

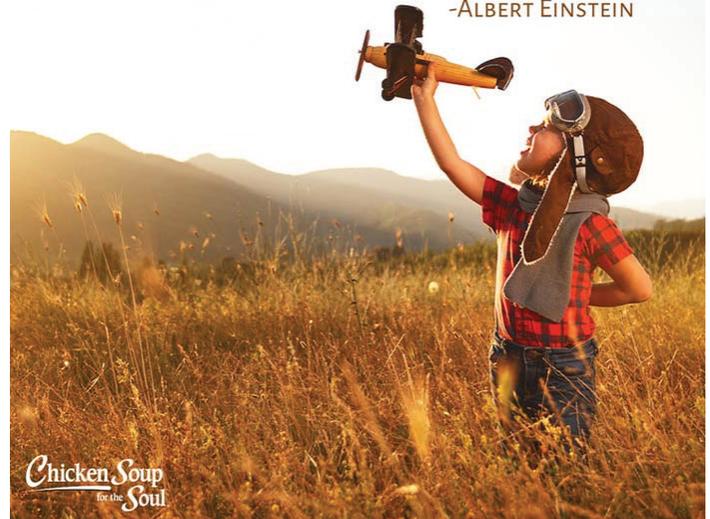
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"LOGIC WILL GET YOU FROM A TO B.
IMAGINATION WILL TAKE YOU
EVERYWHERE."

-ALBERT EINSTEIN



COVID-19 discussion at school board meeting

COVID-19 took up the bulk of the discussion at the Groton Area School Board meeting held last night. The elementary Christmas concert will be done virtually while there will be live performances for the middle school concert on December 8th and the high school concert on December 10th. Having a live concert with the elementary school so close to Christmas was a concern. Board member Marty Weismantel said the musicians were robbed of everything last spring so every effort should be made to give them something this year.

Currently, there is one seventh grader and one elementary staff member home for COVID-19.

The bleachers may not be extended all the way at the basketball games to allow more room between the front row and the playing court. Cheerleaders will also have to adapt since they have to be 6-10 feet away from the base line and the crowd.

Superintendent Joe Schwan said he believes that the three-day weekend has helped curtail the spread of the virus and he commends the parents for all they are doing to make sure ALL students can be kept in class.

The district has the Binax Rapid Test and there was discussion on how to administer that. Beth Gustafson has been trained in the administration of the test.

Wrestlers will be limited to no more than two days of competition per calendar week and no more than four matches per day at a tournament.

The board accepted the resignation of Amanda Morehouse as business office assistant effective Nov. 30.

The school received a rare double score of 100 in the health food service inspections for both the high school and the elementary school.



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Superintendent's Report to the Groton Area School District 06-6 Board of Education

November 9, 2020

Groton Area School District COVID Data Update.

Groton Area School District															
Active COVID-19 Cases															
Updated November 9, 2020, 10:14 AM															
JK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Staff	Total
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2

Since we adopted modified our close contacts protocol on October 12, we've had 39 known new close contact exposures (31 home, 8 school), with one household close contact that has subsequently tested positive for COVID-19.

To date, we've had 42 total confirmed cases of COVID-19 of students or staff members of our District (14 staff members [13.3%], 5 elementary students [1.7%], 12 middle school students [8.5%], and 11 high school students [5.9%])

Brown County data to date indicates 2,585 infections of total population 30,839 [8.4%].

Statewide data to date indicates 53,486 infections of total population 884,659 [6.0%].

Abbott BinaxNOW Rapid Testing. We have received an initial supply of these rapid tests. Mrs. Gustafson is trained in the administration of the tests. At this point, we have not yet administered any tests and the parameters around administration are not clear.

These tests are not valid for asymptomatic testing (must be given to a symptomatic individual within the first 7 days of their symptom onset). A negative test result will still result in sending a student home with a recommendation to see their provider for further evaluation.

As a school district, we do not want to become a testing location where symptomatic individuals go to receive a COVID test. We will not receive any more tests until such a time that we use some of our supply.

Christmas Programs. We need to soon make a determination on what our Christmas music programs will look like. The dates for the concerts are December 10 (MS/HS) and December 22 (Elementary). There are a couple of different options that we have available to us that would avoid some of the risks associated with in-person programs.

1. Virtual or pre-recorded concerts similar to how we're proceeding with the Veteran's Day program.
2. Split-date concerts with limited in-person attendance. We could hold a middle school concert on one night (Tuesday, December 8) and the high school concert on a second night (Thursday, December 10).

Winter Sports and Activities. The SDHSAA has adopted the rules modifications

1. All-State Band auditions will be completed virtually.
2. State Debate competition will be held virtually.
3. Basketball
 - a. If a competitor tests positive, schools shall notify opponents/competitors of the positive individual during the previous 48 hours.
 - b. Pregame officials/captains meetings suspended.
 - c. Starters will be announced and go to their free throw line area. No opponent or opposing coach handshakes.
 - d. Post-game handshakes suspended.
4. Wrestling

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- a. Any athlete, coach, or individual that engages in match, practice, sparring, or other hand-to-hand activity in the sport of wrestling shall be considered for exposure.
 - b. If any athlete in a practice pod tests positive, all members of that pod are considered close contacts. If pods are mixed or aren't used, everyone on the team is considered a close contact.
 - c. No more than two days of competition in a calendar week.
 - d. No more than four matches per day per wrestler.
5. Sideline Cheer
- a. Sideline cheer participants shall maintain a space that is at least 6-10 feet away from the baseline and 6-10 feet away from the crowd.
 - b. Stunting and other playing court-based activities shall be limited and only performed when there are no people on the court to avoid contact with players and officials.
 - c. Cheerleaders shall remain on the sideline and off the playing floor as starting lineups are introduced.

Community Use of School Facilities. Currently, we're moving forward with approving requests to utilize the district facilities for non-school based athletics practices (e.g. youth sports). If such use leads to an increase in infections within our student population or leads to increased absenteeism for close-contacts reasons, we may have to re-evaluate.

Seamless Summer Option Food Service Program. The free school lunch program to students has been extended through the end of the school year. All enrolled students are eligible and receiving free school lunches. We are waiting guidance on the impact of the free meals programs on other federal programs that use free and reduced lunch qualifying rates for eligibility purposes (e.g. Title I).

Mass COVID-19 Testing Event. The SDDOH, the SD Army national Guard, the Office of Emergency Management, and the US Department of Health and Human Services are providing drive-through COVID-19 testing in ten South Dakota communities over the next two weeks, including Aberdeen (November 12, 13, and 14). There is no cost for this service, but pre-registration is required by going to the website www.DoInNeedACOVID19test.com.

2021 Legislative Session. The annual budget address by Governor Noem is scheduled for December 8, 2020. The 2021 Legislative Calendar opens at noon on Tuesday, January 12. The final day of session is Thursday, March 11 with veto day scheduled for Monday, March 29.

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Board Report

Elementary Principal

11/9/20

1. Enrollment

- a. PS – 11
- b. JK – 20
- c. KG – 37
- d. 1st – 48
- e. 2nd – 47
- f. 3rd – 45
- g. 4th – 42
- h. 5th – 51

2. Title I Directors Meeting: I attended our annual Title 1 Directors Meeting on November 5th. We are currently a tier 2 District. This means we only need to electronically submit specific documents and attend a directors meeting. We have one document that needs to be looked at. I'll be meeting with Mr. Schwan on Wednesday to look at our District Family Engagement Policy. There are some updated that will need to be made based on the new ESEA/ESSA guidelines.

3. OST Fundraiser: OST and Groton Area Elementary students are currently selling Driven Coffee for their annual fundraiser. Orders are due by November 16.

4. Playground update: We currently have 1 tire swing down. I am very hesitant to replace the pin in the tire swing because of the wear and tear on the bracket/eye holes. During the summer of 2019, we replace the blue beam due to the bracket being so worn down (\$1771.19), and I believe we need to do the same thing on this one. If not, I think we will continue to have the pins break which can be extremely dangerous.

Our handicap swing is also out of commission. We will have to look at replacing this next summer as well.

5. Elementary COVID Update.

6. Elementary Christmas Concert. I have been in touch with a number of schools around the area to get an idea of what they have planned for the concerts. Not one school that I have heard back from is planning to have a normal/traditional concert. Most of the school will be either living streaming them or posting them to their YouTube pages.

7. KG Pre-Student teacher (formally junior field). Jessica Adler is currently working with Mrs. Gibbs from November 2 through November 23. She is required to log at least 60 hours of experience. Jessica is also subbing for us when she is available.

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Principal's Report

MS/HS Building

Mrs. Sombke

November 9, 2020

1) Enrollment Update:

2019 MS	2020 MS
6-47	6-44
7-42	7-48
8-44	8-51
Total=133	Total=143

2019 HS	2020 HS
9-45	9-44
10-44	10-47
11-51	11-46
12-43	12-51
Total=183	Total=188
MS+HS = <u>316</u>	MS+HS = <u>331</u>

2) Dual Credit Enrollment

- Juniors and Seniors may sign up to enroll in a Dual Credit Course through one of the Board of Regents Schools, or from one of the Technical Schools in South Dakota
- Juniors may enroll in up to two classes or two courses per semester, and Seniors may enroll in up to four classes or four courses per semester with approval of a completed petition submitted to the SDBOR
- Students may contact Mrs. Jodi Schwan to sign up to register on November 9th and 10th, or to contact Mrs. Schwan to make other arrangements if unable to attend on the 9th and 10th

3) Schedule Change Day for Spring Semester

- December 17th and 21st
- Students in grades 6-12 may email Mrs. Schwan to sign up for a time to meet and make changes
- Students may also email for an alternative date if unable to attend on the 17th and 21st

4) Quarter 2 Midterm

- November 12th is the midterm for the 2nd quarter of the 2020-2021 School Year

5) Quarter 3 Remote Learning Deadline

- December 10th is the deadline for parents to enroll their child in Remote Learning for the 3rd quarter of the 2020-2021 School Year

6) Dates to Know

- November 9-10- Dual Credit Registration
- November 11- Veterans Day/Veteran's Day Program provided to students Via Zoom Platform in Classrooms throughout the day
- November 12- 2nd Quarter Midterm
- November 13- Staff Instructional Day (students no school)
- November 20- Staff Instructional Day (students no school)
- November 26-27- Thanksgiving- NO SCHOOL
- December 2- ACT Practice Test hours 1-4
- December 17 and 21- Schedule Changes for Spring Semester
- December 22- Early dismissal and end of 1st Semester of 2020-2021 School Year
- December 23-31- Christmas Break- NO SCHOOL
- January 1- Christmas Break- NO SCHOOL
- January 4- School Resumes for the 2nd Semester of the 2020-2021 School Year

#260 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

I'm out of superlatives, so I'll just open by telling you we are in a streak of unrelenting awfulness, each day its own unique brand of terrible. We set another record today for new case reports with 134,700. This is a 1.3% increase from yesterday and puts us at 10,186,000, nearly one-fifth of the way to our next million just one day after hitting 10 million. New daily confirmed cases have increased by more than 60% over the past two weeks in the US.

