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Chicken Soup
for the Soul

"SMALL ACTS OF
KINDNESS CAN
MAKE A
DIFFERENCE IN
OTHER PEOPLE'S
LIVES MORE
THAN WE CAN
IMAGINE."

-CATHERINE PULSIFER

GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6 School Board Meeting

November 9, 2020 – 7:00 PM – Groton Area Elementary Commons

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.
- POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3 CONSENT AGENDA:
1. Approval of minutes of October 12, 2020 school board meeting as drafted or amended.
 2. Approval of October 2020 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
 3. Approval of October 2020 Transportation Report
 4. Approval of October 2020 School Lunch Report
 5. Acknowledge receipt of public school exemptions #21-13 and #21-14.
- OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:
1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
 2. Continued discussion and necessary action on District response to COVID-19.
 - a. Binax Rapid Testing
 - b. Elementary and MS/HS Christmas Programs
 - c. Winter Sports
 3. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report
- NEW BUSINESS:
1. Approve resignation of Amanda Morehouse, Business Office Assistant, effective Monday, November 30.
 2. Review Department of Health Food Service Inspections conducted 11/3/2020 for Groton Area HS (100) and Groton Area Elementary (100).
 3. Executive Session pursuant SDCL1-25-2(4) for negotiations and SDCL1-25-2(1) for personnel.
- ADJOURN



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Biden wins White House, vowing new direction for divided US

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrat Joe Biden defeated President Donald Trump to become the 46th president of the United States on Saturday, positioning himself to lead a nation gripped by the historic pandemic and a confluence of economic and social turmoil.

His victory came after more than three days of uncertainty as election officials sorted through a surge of mail-in votes that delayed the processing of some ballots. Biden crossed 270 Electoral College votes with a win in Pennsylvania.

Biden, 77, staked his candidacy less on any distinctive political ideology than on galvanizing a broad coalition of voters around the notion that Trump posed an existential threat to American democracy. The strategy proved effective, resulting in pivotal victories in Michigan and Wisconsin as well as Pennsylvania, onetime Democratic bastions that had flipped to Trump in 2016.

Biden was on track to win the national popular vote by more than 4 million, a margin that could grow as ballots continue to be counted.

Trump seized on delays in processing the vote in some states to falsely allege voter fraud and argue that his rival was trying to seize power — an extraordinary charge by a sitting president trying to sow doubt about a bedrock democratic process.

As the vote count played out, Biden tried to ease tensions and project an image of presidential leadership, hitting notes of unity that were seemingly aimed at cooling the temperature of a heated, divided nation.

"We have to remember the purpose of our politics isn't total unrelenting, unending warfare," Biden said Friday night in Delaware. "No, the purpose of our politics, the work of our nation, isn't to fan the flames of conflict, but to solve problems, to guarantee justice, to give everybody a fair shot."

Kamala Harris also made history as the first Black woman to become vice president, an achievement that comes as the U.S. faces a reckoning on racial justice. The California senator, who is also the first person of South Asian descent elected to the vice presidency, will become the highest-ranking woman ever to serve in government, four years after Trump defeated Hillary Clinton.

Trump is the first incumbent president to lose reelection since Republican George H.W. Bush in 1992. It was unclear whether Trump would publicly concede.

Earlier Saturday Trump left the White House for his Virginia golf club dressed in golf shoes, a windbreaker and a white hat as the results gradually expanded Biden's lead in Pennsylvania. Trump repeated his unsupported allegations of election fraud and illegal voting on Twitter, but they were quickly flagged as potentially misleading by the social media platform.

One of his erroneous tweets: "I WON THIS ELECTION, BY A LOT!"



Democratic presidential candidate former Vice President Joe Biden speaks to supporters, early Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2020, in Wilmington, Del. Biden defeated President Donald Trump to become the 46th president of the United States on Saturday, positioning himself to lead a nation gripped by historic pandemic and a confluence of economic and social turmoil. (AP Photo/Paul Sancya)

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The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Biden was spending Saturday morning with family and advisers at home in Wilmington, Delaware, his campaign said.

Americans showed deep interest in the presidential race. A record 103 million voted early this year, opting to avoid waiting in long lines at polling locations during a pandemic. With counting continuing in some states, Biden had already received more than 74 million votes, more than any presidential candidate before him.

More than 236,000 Americans have died during the coronavirus pandemic, nearly 10 million have been infected and millions of jobs have been lost. The final days of the campaign played out against the backdrop of a surge in confirmed cases in nearly every state, including battlegrounds such as Wisconsin that swung to Biden.

The pandemic will soon be Biden's to tame, and he campaigned pledging a big government response, akin to what Franklin D. Roosevelt oversaw with the New Deal during the Depression of the 1930s. But Senate Republicans fought back several Democratic challengers and looked to retain a fragile majority that could serve as a check on such Biden ambition.

The 2020 campaign was a referendum on Trump's handling of the pandemic, which has shuttered schools across the nation, disrupted businesses and raised questions about the feasibility of family gatherings heading into the holidays.

The fast spread of the coronavirus transformed political rallies from standard campaign fare to gatherings that were potential public health emergencies. It also contributed to an unprecedented shift to voting early and by mail and prompted Biden to dramatically scale back his travel and events to comply with restrictions. Trump defied calls for caution and ultimately contracted the disease himself. He was saddled throughout the year by negative assessments from the public of his handling of the pandemic.

Biden also drew a sharp contrast to Trump through a summer of unrest over the police killings of Black Americans including Breonna Taylor in Kentucky and George Floyd in Minneapolis. Their deaths sparked the largest racial protest movement since the civil rights era. Biden responded by acknowledging the racism that pervades American life, while Trump emphasized his support of police and pivoted to a "law and order" message that resonated with his largely white base.

The president's most ardent backers never wavered and may remain loyal to him and his supporters in Congress after Trump has departed the White House.

The third president to be impeached, though acquitted in the Senate, Trump will leave office having left an indelible imprint in a tenure defined by the shattering of White House norms and a day-to-day whirlwind of turnover, partisan divide and the ever-present threat via his Twitter account.

Biden, born in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and raised in Delaware, was one of the youngest candidates ever elected to the Senate. Before he took office, his wife and daughter were killed, and his two sons badly injured in a 1972 car crash.

Commuting every night on a train from Washington back to Wilmington, Biden fashioned an everyman political persona to go along with powerful Senate positions, including chairman of the Senate Judiciary and Foreign Relations Committees. Some aspects of his record drew critical scrutiny from fellow Democrats, including his support for the 1994 crime bill, his vote for the 2003 Iraq War and his management of the Clarence Thomas' Supreme Court hearings.

Biden's 1988 presidential campaign was done in by plagiarism allegations, and his next bid in 2008 ended quietly. But later that year, he was tapped to be Barack Obama's running mate and he became an influential vice president, steering the administration's outreach to both Capitol Hill and Iraq.

While his reputation was burnished by his time in office and his deep friendship with Obama, Biden stood aside for Clinton and opted not to run in 2016 after his adult son Beau died of brain cancer the year before.

Trump's tenure pushed Biden to make one more run as he declared that "the very soul of the nation is at stake."

___ Associated Press writer Jill Colvin contributed to this report.



Lunch with Governor Noem

Governor Kristi Noem stopped in Groton on Friday and had lunch with community leaders. Pictured are Mayor Scott Hanlon, Joel Bierman, Finance Officer Hope Block, Chamber President Carol Kutter, Governor Kristi Noem, School Superintendent Joe Schwan and Rick Schelle. Noem was in Aberdeen earlier in the day to be part of the ribbon cutting ceremony of the new expanded facility at the 3M Plant. After lunch, Noem visited BaseKamp Lodge and Bierman Farm Service. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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A third tower extension was delivered to Groton on Thursday. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Meanwhile in Langford, the old tower was taken down this past week as the new tower is operational. (Photo from Jean Likness' Facebook Page)

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#257 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Another awful day and another new record—second consecutive day: 126,200 new case reports, a 1.3% increase from yesterday's total. We've now reported 9,815,400 cases in the US. Our seven-day new-case average has risen 54% in the past 14 days. This is getting scary. We're currently accounting for around a fifth of the world's new daily cases. At least 13 states set single-day records today: Nevada, Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico, North Dakota, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Arkansas, Indiana, Ohio, Maine, and Pennsylvania. In at least 22 states, there have been more cases reported in the last week than any other seven-day stretch since the pandemic began. The number of diagnosed cases far understates the true number of infections, which accounts in large part for the wildfire-like spread—all those undiagnosed virus shedders, but there's no way to quantify how many undiagnosed cases might be out there. We simply lack the testing capacity to come close to sorting that out, and so the spread continues apace.

College campuses have hit 250,000 cases and counting, nearly all of them since the fall semester began. There were over 38,000 new campus cases reported just in the past two weeks. And we're sure that's an undercount. As with so much else, there is no centralized national tracking system for campuses and no consistent statewide data. We have these numbers only because the New York Times is surveying 1700 campuses on a regular basis and tracking infections. There have been at least 80 campus deaths so far, most of them from the spring and involving employees; but several students have died since the fall semester began. Although young people are not at high risk for serious disease, they certainly can develop it, so this number is expected to rise. Some campuses are planning not to send students home for Thanksgiving or are planning to finish the semester after Thanksgiving with virtual attendance; the amount of travel involved in going home twice within a few weeks has been deemed foolhardy by some.

We're at 236,443 deaths reported. Today, 1188 were reported, a 0.5% increase. Three states reported record numbers of deaths today: Utah, South Dakota, and Kansas.

Remember, way back in February and March when this whole pandemic thing was just ramping up and we were wondering just how bad it would be? Yeah, me neither—seems like a lifetime ago, doesn't it? Nonetheless, way back then, the CDC took the available information on the SARS-CoV-2 virus's genome and built a diagnostic test, packaged it up with all of the reagents, and shipped them out. Then it turned out the test didn't work so well and we lost precious time we could have spent preparing to head this virus off at the pass. An internal review document has surfaced which indicates the agency knew from its own testing the kit would fail a good third of the time. That's a ridiculous failure rate and, according to a number of public health officials, would have taken it right out of production in normal times. They sent the kits out anyway. And this hurt us. What happened at public health labs across the country is that, when the labs ran validation tests to make sure the tests worked the same way in their labs as they purportedly did in the CDC labs, they didn't. It took another month to make reliable testing available.

At the time that first test rolled out we had an even dozen cases in the US, and had we been able to surround our known cases with reliable testing and appropriate isolation and quarantine procedures, things might look very different today. I am not suggesting this failed test is solely responsible for the fix in which we currently find ourselves, but a one-month delay in addressing a virus like this one is going to have serious consequences. By the time we had a reliable test, our case count was in the hundreds. I remember at the time defending the scientists who produced these kits, advising folks to give them a break—difficult circumstances, novel virus, etc. Looks as though I may have been too easy on them back then.

A new study of grocery store employees in Boston found a very high rate of asymptomatic infection in this group, as much as 20%. It was conducted in May when the general population in the community had an infection rate around one percent. It also appears the virus spreads more widely among employees who have regular contact with customers; these workers had five times the infection rate of other employees. This could present a real issue for community spread of virus if these employees, who work with so many members of the public, are transmitting virus. Better surveillance of public-facing employees seems called for here.

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Here's an interesting and hopeful bit of news. Scientists at Columbia University have developed a nasal spray that may block coronavirus in the nose and lungs, preventing infection. The study was done in ferrets, which because they are susceptible to infection via their airway just as humans are, but do not typically become sick, make a pretty good animal model for the virus. The study has not yet undergone peer review, but if it survives that, this looks promising. The paper says the spray is nontoxic, does not require refrigeration, and can be shipped as a freeze-dried powder that is shelf stable. A pharmacist would mix it with water and sugar to produce a spray that would be spritzed up the nose on a daily basis to prevent infection.

What's in it is a substance called a lipopeptide, a cholesterol molecule linked to a chain of amino acids which match those in the spike (S) protein in the virus. In order to infect a human cell, the virus's S protein uncoils to expose two specific chains of amino acids which engage the cell membrane of the host. The way the spray works is, when the spike protein tries to lock on to the cell's receptors, the lipopeptide gets in the way of that process, attaching itself to the spike's amino acid chains. This gums up the works, blocking viral attachment to the host cell, and that blocks infection. The amino acid chain this targets is one which has been resistant to mutation; testing against four known variants of the virus, it worked against all of them in tissue cultures. It also worked fairly well against SARS and partially against MERS, so this might have wider applicability to other coronaviruses we are sure will emerge in the future.

The animal study was very small, involving just a dozen animals. Half of them were given the spray, then placed in pairs into cages with pairs of ferrets given placebo (inactive) sprays and one animal that had been deliberately infected days earlier. After 24 hours, all of the placebo-receiving ferrets became infected; none of the sprayed ferrets did.

The research team has been working on these fusion inhibitors for many years, but their products have been effective against viruses for which there isn't much demand for a preventive—measles, for which we have a highly effective vaccine, and Nipah, which is deadly but extremely rare. The particular scientists who worked on this haven't done drug development before—they do basic science, so they're looking at how to proceed. They say this spray can be produced so cheaply that it could become an option for poor countries with less health care infrastructure than more developed ones. Now, I certainly can't say this is a sure thing, but I like the way it looks at this stage. I hope they find funding for further work.

Another promising development is a clinical trial underway in the UK for aspirin. This is part of the same large trial which showed the benefits of the steroid dexamethasone. Aspirin is an anti-inflammatory drug which also reduces the formation of blood clots, something which has been an issue in severe cases of Covid-19 and can be life-threatening. The abnormal blood clots which form in severe disease can impede blood flow to tissues and can cause heart attacks and strokes, among other problems. We've figured out we need to monitor patients for clots and have developed protocols for using anticoagulants (blood thinners) to lower the risk of clots. Aspirin has the advantage of being cheap and widely available, so if it is effective, it could be a considerable help.

The trial will involve 2000 patients in 176 hospitals who will receive 150 mg of aspirin per day and will utilize a control group who receive standard therapy, but no aspirin. It will look at length of hospital stay, the need for mechanical ventilation, and deaths after 28 days.

There is some research support for this trial; a study at the University of Maryland involving hospitalized patients found that those given aspirin had significantly lower risk of developing complications, were less likely to need mechanical ventilation, or intensive care, and had lower fatality rates. This was an observational study, but it lays a foundation for the clinical trial now starting. A word of warning: Physicians do not recommend people taking aspirin at home to stave off complications. The drug has largely fallen out of use because of its tendency to cause excessive bleeding—same thing that makes it a good clot inhibitor when you need that effect makes it a good clot inhibitor when you don't. Best to leave administration of it in the hands of the professionals.

Back in March, as in so much of the world, Bangladesh prepared to lock down in response to the pandemic. Three friends, Imran Kadir, Tajdin Hasan, and Imtiaz Halim, worried about the many working poor and how they would survive with no social safety net. Among them they had only about \$250, and they

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knew that wasn't going to go far, so they decided to find a way to channel resources from those with money to those without. They began to make appeals for money.

The need was great: The incomes of 51% of rickshaw drivers, 58% of factory workers, 66% of hotel and restaurant workers, and 62% of day laborers were reduced to zero. Even now that businesses have reopened, the recovery has been slow.

Early on, they heard from Bangladeshi cricket star Shakib Al Hasan who donated \$24,000, and they began to distribute food packs in the poorest neighborhoods in Dhaka. They kept up their appeals and brought 120 organizations and businesses under the umbrella of Mission Save Bangladesh. Many companies channeled their corporate social responsibility funds to the organization. Kadir said, "People are so generous! They responded to our calls from their hearts. We started distributing food packs in impoverished neighborhoods in Dhaka with the initial funds that came from the Shakib Al Hasan. Slowly we expanded our reach outside the capital city."

They have given out food packs to about 13,000 families and another 60,000 individuals. They've also provided an ambulance to a group that helps families cremate or bury their loved ones who have died in the pandemic. And they also bring food packs to patients who have come from villages to hospitals. Kadir says, "This is very inspiring."

Those they have helped concur. One resident of a slum in Dhaka's Kalabagn area said, "We will give them blessings as long as we are alive." You could do worse.

See a need. Meet the need. Simple really, and nearly all of us can do something.

Be well. We'll talk again.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Nov. 4	Nov. 5	Nov. 6	Nov. 7			
Minnesota	156,313	160,070	164,865	170,307			
Nebraska	74,060	75,888	78,012	80,693			
Montana	35,159	35,955	36,968	37,947			
Colorado	114,709	117,637	121,006	124,469			
Wyoming	12,399	12,675	12,954	13,871			
North Dakota	47,187	48,301	49,837	51,602			
South Dakota	48,854	49,791	51,151	52,639			
United States	9,385,324	9,488,591	9,610,965	9,744,491			
US Deaths	232,635	233,734	234,944	236,155			
Minnesota	3,379	3,757	+4,795	+5,442			
Nebraska	1,440	1,828	+2,124	+2,681			
Montana	+907	+796	+1,013	+979			
Colorado	+2,562	+2,928	+3,369	+3,463			
Wyoming	+340	+276	+279	+917			
North Dakota	+1,172	1,114	+1,536	+1,765			
South Dakota	+1,004	+937	+1,360	+1,488			
United States	+92,043	+103,267	+122,374	+133,526			
US Deaths	+1,069	+1,099	+1,210	+1,211			
	Oct. 28	Oct. 29	Oct. 30	Oct. 31	Nov. 01	Nov. 02	Nov. 3
Minnesota	137,536	139,444	142,311	145,465	148,472	150,672	152,934
Nebraska	65,376	66,545	68,150	69,645	70,732	70,732	72,620
Montana	29,346	29,966	30,853	31,916	32,801	33,495	34,252
Colorado	98,733	100,208	102,014	104,426	107,350	109,910	112,147
Wyoming	10,035	10,288	10,589	11,020	11,276	11,638	12,059
North Dakota	39,130	39,907	41,130	42,483	43,916	45,043	46,015
South Dakota	39,494	40,589	41,507	44,559	45,992	47,324	47,850
United States	8,779,794	8,859,432	8,947,862	9,048,430	9,127,108	9,208,876	9,293,281
US Deaths	226,728	227,703	228,675	229,711	230,566	231,003	231,566
Minnesota	+2,164	1,908	+2,867	+3,154	+3,007	+2,200	2,262
Nebraska	+877	1,169	+1,605	+1,495	+1,087	----	1,888
Montana	+845	+620	+887	+1,063	+885	+694	+757
Colorado	+1,433	1,475	+1,806	+2,412	+2,924	2,560	2,237
Wyoming	+252	+253	+301	+431	+256	+362	+421
North Dakota	+896	+781	1,222	+1,353	+1,434	+1,128	+972
South Dakota	+984	+1,095	+918	+1,560	+1,433	+1,332	+529
United States	+74,667	+79,638	+88,430	+100,568	+78,678	+81,768	+84,405
US Deaths	+989	+975	+972	+1,036	+855	+437	+563

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November 6th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

As Governor Kristi Noem told the Groton Daily Independent, it is important that those who are vulnerable and in the upper age group to be cautious, that we take care of them, encourage them to stay home and if they need groceries or other items, help them get what they need so they can be protected. Noem was in Groton Friday, visiting with community leaders.

South Dakota's positive cases increased by 1,489 with 644 being recovered.

The death toll in South Dakota increased by 28 with 17 females and 11 males. There were 16 in the 80+ age group, 9 in their 70s, 2 in their 60s and 1 in their 50s.

Breakdown of county numbers: Aurora-1, Beadle-3, Brookings-1, Buffalo-1, Butte-1, Dewey-1, Faulk-1, Jackson-1, Lincoln-4, Lyman-1, Marshall-1, Minnehaha-3, Todd-2, Turner-5 and Union-2.

Glacial Lakes hospital beds being occupied by COVID-19 patients as well as Minnehaha and Pennington counties: Walworth: 5 (0) Occupied Beds.; Potter: 2 (0) Occupied Beds; Hughes: 12 (-1) Occupied Beds, 6 (0) ICU Beds, 3 (+1) Ventilation; Faulk: 2 (0) Occupied Beds; Edmunds: 5 (0) Occupied Bed; Brown: 16 (0) Occupied Beds, 4 (0) ICU, 0 (0) Ventilation; Spink: 3 (-1) Occupied Beds; Day: 3 Occupied Beds; Marshall: 0 (0) Occupied Beds; Grant: 1 (-1) Occupied Beds; Codington: 22 (+0) Occupied Beds, 1 (-1) ICU, 0 (0) Ventilation; None (some counties have no hospitals): Clark, Hand, Hyde, Stanley, Sully, Campbell, McPherson, Roberts; Minnehaha: 231 (+17) Occupied Beds, 53 (+2) ICU, 53 (+2) Ventilation; Pennington: 70 (+3) Occupied Beds, 15 (+1) ICU, 8 (+1) Ventilation

Brown County:

Total Positive: +68 (2,444) Positivity Rate: 20.2%

Total Tests: +337 (20,001)

Recovered: +70 (1,914)

Active Cases: +54 (524)

Ever Hospitalized: +0 (127)

Deaths: +0 (6)

Percent Recovered: 78.3%

Hospital Reports:

Avera St. Luke's: Covid-19 Occupied 14 (+1); ICU 4 (+0), Ventilation 0 (0).

Sanford Aberdeen: Covid-19 Occupied 2 (-1).

Sanford Webster: Covid-19 Occupied 3 (0).

Marshall County Healthcare: Covid-19 Occupied: 0 (0).

South Dakota:

Positive: +1489 (52,639 total) Positivity Rate: 16.5%

Total Tests: 9013 (465,353 total)

Hospitalized: +68 (3,023 total). 493 currently hospitalized (+18)

Deaths: +28 (510 total)

Recovered: +644 (37,703 total)

Active Cases: +816 (14,426)

Percent Recovered: 71.6%

Total COVID-19 Occupied Beds: 493 (+18), Black Hills Region 109 (+4), Glacial Lakes Region 75 (-1) Sioux Empire Region 252 (+16), South Central Plains 57 (-1).

ICU Units: Total 95 (+3), BH 18 (+2), GL 11 (-1), SE 55 (+2), SCP 11 (+0).

Ventilation: Total 64 (+3), BH 8 (+1), GL 3 (+1), SE 53 (+2), SCP 0 (-1).

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 18% Covid, 49% Non-Covid, 33% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 32% Covid, 37% Non-Covid, 31% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 15% Covid, 15% Non-Covid, 69% Available

Beadle (19) +33 positive, +11 recovered (424 active cases)

Brown (6): +68 positive, +14 recovered (524 active cases)

Clark (1): +3 positive, +3 recovered (59 active cases)

Clay (8): +11 positive, +8 recovered (162 active cases)

Codington (16): +65 positive, +13 recovered (473 active cases)

Davison (11): +96 positive, +9 recovered (517 active cases)

Day (3): +6 positive, +3 recovered (43 active cases)

Edmunds (1): +3 positive, +1 recovered (44 active cases)

Faulk (3): +4 positive, +1 recovered (52 active cases)

Grant (3): +14 positive, +2 recovered (79 active cases)

Hanson (1): +11 positive, +1 recovered (58 active cases)

Hughes (8): +34 positive, +10 recovered (208 active cases)

Lawrence (7): +51 positive, +24 recovered (435 active cases)

Lincoln (29): +98 positive, +34 recovered (1038 active cases)

Marshall (3): +0 positive, +4 recovered (13 active cases)

McCook (3): +19 positive, +5 recovered (128 active cases)

McPherson (1): -1 positive, +1 recovery (9 active case)

Minnehaha (123): +359 positive, +107 recovered (3669 active cases)

Potter: +6 positive, +2 recovered (66 active cases)

Roberts (7): +22 positive, +10 recovered (107 active cases)

Spink (1): +8 positive, +3 recovered (123 active cases)

Walworth (10): +6 positive, +1 recovered (57 active cases)

NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Nov. 6:

- 13.5% rolling 14-day positivity
- 1,764 new positives
- 11,329 susceptible test encounters
- 238 currently hospitalized (+7)
- 9,814 active cases (+590)
- 613 total deaths (+17)

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity
Aurora	225	161	730	2	Substantial	32.35%
Beadle	1563	1120	4133	19	Substantial	29.07%
Bennett	242	147	972	5	Substantial	30.38%
Bon Homme	1143	812	1645	3	Substantial	55.73%
Brookings	1675	1300	6839	9	Substantial	19.72%
Brown	2444	1914	8942	6	Substantial	27.09%
Brule	372	249	1451	3	Substantial	36.05%
Buffalo	298	249	803	5	Substantial	46.99%
Butte	478	270	2183	4	Substantial	27.13%
Campbell	85	70	170	1	Moderate	23.68%
Charles Mix	511	341	3088	1	Substantial	15.32%
Clark	158	98	709	1	Substantial	32.88%
Clay	936	766	3499	8	Substantial	23.02%
Codington	1883	1394	6682	16	Substantial	29.43%
Corson	262	180	796	2	Substantial	67.01%
Custer	367	289	1807	4	Substantial	21.48%
Davison	1334	806	4676	11	Substantial	31.08%
Day	195	149	1244	3	Substantial	26.88%
Deuel	217	173	815	1	Substantial	28.41%
Dewey	490	271	3404	2	Substantial	29.36%
Douglas	211	146	713	5	Substantial	16.28%
Edmunds	173	128	757	1	Substantial	8.12%
Fall River	248	188	1871	6	Substantial	18.89%
Faulk	241	186	527	3	Substantial	11.76%
Grant	362	280	1543	3	Substantial	15.04%
Gregory	289	194	884	10	Substantial	33.10%
Haakon	108	77	423	2	Substantial	5.22%
Hamlin	260	187	1307	0	Substantial	15.77%
Hand	186	100	586	1	Substantial	44.78%
Hanson	136	77	474	1	Substantial	35.94%
Harding	63	40	113	0	Substantial	59.09%
Hughes	1016	800	3938	8	Substantial	16.97%
Hutchinson	297	196	1660	2	Substantial	12.09%

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Hyde	65	41	305	0	Moderate	23.68%
Jackson	149	93	772	4	Substantial	30.77%
Jerauld	177	144	393	13	Moderate	25.93%
Jones	40	31	133	0	Moderate	26.67%
Kingsbury	253	150	1103	4	Substantial	20.74%
Lake	507	346	1976	9	Substantial	36.59%
Lawrence	1253	811	5742	7	Substantial	27.21%
Lincoln	3541	2474	13812	29	Substantial	31.31%
Lyman	321	251	1442	7	Substantial	21.83%
Marshall	74	58	791	3	Moderate	9.30%
McCook	351	220	1138	3	Substantial	31.25%
McPherson	72	62	417	1	Moderate	4.46%
Meade	1149	881	5332	10	Substantial	24.64%
Mellette	108	78	571	1	Substantial	47.22%
Miner	152	109	429	2	Substantial	6.45%
Minnehaha	13821	10029	54868	123	Substantial	28.77%
Moody	275	187	1438	4	Substantial	34.21%
Oglala Lakota	1208	672	5679	10	Substantial	33.07%
Pennington	5475	3978	26379	51	Substantial	19.26%
Perkins	88	66	480	0	Moderate	17.86%
Potter	160	94	618	0	Substantial	17.89%
Roberts	434	320	3335	7	Substantial	23.31%
Sanborn	141	73	462	1	Substantial	28.57%
Spink	372	248	1669	1	Substantial	16.81%
Stanley	117	85	554	0	Substantial	20.34%
Sully	56	38	177	0	Moderate	35.29%
Todd	573	429	3474	8	Substantial	46.36%
Tripp	312	255	1171	2	Substantial	12.45%
Turner	586	397	1899	27	Substantial	38.89%
Union	863	686	4247	16	Substantial	19.68%
Walworth	303	236	1340	10	Substantial	14.05%
Yankton	1050	723	6399	7	Substantial	10.57%
Ziebach	125	80	580	2	Substantial	32.26%
Unassigned	0	0	1042	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	1637	0
10-19 years	5471	0
20-29 years	10524	2
30-39 years	8999	7
40-49 years	7510	15
50-59 years	7507	37
60-69 years	5763	71
70-79 years	2978	101
80+ years	2250	277

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	27121	247
Male	25518	263

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Brown County

New Confirmed Cases

67

New Probable Cases

1

Active Cases

524

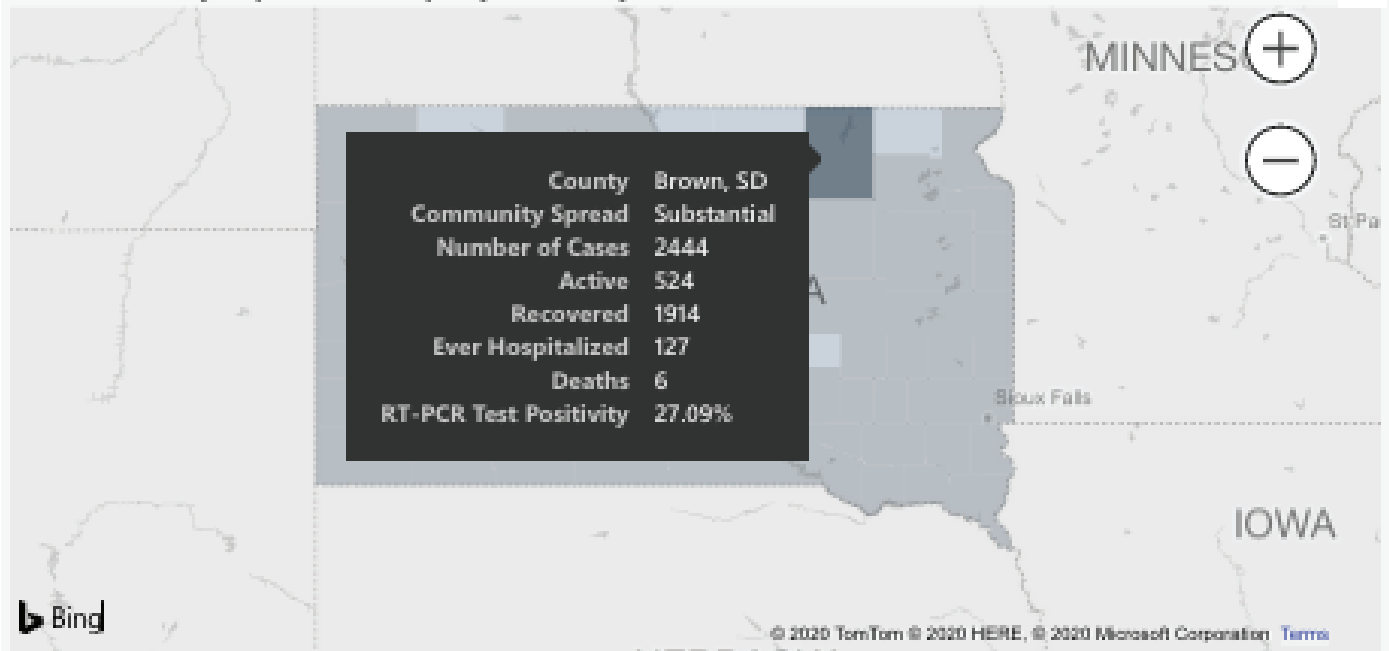
Recovered Cases

1,914

Currently Hospitalized

493

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Moderate ● Substantial

Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.

