithuania after the vote under pressure from authorities, called for a nationwide strike this week that so far has failed to halt production at state-run industrial plants forming the backbone of the Belarusian economy. But observers predict that economic troubles amid a surge in coronavirus infections will fuel discontent and steadily erode Lukashenko's grip on power.

By putting forward an ultimatum to Lukashenko to resign by Oct. 25 or face the strike, Tsikhanouskaya

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has managed to mobilize and re-invigorate her supporters after nearly three months of protests. About 200,000 demonstrators flooded the Belarusian capital last Sunday, one of the biggest rallies since the protests began. Another massive protest is planned for this Sunday.

Authorities, meanwhile, have focused on derailing the opposition efforts to stage strikes at major state factories. They have moved methodically to arrest strike organizers, threatened workers with dismissals for joining the action and deployed officers of the State Security Committee still known under its Soviet name KGB to monitor the situation at industrial plants.

Lukashenko this week charged that "a terrorist war" is being waged against the government "on some fronts," accusing the largely peaceful protesters of "radicalizing." Following his orders, over 300 students are facing dismissal from their universities for taking part in protests.

While thousands of students and retirees took to the streets in Minsk pressing for Lukashenko's resignation, and some small business owners closed their doors earlier this week, most state enterprises have continued to operate as usual.

"The scared workers couldn't be expected to back the opposition's political demands," said Alexander Yaroshuk, the leader of the Congress of Democratic Unions, an association of independent labor unions. "The opposition only has managed to create some hotbeds of strikes at factories, which already can be considered a big achievement in conditions when KGB officers have flooded factory shops and raised pressure on strike organizing committees."

But Yaroshuk noted that even though the nationwide strike hasn't materialized, the economic stagnation will likely foment unrest in the coming months.

"The worsening economic situation could transform isolated hotbeds into the flames of a real strike," he said.

According to the official statistics, the Belarusian economy has contracted by 1.3% in the first nine months of the year as the nation's main export markets have shrunk under the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Lukashenko's cavalier dismissal of the coronavirus threat has added to the public frustration over the 66-year-old ex-state farm director's iron-fisted rule, helping fuel protests.

Facing a run on the national currency amid the unrest, the Belarusian government has spent \$1.5 billion, or about one-fifth of the nation's hard currency reserves, to shore up the Belarusian ruble.

"The economy is becoming Lukashenko's main enemy," said Minsk-based analyst Valery Karbalevich. "Lukashenko needs money to pay workers for their loyalty and law enforcement officers for their brutality. His regime is quickly running out of cash and losing support,"

Faced with the opposition's ultimatum and the threat of a nationwide strike, Belarus on Thursday shut its borders with Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine for most visitors. Lukashenko also reshuffled his top officials this week, appointing Interior Minister Yuri Karayev and Security Council Secretary Valery Vakulchik his envoys to the westernmost Grodno and Brest regions bordering Poland and Lithuania.

Tsikhanouskaya's adviser Franak Viachorka, argued that the shakeup reflected Lukashenko's nervousness.

"Lukashenko can't trust local authorities in western regions, and so he has to put his trusted law enforcement officials in charge there," Viachorka said.

Viachorka also argued that the reshuffle may reflect Lukashenko's fear that his main ally and sponsor, Russia, could be talking to his top lieutenants behind his back.

The Kremlin has backed Lukashenko amid Western pressure and provided a \$1.5-billion loan to help refinance Belarus' debt to Russia. But many observers believe that Moscow could reach out quietly to Lukashenko's entourage on a possible successor as his authority crumbles.

"Lukashenko has failed to quash the protests in nearly three months, and that shows the scale of discontent in the country and pushes the Kremlin to search for new scenarios and partners in Belarus," Karbalevich said. "It opens a window of opportunity for the opposition to hold talks with Moscow, which until that moment has refused to talk to Tsikhanouskaya and her team."

Viachorka, Tsikhanouskaya's adviser, said that the opposition will continue pushing for the creation of parallel structures of power, "exacerbating the crisis of legitimacy for Lukashenko" and pushing him into talks on a transition of power.

Analysis: 2020, and the American chorus' newly loud voices

By DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

It's LOUD in the United States these days. Voices are being raised everywhere, speaking about everything. They're talking policing, health care, COVID. They're discussing the economic safety net, the environment. They're challenging racism, sexism and the myriad ways we come up with to judge each other. They're defending tradition, law and order, and individual rights. And many people are listening, too, in entirely new ways.

The opportunity, the right, to be heard and to be acknowledged. In the history of this country, has there been anything more fundamental? Or more contested?

In that respect, 2020 is like any other year, only much more so. An election is approaching unlike any in recent memory, guaranteed to be a signpost in the long tale of what America is becoming and how it gets there. Divisions are sharp. Heels are dug in.

Yet the chaos unleashed by The American Breaking of 2020 — the pandemic, the disruption, the falling apart of so much we thought we knew — has created space for different voices to speak, for different conversations to take place and for different questions to be asked.

Dr. Uché Blackstock sees that firsthand. She's been sounding the alarm bell for years, trying to get people to listen about racial inequity in health care, such as the increased risk of pregnancy-related death faced by Black women, a subject that can bring her to tears.

Enter 2020. What a difference a pandemic combined with racial unrest has made. The inquiries from those now wanting to work with her organization, Advancing Health Equity, are coming in so fast that she has to refer many of them to others.

"Because these inequities are being amplified and exposed, what I've always been saying and people who have come before me have been saying now has the opportunity to be heard," says Blackstock, the organization's founder and CEO and a medical contributor to Yahoo! News.

The pace of change has been, for many, foundation-shaking. It's fueled by a diverse mix of thought and life experience and perspective. And the multiplicity of voices itself hints at something larger — a version of America that allows for multiple versions of America.

This notion, emerging as 2020 unfolds in its own weird way, has one particularly notable trait: It accepts that while your United States and your neighbor's may in some ways overlap, and in other ways not at all, they're equally American nonetheless.

"We were stuck in this status quo way of thinking and all of a sudden, boom! Something happens and the veil is pulled away and you can see the world differently," says artist Robert Shetterly, who has made a project for almost 20 years of painting the portraits of Americans he considers courageous.

"For years, I'd hear the word 'zeitgeist' (and say), 'What the hell is the zeitgeist?'" he says. "And then you're in a moment when the zeitgeist changes and then you say, 'Oh. That's what it is.'"

A multiplicity of ways to experience American society would seem to fit with the nation's long-told national story. After all, take out the loose change in your pocket, or a dollar from your wallet, and you can see it emblazoned officially — e pluribus unum, or "out of many, one."

But in the country's history, there has always been a chasm between paying lip service to the idea and actually living it — a constant struggle over ideas of assimilation, over what is the "real" America, who gets to claim it and who is ignored and forgotten.

Sometimes the divide is obvious. Take *Dred Scott vs. Sanford*, the 1857 Supreme Court case about slavery where Chief Justice Roger Taney wrote about Black people in the now widely-loathed majority opinion: "It is obvious that they were not even in the minds of the framers of the Constitution when they were conferring special rights and privileges upon the citizens of a State in every other part of the Union."

Other times it's more subversive, like the push-pull between the "heartland" and "coastal elites" or, in 2020, what words get used to describe whose lives matter.

Sometimes the interpretation treats "out of many, one" as a version of the Hunger Games, where the one left standing at the end — the loudest, the most formidable — prevails.

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"Cultural memory ... it's often a very contested space where people are fighting over who gets to be remembered, who's excluded," says Marita Sturken, a professor of media, culture and communication at New York University.

But volume of the voices doesn't necessarily dictate which perspectives carry the day. You can see that from countless protest movements that didn't get what they were pushing for at the exact moment they were pushing for it.

"Just because you get a lot of people out on the street doesn't mean you'll always get what you want. That's the big lesson," said Fabio Rojas, professor of sociology at Indiana University Bloomington, who has studied the protest movement against the war in Iraq.

The idea of a dominant, monolithic America is hardly without its proponents in history and now — those who say that yes, there is ONE way of being American. Next week's presidential election has drawn some clear lines around who sees the world in that manner and who doesn't.

But the election, no matter its results, is not going to settle the question. Because it's not a matter of a simple policy choice or executive order.

In the pandemic's aftermath, Americans will have to figure out their age-old, still-unanswered question, more pressing now than ever: Can a nation be composed of different experiences and still have a national identity? Can it have ties that bind without becoming strangleholds?

Sarah Song, a professor of law and political science at UC Berkeley Law School, studies democracy and civic solidarity. She says the notion of many voices being heard, and which voices prevail, is going to be an ongoing struggle even with the forces that 2020 has unleashed.

"Maybe we'll never agree on the content or what it is," Song says. "But we have to figure out how to manage the disagreement."

Deepti Hajela, a member of the Race and Ethnicity reporting team at The Associated Press, has been covering American culture for more than two decades. Follow her on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/dhajela>

Show your work: AP plans to explain vote calling to public

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Associated Press, one of several news organizations whose declarations of winners drive election coverage, is pulling back the curtain this year to explain how it is reaching those conclusions.

The AP plans to write stories explaining how its experts make decisions or why, in tight contests, they are holding back. If necessary, top news executives will speak publicly in interviews about the process, said Sally Buzbee, senior vice president and executive editor.

Given high interest in the presidential race, the complicating factor of strong early voting and President Donald Trump's warnings about potential fraud, television executives are making similar promises of transparency.

"The general public has a more intense desire to understand it at a nitty-gritty level," Buzbee said. "We don't want to be a dark, mysterious black box of 'We're going to declare a winner, and we're not going to tell you how we do it.' I don't think that benefits us, and I don't think it benefits democracy."

The AP's decision desk expects to call some 7,000 races next week, from the presidency to state ballot initiatives and legislative races.

For each state, a Washington-based analyst is paired with a race caller who studies political history and demographic trends. If it's a state where the presidential contest isn't close, the AP may declare a winner after polls have shut based mostly on interviews conducted with voters through its AP VoteCast survey.

The closer a race is, the more AP's decision desk relies on actual votes rather than VoteCast. Key counties are watched to see how the numbers compare with party enrollments and trends in previous elections. A winner is declared when the AP concludes there's no way the loser can catch up.

In 2016, the AP declared at 2:29 a.m. the morning after the election that Trump had won Wisconsin and, thus, the presidency.

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"It's an arithmetic problem," Buzbee said. "But we do pause when you call the final state. You know what you're about to do."

The AP isn't the election's arbiter. ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN and Fox News Channel have their own decision desks, and their calls can create a hard-to-stop momentum. In a memorable 2012 moment, when Fox News commentators questioned a call against Republican Mitt Romney, anchor Megyn Kelly walked to the decision desk on-air to have them explain it.

Going into Tuesday night, the networks are echoing Buzbee's determination to show their work.

"Explaining to the viewers what we know and don't know will be a very important part of election night and perhaps the days after," said Sam Feist, CNN Washington bureau chief.

Most people watching at home have little idea what goes into those decisions, said Frank Sesno, director of the George Washington University School of Media and Public Affairs and a veteran journalist.

"I think the responsibility of the news organizations goes beyond transparency," said Mark Lukasiewicz, former producer of NBC's election night coverage and now dean of Hofstra University's School of Communication. "It's our obligation to explain it to viewers. Before you give the score, talk about the rules of the game."

The AP's calls may be less visible on the American television networks but are depended upon by newspapers, websites, radio stations and media outlets all over the world. The AP's sprawling election night operation also compiles the vote from across the United States, as it has since 1848.

"The AP's reputation is on the line," Sesno said.

Race calling used to be hotly competitive, but the disaster of 2000 taught media organizations that the embarrassment of being wrong outweighed the satisfaction of being first.

The AP faced intense pressure from news organizations who depend on it in the early morning after the 2000 election, when television networks declared George W. Bush the new president. The AP didn't do likewise, believing the vote in Florida was too close. The AP never did call the 2000 election; the Supreme Court did.

It was one of the AP's finest moments. A reminder of how things can go wrong had come only hours earlier, when the AP and networks incorrectly called Florida for Bush's opponent, Al Gore, and had to take it back.

The AP's vote calls were 99.8% accurate in 2016, flawless in calling presidential and congressional elections in each state.

The nation's polarization and an increased distrust of the media have made the additional openness more important, Buzbee said. The service's clients are increasingly asking for it, too.

Going public in this manner actually conflicts with company culture. The AP traditionally doesn't have a public face — as a wholesaler of information to other outlets, it is usually content to do its work and let others talk.

"A lot of people do know that the AP is a straight shooter, but I don't feel that we can let people take our word for it anymore," Buzbee said. "It makes sense to show people our methodology and to be transparent about how we call races because that then gives people a greater ability to assess what we do."

The AP's tradition of counting votes on election night dates back to the Pony Express. The news cooperative organizes more than 4,000 reporters and stringers across the country to collect vote counts at town and county offices, who phone them in to a staff of more than 800 vote entry clerks. The raw numbers are double-checked with software that points out anomalies.

The AP has competition in that role this year, an outgrowth of its decision after 2016 to build its VoteCast service and abandon the exit polling operation done in partnership for many years with the TV networks.

While Fox News is collaborating with the AP in VoteCast, ABC, NBC, CBS and CNN have kept their exit poll and are funding their own separate vote count.

Who is voting? Who is winning? Early vote only offers clues

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and ANGELIKI KASTANIS Associated Press

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As early voting breaks records across the U.S., political analysts and campaigns are reviewing reams of data on the voters, looking for clues to key questions: Who is voting? And who is winning?

On one level, the answers can be simple. Registered Democrats are outpacing registered Republicans significantly — by 14 percentage points — in states that are reporting voters' party affiliation, according to an Associated Press analysis of the early vote.

But that doesn't tell the whole story. Many Americans' choices don't align with their party registration. Meanwhile, polls show Republicans have heeded President Donald Trump's baseless warnings about mail voting, and large numbers intend to vote on Election Day. That means the early Democratic surge could give way to a Republican surge on Tuesday.

The picture is further clouded by the unprecedented nature of how Americans are voting. While Democrats are hungry for signs that key parts of their coalition — young voters, Black voters, new voters — are engaged, comparisons to 2016 are difficult.

Here's a closer look at what we know — and don't know — about early voters:

EARLY VOTING SPIKES

As of Friday afternoon, 86.8 million people had voted in the presidential election. That's 63% of the total who cast ballots in the 2016 race. Most election experts think the United States will see 150 million to 160 million ballots cast in 2020, which would mean that we are likely more than halfway through voting. In one state, Texas, more votes have already been cast than in all of 2016.

Democrats have a big lead in the early vote over the GOP — 47% to 33% — according to the AP analysis of data from the political data firm L2.

That doesn't mean Democrats are going to win. But it does increase the pressure on Republicans to have a similar advantage — or higher — on Election Day.

NEW VOTERS ARE SHOWING UP

The big turnout question in all elections is: Which side is bringing in new voters? The data shows Democrats are accomplishing that — but not necessarily as dramatically as some of the big overall numbers might suggest.

More than 1 out of 4 of all ballots — 27% — were cast either by new or infrequent voters, according to AP's analysis. Those are voters who have never voted before or voted in fewer than half of the elections in which they were eligible. It sounds like a big number, but it's not too much greater than past years. The Democratic data firm Catalist found that, in 2016, roughly one quarter of the electorate didn't vote in the previous presidential election.

Still, the number may well grow, as new and infrequent voters tend to vote close to, or on, Election Day. And even small increases in the tight battlegrounds can make a difference.

A rise in that number appears to be good news for Democrats. Forty-three percent of the infrequent and new voters are registered Democrats, compared to a quarter who are Republicans. The remaining third are registered as independents or with a minor party — a group that tends to favor Democratic candidates.

The voters are clustered in the Sunbelt, particularly in states such as Florida, North Carolina and especially Texas that Democrats hope to win by mobilizing large chunks of the electorate that sit out most contests.

"Democrats are already expanding their electorate," said Tom Bonier of the Democratic data firm TargetSmart. "That would certainly appear to be favorable for Biden — to be taken with the caveat we've heard a million times before, that we don't know how many other voters will come out on Election Day."

BLACK VOTERS HOLDING STEADY

Biden's fate may be tied to strong turnout among Black voters in the battleground states. So far, about 9% of the early vote has been cast by African-Americans, about on par with the 10% of the electorate Black voters made up in 2016, according to a Pew Research estimate of voters in that election.

Black voters are tracking closely with their share of the electorate in several battlegrounds. In North Carolina, they are 21% of both all early voters and all registered voters. In Georgia, they make up 30% of the early vote and 32% of registered voters.

A slight drop in Black voter turnout from the elevated numbers of 2008 and 2012 played a role in Democrats' 2016 loss, and the party and its supporters are watching carefully to see what happens this time.

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The data so far is ambiguous. There's been a surge in the older African-American vote. Black voters 65 and older are already one of the most reliable voting demographics, but according to TargetSmart data they have already surpassed their numbers in six key battlegrounds — Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Nevada, North Carolina and Texas.

At the same time, according to data from the Service Employees International Union, younger, less reliable Black voters comprise a larger share of the Black vote right now than in 2016. That's a sign of greater engagement in the segment of the electorate that dropped off in 2016.

Organizers say Black voters are reeling from the pandemic and economic collapse, which have hit African-Americans hardest, and the country's racial reckoning. That's motivating them to overcome persistent obstacles to voting, said Mary Kay Henry, international president of the Service Employees International Union.