The number of new cases is increasing in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and other US territories. Only American Samoa is not increasing. Oklahoma and Tennessee have both experienced a more than 100% growth in weekly new-case average in the past week. Utah's rolling seven-day average has set a record for five consecutive days and is almost 40% greater than it was a week ago. The governor has declared a state of emergency. The Iowa Department of Corrections announced outbreaks at two prisons involving some 630 inmates (out of just over 1300 total inmates in the two facilities) and 20 staff members; last week an outbreak at a third prison was announced with over half the 982 inmates infected along with 50 staff members. The state's prison system has also had smaller outbreaks earlier. In total, they're looking at something over 1100 prisoners and 103 staff members. Kansas has a record seven-day new-case average which has pushed them over the 100,000-case mark for the pandemic. West Virginia also set a record for weekly average, and they did it for the fourth time in five weeks. Maryland is reporting its largest new case numbers since mid-June; their governor says they are reaching "a critical point."

Several states, especially those with small populations and more rural areas, are reporting dwindling hospital capacity. For a second weekend in a row, one of Idaho's largest hospitals, St. Luke's Magic Valley Medical Center in Twin Falls, was forced to turn away new patients because they could not care for them. They've already cancelled elective procedures and shipped their pediatric patients to Boise, two hours away; but so many front-line workers are sick or in quarantine that they cannot care for increased patient loads. Covid-19-related hospitalizations have risen more than 20% statewide in the past week, and St. Luke's has a quarter of its occupied beds taken up by Covid-19 patients. It's becoming difficult to find places to send patients because the surge in cases is so widespread that there aren't many places with available capacity. The chief medical officer at St. Luke's system said, "Utah has made it clear they're not able to accept patients. Eastern Washington is rapidly filling up the hospitals in western Washington." New Mexico's largest medical systems are reporting they are at or above normal capacity and that the current pace of caring for Covid-19 patients plus those in for other illnesses and trauma will be unsustainable over the long term.

There were 721 deaths reported today, a 0.3% increase from yesterday. We're now at 238,744 deaths. Deaths are increased by 18% over the past two weeks and are now averaging more than 1000 per day.

Let's get the major headline-maker out of the way first because it's pretty big news: Pfizer has announced that interim analysis of the phase 3 clinical trial for its vaccine candidate produced in partnership with BioNTech shows greater than 90% effectiveness. I want to be clear that this level of protection ranks it right up there with our best vaccines for other diseases; this will be quite remarkable if these data hold up to scrutiny. The company also says no serious safety concerns were noted.

For those keeping score, this is an mRNA vaccine given in two doses three weeks apart to more than 40,000 people in this trial. These results could bode well for the Moderna vaccine, also in phase 3 trials in the US, because it is of the same type. That is important for these particular vaccines because they use a technology which has never been used successfully in a human vaccine before; these data could be viewed as a sort of proof of concept. (For a refresher on vaccine types, you can find a basic explanation at my Update #37 posted March 31 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3474297942586587> or a more detailed one at Update #124 posted June 26 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3717649208251458>.)

Remember this is a double-blind trial, which means the doctors, the participants, and the company do not know which participants received the vaccine and which received placebo injections. The only people

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with access to that information are members of the Data and Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) overseeing the trial which has four built-in checkpoints when a specified number of cases have occurred in the trial participants. When one of these points is reached, the DSMB takes a preliminary look at the data. (For more information on the role of the DSMB in vaccine trials, see my Update #197 posted September 7 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3948580151825028>.)

The analysis announced today is from the second such checkpoint, and the news is very good, indeed. Shane Crotty, professor at the Center for Infectious Disease and Vaccine Research, La Jolla Institute for Immunology, said, "This result is towards the high end of expectations. Greater than 90% efficacy at preventing disease, with 94 COVID-19 cases to evaluate, is an excellent outcome! It would be good to see more of the data, but those are very convincing numbers." Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said the results are "just extraordinary," adding "Not very many people expected it would be as high as that."

This does not, however, mean the company is ready to make application for an emergency use authorization (EUA) for its candidate; the FDA has been clear that a minimum of two months of safety data from at least half of the volunteers are required, and those data won't be available for a couple of weeks yet. We also don't know how serious the cases seen were; there is also a requirement for a minimum number of serious cases before the EUA application should be made. Natalie Dean, biostatistician at the University of Florida, says she is optimistic, but waiting for more data: "There remain many open questions, such as how well the vaccine is working across different age groups, how well it is preventing infection and severe disease. But for the pre-specified primary endpoint of laboratory-confirmed symptomatic disease across the trial population, the numbers look very good." The company expects to be able to manufacture enough doses to immunize 25 million people globally by the end of the year.

Now that we've gotten the exciting stuff out of the way, we do need to come back to earth a bit here. For starters, there were no specific data released today, just a news release. Until this information is subjected to peer review and published so the scientific community can pore over it and check it for design, execution, or interpretation flaws, we cannot say for sure that the findings are what was announced today. This isn't a matter of thinking Pfizer is dishonest, just a part of the way science does its business. So we do not yet have conclusive evidence the vaccine candidate is safe and effective, and by the time the trial reaches its endpoint and data are released, we may well see that 90% number change.

And even if the final number does end up north of 90%, because we do not yet have the data, we also don't know whether the protection is across age groups, particularly in elderly, and that is an important parameter, given the vulnerability of the older age groups to severe disease and death. And of course, it will be a long while before we know how long the protection lasts. Something else we do not know is whether the vaccine prevents asymptomatic infections. Because volunteers in the trial received a test only if they developed symptoms, there is no way to know whether the vaccine is preventing infection entirely. This is an important point because asymptomatic infected people are a source of transmission to others; ideally, the vaccine would prevent these asymptomatic infections too, although if it can prevent severe disease, we can still regard it as a win.

We also do not yet have numbers on mild versus severe disease in participants. Public Citizen, the consumer advocacy group, has noted this, calling the release of preliminary data "bad science" and recommending enthusiasm over this announcement "must be tempered" until the FDA's had a chance to look at those. It is important to establish that the vaccine prevents severe disease or reduces hospitalizations and deaths. As noted above, the FDA is wanting a certain number of severe cases to show up in the participants; this is to forestall a vaccine being approved that is good at preventing mild cases, but doesn't do a thing to prevent the severe ones. A trial protocol that lumps all symptomatic cases together might well give this sort of outcome, so it is important to insist that some proportion of the cases we're seeing in participants are of the severe variety, which is why the FDA has done so. When the application is submitted, the FDA will receive all kinds of detailed data and will take a few weeks to review; one of the things under review will be the plan to manufacture it at scale. There is a need for tens of millions of doses

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just for the US, much less the rest of the world. It would be neither ethical nor effective in stopping the pandemic to hoard all the vaccine for ourselves and let everyone else go without. The effort to control this virus needs to be across borders in order to work anywhere—unless we're willing to keep the world shut down to international travel indefinitely.

Other concerns are the nature of the vaccine: It requires ultra-cold storage at temperatures below -112oF; freezers that work in this range aren't very common outside of research labs. This makes the logistics of a distribution and vaccination program quite difficult. We can hope people are working on that problem now.

None of this is intended to poke holes in your balloon, but I want us to be clear that, while this is great news, it doesn't mean the pandemic will be over next month. If everything else checks out, we still have the problem of getting the vaccine into enough arms to put a dent in what is now pretty much uncontrolled spread which is expected to worsen for at least a few months. The company projects it can produce enough vaccine for some 20-25 million people by the end of this year. That's a great start, but doesn't approach enough; so I expect we'll be looking at spring or later before appreciable numbers of Americans can be vaccinated. Still, when we were expecting 50% and would have been pretty darned happy about 60 or even 70% efficacy, something in the 90s, if that holds, is excellent indeed.

In other good news—been a long time since I had two pieces of good news in the same Update—Eli Lilly and Company has received EUA for its monoclonal antibody treatment, bamlanivimab. You will recall that monoclonal antibodies are those highly purified lab-made versions of the antibodies your immune system produces in response to an infection. Because it doesn't appear to be particularly effective in severe disease, this one has not been authorized for use in hospitalized patients. We believe it keeps the infection in check if administered early enough in the course of the infection; in preliminary studies it was found to reduce emergency room visits and hospitalizations. As a consequence, it is approved on an emergency basis for use in people who are 12 and older who have tested positive and are at risk for severe disease or hospitalization. This would include people over 65 and obese. This therapeutic should be administered as soon as possible after the positive test and within 10 days of developing symptoms. That could be a problem in places where there are significant delays in testing or receiving results; for some, this could push them past the window for administration. The need for it to be administered in a clinic or hospital is a complication, but the greater one is that the number of doses available is going to be fairly limited compared to the demand. The company projects having enough to treat one million people by the end of the year; but considering we're currently adding cases at one million every 10 days, that's not a lot. It's another tool, a welcome one; but it's not a magic solution either.

About that theory of protecting the vulnerable so the rest of the country can get back to work, it's not working so well—at least not the protecting-the-vulnerable portion of the program. A new analysis of federal data for 20 states during the period from the end of May to late October indicates that new weekly cases among nursing home residents nearly quadrupled and deaths more than doubled. Weekly cases among nursing home staff more than quadrupled. This is a problem because, for all the cases identified, there will be other asymptomatic cases undetected; and these are the most likely way the residents are becoming exposed. Additionally, as staff are identified as cases, they are unable to work, leaving enormous pressure on remaining staff. This likely also creates pressure on staff with minor symptoms to continue coming to work, a situation fraught with peril for those residents under care.

States included in the study are those where there have been recent surges: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia. They were chosen on the basis of their high hospitalization rates.

Turns out you simply cannot wall off the vulnerable. Tamara Kinetzka, health researcher at the University of Chicago, says, "Trying to protect nursing home residents without controlling community spread is a losing battle. Someone has to care for vulnerable nursing home residents, and those caregivers move in and out of the nursing home daily, providing an easy pathway for the virus to enter." The COVID Tracking Project reports nursing homes and other long-term care facilities account for about 1% of the population, but for 40% of Covid-19 deaths. So if we're going to decide getting back to normal life is of paramount

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importance, we must acknowledge we've agreed to sacrifice these vulnerable citizens on the altar of business and stop kidding ourselves that we're protecting them. We are not.

In the category of Even-if-you-don't-get-super-sick-this-is-no-picnic, we have an odd phenomenon turning up in people who are recovering from Covid-19. We are aware of the loss of the senses of taste and smell that is so characteristic that it is almost diagnostic, even without a test; not everyone experiences this, but if you do, it's a pretty sure bet you have Covid-19. But in some people recovering, as those senses return, there are distortions. We think what's happening here is that, as sense receptors are restored and come back online in the nervous system, there is a certain likelihood that their connections in the brain will be misrouted for a time. The results are something called parosmia, odor distortion, and phantosmia, smelling scents which aren't actually there; and these can be highly unpleasant. Previously good-smelling things like brewing coffee, cooking food, and cologne can smell like gasoline, fecal matter, or rotting meat. This can make it difficult to get adequate nutrition because eating can actually bring on nausea as these strong unpleasant odors are perceived. This frequently requires radical alteration of one's diet in order to find foods which are tolerated. Some people report smelling a particular odor—cigarette smoke or decomposing food, for example—wherever they go. It is believed this will be temporary for most folks; but estimates from one study are as many as 7% of patients will experience these effects, which when you're talking about 10 million cases and counting, is a whole lot of people. Research on the matter is in "extremely early stages" according to Danielle Reed, associate director of the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia.

Ghina Ghaliya is a journalist in Indonesia. One day last spring a garbage collector came to her house and asked if she had an old cell phone she wasn't using; he wanted it so his children could access the Internet for school. "He said it does not matter if it is the ugly one, as long as his children can use it for learning from home."