Total Confirmed Cases

2,406

Total Probable Cases

38

Total Persons Tested

11,386

Total Tests

20,001

Ever Hospitalized

127

Deaths

6

% Progress
(October Goal:
44,233 Tests)

328%

% Progress
(November Goal:
44,233 Tests)

59%

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Day County

New Confirmed Cases

5

New Probable Cases

1

Active Cases

43

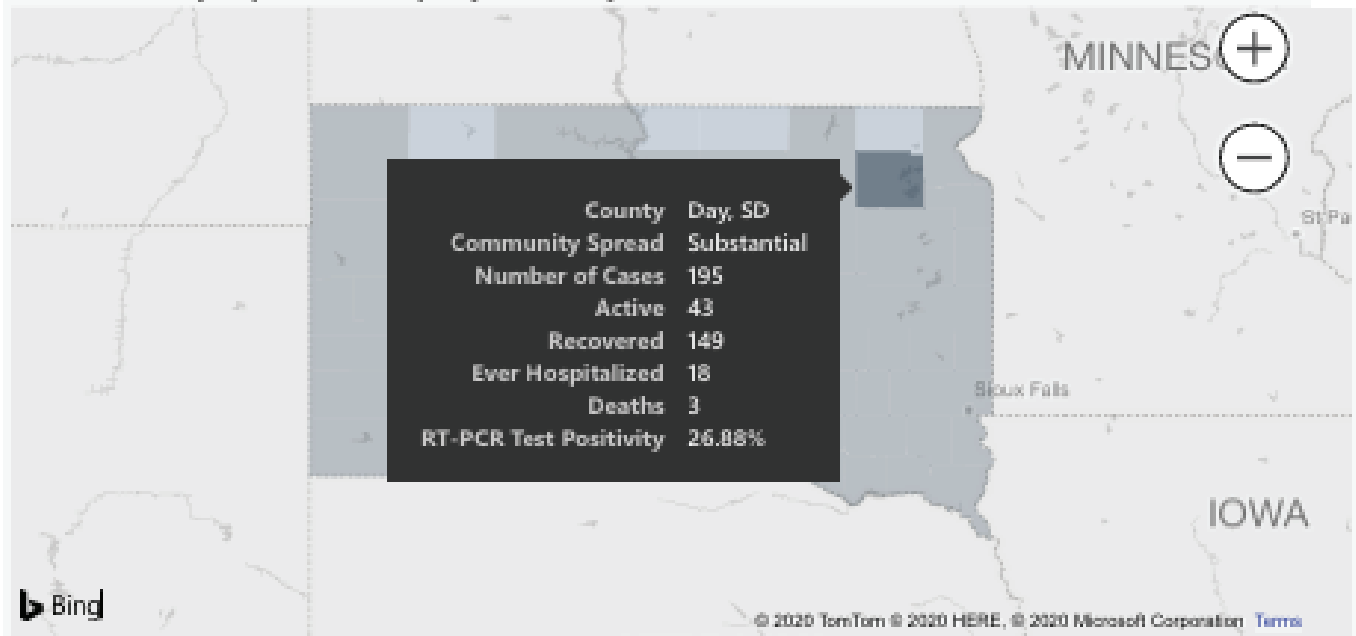
Recovered Cases

149

Currently Hospitalized

493

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Moderate ● Substantial

Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.

Total Confirmed Cases

191

Total Probable Cases

4

Total Persons Tested

1,439

Total Tests

2,772

Ever Hospitalized

18

Deaths

3

% Progress (October Goal: 44,233 Tests)

328%

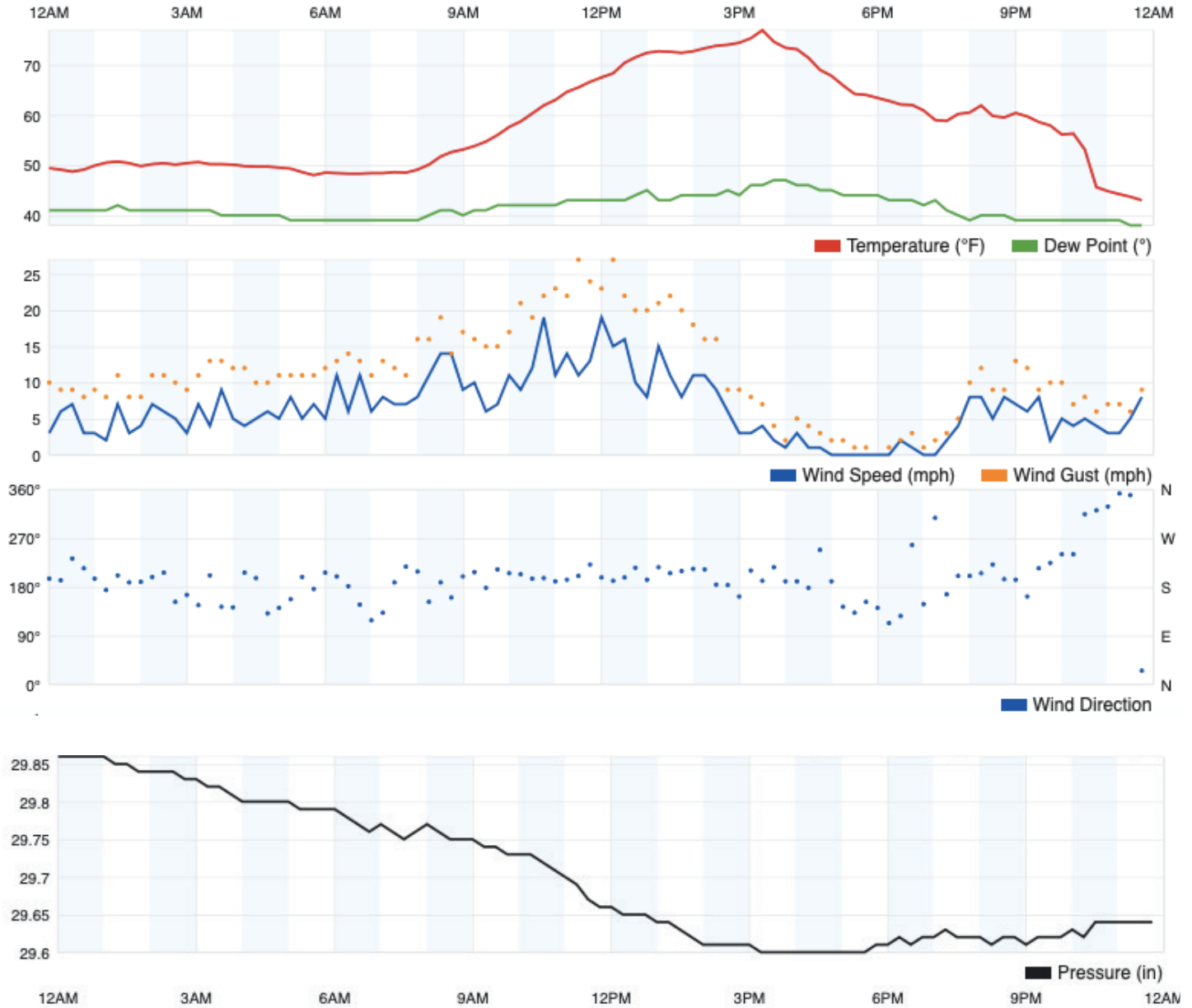
% Progress (November Goal: 44,233 Tests)

59%

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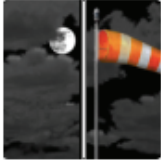


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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



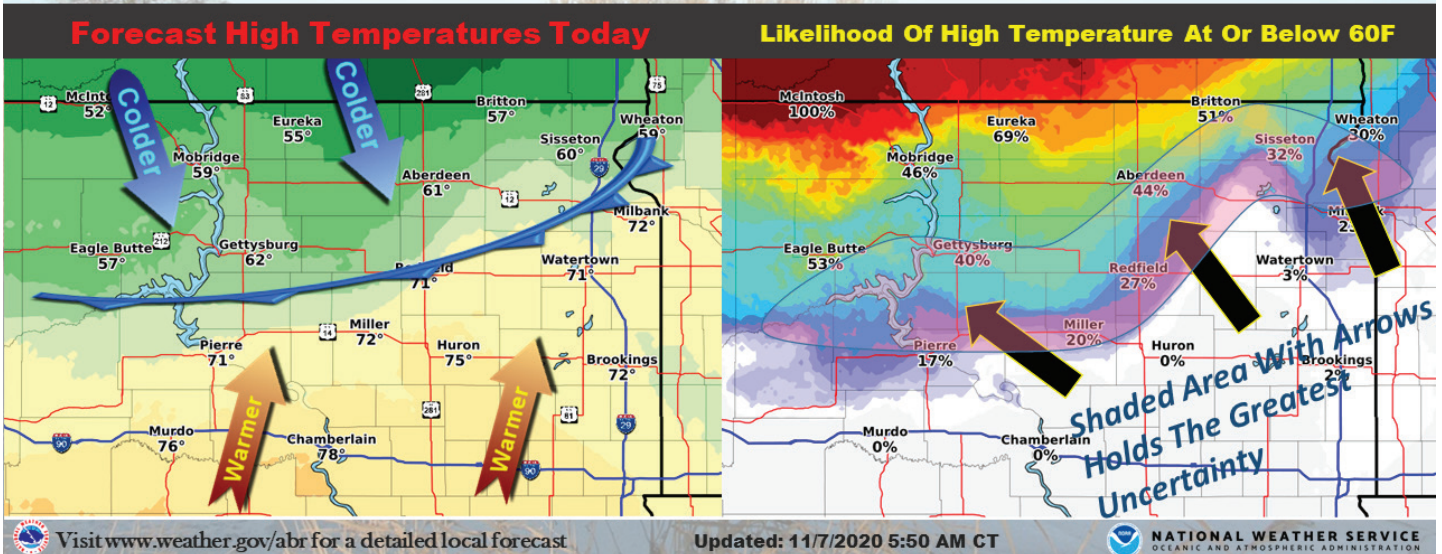
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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
				
Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy then Partly Cloudy and Breezy	Windy. Partly Sunny then Chance Rain	Mostly Clear and Breezy then Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance Rain/Snow
High: 59 °F	Low: 56 °F	High: 68 °F	Low: 29 °F	High: 37 °F

Who Will See Warmer/Cooler Conditions Today?

A Nearly Stationary Front Separates Cold From Warm



A stalled out cold front separates much cooler air from much warmer air. The boundary could sag a little further south today before beginning to retreat back to the north, but the timing and certainty of these things is bit unclear. There is a goodly amount of potential, especially within the hatched area highlighted by arrows in the image on the right, for today's temperature forecast to bust. Just tens of miles is all it could take for temperatures to be as much as 10 degrees too warm or too cold. Once the front retreats to the north, expect much warmer air on Sunday, along with quite windy southerly winds.

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Today in Weather History

November 7, 1986: A major winter storm dumped 10 to 25 inches of snow over most of North Dakota. The snow combined with winds of 30 to 50 mph, and gusts to 70 mph, creating blizzard conditions. Snow began over southern and eastern North Dakota on the morning of the 7th, and by late afternoon, had spread over the entire state. The snowfall was heavy at times and continued through the night of the 7th. In the southeast quarter, the snow alternated with rain, freezing rain, and sleet. By daybreak on the 8th, snow and blowing snow were occurring statewide. By late morning, the storm had intensified into a blizzard over almost all of North Dakota. The blizzard ended over extreme western North Dakota by late afternoon of the 8th and over the rest of the state that night. The most substantial snowfall occurred over south central and east central North Dakota. The highest wind gusts of the storm happened in the north central and northeast sections of the state. Several wind gusts to 58 mph were recorded at Grand Forks, and a gust to 55 mph occurred at the Minot Air Force Base. Wind chills dipped to 40 below over some parts of the state. The storm occurred on the opening day of deer hunting season and forced many hunters to cancel their trips. The storm stranded many motorists and delayed fire-fighting efforts which caused a few homes and buildings burn down. Snowplow activity had to be halted for many hours because of high winds and blowing snow.

November 6, 2000: Snowfall of 4 to 10 inches combined with northwest winds of 30 to 45 mph, with stronger gusts, to create blizzard conditions throughout much of the day. Numerous schools were canceled or started late. Many events were also canceled. Several accidents occurred due to the slick roads and low visibilities. Some storm total snowfall amounts include; 9.5 inches in Selby; 8 inches in Glenham and 12SSW of Harrold; 7.3 inches near Onaka; 7 inches at Faulkton; and 6 inches in Miller.

1940: The Tacoma Narrows Bridge, which opened on July 1, 1940, spanned the Puget Sound from Gig Harbor to Tacoma. At the time of the opening, the bridge was the third longest suspension bridge in the world, covering nearly 6,000 feet. Before the bridge opened, high winds would cause the bridge to move vertically, giving the nickname Galloping Gertie. On this day in 1940, winds of 40 mph caused the bridge to collapse because of the physical phenomenon known as aeroelastic flutter.

1951: At 7 AM a blinding flash, a huge ball of fire, and a terrific roar occurred over parts of Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas, caused by a disintegrating meteor. Windows were broken in and near Hinton Oklahoma by the concussion.

1940 - The Galloping Gertie bridge at Tacoma, WA, collapsed in strong winds resulting in a six million dollar loss, just four months after the grand opening of the new bridge. The winds caused the evenly sized spans of the bridge to begin to vibrate until the central one finally collapsed. From that point on bridges were constructed with spans of varying size. (David Ludlum)

1951 - At 7 AM a blinding flash, a huge ball of fire, and a terrific roar occurred over parts of Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas, caused by a disintegrating meteor. Windows were broken in and near Hinton OK by the concussion. (The Weather Channel)

1986 - An early season blizzard struck the Northern Plains Region. North Dakota took the brunt of the storm with wind gusts to 70 mph, and snowfall totals ranged up to 25 inches at Devils Lake. (Storm Data)

1987 - Heavy snow fell across parts of eastern New York State overnight, with twelve inches reported at the town of Piseco, located in the Mohawk Valley. A storm in the southwestern U.S. left nine inches of snow at the Winter Park ski resort in Colorado. Smoke from forest fires reduced visibilities to less than a mile at some locations from North Carolina to Ohio and Pennsylvania. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Unseasonably warm weather continued across the state of Texas. Seven cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Waco and Del Rio with readings of 92 degrees. McAllen was the hot spot in the nation with a high of 96 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

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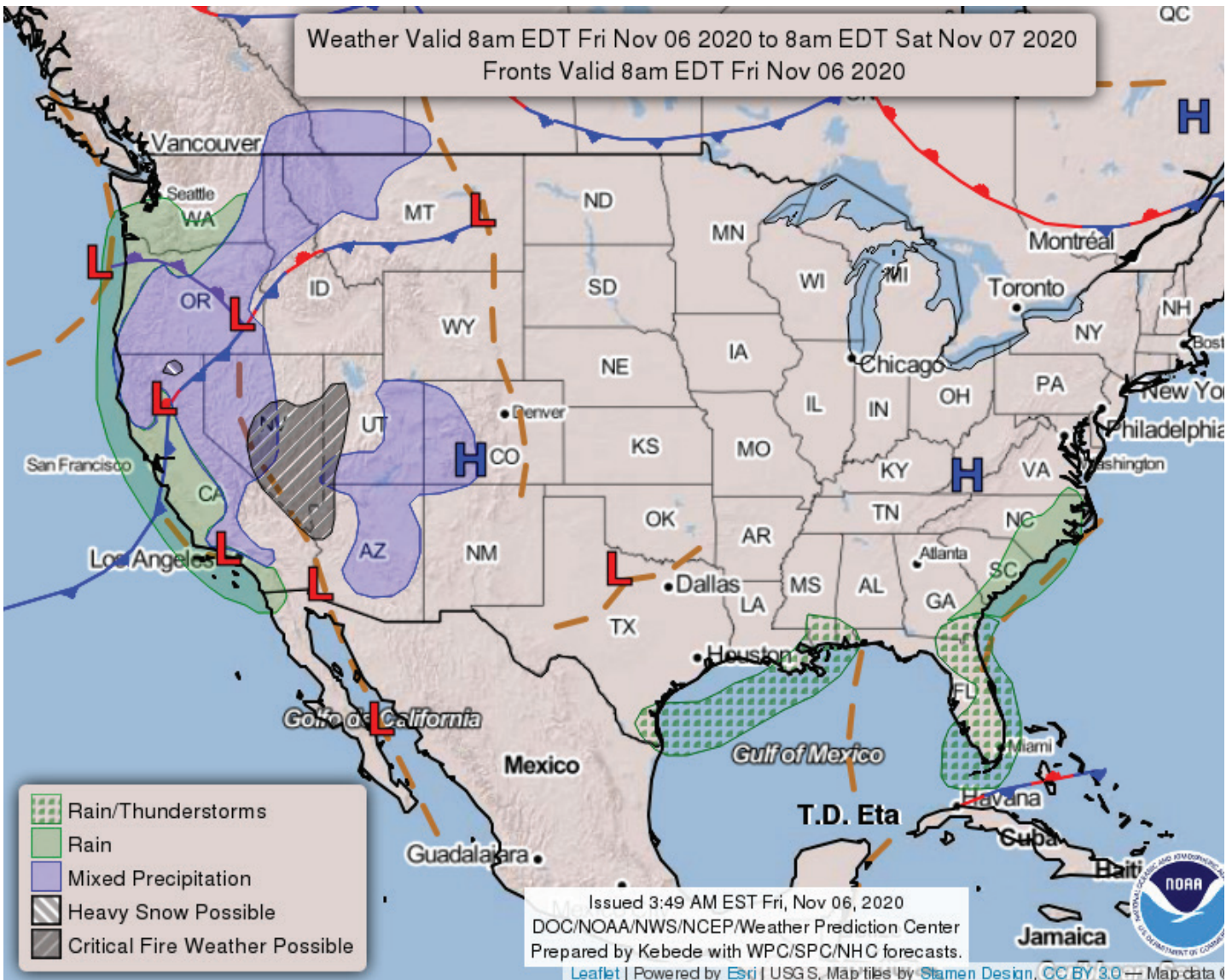
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 77 °F at 3:26 PM
Low Temp: 42 °F at 11:58 PM
Wind: 27 mph at 11:28 AM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 75° in 1909
Record Low: -9° in 1991
Average High: 45°F
Average Low: 23°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.18
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 20.65
Precip Year to Date: 16.34
Sunset Tonight: 5:12 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:24 a.m.



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GOD WORKS

"Do you know what U.N. stands for?" he asked.

"The United Nations," I replied quickly and confidently.

"Not at all," was his reply. "It stands for Unsettled Nations," he informed me.

Then he continued, "Does the Lord care about the condition of the nations of the world? And, if He does care, why doesn't He intervene and make things better?"

"Yes, He cares," I answered. "But we need to see how God has intervened in historical writings by studying His Word so we can understand what He is doing today."

History shows one nation to be at the center of God's attention: Israel. Psalm 105:24 describes what we might call an "explosion of people." It reads, "The Lord made His people very fruitful. He made them too numerous for their foes." We have often heard that there is "strength in numbers." Here we see this "in action." As the Israelites grew in numbers, they grew in strength, and they were able to overcome their adversaries.

It was this "strength in numbers" that made the Exodus possible. The historian continues by revealing another fact to us: those "whose hearts He turned to hate His people and to conspire against His servants," were led by Moses, His servant, and Aaron, His chosen one, to lead them into the land that God had prepared for them. Ultimately, it was their perseverance through persecution that led them to the Promised Land.

Is God involved in the affairs of nations? Indeed He is. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord!" We may not see it now, but we will see it when the time is right.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for being our God! May we look to You, Lord, as the only One who can save our nation. May our leaders humble themselves and seek and follow Your guidance. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The Lord made His people very fruitful. He made them too numerous for their foes. Psalm 105:24, 25

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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

Inmates escapes from Rapid City minimum-security prison

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities in South Dakota are searching for an inmate who escaped from a minimum-security prison in Rapid City.

Prison officials say 38-year-old Ivan Good Plume left the Rapid City Community Work Center without authorization Friday night. Good Plume is serving an 18-year sentence from Pennington County for aggravated assault.

Authorities say walking away from a non-secure correctional facility without authorization could warrant a charge of second-degree escape, punishable by up to five years in prison.

Pandemic, presidential election leads to run on ammunition

By MAKENZIE HUBER Sioux Falls Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The shelves are nearly bare at Gary's Gun Shop in Sioux Falls.

And as you scour the store for a case of bullets to buy, you'll likely hear someone comment how hard it is to find ammunition right now.

You'll be hard-pressed to find ammo in Sioux Falls at all.

Several stores in the city have reported increased sales in ammunition and firearms in 2020, depleting an already short supply during the coronavirus pandemic.

Ammunition sales blew up in March because of COVID-19, said Gary's Gun Shop assistant manager Nick Meyer. But increased sales stayed steady after riots started in May in response to the death of George Floyd and ahead of the presidential election, the Argus Leader reported.

"Firearms and ammunition and the Second Amendment are all hot topics for election times," Meyer said, "and it always spurs a little bit of a spree."

But this year is different.

The gun shop only has 20% of its normal ammunition supply on its shelves, Meyer said.

"Usually, an election year has more of an effect on our inventory, but not this much," he said.

Nyberg's Ace on Minnesota Avenue is sold out of 9 mm handgun and .223 and 5.56 rifles due to short supply.

Blue Collar Tactical down the street also has bare shelves of ammunition. Nyberg's Ace at 41st and Minnesota is out of 9 mm, .223 and 5.56 ammunition.

Matt Bautch, an avid hunter, said he's seen ammunition prices double or triple this year because of the compounding effects of the pandemic, civil unrest and the election.

"Yes, you can find ammo," the 43-year-old said. "It's harder, and it's more expensive, that's for sure. Ammo is double in price that you would have found two years ago ... And it's beyond the ammo. For reloaders, it's the primers, powder — all components."

The 41st and Minnesota Ace location only stocks handgun ammunition as needed and mainly focuses on hunting ammunition. But its supply ran out earlier this year.

"Everything is out of stock," said Glenn Stanley, who works at the store.

That backlog extends all the way to manufacturers, said Jeff Hoffman, who owns Black Hills Ammunition.

While Hoffman's business focuses on specialty ammo for military or law enforcement instead of economy sales, even he started to see demand overwhelm his manufacturing company once ammunition was sold out everywhere else by June.

Some shelves stand bare at Gary's Gun Shop in Sioux Falls. Demand for ammunition has risen because of the pandemic, riots and election this year, employees say.

"Where people really got serious is when they started seeing the rioting, violence and looting and they could see law enforcement was not being supported," Hoffman said. "We're always told we don't need guns and police will protect us, but in that case that's not happening. You have new people buying guns

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and ammunition, but people who already had guns thought they needed more ammo, too.”

That reaction and defensiveness among consumers spells trouble for everyone involved in production — suppliers, manufacturers, dealers and consumers themselves.

“It’s in short supply everywhere because everyone faces the same problem, and then there’s resentment from the customer who wants to buy that ammunition,” Hoffman said.

Bautch started making his own ammunition a few years ago as a hobby instead of buying on the market.

“It’s a good hobby right now because ammo is just so hard to find,” he said.

Some stores, like Scheels, are still relatively well stocked as of Friday. But customers crowd the aisles, with common ammunition largely bought out or in high demand.

Scheels manager Josh Bathke said that ammunition sales have increased in the past few weeks.

Scheels has limited sales on all of its ammunition due to high demand this year.

Walmart has removed firearms and ammunition from the sales floor ahead of the election, said Walmart representative Charles Crowson. The company did the same in June due to “civil unrest” as a precaution for employees.

Usually, in election years there will be a spike in demand for guns and ammunition. Then it’ll settle back down and the “hangover period” stalls sales since there’s a surplus on the market and less demand, Hoffman said.

But Hoffman doesn’t know when they’ll see that hangover period.

“It’s not going to stop with the election because what people are concerned about is lawlessness, looting and burning riots in streets,” Hoffman said. “That’s what people are concerned about and that won’t stop with the election.”

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

18-24-27-34-60, Mega Ball: 2, Megaplier: 2

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

Estimated jackpot: \$142 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$149 million

Friday’s Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Class 11AAA=

Semifinal=

Brandon Valley 55, Sioux Falls Lincoln 28

Harrisburg 21, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 19

Class 11AA=

Semifinal=

Brookings 45, Huron 6

Pierre 21, Yankton 12

Class 11A=

Semifinal=

Canton 14, West Central 6

Tea Area 37, Madison 14

Class 11B=

Semifinal=

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Bridgewater-Emery 46, Mobridge-Pollock 0
Winner 28, Sioux Valley 14
Class 9AA=
Semifinal=
Hamlin 28, Lemmon/McIntosh 6
Platte-Geddes 28, Viborg-Hurley 22
Class 9A=
Semifinal=
Canistota 12, Howard 7
Warner 26, Wall 0
Class 9B=
Semifinal=
Dell Rapids St. Mary 30, Kadoka Area 28
Wolsey-Wessington 20, Herreid/Selby Area 14

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

South Dakota records record-high 28 new deaths from COVID-19

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials reported another 28 deaths from COVID-19 on Friday, setting a record high for single-day deaths since the pandemic began.

Since the start of November, 85 people in the state have died from the virus. Since the start of the pandemic, a total of 510 people in South Dakota have died from coronavirus complications.

Positive cases in the state continued to climb, with 1,416 new cases reported Friday. The number of active cases in the state was 14,426 — another record high — and a total of 493 people were hospitalized as of Friday.

Among those who died, one person was in their 50s, two were in their 60s, nine were in their 70s and 16 were over 80 years old.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks.

Well excavated in search for remains of missing woman

WATERTOWN, S.D. (AP) — Remains found during an excavation connected to a cold case in Watertown have been sent to a forensic lab for analysis, according to investigators.

Crews dug up a well on a rural property east of Watertown Wednesday in an attempt to find the remains of Pamela Dunn, who has been missing since 2001.

Deuel County Sheriff Cory Borg said Thursday that the remains could be human or animal. They've been sent to the South Dakota Forensic Lab in Pierre.

Borg said investigators found remains in the depth between 25 feet and 29 feet.

Dunn went missing from Watertown in December of 2001. Her ex-boyfriend, David Asmussen, is serving a life sentence in prison after he was convicted of kidnapping her. However, prosecutors say no homicide charges have been filed because a body was never found, KSFY-TV reported.

Authorities have previously searched the well, located about 20 miles east of Watertown after they received a tip back in 2017.

Supreme Court: Police had reasonable cause for drug search

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Supreme Court says a judge was wrong when he said key evidence could not be used by the prosecution in a Lawrence County drug case.

The high court, in a ruling this week, said Deadwood police had reasonable cause to seek a warrant to

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search an apartment and a vehicle where illegal drugs were suspected. The warrant also let police collect urine samples.

Court records say the subsequent search of the apartment produced several bags containing a white crystal substance, which was later confirmed to be methamphetamine. And urine samples taken from Carrie Lynn Ostby and Dana Olmsted both tested positive for meth, KELO-TV reported.

Olmsted was charged with one count of possession of a controlled substance. Ostby was charged with unauthorized ingestion of a controlled substance, possession of a controlled substance and possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance.

The defendants later challenged the validity of the warrant. Circuit Judge Eric Strawn granted their motion to suppress the evidence.

The Supreme Court justices said there was sufficient information for police to believe contraband would be found in the apartment.

Biden edges closer to win as Pennsylvania focus intensifies

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, ZEKE MILLER, JILL COLVIN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrat Joe Biden edged ever closer Saturday to a victory over President Donald Trump as the long, exacting work of counting votes extended into a fourth day after the election.