"Black and brown communities have faced these multiple crises," Henry said. That's stiffened their resolve to vote, she added.

The SEIU union says 3 out of every 4 black voters have not voted yet in Pennsylvania. The union is shifting resources to its Pennsylvania turnout operations because it is concerned Black voters have been slower to return mail ballots.

DEMOCRATS HOPE FOR BRIGHT SPOT IN YOUNG VOTERS

As of Friday, AP's analysis showed 11.3% of early votes have been cast by voters between the ages of 18 and 29. That's up slightly from this point in 2016, when 9.6% of the early vote was cast by people under age 30, according to TargetSmart.

And in the Sunbelt battlegrounds of Florida, Georgia and North Carolina, young voters are turning out at a hefty rate of 30% or above, according to AP data.

That's again a good sign for Democrats, but a very preliminary one. Young voters lean Democratic, and when Democrats rush to the polls, it's not unexpected that their numbers would be higher.

Young voters showed up in never-before-seen levels in 2018, with 36% of those who were eligible participating, according to the U.S. Census. That helped Democrats win control of the House of Representatives.

Young voter advocates were concerned about the pandemic causing a sharp drop in voter registrations among 18- and 19-year-olds who just became eligible to vote.

However, young voters are still a larger share of the registered voter population in almost all states than they were in 2016, according to the Center for Information Research and Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University. That's a reflection of both population growth and the increased registration that led to 2018.

Michael McDonald, a University of Florida professor who runs the site ElectProject.org and carefully tracks the early vote, cautioned against drawing too many conclusions from changes in the youth vote from 2016. "Youth turnout is up," he said. "Everything's up. That's what happens when you have a high turnout election."

WILL HIGH TURNOUT SWAY THE OUTCOME?

Republicans argue that predicted record turnout won't matter much in battleground states.

When all the votes are counted, the Trump campaign predicts that the turnout rate in battleground states in 2020 will be similar to in 2016.

"It is pretty predictable what they've brought into the electorate," Nick Trainer, the Trump campaign's director of battleground strategy said of Democrats. "We will bring our own new voters into the electorate ourselves, and it will all come out in the washing machine."

That's a sharp break from several election experts, who see signs in both the early vote numbers and polls of voter enthusiasm in battlegrounds.

John Couvillon, a Republican pollster who tracks the early vote, said the Trump campaign is being too dismissive. "I heard the same kind of attitude in 2008, when Republicans were in denial about the impressive early vote turnout Obama was generating," Couvillon said.

McDonald notes there's no way to know until Election Day.

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However, he noted that, if turnout is low, that's not necessarily good news for Trump given the big early vote lead that Democrats have banked. It would mean the president's campaign would need to win Election Day by an even larger margin.

"They better hope they're wrong," McDonald said.

Biden, Obama make a final appeal to Michigan's Black voters

By DAVID EGGERT, AAMER MADHANI and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WATERFORD TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — Joe Biden enters the final weekend of the presidential campaign with an intense focus on appealing to Black voters whose support will be critical in his bid to defeat President Donald Trump.

The Democratic presidential nominee is teaming up with his former boss, Barack Obama, for a swing through Michigan on Saturday. They'll hold drive-in rallies in Flint and Detroit, predominantly Black cities where strong turnout will be essential to return this longtime Democratic state to Biden's column after Trump won here in 2016.

The memories of Trump's upset win in Michigan and the rest of the upper Midwest are still searing in the minds of many Democrats during this closing stretch. That leaves Biden in the position of holding a consistent lead in the national polls and an advantage in most battlegrounds, including Michigan, yet still facing anxiety that it could all slip away.

Rep. Dan Kildee, a Democrat who represents the Flint area, said he had been pressing for a couple of months for Biden or Obama to visit Flint, a city bedeviled by a water crisis that began in 2014 and sickened the city's residents, exposing stark racial inequities.

"Showing up matters," Kildee said. "The message is important, no question about it. But there's a message implicit in showing up, especially in Flint. This is a community that has felt left behind many, many times and overlooked many, many times."

"It's a message to the people here that they matter, their vote matters," Kildee said. "I think that helps."

R&B legend Stevie Wonder will perform in Detroit on Saturday after Biden and Obama speak.

The press for Michigan's Black voters comes after voting was down roughly 15% in Flint and Detroit four years ago — a combined 48,000-plus votes in a state Trump carried by about 10,700 votes. Overall, the Black voter turnout rate declined for the first time in 20 years in a presidential election, falling to 59.6% in 2016 after reaching a record-high 66.6% four years earlier, according to the Pew Research Center.

Some Democrats say the dynamic is different this year. Jonathan Kinloch leads the 13th Congressional District Democratic Party, which includes parts of Detroit, and expressed confidence that Black voters will turn out for Biden.

"This is not 2016," said Kinloch, who is Black. "People are motivated. People are energized and ready to right the wrong of 2016."

But Trump isn't ceding Michigan to Biden. He visited Waterford Township, near Detroit, on Friday and held a rally in the state capital of Lansing earlier in the week.

While Biden is expected to win the vast majority of Black voters in next week's election, Trump has also courted them and hopes to shave into Democrats' historic advantage in the community.

In his Michigan visits, Trump argued that he's been a better steward of their interests, while pillorying the state's Democratic governor over restrictions in the state she's implemented to try to stem the spread of the coronavirus, which has killed more than 229,000 Americans nationally and infected more than 9 million.

Trump argued that he had followed through on promoting trade policies that have benefited Michigan's auto industry over the last four years. And although Obama steered about \$80 billion to bail out General Motors and Chrysler, Trump argued that he and Biden didn't do enough to help manufacturing workers when the Great Recession jolted the auto industry a decade ago.

"At every turn Biden twisted the knife into the back of Michigan workers and workers all over the country," Trump said at his rally in Waterford on Friday. "In 2016, Michigan voted to fire this corrupt political establishment, and you elected an outsider as president."

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With the election down to the final days, Trump's closing sprint includes four stops in Pennsylvania on Saturday and nearly a dozen events in the final 48 hours across states he carried in 2016.

Biden will close out his campaign on Monday in Pennsylvania, the state where he was born and the one he's visited more than any other in his campaign. The Biden team announced that Biden, his wife, Jill, his running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris, and her husband, Doug Emhoff, plan to "fan out across all four corners of the state."

The former vice president campaigned in Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin on Friday. Trump also visited Minnesota and Wisconsin in addition to his stop in Michigan on Friday.

Biden campaigned in Iowa for the first time since the state's Democratic caucuses more than eight months ago. Trump easily won the state in 2016, but polls show a competitive race with days to go.

Biden noted as he spoke at a drive-in rally at the Iowa State Fairgrounds that, for the first time since World War II, the iconic state fair had to be canceled because of the pandemic.

He pledged to enact a plan to halt the spread of the virus and told the crowd, to honks from the cars gathered, "unlike Donald Trump, we will not surrender to the virus."

Eggert reported from Lansing, Mich., and Madhani reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Alexandra Jaffe in Des Moines, Iowa, 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/>

Race for Texas intensifies amid surging turnout, COVID cases

By WILL WEISSERT and PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

McALLEN, Texas (AP) — Texas' surprising status as a battleground came into clearer focus on Friday as Democratic vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris devoted one of the race's final days to campaigning across America's largest red state and early voter turnout zoomed past 9 million — already more than the total number of ballots cast during the entire 2016 election.

Harris visited three cities, including McAllen in the Rio Grande Valley along the Mexican border, which has been ravaged this summer by the coronavirus. Part of the California senator's mission was to energize Latino voters, whose lower turnout rates have for years helped sink her party's hopes of making Texas more competitive.

"Texas has been turning it out," Harris told a McAllen drive-in rally. "You've been standing in line. You've been organizing. You've been making a huge difference."

By showing up closer to Election Day than anyone on a Democratic presidential ticket has in years, Harris in some ways fulfilled weeks of pleas by Texas Democrats for Joe Biden's presidential campaign to take their chances here more seriously. But Biden himself hasn't come, and the campaign has made relatively little investment in advertising and staff.

Texas' heavily Latino border routinely ranks among the nation's lowest in turnout, meanwhile, and although early voting numbers were up sharply, residents here haven't stampeded to the polls like voters have elsewhere.

Texas is approaching 18,000 confirmed deaths from COVID-19. Nearly 1 in 5 are occurring in the Rio Grande Valley, which in recent months became so overwhelmed that one hospital transferred coronavirus patients hundreds of miles away by helicopter almost daily. The virus is now even raging hundreds of miles west along the border, in El Paso. There, officials on Thursday ordered a two-week shutdown of non-essential activities — though not polling places.

Harris' Rio Grande Valley rally also was not far from where top Trump administration officials a day earlier announced they had completed nearly 400 miles of border wall — a late attempt to show progress on perhaps the president's best-known campaign promise four years ago. The area is the border's economic engine, with a population about 90% Mexican American and represents one of Texas' youngest

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and fastest-growing areas.

Texas' early votes exceeded the 8.9-plus million overall votes four the election years ago by Friday morning, according to an Associated Press tally. This year's numbers were aided by Democratic activists challenging in court for, and winning, the right to extend early voting by one week amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Hawaii also surpassed its 2016 voter turnout, according to the AP tally, while Georgia and Washington state were also closing in.

Texas voters don't register by party affiliation. Turnout has also been inflated by the state's booming population. More than 16.9 million people are registered to vote in 2020, 1.8 million more than 2016's about 15.1-plus million. The number of early votes so far accounts for only about 53% of statewide registered voters.

Still, the fact that Texas exceeded its entire vote total for the past presidential cycle hours before the early voting period ended Friday evening — and prior to millions more likely being cast on Election Day — hints at a potential electoral sea change, Democrats say.

For the party, anything different is likely positive. The party hasn't won a state office in Texas since 1994 — the nation's longest political losing streak. It now believes it has a chance to seize control of the state House, flip as many as six congressional seats and a Senate seat.

President Donald Trump carried Texas against Hillary Clinton in 2016 by 9 points, but that was the smallest margin of Republican presidential victory since 1996.

Texas has the highest share of its registered voters who are either new or infrequent voters of any battleground state, according to an Associated Press analysis of data from the political data firm L2. Roughly half of its voters have either never cast a ballot or done so in half or fewer of the elections for which they were eligible.

So far, 36% of Texas' vote comes from this group of irregular voters. That could bode well for Trump, since his campaign has made a point of attracting voters who hadn't been engaged in politics, just like he did in 2016.

Also, because Texas is one of the few states that maintained its already-strict rules preventing most residents from using mail ballots during the pandemic, some of the lines at in-person early voting locations may reflect it being the only way most voters can cast a ballot before Election Day — further potentially inflating the totals.

Biden's campaign has for months insisted that Texas, with its 38 electoral votes, is among the traditionally conservative states it is looking to flip, though it has long been more bullish on Arizona.

Harris on Friday hit Fort Worth, Houston and McAllen, where turnout news wasn't all positive.

Early voting turnout in Hidalgo County, which includes McAllen, was just over 44%. That is slightly up from early voting in 2016 but still well below Houston, the state's largest city, where turnout is above 54%, and booming suburban counties where turnout has already skyrocketed past 60%.

Joining Harris was former Texas Democratic congressman and presidential candidate Beto O'Rourke, who knocked on doors trying to increase turnout. O'Rourke also struggled to attract voters along the heavily Democratic border two years ago in his narrow U.S. Senate loss, faring worse in some South Texas counties than Clinton had.

He said Rio Grande Valley voters will likely be motivated by the Trump's bungled coronavirus response. "This part of Texas has borne witness to the cruelty of the Trump administration," O'Rourke said.

Weissert reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Angeliki Kastanis in Los Angeles and Nicholas Riccardi in Denver contributed to this report.

Quake strikes Turkish coast and Greek island, killing 19

By ZEYNEP BILGINSOY and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — A strong earthquake struck Friday in the Aegean Sea between the Turkish coast and the Greek island of Samos, killing at least 19 people and injuring over 700 amid collapsed buildings and

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flooding, officials said.

A small tsunami struck the Seferihisar district south of Izmir, the city in western Turkey that was the worst affected by the quake, said Haluk Ozener, director of the Istanbul-based Kandilli Observatory and Earthquake Research Institute.

At least 17 people were killed in Izmir, Turkey's third-largest city, including one who drowned, and 709 were injured, according to Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, or AFAD.

Among the dead were the wife and two children of the secretary-general of the Turkish Medical Association's Izmir branch, the group said.

On Samos, two teenagers died after being struck by a wall that collapsed. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis tweeted condolences, saying "Words are too poor to describe what one feels before the loss of children."

At least 19 people were injured on the island, with two, including a 14-year-old, being airlifted to Athens and seven hospitalized on the island, health authorities said.

The small tsunami that hit the Turkish coast also affected Samos, with seawater flooding streets in the main harbor town of Vathi. Authorities warned people to stay away from the coast and from potentially damaged buildings.

Izmir Gov. Yavuz Selim Kosger said at least 70 people were rescued from wrecked buildings, with four destroyed and more than 10 collapsed. Others suffered less severe damage, he said, but did not give an exact number.

Search-and-rescue efforts were underway in at least 17 buildings, AFAD said. Turkish media showed rescuers pulling people from the rubble, including one survivor who was found about six hours after the quake. Emergency teams continued digging after nightfall and cranes lifted concrete slabs from the wreckage.

The earthquake, which the Kandilli Institute said had a magnitude of 6.9, struck at 2:51 p.m. local time (1151 GMT) in Turkey and was centered in the Aegean northeast of Samos. AFAD said it measured the magnitude at 6.6.

It was felt across the eastern Greek islands and as far as the Greek capital, Athens, and in Bulgaria. In Turkey, it shook the regions of Aegean and Marmara, including Istanbul. Istanbul's governor said there were no reports of damage in the city, Turkey's largest.

Video on Twitter showed flooding in the Seferihisar district, and Turkish officials and broadcasters called on people to stay off the streets after reports of traffic congestion. Izmir Mayor Tunc Soyer urged residents to not enter damaged buildings and to be mindful of social distancing and mask mandates amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Clouds of dust or smoke rose from several spots as buildings collapsed in the quake.

Greek seismologist Akis Tselentis told Greek state broadcaster ERT that due to the shallow depth of its epicenter — roughly 10 kilometers — potentially powerful aftershocks could be expected for several weeks and warned that buildings could collapse in a strong aftershock.

The government and cities like Istanbul sent more than 3,000 rescue personnel to Izmir, as well as relief supplies. The Turkish Red Crescent set up kitchens.

France offered assistance to both countries. The secretary of state for European affairs tweeted France's "full solidarity with Greece and Turkey" and said "we are ready to offer the necessary aid."

The Greek minister responsible for civil protection and crisis management, Nikos Hardalias, headed to Samos along with a search-and-rescue team, paramedics and engineers. Some islanders planned to spend the night in emergency tents for fear of aftershocks.

In a show of solidarity rare in recent months of tense bilateral relations, Greek and Turkish government officials issued mutual messages of solidarity.

"We pray that there is no further loss of life in Turkey or Greece and we send our best wishes to all those affected on both sides of the earthquake," Turkey's Communications Director Fahrettin Altun tweeted. "This tragedy reminds us once again how close we are despite our differences over policy. We're ready to help if Greece needs it."

Mitsotakis, the Greek prime minister, tweeted that he had phoned Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdo-

gan "to offer my condolences for the tragic loss of life from the earthquake that struck both our countries. Whatever our differences, these are times when our people need to stand together."

Erdogan responded to the tweet with his thanks and offered his condolences. "Turkey, too, is always ready to help Greece heal its wounds. That two neighbors show solidarity in difficult times is more valuable than many things in life," he wrote.

Relations between Turkey and Greece have been particularly tense, with warships from both facing off in the eastern Mediterranean in a dispute over maritime boundaries and energy exploration rights. The ongoing tension has led to fears of open conflict between the two neighbors and NATO allies.

—
Becatoros reported from Athens. Angela Charlton in Paris and Amer Cohadzic in Sarajevo, Bosnia, contributed.

Illinois authorities extradite Kyle Rittenhouse to Wisconsin

By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

WAUKEGAN, Ill. (AP) — A 17-year-old from Illinois accused of killing two demonstrators in Kenosha, Wisconsin, has been extradited to stand trial on homicide charges, with sheriff's deputies in Illinois handing him over to their counterparts in Wisconsin shortly after a judge on Friday approved the contested extradition.

In his afternoon ruling that rejected Kyle Rittenhouse's bid to remain in Illinois, Judge Paul Novak noted that defense attorneys had characterized the Wisconsin charges as politically motivated.

"This Illinois court shall not examine any potential political impact a Wisconsin District Attorney potentially considered in his charging decision," Novak's six-page ruling said. He added that it is not for an Illinois judge to "reevaluate probable cause determined by a Wisconsin court."

Immediately after Novak issued the ruling at the courthouse in Waukegan, Illinois, deputies with the Lake County Sheriff's Office picked up Rittenhouse and drove him five miles (eight kilometers) to the Illinois-Wisconsin border, sheriff's office spokesman Christopher Covelli told The Associated Press. Rittenhouse was then turned over to Kenosha County sheriff deputies at the state line at around 3:45 p.m., Covelli said.

The ruling and speedy transfer came several hours after a hearing Friday morning in which Judge Novak heard arguments for and against extradition.