And that sparked an idea for a broader campaign. "I thought there must be many people who need second hand mobile phones out there." She was already working with 11 other journalists to provide food and money to those who needed them, so the logical next step was to use the same network to provide internet access to children. Most students in Indonesia were still not doing face-to-face learning this school year, so the need is great. They promoted their campaign through social media and collected more than 200 phones; with cash donations, they were able to purchase more phones and Internet access as well, so that they have now distributed almost 300 phones.

This is making a difference. One student could only attend online classes in the morning because he was sharing a phone with his father who is a motorcycle taxi driver. The problem is that the father was missing the peak times like morning rush hour so that his son could attend classes. And then in the afternoon, the son couldn't do his school work until his father returned from work. The family's income suffered, and so did the son's education. The donated phone changed both for the better. Another family in a similar situation had a child submitting work late because he had to wait for his dad to get home from work. A top student, he began to fall behind. When his donated phone arrived, he smiled widely and said, "I will use the phone to do online school every day." Small gift—something many people throw away, big difference.

Sometimes it takes so little to make a large impact. I'm thinking about that today.

Stay healthy. We'll talk again.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Nov. 4	Nov. 5	Nov. 6	Nov. 7	Nov. 8	Nov. 9	Nov. 10
Minnesota	156,313	160,070	164,865	170,307	174,954	180,862	184,788
Nebraska	74,060	75,888	78,012	80,693	82,395	83,969	85,551
Montana	35,159	35,955	36,968	37,947	38,948	39,679	40,053
Colorado	114,709	117,637	121,006	124,469	127,967	130,984	134,537
Wyoming	12,399	12,675	12,954	13,871	14,045	14,691	15,311
North Dakota	47,187	48,301	49,837	51,602	53,204	54,305	55,458
South Dakota	48,854	49,791	51,151	52,639	53,978	55,404	56,311
United States	9,385,324	9,488,591	9,610,965	9,744,491	9,861,898	9,972,333	10,110,552
US Deaths	232,635	233,734	234,944	236,155	237,123	237,584	238,251
Minnesota	3,379	3,757	+4,795	+5,442	+4,647	+5,908	+3,926
Nebraska	1,440	1,828	+2,124	+2,681	+1,702	+1,574	1,582
Montana	+907	+796	+1,013	+979	+1,001	+731	+374
Colorado	+2,562	+2,928	+3,369	+3,463	+3,498	+3,017	+3,553
Wyoming	+340	+276	+279	+917	+174	+646	+620
North Dakota	+1,172	1,114	+1,536	+1,765	+1,602	+1,101	+1,153
South Dakota	+1,004	+937	+1,360	+1,488	+1,339	+1,426	+907
United States	+92,043	+103,267	+122,374	+133,526	+117,407	+110,435	+138,219
US Deaths	+1,069	+1,099	+1,210	+1,211	+968	+461	+667
	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 9th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

North Dakota recorded 2 deaths while South Dakota recorded 1. One male resident of Codington was in his 70s that died.

There were 20 fewer patients using ventilations throughout South Dakota - all of them in the Sioux Empire Region.

Glacial Lakes hospital beds being occupied by COVID-19 patients as well as Minnehaha and Pennington counties: Walworth: 3 (-0) Occupied Beds.; Potter: 2 (0) Occupied Beds; Hughes: 15 (+3) Occupied Beds, 6 (+1) ICU Beds, 2 (-0) Ventilation; Hand: 2 Occupied Beds (-1); Faulk: 2 (0) Occupied Beds; Edmunds: 6 (+0) Occupied Bed; Brown: 30 (+0) Occupied Beds, 4 (+3) ICU, 1 (+1) Ventilation; Spink: 1 (-2) Occupied Beds; Day: 2 (-1) Occupied Beds; Marshall: 1 (+0) Occupied Beds; Grant: 1 (0) Occupied Beds; Codington: 19 (-2) Occupied Beds, 3 (+1) ICU, 0 (-1) Ventilation; None (some counties have no hospitals): Clark, Hyde, Stanley, Sully, Campbell, McPherson, Roberts; Minnehaha: 260 (+8) Occupied Beds, 60 (+4) ICU, 37 (-20) Ventilation; Pennington: 83 (+6) Occupied Beds, 12 (-1) ICU, 7 (-0) Ventilation

Brown County:
Total Positive: +30 (2,586) Positivity Rate: 20.7%
Total Tests: +145 (20,616)
Recovered: +5 (1,982)
Active Cases: +24 (595)
Ever Hospitalized: +2 (137)
Deaths: +0 (8)
Percent Recovered: 76.7%
Hospital Reports:
Avera St. Luke's: Covid-19 Occupied 22 (+2); ICU 3 (+1), Ventilation 0 (0).
Sanford Aberdeen: Covid-19 Occupied 8 (-2); ICU 2 (+2), Ventilation 1 (+1)
Sanford Webster: Covid-19 Occupied 2 (-1).
Marshall County Healthcare: Covid-19 Occupied: 1 (+0).

South Dakota:
Positive: +907 (56,311 total) Positivity Rate: 20.7%
Total Tests: 4387 (479,697 total)
Hospitalized: +43 (3,227 total). 566 currently hospitalized +20
Deaths: +13 (536 total)
Recovered: +390 (39,508 total)
Active Cases: +516 (16,266)
Percent Recovered: 70.1%
Total COVID-19 Occupied Beds: 566 (+20), Black Hills Region 123 (+5), Glacial Lakes Region 84 (-3) Sioux Empire Region 278 (+7), South Central Plains 81 (+11).

ICU Units: Total 106 (+10), BH 15 (-1), GL 14 (+5), SE 62 (+4), SCP 15 (+2).

Ventilation: Total 49 (-20), BH 7 (+0), GL 3 (+0), SE 37 (-20), SCP 2 (+0).

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 21% Covid, 42% Non-Covid, 37% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 35% Covid, 33% Non-Covid, 32% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 12% Covid, 16% Non-Covid, 72% Available

Beadle (19) +15 positive, +7 recovered (510 active cases)

Brown (8): +29 positive, +5 recovered (595 active cases)

Clark (1): +6 positive, +3 recovered (64 active cases)

Clay (8): +12 positive, +1 recovered (184 active cases)

Codington (18): +17 positive, +8 recovered (557 active cases)

Davison (12): +36 positive, +6 recovered (647 active cases)

Day (3): +2 positive, +1 recovered (49 active cases)

Edmunds (1): +1 positive, +2 recovered (49 active cases)

Faulk (3): +2 positive, +0 recovered (48 active cases)

Grant (4): +7 positive, +1 recovered (105 active cases)

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Hanson (1): +2 positive, +0 recovered (69 active cases)

Hughes (8): +30 positive, +2 recovered (280 active cases)

Lawrence (8): +22 positive, +16 recovered (485 active cases)

Lincoln (32): +78 positive, +24 recovered (1159 active cases)

Marshall (3): +2 positive, +0 recovered (23 active cases)

McCook (3): +18 positive, +9 recovered (144 active cases)

McPherson (1): +1 positive, +0 recovery (11 active case)

Minnehaha (125): +331 positive, +179 recovered (4072 active cases)

Potter: +1 positive, +1 recovered (65 active cases)

Roberts (9): +12 positive, +4 recovered (147 active cases)

Spink (4): +5 positive, +1 recovered (144 active cases)

Walworth (10): +6 positive, +1 recovered (75 active cases)

NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Nov. 9:

- 14.8% rolling 14-day positivity
- 1,160 new positives
- 6,934 susceptible test encounters
- 254 currently hospitalized (+14)
- 10,865 active cases (+302)
- 644 total deaths (+5)

Yesterday

Global Cases

50,493,472

9,972,333 US

8,553,657 India

5,664,115 Brazil

1,835,187 France

1,781,997 Russia

1,328,832 Spain

1,242,182 Argentina

1,195,350 United Kingdom

1,143,887 Colombia

967,825 Mexico

935,104 Italy

922,333 Peru

Today

Global Cases

50,913,451

10,110,552 US

8,591,730 India

5,675,032 Brazil

1,856,292 France

1,781,997 Russia

1,381,218 Spain

1,250,499 Argentina

1,216,747 United Kingdom

1,149,064 Colombia

967,825 Mexico

960,373 Italy

922,333 Peru

Global Deaths

1,257,747

237,584 deaths
US

162,397 deaths
Brazil

126,611 deaths
India

95,027 deaths
Mexico

49,134 deaths
United Kingdom

41,394 deaths
Italy

40,490 deaths
France

Global Deaths

1,263,089

238,251 deaths
US

162,628 deaths
Brazil

127,059 deaths
India

95,027 deaths
Mexico

49,329 deaths
United Kingdom

41,750 deaths
Italy

41,049 deaths
France

39,345 deaths
Spain

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity
Aurora	246	169	737	2	Substantial	34.78%
Beadle	1682	1153	4191	19	Substantial	37.74%
Bennett	255	155	981	5	Substantial	24.32%
Bon Homme	1161	875	1665	4	Substantial	45.28%
Brookings	1801	1327	7001	9	Substantial	21.62%
Brown	2585	1982	9033	8	Substantial	27.17%
Brule	392	267	1455	3	Substantial	32.74%
Buffalo	310	268	803	5	Substantial	44.32%
Butte	504	296	2228	5	Substantial	27.31%
Campbell	87	70	170	1	Moderate	31.25%
Charles Mix	535	363	3115	1	Substantial	22.85%
Clark	169	104	716	1	Substantial	13.83%
Clay	972	780	3556	8	Substantial	28.67%
Codington	2002	1427	6752	18	Substantial	34.77%
Corson	275	198	805	2	Substantial	51.39%
Custer	389	296	1838	4	Substantial	22.75%
Davison	1503	844	4748	12	Substantial	34.85%
Day	205	153	1254	3	Substantial	30.38%
Deuel	226	173	818	2	Substantial	32.88%
Dewey	554	271	3413	2	Substantial	31.33%
Douglas	222	152	722	5	Substantial	22.78%
Edmunds	182	132	767	1	Substantial	10.50%
Fall River	260	195	1890	6	Substantial	10.34%
Faulk	244	193	525	3	Substantial	20.00%
Grant	398	289	1566	4	Substantial	27.09%
Gregory	312	202	891	10	Substantial	33.13%
Haakon	110	80	428	2	Substantial	3.06%
Hamlin	276	188	1282	0	Substantial	10.37%
Hand	202	109	601	1	Substantial	33.88%
Hanson	151	81	486	1	Substantial	36.56%
Harding	61	40	113	0	Moderate	60.00%
Hughes	1100	812	3978	8	Substantial	21.84%
Hutchinson	327	200	1682	2	Substantial	20.62%