The delay in producing a verdict could be attributed to high turnout, a massive number of mail-in ballots and slim margins between the candidates. Biden held leads in Pennsylvania, Nevada and Georgia, putting him in a stronger position to capture the 270 Electoral College votes needed to take the White House.

There was intense focus on Pennsylvania, where Biden led Trump by more than 28,000 votes, and Nevada, where Biden was up by about 22,000. The prolonged wait added to the anxiety of a nation facing historic challenges, including the surging coronavirus pandemic and deep political polarization.

When Biden addressed the nation Friday night near his home in Wilmington, Delaware, he acknowledged the sluggish pace of the count "can be numbing." But he added: "Never forget the tallies aren't just numbers: They represent votes and voters."

He expressed confidence that victory ultimately would be his. "The numbers tell us a clear and convincing story: We're going to win this race," the former vice president said.

Standing alongside running mate Kamala Harris, Biden wasn't able to give the acceptance speech at that time that his aides had hoped. But he hit notes of unity, seemingly aimed at cooling the temperature of a heated, divided nation.

"We have to remember the purpose of our politics isn't total unrelenting, unending warfare," he said. "No, the purpose of our politics, the work of our nation, isn't to fan the flames of conflict, but to solve problems, to guarantee justice, to give everybody a fair shot."

Trump left the White House for his Virginia golf club dressed in golf shoes, a windbreaker and a white hat as the results gradually expanded Biden's lead in must-win Pennsylvania. On Saturday, Trump repeated baseless allegations of election fraud and illegal voting on Twitter, but they were quickly flagged as potentially misleading by the social media platform.

Biden was spending Saturday morning with family and advisers at home in Wilmington, Delaware, his campaign said.

Trump's campaign was mostly quiet. It was a dramatic difference from earlier in the week, when officials vocally projected confidence and held news conferences announcing litigation in key states. But his inner circle was touched once again by the coronavirus.

Trump's chief of staff, Mark Meadows, contracted the virus, according to two senior White House officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss private matters. Several other members of the White House staff and Trump's campaign team also tested positive.

Trump's handling of the pandemic has been the defining issue of the campaign. The president, first lady Melania Trump and several other people in Trump's orbit have fallen ill and recovered.

A few states remained in play in the race: Georgia and North Carolina were still too early to call, along

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with Pennsylvania and Nevada. In all four states the margins between Trump and Biden were too narrow and the number of ballots left to be counted too great for The Associated Press to declare a winner.

The uncertainty left Americans across the nation glued to their TVs and smartphones, checking for updates to a vote count that, for many, appeared to inch along.

The delays — and the reasons — varied from state to state. In Pennsylvania, officials were not allowed to begin processing mail-in ballots until Election Day under state law. In Nevada, there were a number of provisional ballots cast by voters who registered on Election Day, and officials had to verify their eligibility. Recounts could be triggered in both Pennsylvania and Georgia.

With his path to reelection appearing to greatly narrow, Trump was testing how far he could go in using the trappings of presidential power to undermine confidence in the vote.

Trump did claim that he won late on Election Night. He also tweeted that he had “such a big lead in all of these states late into election night, only to see the leads miraculously disappear as the days went by,” although it was well known that votes cast before Tuesday were still being legally counted.

Pro-Trump protesters — some openly carrying rifles and handguns — rallied outside vote-tabulation centers in a few cities Friday, responding to Trump’s groundless accusations that the Democrats were trying to “steal” the White House. Roughly 100 Trump supporters gathered for a third straight day in front of the elections center in Phoenix, where hundreds of workers were processing and counting ballots.

Maryland GOP Gov. Larry Hogan, a potential presidential hopeful who has often criticized Trump, said there was “no defense” for Trump comments “undermining our Democratic process. America is counting the votes, and we must respect the results as we always have before.”

But others who are rumored to be considering a White House run of their own in four years aligned themselves with the incumbent, including Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., who tweeted support for Trump’s claims, writing that “If last 24 hours have made anything clear, it’s that we need new election integrity laws NOW.”

Election officials in the battleground states of Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Nevada — both Republican and Democrat — have all said they saw no widespread voting irregularities or major instances of fraud or illegal activity.

Even Trump’s own administration has pushed back at the claims of widespread voter fraud and illegal voting, without mentioning that Trump was the one making the allegations. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, which oversees U.S. election security, also noted local election offices have detection measures that “make it highly difficult to commit fraud through counterfeit ballots.”

Trump’s campaign has engaged in a flurry of legal activity across the battleground states.

On Friday evening, Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito approved a GOP request ordering county boards to comply with Pennsylvania state guidance to keep the late ballots separate from those received before or on Election Day. Alito, however, did not direct election officials to stop counting the ballots, as the Republicans had also sought.

But judges in Michigan, Georgia and Pennsylvania quickly swatted down other legal action. A federal judge who was asked to stop vote counts in Philadelphia instead forced the two sides to reach an agreement without an order over the number of observers allowed.

Weissert reported from Wilmington, Delaware. Associated Press writers Colleen Long, Brian Slodysko and Alexandra Jaffe contributed to this report.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump presses vote falsehoods on wide front

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The most direct attempt to undermine the integrity of the U.S. election with bad information came not from overseas sources or online liars but from a president standing behind the presidential seal at the White House and facing defeat.

President Donald Trump spoke of “horror stories” in voting and counting across the land, but his stories were wrong. Election officials, Democrats and some Republicans blanched at his baseless recitation of

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sinister doings and his effort to delegitimize democracy's highest calling.

Since the tide turned after election night and Democrat Joe Biden gained strength in the counting, Trump lashed out at results he didn't like, often lapsing into all-capital letters with his hectoring. Biden stayed low for several days after the vote, making measured statements when he did appear.

On Saturday, Trump persisted in misrepresenting developments at ballot-counting centers, falsely tweeting that campaign observers in Pennsylvania were blocked from seeing what was going on as Biden overtook him in the vote count, which continues. Twitter flagged a series of Trump's tweets as dubious.

A sampling of the rhetoric from a transformational week:

HORRORS

TRUMP: "We're hearing stories that are horror stories. ... We think there is going to be a lot of litigation because we have so much evidence and so much proof." — remarks Thursday night from the White House.

THE FACTS: Trump produced no evidence of systematic problems in voting or counting. In fact, the ballot-counting process across the country has been running smoothly for the most part, even with the U.S. in the throes of the coronavirus pandemic.

One of his main complaints, that counting spilled over past Election Day, is meritless. No presidential election has had all the votes counted the same day and there is no law or even expectation that that should be the case. The surge in mailed ballots and the high turnout have made the process slower than usual in some, but not all, cases.

PENNSYLVANIA

TRUMP: "...Pennsylvania, which everyone thought was easily won on Election Night, only to see a massive lead disappear, without anyone being allowed to OBSERVE, for long intervals of time." — tweet Saturday.

TRUMP: "Pennsylvania Democrats have gone to the state Supreme Court to try and ban our election observers. ... They don't want anybody in there. They don't want anybody watching them while they are counting the ballots." — Thursday night remarks.

THE FACTS: These assertions are false. Trump is wholly misrepresenting a court case in the state and what happened at voting places. No one tried to ban poll watchers representing each side in the election. Democrats did not try to stop Republican representatives from being able to observe the process.

The main issue in the case was how close observers representing the parties could get to election workers who are processing mail-in ballots in Philadelphia. Trump's representatives sued to allow the observers to get closer than the guidelines had allowed. A court ruled in favor of that request.

The counting in Philadelphia was being livestreamed and Trump's lawyers admitted in court that their campaign had observers in the room — "a none-zero" number of them, as they put it.

Contrary to Trump's statement, there was no widespread belief election night that Trump had "easily won" the state. It was well-known that huge numbers of mailed-in ballots as well as in-person ballots were to be counted and that many would be from Democratic-leaning areas. That's why news organizations did not call Pennsylvania for Trump.

TRUMP: "In Pennsylvania, partisan Democrats have allowed ballots in the state to be received three days after the election and we think much more than that and they are counting those without any postmarks or any identification whatsoever." — Thursday night.

THE FACTS: "Partisan Democrats" didn't ordain this. It was the state Supreme Court that ruled ballots mailed before the end of Election Day could be received up to three days later and still be counted. His accusation that mailed ballots without postmarks are being counted is also false. Election officials are weeding out ballots postmarked after Nov. 3.

The U.S. Supreme Court examined the case and did not stand in the way of the three-day time frame. It may review the matter again later.

A number of other states have also made accommodations for the crush of mailed ballots.

TRUMP: "Tens of thousands of votes were illegally received after 8 P.M. on Tuesday, Election Day, totally

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and easily changing the results in Pennsylvania and certain other razor thin states.” — tweet Saturday.

THE FACTS: This is groundless. Many states allow votes received in the mail after Election Day to be counted. It’s not illegal. And Trump has presented no evidence that “tens of thousands” came in after poll closings.

In Pennsylvania, ballots received after 8 p.m. on Election Day were only a fragment of the total vote count. Across the state, counties reported receiving fewer than 8,000 after Tuesday, though some were still assessing how many they had.

Most of those ballots were sitting segregated waiting to be counted and were not included in vote totals, and officials were weeding out ballots that weren’t postmarked by Nov. 3.

MICHIGAN

TRUMP: “Our campaign has been denied access to observe any counting in Detroit.” — Thursday night.

THE FACTS: That’s false.

Absentee ballots were counted at a downtown convention center, where some 134 counting boards were set up. Each party was allowed one poll watcher per board, said City Clerk Janice Winfrey.

She said she was not aware of any Republican poll watchers being removed but noted some had been “very aggressive, trying to intimidate the poll workers and processors.”

Mark Brewer, former chairman of the Michigan Democratic Party, said he was inside the convention center and access was cut off to some people from both sides at one point because of capacity restrictions related to the pandemic.

GEORGIA

TRUMP: “The election apparatus in Georgia is run by Democrats.” — Thursday night.

THE FACTS: No, the state’s elections are overseen by a Republican, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger.

TRUMP: “The 11th Circuit ruled that in Georgia the votes have to be in by Election Day, that they should be in by Election Day. And they weren’t. Votes are coming in after Election Day.” — Thursday night.

THE FACTS: That’s not an accurate description of the ruling in question or what happened in the election in Georgia.

Although the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that votes must be in by 7 p.m. Election Day for them to count, an exception was made for ballots from the members of U.S. military serving overseas. Those could be received until 5 p.m. Friday and still count. Election officials in Georgia are still counting votes, but they are votes that have been lawfully received.

NON-SHENANIGANS

TRUMP: “If you count the legal votes, I easily win. if you count the illegal votes, they can try to steal the election from us.” — Thursday night.

THE FACTS: This is baseless.

Neither Trump’s campaign aides nor election officials identified substantial numbers of “illegal” votes, much less the mammoth numbers it would take to ruin an easy win by Trump in an election where more than 140 million people voted.

He frequently speaks as if mail-in voting itself is illegitimate. But it unfolded in accordance with state voting rules, in some cases adapted by officials to help voters get through the pandemic safely.

TRUMP: “We were winning in all the key locations by a lot, actually. And then our number started miraculously getting whittled away in secret.” — Thursday night.

THE FACTS: He has no foundation to make this accusation. The change in fortunes he speaks about is explained by the nature of vote counting in the states, not by any sudden surge of malfeasance that others have not seen. And it does not happen in “secret” any more than his initial leads developed in secret.

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Often, big cities are slower to report their numbers, and those votes tend skew Democratic. Likewise, many states tend to count mail-in ballots at the end of the process. That portion of the vote has tended to favor Biden, particularly because Trump urged his supporters in advance to avoid mail-in voting and to vote in person either early or on Election Day.

Trump finished election night with leads in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin and Georgia, among the states most in play, then saw his advantage begin to fray Wednesday and past that.

TRUMP: "ANY VOTE THAT CAME IN AFTER ELECTION DAY WILL NOT BE COUNTED!" — tweet Thursday.

THE FACTS: Not true. Despite the tweet shout, votes received in the mail after Tuesday were counted in many places, and legally. Roughly 20 states allow for late-arriving ballots.

KELLYANNE CONWAY, unofficial Trump adviser: "Why are we in such a rush to finish this election prematurely? Let's be patient. Let's take a deep breath. Let's count every legal vote. I think it's a time to be methodical and not emotional." — Thursday on "Fox & Friends."

TRUMP, less than an hour later: "STOP THE COUNT!" — tweet.

THE FACTS: The count went on. A president doesn't control ballot counting. But if state and local officials had somehow stopped counting all at once, that would have frozen a tally that had Biden ahead in electoral and popular votes.

In reality, Trump wanted counting stopped only in undecided key states where he was ahead and Biden might catch up, not the reverse. A variety of Trump's advisers insisted the president wanted a full and fair count, only to be flatly contradicted by his tweets and other statements.

TRUMP: "We want all voting to stop." — statement to supporters in the White House early Wednesday morning.

THE FACTS: This was not a coherent demand or complaint. Voting stopped everywhere on Tuesday, Election Day. Voting had even stopped in Hawaii, where the clock is five hours behind Washington, when he appeared in the East Room after 2 a.m.

He may have meant counting should stop. But state and local officials have never counted all the votes in a presidential election in one day, there is no obligation for them to do so and they did not stop in response.

"IF YOU COUNT THE LEGAL VOTES, I EASILY WIN THE ELECTION! IF YOU COUNT THE ILLEGAL AND LATE VOTES, THEY CAN STEAL THE ELECTION FROM US!" — statement released Thursday.

THE FACTS: He presented no calculation to back this up, or evidence of late votes or illegal ones.

People could not vote after Election Day. If by late votes he meant ballots counted after Tuesday, it's routine and legal to finish counting in days ahead. The great number of ballots cast by mail in the pandemic and the intense interest in the election gave officials far more to count and they never finish in one day in normal times anyway.

TRUMP: "We have claimed, for Electoral Vote purposes, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (which won't allow legal observers) the State of Georgia, and the State of North Carolina, each one of which has a BIG Trump lead. Additionally, we hereby claim the State of Michigan if, in fact ... there was a large number of secretly dumped ballots as has been widely reported." — tweets Wednesday.

THE FACTS: Presidents don't get to "hereby claim" election victories. No candidates for office do.

The U.S. government does not count the ballots in a U.S. election or conduct the vote. State and local officials do that. The winner of a presidential election is determined by the number of electoral votes gained in each state. Legal challenges are settled by courts, and may be by the Supreme Court.

As for the rest of his tweet, his leads at the time in Georgia and North Carolina were not "Big" and his substantial opening lead in Pennsylvania was coming down as more mail ballots and other ballots were counted in Democratic-leaning areas.

He was wrong to say Pennsylvania did not let observers from the campaign watch the processing of

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votes; it did. But a judge sided with Trump in ruling campaign observers could get closer to the processing of ballots than they had been allowed, so they could see it better.

He offered no evidence about "secretly dumped ballots" in Michigan but has generally tried to assign nefarious motives to voting procedures that actually were carried out according to authorized guidelines.

His campaign manager, Bill Stepien, also told fabricated stories of shenanigans, asserting to reporters Thursday that "every night the president goes to bed with a lead" and every night new votes "are mysteriously found in a sack." That day, courts in Georgia and Michigan dismissed complaints from the Trump campaign.

HOUSE RACES

TRUMP: "For the first time ever, we lost zero races in the House. I was talking to (House Republican leader) Kevin McCarthy today. He said he couldn't believe it: zero races. Very unusual thing. Zero." — Thursday night.

THE FACTS: Far from zero. Republicans lost more than 200 House races. But no GOP incumbents lost their races in counting so far.

ECONOMY

TRUMP: "Get out & VOTE! Under my Administration, our ECONOMY is growing at the fastest rate EVER at 33.1%. Next year will be the GREATEST ECONOMIC YEAR in American History! — his final tweet of the campaign to deal with his record.

THE FACTS: That's a distorted snapshot of the economy and not measure of its current performance.

The economy indeed grew by a record 33.1% annual rate in the July-September quarter but it followed the economy's plunge in the spring and did not make up for lost ground.

The U.S. government's estimate of third-quarter growth showed that the economy has regained only about two-thirds of the output that was lost early this year when the eruption of the virus closed businesses, threw tens of millions out of work and caused the deepest recession since the Great Depression.

Since the third quarter, the economy has been weakening again. Coronavirus infections have spiked, hiring has sagged and Washington's emergency economic aid has run out, with no more help in sight this year.

Gregory Daco, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, noted that the record-high third quarter growth in the nation's gross domestic product "tells us little, if anything, about momentum" in the current quarter. "The strong GDP performance gives a false impression of the economy's true health," Daco wrote in a research note. "We anticipate a much slower second phase of the recovery."

Associated Press writers Maryclaire Dale in Philadelphia, Amanda Seitz in Chicago, Christina A. Cassidy in Atlanta and Colleen Long, Brian Slodysko and Hope Yen in Washington contributed to this report.

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

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Census takers say they were told to enter false information

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

Two census takers told The Associated Press that their supervisors pressured them to enter false information into a computer system about homes they had not visited so they could close cases during the waning days of the once-a-decade national headcount.

Maria Arce said her supervisor in Massachusetts offered step-by-step instructions in how to trick the system. She said she felt guilty about lying, but she did not want to disobey her supervisors, who kept

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repeating that they were under pressure from a regional office in New York to close cases.

"It was all a sham. I felt terrible, terrible. I knew I was lying. I knew I was doing something wrong, but they said, 'No, no, we are closing. We have to do this,'" Arce said.

At the time, in mid- to late September, census workers were drawing close to a deadline imposed by President Donald Trump's administration to finish the count by the end of the month.

Indiana census taker Pam Roberts' supervisor pressured her to make up answers about households where no one was home.

Roberts agreed to do it for only one day — making up information on about two dozen households — before refusing to continue the next day because she believed it was wrong. She said she entered made-up answers while in her car outside the homes since the mobile device used for data entry could track where a person was when making an entry.

"That's not what this is about. If it's not truthful, how can we use it?" Roberts, who lives in Lafayette, Indiana, said in an interview.

Asked about the workers' statements to the AP, the Census Bureau said it was looking into the allegations, but the agency did not provide further details.

The census takers shared their experiences with the AP as a coalition of local governments and advocacy groups wages a battle in federal court over the accuracy of the 2020 census. A lawsuit filed in California challenged the decision by the Commerce Department, which oversees the Census Bureau, to speed up deadlines so that the count would end in September.

The coalition argued that the shortened timeline would cause minority communities to be undercounted in the data used to determine the number of congressional seats in each state.

A judge ruled that the count could continue through the end of October and that census officials could continue crunching the numbers through April 2021. But the Trump administration appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which sided with the administration and allowed census field operations to end in mid-October. An appellate court suspended the judge's order on the deadline for the numbers to be used for congressional representation. That issue is still being litigated.

The coalition that filed the lawsuit said the deadline was changed to ensure that the number crunching would take place while Trump was still in office, no matter the outcome of the presidential race. That would guarantee the enforcement of an order Trump issued in July seeking to exclude people who are in the country illegally from the numbers used to determine the distribution of congressional seats.

Trump's order has been found unlawful and unconstitutional by three courts — in New York, California and Maryland. The Justice Department is appealing.

After the Supreme Court decision, the local governments and advocacy groups documented other cases in which census takers were instructed to falsify information or cut corners in order to finish the count.

Under federal law, Census Bureau employees who make false statements can be fined up to \$2,000 and imprisoned for up to five years. But census workers are rarely prosecuted for falsification of census responses since the Census Bureau is more concerned with identifying fraud and correcting mistakes than pursuing legal penalties, said Terri Ann Lowenthal, a former congressional staffer who specializes in the census.

During the 2010 census, two managers in a Brooklyn census office were fired for instructing workers to falsify questionnaires, requiring around 4,220 households to be recounted. Each time a national census winds down, the more difficult homes to count "tend to generate a greater incidence of falsification," the bureau's watchdog agency, the Office of Inspector General, said in a 2010 report.

For this year's census, the Office of Inspector General, says it's evaluating the quality of the data collected. So far, statisticians have not uncovered anything that raises red flags, Ron Jarmin, the Census Bureau's deputy director, said Thursday in a blog post.

There are early signs that the pandemic affected college towns and that higher numbers of people failed to answer questions about their date of birth, sex, race and Hispanic origin than in the 2010 census, Jarmin said.

The Census Bureau says it reached 99.9% of the nation's households — with two-thirds of them respond-

ing online, by mail or by phone, and a third being counted by census takers.

Arce, outside Boston, said a census manager called her at the end of September to tell her a supervisor would be sending her some cases. Arce packed a lunch, expecting that she would be out in neighborhoods all day.

But when her supervisor called, the supervisor said she would be working from her home. The supervisor then walked her through steps that would allow her to override the software on her mobile device so she could close cases remotely, away from the addresses in Framingham, Massachusetts, that she had been given.

Arce said she did not feel right about what she was doing and objected, but she was told the cases had to be closed.

Then she was instructed to go to the neighborhood, which appeared to be heavily Hispanic based on its stores and restaurants, and she closed cases from her car by entering into her mobile device that she was unable to reach residents of households, even though she had not tried knocking on their doors.

The supervisor did not respond to a voicemail message left Friday.

In Indiana, Roberts said she was instructed to fill out information about households even if she had not talked to any of the residents. Her supervisor wanted her "to fill it out and make up names and put it down as a refusal," Roberts said. "I did this from outside the house."

Her supervisor did not respond to an email inquiry on Friday.

She closed about two dozen cases that way. Now she worries that faith in the 2020 census numbers will be undermined because of the corners that were cut.

"They're not going to trust the numbers if you told them you cheated," she said.

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

Ethiopia to replace leadership of Tigray region amid clashes

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Ethiopia moved Saturday to replace the leadership in the country's defiant northern Tigray region, where clashes between regional forces and those of the federal government have led to fears that the major African power could slide into civil war. Tigray's leader told the African Union that the federal government was planning a "full-fledged military offensive."

Neither side appeared ready for the dialogue that experts say is needed to avert disaster.

The upper house of parliament, the House of Federation, voted to set up an interim administration, giving Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed the power to carry out measures against a Tigray leadership his government regards as illegal. Those include appointing officials and facilitating elections.

The Nobel Peace Prize-winning prime minister asserted that "criminal elements cannot escape the rule of law under the guise of seeking reconciliation and a call for dialogue."

Experts and diplomats are watching in dismay as two heavily armed forces clash in one of the world's most strategic yet vulnerable regions, the Horn of Africa. Observers warn that a civil war in Ethiopia, Africa's second most populous country with 110 million people, could suck in or destabilize neighbors such as Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia.

A statement posted Saturday on the Facebook page of the Tigray government, the Tigray People's Liberation Front, said it will win the "justified" war, adding that "a fighter will not negotiate with its enemies."

"Tigray's people are now armed with modern weaponry that could reach the seat of the infidels," it said.

In a letter South Africa's president, who is the African Union's chairperson, Tigray leader Debretsion Gebremichael alleged that Ethiopia's federal government and neighboring Eritrea have mobilized their forces near the Tigray border "with the intention of launching a full-fledged military offensive."

The letter dated Friday, seen by The Associated Press, called Abiy's behavior "unconstitutional, dictatorial and treasonous."

It said the African Union was well-placed to bring parties to dialogue to "avert an all-out civil war."

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The conflict is playing out between former allies in Ethiopia's ruling coalition who now regard each other as illegal. The TPLF long dominated the country's military and government before Abiy took office in 2018 and introduced sweeping political reforms that won him the Nobel. The changes left the TPLF feeling marginalized, and it broke away last year when Abiy sought to turn the coalition into a single Prosperity Party.

Tensions spiked when the Tigray region, objecting to the delay of the national election until next year and Abiy's extended stay in office, held a local election in September that the federal government called illegal.

Clashes began early Wednesday when Abiy accused the TPLF forces of attacking a military base in Tigray. In a major escalation on Friday, Abiy announced that airstrikes in multiple locations around the Tigray capital "completely destroyed rockets and other heavy weapons" and made a retaliatory attack impossible.

The military operations will continue, the prime minister said, and he warned the Tigray population: "In order to avoid unexpected peril, I advise that you limit group movements in cities."

Communications remain almost completely severed with Tigray, making it difficult to verify either side's assertions and leading to pleas from aid groups and human rights groups to warn of a brewing humanitarian disaster. Tigray is increasingly boxed in by Ethiopian federal forces and a six-month state of emergency that curbs public gatherings and movement.

Tigray is preparing for a "major offensive to come tomorrow or the day after from the federal government," Kjetil Tronvoll, a professor at Bjorknes University College in Norway and a longtime Ethiopia watcher, told the AP. "That's my estimate. Abiy has promised a quick delivery of victory, so he has to move fast."

Ethiopia's decision on Saturday to replace the Tigray leadership leaves the region with essentially two options, he said: pursuing a "full-out war" with the aim of toppling Abiy's government or declaring independence, especially with Abiy rejecting dialogue.

Encircled, the TPLF can't afford a drawn-out conflict and might fight its way to the capital, Addis Ababa, or toward the Red Sea for an outlet for supplies, Tronvoll said. He described one published estimate of Tigray having nearly a quarter-million various armed forces a "serious underestimate" and said the region's various forces outnumber the federal army "by at least two or three multiples." That's why Addis Ababa has called for reinforcements from other regional forces, he said.

Dino Mahtani with the International Crisis Group, in comments posted Friday, said that if the Tigray forces come under pressure they may even punch into Eritrea, which would then internationalize this conflict." The TPLF and Eritrea have a bitter history of a long border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea before the countries made peace in 2018.

The TPLF's only other real avenue out of Ethiopia is into Sudan, which finds itself "in a very delicate position," Mahtani said.

Sudan's eastern al-Qadarif province has closed its border with Ethiopia's Tigray and Amhara regions, the Sudan News Agency reported Saturday.

The Tigray drama dominates conversation in Ethiopia, and many people commenting on social media appear to support the government's move to get rid of the region's leadership. Some cite abuses by the TPLF while it was in power for well over two decades, or echo the federal government's accusation that it incited recent violence across the country.

Those sympathetic to the TPLF are mostly silenced due to the communications blackout in Tigray, but those able to comment describe the federal government's actions as an aggression that will lead to further escalation of the conflict.

Elias Meseret in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Samy Magdy in Cairo contributed.

Not waiting: Biden transition team at work amid limbo

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Joe Biden's transition team isn't waiting for a verdict in the presidential race before getting to work.

As officials continue to count ballots in several undecided states, longtime Biden aide Ted Kaufman is

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leading efforts to ensure the former vice president can begin building out a government in anticipation of a victory.

Kaufman is a former senator from Delaware who was appointed to fill the seat vacated when Biden was elected vice president. He also worked on Barack Obama's transition team in 2008, and helped write legislation formalizing the presidential transition process.

Biden first asked Kaufman to start work on a just-in-case transition in April, shortly after the former vice president locked up the presidential nomination at the conclusion of a once-crowded Democratic primary. Now, each day after the election that goes by without a declared winner is one day fewer to formally begin preparing to take over the White House.

The transition can be a frenzied process even under normal circumstances.

In the meantime, an odd political limbo has taken hold. The Biden team is moving forward but can't tackle all that needs to be accomplished; President Donald Trump continues to claim without evidence that the election is being stolen from him.

It's at least somewhat reminiscent of the 2000 presidential race and that year's post-election legal fight over the recount in Florida. After more than a month, the dispute between Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore was decided by the Supreme Court — truncating the transition period to just 39 days before the January 2001 inauguration.

Clay Johnson, who headed Bush's transition team, said Biden's advisers "can't wait to be sure that the president-elect really is the president-elect. They have to hurry up and move forward."

Johnson said that in June of 1999 — about 17 months before Election Day 2000 — Bush approached him about heading the possible transition, having seen his father go through the process 11 years earlier. Prior to Election Day, Bush had already settled on Andy Card to serve as chief of staff for both the transition and at the White House.

Johnson thought they were ahead of schedule. But then came the recount.

After an initial 10 days or so, Bush's running mate, Dick Cheney, told Johnson to begin raising money and making staffing decisions, declaring that the race "is going to be resolved one way or the other."

The Bush team was unable to conduct FBI background checks on potential Cabinet members and other appointees with no official winner declared. Instead, it used a former White House general counsel from the Reagan administration to conduct interviews designed to screen for potential problems that might have turned up in background checks.

"You have to assume you are it and not be presumptuous but they better be working hard as if they are it," Johnson said of Biden's team. "And they should have started doing that last Tuesday night."

Biden's campaign has refused to comment on the transition process. His closest advisers say the top priority will be announcing a White House chief of staff, then assembling the pieces needed to tackle the coronavirus.

A president gets 4,000 appointees, and more than 1,200 of them must be confirmed by the Senate. That could be a challenge for Biden since the Senate may well remain controlled by the Republicans.

The transition process formally starts once the General Service Administration determines the winner based on all available facts. That's vague enough guidance that Trump could pressure the agency's director to stall.

It's also unclear if the president would meet personally with Biden. Obama met with Trump less than a week after the election, but there was no dispute about him having topped Hillary Clinton in the Electoral College.

Whenever the process starts, Biden will have to cope with the coronavirus, which has killed more than 230,000 Americans. Biden has promised to use his transition period to meet with the governors of every state and ask them to impose a nationwide mask-wearing mandate. He says he plans to go around any holdouts to secure such rules from county and local officials.