The shootings happened Aug. 25, two days after a white police officer trying to arrest Jacob Blake shot the 29-year-old Black man seven times in the back, paralyzing him from the waist down. Video of the police shooting sparked outrage and helped spur on the protests.

Rittenhouse's case has become a rallying point for some conservatives who see him as a patriot who was exercising his right to bear arms during unrest. Others portray him as a domestic terrorist who incited protesters by showing up wielding a rifle.

At Friday's hearing, Rittenhouse's lawyer said he had a change of heart since notifying the court that he planned to call witnesses, including Rittenhouse's mother. Instead, John Pierce focused on what he called "fatal defects" in extradition papers.

A local prosecutor said the law is unambiguous in requiring Rittenhouse's extradition.

"You can imagine the chaos if someone can commit a crime and step over the (state borderline) and get sanctuary," Lake County Assistant State's Attorney Stephen Scheller told Novak.

Rittenhouse sat at a defense table wearing a dress shirt and tie — mask across his face. At least once, he turned to look at his mother, Wendy Rittenhouse, on a spectators' bench. Later, as officers led him from the hearing room, she began to cry.

In his ruling, Novak said an extradition to another state can be halted only under several clear conditions, including if the extradition papers aren't in order, if a suspect hasn't yet been charged or if the identity of the suspect is in doubt. He said none of those conditions applied.

Without witnesses from either side, the part of Friday's hearing meant for evidence and testimony lasted less than 30 seconds, when Scheller handed the judge Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker's signed warrant calling for Rittenhouse's extradition.

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Pierce told Novak that Wisconsin authorities were required by law to present charging documents to a magistrate judge and that their failure to do so rendered their extradition request invalid.

Novak dismissed that argument, saying in his ruling that Rittenhouse's lawyers offered no evidence that a magistrate judge did not review the charges.

"Even if this court were to find the complaint (was) not made before a magistrate ... Rittenhouse's argument would still fail," he wrote. The warrant signed by Pritzker, he said, "satisfies all the requirements."

The most serious charge Rittenhouse faces in Wisconsin is first-degree intentional homicide, which carries a life prison sentence. He is also charged with attempted intentional homicide in the wounding of a third protester, as well as a misdemeanor charge of underage firearm possession. His lawyers have argued he was acting in self-defense.

Rittenhouse and the man he allegedly injured are white, as were the two men who were killed.

A day after the shooting, Rittenhouse surrendered to police in his Illinois hometown of Antioch, around 10 miles (16 kilometers) southwest of Kenosha. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, citing an arrest report it went to court to obtain after its public records request was denied, reported Friday that Rittenhouse turned himself in less than two hours after the shooting and told an officer he had "ended a man's life."

The report said firefighters were called when Rittenhouse — described as alternating between calm, fits of crying and vomiting — had trouble breathing at one point. The newspaper also said Rittenhouse told police the rifle used in the shooting was in the trunk of a friend's car.

According to prosecutors and court documents, Rittenhouse killed 36-year-old Joseph Rosenbaum, of Kenosha, after Rosenbaum threw a plastic bag at Rittenhouse, missing him, and tried to wrestle his rifle away.

While trying to get away in the immediate aftermath, Rittenhouse was captured on cellphone video saying, "I just killed somebody." According to a complaint filed by prosecutors, someone in the crowd said, "Beat him up!" and another yelled, "Get him! Get that dude!"

Video shows that Rittenhouse tripped. As he was on the ground, 26-year-old Anthony Huber, of Silver Lake, hit him with a skateboard and tried to take his rifle. Rittenhouse opened fire, killing Huber and wounding Gaige Grosskreutz, of West Allis, who was holding a handgun.

Follow Michael Tarm on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/mtarm>

Trump pitches 'back to normal' as Biden warns of tough days

By ZEKE MILLER, ALEXANDRA JAFFE and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WATERFORD TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — President Donald Trump dangled a promise to get a weary, fearful nation "back to normal" on Friday as he looked to campaign past the political damage of the devastating pandemic. It was a tantalizingly rosy pitch in sharp contrast to Democratic rival Joe Biden, who pledged to level with America about tough days still ahead after Tuesday's election.

In a campaign that has been dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic that has killed more than 229,000 Americans and staggered the economy, the candidates' clashing overtures stood as a reflection of their leadership styles and policy prescriptions for a suffering U.S.A.

Trump and Biden both spent Friday crisscrossing the Midwest, the hardest-hit part of the nation in the latest surge of virus cases. Trump was in Michigan and Biden in Iowa before they both held events in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

With four days until the election and more than 86 million votes already cast, time is running out for Trump and Biden to change the contours of a race framed largely around the incumbent's handling of the pandemic. Biden is leading most national polls and has a narrow advantage in many of the critical battlegrounds that could decide the race.

Trump, billing himself as an optimist, says the nation has "turned the corner" from the outbreak that still kills about 1,000 Americans each day. He speaks hopefully of coming treatments and potential vaccines that have yet to receive approval. Biden dismisses Trump's talk as a siren song that can only prolong the virus, and pledges a nationwide focus on reinstating measures meant to slow the spread of the disease.

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"He said a long dark winter," Trump scoffed Friday at a rally in Michigan. "Oh that's great, that's wonderful. Just what our country needs is a long dark winter and a leader who talks about it."

Trump's rallies, which draw thousands of supporters, have served as representations of the sort of "re-opening" he has been preaching. With spotty use of masks and a lack of social distancing, they flout state and local guidelines that he deems too onerous as he speaks as though the virus has largely disappeared.

Trump and his aides speak openly about seeking the backing of those "fed up" by state restrictions, and he has encouraged chants among his supporters calling for the imprisonment of local officials who have instituted them. The president believes they represent part of a "silent majority" that will help him pull off another come-from-behind victory on Tuesday.

Biden, for his part, referenced Trump's comments last summer that the virus "is what it is." He told supporters in Des Moines, Iowa, that "it is what it is because he is who he is! These guys are something else, man."

Biden, who also campaigned in Milwaukee and St. Paul, Minnesota, on Friday, has seized on comments by Trump's chief of staff that the virus can't be controlled and that the administration is focused instead on vaccines and therapeutics. By contrast, Biden is promising to step up the fight to contain the spread, including a mask mandate on federal property and pressure on governors to apply it in their states, and pledging to follow the advice of public health professionals on potentially strict safety rules.

Still, Biden appeared sensitive to Trump's closing cry that the Democrat would impose draconian measures more damaging than the virus itself.

"I'm not going to shut down the country. I'm not going to shut down the economy," Biden tweeted Friday, responding directly to Trump's attack lines. "I'm going to shut down the virus."

Biden told about two dozen supporters at a Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport, "The fact is, we're now in a situation where this president is in a position that he doesn't know what he's doing."

Trump's closing appeal to "Make America Great Again, Again" paints a bright image of the nation's condition during pre-coronavirus times that contrasts with Biden's charge to "Build Back Better." The president's focus on returning the nation's economy to the boom times of 2019 resonates with some voters, but overlooks the divided and rancorous politics that swirled around impeachment and the persistent problems of inequality.

As the nation set new records for confirmed cases, Wall Street closed out a punishing week Friday with the S&P 500 posting its first back-to-back monthly loss since the pandemic first gripped the economy in March.

Friday marked the beginning of the critical final stretch before the election. Trump's closing sprint includes four stops in Pennsylvania on Saturday and nearly a dozen events in the final 48 hours across states he carried in 2016.

Biden will hit Michigan on Saturday, where he'll hold two joint rallies with former President Barack Obama.

Biden will close out his campaign Monday in a familiar battleground: Pennsylvania, the state where he was born and the one he's visited more than any other in his campaign. The Biden team announced the candidate, his wife, Jill, running mate Sen. Kamala Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff, plan to "fan out across all four corners of the state."

After stopping in Green Bay on Friday, Trump will be back in Wisconsin on Monday for a visit to Kenosha. He appears to lag in recent polling behind his 2016 numbers in the GOP-leaning suburbs around Milwaukee, a key area for successful Republican campaigns in the state.

A new Marquette University Law School poll shows Trump with support from 52% of likely voters in the eight counties that form the half-ring around Milwaukee. In 2016, he received a combined 61% of the vote in the eight counties when he won the state by fewer than 25,000 votes.

Attendance at the president's final campaign stop in Rochester, Minnesota, was capped at 250 people at the insistence of state and local officials. The Minnesota Department of Health has linked 28 coronavirus cases to other recent Trump campaign events in the state.

Trump spoke briefly to hundreds who gathered outside the venue, Rochester International Airport, before giving quick remarks on the tarmac to supporters who were allowed onsite. The president, whose

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campaign rally speeches are typically fiery and at least an hour long, was unusually subdued. He did, however, lash out at the state's Democratic Gov. Tim Walz and its attorney general.

"Your far left Democrat Attorney General Keith Ellison and your Democrat governor tried to shut down our rally, silence the people of Minnesota, and take away your freedom and your rights," Trump said.

Biden aims to hold his election night event in his hometown of Wilmington, Delaware. Trump, who had been scheduled to hold a party at his Washington, D.C., hotel, appeared to be rethinking his plans as a result of the city's COVID-19 restrictions.

"So we have a hotel, I don't know if you're allowed to use it or not, but I know the mayor has shut down Washington D.C.," Trump said as he headed out from the White House. "And if that's the case, we'll probably stay here or pick another location."

Miller reported from Washington and Jaffe from Des Moines, Iowa. Associated Press writers Thomas Beaumont in Des Moines and Will Weissert, Brian Slodysko and Amer Madhani 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/>.

State leaders facing 2nd wave resist steps to curb virus

By ADAM GELLER and DAVID PITT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Even as a new surge of coronavirus infections sweeps the U.S., officials in many hard-hit states are resisting taking stronger action to slow the spread, with pleas from health experts running up against political calculation and public fatigue.

Days before a presidential election that has spotlighted President Donald Trump's scattershot response to the pandemic, the virus continued its resurgence Friday, with total confirmed cases in the U.S. surpassing 9 million.

The number of new infections reported daily is on the rise in 47 states. They include Nebraska and South Dakota, where the number of new cases topped previous highs for each state.

The record increases in new cases have eclipsed the spikes that set off national alarms last spring and summer. During those outbreaks, first in the Northeast and then in Sun Belt states, many governors closed schools and businesses and restricted public gatherings.

But this fall's resurgence of the virus, despite being far more widespread, has brought a decidedly more limited response in many states. Most are led by Republican governors backing a president who insists, falsely, that the country is getting the virus under control.

Over the past two weeks, more than 76,000 new virus cases have been reported daily in the U.S. on average, up from about 54,000 in mid-October, according to Johns Hopkins University. Deaths, which usually lag case numbers and hospitalizations, are also rising, from about 700 to more than 800 a day.

The virus has now killed more than 229,000 Americans.

Nevertheless, many officials have resisted calls to enact measures like statewide mask mandates or stricter curbs on the size of gatherings, casting the response to the virus as a matter of individual decision-making.

"At the end of the day, personal responsibility is the only way. People will either choose or not choose to social distance, or choose to wear a mask or not," said Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, a Republican. "What we can do is to remind them is that personal responsibility can protect them."

Lee's state is among those without a blanket mask mandate despite a study released this week showing that areas of Tennessee where people are not required to wear them are seeing the most hospitalizations.

In Iowa, where a record 606 coronavirus patients were hospitalized Friday, one health expert said officials there had been too quick to reopen, along with several neighboring states.

"If we follow the course that the other Midwestern states like Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota have, we're going to have trouble keeping up," said Dr. Ravi Vemuri, an infectious disease specialist

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at MercyOne hospitals.

Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds, who has rejected mask requirements and said Iowans must learn to live with the virus, continued this week to downplay efforts to contain it.

On Wednesday, Reynolds, who has made frequent campaign appearances for Trump and other candidates surrounded by crowds of often maskless supporters, poked fun at Theresa Greenfield, a Democrat running in a tight Senate race, for suspending a campaign tour after a staff member was exposed to someone who tested positive.

"Theresa didn't get very far on her RV tour, did she?" Reynolds said. She went on to accuse Greenfield and other Democrats of "hiding in their basements."

The pandemic has put similar pressures on states with Democratic governors, but the politics have played out differently.

Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly, a Democrat, has repeatedly tried to impose restrictions but been stymied by the Republican-controlled legislature. She is considering calling lawmakers into a special session to impose a statewide mask mandate.

In Wisconsin, where the virus has raged since September, Democratic Gov. Tony Evers pleaded with residents this week to shelter in place to slow the spread. Evers issued a formal stay-at-home order in March, but the state's conservative Supreme Court struck it down in May. He was subsequently sued over a mask mandate and limits on gatherings in bars and restaurants.

The parrying by governors and legislators reflect the way that politics and the personal beliefs of a significant sector of the population have become entangled with supposedly nonpartisan matters of public health.

Michelle Riipinen, a 38-year-old resident of Boise, Idaho, said state-mandated school closings, business shutdowns and mask requirements are "draconian measures" that do more harm than good. She said she chooses not to wear a mask.

"I believe in personal responsibility and that it is our responsibility as American citizens to choose if we want to wear it or not," she said. "Our government shouldn't be making that choice for us."

In Utah, Republican Gov. Gary Herbert has ordered mask mandates and limited social gatherings to 10 people or fewer only in counties with the highest transmission rates, not the entire state. The latter measure includes exceptions for religious services and school events.

"This is not an easy thing to enforce. As you drive down the road, you talk about people getting tickets for speeding, but how many are actually speeding?" Herbert said when asked about his resistance to broader mandates.

Herbert said Friday he was "disgusted" after someone shot at a state health department office. The incident came a day after anti-mask protesters gathered outside the home of Utah state epidemiologist Dr. Angela Dunn, who recommended that the state reinstate restrictions to avoid overwhelming hospitals.

"It's taken a really big toll on my family and myself," Dunn said. "I think it's really unfortunate we live in a state where people feel that it is OK to harass civil servants."

Herbert, who has not heeded Dunn's recommendation, said protesters were within their rights to criticize him or other elected officials, but that they should leave state employees alone.

"I know we're asking a lot of the people of Utah to be patient," the governor said. "We know that their time is valuable. I would hope that they would put that in a constructive effort."

Geller reported from New York. Associated Press writers Sophia Eppolito in Salt Lake City, Christine Fernando in Carmel, Indiana, and Jonathan Mattise in Nashville, Tennessee, contributed to this story.

Armenia, Azerbaijan vow to avoid targeting residential areas

By AVET DEMOURIAN Associated Press

YEREVAN, Armenia (AP) — Armenia and Azerbaijan promised Friday to avoid shelling residential areas amid the fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh, a pledge that follows a day of talks in Geneva even as Azer-

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bajjani troops pushed deeper into the separatist territory.

The two sides agreed they "will not deliberately target civilian populations or non-military objects in accordance with international humanitarian law." They also promised to help recover and exchange the remains of soldiers left on the battlefield and in a week's time submit lists of prisoners of war for the purpose of "providing access and eventual exchange."

The talks between foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan were sponsored by the so-called Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which is co-chaired by Russia, the United States and France. The co-chairs said in a statement issued after the talks that Armenia and Azerbaijan also promised to offer their proposals regarding possible cease-fire verification mechanisms.

Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a war there ended in 1994. The latest outburst of hostilities began Sept. 27 and left hundreds and perhaps thousands dead, marking the worst escalation of fighting since the war's end.

A U.S.-brokered truce frayed immediately after it took effect Monday, just like two previous cease-fires negotiated by Russia. The warring sides have repeatedly blamed each other for violations.

During Friday's talks, co-chairs of the Minsk Group urged the sides to honor their cease-fire commitments. "The Co-Chairs will continue working with the sides intensively to find a peaceful settlement of the conflict," they said in a statement.

While the top diplomats held tense talks in Geneva, Azerbaijani forces continued pressing their offensive into Nagorno-Karabakh after more than a month of heavy fighting.

Intense clashes were going on in the south of Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia's Defense Ministry said. The Azerbaijani military reported that areas in the Terter and Gubadli regions of Azerbaijan came under Armenian shelling.

On Thursday, Nagorno-Karabakh's separatist leader said Azerbaijani troops had advanced to within 5 kilometers (about 3 miles) of a strategically located town just south of the region's capital, Stepanakert.

In a somber acknowledgment of Azerbaijani gains, Arayik Harutyunyan urged residents to mobilize all their resources to fend off the attack on Shushi, a town that sits on the main road linking Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia.

"The one who controls Shushi controls Nagorno-Karabakh," Harutyunyan said, standing next to the Shushi cathedral that was badly damaged by Azerbaijani shelling earlier this month.

In Stepanakert, a group of people boarded a bus bound for Armenia to escape the fighting.

"I don't want to leave. I want to stay home in the village but they told us that we should leave," said Valya Sogomonyan, who fled her village in the Askeran region. "Azerbaijanis are shelling our village. We are leaving our house and all our things behind."

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has insisted that Azerbaijan has the right to reclaim its territory by force after three decades of international mediation have produced no result. He said that Armenia must pledge to withdraw from Nagorno-Karabakh as a condition for a lasting truce.

Azerbaijani troops, which have relied on strike drones and long-range rocket systems supplied by Turkey, have reclaimed control of several regions on the fringes of Nagorno-Karabakh and forged into the separatist territory from the south.