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Hyde	74	41	303	0	Substantial	45.95%
Jackson	159	98	777	4	Substantial	33.96%
Jerauld	190	147	403	13	Substantial	16.67%
Jones	42	33	137	0	Moderate	28.57%
Kingsbury	283	158	1115	4	Substantial	20.11%
Lake	562	370	2002	9	Substantial	40.26%
Lawrence	1371	878	5908	8	Substantial	29.19%
Lincoln	3782	2591	14029	32	Substantial	32.07%
Lyman	334	272	1450	7	Substantial	22.94%
Marshall	84	58	804	3	Substantial	30.77%
McCook	395	235	1150	3	Substantial	32.50%
McPherson	74	62	420	1	Moderate	1.53%
Meade	1226	913	5430	10	Substantial	19.72%
Mellette	111	81	578	1	Substantial	22.22%
Miner	163	110	432	2	Substantial	18.75%
Minnehaha	14765	10693	55583	125	Substantial	30.27%
Moody	303	194	1427	4	Substantial	7.20%
Oglala Lakota	1256	709	5700	11	Substantial	34.52%
Pennington	5856	4148	26830	51	Substantial	23.76%
Perkins	98	67	489	0	Substantial	37.78%
Potter	179	114	620	0	Substantial	19.14%
Roberts	484	328	3346	9	Substantial	29.58%
Sanborn	160	74	479	1	Substantial	42.86%
Spink	403	255	1681	4	Substantial	11.55%
Stanley	133	86	561	0	Substantial	26.37%
Sully	60	41	175	0	Moderate	39.13%
Todd	595	466	3492	10	Substantial	29.33%
Tripp	341	263	1169	2	Substantial	42.48%
Turner	627	404	1931	30	Substantial	31.50%
Union	921	697	4294	16	Substantial	29.39%
Walworth	325	240	1364	10	Substantial	26.14%
Yankton	1126	758	6524	8	Substantial	16.49%
Ziebach	131	80	579	2	Substantial	30.38%
Unassigned	0	0	1100	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	1761	0
10-19 years	5912	0
20-29 years	11209	2
30-39 years	9580	8
40-49 years	8046	15
50-59 years	7983	39
60-69 years	6176	77
70-79 years	3224	104
80+ years	2420	292

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	29134	263
Male	27177	274

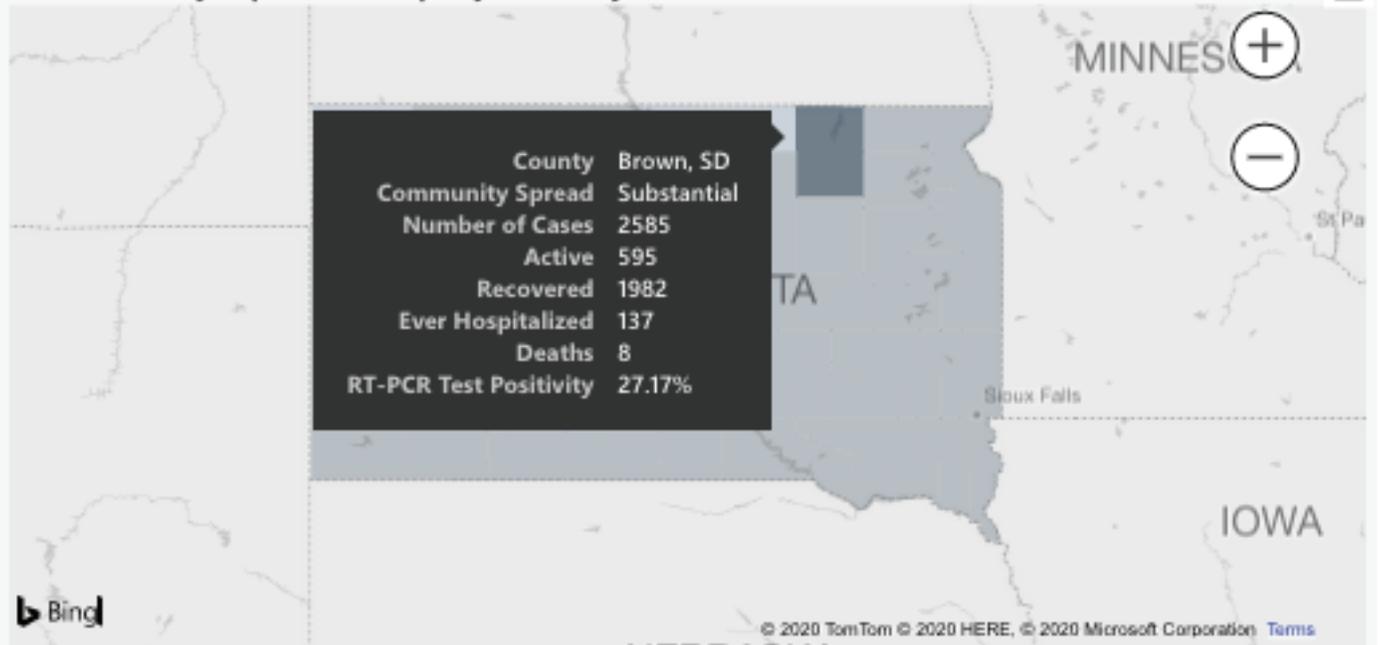
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Brown County



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.



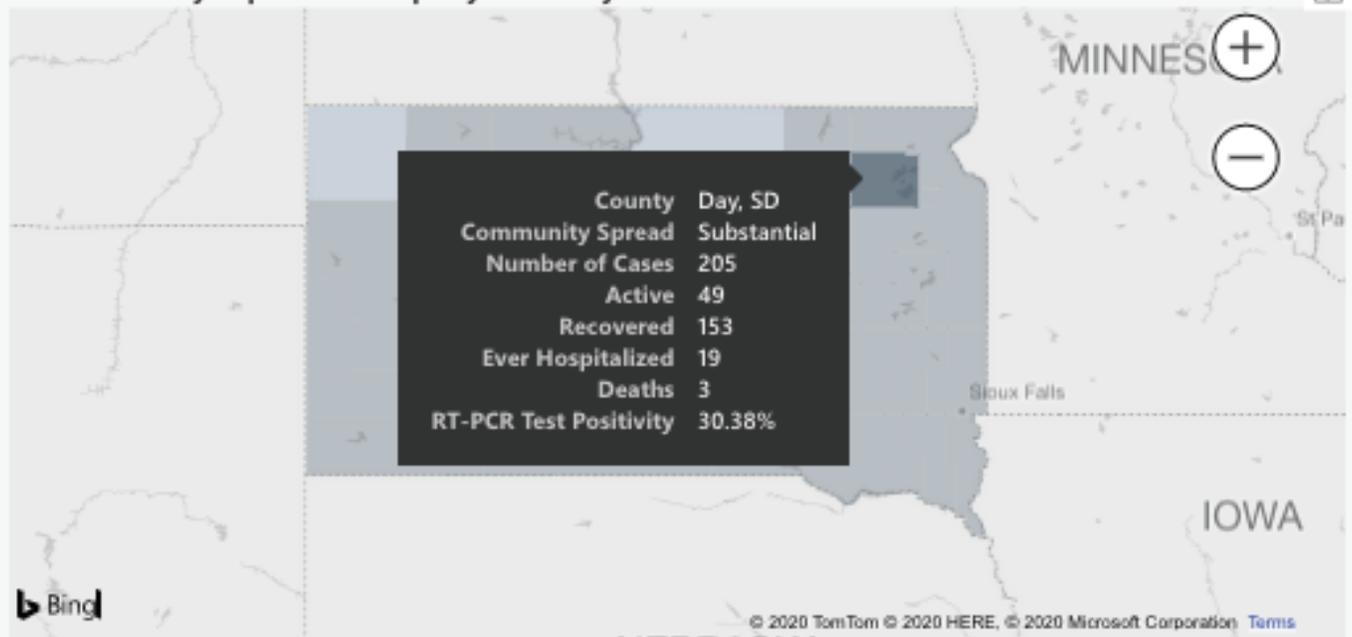
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Day County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



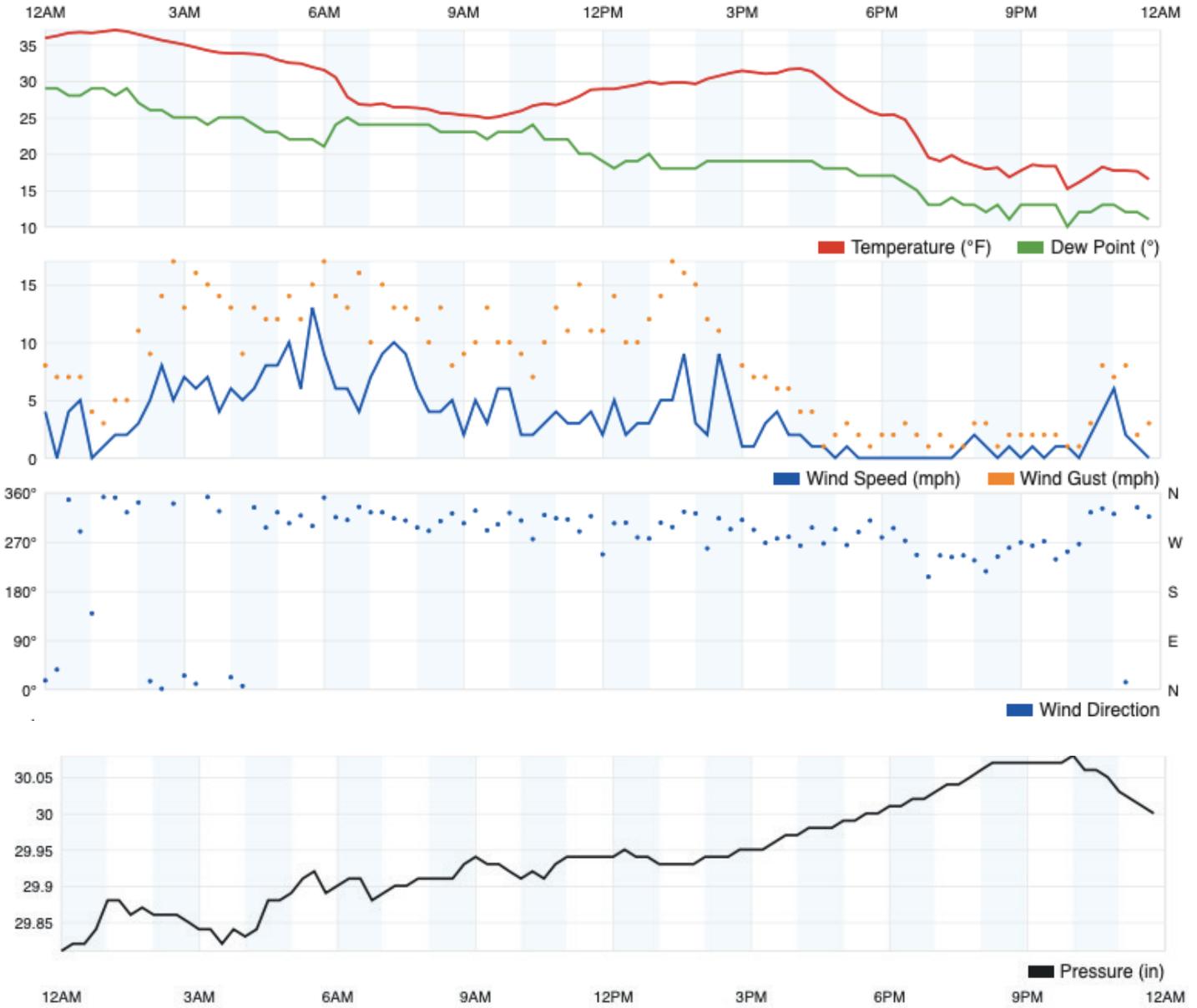
Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Partly Sunny