Another key decision will be how Biden deploys his running mate, California Sen. Kamala Harris. His campaign has indicated that Biden will establish a White House-level coronavirus task force like Trump did,

but it's not clear if he will tap Harris to run it. Vice President Mike Pence heads the current panel.

As his team awaits the results of the ballot counting, Biden is huddling in his Wilmington home with top advisers and family. Harris has stuck close too, occupying a Delaware hotel with her family since election night and joining Biden as he gave remarks in recent days.

New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, a former Biden presidential primary rival, said he expects Harris to be "a real partner" to Biden and hopes to see her "managing major issues of importance."

Associated Press writer Kathleen Ronayne contributed to this report from Sacramento, Calif.

The Latest: US sets daily record, tops 126,000 virus cases

By The Associated Press undefined

BALTIMORE — The United States set a record of more than 126,400 confirmed cases in a single day on Friday.

The seven-day rolling average of new daily cases in the U.S. is approaching 100,000 for the first time, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

Total U.S. cases since the start of the pandemic are nearing 10 million, and confirmed cases globally are approaching 50 million.

Worldwide infection numbers are also setting records. The world reached 400,000 daily confirmed cases on Oct. 15; 500,000 on Oct. 26, and 600,000 on Friday.

The seven-day rolling average for daily deaths in the U.S. rose in the past two weeks from 772 on Oct. 23 to 911 on Friday. Those numbers were higher in the spring and August.

The global death toll hit a daily record of 11,024 confirmed deaths on Wednesday.

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

- Malaysia's coronavirus cases triple in month
- Germany reports daily record of more than 23,000 virus cases
- Russia's total death toll surpasses 30,000 from virus
- Trump chief of staff Mark Meadows diagnosed with the coronavirus
- Books? Hairdressers? Europeans split on lockdown essentials
- In India, polluted air spells trouble for virus patients

— Follow AP's coronavirus pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/virus-outbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

WASHINGTON -- President Donald Trump's chief of staff Mark Meadows has been diagnosed with the coronavirus as the nation sets daily records for confirmed cases for the pandemic.

Two senior administration officials confirmed Meadows tested positive for the virus, which has killed more than 236,000 Americans so far this year. Meadows traveled with Trump in the run-up to Election Day and last appeared in public early Wednesday morning without a mask as Trump falsely declared victory in the vote count.

He had been one of the close aides around Trump when the president came down with the virus more than a month ago.

The number of coronavirus cases in the U.S. have increased more than 50% in the past two weeks, the seven-day rolling average for daily new cases rose from 61,166 on Oct. 22 to 94,625 on Thursday, according to an AP analysis of data from John Hopkins University.

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Malaysia's government says it will expand movement restrictions to most parts of the country after coronavirus cases tripled in a month. Another 1,168 new cases were reported

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Saturday, bringing the total tally to 39,357 -- compared to just 13,993 cases a month ago. The death toll stands at 282.

Senior Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob says the entire peninsula Malaysia, except for three states, will be placed under a conditional movement control order from Monday until Dec. 6. He says the move will help curb the virus spread and allow targeted screening to be done.

The restrictions have been imposed since Oct. 14 in Kuala Lumpur, the administrative capital Putrajaya and the richest state of Selangor.

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran has reported 9,460 cases of the coronavirus, breaking its previous single-day record earlier this week.

The health ministry registered 423 deaths on Saturday, pushing its confirmed death toll to 37,832, the highest in the Middle East.

Iran has seen a recent surge of infections as the government resists a centralized lockdown to salvage its sanctions-hit economy. However, authorities have recently tightened movement restrictions and introduced travel bans and mask mandates as hospitals in the hard-hit capital of Tehran near overwhelming numbers of patients.

Iran's medical council announced Saturday that 300 health workers had died from the virus.

BANGKOK — Health authorities in Thailand on Saturday confirmed a new case of local transmission of the coronavirus, one of a handful discovered in recent months.

The Department of Disease Control identified the new case as a 37-year-old Indian man working as a waiter in the southern province of Krabi. It says he tested positive for the disease when he applied Wednesday to have his work permit renewed.

Krabi is a province on the Andaman Sea and normally popular with tourists, though Thailand was completely shut to foreign tourists from early April until last month.

The health agency says it confirmed 12 new cases of coronavirus, including the Indian man. Two each had traveled from France, the United Arab Emirates, the United States and Myanmar, and one each from Mexico, Switzerland and the Netherlands. All arrivals from abroad must be quarantined for 14 days.

Thailand has confirmed a total of 3,830 coronavirus cases and 60 deaths since January.

BERLIN — Germany's disease control center is reporting a daily record of 23,300 coronavirus infections.

The Robert Koch Institute says that surpassed the record of 21,506 set the day before, which was the first time the country had registered more than 20,000 daily cases.

It reported 130 deaths, a number trending upward but far lower than the high of 315 deaths reported one day in April.

Germany has imposed significant new restrictions to prevent the health system from being overwhelmed. A four-week partial shutdown took effect on Monday, with bars, restaurants, leisure and sports facilities closed and new contact restrictions imposed. Shops and schools remain open.

Germany has recorded 642,488 coronavirus cases and 11,226 deaths since the start of the pandemic.

MOSCOW — Russia reports the coronavirus death toll has exceeded 30,000.

The national coronavirus task force says 364 people died on Friday, bringing the total to 30,251 since the start of the pandemic.

It says 20,396 new infection cases were recorded, down slightly from Thursday's record of 20,582. Overall, some 1.75 million people in Russia have been infected with the virus.

AUSTIN, Texas — A Texas district judge on Friday upheld an order from El Paso County's top elected official shutting down businesses while the region fights an alarming surge in COVID-19 cases.

The decision from Judge Bill Moody of El Paso's 34th District Court came as federal military medical

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teams deployed to the border region at the request of the state.

The county's top elected official, El Paso County Judge Ricardo Samaniego, ordered a two-week shut-down of nonessential activities late last week.

In making his decision, Moody pointed out that during the Spanish flu pandemic in the early part of the 20th century, city and county elected officials had authority to respond as they "thought was necessary to protect the health and financial interests of their individual communities."

Chris Hilton, an attorney with the Texas attorney general's office, said the state would appeal. Attorney General Ken Paxton has argued that Samaniego's order is illegal because it goes against Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's statewide order to reopen businesses.

Meanwhile, three Air Force medical teams were expected to arrive in El Paso by the weekend, according to Seth Christensen, chief of media and communications for the Texas Department of Emergency Management.

El Paso joins a list of 10 other cities, including Houston, San Antonio and multiple communities in the Rio Grande Valley region, to receive aid from the Department of Defense at the request of Texas officials, Christensen said.

CHICAGO — Faced with 20,000 new cases of coronavirus illness in the last two days, a stay-at-home order is possible if the spread is not slowed, Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker said Friday just before his office announced that he was self-isolating after he had been exposed to the virus.

With a record 10,374 new infections reported Friday, and the 10,000-death mark passed this week, Pritzker was asked if he would order people to stay in their homes as was required by Illinois and many other states during the spring onslaught of COVID-19.

"We're in a bad situation (but) I'm not looking at the broader mitigation of stay-at-home ... as in something I would do in the coming days or a week. But I can't guarantee you what it looks like two weeks from now or three weeks," he said. "I just don't know."

About an hour after his daily COVID-19 briefing, Pritzker's office announced that the governor was self-isolating after learning that an infected person attended a meeting with Pritzker last Monday. He is awaiting test results.

It is the third time during the pandemic that Pritzker has been exposed to the virus — twice previously it was the result of a staff member getting sick.

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice said he and his staff tested negative for the coronavirus after a staffer in the Capitol building tested positive on Friday morning. The attorney general's office later said the employee believed to have the virus tested negative on Friday evening.

Justice says he was tested for the virus minutes before a noon news conference Friday, where he announced a record high of new cases. The state reported 540 confirmed coronavirus cases in the past 24 hours.

The employee who initially tested positive Friday morning works for the attorney general, said Curtis Johnson, a spokesman for Attorney General Patrick Morrisey.

But after testing staff and the individual again Friday evening, "all of our tests came back negative," Johnson later told the AP.

"The office is taking appropriate precautions that include testing to ensure the safety of not only its employees, but all of those in the Capitol building and the surrounding community," Johnson had said Friday afternoon after the positive test.

The governor's office declined to say exactly how many people were tested and whether anyone will consider quarantining.

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Kentucky reported 2,302 new coronavirus cases and 10 more virus-related deaths Friday. More than 1,000 people remain hospitalized with the virus.

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Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear also urged Kentucky's 80 counties classified as "red zone" counties to follow the state's emergency recommendations. In last week's report, 68 Kentucky counties were on the red-zone list, due to the high prevalence of cases.

"I know we've been in this fight for so long that it's easy to get numb to the scary headlines and high case numbers," Beshear said. "That's normal. It's human nature. But you have to understand this is the most dangerous COVID-19 has ever been in the commonwealth and it is leading to more of our fellow Kentuckians becoming sick, being hospitalized and dying."

Kentucky set a high Thursday with 2,318 new cases.

The state's test positivity rate Friday reached 6.77%, the highest since June.

ANCHORAGE, Alaska -- Officials in Anchorage plan to boost enforcement of an expanded mask mandate and restrict indoor gathering sizes in a bid to curb coronavirus cases.

The updated mask mandate, which takes effect Monday, requires masks to be worn, with some exceptions, in indoor public settings or communal areas and outdoors when distancing from non-household members is not possible.

Acting Mayor Austin Quinn-Davidson says the revision will get rid of loopholes in the order that has been in effect. She says the municipality plans to bolster its enforcement efforts in response to concerns from the business community.

TOPEKA, Kan. — Kansas added a record-setting 5,418 new coronavirus cases over two days as hospitals warned that staffing was under strain.

The increases in confirmed and probable cases reported Friday brought the state's total to 97,633, a 5.9% increase from Wednesday.

Data from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment shows that state averaged 1,779 new cases a day for the seven days ending Friday. The state also added 79 COVID-19 deaths to bring the total to 1,166. Deaths have more than doubled since mid-September.

State health department head Dr. Lee Norman says cases "are just skyrocketing" because people are spending more time indoors and attending public events and family gatherings without being diligent about wearing masks or social distancing.

He says he's concerned cases will spike again from family Thanksgiving get-togethers. Norman adds many local officials "haven't done anything" to check the surge.

UAE announces relaxing of Islamic laws for personal freedoms

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The United Arab Emirates announced on Saturday a major overhaul of the country's Islamic personal laws, allowing unmarried couples to cohabit, loosening alcohol restrictions and criminalizing so-called "honor killings."

The broadening of personal freedoms reflects the changing profile of a country that has sought to bill itself as a Westernized destination for tourists, fortune-seekers and businesses despite its Islamic legal code that has previously triggered court cases against foreigners and outrage in their home countries.

The reforms aim to boost the country's economic and social standing and "consolidate the UAE's principles of tolerance," state-run WAM news agency reported, which offered only minimal details in the surprise weekend announcement. The government decrees behind the changes were outlined extensively in state-linked newspaper The National, which did not cite its source.

The move follows a historic U.S.-brokered deal to normalize relations between the UAE and Israel, which is expected to bring an influx of Israeli tourists and investment. It also comes as skyscraper-studded Dubai gets ready to host the World Expo. The high-stakes event, expected to bring a flurry of commercial activity and some 25 million visitors to the country, was initially scheduled for October but was pushed back a

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year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The changes, which The National said would take immediate effect, also reflect the efforts of the Emirates' rulers to keep pace with a rapidly changing society at home.

"I could not be happier for these new laws that are progressive and proactive," said Emirati filmmaker Abdallah Al Kaabi, whose art has tackled taboo topics like homosexual love and gender identity.

"2020 has been a tough and transformative year for the UAE," he added.

Changes include scrapping penalties for alcohol consumption, sales and possession for those 21 and over. Although liquor and beer is widely available in bars and clubs in the UAE's luxuriant coastal cities, individuals previously needed a government-issued license to purchase, transport or have alcohol in their homes. The new rule would apparently allow Muslims who have been barred from obtaining licenses to drink alcoholic beverages freely.

Another amendment allows for "cohabitation of unmarried couples," which has long been a crime in the UAE. Authorities, especially in the more freewheeling financial hub of Dubai, often looked the other way when it came to foreigners, but the threat of punishment still lingered. Attempted suicide, forbidden in Islamic law, would also be decriminalized, The National reported.

In a move to better "protect women's rights," the government said it also decided to get rid of laws defending "honor crimes," a widely criticized tribal custom in which a male relative may evade prosecution for assaulting a woman seen as dishonoring a family. The punishment for a crime committed to eradicate a woman's "shame," for promiscuity or disobeying religious and cultural strictures, will now be the same for any other kind of assault.

In a country where expatriates outnumber citizens nearly nine to one, the amendments will permit foreigners to avoid Islamic Shariah courts on issues like marriage, divorce and inheritance.

The announcement said nothing of other behavior deemed insulting to local customs that has landed foreigners in jail in the past, such as acts of homosexuality, cross-dressing and public displays of affection.

Traditional Islamic values remain strong in the federation of seven desert sheikhdoms. Even so, Annelise Shelton, a Middle East research fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, wrote on Twitter that the drastic changes "can happen without too much popular resistance because the population of citizens, especially in the main cities of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, is so small."

The roughly 1 million Emiratis in the UAE, a hereditarily ruled country long criticized for its suppression of dissent, closely toe the government line. Political parties and labor unions remain illegal.

Without Ginsburg, high court support for health law in doubt

By MARK SHERMAN and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Until six weeks ago, defenders of the Affordable Care Act could take comfort in some simple math. Five Supreme Court justices who had twice preserved the Obama-era health care law remained on the bench and seemed unlikely votes to dismantle it.

But Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death in mid-September and her replacement by Amy Coney Barrett barely a month later have altered the equation as the court prepares to hear arguments Tuesday in the third major legal challenge in the law's 10-year existence.

Republican attorneys general in 18 states, backed by the Trump administration, are arguing that the whole law should be struck down because of a change made by the Republican-controlled Congress in 2017 that reduced the penalty for not having health insurance to zero.

A court ruling invalidating the entire law would threaten coverage for more than 23 million people. It would wipe away protections for people with preexisting medical conditions, subsidized insurance premiums that make coverage affordable for millions of Americans and an expansion of the Medicaid program that is available to low-income people in most states.

"No portion of the ACA is severable from the mandate," Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton told the court in a written filing. The Republicans are pressing this position even though congressional efforts to repeal the entire law have failed, including in July 2017 when then-Arizona Sen. John McCain delivered a

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dramatic thumbs-down vote to a repeal effort by fellow Republicans.

Barrett is one of three appointees of President Donald Trump who will be weighing the latest legal attack on the law popularly known as "Obamacare." Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh are the others. It's their first time hearing a major case over the health law as justices, although Kavanaugh took part in the the first round of suits over it when he was a federal appeals court judge.

Of the other justices, Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Stephen Breyer, Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor have voted to uphold the law. Justices Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas have voted for strike it all down.

The case is being argued at an unusual moment, a week after the presidential election, with Democrat Joe Biden on the cusp of winning the White House. Control of the Senate also is hanging in the balance.

The political environment aside, the practical effects of the repeal of the tax penalty have surprised many health care policy experts. They predicted that getting rid of the penalty would lead over time to several million people dropping coverage, mostly healthier enrollees, and as a result, premiums for the law's subsidized private insurance would rise because remaining customers would tend to be in poorer health.

But that hasn't happened – at least not yet.

Enrollment in the law's insurance markets stayed relatively stable at more than 11 million people, even after the effective date of the penalty's elimination in 2019. According to the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation, enrollment dropped by about 300,000 people from 2018 to 2019. Kaiser estimates 11.4 million people have coverage this year.

Enrollment has fallen by more than 1 million people in the Trump years, but most of that happened before the penalty was repealed, not after.

Premiums have also remained stable since the penalty was repealed.

An additional 12 million people have coverage through the law's Medicaid expansion.

Some policy experts are now reassessing the importance of the coverage requirement and its fines. The thinking is that the law's benefits — coverage for preexisting conditions and subsidized premiums — may be more powerful motivators for consumers than the penalty.

"Enrollment doesn't seem to have skewed towards sicker people as many expected without a mandate penalty," said Larry Levitt of the Kaiser Foundation. "The carrot of the subsidies has been much more powerful than the stick of the mandate."

Barrett's confirmation hearings featured a sort of role reversal, with Democrats predicting the law's doom with Barrett on the court and Republicans playing down the prospects for a ruling that would completely upend the law.

Without tipping her hand about her eventual vote, Barrett talked at length about the legal doctrine of severability. Even if the justices agree that the law's mandate to buy health insurance is unconstitutional because Congress repealed the penalties for not complying, they could still leave the rest of the law alone. That would be consistent with other rulings in which the court excised a problematic provision from a law that was otherwise allowed to remain in force.

A limited ruling would have little real-world consequence. The case could also be rendered irrelevant if the new Congress were to restore a modest penalty for not buying health insurance.

A decision is expected by late spring.

Whitney Houston, Nine Inch Nails set for Rock Hall induction

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Years after their deaths, Whitney Houston, the Notorious B.I.G. and T. Rex's Marc Bolan will be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Joining them as part of the hall's 2020 class are Nine Inch Nails, Depeche Mode and the Doobie Brothers. Houston, T. Rex, B.I.G. and the Doobie Brothers are being inducted after being on the ballot for the first time.

The Rock Hall's annual induction ceremony was originally supposed to take place in May at the Public

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Auditorium in Cleveland, the city where the rock museum is located, but things changed because of the coronavirus pandemic. Instead, HBO will air a taped special airing Saturday at 8 p.m. EST, with big names like Bruce Springsteen, Sean "Diddy" Combs and Alicia Keys making appearances alongside some of the inductees.

Houston, who died in 2012, released her debut album in 1985 and became one of the greatest singers in music history. B.I.G. only released two albums but made a major impact on both the rap and pop music scenes. He died in 1997 at age 24.

The death of Bolan in 1977 ended British band T. Rex, known primarily for its 1970s hit "Bang a Gong (Get it On)" and, to a lesser extent, "Jeepster."

Artists become eligible for induction to the Rock Hall 25 years after the release of their first record.

Depeche Mode remains active, but its biggest influence came in the 1980s when its post-punk, synthesizer-dominated music made the Brits a favorite of the goth subculture. With songs like "Closer," Nine Inch Nails was a leader of the industrial rock movement in the 1990s. And the Doobie Brothers weren't critical favorites, but they had some indelible rock hits in the 1970s, including "Listen to the Music," "Black Water" and "China Grove." This year they are celebrating their 50th anniversary.

Others set to make appearances during the TV special include Dave Grohl, Miley Cyrus, Jennifer Hudson, Gwen Stefani, Charlize Theron, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Adam Levine and Brad Paisley. During the event, music managers Irving Azoff and Jon Landau will be honored with the Ahmet Ertegun Award.

Books? Hairdressers? Europeans split on lockdown essentials

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

HALLE, Belgium (AP) — In times when a pandemic unleashes death and poverty, the concept of what is essential to keep society functioning in a lockdown is gripping Europe.

Beyond the obvious — food stores and pharmacies — some answers in the patchwork of nations and cultures that make up Europe can approach the surreal. What is allowed on one side of a border can be banned just a brief stroll down the road, on the other.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that while it might seem fairest to just shut everything down, "it's perhaps not the most practical" solution.

"If people are only satisfied when everything possible is shut down, then that's a view which naturally doesn't make economic sense," Merkel said.

That's why Germany is keeping car dealerships open this time, after their closure in the first, spring lockdown hurt the country's huge automobile industry.

In Belgium, of course, chocolate shops are staying open.

"Chocolate is very much an essential food around here," said chocolatier Marleen Van Volsem at the Praleen chocolaterie south of Brussels. "It has to be. Because chocolate makes you happy."

Happiness would seem no subject to split hairs about. Yet consider how differently Italy and Britain treat a service that gladdens many a heart.

In the country that coined the term "bella figura" — the art of cutting a fine figure — hairdressers are deemed essential.

"Italians really care about their image and about wellness," said Charity Cheah, the Milan-based co-founder of TONI&GUY Italy. "Perhaps psychologically, the government may feel that going to a salon is a moment of release from stress and tension, a moment of self-care, that citizens need."

But across England people have had to scramble to get their hair done in the last days and hours while they still could, before new pandemic restrictions came into force on Thursday.

"The thought of another lockdown and being stuck at home — (people thought) I'm going to throw caution to the wind and I am just going to come in and have my hair done," said Richard Ward, managing director at the Richard Ward Hair and Metro Spa on London's swank Sloane Square.

And then there are life's finer pleasures.

In France, the love of books is unquestioned. No country has more Nobel Prize-winners in Literature,

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and a book review program on TV like Apostrophes used to be watched by millions every week. But walk the streets of Paris and you will find bookshops closed.

Sylvia Whitman, who runs the famed Shakespeare and Co. bookstore on the Left Bank, seethes at the prospect of giant online platforms gobbling up business while her shop is shuttered. Her sales have dropped 80% since the the spring lockdown.

"I find it really tiring that the bigger you are the more you can ignore laws, you can avoid taxes, you can find loopholes," she said. "The smaller you are, the more expensive and the more complicated things are."

Across the border in Belgium, books were deemed essential. Even then, Wouter Cajot, owner of the 't Stad Leest in the port of Antwerp finds it a mixed blessing. The lockdown has reduced passing shoppers to a trickle and he will have to decide whether heating and personnel costs make it worth his staying open.

But when essential goods cannot be bought in a store they can still be delivered.

"During the first lockdown we had to invent a website in three days and nights," said Cajot, and he got "new logistical equipment — a cargo bike," to the delight of his Antwerp clients who get books delivered within hours of placing their order. "So why order books at an international online giant when the corner bookstore can deliver same-day by bike?"

That's also become a question of government policy. With small shops often forced to suspend operations, and drifting closer to bankruptcy as a result, the door is wide open for supermarket chains and online giants to pounce. Several countries have taken steps to ensure supermarkets during lockdown cannot sell many products that provide the livelihood of closed shops.

It can get very complicated, with some supermarkets forced to tape off sections of their merchandise. In Belgium, Christmas decorations which took weeks to set up may now be hidden from view, since retail stores cannot sell them, as they are deemed non-essential.

"Books and magazines are allowed," said Harry Decraene, manager of a Carrefour department west of Brussels. "DVDs, CDs and games are not allowed. Sewing equipment is allowed, stationery is allowed, garden equipment can be sold. Pots and pans, toys and Christmas supplies are not allowed."

Just as toys would seem essential for children, petanque — France's traditional outdoors game that involves mostly elderly players tossing metal balls with leisurely accuracy — might be considered a must for the country's retirees.

There is nothing quite like the petanque grounds of the Provencal village of Saint-Paul-de-Vence, where the likes of actors Yves Montand and Lino Ventura would click their balls on the dirt. Now they're deserted, as the government opined that petanque is not essential.

"It's a leisure activity, we can do without it," said Sandrine Leonard, who manages the local tourism information center. Now that dead leaves provide the color the sun usually does, "it's more a period to stay quietly at home, to do some cooking. We spend less time outdoors. Hence the importance of having a good book."

But wait! Bookshops are closed.

John Leicester and Oleg Cetinic contributed from Paris, Virginia Mayo from Antwerp, Belgium, Sam Pe-trequin from Brussels, Frank Jordans from Berlin, Colleen Barry from Milan.

Follow AP pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/virus-outbreak>

Evangelicals stick with Trump, see upside even if he loses

By ELANA SCHOR and DAVID CRARY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The conservative evangelical Christians who helped send Donald Trump to the White House four years ago stuck by him in 2020. But even if Trump doesn't get a second term, some conservative Christians see reasons to celebrate in this year's election results.

White evangelical voters made up 23% of the vote nationwide and overwhelmingly favored Trump this fall, with about 8 in 10 backing him, according to AP VoteCast. Their support may not have been enough

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to re-elect the president — with Democratic nominee Joe Biden in the lead as states continued to count votes Friday — yet evangelicals still took heart in their strong presence at the polls and the GOP's success in down-ballot races.

"There's no question that we did our job," Ralph Reed, the veteran GOP activist who founded the Faith and Freedom Coalition nonprofit, said of his fellow conservative Christians.

Like most fellow evangelicals, Reed left room for the president to eke out a victory even as that path appeared slim Friday. But he also singled out Democrats' lackluster showing in key congressional races as a positive sign and suggested that religious conservatives might see an opportunity to work with a Biden administration that tacks away from the left.

"Should President Trump come up short ... if that's what ends up happening — other than that, it was a very impressive cycle for voters of faith and for social conservatives in the Republican Party," Reed said.

While many of Trump's evangelical allies are white, the president's campaign also worked to appeal to Latino voters and the GOP saw signs of improvement with that demographic in several states. The Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, a Latino evangelical pastor who has advised Trump, said those advances with Latino voters are one reason why evangelicals should view the election as "a win" for their priorities.

"I would argue, with great due deference to our president, that if we fall short, it's not due to the evangelical agenda of life, religious liberty and biblical justice," Rodriguez said. "It was more a rejection of the personality."

Looking ahead, Rodriguez said, "if we can reconcile the message and the messenger, I think the future looks pretty amazing."

Among Latinos, 61% of evangelicals backed Trump, according to AP VoteCast, far higher than the 35% he received from Latinos overall.

Biden's campaign had tried to peel off parts of Trump's evangelical base as part of its active faith outreach operation. But Robert Jones, author of two books about white Christians, said there was no erosion of white evangelicals' support for Trump and the Republican Party in this election — and that applied to both men and women in that demographic.

"They absolutely stood by their man," said Jones, who oversees frequent surveys of religious Americans as CEO of the Public Religion Research Institute, an independent Washington-based nonprofit.

Jones said white evangelicals, thanks to their high turnout rate, continue to have an outsized influence on election results, both nationally and in certain states. Without their political engagement, Democrats would have made greater inroads this year in states such as Texas and North Carolina, he said.

Of course, some of the president's closest evangelical allies are not yet ready to acknowledge the prospect of a Biden victory. Trump is vowing to continue challenging the outcome, promoting baseless voter fraud allegations in an effort to chip at public confidence in the process.

Texas-based megachurch pastor Jack Graham, a longtime Trump backer, tweeted Thursday night that he is "praying that the lies and cheating will be exposed and (Trump) will be fairly re elected." Paula White-Cain, who serves as Trump's personal pastor and White House faith adviser, led a prayer this week for the election and described hearing "a sound of victory."

Another top evangelical Trump supporter, Dallas megachurch pastor Robert Jeffress, said it was premature to talk about a Biden presidency, noting that Al Gore and George W. Bush spent weeks contesting the results of the 2000 election before the Supreme Court ruled in Bush's favor.

If Biden does become president, Jeffress said via email, "Christians would have the same responsibility to him that they have to President Trump: They should commend his good policies, condemn his bad ones, and pray for his success."

Even if defeated, Trump would remain a hero to evangelicals, said Jeffress, hailing him as "the most pro-faith president in American history."

Another evangelical leader who backed Trump, meanwhile, expressed concerns about the president's repeated voter fraud assertions that are unsubstantiated by evidence.

The Rev. Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, said in his daily commentary Thursday that while fraud has happened in past elections, "making general-

ized charges of voter fraud without specifics that can be investigated, that's quite dangerous to America as a nation."

Mohler looked ahead to the possibility of a Biden presidency coinciding with continued GOP control of the Senate, which depends on the outcome of what could be two Georgia runoff elections in January. He expressed hope that a division of power between the Senate and White House might thwart possible Biden policies that would worry evangelicals.

In a phone interview Friday, Mohler said pro-Trump evangelicals had differing motives for supporting a president who has so frequently departed from the traditions of his office.

"There are those who see him as the answer to their prayers, and others who see him as necessary in this political emergency," Mohler said. "The idea of a Biden-Harris administration is unthinkable for many evangelicals."

Crary reported from New York.

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Trump's wild claims test limits of Republican loyalty

By STEVE PEOPLES and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's wild and unsupported claims of voter fraud have emerged as a high-stakes Republican loyalty test that illustrates the tug of war likely to define the future of the GOP whether he wins or loses the presidency.

There is a pervasive sense among current and former GOP officials that the president's behavior is irresponsible if not dangerous, but a divide has emerged between those influential Republicans willing to call him out publicly and those who aren't.

Driving their calculus is an open acknowledgement that Trump's better-than-expected showing on Election Day ensures that he will remain the Republican Party's most powerful voice for years to come even if he loses.

That stark reality did little to silence the likes of Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, a second-term Republican who has not ruled out a 2024 White House bid. He described the president's claims as "dangerous" and "embarrassing."

"If there are legitimate challenges, we have a process, that's the way it works," Hogan told The Associated Press. "But to just make accusations of the election being stolen and widespread fraud without providing any evidence, I thought was really bad for our democratic process and it was something I had never seen in my lifetime."

"Other Republicans did speak up," he noted, "but certainly not enough of them."

Indeed, the most aggressive Republican criticism was limited to the small and familiar group of frequent Trump critics such as Utah Sen. Mitt Romney and Nebraska Sen. Ben Sasse, who will not face Republican voters again for at least four years.

On the other side were Trump allies, including the president's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., who called on Republicans considering running for the party's nomination in 2024 to come to the president's defense.