According to Nagorno-Karabakh officials, 1,166 of their troops and 39 civilians have been killed. Azerbaijani authorities haven't disclosed their military losses, but say the fighting has killed at least 91 civilians and wounded 400.

But Russian President Vladimir Putin said last week that, according to Moscow's information, the actual death toll was significantly higher and nearing 5,000.

Associated Press writers Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow and Aida Sultanova in London contributed to this report.

Walmart returns guns and ammunition to US store displays

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By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Walmart has reversed course, announcing it is returning ammunition and firearms to their displays in its U.S. stores.

On Thursday the nation's largest retailer said it had removed the items from displays due to "civil unrest" in some areas of the country. Guns and ammunition, however, had remained for sale at the stores, just not visible to shoppers.

But on Friday Walmart said the items had been restored to displays because the unrest has remained isolated.

The moves come after several days of protests, vandalism, and an overnight curfew in Philadelphia after police fatally shot a Black man with a history of mental health problems.

"After civil unrest earlier this week resulted in damage to several of our stores, consistent with actions we took over the summer, we asked stores to move firearms and ammunition from the sales floor to a secure location in the back of the store in an abundance of caution," Walmart said in a statement. "As the current incidents have remained geographically isolated, we have made the decision to begin returning these products to the sales floor today."

The retailer based in Bentonville, Arkansas, sells firearms in about half of its 4,700 stores.

Follow Anne D'Innocenzio: <http://twitter.com/ADInnocenzio>

Voting, virus, race are hot topics in state high court races

By MORGAN LEE and ED WHITE Associated Press writers

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court isn't the nation's only judicial battleground.

The high courts in a number of states are on the ballot Tuesday in races that will determine whether Republicans or Democrats have a majority, and the stakes are high for both sides. This year alone, state supreme courts have been thrust into the spotlight to decide politically charged cases over voting rights, race and governors' coronavirus orders.

Next year, it could be abortion, health care and redistricting.

Among the most hotly contested races are the ones for two high court seats in Michigan, where a Republican-leaning majority has undercut emergency virus restrictions by Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

Whitmer has been openly feuding with the justices after a 4-3 partisan vote in early October that invalidated her emergency health orders.

"The Supreme Court decision in my state has created a lot of confusion and worked to undermine the work that we've done here," Whitmer said. "We crushed our COVID spike early, our economy rebounded. ... It's all at risk."

Whitmer's administration quickly reinstated virus measures under a different law, but the governor said the high-court ruling has fostered public confusion about the need to wear masks and maintain social distancing. Michigan's virus cases and deaths are again spiking. The state's seven-day average for new daily cases has risen over the past two weeks from 1,488 per day to 2,852 as of Thursday.

The rushed U.S. Supreme Court confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett, coming just days before the presidential election, has cast a spotlight on the growing politicization of the nation's courts. President Donald Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, both Republicans, have spoken openly about their success in packing the federal judiciary with conservative jurists.

State supreme court races have become similarly partisan and often attract millions of dollars in campaign spending, much of it from groups outside the state.

Among other hot button issues, the coming year could see state high courts decide matters on eviction moratoriums, private school vouchers, abortion and redistricting.

"By and large, it's these state high courts that are going to have the final say," said Douglas Keith, an attorney at the nonpartisan Brennan Center for Justice at New York University,

In New Mexico, the supreme court has upheld aggressive pandemic health orders from Democratic

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Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham under long-established laws that have rarely if ever been invoked. They limit public gatherings to five people or fewer, mandate face masks and imposes a self-quarantine after travel.

The rulings have infuriated Republican Party leaders and lawmakers who say local businesses are being ruined by the restrictions while online and big box stores prosper. The disagreement is at the heart of races for two high court seats in which Democratic incumbents are campaigning to be retained.

"With public health orders, the Legislature has spoken. They're the ones who have set up this emergency health act," said Justice Shannon Bacon, who is defending against Republican challenger Ned Fuller, a county prosecutor. "Our job is to enforce the law unless and until somebody demonstrates that it's unconstitutional."

Fuller said the governor and state health officials don't have free reign during a public health emergency. "Then the question is, they have to do it in the least restrictive way," he said. "And then the next question is, are we applying the law equally?"

In Ohio, a 5-2 Republican majority is at stake on the state high court in two races that are attracting outside money.

Republican strategist Karl Rove has solicited donations to help GOP Justice Judith French in her race against Democratic challenger Jennifer Brunner, an appellate court judge. Rove's group is citing concerns about the upcoming redistricting, even though Ohio voters in 2018 approved a constitutional amendment to decrease partisan influence in that process.

The Judicial Fairness Initiative, a group that advocates for conservative state justices, has been running attack ads against Brunner. It received at least \$3 million from the Republican State Leadership Committee, according to filings with the Federal Election Commission.

The money is even flowing to states with safe partisan majorities.

Millions of dollars are being spent in Texas, where all nine state supreme court justices are Republicans and the high court has not had a Democratic justice since 1998.

It's a reaction to gains Democrats have been making with district and regional appellate courts that serve as the pipeline for appeals, said David de la Fuente, a Dallas-based political analyst for the moderate Democratic group Third Way.

During the 2018 elections, Democrats extended control of appeals courts covering Dallas, Houston and Austin.

"The Supreme Court is the Republicans' and big businesses' last line of defense," de la Fuente said. "That is why the money is pouring in."

The politically conservative Judicial Fairness PAC, underwritten indirectly by the oil sector through the group Engage Texas, is spending at least \$1.2 million to support four incumbent Republican justices, according to data on television ad buys from the Brennan Center.

The incumbents, including Chief Justice Nathan Hecht, a 31-year veteran of the court, are defending their seats against a slate of all-female Democratic candidates that include women of Black, Taiwanese and Latina heritage.

In North Carolina, the state's first Black female chief justice, Cheri Beasley, is being challenged by fellow Supreme Court Justice Paul Newby, a Republican. The campaign has been marked by divisions over racial justice and the state's history of gerrymandered voting districts.

Democrats currently hold six of the court's seven seats, with three up for election this year.

The partisan composition of the court will help determine the outcome in looming battles over Republican voter identification initiatives, the application of capital punishment and a taxpayer-funded scholarship program for K-12 children to attend private schools.

Newby targeted Beasley's seat after being passed over in the chief justice selection process by Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper. Under Beasley's leadership, the court ruled in June that death row inmates can use a repealed law addressing racial discrimination to seek life sentences.

Newby also criticized Beasley for suspending jury trials because of the coronavirus pandemic and for her remarks in response to the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. Beasley lamented unequal

treatment for Blacks by North Carolina's criminal justice system.

"Frankly, you can be seen as undermining or questioning the impartiality of judges, or district attorneys, of juries," Newby said at a candidate forum.

Beasley hasn't wavered: "In our courts, African Americans are more harshly treated, more severely punished and more likely to be presumed guilty," she said.

White reported from Detroit. Associated Press writers Geoff Mulvihill in Davenport, Iowa, and Gary Robertson, in North Carolina, contributed to this report.

This version corrects that Beasley is North Carolina's first Black female chief justice.

For many Latinos, virus deaths loom over Day of the Dead

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Matilde Gomez wants her mother, Gume, to know how much she appreciates her love and sacrifices. So, she's putting her feelings into a letter.

Only Gume Salazar will never get to read it.

Instead, it's going on a table in Gomez's home in Arizona that's dedicated to her mother, who died of COVID-19. It will sit alongside fresh flowers and Salazar's blouse on Day of the Dead, a holiday that Salazar actually didn't care for much.

"I would think she would be OK with it," Gomez said. "She would see this as a way for me to heal."

Day of the Dead, or Dia de los Muertos, the annual Mexican tradition of reminiscing about departed loved ones with colorful altars, or ofrendas, is typically celebrated Nov. 1-2. It will undoubtedly be harder for Latino families in the U.S. torn apart by the coronavirus. Some are mourning more than one relative, underscoring the pandemic's disproportionate impact on communities of color. Adding to the misery, people can't gather for the holiday because of the health risks.

Gomez's mother and uncle died of the virus a month apart this summer. The siblings in their 50s had no underlying health conditions. Gomez only spoke to her mother on the phone once before she died in a California hospital. On top of that, Gomez, 41, was diagnosed with breast cancer this month. She decided not to schedule surgery until after Day of the Dead because she wanted to honor her mother properly.

"I want to celebrate her memory in my household with Dia de los Muertos," said Gomez, who lives in the Phoenix suburb of El Mirage. "She's never going to be forgotten."

Day of the Dead usually revolves around an altar in the home or at a graveside of photos of the dead, their important belongings and even favorite foods. They often are adorned with marigolds, which are believed to draw the souls of the dead.

Normally, the holiday would bring processions in cities with large Latino communities, and mourners would eat, sing and share memories. COVID-19 has scuttled those plans but hasn't stopped people from erecting altars to enjoy online or outdoors.

Mother and daughter Chicana artists Ofelia and Rosanna Esparza have overseen the design of an altar at Grand Park in downtown Los Angeles since 2013. It's one of 11 huge altars on display in a collaboration between the county park and Self Help Graphics, an organization highlighting Latino artists and social justice. Ofelia, 88, is a fifth-generation altar-maker, and both were cultural advisers on Disney-Pixar's "Coco," a movie centered around Day of the Dead.

They built a 24-by-14-foot (7-by-4-meter) ofrenda of photos contributed by the community, candles, votives and tissue-paper marigolds. Besides the pandemic-induced sadness, the Esparzas believe Latinos are more interested in observing Day of the Dead.

"Because of the quarantine and the COVID, there's this heightened awareness of the losses that are occurring not just in our city but around the globe," said Rosanna Esparza, whose cousin died of a suspected coronavirus infection, while four other relatives recovered from COVID-19. "I just feel like there's a heightened awareness and more of a sense of reverence for life."

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For Sebastian Diaz Aguirre, the altar in his Brooklyn apartment that's stocked with Mexican sweet bread, coffee and a shot of tequila comforts him as he grieves his father. His father didn't die from COVID-19, but Aguirre believes the isolation hastened his decline at a senior living facility.

"I realize this year in a very special way, how important my Mexican roots and this tradition was to me," Aguirre said. "I do feel a connection with my dad."

Of the more than 6.8 million COVID-19 cases recorded so far by the Centers for Disease Control, about half noted racial identity. Of those 3.6 million-plus infections, 990,000 affected Hispanic people. And Hispanics made up the highest percentage of confirmed deaths in children 5-17 and adults 40-49.

More people of color are essential workers and live in multigenerational households, which could contribute to higher rates of infection and death, experts say.

Consuelo Flores, a Chicana artist featured in Self Help Graphics' exhibition, created an altar with photos she found by searching "Black or Latino victims of COVID."

"It's a realization the people that have died to serve the community and to ensure everybody's well-being ... they look like me. They look like my family," Flores said. "It tells you how imbalanced our society is."

In Mexico, authorities have mostly closed cemeteries to keep families from congregating. Most U.S. cemeteries and funeral homes weren't closing but canceled large events. Some, like Perches Funeral Homes in El Paso, Texas, invited people to post altar photos on Facebook.

CEO Salvador Perches said that with a rise of cases in El Paso and neighboring Juarez, Mexico, it's been hard for grieving families to avoid gathering.

"People can't celebrate their loved ones, we can't mourn," Perches said. "Just like Mother's Day and Father's Day this year, this is when people go visit their loved ones."

Ultimately, some say pageantry isn't what's important. An understated ofrenda at home is enough because it's the bridge between the living and the dead, Ofelia Esparza said. It should remind people to focus on how their loved ones lived.

"When you honor them, you're not going to talk about how they died," she said. "You want to remember how you loved them and how they loved you."

Associated Press journalist Emily Leshner in New York and Report for America/Associated Press journalist Acacia Coronado in Austin, Texas, contributed to this report. Tang is a member of The Associated Press Race and Ethnicity team. Follow her on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ttangAP>.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through the Religion News Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

This story has been corrected to show that Grand Park is a Los Angeles County, not city, park.

Sans gala or red carpet, a stylish fashion show at the Met

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The annual hoopla around the celebrity-studded Met Gala is so intense, it's often forgotten who the real star is: the fashion exhibit inside.

This year, it's the only star. A stylish Costume Institute show at the Metropolitan Museum has opened, six months behind schedule. But what's six months when you're covering 150 years of fashion?

And that's the point, in more ways than one, of "About Time: Fashion & Duration," which explores the concept of fashion through time. Time is a flexible concept, it argues. It is not linear, at least not where fashion is concerned. Ideas revisit themselves through the decades, even the centuries.

That was the central concept even before the exhibit, traditionally launched by the Met Gala in May, was waylaid by the pandemic — which changed everything, including our concept of time. (How many times have you heard someone ask what day or month it is?)

So the fact that "About Time" was able to open at all is cause for celebration. As the Met's director, Max

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Hollein, said in opening remarks: "We could not imagine, when we chose the name for this exhibition more than a year ago, how apt the title would become."

Of course, everything is different this year. Instead of speaking in person at the annual press preview, Hollein and curator Andrew Bolton spoke virtually, and masked, in taped remarks. And crowd size is being restricted, in accordance with guidelines for museums — likely not a bad thing in terms of the viewing experience.

Visually, the show is concise — smaller than recent extravaganzas like the opulent "Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination." Nearly every garment on display is black, save a couple in white or cream. Rather than a collection of loaned items from across the globe, the exhibit consists almost entirely of items from the Institute's collection.

The design of the show, by Es Devlin, is intended to convey the inner and outer workings of a clock. There are two clocks, two galleries, and two timelines. One timeline is chronological, beginning in 1870, when the museum was founded (this year marks the 150th anniversary.) The other is what Bolton calls "a disrupted timeline of fashion" — involving flashbacks and fast-forwards, or "interruptions."

Bolton has chosen novelist Virginia Woolf and her writings on time as an inspiration; she is what he calls the show's "ghost narrator." Three quotations are read aloud in the galleries by Nicole Kidman, Meryl Streep and Julianne Moore, who starred in the 2002 film "The Hours," based on Michael Cunningham's book that was inspired by Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway."

And the concept of an hour is illustrated, literally, by illuminated "ticks" of a clock on the floor. Garments are placed in 60 pairs — as in 60 minutes — each pair containing one item from the chronological timeline and one from the disrupted one. What they show is that ideas, shapes, techniques or materials constantly refer back (or project forward) to each other over time.

Paired together, for example, are a 2012 futuristic black Iris van Herpen gown, using 3D printing technology and resembling a very chic aquatic creature, with a classic 1951 Charles James ballgown with crescent-shaped puffs in cream silk — essentially the same shape.

A 1919 silk satin and chiffon gown with a so-called "barrel skirt" — named for its shape — is accompanied by a highly exaggerated barrel-shaped dress from 2012-2013 by Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons in radically different material: polyester felt with sequins.

And a 1930s pleated black silk charmeuse dress from Spanish designer Mariano Fortuny is juxtaposed with Issey Miyake's 1994 otherworldly "Flying Saucer" dress in accordion-pleated taffeta.

The fashion world, like most industries, has been hit hard by the pandemic. But in his own virtual remarks, designer Nicolas Ghesquiere, creative director of show sponsor Louis Vuitton, made reference to a possible silver lining: "The pause the pandemic has imposed on many of us has also created a certain space to reflect on where we are and where we are going," he said. "Even in the most turbulent times, art, fashion and culture can help us navigate change and frame how we see the world anew."

The show ends with a solitary piece from designers Viktor & Rolf, a white patchwork dress made up of pieces from their archive of fabric swatches. It's meant as a metaphor, Bolton noted, "for the future of fashion and the importance of community, collaboration and sustainability."

"About Time: Fashion & Duration" runs through Feb. 7.

Tanzania's populist leader declared winner of flawed vote

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Tanzania's populist President John Magufuli has been declared the overwhelming winner of a second term amid allegations of widespread election fraud, while the ruling party won enough seats in parliament to change the constitution.

The national electoral commission late Friday said Magufuli received 12.5 million votes, or 84%, while top opposition candidate Tundu Lissu received 1.9 million, or 13%. Turnout was roughly 50%, with 14.8 million people voting after 29 million registered.

The ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi party won parliament seats in 253 of the 261 constituencies announced so far, achieving upsets in opposition strongholds by wide margins.

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Some in the ruling party had called for the presidency's two-term limit to be extended if enough parliament seats could be secured.

Lissu has rejected the vote while alleging "widespread irregularities" and called for peaceful demonstrations. The opposition asserts that thousands of observers were turned away from polling stations on Wednesday, and that at least a dozen people were killed on the eve of the vote in the semi-autonomous region of Zanzibar. Internet and text-messaging services slowed dramatically or disappeared.

But electoral commission chair, Semistocles Kaijage, asserted in late Friday's announcement that all the votes were legitimate.

Large crowds of ruling party supporters who had gathered to watch the election results were celebrating in the streets. There was no immediate comment by the president.

The two main opposition parties, Lissu's CHADEMA and ACT Wazalendo, planned to hold a joint press conference on Saturday, a spokesman said.

The United States has said that "irregularities and the overwhelming margins of victory raise serious doubts about the credibility of the results announced."

Few international election observers were present, unlike in past years.

The vote "marked the most significant backsliding in Tanzania's democratic credentials," Tanzania Elections Watch, a group of regional experts, said in an assessment released Friday. It noted a heavy deployment of military and police whose conduct created a "climate of fear."