High: 34 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 17 °F

Veterans Day



Sunny

High: 46 °F

Wednesday Night



Partly Cloudy

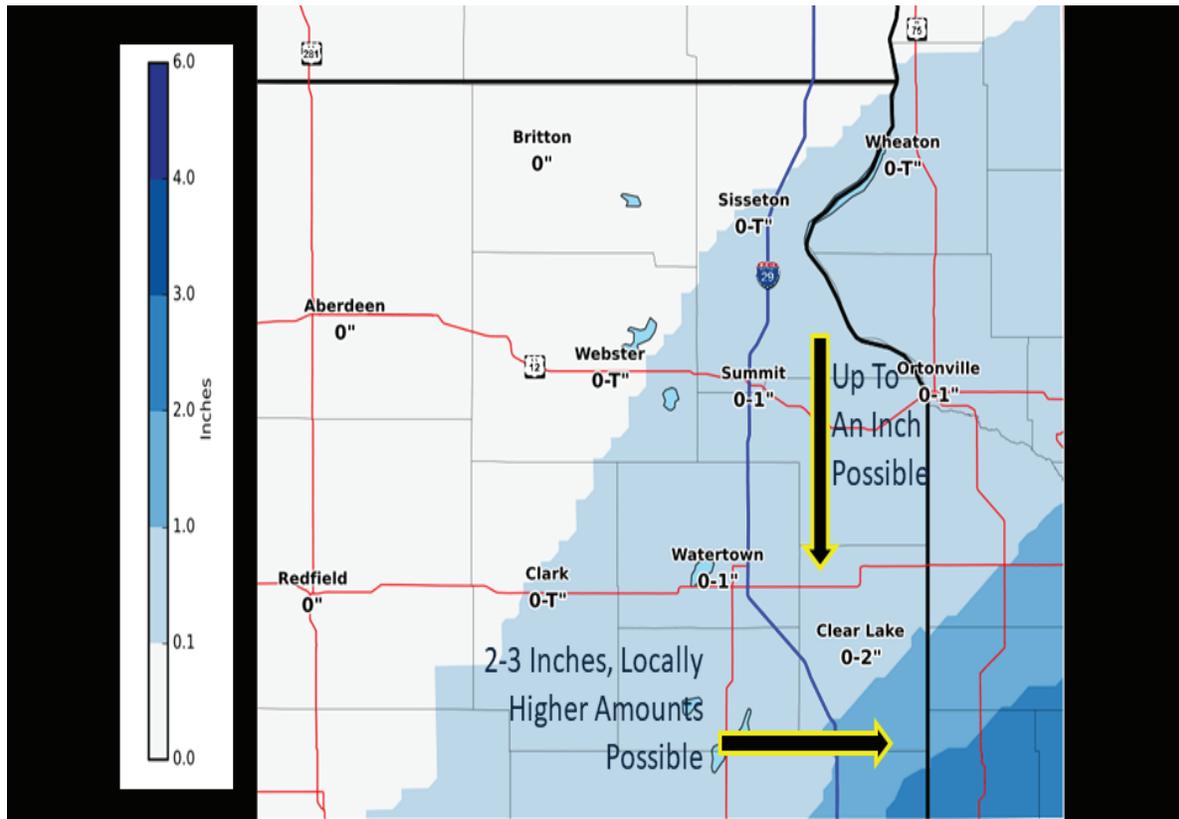
Low: 19 °F

Thursday



Mostly Sunny

High: 32 °F



A winter storm lifting northeast across the nation's mid-section will glance east central and northeast South Dakota with a light accumulation of snow. Over this forecast area, Deuel County could see a range of 1 to 4 inches of snow by this evening. If you're traveling into Minnesota, the threat of heavy snow and ice accumulation increases considerably!

The northwest edge of snowfall accompanying a progressive winter-like low pressure system will brush past the region today. Expect a sharp cut-off between areas that see little to no snow and areas that could receive 2 or more inches of snow. Meanwhile, far southeastern South Dakota and much of central and southern Minnesota could see up to 6 inches of snow along with a potential layer of ice accumulation. Travelers beware!

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Today in Weather History

November 10, 1998: Heavy snow fell across most of central, north central, and northeast South Dakota from the early morning hours of the 9th into the late afternoon hours of the 10th. Heavy snow also fell across west central Minnesota from late in the evening on the 9th to the early morning hours of the 10th. Snowfall amounts ranged from 6 to 14 inches. Early in the storm, much of the precipitation fell as rain, freezing rain, and heavy wet snow. During the early morning hours of the 10th, northwest winds increased to 20 to 50 mph and gusted at times to 60 mph. These high winds brought widespread blizzard conditions into the late evening hours of the 10th. On both the 10th and 11th, most area schools were closed, along with many highways, including Highways 12 and 83. Interstates 29 and 90 were also closed due to slick roads and near-zero visibilities. Hundreds of vehicles were stranded in this storm, with many people needing rescue, and many motorists also slid off the roads. There were also numerous accidents, with a few resulting in injuries. Due to the ice buildup from the rain, freezing rain, and wet snow early in the storm, along with the high winds, many tree limbs, some trees, and power lines and poles were brought down, which resulted in multiple power outages across the region. The area most affected by power outages was north of a line from Mobridge to Ipswich, along Highway 212, to the North Dakota border. Some 25 cities were affected by power outages. Hosmer was without power for over 40 hours. At South Shore, a family lost power for 120 hours. A lineman tried to get to the home twice, but could not because of the low visibility. A teenager was also lost overnight near South Shore while he was hunting with friends. He was found at 8 am the next morning. In Watertown, two people were injured in an accident. Several of the downed trees across parts of the area blocked traffic for a time. Numerous businesses were closed, and activities were canceled on the 9th and 10th. In Pierre, the strong winds ripped the canopy off the Amoco gas station. The blizzard brought the fifth lowest barometric pressure on record to Watertown. Some snowfall amounts from this horrible blizzard included; 15.4 inches near Bryant; 12.5 inches in Webster; 12.3 in Pierre; 10.8 in Sisseton; 10.5 inches near Summit; 10.0 inches in Pollock and near Onida; and 9.0 in Blunt and Conde.

2002: The second largest November tornado outbreak on record over the eastern United States occurred during the Veterans Day weekend of November 9-11, 2002. Seventy-six tornadoes were reported in seventeen states. Of the 76 tornadoes, almost one out of every six was a killer, resulting in 36 fatalities.

1915 - An unusually late season tornado struck the central Kansas town of Great Bend killing eleven persons along its 35 mile track. The tornado destroyed 160 homes in Great Bend killing 11 persons and causing a million dollars damage. Hundreds of dead ducks dropped from the sky northeast of the track's end. (The Weather Channel)

1975 - Another freshwater fury hit the Great Lakes. A large ore carrier on Lake Superior, the Edmund Fitzgerald, sank near Crisp Point with the loss of its crew of 29 men. Eastern Upper Michigan and coastal Lower Michigan were hardest hit by the storm, which produced wind gusts to 71 at Sault Ste Marie MI, and gusts to 78 mph at Grand Rapids MI. Severe land and road erosion occurred along the Lake Michigan shoreline. A popular hit song by Gordon Lightfoot was inspired by the storm. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A cold front brought snow to the Appalachian Region and freezing temperatures to the central U.S. Up to nine inches of snow blanketed Garrett County of extreme western Maryland. Freezing temperatures were reported as far south as El Paso TX and San Angelo TX. Gale force winds lashed the Middle Atlantic Coast and the coast of southern New England. Thunderstorms brought fire quenching rains to Alabama, and produced large hail and damaging winds to eastern North Carolina. Ahead of the cold front, seven cities in Florida and Georgia reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 80s. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Strong winds circulating around a deep low pressure system in southeastern Ontario buffeted the northeastern U.S., with the Lower Great Lakes Region hardest hit. Winds in western New York State gusted to 68 mph at Buffalo, to 69 mph at Niagra Falls, and to 78 mph at Brockport. Four persons were injured at Rome NY when a tree was blown onto their car. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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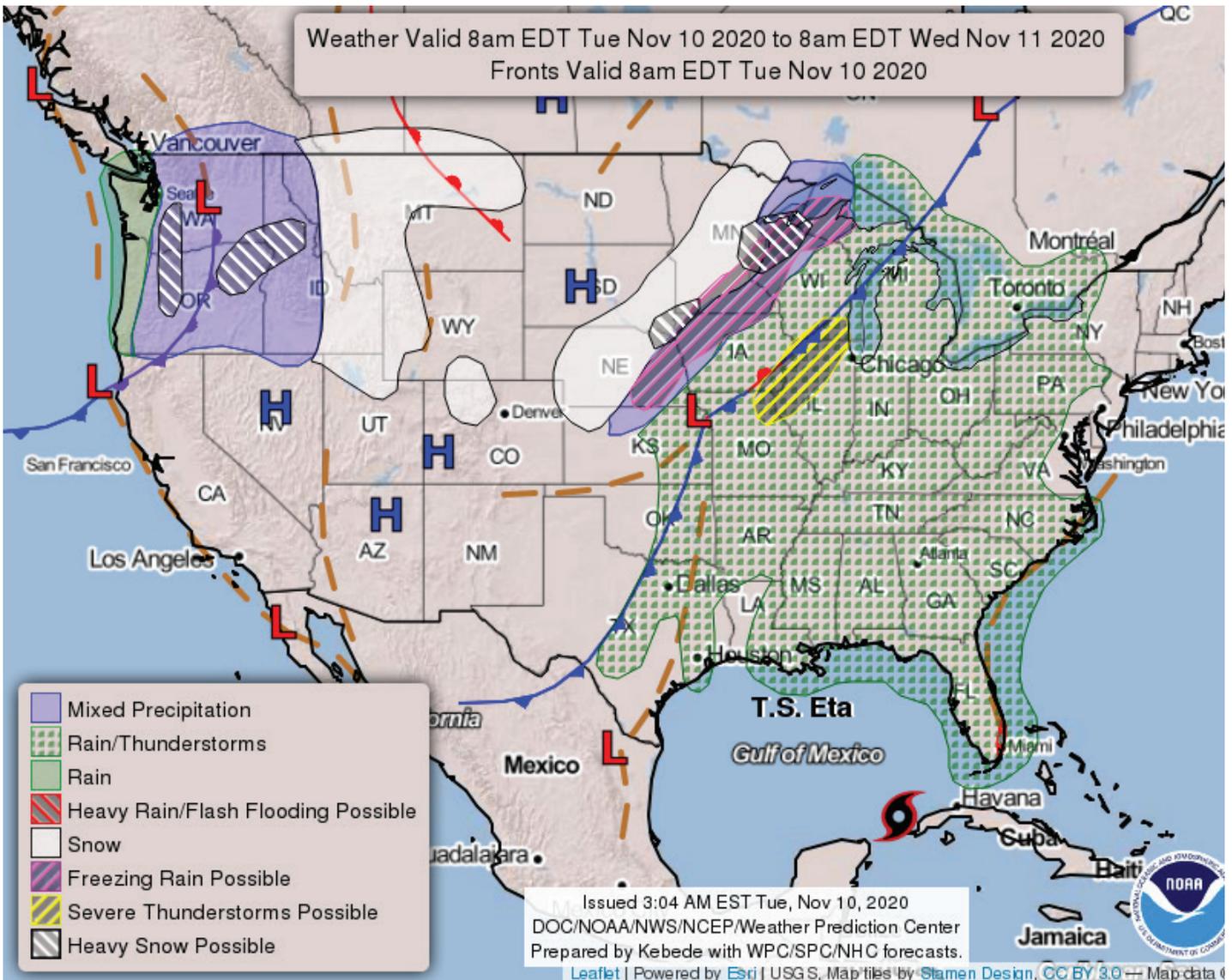
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 37 °F at 1:21 AM
Low Temp: 15 °F at 10:03 PM
Wind: 17 mph at 2:39 AM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 69° in 1954
Record Low: -7° in 1896
Average High: 43°F
Average Low: 22°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.27
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 20.74
Precip Year to Date: 16.34
Sunset Tonight: 5:08 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:28 a.m.