"The total lack of action from virtually all of the '2024 GOP hopefuls' is pretty amazing," he tweeted. "They have a perfect platform to show that they're willing & able to fight but they will cower to the media mob instead."

Several quickly raised their voices, including former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, who served as Trump's ambassador to the United Nations, though some Trump allies saw Haley's statement on Twitter thanking Trump for helping to deliver "conservative victories" up and down the ballot as reading too much like a political obituary of sorts for the president.

Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley, another Trump ally in the 2024 conversation, avoided embracing some of

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Trump's most outlandish claims, but vowed to introduce new "election integrity" legislation to address some of the complaints Trump's campaign has raised.

In contrast, Missouri's other Republican senator, Roy Blunt, was not afraid to call out Trump's inconsistent calls to stop counting ballots in states where he's ahead and keep counting in states where he's behind.

"You can't stop the count in one state and decide you want the count to continue in another state," Blunt told reporters. "That might be how you'd like to see the system work but that's not how the system works."

As votes were tallied across the country Friday afternoon, Biden was on the cusp of winning the presidency as he opened up narrow leads in the critical battlegrounds of Georgia and Pennsylvania. The shifts put Biden in a stronger position to capture the 270 Electoral College votes needed to take the White House.

With things trending in the wrong direction for him, Trump continued to spread baseless rumors of voting fraud throughout the day, calling on the Supreme Court to intervene even as his campaign struggled to produce significant evidence of malfeasance.

Still, there was no shortage of Republican leaders willing to back him up — especially after Donald Trump Jr. called out their silence on social media.

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham told reporters Friday that he was "not conceding" Biden's tightening grasp on the presidency and fully supported Trump's efforts to challenge ballot counts in several states.

On Fox News the night before, Graham said he was transferring \$500,000 from his campaign account to Trump's legal fund, and called for others to make donations as well.

Ari Fleischer, a former aide to President George W. Bush, said Trump was simply saying out loud about the voting system what most losing candidates say privately.

"I wish people talked with less bombast. But I'm not going to fault the president for it," Fleischer said.

"Be gentle about Trump's behavior," he urged. "When I watched it last night and watched these heads explode I just rolled my eyes. ... We've always been a noisy democracy."

Yet history suggests that Trump's rhetoric and actions go well beyond the normal trappings of democracy. Never before has a sitting president so aggressively undermined the integrity of a U.S. election.

His strategy was entirely predictable. With polls showing him lagging, Trump raised questions about the integrity of the voting system for much of the year. Yet his words from the White House this week were no less shocking.

Even internally, some advisers did not want him to address the nation Thursday night when he made his most outrageous claims.

Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson, a staunch Trump ally, highlighted the obvious downside of Trump's questions about the integrity of the voting process.

"It's very unfortunate that no matter who wins, the other half of America is not going to view this as a particularly legitimate election," Johnson said on WTMJ-AM, a local radio station. "I'm not saying it's legitimate or not. I'm saying this process has been set up where people are not going to view it as legitimate. And that's a real problem."

Trump spent most of Friday behind closed doors at the White House, angry about the direction of the race and insisting that his aides and allies push back. There was no indication he would concede, no matter what the final vote tally showed.

Hogan, the Maryland governor, acknowledged that Trump would have "an important voice with the base of the Republican Party" moving forward regardless of the 2020 election's outcome.

"I'm sure he's going to be a factor to contend with," Hogan said. "I don't anticipate him going quietly."

Peoples reported from New York. AP writer Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, California, contributed to this report.

Trump, GOP test out rallying cry: Count the 'legal' votes

By COLLEEN LONG and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump and some of his Republican supporters are testing out a rallying cry for his uphill fight to reverse the lead that Joe Biden holds in key battleground states: count

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all "legal" votes.

The language is freighted with a clear implication, namely that Democrats want illegal votes counted, a claim for which there is no evidence.

But it underscores Trump's strategic imperatives as Biden closes in on securing the 270 Electoral College votes needed to win the presidency, tactics that are rooted more in political messaging than legal precedent.

"It's not the use of the word 'legal' vote, it's the constant insinuation that there are so many illegal or fraudulent votes out there," said Rick Hasen, a professor of law and political science at the University of California Irvine and author of the Election Law blog. "There's no evidence produced by the campaign to support there has been a lot of fraud."

Even Trump's own administration has pushed back at the claims of widespread voter fraud and illegal voting - though it didn't mention Trump was the one making the allegations. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, federal agency that oversees U.S. election security, also noted local election offices have detection measures that "make it highly difficult to commit fraud through counterfeit ballots."

Top election officials in the battleground states of Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Nevada - both Republican and Democrat - have all said they see no widespread voting irregularities, no major instances of fraud or illegal activity. The count is slow - but that was to be expected, because a record number of people voted by mail this year in the coronavirus pandemic.

That has not stopped the chorus of Republican leadership arguing all legal ballots must be counted, including from the Governor of Georgia, freshly re-elected Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, and the Vice President. Democrats and Biden, on the other hand, has stuck with: "Every vote must be counted."

Gabriel Sterling, a top Georgia elections official and a Republican, said Friday the process was public and transparent, with many safeguards and backed up with "paperwork on top of paperwork in many cases."

Meanwhile, Republican national chairwoman Ronna McDaniel appearing at a rally with Georgia Trump supporters, without offering specifics, said the GOP has heard "reports" of "irregularities" in Georgia. She called for "patience" so that such instances could be "investigated." Pressed for examples, she said there were "six or seven," but did not elaborate.

So many of the ballots this season came via mail over fears of the virus, which is spiking across the U.S. There are numerous safeguards for those ballots built into the system to ensure that only voters eligible to vote can do so and that they cast only one ballot.

This includes updated voter rolls to remove voters who have died or have moved out of state, counting only ballots that were sent in by registered voters and, in some states, matching signatures on ballots to ones on file at the local election office.

Election officials say that when fraud does happen, people are caught and prosecuted and it typically involves someone wanting to honor the wishes of a loved one who recently died and either knowingly or not commits a crime by filling out that ballot. An election judge from southern Illinois was charged in 2016 with voter fraud after she filled out a ballot for her late husband because she said he would have wanted Trump to be president.

So far, there has been no evidence offered by Trump - or anyone else - of widespread fraud that would somehow affect the outcome of the race. That hasn't stopped the campaign from filing allegations.

A judge in Georgia dismissed a case by state Republicans and the Trump campaign this week that essentially sought to ensure state laws are being followed on absentee ballots, rising concerns about 53 ballots. Local officials testified that those ballots had all been received on time.

A statewide appellate court judge in Pennsylvania on Friday dismissed a request to stop the state or counties from counting provisional ballots that were cast by voters whose mail-in ballots were disqualified by a technicality.

In Nevada, a lawsuit alleges that ineligible votes were cast in the Las Vegas area, the biggest Democratic stronghold in an otherwise predominantly GOP state.

The lawsuit cites two examples: a woman who said she was turned away from voting in person because a mailed ballot had been cast with her signature, and a political strategist who said he was denied an opportunity to observe ballot counting late on election night.

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"Nothing that I've seen regarding the election raises a legal issue that could succeed. There is just is nothing there," said Barry Richard, who represented George W. Bush in the 2000 recount in Florida that ended up before the U.S. Supreme Court. "When these kind of lawsuits are filed it just breeds contempt for the whole legal system," he said.

Even if Trump did have credible evidence that there may have been fraud, he would have to show that it impacted enough ballots to make a difference in the election, Richard said.

"Courts don't take up cases just to waste time," he said.

Richer reported from Boston. Associated Press Writers Ken Ritter in Nevada, Corey Williams in Detroit, Bill Barrow, Kate Brumback, Christina A. Cassidy and Ben Nadler in Atlanta, Anthony Izaguirre in Lindenhurst, New York and Ben Fox in Washington contributed to this report.

The count goes on — with Biden on the cusp of presidency

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, ZEKE MILLER, JILL COLVIN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrat Joe Biden stood on the cusp of winning the presidency Friday night, three days after Election Day, as the long, exacting work of counting votes widened his lead over President Donald Trump in critical battleground states.

High turnout, a massive number of mail-in ballots and slim margins between the two candidates all contributed to the delay in naming a winner. But Biden held leads in Pennsylvania, Nevada and Georgia, putting him in an ever-stronger position to capture the 270 Electoral College votes needed to take the White House.

There was intense focus on Pennsylvania, where Biden led Trump by more than 27,000 votes, and Nevada, where the Democrat led by about 22,000. The prolonged wait added to the anxiety of a nation facing historic challenges, including the surging pandemic and deep political polarization.

Trump stayed in the White House and out of sight, as more results trickled in and expanded Biden's lead in must-win Pennsylvania. In the West Wing during the day, televisions remained tuned to the news amid trappings of normalcy, as reporters lined up for coronavirus tests and outdoor crews worked on the North Lawn on a mild, muggy fall day.

Biden, for his part, addressed the nation Friday night near his home in Wilmington, Delaware, and acknowledged the sluggish pace of the count "can be numbing." But he added, "Never forget the tallies aren't just numbers: They represent votes and voters."

He expressed confidence that victory ultimately would be his, saying, "The numbers tell us a clear and convincing story: We're going to win this race."

Standing alongside his running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris, and against a backdrop of flags, Biden wasn't able to give the acceptance speech his aides had hoped. But he hit notes of unity, seemingly aimed at cooling the temperature of a heated, divided nation.

"We have to remember the purpose of our politics isn't total unrelenting, unending warfare," he said. "No, the purpose of our politics, the work of our nation, isn't to fan the flames of conflict, but to solve problems, to guarantee justice, to give everybody a fair shot."

Trump's campaign on Friday was mostly quiet -- a dramatic difference from the day before, when officials held a morning call projecting confidence and then a flurry of press conferences announcing litigation in key states. But it was touched once again by the coronavirus pandemic.

Chief of staff Mark Meadows contracted the virus, according to two senior White House officials not authorized to publicly discuss private matters. Several other members of the White House staff and Trump's campaign team also tested positive.

Trump's handling of the pandemic has been the defining issue of the campaign. The president, first lady Melania Trump and several other people in Trump's orbit have fallen ill.

A handful of states remained in play Friday evening — Georgia, North Carolina too early to call along with Pennsylvania and Nevada. In all four states the margins between Trump and Biden were too narrow

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and the number of ballots left to be counted too great for the AP to declare a victor.

In Pennsylvania, officials were not allowed to begin processing mail-in ballots until Election Day under state law. In Nevada, there were a number of provisional ballots cast by voters who registered on Election Day, and officials had to verify their eligibility. And recounts could be triggered in both Pennsylvania and Georgia.

With his pathway to reelection appearing to greatly narrow, Trump was testing how far he could go in using the trappings of presidential power to undermine confidence in the vote.

On Thursday, he advanced unsupported accusations of voter fraud to falsely argue that his rival was trying to seize power. It was an extraordinary effort by a sitting American president to sow doubt about the democratic process.

"This is a case when they are trying to steal an election, they are trying to rig an election," Trump said from the podium of the White House briefing room.

He took to Twitter late Friday to pledge further legal action, tweeting that "Joe Biden should not wrongfully claim the office of the President. I could make that claim also. Legal proceedings are just now beginning!"

Trump did claim that he won late on Election Night. He also tweeted that he had "such a big lead in all of these states late into election night, only to see the leads miraculously disappear as the days went by," although it was well known that votes cast before Tuesday were still being legally counted.

Biden spent Thursday trying to ease tensions and project a more traditional image of presidential leadership. After participating in a coronavirus briefing, he declared that "each ballot must be counted."

"I ask everyone to stay calm. The process is working," Biden said. "It is the will of the voters. No one, not anyone else who chooses the president of the United States of America."

Trump's erroneous claims about the integrity of the election challenged Republicans now faced with the choice of whether to break with a president who, though his grip on his office grew tenuous, commanded sky-high approval ratings from rank-and-file members of the GOP. That was especially true for those who are eyeing presidential runs of their own in 2024.

Maryland GOP Gov. Larry Hogan, a potential presidential hopeful who has often criticized Trump, said unequivocally: "There is no defense for the President's comments tonight undermining our Democratic process. America is counting the votes, and we must respect the results as we always have before."

But others who are rumored to be considering a White House run of their own in four years aligned themselves with the incumbent, including Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., who tweeted support for Trump's claims, writing that "If last 24 hours have made anything clear, it's that we need new election integrity laws NOW."

Trump's campaign engaged in a flurry of legal activity, saying it would seek a recount in Wisconsin and had filed lawsuits in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Georgia.

On Friday evening, Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito approved a GOP request ordering county boards to comply with state guidance to keep the late ballots separate from those received before or on Election Day. However, Alito did not direct election officials to stop counting the ballots, as the Republicans had also sought.

But judges in three states quickly swatted down legal action. A federal judge who was asked to stop vote counts in Philadelphia instead forced the two sides to reach an agreement without an order over the number of observers allowed.

"Really, can't we be responsible adults here and reach an agreement?" an exasperated U.S. District Judge Paul S. Diamond said during an emergency hearing Thursday evening. "The whole thing could (soon) be moot."

The Trump campaign said it was confident the president would ultimately pull out a victory in Arizona, where votes were also still being counted, including in Maricopa County, the state's most populous area. The AP has declared Biden the winner in Arizona and said Thursday that it was monitoring the vote count as it proceeded.

"The Associated Press continues to watch and analyze vote count results from Arizona as they come in," said Sally Buzbee, AP's executive editor. "We will follow the facts in all cases."

Weissert reported from Wilmington, Delaware. Associated Press writers Colleen Long and Alexandra Jaffe in Washington contributed to this report.

Trump chief of staff Meadows diagnosed with COVID-19

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's chief of staff Mark Meadows has been diagnosed with the coronavirus as the nation sets daily records for confirmed cases for the pandemic.

Two senior administration officials confirmed Friday that Meadows had tested positive for the virus, which has killed more than 236,000 Americans so far this year. They offered no details on when the chief of staff came down with the virus or his current condition. His diagnosis was first reported by Bloomberg News.

One administration official said several other staffers had tested positive as well.

Meadows traveled with Trump in the run-up to Election Day and last appeared in public early Wednesday morning without a mask as Trump falsely declared victory in the vote count. He had been one of the close aides around Trump when the president came down with the virus more than a month ago, but was tested daily and maintained his regular work schedule.

It marked the latest case of the virus in the West Wing, coming not even two weeks after Marc Short, Vice President Mike Pence's chief of staff, and other aides tests positive for the virus. Trump, first lady Melania Trump, and at least two dozen others tested positive for the virus in early October, after Trump held large gatherings of people not wearing face-masks, including the ceremony announcing the nomination of now-Justice Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court.

Trump has repeatedly said that the nation is "rounding the turn" on the pandemic, which was top of mind for voters in Tuesday's election.

COVID-19 cases in the U.S. have increased more than 50% in the past two weeks. According to an AP analysis of data from John Hopkins University, the 7-day rolling average for daily new cases rose from 61,166 on Oct. 22 to 94,625 on Nov. 5.

Nations long targeted by US chide Trump's claims of fraud

By CHRISTINE ARMARIO and CARA ANNA Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Demands to stop the vote count. Baseless accusations of fraud. Claims that the opposition is trying to "steal" the election.

Across the world, many were scratching their heads Friday — especially in countries that have long been advised by Washington on how to run elections — wondering if those assertions could truly be coming from the president of the United States, the nation considered one of the world's most emblematic democracies.

"Who's the banana republic now?" Colombian daily newspaper Publimetro chided on the front page with a photo of a man in a U.S. flag print mask.

The irony of seeing U.S. President Donald Trump cut off by major media networks Thursday as he launched unsubstantiated claims lambasting the U.S. electoral system was not lost on many. The U.S. has long been a vocal critic of strongman tactics around the world. Now, some of those same targets are turning around the finger.

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro laughed as the vote dragged on past Tuesday, briefly breaking into the hymn of his nation's annual beauty contest on state TV, singing, "On a night like to night, any of them could win."

In Africa — long the target of U.S. election guidance — one Kenyan commentator spun out satiric tweets, drawing freely from clichés that long have described troubled elections and questioning the strength of democracy in the U.S.

Kenyan cartoonist Patrick Gathara tweeted that Trump "has barricaded himself inside the presidential palace vowing not to leave unless he is declared the winner," with a mediator "currently trying to coax him out with promises of fast food."

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Along with the mockery comes dismay. Many people in Africa see the U.S. as a bellwether for democracy and, after troubled votes in Tanzania and Ivory Coast in recent days, they looked to what Washington might say.

"We are asking ourselves, why is the U.S. democratic process appearing so fragile when it is meant to be held up to us in the rest of the world as a beacon of perfect democracy?" said Samir Kiango, a Tanzanian out in his country's commercial capital Friday.

For decades, the U.S. has been an advocate for democracy abroad, using diplomatic pressure and even direct military intervention in the name of spreading the principles of a pluralistic system with a free and fair vote for political leaders. These tactics have generated both allies and enemies, and this year's presidential vote perhaps more than any other is testing the strength of the values it promotes around the world.

And the world is paying close attention.

Few places on Earth have been on the receiving end of U.S. election advice as the African continent, where the U.S. has encouraged nations to have independent electoral commissions, a uniform voters' roll and other standards aimed at ensuring an equitable vote.

"The U.S. electoral system has none of these. Not a single one," Sithembile Mbete, a commentator and senior lecturer on political science at the University of Pretoria, said at an online event last month.

"Some African elections are actually better-run," added Nic Cheeseman, professor and author of a book on democracy in Africa.

Denis Kadima, executive director of the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, said he sees Trump's approach to democracy as an exception, but "we should not use that as a way of allowing our own governments to do bad things."

In Mexico, some commentators called on the media to follow the lead of U.S. colleagues in cutting off transmissions when their own country's president begins spreading falsehoods.

Yet there also was concern that a region where many democracies are still on fragile ground — or in the throes of outright autocratic rule — that Trump's behavior could set a bad precedent.

"If we resort to violence or loud demonstrations or political leaders trying to do their best to skew the results before it's finalized, that will provide a different example for countries in Latin America," said Eric Farnsworth, vice president of the Council of the Americas, a New York-based organization promoting business in the region.

Still, despite all the ruckus in the U.S., many said they see it as a blip, unlikely to damage the country's reputation as a champion of democracy.

Kadima, in the Ivory Coast, said he sees Washington as retaining its ideals, though he admitted confusion over the persistence of the electoral college system.

"I'm not very impressed by the college system, which I don't find terribly democratic," he said.

His colleague, Grant Masterson, noted that the U.S. election system has "50 different ways in 50 different states," something he said works for the American people but "certainly not the system that other countries are charging toward to embrace."

What he finds "fantastic for American democracy," however, is the ritual of the concession speech after a bitterly fought vote, signaling that it's time to "take off your partisan hats and put on your national hat" and move on.

"That's really been an exceptionally good example for the rest of the world to emulate," he said — though he has doubts about such a speech this time.

As restless Americans awaited voting results from the few remaining states not yet colored red or blue, millions across the world joined them. And however it turns out, many hoped that ultimately America's humbled democracy comes out stronger.

Gathara, the Kenyan cartoonist and commentator, said he is optimistic there will be a more honest discussion about democracy as a result.

"I really don't know how it ends," he said of his running commentary. "We're all trying to figure this democratic thing out."

Associated Press writers Jorge Rueda in Caracas, Venezuela, and David Biller in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, contributed to this report.

Guatemala searches for bodies as strengthening Eta eyes Cuba

By SONIA PÉREZ D. Associated Press

PURULHA, Guatemala (AP) — Searchers in Guatemala dug through mud and debris looking for an estimated 100 people believed buried by a massive, rain-fueled landslide, as the remnants of Hurricane Eta strengthened early Saturday as the storm churned toward Cuba.

Eta was forecast to become a tropical storm again on Saturday as it moved over the Caribbean Sea and the U.S. National Hurricane Center issued tropical storm watches for the northwestern Bahamas, southern Florida and the Florida Keys. The center of Eta was expected to approach the Cayman Islands Saturday, be near Cuba Saturday night and Sunday, and approach the Florida Keys or south Florida late Sunday.

Back in Central America, which Eta reached as a Category 4 hurricane Tuesday before weakening into a tropical depression, authorities from Panama to Mexico were still surveying the damages from flooding and landslides following days of torrential rains. The confirmed death toll was in the dozens and expected to rise.

On Friday, search teams in Guatemalan pulled the first bodies from a landslide in San Cristobal Verapaz, but the work was slow and help was trickling in. Teams first had to overcome multiple landslides and deep mud just to reach the site where officials have estimated some 150 homes were devastated.

In neighboring Honduras, 68-year-old María Elena Mejía Guadron died when the brown waters of the Chamelecon river poured into San Pedro Sula's Planeta neighborhood before dawn Thursday.

Mirian Esperanza Nájera Mejía had fled her home in the dark with her two children and Mejía, her mother. But while she held tight to her children, the current swept away Mejía.

Nájera continued searching desperately for her mother Friday morning. But Mejía's body was recovered later and taken to the morgue where her relatives identified her.

"When the flooding started, the whole family was leaving the house," said family friend Nery Solis. "Mirian had her two children and suddenly the current grabbed them and she wasn't able to get her mom."

The family transported Mejía's body to the western city of Copan Friday. Her burial was scheduled for Saturday.

In southern Mexico, across the border from Guatemala, 19 people died as heavy rains attributed to Eta caused mudslides and swelled streams and rivers, according to Chiapas state civil defense official Elías Morales Rodríguez.

The worst incident in Mexico occurred in the mountain township of Chenalho, where 10 people were swept away by a rain-swollen stream; their bodies were later found downstream. Mexico's National Meteorological Service said Eta's "broad circulation is causing intense to torrential rains on the Yucatan peninsula and in southeastern Mexico."

But the massive slide in Guatemala's central mountains threatened to double Central America's reported death toll in one remote community.

Late Friday, army spokesman Rubén Tellez said soldiers and community members had recovered the first three bodies. Hundreds of tons of mud, rock and debris entombed others.

Rescue teams struggled for hours Friday to reach the site from two different approaches. Smaller landslides blocked highways and decimated the dirt road leading to the community of Queja at the base of the slide. The indigenous community of about 1,200 residents consisted of simple homes of wood and tin roofs clinging to the mountainside.

Tropical Depression Eta was centered 275 miles (445 kilometers) west-southwest of Grand Cayman late Friday. It was moving northeast at 12 mph (19 kph) and had maximum sustained winds of 35 mph (55 kph).

Hurricane Eta's arrival in northeast Nicaragua followed days of drenching rain as it crawled toward shore. Its slow, meandering path north through Honduras pushed rivers over their banks and pouring into neigh-

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borhoods where families were forced onto rooftops to wait for rescue.

The Honduran government estimates more than 1.6 million have been affected. It said rescues were happening Friday in San Pedro Sula and La Lima, but the need was great and resources limited.

The U.S. State Department said in a statement Friday that four U.S. helicopters from the Soto Cano Air Base near Tegucigalpa had flown to San Pedro Sula to participate in rescue operations. U.S. helicopters were also assisting in Panama where authorities confirmed five deaths in the western province of Chiriqui, which borders Costa Rica.

Associated Press writer Marlon González in Tegucigalpa, Honduras contributed to this report.

Be prepared: Biden transition team at work amid limbo

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Joe Biden's transition team isn't waiting for a verdict in the presidential race before getting to work.

As officials continue to count ballots in several undecided states, longtime Biden aide Ted Kaufman is leading efforts to ensure the former vice president can begin building out a government in anticipation of a victory.

"While we're waiting for the final results, I want people to know we are not waiting to get the work done," Biden said in a speech late Friday night, appearing with his running mate, California Sen. Kamala Harris, at the convention center not far from his home in Wilmington, Delaware.

Biden noted that he and Harris had met virtually Thursday with public health and economic experts as they begin working to combat the coronavirus pandemic, saying it is becoming "significantly more worrisome all across the country."

Kaufman is a former senator from Delaware who was appointed to fill the seat vacated when Biden was elected vice president. He also worked on Barack Obama's transition team in 2008, and helped write legislation formalizing the presidential transition process.

Biden first asked Kaufman to start work on a just-in-case transition in April, shortly after the former vice president locked up the presidential nomination at the conclusion of a once-crowded Democratic primary. Now, each day after the election that goes by without a declared winner is one fewer to formally begin preparing to take over the White House.

The transition can be a frenzied process even under normal circumstances.

In the meantime, an odd political limbo has taken hold. The Biden can't tackle all that needs to be accomplished while President Donald Trump continues to claim without evidence that the election is being stolen from him.

It's at least somewhat reminiscent of the 2000 presidential race and that year's post-election legal fight over the recount in Florida. After more than a month, the dispute between Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore was decided by the Supreme Court — truncating the transition period to just 39 days before the January 2001 inauguration.

Clay Johnson, who headed Bush's transition team, said Biden's advisers "can't wait to be sure that the president-elect really is the president-elect. They have to hurry up and move forward."

Johnson said that in June of 1999 — about 17 months before Election Day 2000 — Bush approached him about heading the possible transition, having seen his father go through the process 11 years earlier. Prior to Election Day, Bush had already settled on Andy Card to serve as chief of staff for both the transition and at the White House.

Johnson thought they were ahead of schedule. But then came the recount.

After an initial 10 days or so, Bush's running mate, Dick Cheney, told Johnson to begin raising money and making staffing decisions, declaring that the race "is going to be resolved one way or the other."

The Bush team was unable to conduct FBI background checks on potential Cabinet members and other appointees with no official winner declared. Instead, it used a former White House general counsel from

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the Reagan administration to conduct interviews designed to screen for potential problems that might have turned up in background checks.

"You have to assume you are it and not be presumptuous but they better be working hard as if they are it," Johnson said of Biden's team. "And they should have started doing that last Tuesday night."

Biden's campaign has refused to comment on the transition process. His closest advisers say the top priority will be announcing a White House chief of staff, then assembling the pieces needed to tackle the coronavirus.

A president gets 4,000 appointees, and more than 1,200 of them must be confirmed by the Senate. That could be a challenge for Biden since the Senate may well remain controlled by the Republicans.

The transition process formally starts once the General Service Administration determines the winner based on all available facts. That's vague enough guidance that Trump could pressure the agency's director to stall.

It's also unclear if the president would meet personally Biden. President Barack Obama met with Trump less than a week after the election, but there was no dispute about him having topped Hillary Clinton in the Electoral College.

Whenever the process starts, Biden will have to cope with the coronavirus, which has killed more than 230,000 Americans. Biden has promised to use his transition period to meet with the governors of every state and ask them to impose a nationwide mask-wearing mandate. He says he plans to go around any holdouts to secure such rules from county and local officials.

Another key decision will be how Biden decides to deploy his running mate, California Sen. Kamala Harris. His campaign has indicated that Biden will establish a White House-level coronavirus task force like Trump did, but it's not clear if he will tap Harris to run it. Vice President Mike Pence heads the current panel.

As his team awaits the results of the ballot counting, Biden is huddling in his Wilmington home with top advisers and family. Harris has stuck close too, occupying a Delaware hotel with her family since Election Night and joining Biden as he gave remarks in recent days.

New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, a former Biden presidential primary rival, said he expects Harris to be "a real partner" to Biden and hopes to see her "managing major issues of importance."

Associated Press writer Kathleen Ronayne contributed to this report from Sacramento, Calif.

Perdue, Ossoff head to Georgia US Senate runoff

By BEN NADLER Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Republican U.S. Sen. David Perdue and Democrat Jon Ossoff will face off in a Jan. 5 runoff in Georgia for Perdue's Senate seat, one of two high-profile contests in the state that could determine which party controls the upper chamber.

Libertarian candidate Shane Hazel was able to get enough votes so that neither Perdue nor Ossoff cleared the 50% threshold needed for an outright win.

Thousands of absentee ballots and in-person votes cast early needed to be counted after Election Night passed, forcing a long and tense wait before the race could be called.

Democrat Raphael Warnock and Sen. Kelly Loeffler, the Republican appointed last year after Sen. Johnny Isakson retired, will also compete in a runoff on the same day. The twin races in Georgia are likely to settle which party controls the Senate.

Nationally, the Senate stands split at 48-48. But Republicans lead uncalled races in Alaska and North Carolina, so the ultimate balance is likely to come down to what happens in the Georgia runoffs.

Both sides promised unlimited funds would flow to the campaigns and onto the airwaves, and they predicted an all-star cast of campaigners for a state that in recent weeks drew visits from Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, Democratic vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris and former President Barack Obama.

The race between Ossoff and Perdue, a close ally of Trump, has been characterized by sharp attack ads

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but relatively moderate political positions. Both candidates steered toward the middle, vying for a state Trump won handily four years ago, but where swaths of suburbia have shown signs of disillusionment with the president.

Perdue has often focused his message on the economy, touting pre-pandemic job growth and his business experience before taking office. He has sought to cast Ossoff as backing a "radical socialist agenda."

Ossoff, meanwhile, has hammered Perdue's response to the coronavirus pandemic and decried Republican efforts to overturn the Affordable Care Act in the middle of the public health crisis.

Democrats haven't won a U.S. Senate race in Georgia in two decades, but Republican dominance has been slipping. Democrat Stacey Abrams narrowly lost the race for governor in 2018, and Biden held a slim lead over Trump on Friday night in this year's race for the White House, though The Associated Press has not yet called the race.

Perdue's campaign is already portraying the runoff election as a last stand for Republicans to hold the Senate majority.