"The electoral process, so far, falls way below the acceptable international standards" for holding free and fair elections, the group said.

The opposition alleges widespread irregularities including double-voting and ballot box-seizing by security forces or other authorities.

The East African nation is one of Africa's most populous countries and fastest-growing economies. Magufuli has pointed to the country's achievement of lower-middle-income status as one reason he deserves another term.

But observers say Tanzania's reputation for democratic ideals is crumbling, with Magufuli accused of severely stifling dissenting voices in his first five-year term. Opposition political gatherings were banned in 2016, the year after he took office. Media outlets have been targeted. Some candidates were arrested, blocked from campaigning or disqualified ahead of the vote.

Concerns of post-election violence linger. The ACT Wazalendo presidential candidate in Zanzibar was arrested on Thursday for the second time this week before being released. Another ACT Wazalendo official there, Ismail Jussa, was badly beaten by soldiers and hospitalized, the party said.

As anger rises, Muslims protest French cartoons

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Tens of thousands of Muslims, from Pakistan to Lebanon to the Palestinian territories, poured out of prayer services to join anti-France protests on Friday, as the French president's vow to protect the right to caricature the Prophet Muhammad continues to roil the Muslim world.

Hardline Islamic groups across the region have seized on the the French government's staunch secularist stance as an affront to Islam, rallying their supporters and stirring up rage.

Demonstrations in Pakistan's capital Islamabad turned violent as some 2,000 people who tried to march toward the French Embassy were pushed back by police firing tear gas and beating protesters with batons. Crowds of Islamist activists hanged an effigy of French President Emmanuel Macron from a highway overpass after pounding it furiously with their shoes. Several demonstrators were wounded in clashes with police as authorities pushed to evict activists from the area surrounding the embassy.

In Pakistan's eastern city of Lahore, an estimated 10,000 followers of the radical Islamic Tehreek-e-Labbaik party celebrating the Mawlid, the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, took to the streets. They chanted anti-France slogans, raised banners and clogged major roads en route to a Sufi shrine.

"There's only one punishment for blasphemy," bellowed Khadim Hussain Rizvi, a fiery cleric leading the

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march.

"Beheading! Beheading!" the protesters yelled back.

The demonstrations, largely led by Islamist parties across the region, come amid rising tensions between France and Muslim-majority nations, which flared up earlier this month when a young Muslim beheaded a French schoolteacher who had shown caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in class.

The images, republished by the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo to mark the opening of the trial for the deadly 2015 attack against the publication, have stirred the ire of Muslims across the world who consider depictions of the prophet blasphemous. On Thursday, a knife-wielding Tunisian man carrying a copy of the Quran killed three people at a church in the Mediterranean city of Nice.

A few hundred demonstrators in Lebanon's capital Beirut flocked toward the Palais des Pins, the official residence of the French ambassador to Lebanon, but found their way blocked by lines of police officers in riot gear. Waving black and white flags with Islamist insignia, the Sunni Islamist activists cried, "At your service, oh prophet of God." Some slung stones at police who responded with smoke and tear gas.

The sight of anti-France protests in Lebanon is an embarrassment for Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri, who is trying to form a new government that would implement a French plan for reform. France, Lebanon's former colonial ruler, has been helping the country chart a course out of its spiraling economic and financial crisis.

In Istanbul, Turkey's largest city, worshippers thronged a Shiite mosque after Friday prayers, chanting religious slogans and holding signs lampooning Macron. Turkey has led regional condemnation of the French president, with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's verbal attacks on Macron prompting France to recall its ambassador to Turkey last weekend.

Hundreds of Palestinians also protested against Macron outside the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, the third holiest site in Islam, chanting, "With our souls and with our blood we sacrifice for our prophet, Muhammad." Some youths scuffled with Israeli police as they exited the esplanade into the Old City. Israeli police said they dispersed the gathering and detained three people.

Scores more turned out in the Gaza Strip, where the militant Hamas group organized anti-France rallies at mosques across the territory that it controls.

Fathi Hammad, a Hamas official, addressed a demonstration at the Jabaliya refugee camp, vowing "to stand together to confront this criminal offensive that harms the faith of about two billion Muslims," referring to depictions of the Muslim prophet. He reiterated Hamas authorities' appeal for Palestinians to boycott all French products.

One protester, who identified himself as Abu Huzayfa, equivocated when asked about recent attacks in France in retribution for the cartoons.

"We don't target innocents," he said. "But those who directly insult our prophet will shoulder the responsibility."

Cries of "Death to France" rang out in Afghanistan's capital of Kabul and several other provinces as thousands filled the streets. Demonstrators trampled on portraits of Macron and called on Afghan leaders to shut down the French embassy, halt French imports and ban French citizens from visiting the country. In the country's western Herat province, protesters hoisted an effigy of Macron on a crane and set it alight.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of Hezb-i-Islami, an Islamist party, warned Macron that if he doesn't "control the situation, we are going to a third world war and Europe will be responsible."

Muslims also rallied outside the Middle East, with a huge crowd of some 50,000 noisily chanting protesters in Bangladesh's capital of Dhaka torching effigies of Macron and holding signs that read, "Say no to Islamophobia," "Stop racism," and "Boycott French products." Several hundred protested peacefully in Ethiopia's capital after Friday prayers.

Over the past week, protests and calls to boycott French products have spread rapidly. Social media has been pulsing with anti-France hashtags. Muslim leaders have loudly criticized France for what they see as the government's provocative and anti-Muslim stance.

Thursday's attack in Nice also drew condemnations from leaders of countries that had voiced outrage over the caricatures, such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Egypt.

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The leader of the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, denounced Thursday's stabbing attack in Nice which he said is rejected by Islam.

However, in a televised address Friday, he criticized French authorities and President Emmanuel Macron for their insistence on defending the Prophet Muhammad caricatures in the name of freedom of expression.

Nasrallah said the concept of the freedom of expression should not include "violating the dignity of 2 billion Muslims."

"No Muslim in this world can accept insulting his Prophet," he said.

In a Friday sermon aired live on Egyptian state TV, the country's minister of religious endowments appeared to denounce any violent retaliation for the cartoons.

"Love of the prophet cannot be expressed by killing, sabotaging or responding to evil with evil," said Mohamed Mokhtar Gomaa, addressing dozens of worshippers at a mosque in Egypt's Delta province of Daqahleya.

Associated Press writers Asim Tanveer in Multan, Pakistan; Munir Ahmed in Islamabad, Pakistan; Ta-meem Akhgar in Kabul, Afghanistan; Noha ElHennawy in Cairo; Joseph Krauss in Jerusalem; Julhas Alam in Dhaka, Bangladesh; Elias Meseret in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Zeina Karam in Beirut; Robert Badendieck in Istanbul; Fares Akram in Gaza City, Gaza Strip, contributed to this report.

With salsa, caravans, Cubans make last push to reelect Trump

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON The Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — On the spur of the moment, a singer in a Cuban salsa band had an idea for a lyric to please fellow Trump supporters at a Miami birthday party.

Tirso Luis Paez flicked his hand so his band mates would let him take over during a crowd favorite, "Cuba is Me," and instead of singing the usual chorus, he belted out: "Yo voy a votar, por Donald Trump!"

The seemingly spontaneous moment with Los 3 de la Habana was live-streamed and soon viewed by tens of thousands. The Trump campaign quickly featured it in a national ad projecting Miami Cuban enthusiasm for the Republican leader to Latino markets across the country. An English language version, "Oh my God I will vote, I will vote for Donald Trump," spread online as well.

Florida's Cuban American voters remain a bright spot in Trump's effort to retain his winning coalition from 2016. Polls show his strong support from these key voters may even be growing to include the younger Cuban Americans that Democrats once considered their best hope of breaking the GOP's hold. For Trump, that support could prove essential in a tight race in a state he must win to beat Democratic challenger Joe Biden.

In the past four years, Trump has courted with these voters by undoing former President Barack Obama's Cuba engagement policy, sanctioning Latin-American socialist governments and misleadingly casting all Democrats as leftists and anti-capitalists.

"Anything that smells like socialism to us, the slightest thing already makes us sick. We start shaking," said Paez, who like many exiled Cubans accuses the island's Communist leaders of oppressing its people and failing to lift them out of poverty.

"Many people could identify with us in that video," Paez said.

Miami-Dade is where more than 40% of Cuban Americans live, and while the population includes more than 1.5 million Hispanics of voting age, they have an outsized influence over other Latino groups in the city.

Caravans have become a common sight in Miami as Election Day approaches, with hundreds of cars in Hispanic neighborhoods blasting horns, blaring Latin music and cheering for Trump. They offer a stark contrast to pandemic gloom, often looking like victory parades, and the band has joined in, sharing a stage with Ivanka Trump and a boat ride with Eric Trump. Their song has been kept on a loop outside an early voting station in the Cuban American stronghold of Hialeah, where supporters waved American and Blue Lives Matter flags alongside a cardboard cutout of the president.

Democrats had been banking on younger Cuban Americans to be more open to warming ties with the

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island, even if older exiles remain staunchly opposed. Obama's appeal to young voters helped him carry Florida in both 2008 and 2012.

Four years later, Democrat Hillary Clinton found some support among Cuban Americans put off by Trump's unpredictable style, especially after he thwarted Cuban American Sen. Marco Rubio in the GOP primary. She won Miami-Dade County by 30 percentage points. Still, she narrowly lost the state to Trump.

A Florida International University poll of Cuban Americans in Miami-Dade County released this month shows Trump leading Biden 59% to 25%. The same poll showed Trump leading among young Cubans, unlike in 2016, and the GOP gaining three out of four new arrivals from the island between 2010 and 2015 who registered to vote.

Priorities USA, the largest Democratic super PAC, has released ads featuring a prominent exiled Cuban author saying Trump styles himself after Benito Mussolini and Augusto Pinochet. Another ad, by The Lincoln Project of anti-Trump Republicans, accuses him of acting like a dictator and says "Trump is just English for Castro."

And on Thursday, while both Biden and Trump were campaigning in Florida, the former vice president attacked the Trump administration for increasingly denying asylum to people fleeing dictatorships in Cuba and Venezuela. Biden said that if Trump had been president when generations of Cubans first came to the U.S. fleeing Fidel Castro, "in the old days, they wouldn't be here."

Guillermo Grenier, who leads the FIU Cuba Poll, argues that these efforts may be too late, after the Biden campaign seemed to have given up on Cuban Americans, courting Florida's Puerto Rican and Black voters instead.

"There is no Democratic plan or beachhead to swing Cubans over to the Democratic side," Grenier said.

Biden is backed by Puerto Rican artists such as Bad Bunny and Luis Fonsi, while younger Cubans follow Trump's social media celebrities, such as YouTube personality Alex Otaola and popular comedian Roberto San Martin.

Trump's criticism of Black Lives Matter protests that have sometimes sparked vandalism and violence resonates in Miami, where many Cubans said they were triggered by hammer-and-sickle graffiti sprayed on a city monument during protests in June over George Floyd's death.

When Miami public schools proposed increasing anti-racism teaching over the summer, the district was swamped with hundreds of calls, many from Cuban Americans concerned about "indoctrinating" children with strains of Marxist thought. A Cuban exile compared violent demonstrators to Nazis in an ad published by The Miami Herald.

Edgard Lopez, a 43-year-old voter who arrived in Miami as a Cuban refugee a decade ago, said he opposes Biden's call for more "community-oriented" policing.

"We come to this country seeking law and order. In our country that does not exist, and that is now under threat," said Lopez, who said he was harassed in Cuba for his work as a member of the opposition.

Lopez said Trump's blunt style is popular among Cuban Americans and he praises Trump's economic record, saying he's been better off under this administration working as a chef.

Democrats warn that Trump's efforts to overturn Obama's health care law could hurt Cuban Americans in particular, since Miami-Dade County has the nation's highest number of people enrolled in its health plans.

"Many Cuban voters are the greatest beneficiaries of the Affordable Care Act, and they are voting to destroy and eliminate it," said Fernand Amandi, a Democratic pollster.

The musicians of Los 3 de la Habana say Trump's economic and foreign policies have been his main achievements. Ana Pinelli Paez, Tirso's mother and fellow band member, remembers when they survived on only red beans, plantains and bread before leaving Cuba in 2007. She likes that Trump focuses on regular people, she said, "and he prioritizes Americans."

AP: Use of slurs not 'isolated' at Louisiana State Police

By JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — A Black trooper with the Louisiana State Police was on a break when his

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cellphone buzzed with an unusual voice message. It was from a white colleague, unaware his Apple Watch had recorded him, blurting out the Black trooper's name followed by a searing racial slur.

"F----- n----, what did you expect?"

That unguarded moment, sent in a pocket-dial of sorts, touched off an internal investigation at Louisiana's premier law-enforcement agency that remained under wraps for three years before a local television station reported last month that the white trooper had not even been reprimanded for the racist recording.

"I believe this to be an isolated incident and I have great confidence in the men and women who serve in the Louisiana State Police," the agency's outgoing head, Col. Kevin Reeves, said in response to the controversy.

But an Associated Press review of hundreds of State Police records revealed at least a dozen more instances over a three-year period in which employees forwarded racist emails on their official accounts with subject lines like "PROUD TO BE WHITE," or demeaned minority colleagues with names including "Hershey's Kiss," "Django" and "Egg Roll."

"The State Police has a real, deep-rooted racism problem," said David Lanser, a New Orleans attorney with the Law Office of William Most, which obtained the records and emails through a targeted public-records request in 2018 for emails containing racist language. "Denying the existence of systemic and individual racism in the LSP will only serve to perpetuate its serious and often tragic effects on the people of Louisiana."

Reeves, who abruptly retired this week amid a series of controversies involving race, did not respond to a detailed request for comment. A State Police spokesman said only that "these incidents were already addressed by the agency."

On Friday, Gov. John Bel Edwards appointed a Black State Police captain, Lamar Davis, to succeed Reeves, who is white.

Law enforcement misconduct — especially cases involving bias — has drawn new scrutiny amid a racial reckoning sweeping the country after the killing of George Floyd.

In Louisiana, racial tensions have heightened in recent months amid a federal civil rights investigation into the still-unexplained death of Ronald Greene, a Black motorist taken into custody last year following a State Police chase near Monroe. Reeves faced criticism for his secretive handling of the case, including waiting 474 days to open an internal probe and refusing to release body-cam video that, according to those who have seen it, shows troopers beating, choking and dragging Greene while calling him a "son of a b----."

State Police records obtained by the AP revealed that Reeves also refused to discipline another state trooper and a longtime administrative assistant last year after they were found to have forwarded overtly racist emails from their account, including a five-page chainmail titled "BE PROUD TO BE WHITE" that claims white Americans have "LOST most of OUR RIGHTS" and addresses law enforcement treatment of minorities. The email questioned why "only whites can be racists" and challenged its recipients to be "proud enough to send it on."

A State Police attorney said the emails were several years old when they surfaced and there had been "no complaints since" against either employee.

Other records obtained by AP revealed a pattern of racist remarks made by white troopers — such as saying a Black trooper resembled a "monkey" in his uniform.

A State Police captain, whose name was redacted in the records, accused a Black subordinate of lying after he told investigators he was offended by his colleagues repeatedly calling him "Django" after the character in a film about a fictional freed slave. State Police determined the nickname was "not intended to be racially derogatory."

The same internal investigation delved into the use of the term "Oreo" to describe white troopers' aversion to working a shift alone with two Black colleagues.

And in another racist exchange, a State Police sergeant was accused of disparaging a Black colleague when a child asked a group of troopers in a restaurant why they left their patrol car idling in the parking lot with the air conditioner on.

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"Have you not seen a Hershey's Kiss when left in the sun?" the sergeant reportedly replied.

It's not clear from the records whether any troopers were disciplined in these incidents.

Eugene Collins, president of the Baton Rouge branch of the NAACP, said the records show the state's "premier law enforcement agency is systemically racist at multiple levels."

"This should not exist in 2020," Collins said. "We really hope the Department of Justice investigates this agency for further possible civil rights violations."

Looking under the hood of other American police agencies would reveal "if not documented emails, a similar mindset portrayed in everyday conversations among officers," said Michael Jenkins, a policing expert who teaches criminal justice at the University of Scranton. "Unfortunately, I think this hits on a larger issue in policing that continues to show its face."

In the freakish Apple Watch pocket dial incident in 2017, Trooper Gus McKay told investigators "the stars couldn't have lined up any worse."

"It would be like me accidentally sending a picture of my naked wife to someone," McKay is quoted telling investigators in State Police records. "It wasn't supposed to get out."

McKay told investigators he was sitting around his dinner table with his wife and grandfather preparing to go investigate a traffic crash when he used the slur in reference to a white cousin who can't pay his bills.

McKay later asked to meet the Black colleague in person, telling investigators he had "dated a Black girl in college" and had Black roommates. "I'm the least person to ever get caught up in this because it means nothing to me."

The Black trooper who received the recording and whose name was redacted in the documents told investigators he had been offended by the slur, even though he wanted to believe McKay's explanation.

"I was more offended that you were sitting around with your family and talking in that manner," the trooper said of McKay.

A week before the incident, he said he had dined with McKay at a restaurant. "So after that, fast forward, you are sitting around having this conversation, it's like, darn! Why is (McKay's wife) accepting you talking like this? Why is she not mad at you using the word?"