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GUARDED BY GOD

There was a large stag - a red-coated deer - that roamed through the hills of Rome. No one ever came near it or tried to capture or kill it. Caesar protected it, and all were forbidden to disturb it. On its sides were the words, "Touch me not! I belong to Caesar." It was a sign of ownership, and no one dared to harm or hurt that animal.

There is a far more important statement about ownership in Psalm 105. It is a statement about those who belong to God: "Do not touch My anointed ones."

Sometimes the words of God are overlooked by the children of God. This verse is a good example of an "overlooked" rule given by the Lord. Few of us will admit to having never spoken evil of a fellow Christian. But...

We often listen carefully while one "saint" criticizes or condemns another "saint." We carefully listen to every detail when a fellow church member ridicules or runs down the person who sits next to us during the worship service. We do not see "for whom Christ cares" on the forehead of someone whose marriage is falling apart - so we anxiously listen to the sordid details of an unfaithful spouse. We blame others for "bad parenting skills" when their children become addicts rather than grieve with them over their loss. We carelessly pass on rumors about the honesty of someone who has more than we do. The tongue can easily become a weapon of wickedness and ultimately destroy "the Lord's anointed ones."

We must use our tongues to help, heal, and give hope, not hurt or harm!

Prayer: Thank you Father for your love and protection. Help us to turn deaf ears to words that hurt or harm others. Rather, help us to speak words of kindness and show Your love to them! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Do not touch My anointed ones. Psalm105:15a

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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

Indigenous candidates' wins in Congress give hope for change

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — Internet access, health care and basic necessities like running water and electricity within Indigenous communities have long been at the center of congressional debates. But until recently, Congress didn't have many Indigenous members who were pushing for solutions and funding for those issues.

Hope is growing after the Native delegation in the U.S. House expanded by two on Election Day: Yvette Herrell, who is Cherokee and prevailed in New Mexico's 2nd Congressional District, and Kai Kahele, a Native Hawaiian who won that state's 2nd District.

They will join four Native Americans who won reelection: Reps. Deb Haaland of New Mexico, who's Laguna; Sharice Davids of Kansas, who's Ho-Chunk; Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma, who's Cherokee; and Tom Cole of Oklahoma, who's Chickasaw.

Of the six who prevailed, half are Democrats and half Republican — a divide Cole said would "absolutely be indispensable in passing anything the next two years." The winners were among a dozen Indigenous major-party candidates running in top-of-the-ticket races.

"I always consider tribal affairs to be non-partisan," Cole said Monday. "The tribal sovereignty and trust responsibility are not partisan issues. You either believe in those or you don't."

Representation means progress, scholars say, particularly for Indigenous children who will see their language and culture on display in Congress. It's fueled by efforts to recruit Indigenous candidates and back them financially, get-out-the-vote efforts and Native communities flexing their political muscle. About 100 Indigenous candidates were on general election ballots across the country, most seeking seats in state legislatures.

"It's seeing people that look like us in Congress that is inspiring women, more than anything, to run," said Traci Morris, executive director of the American Indian Policy Institute at Arizona State University who's Chickasaw. "That's what I see — I see we all think we can do it now. And there was huge involvement."

Still, Indigenous people remain underrepresented in Congress. The U.S. Senate has not had a Native American member since Ben Nighthorse Campbell of Colorado retired in 2005. He has Northern Cheyenne heritage. Democrat Paulette Jordan, who is Coeur d'Alene, lost to the incumbent for a U.S. Senate seat in Idaho this year.

But the House victories won't necessarily translate to immediate power in Washington. Kahele said he imagines he'll spend time learning about Indigenous issues outside of his native Hawaii and educating other Native and non-Natives in Congress.

And while it's not easy to ignore Indigenous lawmakers if they're sitting across the table, they often can be pigeonholed, said Richard Monette, who teaches federal Indian law at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"I think that, in the end, the scale tips toward being more good than bad," said Monette, a former chairman of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. "That's fair to say, but I will say this is complex."

Herrell, for example, said she's proud of her heritage but didn't tout it in her bid to unseat Democrat Xochitl Torres Small in a complicated district that includes minority communities along the U.S.-Mexico border, tribes, ranchers, farmers, and oil and gas industry workers.

"I really prefer to call myself an American," she told The Associated Press. "I'm a New Mexican, and it's not about labels, it's not about race. It's about people and representing all of our values, all of our shared likes and even dislikes and coming together."

The House formed the bipartisan Congressional Native American Caucus in 1997 that has dozens of non-Indigenous members and is now led by Cole and Haaland. Most notably, it worked to pass two bills to help address the epidemic of missing and slain Native American women. But the leadership team, which also includes Davids and Mullin, doesn't always agree.

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"We all make decisions based on two things: our life experiences and the way we were raised," Mullin said in a statement to the AP. "With more Native Americans in Congress, we can make a bigger impact and better educate our colleagues about Native issues."

Haaland and Cole said the focus in the upcoming session will be COVID-19's impact on Native communities, chronic shortfalls in federal funding for tribes, broadband internet access, further addressing missing and slain Indigenous women and land put into trust for tribes.

Kahele, who became the second Native Hawaiian elected to Congress since statehood, has said he will champion Indigenous voices and push for things like housing assistance, the protection of natural resources and for the federal government to right the wrongs committed against Indigenous Hawaiians.

Hawaii was an independent kingdom until 1893, when American businessmen backed by U.S. Marines overthrew Queen Liliuokalani. The U.S. annexed Hawaii five years later, making it a territory. It gained statehood in 1959.

While the U.S. apologized in 1993, Kahele said "that was the first step in what needs to be a process of healing and reparations."

Native Hawaiians are not among the more than 570 federally recognized Native American tribes, though they've sought the designation. They share common struggles in land loss, health care and lack of economic prosperity and have access to some of the same federal funding and preference for bidding on federal contracts as tribes.

Kahele said he's already reached out to his Native colleagues in the House.

"If we work together, we can achieve so much more," Kahele said. "And there are a lot out there who want us to fight, to compete against each other for the same federal resources."

Associated Press writer Susan Montoya Bryan in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Audrey McAvoyn in Honolulu contributed to this report.

1st South Dakota prisoner dies due to COVID-19 complications

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota has reported its first case of a prison inmate dying due to complications from COVID-19, according to Department of Corrections data posted Monday.

The daily update showed that the inmate was being housed at the Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield. The report did not say how old the person was or when that person died.

More than 50% of state prisoners have been diagnosed with the coronavirus. The department has confirmed 1,870 cases since the pandemic began, out of about 3,350 prisoners.

The death toll from the virus is 537.

State health officials reported Monday that the number of hospitalizations rose for a fourth straight day, with 566 people being treated in medical facilities around the state. There were 907 virus cases confirmed in the last day, lifting the statewide total to 56,311 known cases.

There were more than 1,836 new cases per 100,000 people in South Dakota over the past two weeks, which ranks second in the country behind North Dakota for new cases per capita. One in every 109 people in South Dakota tested positive in the past week, according to Johns Hopkins University researchers.

Noem's pitch to aid Trump seems to benefit own campaign fund

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem has enthusiastically taken up President Donald Trump's efforts to contest the results of the presidential election, asking for online donations to "help us bring it home for the president," but it appears the donations are set to flow into her own reelection account.

The Republican governor, a close Trump ally, launched a fundraising campaign soon after the election was called for Biden on Saturday. The website soliciting donations has "Kristi Noem for Governor" in large letters at the top, but below that, the message is all about Trump, saying that he "needs our support while the far-left Dems declare a victory for Biden before all the votes are counted." It urges donors to "Please

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help us bring it home for the president!"

The site allows contributors to check the amount of their donation and includes a box to cover a processing "so 100% of my donation goes to Kristi for Governor."

Noem, who was first elected in 2018 and would be up for reelection in 2022, did not respond to a request for comment on how the money raised would be used. Her campaign committee chairman, Steve Kirby, said he had no comment on how the funds would be used.

It's unlikely that much, if any, of the money will end up going to Trump, said Paul S. Ryan, the vice president of policy and litigation at Common Cause, a campaign finance watchdog. Ryan, a campaign finance lawyer, pointed out that the governor can give a maximum of \$2,800 to Trump's campaign under federal law. If she wanted more to flow to Trump, she could have directed donors to the president's own donation site.

"In all likelihood, she is keeping this money that she is raising," Ryan said. "If she were actually interested in raising money for Donald Trump's own legal efforts, she would use a joint-fundraising committee."

Federal election law makes it difficult for state campaign committees like Noem's to donate to federal campaigns because it would have to ensure the donations it receives meet federal contribution limits.

Ryan compared Noem's solicitation to Trump's current fundraising push. Trump's solicitation, though billed as raising money for his legal fight, notes that half of contributions will go to pay off general election campaign debt.

"He's setting the example at the top of the party, at the top of the ticket," Ryan said. "It doesn't surprise me to see Noem doing something similar."

Noem has emerged as a conservative star during Trump's campaign, with her travels to presidential proving grounds like New Hampshire and Iowa fueling speculation that she is eyeing a 2024 run.

The national attention has helped her fill up a campaign war chest, amassing more donations in the two weeks leading up to Election Day than she did in the first five months of the year. She has raised more than \$1 million in contributions to her gubernatorial campaign in the last six months.

The Republican governor has increasingly seized on national hot-button issues. Last week, she furthered Trump's allegations of widespread voter fraud by tweeting that election systems were "rigged," even as votes were still being tallied. No evidence of such fraud has yet emerged.

Trump has made an aggressive pitch to donors to help finance lawsuits and encouraged supporters to rally against accepting the results of the election.

Noem has made it clear she will take up Trump's fight. In a Sunday appearance on ABC News, she said, "When you break the process on which we elect our leaders, you will break America forever. So this isn't just about this election, this is about every election in the future."

Suspect in homicide, kidnapping, assault arrested

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls man is facing a number of charges after a man's body was found in a burning ditch east of Brandon during the weekend.

Authorities have identified the victim as 22-year-old Saivaughn Robert Carlstrom, who also lived in Sioux Falls. His body was found by a sheriff's deputy on patrol Saturday.

The 48-year-old suspect was arrested in Sioux Falls Sunday afternoon, according to police, and could be charged with first-degree murder, first-degree kidnapping and second-degree sexual assault.

The kidnapping and assault charges involve another victim who was rescued on Sunday, according to Minnehaha County Sheriff Michael Milstead, who did not elaborate.

Milstead said 20 to 25 investigators from Sioux Falls, Brandon and the sheriff's office worked on the case.

Patrol investigates death of pedestrian in Day County

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the death of a pedestrian who was struck by a car on a Day County road.

The patrol said the 37-year-old man was hit on County Road 1 Saturday about 2 a.m. and died at the

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scene near Waubay.

A 48-year-old man and 33-year-old woman in the car suffered minor injuries and were taken to the hospital. No identities have been released.