"The stakes in this election could not be higher: A vote for Jon Ossoff is a vote to hand power to Chuck Schumer and the radical Democrats in Washington," Perdue campaign manager Ben Fry said in a statement Friday. "Georgians won't let that happen."

Ossoff spoke at a news conference in Atlanta on Friday morning, surrounded by supporters waving signs that read, "Vote your Ossoff."

"We have all the momentum. We have all the energy. We're on the right side of history," Ossoff said.

Asked about Democrats' weak performance in recent runoff elections in Georgia, Ossoff replied: "This is a different state. Georgia has become younger and more diverse every day of the last decade. And the effort that has gone into registering voters, empowering voters is unprecedented, unmatched anywhere in the country."

Paa Coss, a 39-year-old who said she moved to Atlanta 10 years ago, came to support Ossoff wearing a shirt covered in a collage of pictures of Biden.

"It's so exciting," Coss said. "I just see this blue wave happening — the changing demographics in my neighborhood."

"A lot of my friends from out of town are texting me. All eyes are on Georgia right now, which is great," she added.

Associated Press writer Bill Barrow contributed to this report.

2020 Latest: Biden says he's preparing for White House

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

11:05 p.m.

Joe Biden says he is already preparing to assume the presidency even though he has not been declared the winner in his race against President Donald Trump.

"I want people to know we're not waiting to get the work done," he said late Friday in remarks to the nation.

Biden said he and his running mate, Kamala Harris, have held briefings on the coronavirus and the economy this week as the U.S. records record daily cases.

He noted nearly 240,000 people have died from the pandemic and said he wants those families to know they aren't alone.

He also addressed the millions of Americans who remain out of work and are struggling to pay rent or buy food.

"We don't have any more time to waste on partisan warfare," he said.

The Associated Press has not yet declared a winner in the race between Biden and Trump because neither candidate has reached the 270 Electoral College votes needed to carry the White House.

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

Democrat Joe Biden is pushing closer to the 270 Electoral College votes needed to carry the White House, securing victories in the battlegrounds of Wisconsin and Michigan and narrowing President Donald Trump's path. Biden planned a prime-time address alongside his running mate, Kamala Harris, on Friday night. Trump remained ensconced in the White House, occasionally tweeting.

Read more:

- Biden on cusp of presidency after gains in Pennsylvania
- Trump's wild claims test limits of Republican loyalty
- Trump's attacks on mail-in ballots rankle some military veterans
- Sen. Johnson says half of country won't accept Biden win
- EXPLAINER: States still in play and what makes them that way
- Protesters crying foul over vote counts stir safety concerns

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON:

10:50 p.m.

Joe Biden projected confidence Friday that he would win the presidential election, citing his lead in votes in key states like Pennsylvania.

The Associated Press has not yet declared a winner in the race between Biden and President Donald Trump because neither candidate has reached the 270 Electoral College votes needed to carry the White House.

Biden noted he has already won the most votes in history for any presidential candidate.

He said a record number of Americans "chose change over more of the same."

He told the nation that the political parties may be opponents, but they are not enemies.

"Let's put the anger and the demonization behind us," he said.

8:05 p.m.

Democrat Joe Biden's lead over President Donald Trump is growing in battleground Pennsylvania.

By Friday evening, the Democrat held a lead of over 19,500 votes out of more than 6.5 million ballots cast. That's an edge of about 0.29%. State law dictates that a recount must be held if the margin between the two candidates is less than 0.5%.

The Associated Press has not declared a winner in the state.

The Pennsylvania secretary of state's website said Friday that there were 102,541 more mail ballots that needed to be counted, including many from Allegheny County, a Democratic area that is home to Pittsburgh, and the Democratic stronghold of Philadelphia County.

Additionally, there are potentially tens of thousands of provisional ballots that remain to be tabulated, though an exact number remained unclear. Those ballots will be counted after officials verify their eligibility to be included.

Pennsylvania is among a handful of battleground states that Trump and Biden are narrowly contesting as they seek the 270 electoral votes needed to win the presidency.

8 p.m.

Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito has ordered county elections officials in Pennsylvania to keep separate mail-in ballots that arrived after Election Day. The state's top elections official already had ordered those ballots be kept apart.

The order came Friday night in response to a plea from the state Republican Party as Democrat Joe Biden inched ahead of President Donald Trump in Pennsylvania in the presidential race.

Alito, acting on his own, said he was motivated in part by the Republicans' assertion that they can't be sure elections officials are complying with guidance issued by Pennsylvania Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar, a Democrat.

The justice handles emergency appeals from Pennsylvania. He ordered a response from the state by

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Saturday afternoon and said he has referred the matter to the full court for further action.

The order is related to an ongoing Republican appeal to the Supreme Court to try to keep ballots received in the mail after Election Day from being counted. The state's top court granted a three-day extension, and the Supreme Court refused to block it.

The Associated Press has not declared a winner in the state.

6:40 p.m.

Democrat Joe Biden's lead over President Donald Trump in Nevada has grown slightly, putting the former vice president ahead by 22,657 votes in the battleground state.

The results Friday afternoon were mail-in ballots from Democrat-heavy Clark County, which include Las Vegas and three-quarters of Nevada's population.

Biden had 632,558 votes, and Trump had 609,901. Vote counting in the state — and several other battlegrounds — is continuing.

The fresh batch of results was among 63,000 mail ballots that Clark County Registrar Joe Gloria said Friday morning that his workers were starting to process. He expected the bulk would be processed by Sunday.

Gloria has an additional 60,000 provisional ballots to be processed later.

6:05 p.m.

Democrat Joe Biden is adding to his lead over President Donald Trump in Georgia.

As of early Friday evening, Biden had overtaken Trump by 4,235 votes in the battleground state, which Trump must win to have a shot at reelection.

The Democrat first surpassed Trump in the state vote count on Friday morning as votes continue to be counted.

The contest is still too early for The Associated Press to call.

Trump's lead dwindled after Election Day when state officials began processing mail-in ballots, a form of voting that has skewed heavily in Biden's favor after Trump spent months claiming — without proof — that voting by mail would lead to widespread voter fraud.

If there is less than a 0.5% difference between Biden's and Trump's vote totals, state law dictates that a recount must be held. Biden currently holds a lead of about 0.08%.

A Democratic presidential candidate hasn't won Georgia since Bill Clinton in 1992.

5:25 p.m.

Democratic vice presidential candidate Kamala Harris is expected to deliver remarks Friday alongside Joe Biden.

Biden has scheduled a prime-time address on the presidential contest as votes continue to be counted in several battleground states. Biden is on the cusp of victory as he opened narrow leads over President Donald Trump in Georgia and Pennsylvania.

Harris has appeared alongside Biden during his remarks in recent days but has not made any public comments herself on the state of the race. A campaign official confirmed she will speak Friday night before Biden does.

The California senator has been at a hotel in Wilmington, Delaware, with her family since Tuesday night.

The Associated Press has not yet declared a winner in Nevada, North Carolina, Georgia, Pennsylvania and Alaska.

3:30 p.m.

Top Republican officials in Georgia say they are confident the secretary of state will ensure that ballots are properly counted.

The statement Friday from GOP Gov. Brian Kemp and others came a day after President Donald Trump alleged without any details or evidence that election officials are trying to "steal the election" from him.

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Trump said Thursday that the "election apparatus in Georgia is run by Democrats," even though the top election official is a Republican whom he endorsed.

Democrat Joe Biden was leading Trump in Georgia by about 1,500 votes midday Friday. The Associated Press has not called the race for either candidate yet.

3:10 p.m.

The federal agency that oversees U.S. election security is pushing back at unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud without mentioning that President Donald Trump is making unfounded allegations about the vote count.

A new statement from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency notes that local election offices have detection measures that "make it highly difficult to commit fraud through counterfeit ballots."

CISA, a component of the Department of Homeland Security, published the statement Friday on a section of its website devoted to dispelling rumors. It said it was countering a rumor about the role of DHS and CISA in the printing of ballots and auditing of results. Neither agency has a role in printing or auditing ballots. CISA principally helps local and state election departments protect themselves against cyberattacks.

CISA also put out a statement noting that the systems and processes used to tabulate votes and certify results "are protected by various safeguards that help ensure the accuracy of election results."

The agency has been urging the public for weeks to be patient during the counting of results, which was slower this year in large part because of COVID-19 and the large number of mail-in ballots. It has made no comment on Trump saying without evidence that the ballot-counting process is unfair and corrupt.

2:50 p.m.

Pennsylvania Republicans are turning to the U.S. Supreme Court to ask for an order that mail ballots arriving after Election Day in the battleground state be segregated. The state's top elections official already had ordered those ballots be kept apart.

The emergency request Friday came as Democrat Joe Biden inched ahead of President Donald Trump in Pennsylvania.

The plea is part of an ongoing Republican appeal to the Supreme Court to try to keep ballots received in the mail after Election Day from being counted. The state's top court granted a three-day extension, and the Supreme Court refused to block it.

But Democratic Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar told local officials to keep the ballots separate because the high court hasn't ultimately decided whether to step in.

Republicans presented no evidence that counties are not adhering to Boockvar's orders, but said, "It is unclear whether all county boards are following them in the post-election chaos."

The Associated Press has not declared a winner in the state.

2:30 p.m.

A statewide appellate court judge in Pennsylvania has dismissed a request from Republicans to stop the state or counties from counting provisional ballots that were cast by voters whose mail-in ballots were disqualified by a technicality.

Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf's state elections bureau last month gave guidance to counties that a voter could use a provisional ballot if they "did not successfully vote" with the mail-in or absentee ballot they were issued, or if their ballot was rejected and they believe they are eligible to vote.

The Democratic National Committee, which had sought to oppose the case in court, said Republicans wanted to "throw out lawfully cast provisional ballots."

Wolf's top elections official, Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar, a Democrat, has insisted that the practice is legal and not prohibited by law.

Regardless, she said there aren't "overwhelming" numbers of voters who cast a provisional ballot after their mail-in ballot was disqualified, but she has not given an exact figure.

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2 p.m.

Democrat Joe Biden has increased his lead over President Donald Trump in Nevada to 20,137 votes. Results released Friday from Democrat-heavy Clark County, which includes Las Vegas and three-quarters of Nevada's population, along with two rural counties, put Biden at 627,104 votes and Trump at 606,967. Biden's lead nearly doubled from Thursday, when he was leading Trump by about 11,000 votes. The Associated Press has not called the presidential race. Votes are still being counted in several battleground states.

Clark County Registrar Joe Gloria says his county has an additional 63,000 mail ballots to be processed over the next few days and 60,000 provisional ballots to be processed later.

Gloria said Clark County would release more results Friday afternoon but he said he did not know exactly how many ballots could be included in that release.

The state has said it will provide an update later Friday on how many ballots are yet to be counted statewide. On Thursday, they reported that number at 190,150.

1:50 p.m.

President Donald Trump says he "will never give up fighting for you and our nation" as he is on the cusp of losing his bid for reelection.

Trump is spending Friday at the White House tweeting, watching results come in and continuing to cast unfounded doubt over the integrity of the election.

He says in a statement released by his campaign: "We believe the American people deserve to have full transparency into all vote counting and election certification." And he adds that, "This is no longer about any single election. This is about the integrity of our entire election process."

There is no evidence that any votes cast illegally are being counted or that the process is unfair and corrupt. Indeed, the ballot-counting process across the country largely has been running smoothly, if slowly, because of the increase in mail-in ballots because of the coronavirus pandemic.

But Trump is nonetheless threatening continued legal action, saying: "We will pursue this process through every aspect of the law to guarantee that the American people have confidence in our government."

Trump's Democratic rival, Joe Biden, has opened up narrow leads over Trump in the critical battlegrounds of Georgia and Pennsylvania.

12:55 p.m.

Sen. Mitt Romney, the 2012 Republican presidential nominee, says President Donald Trump is "damaging the cause of freedom" and inflaming "destructive and dangerous passions" by claiming, without foundation, that the election was rigged and stolen from him.

Romney lost to President Barack Obama in 2012 but was gracious in defeat. He is Trump's most vocal critic within the Republican Party and voted to convict him in Trump's impeachment trial early this year.

The Utah Republican offered his assessment Friday on Twitter, saying that Trump is well within his rights to challenge the results through the legal remedies available to him. But Romney says Trump is "wrong to say that the election was rigged, corrupt, and stolen from him — doing so damages the cause of freedom here and around the world."

Democrat Joe Biden is on the cusp of winning the presidency as he opens up narrow leads over Trump in several critical battlegrounds.

The Associated Press has not called the presidential race. Votes are still being counted in states including Pennsylvania and Georgia.

12:40 p.m.

Joe Biden's campaign says he will give a speech during prime time Friday.

The Democratic presidential candidate's campaign announced that he would be making an address but did not say where or what he plans to say.

Biden is on the cusp of winning the presidency as he opens up narrow leads over President Donald Trump in several critical battlegrounds.

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The Associated Press has not called the presidential race. Votes are still being counted in states including Pennsylvania and Georgia.

He has urged the public to be patient as vote counting continues. He was spending Friday at home in Wilmington, Delaware.

A stage set up since election night for a victory party outside the city's convention center remained intact and has been secured for days by security personnel using high fencing and car barriers.

Biden campaign staffers who arrived in Wilmington for a victory party earlier in the week have been told to hold onto their hotel rooms until early next week.

11:50 a.m.

Democrat Joe Biden is leading President Donald Trump in the battleground state of Pennsylvania.

By Friday morning, Biden overtook Trump in the number of ballots counted in the state, which Trump must win to have a shot at reelection. Biden leads by more than 9,000 votes. The contest is still too early for The Associated Press to call. Votes in the state are still being counted.

Trump's lead dwindled after Election Day when state officials began processing mail-in ballots, a form of voting that has skewed heavily in Biden's favor. Trump spent months claiming — without proof — that voting by mail would lead to widespread voter fraud.

If there is less than a half percentage point difference between Biden's and Trump's vote totals, state law dictates that a recount must be held.

8:50 a.m.

Democrat Joe Biden is now leading President Donald Trump in the battleground state of Pennsylvania.

By Friday morning, Biden overtook Trump in the number of ballots counted in the state, which Trump must win to have a shot at reelection. Biden now holds a nearly 6,000-vote advantage.

The contest is still too early for The Associated Press to call. Votes in the state are still being counted.

Trump's lead dwindled after Election Day when state officials began processing mail-in ballots, a form of voting that has skewed heavily in Biden's favor after Trump spent months claiming — without proof — that voting by mail would lead to widespread voter fraud.

If there is less than a half percentage point difference between Biden's and Trump's vote totals, state law dictates that a recount must be held.

4:40 a.m.

Democrat Joe Biden is now leading President Donald Trump in the battleground state of Georgia.

By Friday morning, Biden overtook Trump in the number of ballots counted in the battleground, a must-win state for Trump that has long been a Republican stronghold. Biden now has a 917-vote advantage.

The contest is still too early for The Associated Press to call. Thousands of ballots are still left to be counted — many in counties where the former vice president was in the lead.

An AP analysis showed that Biden's vote margins grew as counties processed mail ballots cast in his favor.

There is a potential that the race could go to a recount. Under Georgia law, if the margin between Biden and Trump is under half a percentage point of difference, a recount can be requested.

EXPLAINER: Why ballot-counting in Nevada is dragging on

By SAM METZ and MICHAEL R. BLOOD Associated Press

CARSON CITY, Nev. (AP) — The pace of vote-counting in Nevada is being criticized for taking too long and it's even become fodder for online jokes. But government officials say they are emphasizing accuracy over speed in a year when processing an unprecedented flood of mail-in ballots under extended deadlines is taking more time.

"We told everyone early on that results would take at least 10 days," Secretary of State spokeswoman Jennifer A. Russell said in an email.

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THE GENESIS

The Legislature passed a bill in August to send all active voters mail-in ballots in hopes of curbing, or at least not fueling, the spread of the coronavirus. Those postmarked by Election Day can be counted if they arrive at election offices within seven days, which is Tuesday. And they continue to come in, though the number arriving each day is expected to dwindle.

"It's been a different year for us," said Deanna Spikula, registrar of voters in Washoe County, the state's second-largest county that includes Reno. "The volume is definitely something that we've never seen before in the state as far as receiving and processing mail-in ballots."

WHERE WE STAND

The Associated Press has not declared a winner in the state. More than 1.2 million ballots had been counted by Friday afternoon, with Joe Biden holding a 22,657-vote lead over President Donald Trump — an edge of about 1.8 points.

The Nevada Secretary of State's Office said Friday night that statewide about 124,500 ballots remained to be processed, with 90% of them in Clark County. Just under half of those were mail ballots and the rest were provisional ballots cast by people who registered or updated their registration at the polls.

The vast majority of those untallied ballots are in Clark County, which includes Las Vegas and its populous surrounding suburbs. Clark County Registrar Joe Gloria said on Friday that outstanding votes fell into several categories, each requiring multi-step verification to ensure the integrity of the election.

THE PROCESS

Most still-to-be counted ballots arrived by mail, and are first processed through a machine that verifies signatures. Election staff manually examines signatures not verified by the machine. Later, a review is done to make sure the total number of ballots processed matches the number of ballots received. Once verified, those ballots are counted.

As of Thursday, an additional 44,000 ballots required ID verification, and 2,100 others had signature-match problems. The registrar's office reaches out to voters in both groups to verify their eligibility to vote, which again takes time.

THE TIMELINE

Gloria said he expected the majority of the remaining ballots to be counted by Sunday. The Legislature gave election officials until November 12 to finish counting votes, and Gloria said staff intended to work until then to resolve ballot issues.

In Washoe County, the registrar's office said it had no backlog or other problems with vote-counting. Along with counting mail ballots as they arrive, the county has about 5,100 provisional and same-day registration ballots that need to be counted. About 1,800 others have signature issues, which the agency is attempting to resolve with the voters.

Processing mail-in ballots takes longer, but "we haven't had any hiccups, we haven't had any delays," said spokeswoman Bethany Drysdale.

QUOTABLE:

"This is Nevada. You'd think in this state we'd be good at math and good at counting numbers. I thought we would be more on the cutting edge because of all the other technology that goes on in our city." — Michelle Johnson, professional singer and longtime Las Vegas resident.

Sam Metz is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues. Blood reported from Los Angeles. AP video journalist Haven Daley and reporter Michelle Price in Las Vegas contributed.

EXPLAINER: Slow U.S. election count mostly for good reasons

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The slow pace of this year's U.S. election count is fueling a lot of criticism, but

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it's mostly a reflection of laudable things: greater voter enthusiasm and steps that states took to protect their residents from COVID-19.

THE ENTHUSIASM FACTOR

Even though the count is not yet complete, President Donald Trump has easily surpassed the number of votes he got four years ago: more than 70 million so far, versus about 63 million in his victorious 2016 run. Meanwhile, Democrat Joe Biden has gained some 73.9 million votes, versus the 65.9 that Hillary Clinton got.

All in all, some 15 million more voters participated in this year's presidential election than in the one four years ago. Congratulations, Americans.

THE PANDEMIC FACTOR

Hoping to prevent long lines of people having to gather during a pandemic, states decided to make it made it easier to vote by mail, and therefore safer for everyone.

U.S. states such as Minnesota, North Carolina and Nevada extended the deadlines for when ballots could be received. Nebraska and Iowa joined the ranks of states that send an absentee ballot application to every registered voter. New Jersey and California mailed ballots to every registered voter, whether they requested it or not.

Millions of voters took states up on the offer and chose to vote by mail rather than in person on election day. For some states, that has meant a slowdown in the tabulation of results because votes received by mail often take longer to process than ballots cast at polling places.

THE EXPERIENCE FACTOR

Some states have done much better than others processing mail-in ballots.

States such as Florida and North Carolina learned from experience and allowed election officials to process mail ballots in the weeks leading up to election day.

In Florida, clerks can start counting ballots 22 days before an election. In North Carolina, beginning five weeks before the election, county boards insert approved ballots into a voting machine, allowing for a prompt tabulation on Election Day.

But other states such as Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, all with Republican-led legislatures and all of them swing states, made a conscious decision to wait so there would be no counting of mail-in ballots prior to Election Day. Michigan did eventually allow election officials to process some ballots one day earlier, but the counting of the ballot still had to wait until Nov. 3.

THE PREDICTABILITY FACTOR

As state lawmakers battled over how to process mail-in ballots, there were warnings of what was to come.

Here's what Eugene DiGirolamo, a Republican county commissioner in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, the state's fourth-most populous county, told The Associated Press two weeks before election day:

"My guess is if we're only allowed to start on Election Day, it's going to be three, four, five days after the election when we'll have these things scanned and counted," DiGirolamo said. "I am just scared to death that Pennsylvania is going to look really bad, especially if the election for president is close and they're waiting for results from the battleground states like Pennsylvania truly is."

Advocates race to find voters to correct flawed ballots

By KATE BRUMBACK and SUDHIN THANAWALA Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Advocates for both presidential candidates raced to find every person in Georgia who submitted a flawed ballot before time ran out Friday to fix the paperwork in a race that could be decided by the narrowest of margins.

Hours before the 5 p.m. deadline, Christin Clatterbuck and Sarah Meng joined about 20 other volunteers who planned to visit addresses in suburban Atlanta's Gwinnett County in search of voters whose ballots were initially rejected but could be fixed with a signature or an ID.

Cam Ashling, a Democratic activist who organized the small effort, gave instructions and a pep talk. "Never has it ever been more true than now that every vote counts," she shouted beside a pickup truck with a bed full of snacks, water and a big bottle of hand sanitizer.

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Clatterbuck and Meng drove through suburban neighborhoods in their small SUV. They walked past rose bushes to knock on the door of a home in Lilburn where they were looking for a 19-year-old voter. Her dad answered and promised to call her at college.

Other problem ballots were cast by people not listed on the voter rolls who needed to explain why. They had to correct, or "cure," their ballots by the deadline for the votes to count.

No one knew how many flawed ballots needed to be fixed. Each of the state's 159 counties keeps its own tally.

At a second home, Clatterbuck and Meng did not find the voter, but a friend put her on the phone. She had failed to sign her ballot.

"As you know, it's so, so, so important. Today by no seconds later than 5 o'clock," Meng said, giving details on exactly what needed to be done.

Alex Upreti promised to help the friend fix her vote. Meng and Clatterbuck cheered.

The pair did not hit every home on the list. They decided to skip a house where an SUV in the driveway had a "Blue Lives Matter" sticker to show support for law enforcement in the face of Black Lives Matter protests against police brutality and racial injustice. The sticker suggested the home could be occupied by someone who backed President Donald Trump, a Republican.

Over more than two hours, they knocked on 10 doors in all. Half of the voters said they had already corrected the problems. No one answered at three houses. The two later received additional addresses to check and set out again.

Counties are required to contact voters with problem ballots so they can be fixed. Both political parties also have those lists and were reaching out.

"The voters I had talked to, they had already been talked to by like four people," said state Rep. Bee Nguyen, an Atlanta Democrat who went door to door Wednesday in DeKalb County.

Some volunteers tried to call voters with ballot problems.

"It's definitely hit or miss like anything. Think about a telemarketer," said Aklima Khondoker, the Georgia state director of All Voting is Local. "Typically for me, when a strange phone number comes up, I think it is spam."

Cobb County Republican Party Chairman Jason Shepherd sent out a call Thursday for volunteers to help the state party, saying Republicans were trying to correct problems with provisional ballots. State GOP Political Director Joe Proenza referred comment to a Trump campaign spokesperson who did not respond to an email.

Democrat Joe Biden was leading President Donald Trump in Georgia by about 4,200 votes late Friday afternoon, but final results will not be known for days. Under Georgia law, a candidate can request a re-count if the margin is less than one half of one percentage point. Biden's lead was less than a tenth of a percentage point.

The Associated Press has not declared a winner in Georgia because the race remains too early to call. The state's 16 electoral votes could clinch the contest for Biden in his quest for the 270 votes needed to win the presidency.

The secretary of state's office said several thousand absentee ballots were still being counted. Another 8,400 ballots sent to military and overseas voters could be counted if received by the Friday deadline. Counties also have provisional ballots to review.

Gabriel Sterling, who has overseen the implementation of Georgia's new electronic voting system, said the state's counties have been working diligently to finish tabulating results. He emphasized his confidence in the legitimacy of the process. Any evidence-backed complaint will be investigated, he added.

"When you have a narrow margin, little, small things can make a difference. So everything's going to have to be investigated to protect the integrity of the vote," Sterling said.

After each county certifies its vote total, the state will perform an audit before issuing its own certification. Counties must certify their results by Nov. 13, and the state must certify them by Nov. 20.

Associated Press writers Michael Warren and Jeff Amy in Atlanta; Russ Bynum in Savannah, Georgia; and Jeffrey Collins in Columbia, South Carolina, contributed.

Find AP's full election coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/election-2020>

Trump's wild claims test limits of Republican loyalty

By STEVE PEOPLES and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's wild and unsupported claims of voter fraud have emerged as a high-stakes Republican loyalty test that illustrates the tug of war likely to define the future of the GOP whether he wins or loses the presidency.

There is a pervasive sense among current and former GOP officials that the president's behavior is irresponsible if not dangerous, but a divide has emerged between those influential Republicans willing to call him out publicly and those who aren't.

Driving their calculus is an open acknowledgement that Trump's better-than-expected showing on Election Day ensures that he will remain the Republican Party's most powerful voice for years to come even if he loses.

That stark reality did little to silence the likes of Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, a second-term Republican who has not ruled out a 2024 White House bid. He described the president's claims as "dangerous" and "embarrassing."

"If there are legitimate challenges, we have a process, that's the way it works," Hogan told The Associated Press. "But to just make accusations of the election being stolen and widespread fraud without providing any evidence, I thought was really bad for our democratic process and it was something I had never seen in my lifetime."

"Other Republicans did speak up," he noted, "but certainly not enough of them."

Indeed, the most aggressive Republican criticism was limited to the small and familiar group of frequent Trump critics such as Utah Sen. Mitt Romney and Nebraska Sen. Ben Sasse, who will not face Republican voters again for at least four years.

On the other side were Trump allies, including the president's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., who called on Republicans considering running for the party's nomination in 2024 to come to the president's defense.

"The total lack of action from virtually all of the '2024 GOP hopefuls' is pretty amazing," he tweeted. "They have a perfect platform to show that they're willing & able to fight but they will cower to the media mob instead."

Several quickly raised their voices, including former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, who served as Trump's ambassador to the United Nations, though some Trump allies saw Haley's statement on Twitter thanking Trump for helping to deliver "conservative victories" up and down the ballot as reading too much like a political obituary of sorts for the president.

Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley, another Trump ally in the 2024 conversation, avoided embracing some of Trump's most outlandish claims, but vowed to introduce new "election integrity" legislation to address some of the complaints Trump's campaign has raised.

In contrast, Missouri's other Republican senator, Roy Blunt, was not afraid to call out Trump's inconsistent calls to stop counting ballots in states where he's ahead and keep counting in states where he's behind.

"You can't stop the count in one state and decide you want the count to continue in another state," Blunt told reporters. "That might be how you'd like to see the system work but that's not how the system works."

As votes were tallied across the country Friday afternoon, Biden was on the cusp of winning the presidency as he opened up narrow leads in the critical battlegrounds of Georgia and Pennsylvania. The shifts put Biden in a stronger position to capture the 270 Electoral College votes needed to take the White House.

With things trending in the wrong direction for him, Trump continued to spread baseless rumors of voting fraud throughout the day, calling on the Supreme Court to intervene even as his campaign struggled to produce significant evidence of malfeasance.

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Still, there was no shortage of Republican leaders willing to back him up — especially after Donald Trump Jr. called out their silence on social media.

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham told reporters Friday that he was “not conceding” Biden’s tightening grasp on the presidency and fully supported Trump’s efforts to challenge ballot counts in several states.

On Fox News the night before, Graham said he was transferring \$500,000 from his campaign account to Trump’s legal fund, and called for others to make donations as well.

Ari Fleischer, a former aide to President George W. Bush, said Trump was simply saying out loud about the voting system what most losing candidates say privately.

“I wish people talked with less bombast. But I’m not going to fault the president for it,” Fleischer said.

“Be gentle about Trump’s behavior,” he urged. “When I watched it last night and watched these heads explode I just rolled my eyes. ... We’ve always been a noisy democracy.”

Yet history suggests that Trump’s rhetoric and actions go well beyond the normal trappings of democracy. Never before has a sitting president so aggressively undermined the integrity of a U.S. election.

His strategy was entirely predictable. With polls showing him lagging, Trump raised questions about the integrity of the voting system for much of the year. Yet his words from the White House this week were no less shocking.

Even internally, some advisers did not want him to address the nation Thursday night when he made his most outrageous claims.

Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson, a staunch Trump ally, highlighted the obvious downside of Trump’s questions about the integrity of the voting process.

“It’s very unfortunate that no matter who wins, the other half of America is not going to view this as a particularly legitimate election,” Johnson said on WTMJ-AM, a local radio station. “I’m not saying it’s legitimate or not. I’m saying this process has been set up where people are not going to view it as legitimate. And that’s a real problem.”

Trump spent most of Friday behind closed doors at the White House, angry about the direction of the race and insisting that his aides and allies push back. There was no indication he would concede, no matter what the final vote tally showed.

Hogan, the Maryland governor, acknowledged that Trump would have “an important voice with the base of the Republican Party” moving forward regardless of the 2020 election’s outcome.