As Trump faces uncertain future, so do his signature rallies

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

LITITZ, Pennsylvania (AP) — They began to arrive more than 40 hours before President Donald Trump took the stage in this stretch of rural Pennsylvania where horse-drawn buggies remain a common sight. By 10 p.m., a small group had set up an overnight camp on lawn chairs as a cold drizzle set in.

"I am the crazy Trumper," declared Kyle Terry, 33. He had been the first to arrive at the IMAX parking lot — at 8 p.m. Saturday for a Monday afternoon rally, his fifth of the fall. "I love it. I've been having the most fun of my life. And I really just don't want this to stop."

As President Donald Trump faces an uncertain future, so too does a fixture of the American political scene over the last five years: the Trump campaign rally, a phenomenon that has spawned friendships, businesses and a way of life for Trump's most dedicated supporters. His fans have traveled the country to be part of what they describe as a movement that could outlive his time in office.

Some have attended so many rallies they've lost count, road-tripping from arena to arena like rock groupies. They come for the energy, the validation of being surrounded by like-minded people, the feeling of being part of something bigger than themselves. Sociologists and historians see elements of a religious following.

They are people like Cynthia Reidler, 55, who has been a Trump supporter since he announced his candidacy. She has been to nearly 20 Trump events, from rallies to Fourth of July celebrations on the National Mall.

"The feeling — like it just grabs you," she said as she waited near the front of the line Monday morning, dressed in a red poncho and headband with tinsel and lights that no longer lit up because of the rain. "I always say it's better than a rock concert. And it's free."

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Reidler, who lives in Pine Grove, Pennsylvania, arrived at Lancaster Airport around 2:30 p.m. the day before the rally and camped out overnight so she could snag her favorite spot up front. The waiting game, for her, is part of the fun.

"It's just a whole lot of excitement that I don't think you can explain. It brings back a time when our country was just so happy and so positive," she said, comparing the feeling to the time she marched in a bicentennial parade as a Girl Scout when she was 11.

And what of the threat from the coronavirus pandemic?

"I know the statistics. It is a risk," said Reidler, who works in health care. But "the thought of not having him as a president is more of a fear to me than the alternative."

Tears welled in her eyes as she entertained the prospect.

It was a similar story for Terry, the first-in-line Trump fan from northeast Philadelphia. He had never been into politics until this year, when he registered to vote for the first time. Now he's fully committed: He spent three nights camped outside Walter Reed military hospital after Trump was admitted with the coronavirus.

Terry, who is unemployed, said he was hooked after attending his first rally. "It was the most awesome thing I've ever experienced in my life," he said. "What you see on TV and when you see him in person, is two different things. It's almost unexplainable."

To him, it's about the camaraderie: "We're all standing together, we're all smiling, we're all laughing." The community: "There's three or four people sitting in my car that I know from other rallies." And the common purpose: "Just standing up for my country."

That rhetoric was echoed by Bob Wardrop, 55, who arrived from Long Island around 9 p.m. to be "part of the movement." In his telling, he and other Trump supporters were continuing the fight of their "forefathers that fought the British hundreds of years ago."

"We're still fighting that now because they're trying to overthrow us and take over our country," he said.

By morning, the crowd had grown. Thousands snaked around a holding area, with trucks selling funnel cakes and cotton candy. A parking lot several blocks away had transformed into a Trump bazaar where traveling merchants were selling shirts and buttons.

The morning arrivals included Celeste March, 58, from Elverson, Pennsylvania, who had seen Trump once in 2016 and was determined to see him again before Nov. 3.

"There's nothing like it. It's on my bucket list," she said.

And while some dismiss the rallies as an ego project for a president who revels in the adoration of his crowds, campaign spokeswoman Samantha Zager said the events are tools to energize volunteers, drive media coverage and collect voter data.

Indeed, the Trump campaign estimates the events have generated tens of millions of dollars a week in free television coverage. While many rally-goers are loyal Trump supporters who don't need motivation, the campaign said 22% of those who attended the Lititz rally were not Republicans and 21% had not voted in 2016.

George Gigicos, who ran Trump's 2016 advance operation, said the rallies "were hugely important" to Trump's campaigns and presidency.

Like his Twitter account, "it allows him to connect directly with the people without the filter of the media," Gigicos said. "It's him with the people. And it was remarkable to watch and to see how he resonated."

"There's a kind of a populist feel," added Douglas Brinkley, a presidential historian at Rice University. "It's about being part of a spectacle, which is different from a campaign rally, which is typically a little bit more intellectual in presentation."

The phenomenon, he said, is not unique in American history.

He pointed to the 1840 election when William Henry Harrison gave out free alcohol at events nicknamed "booze rallies" during a "last-minute crazy physical push like you see Trump resorting to."

Brinkley tied the events to a long religious tradition tracing from the second great awakening Protestant revival of the early 1800s, when ministers traveled from city to city, to evangelist Billy Graham's crusades.

"A religious fervor gets developed, and it becomes sort of like a cult-based atmosphere," he said.

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Sociologist Arlie Hochschild, who has been studying Trump supporters, agreed that he had tapped into religious imagery that secular liberals often missed.

Trump "is saying, 'Oh I'm surrounded by enemies and look how I'm suffering. And I suffer for you.' So it's got a religious metaphor it's tapping into," she said, combined with elements of a love affair.

"He needs us. He's feeding off of us. So we must be pretty powerful," she said, describing his supporters.

Trump, who is notoriously superstitious, has refrained from weighing in on his future if he loses. But some have speculated he might continue to tour the country, regardless of the outcome.

"Do I see him going out there and rallying Americans behind his country? Absolutely. I think he should," said Gigicos, who believes Trump will win reelection. "He loves America, and he is the Republican Party right now, so why wouldn't he?"

Those who have been part of the movement agree.

"I think it will endure. I think there's going to be people out there that have kind of been brought into the political fray," said James Epley, who worked for Trump's 2016 campaign and now sells merchandise at Trump rallies and online under the "Silent Majority" trademark.

Reidler, who volunteered for the campaign this summer, said that if Trump loses, she plans to "see what I can do to get involved."

"It's sort of filled that void that I haven't had (filled) for a long time," she said. "And it just seems important."

NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week

By The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

Biden tax plan would not raise taxes on majority of Americans

CLAIM: By reversing President Donald Trump's tax cuts, Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden would raise taxes on 82% of Americans.

THE FACTS: A popular but false post on Facebook claims, "By reversing the tax cuts @realDonaldTrump signed into law, Joe Biden would raise taxes on 82% of Americans." The quote is attributed to Ronna McDaniel, chairwoman of the Republican National Committee, who made similar inaccurate claims at the party's convention in August. In fact, Biden says he won't raise taxes on anyone making less than \$400,000, which translates to a small portion of American households. "If you're looking only at individual income taxes and payroll taxes, we find that about 2 percent of all families would see their taxes go up directly under the Biden plan — almost all of them in the top 5 percent by income," John Ricco, a senior tax analyst at the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Wharton Budget Model, told The Associated Press in an email. Biden has also proposed repealing part of Trump's corporate tax break. Trump lowered that tax rate from 35% to 21%, and Biden has proposed raising it to 28%. The false social media posts about Biden raising taxes on 82% of Americans appear to misstate the Penn Wharton Budget Model's analysis of how a corporate tax increase will impact the country. Ricco said the model predicts that 82% of families will be affected long-term by an increase in corporate taxes, but not because their individual taxes would go up. "Instead of seeing their taxes go up directly, those additional families are paying the corporate tax hikes in the form of lower investment returns or lower wages over time," Ricco wrote. For the bottom 90% of American households in terms of income, the Penn Wharton Budget Model predicts the passed down costs of the corporate tax increase in the future would average between \$25 and \$690, depending on income. But for those same households, the model found that tax credits proposed in Biden's plan would more than offset those costs on average.

— Associated Press writer Jude Joffe-Block reported from Phoenix.

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False posts spread about ballots without signatures in Miami-Dade County

CLAIM: In Florida's Miami-Dade County, 23% of mail-in ballots have been rejected for missing signatures.

THE FACTS: The correct number is about 0.5%. About 2,265 of the 433,235 mail-in ballots that had been submitted to the Miami-Dade County Elections Department by Thursday morning were flagged for rejection because of missing signatures, according to Robert Rodriguez, assistant deputy supervisor of elections for the department. Another 212 had mismatched signatures. The erroneous 23% figure was shared widely on Twitter. "Miami Dade reporting 23% of early ballots being REJECTED for missing signatures," wrote one Twitter user in a post that was retweeted more than 4,600 times on Thursday and later deleted. Actor and activist George Takei shared a similar tweet with the false information on Thursday. It is unclear what fueled the false claims around the number of ballots without signatures, but they surfaced after an opinion article published in the Tampa Bay Times on Oct. 16 pointed out a different discrepancy related to Miami-Dade County ballots. "Although Miami-Dade County accounts for only 7.2% of mail ballots cast by Florida voters, it accounts for nearly 23% of the state's mail ballots received without signatures," the article said. Those numbers were current as of Oct. 16, according to Daniel Smith, a political science professor at the University of Florida and one of the article's authors. As of Thursday, he said, Miami-Dade County accounts for 10.3% of the state's total ballots and about 1 in 4 of the state's ballots with missing signatures. Smith said Miami-Dade County may be overrepresented among counties for ballots without signatures because it is home to many naturalized citizens from around the world who may have difficulty reading voting instructions in the languages provided. However, social media users spreading the recent false claims are "completely misrepresenting" those numbers, Smith added. There is still time for voters in Miami-Dade County or elsewhere in Florida to correct missing or mismatched signatures on their mailed ballots. Election officials notify voters whose signatures are missing or don't match, and any such voter can complete a cure affidavit and return it to their county elections department by 5 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 5, according to state officials.

—Associated Press writer Ali Swenson reported from Seattle.

Harris did not violate campaigning laws in Ohio

CLAIM: Video shows Democratic vice presidential candidate Kamala Harris committing a crime by campaigning outside a polling place in Cleveland, Ohio.

THE FACTS: Ohio law prohibits engaging in any kind of election campaigning within 10 feet of any elector in line to vote and within 100 feet of the polling site entrance. Harris did not violate this law when she made an Oct. 24 appearance outside the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections in downtown Cleveland where voters were lined up to vote, election officials said. Under Ohio law, two small U.S. flags are placed 100 feet from the entrance at polling locations. These flags act as a barrier for the neutral zone where campaigning is prohibited. Video footage shows Harris standing on East 30th Street surrounded by Secret Service agents addressing voters standing in line. "Thank you for standing in this line," she says while using a microphone to address early voters. "Thank you for voting and voting early. Your vote is your voice, your voice is your vote. There is so much at stake. Don't let anyone ever take your power. The power of your voice is so important." According to county election officials, Harris did not violate Ohio electioneering laws. "The Director and several CCBOE staff were outside during the majority of her stop and witnessed no violations of Ohio's electioneering laws," the office said in a statement. "Senator Harris did not come onto CCBOE property." In addition, police officers were on site to manage traffic and the flow of voters. They also assist staff with enforcing the neutral zone around the polling site. No assistance was needed by the officers during Harris' visit, election officials said. Posts online showing video of Harris outside the polling site suggest that she broke the law by standing outside and talking to voters. "Here's video of Kamala Harris committing a crime - campaigning at a polling place," one Twitter post said. Sabrina Singh, Harris' press secretary, confirmed to the AP that Harris stood behind the boundary while talking to voters. "Senator Harris enjoyed visiting Cleveland on Saturday to get out the vote, including stopping at a polling location to greet voters, where she stood behind the 100 foot boundary line beyond the neutral zone."

— Associated Press writer Beatrice Dupuy reported from New York.

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Delaware mansion in photo is not owned by Biden

CLAIM: Photo shows "Biden's huge Delaware mansion," one of the largest in the state.

THE FACTS: A Facebook post circulating widely on Tuesday falsely claimed a grand mansion in a suburb of Wilmington, Delaware, belongs to the Democratic presidential candidate. "Biden's huge Delaware mansion, one of largest in the state!" read the caption on the post, which had been viewed more than 169,000 times by Tuesday. The photo showed an immense driveway leading up to a sprawling stone estate. A reverse-image search reveals the pictured home is a nearly 21,000-square-foot property in Greenville, Delaware, that's currently on the market for an asking price of \$8.6 million. It's probably one of the largest houses in the state, according to Rory Burkhart, a realtor for the property. But it doesn't belong to Biden, he told the AP in an interview. The Bidens call a different home in Wilmington their main residence. The family also has a vacation house in Rehoboth Beach, the AP has reported. This isn't the first time untrue claims have emerged about the former vice president's real estate ventures. The AP debunked posts earlier this month that falsely claimed Biden lived in another mansion in Wilmington. Biden did buy that property for \$185,000 in the 1970s, but he sold it in 1996 for \$1.2 million.

— Ali Swenson

Joe Biden has not stopped campaigning in person

CLAIM: Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden will not hold any more in-person campaign events before the election.

THE FACTS: With just over a week to go until the U.S. presidential election, social media users and conservative news sites were falsely claiming the Democratic candidate was done with in-person campaigning. "BREAKING REPORT: Joe Biden ENDS IN-PERSON campaigning, 9 DAYS BEFORE the election," read one tweet shared more than 8,000 times. In fact, Biden had several in-person campaign stops planned as the posts circulated, including a trip to Georgia on Oct. 27 and a trip to Florida on Oct. 29. President Donald Trump and his supporters have frequently mocked Biden for holding events virtually during the pandemic and for taking time off the campaign trail to prepare for the presidential debates. Some news stories sharing the false claim cited a tweet from JT Lewis, a Trump supporter and gun rights activist who lost a brother in the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012. Lewis tweeted without evidence on Sunday that Biden said he would not do any more in-person campaigning for the remaining nine days until the election. That tweet was later deleted.

— Ali Swenson

Flu cases are not down 98% globally

CLAIM: New data shows flu cases are down 98% around the globe.

THE FACTS: Social media posts making this claim are providing incomplete information, relying solely on data from countries in the Southern Hemisphere like New Zealand and Australia. The Northern Hemisphere has yet to experience its full flu season. But while the claim isn't true, there is some good news to be found here. Experts say that extensive measures taken in these countries from mask wearing, lockdowns and social distancing have contributed to low flu numbers this year. While some posts online did not cite evidence for the figures, others pointed to newly released data from the World Health Organization to suggest that flu cases are down by 98% around the world. The WHO has not said that. In its latest influenza update based on flu cases reported from Sept. 29 to Oct. 11, WHO found that global influenza numbers are lower than expected for this time of year. "Although the southern hemisphere seems to have been largely spared, we are still very concerned about the northern hemisphere influenza season just starting," Dr. Margaret Harris, a WHO spokeswoman, said in an email. Medical professionals in the U.S. have been warning of a "twindemic," an overlap of influenza and COVID-19, which have similar symptoms. "In the areas where people properly wear a proper mask, we will see very low rates of COVID-19 and influenza," said Dr. Gregory Poland, infectious diseases expert and head of vaccine research at the Mayo Clinic. "In the areas where people are not compliant with mask wearing and distancing guidelines, we

will see both diseases, with COVID-19 more prominent because of its inherent greater infectiousness." In New Zealand, where there was a strict approach to the pandemic, officials reported 25 coronavirus deaths in a country with a population of about five million. Officials there have been applauded for their handling of the coronavirus pandemic. The country took early action against the virus and has worked to almost eliminate community transmission. "The efforts that were undertaken to reduce the spread of SARS-COV2 were also effective at reducing the flu," said Dr. Edward Belongia, director for the Center for Clinical Epidemiology & Population Health at the Marshfield Clinic Research Institute, in Wisconsin. "They are both respiratory viruses that spread in similar ways." Medical experts like Belongia warn that the U.S. has not initiated steps like mask wearing and lockdowns on the same level as Australia and New Zealand to control the pandemic so the flu remains a large concern. "Flu could be a very real problem again this year as it was last year," Poland said. "Don't neglect your flu vaccine."

— Beatrice Dupuy

Find all AP Fact Checks here: <https://apnews.com/APFactCheck>

Election emerges as referendum on race relations in America

By KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Every day feels like a raw wound for Omari Barksdale.

His sister, Laneeka Barksdale, died of COVID-19 in late March in Detroit — and since then, so have more than 228,000 Americans. Many were Black Americans whose communities were disproportionately devastated by the virus.

Omari Barksdale, a Black man, watched with alarm as the toll of the country's racial injustice mounted. People of color bore the brunt of pandemic-related job losses. Police shot and killed Breonna Taylor inside her Kentucky home, and a Minneapolis police officer pressed a knee into George Floyd's neck for nearly eight minutes as Floyd gasped, "I can't breathe," in his final moments.

The convergence of the pandemic, joblessness and police brutality has forced the U.S. to confront its centuries-old legacy of systemic racism this year. And for Barksdale and many Black Americans, it's turned next week's presidential election into a referendum on the future of race relations, an opportunity to take steps toward healing or the potential of a deeper divide.

"It feels like half of me was taken away," said Barksdale, who, in the weeks after his sister's death, began leading a team of volunteers canvassing Michigan voters. "For many years, we've had this commentary about how far we've come, but if you look at the landscape and dynamics right now of America, we're back in the '50s and '60s. The reasons for protesting are the same now as they were then: for the protection of Black lives, the opportunity for Black lives, and the understanding and value of Black lives."