Florida cities mop up after deluge from Tropical Storm Eta

By FREIDA FRISARO and KELLI KENNEDY Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Tropical Storm Eta was squatting off western Cuba on Tuesday after drifting away from South Florida, where it unleashed a deluge that flooded entire neighborhoods and filled some homes with rising water.

The 28th named storm of a record hurricane season was the first this year to make landfall in Florida. And now a 29th named storm has formed over the northern Atlantic: Theta took shape Monday night, eclipsing the record set in 2005, when Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma struck the Gulf Coast.

After striking Nicaragua as a Category 4 hurricane and killing more than 100 people from Mexico to Panama, Eta delivered torrential rains to Cuba and South Florida before moving into the Gulf of Mexico. With no powerful steering winds to guide its way, the storm drifted west again in an unusual reverse S-curve pattern.

By Tuesday morning, it was lingering just north of the Yucatan Channel between Cuba and Mexico, with top winds of 50 mph (85 kmh). Forecasters said it would remain nearly stationary through the day before moving north later in the week, but they had little confidence on where it might land again.

Eta continued to swell rivers and flood coastal zones in Cuba. Some 25,000 people were evacuated with no reports of deaths, but rainfall continued, with total accumulations of up to 25 inches (63 centimeters) predicted.

The rain also kept falling Tuesday in South Florida, where as much as 23 inches were expected to accumulate. Eta barely hit land late Sunday as it blew over Lower Matecumbe Key on its way into the Gulf of Mexico, but dumped water over densely populated neighborhoods from Monroe to Palm Beach counties.

People in Florida are very familiar with the heavy tropical rain that falls like clockwork on summer afternoons. This was something else — a 100-year rain event, Fort Lauderdale Mayor Dean Trantalis called it. "Once the ground becomes saturated, there's really no place for the water to go," Trantalis said.

"I looked outside and said oh my God, it's coming up, it's coming up!" said Cynthia Rowe in Miami Gardens.

"Now I have fish in my yard and everything, it's rough," Davie resident Troy Rodriguez said, with some irony.

There were no reported deaths in Florida, unlike in Central America and Mexico, where the toll was rising.

Nearly a week after Eta crashed ashore in Nicaragua, authorities from Panama to Guatemala have reported more than 100 dead and an even higher number of missing. Extensive flooding and landslides have affected hundreds of thousands of people in countries already struggling with the economic fallout of the pandemic.

In Florida, the rain damaged one of the state's largest COVID-19 testing sites, at Miami-Dade County's Hard Rock Stadium, officials said. Throughout the pandemic, it has been one of the busiest places for people to get a coronavirus diagnosis. The site was expected to be closed until Wednesday or Thursday. At least seven other state testing sites were to remain closed on Tuesday.

"It's very bad. In the last 20 years, I've never seen anything like that," said Tito Carvalho, who owns a car stereo business in Fort Lauderdale and estimated the water was 3 feet (about a meter) deep in some places. Some items in his business were damaged from the flooding, he added.

Firefighters pulled a person from a car that had driven into a canal Sunday night in Lauderhill, north of Miami. The patient was hospitalized in critical condition, authorities said. And a tractor-trailer was left dangling off the elevated Palmetto Expressway in Miami, the Florida Highway Patrol said, after the driver lost control.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said on Twitter that Floridians should monitor the storm over the coming days. While this storm has moved offshore, it could still bring dangerous conditions to the Gulf Coast at the end

of this week," he tweeted.

Associated Press writers Adriana Gomez-Licon in Miami, Cody Jackson in Fort Lauderdale, Tamara Lush in St. Petersburg, and Haleluya Hadero in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Erekat, longtime spokesman for the Palestinians, dies at 65

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Saeb Erekat, a veteran peace negotiator and prominent international spokesman for the Palestinians for more than three decades, died on Tuesday, weeks after being infected by the coronavirus. He was 65.

The American-educated Erekat was involved in nearly every round of peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians going back to the landmark Madrid conference in 1991. Over the years, he was a constant media presence. He tirelessly argued for a negotiated two-state solution to the decades-old conflict, defended the Palestinian leadership and blamed Israel — particularly hard-line leader Benjamin Netanyahu — for the failure to reach an agreement.

As a loyal aide to Palestinian leaders — first Yasser Arafat and then Mahmoud Abbas — Erekat clung to this strategy until his death, even as hopes for Palestinian statehood sank to new lows.

In the weeks leading up to his death in an Israeli hospital, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain had normalized ties with Israel, breaking with the long-held Arab position that a deal on Palestinian statehood must precede normalization. Abbas and members of his inner circle, including Erekat, found themselves internationally sidelined and deeply unpopular among Palestinians. And decades of unfettered Israeli settlement expansion had made a statehood deal based on the partition of territory increasingly unlikely.

His son Ali confirmed that he passed away. Hadassah Medical Center, the Israeli hospital where he had been receiving intensive care for three weeks, also announced his passing. Erekat has received a lung transplant in 2017 and was at especially high risk from the virus.

Mosque loudspeakers in his hometown of Jericho also announced his death.

Abbas said Erekat's death was a "great loss for Palestine and our people, and we feel deeply saddened by his loss, especially in light of these difficult circumstances facing the Palestinian cause."

Abbas said flags will be flown at half-mast for three days. Erekat will be laid to rest in Jericho on Wednesday.

Tributes poured in from world diplomats, including several former Israeli and American peace negotiators.

"The passing of (Erekat) marks the end of an era," tweeted Robert Malley, a senior advisor on the Middle East in the Obama administration. "No one believed in the possibility of a two-state solution as ardently as he did; no one fought for it with greater conviction & obstinacy."

Tzipi Livni, a former Israeli foreign minister who negotiated with Erekat in the 2000s, said he had texted her after falling ill, saying "I'm not finished with what I was born to do." She offered her condolences, saying "he will be missed."

Yossi Beilin, a former Israeli Cabinet minister and peace negotiator, called Erekat's death "a big loss for those who believe in peace, both on the Palestinian side and the Israeli side."

He said that Erekat had sent his own children to "Seeds of Peace," a summer camp promoting coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians, and that after a flood in Jericho, he had been moved to see his daughter receive 23 emails from Israeli friends asking if she was OK.

"He said: 'For me this is the whole story — if we care for each other and understand that we can be friendly,'" Beilin recalled.

Erekat was born on April 28, 1955 in Jerusalem. He spent most of his life in the occupied West Bank town of Jericho, a palm-studded desert oasis about 30 minutes from Jerusalem. As a child in Jericho, he witnessed Palestinians fleeing to nearby Jordan during the 1967 war in which Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

In interviews, Erekat often spoke about life and his family in Jericho, as a way of explaining the impact of

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Israeli occupation to foreign viewers and to position himself as an ordinary Palestinian. His wit and grasp of colloquial American phrases made him popular with interviewers.

Erekat studied abroad, earning a BA and MA in international relations from San Francisco State University and later completing a Ph.D. at the University of Bradford in the U.K., where he focused on conflict resolution. Erekat also held U.S. citizenship.

When he returned to the West Bank he became a professor at An-Najah University in Nablus and an editor at the Al-Quds newspaper. A self-described pragmatist, he invited Israeli students to visit the university in the late 1980s and condemned violence on all sides.

He was nevertheless convicted of incitement by an Israeli military court in 1987 after troops raided the university and found an English-language newsletter he had authored in which he wrote that "Palestinians must learn how to endure and reject and resist" all the forms of occupation.

Erekat insisted he was advocating peaceful resistance and not armed struggle, and he was later given an eight-month suspended sentence and fined \$6,250. "If they have reached the point of fining someone like me \$6,250 for three words written in English and sent abroad, then the occupation is not working and they are really getting nervous," he later said.

The first intifada, or Palestinian uprising, erupted later that year in the form of mass protests, general strikes and clashes with Israeli troops. That uprising, along with U.S. pressure on Israel, culminated in the Madrid conference, widely seen as the start of the Mideast peace process.

Erekat was a prominent representative of Palestinians living inside the occupied territories at the time, but became a close aide to Arafat when the exiled Palestine Liberation Organization returned to the territories following the 1993 Oslo accords. In subsequent years he routinely served as Arafat's translator, and was sometimes accused of editing his remarks to soften the rough edges of the guerrilla leader-turned-aspiring statesman.

Throughout the 1990s, Erekat was a frequent guest on CNN and other news programs, where he condemned violence on both sides but warned that the peace process was at risk of collapse because of Israel's refusal to withdraw from the territories.

Then, as now, the Palestinians sought an independent state in east Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Oslo accords were intended to pave the way for such a settlement, but the process stalled amid a wave of suicide bombings and other attacks by Palestinian militant groups and continued Israeli settlement construction and failure to keep pledges to turn over territory to Palestinian control. With both sides accusing each other of acting in bad faith, they were unable to agree on final status issues, such as borders, security, Jerusalem, and the fate of Palestinian refugees.

Erekat was part of the Palestinian delegation at Camp David in 2000, when President Bill Clinton brought the two sides together for marathon talks aimed at reaching a final agreement. The talks ended inconclusively, and a few months later a second and far more violent intifada erupted.

By then Erekat had become a senior Palestinian official and was seen as a possible successor to Arafat, who died in a French hospital in 2004. Erekat accompanied Arafat's body on the flight back to the West Bank for burial. He continued as a top aide to Abbas and served as a senior negotiator in sporadic peace efforts in the late 2000s.

"I am the most disadvantaged negotiator in the history of man," he told a reporter in 2007, the year that the Islamic militant group Hamas seized control of Gaza from Abbas' forces. "I have no army, no navy, no economy, my society is fragmented."

Erekat resigned as chief negotiator in 2011 after a trove of documents was leaked to the pan-Arab broadcaster Al-Jazeera showing that the Palestinian leadership had offered major concessions in past peace talks that were never made public. But Erekat remained a senior Palestinian official and a close adviser to Abbas, who later appointed him secretary general of the PLO.

Israel and the Palestinians have not held substantive talks since Netanyahu — a hard-liner who opposes concessions to the Palestinians — took office in 2009.

But Erekat continued to call for a two-state solution based on the 1967 lines, accusing the Israeli leader of putting a "nail in the coffin" of hopes for peace by continuing to expand settlements.

While Erekat was welcomed in world capitals, he was more controversial in the West Bank, where he was seen as part of an elite clique enjoying a jet-setting lifestyle but detached from the public and clinging to an unrealistic goal after years of failed peace efforts and Israeli settlement expansion.

He was a strident critic of President Donald Trump's Mideast plan, which overwhelmingly favors Israel and would allow it to keep nearly all of east Jerusalem and up to 30% of the West Bank. He derisively said "real estate men" would never solve the conflict and accused Trump and Netanyahu of teaming up to "destroy the Palestinian national project."

"To reject this plan isn't to reject peace but the contrary: Rejecting it means rejecting the perpetuation of a system of apartheid," he wrote in a Washington Post op-ed in January.

He closed the column with the same call to action he had been issuing for nearly three decades.

"The international community must decide: Either it stands on the right side of history with the independence of the state of Palestine living side by side, in peace and security, with the state of Israel on the 1967 border — or it agrees to tolerate an apartheid regime."

Erekat is survived by his wife, two sons, twin daughters and eight grandchildren.