“I’m sure he’s going to be a factor to contend with,” Hogan said. “I don’t anticipate him going quietly.”

Peoples reported from New York. AP writer Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, California, contributed to this report.

NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn’t happen this week

The Associated Press undefined

A look at false and misleading claims and videos that followed voting in the Nov. 3 presidential election. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

Video shows Pennsylvania election workers transcribing damaged ballots

CLAIM: A video shows election workers in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, stamping clean ballots as received and then filling them in, which proves that voter fraud is taking place.

THE FACT: The video, taken from the county’s official livestream, shows an election worker transcribing votes from damaged ballots to clean ballots. Social media users are taking footage from livestreams of the vote count to rapidly spread false information about the close race for president in Pennsylvania. One version of the video used to make the false claim received more than 1 million views on Twitter on Friday. The videos were shared prominently by pro-Trump accounts on Facebook and Twitter. “Nothing to see here!! Ballots stamped as “received” THEN filled in #VoterFraud,” one tweet said. A post on Facebook

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sharing the video said, "Delaware County, Pennsylvania, looks like the dude in the black shirt is doing more than just 'counting ballots' #trump2020." In the video, an election worker wearing a black shirt and a black mask can be seen sitting at a table as he transcribes ballots. According to Delaware County election officials, the video was cropped to remove the bipartisan observers watching over election workers from 6 feet away, a distance that was agreed upon by the county Election Bureau and the former Republican chairman of the Delaware County Council. When processing ballots, county officials rely on a machine extractor to open the ballots and some ballots become damaged during the process, preventing them from being scanned. In order to count those votes, the man in the video was manually transcribing the votes from the damaged ballots to a clean ballot so they could be properly scanned. The damaged ballots were positioned next to the new ones for election observers to witness, and they were preserved. Delaware County has been allowing Pennsylvania residents to watch the livestream since they first began streaming the vote count on Nov. 3. "Unfortunately, some residents have altered to video and are making false accusations, which baselessly and wrongly attacks the integrity of the election staff and the completely transparent process by which votes are being counted in Delaware County," the county said in a statement. Posts online shared at least three different videos of Delaware County election workers to suggest that voter fraud was taking place. The AP confirmed the video with county officials who said they were also transcribing ballots and observers were present.

— Associated Press writer Beatrice Dupuy in New York contributed this report.

Ballot-stuffing video was shot in Russia, not Michigan

CLAIM: Video shows poll workers committing election fraud by stuffing ballots in Flint, Michigan.

THE FACTS: The video shows poll workers in Russia, not in the United States. It has been circulating online since March 19, 2018, when it was used to support reports of alleged ballot stuffing in Russia's elections that year. In the video, there are five poll workers in a room. One of them is standing, and can be seen putting ballots into a white box. Later, a woman in a blue shirt can be seen doing the same. Behind them there are two polling booths. On Thursday, social media users began widely sharing the video anew, this time with false claims it was evidence of election fraud in Flint, Michigan. "Here we have staffers stuffing ballots in flint mi," read a Facebook post shared nearly 2,000 times. However, the original video was not shot in Michigan — or in the United States. It appeared in a Washington Post story about ballot-stuffing in Russia in 2018. There are also context clues that show the video isn't American: The Russian coat of arms is visible on both the ballot box and on the polling booths.

— Associated Press writers Ali Swenson in Seattle and Abril Mulato in Mexico City contributed this report.

CLAIM: Votes were eliminated in Arizona and Michigan because people were made to use Sharpie pens to mark their ballots. This caused the tabulation machine to cancel the vote.

THE FACTS: Following an AP race call early Wednesday that Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden had flipped Arizona, as well as updated vote counts showing Biden in the lead in Michigan, social media posts circulated suggesting votes for Trump were canceled because voters were told to use Sharpies at their polling site. The claims spurred from a viral video from Arizona that shows a woman speaking about how four different polling places were using Sharpies, and a man asking if "those ballots are not being counted" and "are invalid." "They are invalidating votes is what they are doing," the man says. "People are coming here to vote for Donald Trump and all those votes are getting invalidated," he says in the video. But the day of the election, officials had made clear the Sharpies were given out on purpose. The Maricopa County Elections Department tweeted on Election Day that voting centers use Sharpies so that ink does not smudge when ballots are counted. Maricopa County Recorder Adrian Fontes tweeted in response to a voter's query, "Vote Centers use sharpies for the fastest drying ink, to prevent smudges going through the tabulation equipment," he said. "This is an upgrade of our new equipment & ballots. Bleed thru does not affect tabulation because the columns are offset & the machines can only read the bubbles." Sophia Solis, public information officer for the Arizona Secretary of State, said in an email that votes would not be canceled if there was an issue with the ballot. According to the state's election procedures manual, a

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ballot review board duplicates ballots which cannot be read by the machine. "This may include crumpled or otherwise damaged ballots, ballots with smudged ink, or ballots which are marked in the wrong color of ink or with a device that cannot be read by the tabulation machine," the manual states. Yet posts online suggested there was a #sharpiegate conspiracy in Arizona. And in Michigan, social media users falsely claimed, "If you were given a black sharpie marker to fill out your ballot...The machines will successfully count your ballot but not your vote, because the machines only detect black pen ink!" Lisa Posthumus Lyons, the clerk for Michigan's Kent County, addressed the confusion on Wednesday afternoon. "Sharpies are the preferred device of our election equipment vendor," she tweeted. "Black or blue pen also acceptable for proper tabulating. Bleed through is not a concern as ballots are programmed to ignore bleed."

—Associated Press writers Beatrice Dupuy in New York and Jude Joffe-Block in Phoenix contributed this report.

Video does not show votes by dead residents in Michigan

CLAIM: Searches of Michigan's Voter Information Center show that dead residents voted in the Nov. 3 election, proving there was voter fraud in the recent election.

THE FACTS: A video showing searches of the state's voter information site were being shared on social media as proof that dead people cast ballots in the 2020 election. It actually showed legitimate voters. The Michigan secretary of state's office confirmed that ballots of voters who have died are not counted in Michigan. The posts rely on a video that shows names of voters being entered into the Michigan Voter Registration Center. In one video, the name Donna Brydges is entered with a birth date from 1901, which would make her 119 years old. The video then shows that a vote was received from Donna Brydges in Ludington, Michigan, for the Nov. 3 presidential election. "Apparently Donna Brydges (born in 1901) voted via absentee ballot in Mason County, Michigan. That would make her 119 years old!" said a tweet circulating the video along with a claim that it shows fraud in the election. The tweet had more than 19,000 retweets. Ludington is in Mason County. The Associated Press reached out to Brydges, whose contact information was listed in the voting information. She answered the phone and confirmed her identity. She then passed the phone to her husband, who verified that his wife was very much alive, noting, "she's actually beat me in a game of Cribbage." In a statement to the AP, Tracy Wimmer, director of media relations for the secretary of state's office, said that ballots cast by voters who die before Election Day are rejected in Michigan. "On rare occasions, a ballot received for a living voter may be recorded in a way that makes it appear as if the voter is dead," she said. This can occur for a number of reasons. For example, someone born in 1990 is accidentally recorded as being born in 1890, Wimmer said. "Local clerks can correct the issue when it is brought to their attention," she said. Several other names were also used online to make the false assertion that dead people were voting. The false claims were shared online with the hashtag #stopthesteal, which has been circulated in recent days to suggest that votes are being stolen from Trump.

— Beatrice Dupuy

Wagon filmed at Detroit vote center held camera gear, not ballots

CLAIM: Video shows a man unloading ballots from a white van and using a red wagon to secretly haul them into Detroit's ballot-counting center in the middle of the night.

THE FACTS: On Wednesday, as election workers tallied millions of mail-in votes in battleground states including Michigan, right-wing commentator Steven Crowder shared a grainy video of a man unloading something out of a white van, placing it onto a red wagon and lugging it inside Detroit's TCF Center. "This only creates MORE questions about votes and ballot security concerns in Michigan," Crowder tweeted. Social media users and conservative websites quickly seized on the video, calling it "highly suspicious" and claiming it showed a man smuggling illegitimate ballots into the facility "in the dead of night." However, the local news station WXYZ-TV soon clarified the real explanation: The man was one of the station's photographers, and he was using the wagon to carry his heavy camera equipment. "A conservative 'news' site reports catching a man wheeling in 'suspicious' equipment to the Detroit convention center, implying it was used to steal ballots," tweeted Ross Jones, an investigative reporter for WXYZ-TV. "The 'ballot thief'

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was my photographer. He was bringing down equipment for our 12-hour shift." In its fact check, the station also shared a photo of the wagon holding a Pelican brand camera case with a WXYZ-TV sticker on it.

— Ali Swenson ____

Wisconsin did not count more votes than there are registered voters

CLAIM: Wisconsin has "3,129,000 registered voters," but counted 3,239,920 votes.

THE FACTS: On Wednesday, as states were continuing to count votes in the U.S. presidential election, multiple false posts circulated on social media claiming that Wisconsin had more votes counted than people registered to vote. "BREAKING: Wisconsin has more votes than people who are registered to vote. Total number of registered voters: 3,129,000. Total number of votes cast: 3,239,920. This is direct evidence of fraud," one Twitter user claimed. The tweet had over 9,000 retweets. Another Twitter user wrote: "Registered voters in Wisconsin: 3,129,000. Votes counted so far in Wisconsin: 3,170,206. 101% turnout among Wisconsin voters? FRAUDULENT." Wisconsin, which allows eligible voters to register on Election Day, had 3,684,726 active registered voters as of Nov. 1. That figure does not include people who registered and voted on the same day. By Wednesday afternoon, nearly 3.3 million ballots had been counted in Wisconsin in the presidential race, according to The Associated Press. The United States Census Bureau reported that there were 3,129,000 registered voters during the 2018 midterms.

—Associated Press writer Arijeta Lajka in New York contributed this report.

Georgia county did not reject 40,000 ballots

CLAIM: Election officials in DeKalb County, Georgia, rejected 40,000 absentee ballots.

THE FACTS: County election officials identified 201 problematic mailed ballots that were rejected, and told the AP all of those voters had been notified. Voters are supposed to have three days after being contacted to correct the issue, usually a problem with the voter's signature, and the final deadline is Nov. 6. A Georgia state website with information about absentee voting says, "If your ballot was rejected, your county elections office will contact you with a document to "cure" or correct your ballot envelope." Social media users incorrectly claimed that in DeKalb County, 40,000 such mailed ballots had been rejected and urged voters to call a toll-free hotline run by Georgia's Democratic party in order to cure their ballots in time to be counted. DeKalb County officials set the record straight on Twitter: "Voters: there is incorrect info circulating regarding the number of DeKalb ballots that need to be cured by Friday. Currently, there are approximately 200 ballots that need to be cured and each voter is being contacted via phone or overnight mail."

— Jude Joffe-Block

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Hiring held last month but signs of caution as virus worsens

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defying fears of another slowdown, U.S. businesses kept hiring at a solid pace in October, yet there are signs they remain cautious about the economy's future as the pandemic worsens.

The Labor Department said Friday that employers added 638,000 jobs and the unemployment rate tumbled a full percentage point to 6.9%, extending what has been a faster recovery than many economists expected in the spring.

But the pace of hiring isn't robust enough to rapidly soak up the millions of Americans who were thrown out of work by the pandemic recession.

The job gains were little changed from September's 672,000 and less than half August's 1.5 million. Yet the increase was stronger than it appears: It was held down by the loss of about 150,000 temporary Census jobs. Excluding governments at all levels, private businesses added a healthy 906,000 jobs. Hiring

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has held at that level for three months.

Overall, the latest jobs report suggests the tentative recovery remains intact, for now, and that the economy is continuing to adapt to the pandemic.

"It was a pleasant surprise to see that the pace of the recovery hasn't slowed down," said Nick Bunker, an economist at Indeed, the job search website. "But we all need to keep in mind the huge hole that we're in, in terms of jobs and unemployment."

Hiring rose in retail, including in online retail, where many Americans have turned during the viral outbreak. Warehousing and courier services have both added jobs in every month since the pandemic, including last month.

But in a sign of the uncertainty clouding the economy as the virus surges, companies also added more than 100,000 temporary workers. That suggests they are seeing more demand from customers but aren't sure how long it will last and are reluctant to make permanent job offers. The length of the average work week also rose, evidence that employers pushed their current staff to work more rather than take on new workers.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell and Wall Street economists have urged Congress to approve more government aid to support families and businesses, particularly as the pandemic rages and colder weather threatens recent hiring gains among restaurants and bars, which had been able to serve customers outdoors.

But the prospects for more stimulus have been scrambled by the election, which appears likely to result in a victory for former Vice President Joe Biden, the Democrat, while possibly preserving a Republican majority in the Senate. That could mean any additional aid will be postponed until at least next year.

The job market and the overall economy remain under intensified pressure from the accelerating pandemic. On Thursday, the nation broke another record in the seven-day rolling average for new cases, hitting nearly 90,000. Daily new cases were also on track to top 100,000 again, with surging numbers reported all around the country, including a combined nearly 25,000 in Texas, Illinois and Florida.

The nation still has 10.1 million fewer jobs than it did before the viral outbreak intensified in March. At the current pace of hiring, it would take until February 2022 to regain all those jobs. Still, that would be faster than the 2008-2009 Great Recession, when it took more than five years to recover the jobs lost.

The gradual recovery of the job market has affected Americans in uneven ways and widened inequalities. Lower-paid workers in industries like restaurants, hotels, and health care have seen their jobs and incomes recover much more slowly than white-collar workers who have largely worked from home. Many of them have also benefited from a surge in home equity and from the Federal Reserve's ultra-low-rate policies, which have fueled gains in the stock market.

Women have been more likely to leave the workforce than men since the pandemic began, particularly since school started, with many schools operating only online. That has forced some working mothers to quit jobs.

And the unemployment rate for Black workers, at 10.8%, fell sharply in October but remained much higher than for whites, which dropped to 6%. Hispanic unemployment fell to 8.8% from 10.3%.

Some companies have benefited from the ways the pandemic is reshaping the way Americans work and live. With one-fifth of the employed working from home, the government's report showed, spending on services such as cleaning, painting and remodeling has jumped.

That's kept Premium Service Brands busy. The Charlottesville, Virginia, company owns seven home service businesses, including Maid Right, 360 Painting and Handyman Pro.

"As far as hiring goes, we're in full swing," said Paul Flick, founder and CEO. "People are investing more money in the place they're spending their time in."

Flick said his company's franchises have increased hiring roughly 25% since the pandemic struck. Some of their new hires used to be cleaners at hotels or lost jobs in other service businesses.

Yet other firms are still struggling. JMBrennan Inc., a third-generation mechanical engineering firm in Milwaukee, has had to lay off some employees since March. The company installs and fixes plumbing, heating and air conditioning systems, but demand has fallen as office buildings and schools remain empty.

And with the pandemic worsening, few businesses are thinking of expanding.

"Does anybody need a brand new office tower?" Brennan asked. "Does anyone need a new hospital?" His firm finished work in June on the new 25-story BMO Bank Tower in downtown Milwaukee that he estimates has maybe 35 people in it. Workers are unlikely to return if the pandemic continues, he said.

"We're not shutting down the economy, but the fact that COVID is still there leaves a lot of uncertainty," he said. "You don't need to expand if no one is in your building."

The economy, which had rebounded sharply in the July-September quarter as businesses reopened from virus-related shutdowns, is now expanding more slowly. Many businesses may struggle as the weather turns colder. Consumers could also pull back again on shopping, traveling and other activities to avoid contracting the virus.

Still, some parts of the economy are recovering steadily. Manufacturing output is still rebounding, with Americans stepping up their purchases of cars, homes and housing-related goods like appliances and furniture. Home sales have also risen as the Fed has pushed mortgage rates to nearly record lows.

Romney: Trump's election fraud claim wrong, 'reckless'

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Key Republican lawmakers, including 2012 presidential nominee Mitt Romney, on Friday slammed President Donald Trump's unsubstantiated claim that Democrats are trying to "steal" the election. But some GOP leaders struck a more neutral tone — and others urged the White House to fight.

Romney, now a senator from Utah, said Trump was within his rights to request recounts and call for investigations where evidence of irregularities exists.

But Trump "is wrong to say the election was rigged, corrupt and stolen," Romney said on Twitter. Trump's claim "damages the cause of freedom here and around the world ... and recklessly inflames destructive and dangerous passions," he said.

Romney is Trump's most vocal critic within the Republican Party and voted to convict Trump in the president's impeachment trial earlier this year.

His comments came as GOP Sen. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania — whose state is a key battleground in the presidential election, where votes are still being tallied — called Trump's claim of fraud "very disturbing."

"There's simply no evidence anyone has shown me of any widespread corruption or fraud," Toomey told "CBS This Morning."

"The president's speech last night was very disturbing to me because he made very, very serious allegations without any evidence to support it," said Toomey.

While he voted for Trump, "I want the next president to be the person who legitimately wins the Electoral College and I will accept whoever that is," Toomey said.

Trump, who has complained for weeks about mail-in ballots, escalated his allegations late Thursday, saying at the White House that the ballot-counting process is unfair and corrupt. Trump did not back up his claims with any details or evidence, and state and federal officials have not reported any instances of widespread voter fraud.

Yet Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell struck a more neutral tone, and other top Republicans more defiantly urged Trump to fight to defeat Democrat Joe Biden.

"Every legal vote should be counted," McConnell tweeted early Friday. "All sides must get to observe the process."

McConnell grew testy during a press conference later in Kentucky when he was repeatedly asked to say more. "Beyond that, I don't have anything to say," McConnell said. "It won't make any difference how many times you ask, I've already given my answer."

Missouri Sen. Roy Blunt, a member of the GOP leadership, said Friday that Trump "should turn this discussion over to his lawyers," adding that the Trump campaign was making inconsistent arguments.

"You can't stop the count in one state and decide you want the count to continue in another state. That might be how you'd like to see the system work but that's not how the system works," Blunt said at the

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Capitol.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy took a more confrontational tone, insisting inaccurately that Trump "won" the election — even though officials in several states are still counting Americans' ballots.

"So everyone who's listening, do not be quiet, do not be silent about this. We cannot allow this to happen before our very eyes," McCarthy, R-Calif., said Thursday on Fox News. "Join together and let's stop this."

The split showed the grip Trump still has on his party, particularly after Republicans in Congress won seats in the House and Senate running for reelection alongside the president.

One top Trump ally, Sen. Lindsey Graham, told reporters Friday that he supports Trump's efforts to challenge ballot counts in several states yet to be called in the presidential race. The South Carolina Republican said he had talked to the Trump campaign and expects evidence of voting irregularities to surface in the next 48 hours, but added that it was up to the Trump campaign to make that case.

While he's "not conceding" that Biden is going to win the presidency, Graham said he will try to work with a potential Democratic administration. Graham, a conservative who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee, vowed to "fight like hell" to stop "a radical agenda," while recognizing that, "if Biden does win, he's president," and Republicans will "try to work with him when we can."

Other GOP senators, governors and other elected officials swiftly pushed back against Trump.

Maryland GOP Gov. Larry Hogan, a potential 2024 presidential hopeful who has often criticized the president, said unequivocally: "There is no defense for the President's comments tonight undermining our Democratic process. America is counting the votes, and we must respect the results as we always have before."

Trump's tweets on Thursday declaring victory and calling for officials to "STOP THE COUNT" were a test of how strongly he can keep Republicans in line as he tries to challenge the voting process in court.

Before Trump's speech in the White House briefing room, several Republicans challenged his attempts to halt vote-counting in Pennsylvania and other battleground states.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, urged "everyone to be patient" as results come in. "It is critical that we give election officials time to complete their jobs, and that we ensure all lawfully cast ballots are allowed and counted," she said in a statement.

Rep. Will Hurd, a Texas Republican who did not seek reelection, called Trump's comments about corruption "dangerous" and "wrong." Trump's remarks undermine the U.S. political process and "the very foundation this nation was built upon," Hurd said.

While Biden was close Friday to the 270 Electoral College votes needed to win the White House, it was unclear when a national winner would be determined after a long, bitter campaign dominated by the coronavirus pandemic and its effects on Americans and the national economy.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick and Lisa Mascaro in Washington and Meg Kinnard in Columbia, S.C., contributed to this report.

EXPLAINER: What is a 'cured' ballot?

By The Associated Press undefined

Across the country, any uncounted ballots cast by Election Day are being verified and tabulated as election officials work toward reporting results of the 2020 presidential election.

In some cases, problems such as a missing signature can occur, and voters are provided an opportunity to "cure," or fix, ballots so they can still be counted. This is a normal process in many states; while actual voting is over, the work of finalizing results will continue for days and, in some cases, weeks.

Here, Christina A. Cassidy, a reporter for The Associated Press who covers voting and election security, offers some insight into the post-election process for fixing ballots:

UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES CAN A BALLOT BE CURED?

If voters casting ballots in person run into problems at a polling place, they can simply ask the nearest poll worker for help. That's not the case for voters using a mail ballot, so several states have created a

process for these voters to fix certain errors such as a missing or mismatched voter signature.

Eighteen states require voters to be notified if their ballots are missing a signature or there is some discrepancy between the signature on the ballot and the one on file at the election office, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, which tracks state laws. These states all provide time for voters to fix these ballots, ranging from two to 21 days depending on the state.

In states that lack such a process, ballots with these problems are generally not counted. But a few states do not use signature verification to validate a mail ballot, including Pennsylvania. For ballots missing a signature, Pennsylvania lacks a formal cure process, though some counties have allowed voters to fix them — a source of litigation in the state.

HOW ARE BALLOTS CURED?

Rules vary on how voters can fix their ballots. In most cases, voters must sign and return an affidavit confirming the ballot is theirs. There may be additional requirements. For instance, Georgia requires identification along with the affidavit. In a few states, if the problem is identified before Election Day, the voter is sent a replacement ballot.

ARE THESE VOTES LEGAL?

Yes. President Donald Trump has complained that Republican poll watchers have been unable to observe the ballot review process in key states, arguing on Twitter that “votes accepted during this period must be determined to be ILLEGAL VOTES.” But Republican poll watchers have had the same access as Democrats, and poll watchers do not determine the validity of signatures and ballots.

Election workers review these ballots and decide which ones to count, which ones qualify for the curing process (if allowed) and which ballots are rejected. Partisan poll watchers can report concerns to party officials, who can raise objections and file lawsuits.

Ethiopian PM announces airstrikes in country's Tigray region

By CARA ANNA and ELIAS MESERET Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Ethiopia's prime minister on Friday said his government has carried out airstrikes against the forces of the country's well-armed Tigray region, asserting that strikes in multiple locations “completely destroyed rockets and other heavy weapons” and made a retaliatory attack impossible.

Abiy Ahmed's evening announcement marked another escalation in clashes this week that experts say could slide one of Africa's most powerful and populous countries into civil war. The conflict pits former allies in the nation's ruling coalition, with the federal government and regional government now regarding each other as illegal.

There was no mention of casualties in what Abiy called the “first round of operation” against the region's government, the Tigray People's Liberation Front. He said the air force destroyed heavy weapons in Tigray's capital, Mekele, and surrounding areas, alleging the TPLF “has the desire to use them.”

The operation will continue, Abiy said, “until the junta is made accountable by law.” And he warned the Tigray population: “In order to avoid unexpected peril, I advise that you limit group movements in cities.”

There was no immediate response from the Tigray government, while the region is increasingly boxed in by movement restrictions and a six-month state of emergency imposed by the federal government.

The military operation launched early Wednesday after Abiy accused the Tigray government of a deadly attack on a military base. He asserted Friday that months of trying to resolve differences with the regional government have failed. Now, he said, the operation has “clear, limited and achievable objectives: to restore the rule of law and the constitutional order.”

And with that, the prime minister appeared to close the door on dialogue, which some experts and diplomats say is desperately needed.

The prime minister, who won the Nobel Peace Prize last year for his sweeping political reforms, now faces his greatest test. The TPLF, which dominated Ethiopia's government before he took office in 2018, has felt marginalized by the shifts in power and defied the federal government in September by holding a controversial local election.

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The northern Tigray region is now increasingly cut off. Ethiopia's civil aviation authority said airports in Mekele and the regional cities of Shire, Axum and Humera were closed. In Sudan, the acting governor of Kassala province said its border with northern Ethiopia has closed "until further notice" due to the tensions, the Sudan News Agency reported.

Experts say civil war would be catastrophic and destabilizing for the Horn of Africa. The United Nations said Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has spoken with the chair of the African Union, which is based in Ethiopia, and Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok in his role as current head of the regional bloc.

Aid groups warn a humanitarian disaster is in the making if fighting continues, with the COVID-19 pandemic one of several crises.

Communications remained almost completely cut off in Tigray. They disappeared around the time that Abiy made his early Wednesday announcement.

The attack on a military base was "the last straw," Abiy said Friday.

Ethiopia's army has said it was deploying troops from around the country to Tigray,. The Tigray leader has said "we are ready to be martyrs." Casualties have been reported on both sides.

It remained challenging to verify either side's version of events.

At least one fighter jet flew overhead but there was no confirmation it dropped bombs, a source in Ethiopia told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media about the issue. Thursday saw heavy fighting and shelling, the source said, and roads to Tigray were closed.

The federal government said Friday that public meetings in Tigray and moving in groups of more than four people are not allowed, and no one aside from law enforcement can bear arms.

The federal police asserted that its members guarding 22 locations throughout Tigray had come under attack from TPLF forces in recent days.

The U.N. human rights chief, Michelle Bachelet, urged Ethiopia's federal government to restore internet and phone services, saying that "cutting off communication has severely hampered the ability to monitor the situation on the ground, particularly the impact of the clashes in the local population."

But some word began to emerge. On Friday, the International Rescue Committee received its first message from colleagues in Tigray.

"There aren't active hostilities under way in the areas where we're working," said George Readings, who leads the group's global crisis analysis. But "we know the situation is pretty tense."

Some 90,000 people in Tigray receive IRC services, and he worried how conflict would affect "so many people already so vulnerable."

Tigray receives refugees from Eritrea — Readings could not say whether that border was open — and the region has been hit hard by a locust outbreak. "I should mention there has been flooding as well," he said. "It's a really delicate situation."

The IRC's Tigray operations have fuel available for the next month. "Then, there is a real question," if travel remains restricted and fighting continues, Readings said.

It was not clear what, if any, powerful backers Tigray might have now.

Tigray borders Eritrea, which fought a years-long war with Ethiopia before the two countries made peace in 2018. The Tigray government and Eritrea don't get along, and the TPLF this week accused Eritrea of teaming up with Ethiopia's federal government to target it.

Eritrea's information ministry said Friday that "the immediate cause of the current conflict is TPLF's reckless and multi-pronged attack this week on contingents of the Ethiopian armed forces — the Northern Command — deployed in the Tigray region for decades."

Meseret reported from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Nona Elhennawy in Cairo contributed.

AP Explains: 5 key takeaways from the October jobs report

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The American job market is clawing its way back — steadily if slowly — from the devastation inflicted by the coronavirus-caused recession. What no one knows is just how long it might take for workers to be made whole.

In October, the government said Friday, employers added 638,000 jobs. It was a solid gain, more than economists had expected. And it was even stronger than the headline number suggested.

Yet even with last month's hiring, the economy has regained barely 12 million of the 22 million jobs it lost in March and April, when the virus suddenly paralyzed much of the economy.

Now, a surge of confirmed infections to record highs — which could accelerate as the weather gets colder — threatens the tentative economic comeback. So does Congress' failure to provide another jolt of aid for individuals and businesses now that a multi-trillion-dollar financial rescue package enacted in March has expired.

Much of the job market's improvement thus far comes from businesses bringing back employees they had furloughed in the spring. But many job losses have turned permanent: The number of Americans who have been unemployed for six months or longer jumped by 1.2 million — 48% — in October.

"Our next president will undoubtedly inherit a challenging labor market in which millions of Americans remain unemployed," said Karen Fichuk, CEO of Randstad North America, which manages hiring for technology, engineering and manufacturing companies

Here are five takeaways from the October jobs report:

UNEMPLOYMENT PLUNGED

The unemployment rate tumbled to 6.9% last month from 7.9% in September. That sharp drop occurred even as the number of Americans who are either working or looking for work rose by 724,000.

A big increase like that could cause unemployment to rise. New job seekers, after all, often need time to land a job and would be considered unemployed until they do. But last month, the number of employed Americans actually rose by 2.2 million while the count of unemployed fell by 1.5 million.

As the proportion of Americans who are either working or looking for work — what economists call the labor force participation rate — ticked up to 61.7% from 61.4% in September. Still, it remains down from 63.4% in February, before the virus flattened the economy.

JOB GAINS WERE WIDESPREAD

Companies across an impressively wide range of industries hired in October. Overall, the private sector added a robust 906,000 jobs. That gain offset the loss of 268,000 government jobs, including about 150,000 temporary Census positions.

Leisure and hospitality companies, which include hard-hit restaurants and hotels, added 271,000 jobs last month on top of 406,000 in September. Even with those increases, the sector remains down nearly 3.5 million jobs from February — a testament to the depth of losses in those industries.

Retailers added 104,000 in October. Construction jobs surged by 84,000 as super-low mortgage rates and pent-up demand for houses from people adapting to working from home continued to fuel a housing boom.

Businesses added 109,000 temporary workers, up from a tepid 22,000 in September. That could be a sign of business optimism: Companies often hire temps to test the market before committing to permanent hires.