Black voters will be decisive in shaping next week's results. Democrat Joe Biden is relying on strong turnout among Black voters in cities such as Detroit, Philadelphia and Milwaukee to tip critical swing states in his direction. President Donald Trump, meanwhile, is focusing most of his effort on last-minute appeals to his core base of white voters.

As of Thursday, more than 79 million votes had been cast in the 2020 general election, with Black voters making up almost 9% of that total, according to an Associated Press analysis of data from the political data firm L2. In North Carolina, a battleground state seeing high turnout across the board, 60% of Black registered voters have already cast a ballot.

"The soul of the nation is at risk," longtime civil rights leader the Rev. Al Sharpton said in an interview. "Another four years of Trump would completely set us back and the advancements that we've made towards equal rights, human rights and civil rights. It would take us 20 or 30 years, a generation, to get back what he would cement."

The election-year reckoning is the culmination of centuries of inequity and racism that far predates Trump's political career. But Trump has pulled at the nation's racial divide throughout his presidency.

He blamed "both sides" for 2017 violence between white supremacists and anti-racism protesters in

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Charlottesville, Virginia, and wondered why the U.S. was admitting so many immigrants from "shithole countries" like African nations. He said four Democratic congresswomen of color should go back to the "broken and crime infested" countries they came from, ignoring the fact that all of the women are American citizens and three were born in the U.S.

Trump was criticized in September for his initial refusal to outright condemn a far-right fascist group during a debate with Biden.

"Donald Trump is an unabashed racist who not only revels in his ability to mock, scorn and create harm, he denies any culpability for the consequences," said Stacey Abrams, a voting rights activist and former Georgia gubernatorial candidate.

"I fear for our communities if he retains the seat of the presidency for four more years. I also have a deep worry that his continued occupation of that seat would result in those who intend us harm who will feel that they have carte blanche to do so," said Abrams, who is Black. "My deep hope is that the demographic changes in our country, coupled with the consciences of white Americans who understand that he is wrong, they will actually do what's right."

Trump points to criminal justice reform, opportunity zones and funding for historically Black colleges and universities as examples of what he's done for Black Americans, but many critics argue his claims are exaggerated or undermined by his comments.

After a summer of nationwide unrest that led to millions marching in the streets of America, Trump has billed himself as a leader who will restore "law and order" — an attempt to appeal to white grievances and allay white suburban fears.

Just this week, Trump's presidential adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner said the president wants to help Black people in America, but they have to "want to be successful" for his policies to work, a comment that recalled racist stereotypes of Black Americans.

"What we see is when racism goes unchecked and becomes institutionalized publicly and becomes a part of our administration," said Jessica Byrd, who leads the Movement for Black Lives' Electoral Justice Project and The Frontline, a multiracial coalition effort to galvanize voters. "We've seen firsthand the way that a vocal minority can become an extremist power building faction."

Biden has his own vulnerabilities on race. He has apologized for the poor treatment of Anita Hill when she testified before his Senate committee in 1991 to accuse then-Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment. He's also expressed regret about provisions of a 1994 crime bill he supported that has been blamed for incarcerating a generation of Black men.

But he's put Black voters at the center of his 2020 campaign. His presidential hopes were rescued in February when Black voters in South Carolina rallied around him, powering him through Super Tuesday wins and helping deliver the Democratic nomination.

Unlike Trump, he has acknowledged systemic racism and has pledged to address it.

"Donald Trump fails to condemn white supremacy, doesn't believe that systemic racism is a problem, and won't say that Black lives matter," Biden said Tuesday in Atlanta. "We know Black lives matter."

In the final stretch of the campaign, Black voters are organizing to make sure their votes are counted. LaTosha Brown, the co-founder of Black Voters Matter Fund, said her organization has traveled across 15 states to galvanize voters, including in rural counties and smaller cities that are often ignored.

"America is at its tipping point," Brown said. "We're in a perfect storm of being at the intersection of a health pandemic, an intersection of a lot of uncertainty around the political future of this country, and the economic future of this country and blatant open racism. All of that is forcing us to deal with the evils of this country that we have not dealt with, which is quite frankly sexism and racism."

But some voters of color are still making up their minds. Victor Gomez, a 39-year-old Latino man in Hayward, California, said the pandemic and immigration are top concerns.

He doesn't feel like Trump or Biden has addressed issues that matter most to Latinos. He's still planning to vote, but hasn't decided whom he'll back.

"A lot of people have friends who are immigrants, and they get discriminated against because they

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don't have papers and they struggle," Gomez said. "The (president) says that he supports Latinos and immigrants, but I haven't seen anything from him but putting us down."

But matters involving race are not only at the forefront for voters of color. As they've watched several forms of racial injustice collide this year, many white Americans have been forced to grapple with uncomfortable truths about racism.

Detroit resident Colton Dale, a 27-year-old white man who is the vice president of the Grosse Pointe Democratic Club and a lifelong Democrat, said he's had conversations with family members and co-workers who support Trump. He's spent time trying to convince them, as well as potential voters he encounters, of the "chaos" Trump's presidency has caused.

"I think people, even Republicans and his supporters, they know who he is, especially four years down the road," Dale said. "I just try to draw a contrast and say that we would be living in a better and brighter America under a Joe Biden administration as opposed to another four years of Trump. People are just ready to end this nightmare."

The Biden campaign has also spent a significant amount of time and resources to connect with younger voters, who turned out in droves over the summer to protest police brutality and racism.

For the past several months, Tylik McMillan, the National Action Network's national director of youth and college, has focused on educating first-time voters, college students and young voters who have been disengaged with the political process about what's at stake.

"The reality is when I step out of these doors, we're still just Black in America, and I can be the next George Floyd. I can be the next Ahmaud Arbery. And to have a leader at the highest office not understand that racism is real in this country, it's a problem," said McMillan, 24.

But regardless of the election's outcome, America will be left to grapple with the "fault lines" and fractures of racism and inequity that have been made clear.

"Nov. 3 will be a referendum on Black lives, it will be a referendum on structural change, and will be a referendum on whether, when we are experiencing all of this chaos, are we going to look to one another for solutions and embrace one another or are we going to look towards one another with fear and suspicion?" said Maurice Mitchell, the national director of Working Families Party, who is also a leader of The Frontline. "The movement, now the largest social movement in our country's history, will be the story of 2020, whatever the outcome."

Kat Stafford is a member of the AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Follow Stafford on Twitter at http://twitter.com/kat__stafford.

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/>.

Parisians flee, sidewalks empty as France enters lockdown

By THOMAS ADAMSON and NICOLAS GARRIGA Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Parisians fleeing for the countryside jammed the roads ahead of France's lockdown to slow the spread of resurgent coronavirus infections, and there was only a sprinkling of people hurrying along city sidewalks Friday as the nationwide restrictions went into effect.

Dystopian images of logjams that stretched for 435 miles (700 kilometers) at one point Thursday evening — exacerbated by the upcoming long holiday weekend — were a grim sign of a return to the dark days of the spring, when virus cases first swelled in Europe and many countries kept their citizens inside for weeks on end. With infections hitting record levels in some countries, many are now resorting to severe restrictions again.

In France, concerns were growing that rising infections would swamp the country's health system, so authorities ordered another four-week lockdown beginning Friday. Many areas of the French capital resembled a regular lazy weekend morning — on what would normally have been a bustling weekday.

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Those who were out frequently clutched permission forms proving they had an exemption that allowed them to be on streets.

The only places that were busy were grocery stores and markets as people stockpiled food and other necessities.

All of France's 67 million people have been ordered to stay at home at all times with no visitors, or risk steep fines or prosecution. There are a handful of exceptions, such as being allowed out for one hour of exercise a day within a half-mile (1 kilometer) of home, to go to medical appointments, to a place of work, or to shop for essential goods. Restaurants and cafés are shuttered, apart from those that offer takeout.

"Going to friends' houses, having friends over and moving around for anything other than the reasons set out" will be impossible, Prime Minister Jean Castex explained firmly on Thursday.

That will hit hard for many.

"It's not nice because I left my country to enjoy the experience of living in another country," said Laura Beimberg, 28, an intern at cosmetics giant L'Oreal who is from Mexico. "And this experience of being between four walls, far away from family and friends is so hard."

French President Emmanuel Macron implemented the lockdown as a last resort to curb the steep spike in infections across the country, where new daily cases are currently averaging around 50,000. That means that, on a per capita basis, France is seeing about two and a half times the number of new cases each day that the United States is.

But France is not alone. Many of its European neighbors are experiencing rising infections, some even beyond what they saw in the spring. In Belgium, the average number of daily cases is around 150 per 100,000 people, compared to France's approximately 62.

The government in Belgium is meeting Friday to consider even tougher restrictions on movement that would amount to a quasi-lockdown. Germany, which is also seeing an increase in cases though on a much less dramatic scale, agreed this week to a monthlong shutdown of restaurants, bars, theaters and other leisure facilities, dubbed "lockdown light."

Such measures have taken a brutal toll on economies around Europe, and French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire gave grim predictions during an interview on France-Inter, raising his estimate for the depth of the recession. He forecasted an 11% fall in GDP this year.

French residents could perhaps be forgiven for thinking it was groundhog day, just a few months after they emerged from one of the strictest lockdowns in Europe.

Some were accepting of the reality.

"We just have to live with it. You have resign yourself to it," said Yoann Boullé, 28, a sanguine evening manager at a Parisian brasserie.

But many Parisians, who had had enough last time around, didn't wait to be confined to their typically cramped apartments for four weeks.

Carlo Ponti, a 54-year-old interior decorator, was among those who fled Paris, but he did it by train. He called the departure of the Parisians a "historic exodus."

He left Friday morning with his husband after finding all trains were booked Thursday night.

"The minute the French president gave his speech (announcing a lockdown), the entire national train website went down, was overloaded. Everyone wanted to book to get away," Ponti said.

He plans to stay in his second home in the French region of Burgundy until over Christmas.

"During lockdown, the quality of life in the capital is terrible and so everyone who can do, tries to get away," he said.

Highways around the capital descended into scenes of traffic chaos during the night as residents fled the capital. French media reported that the logjams were more than double the usual in the region around Paris, reaching near record levels as many headed for country or family homes with more space.

The traffic was worsened by the fact that many were also leaving for the Nov. 1 All Saints' Day holiday.

Macron said that authorities would be "tolerant" about families returning from the holiday on Monday, but otherwise interregional travel is strictly prohibited.

Adamson reported from Leeds, England.

Curious about going to a movie theater? 7 things to know

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

It's been over two months since movie theaters started reopening in the U.S., but there is still a fair amount of consumer confusion about moviegoing in the COVID-19 era.

Movie studios and theater owners have found themselves in the unique position of having to re-educate audiences on how to see movies now. Warner Bros. even recently revamped the website for "Tenet," Christopher Nolan's sci-fi espionage thriller, to help take some of the mystery out of going back to the movies.

So what do you need to know about going to the theater?

WHERE ARE THEATERS OPEN?

Indoor movie theaters remain open in most states, except New Mexico, although some are on a county-by-county basis, including California, Massachusetts, Maryland, Hawaii, Washington, Oregon and Wisconsin. Last weekend, theaters were cleared to open begin opening in some New York State counties at under 50% capacity and this weekend San Francisco will join in too. New York City, Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles remain closed, however.

WHAT THEATERS ARE OPEN?

Regal theaters are currently closed in the U.S, and independent cinemas vary by location, but AMC Theaters (the nation's biggest chain) and Cinemark are largely up and running. Approximately 54% of screens are open in the U.S., according to the National Association of Theater Owners.

ARE THERE NEW MOVIES?

Yes, there are movies being released in theaters almost every week, although there have been quite a few major fall movies, like "Black Widow," "No Time To Die" and "West Side Story," that have moved to 2021.

The biggest release since reopening began in late August is "Tenet," which is still playing on around 1,800 screens. Current offerings widely available also include the Liam Neeson thriller, "Honest Thief," a PG-13 horror movie with Gillian Jacobs called "Come Play," the R-rated horror "The Empty Man" and the comedy "The War With Grandpa" with Robert De Niro. There are also "retro" releases, like "The Nightmare Before Christmas," "Hocus Pocus" and "Monsters Inc," which are available for \$5 tickets at AMC. And this weekend, Fathom Events is bringing "Apollo 13" back to theaters for its 25th anniversary.

WHAT SAFETY PRECAUTIONS ARE THEATERS TAKING?

During the long shutdown, the National Association of Theater Owners helped spearhead the development of a sweeping set of protocols and guidelines called CinemaSafe that over 400 companies representing over 3,100 locations have committed to. They include mandatory masks for employees and patrons, social distancing, reduced capacity, mobile ticketing, modified concessions, air filtration, employee training and enhanced cleaning. Anyone not feeling well is also asked to stay home.

CAN YOU PURCHASE AND CONSUME CONCESSIONS?

Yes, in most locations. San Francisco has a concession ban and Chicago has recently suspended dining and bar services at theaters. Customers are generally allowed to remove their masks while consuming concessions.

WHAT ARE VIEWING OPTIONS?

There are a few options for seeing movies. You can buy tickets regularly, wear a mask and social distance in the theater (theaters with assigned seating do this automatically and others have taped off seats and rows). Or, some chains like AMC and Cinemark and some theaters are renting screens for private viewing parties for up to 20 people. Pricing varies by movie (new movies tend to start at \$149 whereas back catalog classics can be \$99) and location. Cinemark is even offering "private gaming party" pricing (\$99 for 2 hours) where you can play your own video game on the big screen.

IS IT SAFE?

Health experts recommend wearing masks and maintaining social distance when outside and avoid going out when sick. Indoor spaces like movie theaters, restaurants and malls mean prolonged exposure, which could mean greater risk.

"At this point, with cases surging, I'm not sure that being indoors for two hours with folks is a really good idea," said Lisa M. Lee, a public health expert at Virginia Tech.

Private viewing parties — with safeguards — might be a way to lessen the risk, however.

"If you have, for example, a family or a pandemic pod that you stayed with and everyone has agreed to be safe and to maintain physical distance and masking and all the precautions, that could be an option," she said.

But in general, drive-ins or an outdoor screening "would certainly be a lot safer," Lee said.

"We're never going to have a zero-risk situation with this because we have far too much community spread at this point, so we all have to pick carefully what we're willing to risk and that's an individual decision," Lee continued. "But it's also really important that we avoid putting other people at risk, which is the issue in a closed space with other people that you don't know are infected."

Follow AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr on Twitter: www.twitter.com/ldbahr

On pandemic 'learning loss,' schools look forward, not back

By PATRICK WALL of Chalkbeat and KANTELE FRANKO of The Associated Press Chalkbeat and Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — A complete picture has yet to emerge of how much learning was lost by students during the pandemic. That's all right with educators like Superintendent Craig Broeren, whose top concern is figuring out where each student stands now.

Wisconsin Rapids, his small school district in central Wisconsin, isn't administering any special test to measure how much districtwide progress stalled after classrooms closed in March. Such data wouldn't capture a student's unique circumstances or point a way forward, Broeren said.

Instead, the district is sticking with its usual fall assessments. Those tests can roughly estimate learning loss since the spring, but leaders say they are most useful for pinpointing what students know now and tracking how much they learn.

"Frankly, what we lost is less of an issue than where a kid is starting from," Broeren said, "and using that to inform instruction."

That approach is the norm nationwide. Most states aren't requiring all districts to administer uniform tests to measure students' slippage. Rather, districts generally are using the tests they give each fall to guide instruction for the school year and, in many cases, also assessing students' mental health and well-being -- an approach favored by many experts and educators who say a rush to quantify learning loss could demoralize students and teachers.

But as many schools continue distance learning or brace for more virus-related closures that could further slow progress, the patchwork approach to testing this fall worries some advocates and policymakers who say it's difficult to plan academic recovery this year without consistent data across districts and states.

"We're in this data black hole," said Kyle Rosenkrans, executive director of the New Jersey Children's Foundation, an advocacy group that plans to hire researchers to estimate how much students have fallen behind. "You can't prescribe solutions unless you have a sound diagnosis of the scale of the problem."

Using data from past school closures, researchers have estimated some students might have lost several months to a year's worth of academic growth after school buildings around the country closed last March. Some policymakers say data is needed urgently to support districts with the largest gaps or plan more drastic statewide responses, such as extending the school year.

Among those calling for a more aggressive effort to measure that loss is New Jersey Sen. M. Teresa Ruiz, a Democrat who co-sponsored a bill to require testing to assess academic and social-emotional needs and to require the state to analyze the results.

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New Jersey offered new diagnostic tests to help districts identify students needing extra support, but those aren't designed to measure statewide trends, and most of its districts are already using other assessments.

"The fact that it's optional and they're not requiring the data to go back to them, it just misses the whole intent of what is critically needed," Ruiz said. "We need to know what has happened during this pandemic."

Some places are starting to get a partial glimpse of the pandemic's academic toll. Idaho, which requires grades K-3 to take a fall reading test, found an overall decline in reading skills. And the Washington, D.C., school system likewise discovered a significant drop in the share of young pupils meeting reading targets.

Many educators have braced for such results. Yvette Gonzalez, a fashion design teacher at a high school in El Paso, Texas, said many of her students have had to take on jobs or care for siblings during the pandemic.

"When they're constantly thinking about COVID and how to survive on a day-to-day basis, a lot of them are not worried about how they're going to finish their work," she said.

In Newark, New Jersey, teacher Wirmarie Morales said her own son, a high school senior, worries he'll have to take remedial classes in college to make up for material he missed. And her fourth-grade bilingual students appeared to start this school year with less confidence and fluency in English than usual.

"They don't know basic, simple things that they would normally know," she said. "It is time they lost that maybe, at some point, we can't get back."

To measure learning loss on a large scale, researchers need recent test results from across districts, but consistent data will be hard to come by.

States canceled their annual exams last spring at the start of the pandemic, and most are letting districts decide whether and how to test this fall. Few states appear to be collecting the results of those tests.

"It's information that everybody wants to have," said Daniel Domenech, executive director of AASA, the School Superintendents Association. "But, right now, the priority is focusing on kids' needs."

Educators highlight other arguments for avoiding wide-scale testing this fall.

They worry it could lead to a focus on reviewing past topics, at the expense of teaching new material. Students who faced hardships in the spring or couldn't access online classes might be misidentified as academically challenged. And testing could eat up instructional time and put more pressure on students already stressed by the pandemic.

Parents and educators in Portland, Oregon, cited such concerns in opposing planned diagnostic testing, which the district suspended to focus instead on "engagement and instruction." Teachers also raised concerns that having students take tests from home could skew results.

"We know that students don't have equal opportunities to have good Wi-Fi connections, high-quality technology, a quiet working environment," said Elizabeth Thiel, president of the Portland Association of Teachers. "What is the outcome when we are using that data to make any assumptions about our students?"

Several states that recommend testing this fall, such as California and Ohio, provided lists of approved assessments, with a focus on diagnostic tests that deliver quick, student-specific results that teachers can use to tailor their lessons and target students who need extra help.

Wisconsin, too, favors teacher-driven assessments and urged districts to "not focus on large scale gap-finding assessments or diagnostics."

Some school districts are tweaking their usual fall assessments.

Dayton Leadership Academies, a K-8 charter school in Dayton, Ohio, began classes remotely but staggered appointments for students to visit school for several hours of assessments. That allowed kids to be tested in a controlled environment and meet their teachers, Principal Tess Mitchner Asinjo said.

"It felt more like real school," she said.

The results brought instructors some relief. More students were categorized as being behind their grade level, but the numbers weren't nearly as bad as they'd anticipated.

Schools in Camden, New Jersey, planned to use teacher-created quizzes and external tests such as the i-Ready online assessment tool, and possibly the assessments the state created to help districts identify

learning gaps, Superintendent Katrina McCombs said.

"My gut tells me we are going to take a hit in some of our skills," she said.

The assessments, she said, will allow the district "to drill down in a laserlike way to see what those skill gaps are and how we can rapidly close those gaps."

Camden and other districts plan to use the data to design districtwide interventions, such as after-school programs and academic "boot camps" for the students furthest behind.

Many districts are comparing students' fall scores with midyear tests taken before schools closed, which will give a rough idea of how they've fared during the pandemic. But to precisely measure learning loss, districts would need to compare the change in each student's scores this year to their estimated academic growth in a normal year, said John Gatta, CEO of ECRA Group, an education research and analytics firm.

Most school systems probably can't do such an analysis themselves, Gatta said.

There is some hope that federally mandated testing in the spring could provide a more complete picture of the so-called COVID-19 slide. Those tests might reveal whether certain districts or racial or ethnic groups lost more ground than others, but the results won't be available until fall 2021.

That leaves policymakers without data they can use this school year, Massachusetts board of education member Michael Moriarty said at a recent meeting. The state offered free diagnostic tests, he said, but its education department doesn't have the authority to make districts give the tests or submit the results.

"We're flying blind right now," he said.

Franko reported from Columbus, Ohio.

On virus, Trump and health advisers go their separate ways

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A multi-state coronavirus surge in the countdown to Election Day has exposed a clear split between President Donald Trump's bullish embrace of a return to normalcy and urgent public warnings from the government's top health officials.

It's the opposite of what usually happens in a public health crisis, because political leaders tend to repeat and amplify the recommendations of their health experts, not short-circuit them. "It's extremely unusual for there to be simultaneous contrary messaging," said John Auerbach, who heads the nonpartisan Trust for America's Health.

The Republican president and the health officials appear to be moving farther apart since White House chief of staff Mark Meadows declared last Sunday "we're not going to control the pandemic."

Since then, Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary Adm. Brett Giroir has done a round of interviews warning that the country's situation is "tenuous" but that Americans can indeed control the virus by practicing what he calls the "3W's" — watching your distance from others, wearing a mask and frequently washing your hands.

White House coronavirus adviser Dr. Deborah Birx, touring the states to raise prevention awareness, lamented in Bismarck, North Dakota, that she hadn't seen such disdain for mask wearing elsewhere. "We find that deeply unfortunate because you don't know who's infected and you don't know if you're infected yourself," she told reporters. The state's positive test rate is 11%, above the level indicating widespread transmission.

HHS Secretary Alex Azar, for his part, has a profile photo of himself masked up on his Twitter account.

But Trump continues to ridicule masks and mask-wearing as he insists the U.S. has turned the corner on the virus. At a reelection rally Wednesday in Bullhead City, Arizona, the president painted a sardonic word picture of left-coast Californians trying to eat through their masks.

"How about California ... where you are supposed to eat with the mask (and) can't take it off?" Trump said. "You see people and, boy, you know when you have spaghetti and meat sauce ... you walk out it looks like you got into a fight."

That's not actually what the California governor's office recently recommended to restaurant goers.

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The advice was to keep the mask on when not eating, or “between bites.” An illustration showed a diner masked while reading the menu and, later, while wiping her hands with a napkin after eating.

It might all be considered political theater if the nation’s situation weren’t so serious.

“We are in a third wave,” said Marta Wosinska of the Duke-Margolis Center for Health Policy. “We are seeing pretty dramatic increases in the number of people hospitalized and an uptick in deaths.”

The White House insists there’s no conflict between Trump and the health advisers who back in the spring shared the briefing room podium with the president on many an occasion.

“As the president has said, the cure cannot be worse than the disease and this country should be open armed with best practices, such as social distancing, good hygiene, and face coverings, to limit the spread of COVID-19,” spokesman Judd Deere said in a statement.

The health officials do not invoke Trump in their warnings, and they sidestep questions that might lead them into anything that could be perceived as a direct criticism. But their message reflects a different view of reality than what’s coming from the president and senior White House officials.

“I wasn’t an English major, but ‘tenuous’ seems like the right word” to describe the condition of the country, Giroir said this week on NBC. The surge can be controlled by going back to the “3W’s” but “if we don’t do those things it may force local officials or government officials in the states to have more draconian measures.”

The numbers bear him out.

According to data through Thursday from Johns Hopkins University, the seven-day rolling average for daily new cases in the U.S. rose over the past two weeks from 53,412 to 76,590. That marks a return to levels not seen since the summer surge.

The seven-day rolling average for daily new deaths rose over the past two weeks from 704 to 803.

Fifteen states have test positive rates of 10% or higher, considered an indicator of widespread transmission. The picture is not all bleak because there are also states that have succeeded in curbing previous surges.

But test positive rates have been rising in 44 states, according to the COVID Tracking Project.

Giroir also said the facts contradict the notion that that the U.S. has more cases because it tests so many people. That’s an assertion often heard from Trump.

“We do believe, and the data show, cases are going up — it’s not just a function of testing,” he said on NBC. Rising numbers of hospitalizations and deaths confirm that.

Trump’s clashes with science and the scientists around him have been a running story throughout the pandemic. He’s often lashed out at Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government’s top infectious disease specialist. He’s called CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield “confused” about the timeline for the availability of vaccines.

But the split is only growing wider.

With the arrival of cold weather, the virus risk is greater because people will spend time indoors where it can spread more readily. Contradictory messages from the top don’t help.

“The risk is enormous,” said Auerbach. “We are literally talking about lives being at stake.”

‘Very confident’: NYC hospitals prepare for virus resurgence

By JIM MUSTIAN and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Like battle-hardened veterans, New York City hospitals and nursing homes are bracing for a potential resurgence of coronavirus patients, drawing on lessons learned in the spring when the outbreak brought the nation’s largest city to its knees.

The new playbook derives from the apocalyptic days of March and April, when testing and resources were scarce, emergency rooms overflowed, and funeral homes stacked corpses in refrigerated trailers.

Those insights, however hard won, make it far less likely that the city’s hospitals would collapse under a second wave of COVID-19, health care leaders said.

Even without a vaccine, doctors are touting increasingly effective coronavirus treatments, three-month supplies of personal protective equipment and contingency staffing plans.

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Similar preparations are underway at New York's hard hit nursing homes, which accounted for a staggering percentage of the state's coronavirus deaths.

"We didn't even have testing in February when there was so much transmission," Dr. Mitchell Katz, head of the city's public hospital system, said in an interview. "I can't see how we'd ever have the same situation that we had in March and April, but we are preparing for that possibility anyway."

Not only has critical care improved, Katz said, but coronavirus patients also are generally "not getting as intense as an exposure as they once did because of the wearing of masks." New cases also are afflicting younger people, who are less likely than older patients to need hospitalization.

"Our hospitals are still quieter than they would have been a year ago because people are avoiding care out of concerns about COVID," Katz added. "We can have several hundred additional patients and still not be full."

New York has recorded nearly 37,000 new COVID-19 infections in October and is on pace to have more than double the number of people sickened this month as fell ill in September.

But so far, that increase has led to only a modest uptick in hospitalizations. On average, about 45 people a day have been admitted to New York City hospitals each day in October, city statistics show, up from an average of 29 per day in September.

That compares to an average 1,600 per day during the worst two weeks of the pandemic in March and April — a time when the state also recorded its highest daily death tolls and ambulance sirens became an ominous soundtrack to the city's out-of-control pandemic.

Last week, by contrast, the city's 11 public hospitals had six total intubated patients — down from a peak of 960.

The relative quiet stands in stark contrast to hospitals in Europe and the Mountain West that have been increasingly overwhelmed by new surges.

"The measures that were put in place seem to be working," said Dr. Fritz Francois, chief medical officer at NYU Langone Health, alluding to widespread mask use, social distancing and authorities' focus on hot spots in pockets of the city.

"Even if we see something of a resurgence," Francois said, "the outlook is that it's not going to be similar to what we experienced in the spring."

Still, hospitals around the city are rewriting policies and stocking up on supplies while closely monitoring fluctuations in statewide case and computer modeling to decide whether and when to activate contingency plans.

The city's public hospital system is installing new cameras and microphones in patient rooms to reduce exposure for nurses. NYU Langone has reduced to a matter of hours the time it needs to open a COVID-dedicated unit. NewYork-Presbyterian has stockpiled ventilators, even as doctors now recognize that anesthesia machines can be made to function as ventilators in a pinch.

"I'm very confident that with any resurgence, we could deal with it," said Dr. Steven Corwin, chief executive officer of NewYork-Presbyterian, which has increased its number of intensive care beds from 450 to 600.

Anxiety levels remain high at New York nursing homes, where the coronavirus spread rampantly for months. New York nursing homes reported 713 confirmed and suspected COVID-19 cases for the four weeks ending Oct. 11, according to federal Medicare data, up from 379 over the previous four weeks.

Seeking to head off new outbreaks, state health officials restricted visitation to nursing homes that can demonstrate they are "COVID-free" for 14 days, meaning no positive tests among residents or staff — a requirement nursing home proprietors said has been exceedingly difficult to meet, given the coming and going of staff from the facilities.

Earlier this week, New York banned visitation to most adult care facilities within coronavirus "red zones" where infection rates have ticked upward.

"The majority of nursing homes do not have adequate staffing to meet the basic clinical needs of their residents under normal circumstances," said Richard Mollot, executive director of the Long Term Care Community Coalition, a nonprofit advocacy group.

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"We believe that this problem has been exacerbated by the pandemic, and have not heard anything of nursing homes as a whole working to address this problem in the face of current needs, no matter a second wave," he said.

Still, like hospitals, nursing homes contend they are better poised for a potential second wave than they were the first, pointing to more widespread testing and supplies of PPE.

"Nursing homes have through hard experience learned how to keep their patients and residents and staff safe," said Chris Laxton, executive director of the The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine.

Gurwin Jewish, a 460-bed home on Long Island, has updated contingency staffing plans for a new outbreak and is conducting in-service classes to educate staff on infection prevention measures. The home is testing 1,000 people a week and has a three-month stockpile of PPE and isolation panels it used in the spring to create a dedicated COVID unit.

Still, like other New York nursing homes, it's operating at about 85% capacity.

"We do think that there is a hesitation by some to send their loved one to a skilled nursing facility," said Maureen Fagan, a Gurwin Jewish spokeswoman. "People are afraid."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Oct. 31, the 305th day of 2020. There are 61 days left in the year. This is Halloween.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 31, 1941, work was completed on the Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota, begun in 1927.

On this date:

In 1795, English poet John Keats was born in London.

In 1860, Juliette Gordon Low, founder of the Girl Scouts of the USA, was born in Savannah, Ga.

In 1926, magician Harry Houdini died in Detroit of peritonitis resulting from a ruptured appendix.

In 1941, the Navy destroyer USS Reuben James was torpedoed by a German U-boat off Iceland with the loss of some 100 lives, even though the United States had not yet entered World War II.

In 1961, the body of Josef Stalin was removed from Lenin's Tomb as part of the Soviet Union's "de-Stalinization" drive.

In 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered a halt to all U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, saying he hoped for fruitful peace negotiations.

In 1984, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two Sikh (seek) security guards.

In 1994, a Chicago-bound American Eagle ATR-72 crashed in northern Indiana, killing all 68 people aboard.

In 1998, a genetic study was released suggesting President Thomas Jefferson did in fact father at least one child by his slave Sally Hemings.

In 1999, EgyptAir Flight 990, bound from New York to Cairo, crashed off the Massachusetts coast, killing all 217 people aboard.

In 2001, New York hospital worker Kathy T. Nguyen (nwen) died of inhalation anthrax, the fourth person to perish in a spreading wave of bioterrorism.

In 2005, President George W. Bush nominated Judge Samuel Alito (ahl-EE'-toh) to the Supreme Court. Civil rights icon Rosa Parks was honored during a memorial service in Washington, D.C.

Ten years ago: A former teenage al-Qaida fighter, Omar Khadr, was sentenced by a military judge at Guantanamo to eight more years in custody under the terms of a plea agreement. Theodore C. Sorensen, President John F. Kennedy's aide and speechwriter, died in New York at age 82. Kim Clijsters beat top-ranked Caroline Wozniacki to win the season-ending WTA Championships in Qatar, 6-3, 5-7, 6-3. Tiger Woods lost golf's No. 1 ranking after 281 consecutive weeks to England's Lee Westwood.

Five years ago: A Russian passenger airliner crashed in a remote part of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula 23 minutes after taking off from a popular Red Sea resort, killing all 224 people on board. Four people were

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killed, including the gunman, following a shooting rampage in Colorado Springs that ended in a gun battle between police and the shooter.

One year ago: The Democratic-controlled House voted 232-196 to pass a resolution setting procedures for the impeachment inquiry as Democrats tried to counter the Trump administration's criticism of the probe; two Democrats voted against the resolution, joining all of the House's Republicans. Tim Morrison, who had stepped down from his post at the National Security Council a day earlier, confirmed that military aid to Ukraine had been held up by President Donald Trump's demand for Ukraine to investigate Democrats and Joe Biden, but he testified that in his view, there was nothing illegal about the quid-pro-quo at the center of the impeachment inquiry. Trump announced that he would be making Palm Beach, Florida, his permanent residence after leaving the White House rather than returning to Trump Tower in New York.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Lee Grant is 95. Former astronaut Michael Collins is 90. Former CBS anchorman Dan Rather is 89. Folk singer Tom Paxton is 83. Actor Ron Rifkin is 82. Actor Sally Kirkland is 79. Actor Brian Doyle-Murray is 75. Actor Stephen Rea is 74. Olympic gold medal long-distance runner Frank Shorter is 73. Actor Deidre Hall is 73. TV show host Jane Pauley is 70. Actor Brian Stokes Mitchell is 63. Movie director Peter Jackson is 59. Rock musician Larry Mullen is 59. Actor Dermot Mulroney is 57. Rock musician Mikkey Dee is 57. Rock singer-musician Johnny Marr is 57. Actor Rob Schneider is 57. Country singer Darryl Worley is 56. Actor-comedian Mike O'Malley is 55. Rap musician Adrock is 54. Rap performer Vanilla Ice (aka Rob Van Winkle) is 53. Rock musician Rogers Stevens (Blind Melon) is 51. Rock singer Linn Berggren (Ace of Base) is 50. Reality TV host Troy Hartman is 49. Gospel singer Smokie Norful is 47. Actor Piper Perabo (PEER'-uh-boh) is 44. Actor Brian Hallisay is 42. Actor Samaira (SAH'-mee-rah) Armstrong is 40. Folk-rock musician Tay Strathairn (Dawes) is 40. Actor Eddie Kaye Thomas is 40. Rock musician Frank Iero (My Chemical Romance) is 39. Actor Justin Chatwin is 38. Actor Scott Clifton is 36. Actor Vanessa Marano is 28. Actor Holly Taylor is 23. Actor Danielle Rose Russell is 21. Actor-singer Willow Smith is 20.