WOMEN LAGGING IN JOBS RECOVERY

Women, as a group, are continuing to be left behind in the jobs recovery. They accounted for just 280,000, or 44%, of the jobs added last month. Because they work disproportionately in vulnerable jobs — at restaurants, bars and beauty shops, for instance — women account for 5.5 million, or nearly 55%, of the 10.1 million jobs that remain lost.

Since February, nearly 2.2 million women ages 20 or older have stopped working or looking for a job, versus just 1.4 million men. Some women stopped working to care for children stuck at home until their schools reopen.

JOB PROSPECTS IMPROVED FOR ALL RACES

Last month's burst of hiring benefited Black, white and Hispanic workers. Compared with September,

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employment rose by 785,000, or 3%, for Hispanics; by 433,000, or 2.5%, for African Americans; and by nearly 1.7 million, or 1.5%, for whites.

Black and Hispanic Americans were also much more likely than whites to enter the labor market last month.

Still, disparities between races persisted in unemployment: The jobless rate in October was 6% for whites, versus 10.8% for African Americans and 8.8% for Hispanics.

WHO'S WORKING FROM HOME?

Forced to work at home when the pandemic hit hard this spring, many Americans have returned to their offices, stores and other worksites. The Labor Department said 21.2% of Americans were teleworking last month, down from 35.4% back in May.

Who is teleworking? The answer varies widely: 47.4% of Americans with advanced degrees and 35% of those with bachelor's degrees worked from home. The compares with only 7.1% of workers with only a high school diploma.

More than 35% of Asian Americans worked from home, compared with 20.7% of whites, 17.8% of African Americans and 12.7% of Hispanics. Just 18.8% of men teleworked last month, compared with 24% of women.

Pressure mounts, rifts emerge at Fox News over election

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The steady counting of votes that has moved Democrat Joe Biden closer to the presidency is exposing rifts at Fox News Channel, the influential media outlet that is the favorite for many supporters of President Donald Trump.

Despite intense pressure from Trump's team, Fox's decision team has stood fast with its election night call of Arizona for Biden. Fox has Biden with 264 electoral votes, and if Fox calls either Georgia, Pennsylvania, Nevada or North Carolina for the Democrat, that would give him enough to win the presidency.

Fox anchor Bret Baier fact-checked Trump after the president took to a White House podium Thursday evening to claim the election was fraudulent and that he was being cheated.

"We have not seen the hard evidence," Baier told viewers.

Fox carried Trump's entire speech, as did CNN, whose anchors denounced Trump sharply when it was done. CBS, ABC, NBC and MSNBC all cut away from the president to say he was spreading falsehoods, a decision that "Fox & Friends" anchor Brian Kilmeade said on Friday was arrogant.

The New York Post, like Fox a news organization owned by Rupert Murdoch and a Trump ally during the campaign, raised eyebrows Thursday by headlining a story on Trump's speech, "Donald Trump makes baseless election fraud claims in White House address."

Post headlines Friday took a more neutral approach. On the front page of the print edition, the Post headlined "POTUS Interruptus: Still No Winner." The top campaign story on the website early Friday was about the Trump campaign saying the election is not over.

Fox's news and opinion sides often contribute to a split personality at the top-rated cable network. The stress of the closely-contested presidential election has brought that to the surface.

Shortly before 9 a.m. on Friday, when CNN and MSNBC were reporting that Biden had taken a lead in the Pennsylvania vote count for the first time, "Fox & Friends" was airing a segment about Trump increasing his support among some minority voters during the election.

The Fox anchors then reported the Pennsylvania news, but softened the blow by noting that the president's team has claimed it has not been able to monitor the vote count as closely as it wants. Host Ainsley Earhardt noted that in Georgia, where Biden had similarly taken a lead overnight, there were apparently many ballots from military stationed overseas that had not been counted.

"Look, this is still too close to call in this state," host Steve Doocy said. "We just wanted to break in and let you know."

Moments later, Fox aired a news report from the White House, where reporter Kristin Fisher noted that

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Trump and his campaign had not provided evidence of any illegal voting in the presidential election.

"The reality is, he has not won the presidency with the legal votes," Fisher said.

Fox's most-watched personalities work in prime time, however, and on Thursday they were expressing anger at how the election was turning out. Sean Hannity suggested Pennsylvania should have a do-over of its election after he showed film of a Trump supporter being turned away as an observer at a facility where votes were being counted.

Trump's campaign has legal observers watching the vote count in Philadelphia and several key Pennsylvania counties.

Tucker Carlson called for more transparency and time.

"It is entirely possible now that, someday soon, the news media will decide to shut this election down," Carlson said. "Believe it or not, effectively they have the power to do that."

All votes should be counted, and the Trump team's allegations should be thoroughly checked out, he said.

"Slow down," he said. "No hasty calls. Our nation works. It has worked before. If people air concerns, resolve the concerns. Don't call them names, don't sweep those concerns under the rug, don't shut them down artificially with unelected news anchors. Let our system work."

Carlson didn't mention his employer, but the call of Arizona was hugely controversial. Rival MSNBC aired a report Wednesday night with Trump supporters gathering outside of a facility where votes were being counted in Arizona, when some of them began chanting, "Fox News sucks."

The Associated Press called Arizona for Biden a few hours after Fox and has similarly stuck to its guns. Other news organizations have left Arizona undecided.

In a report Thursday afternoon, Fox's Harris Faulkner listed Arizona among states "too close to call," even though Fox had called it. Bill Hemmer, who has been closely monitoring the vote count on Fox, told viewers that "we'll see" if that call needed to be adjusted.

But Fox's decision desk leaders have made several appearances on the air to explain the Arizona call and say it was standing by it.

"Arizona is doing just what we expected it to do and we remain serene and pristine," said Fox politics editor Chris Stirewalt.

Prominent conservative commentator Ben Shapiro tweeted Friday that "all of those impatient to declare the election over aren't helping anything here. The votes are all in, and the election is already over. We have a legal process. Let the process work."

Pugnacious commentator Dan Bongino acknowledged in a Thursday podcast that things weren't looking good for Trump, but he wasn't giving up.

"It's time to fight," he said.

Italy shuts down 4 regions as Europe tries lighter lockdowns

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — Luxury fashion boutiques, jewelry shops and most of Milan's flagship department stores were shuttered Friday, as the center of Italy's vibrant financial capital fell into a gray quiet on the first day of a partial lockdown in four regions aimed at stopping the coronavirus's resurgence.

The new restrictions — which led to closures of a patchwork of nonessential businesses — allow a great deal more freedom than Italy's near-total 10-week lockdown that started in March, but nonetheless brought recriminations from regional governments that feel unfairly targeted. In particular, the south, which was largely spared in the spring, chafed the most, despite concerns that its weaker health care system was especially vulnerable.

Italy's move echoes those in many parts of Europe, where infections are rising again, but governments have been reluctant to impose the kind of nationwide shutdowns they did in the spring because of the terrible economic damage they did. For instance, many European countries have opted to keep schools open — making work easier for parents — while shutting bars and restaurants and many shops.

Even the lighter restrictions this time around, however, are drawing stiff criticism — especially in countries

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like Britain and Italy where they have exacerbated regional tensions.

Under Italy's complicated 21-point formula, the northern regions of Lombardy, Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta and the southern region of Calabria, the toe of Italy's boot, faced increased restrictions for the next 15 days, including the closure of all nonessential stores, take-out only for bars and restaurants, distance learning for students 12 and over and a ban on leaving hometowns except for work, health or other serious reasons.

Sicily and Puglia, two other southern regions, fell into a second tier of restrictions, while the rest of the country maintained more freedom of movement but with a 10 p.m. curfew and restaurants closings at 6 p.m.

In Rome, Italy's health minister faced Parliament to defend the government's handling of the new phase of the crisis amid concerns the government has too often bypassed lawmakers during the pandemic.

"In a great country like Italy, this cannot be the field of a political battle," Roberto Speranza said, noting that the criteria being applied had been in place since April without dissent. "I say this with all my strength and from my heart: Enough. Don't fuel polemics."

Speranza said the lockdowns were a necessity as the number of confirmed infections skyrockets and deaths reach highs not seen since the spring.

The restrictions took effect the day Italy hit a new all-time high of single-day confirmed infections — 37,809 — and registered the highest number of deaths — 446 — since spring. Lombardy's latest caseload surged to nearly 10,000, accounting for more than 25% of Italy's new confirmed infections on Friday.

"Maybe people are getting used to seeing 400 dead. That number would have people petrified in front of their TV sets. Now people seem more indifferent," Luca Zerbini, a lawyer drinking a take-out cup of coffee near the Duomo cathedral.

In Calabria, the governor vowed to fight the restrictions. And some mayors in the Lombardy in cities that suffered in the first lockdown but are less hard-hit now have pushed for restrictions to vary by province and not by the larger category of region.

Milan's mayor, Giuseppe Sala, rejected such differential treatment within regions, which share a common health care system. "I invite Milanese to stay home as much as possible in these very difficult days," Sala said Friday.

All was quiet in the city, where even the lines that usually form in front of popular takeaway sandwich shops — still allowed to be open — were nowhere to be seen. The hodgepodge of shops considered "necessary" includes hairdressers, cosmetic and perfume stores, florists, and sweet shops alongside grocery stores — but not ice cream parlors or pastry shops. That created the odd situation where the flagship Rinascente department store was open only to customers wanting to access the ground floor for cosmetics, the 7th-floor food court or the penthouse hair salon.

That patchwork reflects efforts to balance slowing the virus's spread with protecting the battered economy — and it can be seen across Europe. Many fear that businesses that suffered in the spring won't survive new restrictions this time around.

In France, bookshops have been shut, and Paris' landmark English-language store Shakespeare and Company appealed to readers for support. And it got it, receiving 5,000 online orders in one week, compared with the usual 100.

But even as politicians keep a wary eye on the economy, they are also concerned about pressure on their strained health systems.

Luca Zaia, governor of the northern Italian region of Veneto region, said that the deaths in his region were mostly among people over 70 while most infections were among the young, underlining the necessity for people to observe new rules even in one of the regions with the lightest restrictions.

"We are entering the most critical phase," Zaia said, noting that if the situation worsens they will have to halt other medical procedures to find beds for COVID-19 patients.

Germany's health minister has warned of hard times ahead unless the country can "break" the rising trajectory of coronavirus cases, which has doubled the number of patients in intensive care in just 10 days and set a new record of over 21,500 new confirmed cases on Friday.

And the French government is supplying quick virus tests to nursing homes around the country and to

the nation's biggest airport, Paris' Charles de Gaulle. The tests are cheap and fast, but experts say they are also less accurate than the standard ones. Nursing homes in France, Spain and other European countries saw tremendous numbers of deaths in the first surge.

"The second wave is here, and it is violent," French Health Minister Olivier Veran warned Thursday night, while urging people to respect a partial national lockdown.

In Denmark, meanwhile, more than a quarter-million people were put on lockdown in a northern region where a mutated variation of the coronavirus infected a mink farm. Although there was no evidence the mutation posed a threat to people, Danish authorities were taking no chances and ordered millions of the animals to be killed.

Follow AP's coronavirus pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/virus-outbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>.

Johnny Depp exits 'Fantastic Beasts' franchise

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Johnny Depp has exited the "Fantastic Beasts" franchise following his failed libel case against The Sun tabloid newspaper for a 2018 article that labeled him a "wife beater."

Depp said Friday in a letter posted on Instagram that he would depart the role of the dark wizard Gellert Grindelwald after the studio requested his resignation. Depp said his announcement came "in light of recent events."

"I wish to let you know that I have been asked to resign by Warner Bros. from my role as Grindelwald in 'Fantastic Beasts' and I have respected and agreed to that request," said Depp.

Warner Bros. confirmed Depp's departure and said the role will be recast. "We thank Johnny for his work on the films to date," the studio said in a statement. The third "Fantastic Beasts" film is currently in production.

Depp also said he would appeal the decision earlier this week by a British judge. After hearing testimony from Depp and ex-wife Amber Heard in the high-profile case, Justice Andrew Nicol said that the allegations against Depp were "substantially true." Depp had sued News Group Newspapers, publisher of The Sun, and its executive editor, Dan Wootton, over an article accusing him of assaulting Heard.

"The surreal judgement of the court in the U.K. will not change my fight to tell the truth and I confirm that I plan to appeal," Depp said Friday. "My resolve remains strong and I intend to prove that the allegations against me are false. My life and career will not be defined by this moment in time."

"Fantastic Beasts," a prequel franchise spun off from the "Harry Potter" films, has grossed nearly \$1.5 billion between 2016's "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" and 2018's "Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald." Warner Bros. on Friday postponed the release of the third "Fantastic Beasts" film from November next year to summer 2022.

AP VoteCast: Trump wins white evangelicals, Catholics split

By ELANA SCHOR and DAVID CRARY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump won support from about 8 in 10 white evangelical Christian voters in his race for reelection, but Catholic voters split almost evenly between him and Democratic opponent Joe Biden, according to AP VoteCast.

Trump's strong hold on white evangelical voters illustrates the GOP's enduring success with a bloc of religious conservatives who have been a linchpin of the president's political base since his 2016 victory. The president's path to a second term has grown narrower, however, amid a divide among Catholics between Trump and Biden, a lifelong member of the faith.

AP VoteCast showed 50% of Catholics backing Trump and 49% favoring Biden, reflecting the faith's long-standing role as a closely contested vote in presidential elections — particularly in Rust Belt battleground

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states such as Michigan and Wisconsin. Trump won both of those states by less than 1 percentage point in 2016, but Biden prevailed in both this year. The survey of more than 110,000 voters nationwide was conducted for The Associated Press by NORC at the University of Chicago.

Ahead of the election, the rival campaigns targeted Catholics with fervent appeals to vote based on their faith. Trump supporters said faithful Catholics should not vote for Biden because of his support for abortion rights, while Biden backers said Trump is too divisive and has failed to elevate social justice issues that are part of Catholic teaching.

Michael Wear, a past faith adviser to former President Barack Obama, said he saw signs that the Biden campaign's focused outreach to religious voters – which included multiple ads invoking the former vice president's Catholicism – had paid off. Biden would be just the second Catholic president after John F. Kennedy.

"Biden's political approach has been vindicated in these results," said Wear, who helped lead a bipartisan super PAC this fall that aimed to undercut Trump's Christian support. "He ran because he believed he would not lose the Rust Belt, when the nominee in 2016 did."

Michael New, an abortion opponent who teaches social research at Catholic University of America, said Trump's opposition to abortion likely attracted some Catholic voters even if they disagreed with him on other issues.

This year, Catholic voters accounted for 22% of the electorate, and there was a sharp rift within their ranks by race and ethnicity.

Among white Catholics, 57% backed Trump and 42% backed Biden, according to VoteCast. In 2016, Trump won 64% of white Catholics and Clinton won 31%, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of voters.

Among Hispanic Catholics, VoteCast shows 67% backed Biden and 32% backed Trump.

"The election results show that the Catholic Church is as divided as our nation, but the real divide is race and ethnicity, not theology," said David Gibson, director of Fordham University's Center on Religion and Culture.

He said the gap between the white Catholic vote for Trump and the Latino vote for Biden poses a challenge for church leaders, especially if the Republican Party continues to woo white voters with anti-immigrant rhetoric.

"If the Republican Party continues to try to amplify calls to white grievance and fear of immigrants in order to rally the white Catholic vote, that could create further problems for the Catholic Church itself as it seeks unity," Gibson said via email.

Catholics weren't the only religious group vocally courted by the Biden campaign, which also sought to cut into Trump's advantage with certain segments of the white evangelical electorate. Yet the president's commanding performance with that bloc raises questions about whether future Democratic campaigns would make similar efforts.

Ryan Burge, a political scientist at Eastern Illinois University who focuses on religious voting patterns, said white evangelicals "are as red as red can get" and suggested that future Democratic hopefuls pay more attention to white Catholics and Hispanic evangelicals.

"There's no way to peel anybody off, because there's no wedge there" among white evangelicals who favor the Republican agenda, Burge said.

Among voters with no religious affiliation, Biden took 72% while Trump took 26%. And VoteCast found several other religious voting blocs going overwhelmingly for Biden, largely in line with their previous preference for Democrats.

Jewish voters made up 3% of the electorate and went overwhelmingly for Biden, with 68% backing the Democrat compared with 31% backing Trump. Among Muslim voters, 64% supported Biden and 35% supported Trump. In a 2017 survey from Pew Research Center, about two-thirds of U.S. Muslims identified as Democratic or leaned to the Democratic Party.

One bright spot for Trump among religious voters was his performance among The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints members. In 2016, Trump won the state of Utah – with its sizable population of

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church members – with less than 50% support as third-party candidate Evan McMullin, a church member himself, won more than 20% of the vote.

While 67% of members of the faith voted for Republicans in the 2018 midterms, according to VoteCast, only 56% said then that they approved of Trump's handling of his job.

But this year, with no third-party candidate on the ballot, Trump got the backing of 71% of Latter-day Saints nationwide, while 24% supported Biden.

Crary reported from New York. Associated Press writer Hannah Fingerhut contributed.

AP VoteCast is a survey of the American electorate conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago for Fox News, NPR, PBS NewsHour, Univision News, USA Today Network, The Wall Street Journal and The Associated Press. The survey of 110,485 voters was conducted for eight days, concluding as polls closed. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The survey combines a random sample of registered voters drawn from state voter files; self-identified registered voters using NORC's probability based Ameri-Speak panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population; and self-identified registered voters selected from nonprobability online panels. The margin of sampling error for voters is estimated to be plus or minus 0.4 percentage points. Find more details about AP VoteCast's methodology at <https://ap.org/votecast>.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through the Religion News Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

Michigan couple with 14 sons welcome their first daughter

LAKEVIEW, Mich. (AP) — A Michigan couple whose large family attracted attention by growing to include 14 sons has welcomed their first daughter nearly three decades after the birth of their first child.

Kateri Schwandt gave birth Thursday to Maggie Jayne, who weighed in at 7 pounds, 8 ounces (3.4 kilograms) and entered a world filled with 14 older brothers.

Jay Schwandt said he and his wife, both 45, "are overjoyed and beyond excited to add Maggie Jayne to our family."

"This year has been memorable in so many ways, for so many reasons, but Maggie is the greatest gift we could ever imagine," he told the Detroit Free Press following his daughter's birth at Mercy Health Saint Mary's Hospital in Grand Rapids.

The Schwandts have been featured for years in local and national news as their family has grown. The couple have a livestreaming program called "14 Outdoorsmen" that may now need a name change.

Their oldest child, Tyler Schwandt, 28, said his parents thought they would never have a daughter after 14 sons. He said there's likely nothing pink in the family's home in the rural community of Lakeview, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) northeast of Grand Rapids.

"I don't even know if my mom owns any pink clothing — or anything," said Tyler, who is engaged to be married and recently bought a home 20 minutes away from his parents' 200-acre (81-hectare) farm.

The Schwandts started dating as freshmen, attending Gaylord High School and Gaylord St. Mary's, respectively. They wed in 1993, before they attended Ferris State University, and before they graduated the couple had three sons.

Both earned advanced degrees, even as their family grew. Kateri holds a master's degree in social work from Grand Valley State University, and Jay, who is a lawyer and owner of a land surveying business, holds a law degree from Western Michigan University's Thomas M. Cooley Law School.

'I cry every day': Virus hits French nursing homes anew

By ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Virus pressure is mounting at French nursing homes, where more than 400 people with

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COVID-19 have died in the past week and some residents are again being confined to their rooms and cut off from their families.

"I cry every day," said Patricia Deliry, 81, whose daughter usually provides daily assistance at her Paris care home but has been kept away for the past two weeks as part of the home's virus protection efforts. Deliry hasn't been able to see fellow residents either. "We're confined, closed in from morning to night."

French Health Minister Olivier Veran said Friday that the government is sending 1.6 million rapid virus tests to care homes across the country to allow them to test personnel. It's part of efforts to avoid mass new confinement of nursing home residents after the anguish caused during a nationwide lockdown in the spring. Germany launched a similar antigen test effort at nursing homes this week.

"The goal is to learn lessons from the first wave," said the government minister for elderly care issues, Brigitte Bourignon, while visiting a nursing home south of Paris on Friday. "What we want is to stay on this balancing line -- which is difficult -- between the protection that we owe our elders but also the fact that we should respect their rights and therefore not isolate them totally."

More people have died with the virus in French nursing homes in the last two weeks than in the previous five months combined, according to public health agency figures. The health minister said Friday that 15% of homes currently have active virus cases, and "mortality is growing every day, like we saw in the first wave."

France has reported 12,079 virus-related deaths in nursing homes overall; many other nursing home residents died after being transferred to hospitals. They make up a large proportion of the 39,037 total reported deaths in France, among the world's highest tolls.

France is currently under a new partial lockdown as overall virus hospitalizations and deaths have risen sharply in recent weeks, but nursing homes are allowed to stay open if they take precautions. Many still allow visitors to see family members through plexiglass dividers or at a large distance.

Deliry's care home has said it periodically suspends family visits and re-confines some residents as new cases emerge, then allows them back with distancing and disinfection requirements when the risk subsides. But for residents and their relatives, the unpredictability is deeply frustrating.

"At least there is television (in the room), or I would be banging my head against the wall," Deliry, who is partially disabled after a stroke, told The Associated Press.

Meanwhile care home staff are under increasing strain. Bourignon said medical students would be called in to reinforce nursing home personnel, and told workers, "Hang in there. Yes, the second wave is here, and there will be enormous work to take on, and there will be difficult situations."

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

Pandemic heaps new fears and trauma on war-scarred Bosnians

By SABINA NIKSIC undefined

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — Memories of the Bosnian War are shaping Zdenka Sutalo's perception of the coronavirus.

The 58-year-old unemployed woman attends group therapy sessions to work through the trauma of the 1992-95 conflict. As a young woman in Sarajevo, she endured bombardment, hunger, electricity shortages and was forced to break off her university studies for good. Today she sometimes has to be reminded to see the novel virus as a serious risk.

"The war was my most difficult experience in life," she said after a recent therapy session that included painting pinecones and exercising in a Sarajevo park with others.

"As for the pandemic, the world survived plague and cholera and those are now just water under the bridge."

As coronavirus cases surge in Bosnia, the pandemic is heaping more trouble on an impoverished nation that has never recovered economically or psychologically from a war that killed 100,000 people and forced 2.2 million from their homes.

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Bosnian health authorities estimate that about half of the the Balkan nation's nearly 3.5 million people have suffered some degree of trauma resulting from the war.

Mental health professionals fear that the pandemic will now exacerbate mental health problems and other health risks, and are speaking of a surge of new patients coming into their practices in recent months.

Tihana Majstorovic, a Sarajevo psychologist who led the pinecone-painting session, said the war experience was leading some Bosnians to downplay the threat of the pandemic, increasing the risk of its spread.

"People who survived the war perceive danger differently. Often, if they are not hungry, cold or have mortars exploding over their heads, they do not feel they are in danger," said Majstorovic, who works for Menssana, a non-governmental mental health group in Sarajevo.

It has made them prone to "downplaying the threat, to behaving less responsibly than they should," Majstorovic said. "It is not at all a healthy mechanism for adapting to a world threatened by an invisible virus."

Remzija Setic, a clinical psychologist, said he, too, sees war survivors "recklessly" downplaying the risks of the virus.

But he also has patients who are suffering from heightened anxiety because some aspects of living through this pandemic are reminiscent of the war: being trapped indoors, seeing public spaces as dangerous, concern over getting food and separation from family and friends.

On top of that, pandemic fatigue is setting in.

Setic said he sees a growing number of people, including many without diagnosed mental disorders, who complain of extreme irritability and physical exhaustion. That fatigue is also leading some young Bosnians without memory of the war to be cavalier about the risk of a virus that has infected nearly 56,000 people and killed more than 1,350 in the country.

"During the past seven to eight months, our population in general has grown exhausted out of an abundance of information, so they are starting to resist," Setic said.

In some ways, Bosnia is better equipped than some other countries to handle the challenges.

Because of the trauma from the war, the past-quarter century of recovery has included creating psychological support networks for a traumatized population.

Thanks in part to initially abundant financial support from Western governments and international organizations, some 70 community-based mental health centers were established throughout the country.

"It is a fact that we have a lot of relevant experience ... and that we've learned many lessons that we could share," said Goran Cerkez, the assistant health minister in the larger of Bosnia's two highly autonomous regions.

Cerkez, who led a post-war effort to reform Bosnia's mental health care system, noted that people from the neighboring nations of Serbia and Croatia — also born from the bloody breakup of ex-Yugoslavia — have been calling Bosnian hotlines set up to help people deal with pandemic-related stress.

Based on his experiences, he expects the psychological impact of the coronavirus pandemic, both in his country and globally, to be longer and more severe than its immediate medical impact.

"Many (collective) traumatic experiences have some things in common," Cerkez said. "They produce a sense of hopelessness and insecurity, a sense of uncertainty because it is impossible to predict how long they will last."

Follow AP's coronavirus pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/virus-outbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Nov. 7, the 312th day of 2020. There are 54 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 7, 1967, Carl Stokes was elected the first Black mayor of a major city -- Cleveland, Ohio.

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On this date:

In 1811, U.S. forces led by Indiana Territory Gov. William Henry Harrison defeated warriors from Tecumseh's Confederacy in the Battle of Tippecanoe.

In 1867, Nobel Prize-winning scientist Marie Curie was born in Warsaw.

In 1917, Russia's Bolshevik Revolution took place as forces led by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin overthrew the provisional government of Alexander Kerensky.

In 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt won an unprecedented fourth term in office, defeating Republican Thomas E. Dewey.

In 1962, Richard M. Nixon, having lost California's gubernatorial race, held what he called his "last press conference," telling reporters, "You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore."

In 1972, President Richard Nixon was re-elected in a landslide over Democrat George McGovern.

In 1973, Congress overrode President Richard Nixon's veto of the War Powers Act, which limits a chief executive's power to wage war without congressional approval.

In 1989, L. Douglas Wilder won the governor's race in Virginia, becoming the first elected Black governor in U.S. history; David N. Dinkins was elected New York City's first Black mayor.

In 2001, the Bush administration targeted Osama bin Laden's multi-million-dollar financial networks, closing businesses in four states, detaining U.S. suspects and urging allies to help choke off money supplies in 40 nations.

In 2009, in a victory for President Barack Obama, the Democratic-controlled House narrowly passed, 220-215, landmark health care legislation to expand coverage to tens of millions lacking it and place tough new restrictions on the insurance industry.

In 2013, shares of Twitter went on sale to the public for the first time; by the closing bell, the social network was valued at \$31 billion.

In 2018, a gunman killed 12 people at a country music bar in Thousand Oaks, Calif., before apparently taking his own life as officers closed in; the victims included a man who had survived the mass shooting at a country music concert in Las Vegas. After more than a year of blistering attacks from President Donald Trump, Attorney General Jeff Sessions was pushed out of that post.

Ten years ago: Scientists at the world's largest atom smasher, the Large Hadron Collider near Geneva, recreated the state of matter shortly after the Big Bang using collisions of lead ions. Gebre Gebremariam (GEH'-brah geh-brah-MAYR'-ee-am) of Ethiopia won the men's title at the New York City Marathon in 2:08:14 in his debut at the distance. Kenya's Edna Kiplagat won the women's race in 2:28:20 for her first major marathon championship.

Five years ago: The leaders of China and Taiwan met for the first time since the formerly bitter Cold War foes split amid civil war 66 years earlier; Chinese President Xi Jinping and Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou hailed the meeting in Singapore as a sign of a new stability in relations. The license plates that were on the limousine carrying President John F. Kennedy when he was assassinated in Dallas in 1963 were sold at auction for \$100,000. Yitzhak Navon, 94, who was a top aide to Israel's founding father David Ben-Gurion and who served as Israel's president from 1978 to 1983, died in Jerusalem.

One year ago: Former Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that he would try to reclaim his old Senate seat from Alabama. (The effort ended in defeat in a Republican primary runoff.) Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson announced that he was retiring after more than three years as the city's top cop. (Johnson would be fired weeks later by Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, who cited "ethical lapses" including lying about a recent incident in which Johnson was found asleep at the wheel of his car after having drinks.) Juul Labs said it would stop U.S. sales of its best-selling, mint-flavored electronic cigarettes; the move came as the company struggled to survive a nationwide backlash against vaping.

Today's Birthdays: Former U.S. Sen. Rudy Boschwitz, R-Minn., is 90. Actor Barry Newman is 82. Actor Dakin Matthews is 80. Singer Johnny Rivers is 78. Former supermodel Jean Shrimpton is 78. Singer-songwriter Joni Mitchell is 77. Former CIA Director David Petraeus is 68. Jazz singer Rene Marie is 65. Actor Christopher Knight (TV: "The Brady Bunch") is 63. Rock musician Tommy Thayer (KISS) is 60. Actor Julie Pinson

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is 53. Rock musician Greg Tribbett (Mudvayne) is 52. Actor Michelle Clunie is 51. Documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock is 50. Actor Christopher Daniel Barnes is 48. Actors Jeremy and Jason London are 48. Actor Yunjin Kim is 47. Actor Adam DeVine is 37. Rock musician Zach Myers (Shinedown) is 37. Actor Lucas Neff is 35. Rapper Tinie (TY'-nee) Tempah is 32. Rock singer Lorde is 24.