Associated Press writers Mohammed Daraghmeh and Haitham Hamad in Ramallah, West Bank, and Josef Federman in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

EU files antitrust charges against Amazon over use of data

LONDON (AP) — European Union regulators have filed antitrust charges against Amazon, accusing the e-commerce giant of using data to gain an unfair advantage over merchants using its platform.

The EU's executive commission, the bloc's top antitrust enforcer, said Tuesday that the charges have been sent to the company.

The commission said it takes issue with Amazon's systematic use of non-public business data to avoid "the normal risks of competition and to leverage its dominance" for e-commerce services in France and Germany, the company's two biggest markets in the EU.

The EU started looking into Amazon in 2018 and has been focusing on its dual role as a marketplace and retailer.

In addition to selling its own products, the U.S. company allows third-party retailers to sell their own goods through its site. Last year, more than half of the items sold on Amazon worldwide were from these outside merchants.

Executive Vice President Margrethe Vestager, the EU commissioner in charge of competition, said it's not a problem that Amazon is a successful business but "our concern is very specific business conduct which appears to distort genuine competition."

Amazon faces a possible fine of up to 10% of its annual worldwide revenue, which could amount to billions of dollars. The company rejected the accusations.

"We disagree with the preliminary assertions of the European Commission and will continue to make every effort to ensure it has an accurate understanding of the facts," the company said in a statement.

The company can, under EU rules, reply to the charges in writing and present its case in an oral hearing.

Vestager also opened a second investigation into Amazon over whether it favours its own products and those from third-party merchants that use its logistics and delivery services.

It's the EU's latest effort to curb the power of big technology companies, following a series of multibillion dollar antitrust fines against Google in previous years.

China gears up for world's largest online shopping festival

By ZEN SOO AP Technology Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Chinese consumers are expected to spend tens of billions on everything from fresh food to luxury goods during this year's Singles' Day online shopping festival, as the country recovers from the pandemic.

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The shopping festival, which is the world's largest and falls on Nov. 11 every year, is an annual extravaganza where China's e-commerce companies, including Alibaba, JD.com and Pinduoduo, offer generous discounts on their platforms. Last year, shoppers spent \$38.4 billion on Alibaba's e-commerce platforms Tmall and Taobao.

The shopping festival got its name as it falls on Nov. 11 every year. Also known as 11.11 or Double 11, the numbers look like "bare branches", an expression referring to those who are single and unattached in China. The day thus later became known as Singles' Day.

This year's festival will be closely watched as a barometer of consumption in China, which is just beginning to bounce back from the coronavirus pandemic after months of lockdown earlier in the year.

Analysts expect Chinese consumers to spend more on imported products and foreign luxury brands, since many Chinese tourists were unable to travel internationally due to the coronavirus pandemic and tightened travel restrictions.

A survey by consulting firm Oliver Wyman found that 86% of Chinese consumers are willing to spend the same as or more than during last year's Singles' Day festival.

"In the last six months or so, wealthy households have actually spent more money," said Sean Shen, customer and strategy competence leader for EY in Greater China. "We also see that purchases of luxury segment products are increasing because of the international travel restrictions."

In 2018, Chinese consumers spent about 770 billion yuan (\$116.3 billion) on luxury items, accounting for about a third of the global spend, with each luxury-consuming household spending an average of 80,000 yuan annually (\$12,089), according to a 2019 McKinsey report on luxury.

Sales of electronic goods and health and wellness products are also expected to rise, as more people work from home and pay more attention to their health amid the pandemic, according to a report by consultancy Bain & Company.

To help merchants cope with the impact from the coronavirus, online platforms have extended the shopping festival period this year in hopes of boosting sales.

Both Alibaba and JD.com, the country's two biggest e-commerce companies, began offering discounts on Oct. 21, three weeks ahead of Nov. 11. Some brands and merchants that slashed their prices booked hundreds of millions of yuan (tens of millions of dollars) in sales just hours into the shopping festival.

Tang Chenghui, an electrical engineer who lives in Beijing sees Singles' Day as an opportunity to stock up on snacks and imported products such as milk from Australia. Ahead of the festival, Tang pre-ordered 3 boxes of duck eggs, 10 packets of soybean milk powder, two boxes of yogurt, coffee and wine.

"I'm buying more snacks this year because I've just moved into a new apartment and have enough storage space to stockpile the snacks I like," said Tang. "Some of these products are really cheap during the Singles' Day discounts."

Unlike Black Friday and Cyber Monday in the U.S., Singles' Day in China is not just about deep bargains. Alibaba pioneered the concept of Singles' Day and holds an annual gala on Nov. 11 with celebrity performances to entertain shoppers.

E-commerce companies don't break down Singles Day sales volume by brands so it is hard to know what share goes to foreign companies, though some companies might announce their own performances.

Sales via livestreaming and Alibaba's annual gala are part of a "shoppertainment" trend which blends shopping with entertainment in order to become more appealing and engaging to shoppers.

Mini games within online shopping platforms entice shoppers with deeper discounts while encouraging them to spend more time within the app.

"Because of COVID-19, brands and retailers have doubled down on e-commerce and livestreaming commerce to drive growth, and it will show strongly on (Singles' Day) this year," said Wang Xiaofeng, a senior analyst at Forrester.

But while millions of shoppers spend hours on mini games hoping to snag better bargains, some are irked by the complexities required to win such discounts.

"Black Friday discounts tend to be better, and they are more straightforward," said Liu Zhirou, a 27 year-old Beijing-based accountant. "Now, I still ask my friends to help me buy things from the U.S. during

Black Friday.”

“The rules around Singles’ Day discounts now are getting more and more complicated,” she said. “I usually just spend my money on Black Friday, and buy less on Singles’ Day.”

—
AP researcher Chen Si in Shanghai contributed to this report.

Russian peacekeepers go to Nagorno-Karabakh to bolster truce

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — More than a dozen planes carrying Russian peacekeepers headed for Nagorno-Karabakh on Tuesday, hours after Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to halt fighting over the separatist region and amid signs this cease-fire would hold where others hadn’t.

The truce came after significant advances by Azerbaijani forces that the Nagorno-Karabakh leader said made it impossible for their side to carry on — but angered many Armenians, who stormed government buildings overnight, demanding the Parliament invalidate the agreement. Dozens of protesters gathered again Tuesday morning in front of the parliament building in the Armenian capital of Yerevan.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been locked in a conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh for decades. The region lies within Azerbaijan but has been under control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war there ended in 1994. Heavy fighting erupted in late September — the biggest escalation of the conflict in a quarter-century — and has left hundreds, possibly thousands, dead.

Several cease-fires announced over the past six weeks crumbled almost immediately, but the current agreement appeared to be holding, with neither side reporting any more fighting since it came into force.

It came days after Azerbaijan pressed its offensive deeper into the region and took control of the city of Shushi, which is strategically positioned on heights overlooking the regional capital of Stepanakert.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian said on Facebook that calling an end to the fight was “extremely painful for me personally and for our people.”

But on Tuesday he explained that he was left with no choice, saying the army had told him it was necessary.

“We found ourselves in a situation when there was no alternative to signing the agreement,” Pashinian was quoted by Russia’s Interfax news agency as saying.

Nagorno-Karabakh’s separatist leader Arayik Harutyunyan echoed Pashinian’s sentiment. He said: “Had the hostilities continued at the same pace, we would have lost all of Artsakh (an Armenian name for Nagorno-Karabakh) within days.”

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev referred to the agreement as a “glorious victory” on Twitter, and Azerbaijanis flooded their capital city to celebrate.

Russia’s Defense Ministry said that 15 planes carrying peacekeepers and military equipment departed for the region Tuesday. A total of 1,960 Russian peacekeepers are to be deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh under a five-year mandate.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who personally announced the agreement overnight, called the fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh “a truly great tragedy” on Tuesday and expressed satisfaction over “agreements reached to end the bloodshed.”

The pact calls for Armenian forces to turn over control of some areas it held outside the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh, including the Lachin region, where the main road leading from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia passes through. The agreement calls for the road, the so-called Lachin Corridor, to remain open and be protected by Russian peacekeepers.

The agreement also calls for transport links to be established through Armenia linking Azerbaijan and its western exclave of Nakhchivan, which is surrounded by Armenia, Iran and Turkey.

Nagorno-Karabakh military have reported some 1,300 troops killed in the six weeks of fighting. Azerbaijan hasn’t disclosed its military losses. Scores of civilians have also been killed and wounded on both sides.

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Russia, France and the U.S. — co-chairs of the Minsk Group, set up in the 1990s by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to mediate the conflict — have been trying to secure a cease-fire for weeks.

Moscow faced a particularly delicate balancing act: It has a military base in Armenia and a pact obliging it to protect the country in case of foreign aggression, but also has good ties with Azerbaijan.

Further complicating the matter, Turkey threw its weight behind Azerbaijan and sought to play a bigger role in the peace efforts — something Armenia has vehemently objected to.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, who held a telephone call with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov on Tuesday, suggested a possible Turkish role in the monitoring of the cease-fire, saying talks were ongoing.

"We will stand alongside Azerbaijan. This is a great success, a victory for Azerbaijan. Territories that were under occupation for 30 years are being taken back," Cavusoglu told a news conference.

Azerbaijan's president announced Tuesday that the country would create a "peacekeeping center" that will host both Russian and Turkish military and monitor the cease-fire. Aliyev and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussed the initiative in a phone call, Aliyev's office said, and "expressed confidence that the center will contribute to a lasting peace in the region."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that setting up a center "for monitoring the conditions of the cease-fire" in Azerbaijan was discussed, but that it has to be outlined in separate agreements.

Associated Press writers Avet Demourian in Yerevan, Armenia, Aida Sultanova in London, and Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey, contributed to this report.

GOP tries again to get high court to ax health care law

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A week after the 2020 election, Republican elected officials and the Trump administration are advancing their latest arguments to get rid of the Affordable Care Act, a long-held GOP goal that has repeatedly failed in Congress and the courts.

In arguments scheduled for Tuesday, the Supreme Court will hear its third major fight over the 10-year-old law, popularly known as "Obamacare." Republican attorneys general in 18 states and the administration want the whole law to be struck down, which 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.

California is leading a group of Democratic-controlled states that is urging the court to leave the law in place.

The case comes to a court that now has three justices appointed by President Donald Trump: Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett, who joined the court late last month following her hurried nomination and confirmation to replace the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

The three Trump appointees have never ruled on the substance of the health care law. Barrett, though, has been critical of the court's earlier major health care decisions sustaining the law, both written by Chief Justice John Roberts.

The Supreme Court could have heard the case before the election, but set arguments for a week after. The timing could add a wrinkle to the case since President-elect Joe Biden strongly supports the health care law.

The case turns on a change made by the Republican-controlled Congress in 2017 that reduced the penalty for not having health insurance to zero. Without the penalty, the law's mandate to have health insurance is unconstitutional, the GOP-led states argue.

If the mandate goes, they say, the rest of the law should go with it because the mandate was central to the law's passage.

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But 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.

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

The legal argument could well turn on the legal doctrine of severability, the idea that the court can excise a problematic provision from a law and allow the rest of it to remain in force. The justices have done just that in other rulings in recent years.

But in the first big ACA case in 2012, Justices Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas voted to strike down the whole law. Roberts and Justices Stephen Breyer, Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor have voted to uphold it.

A limited ruling would have little real-world consequences. 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.

GOP backs Trump as he fights election results, transition

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration threw the presidential transition into tumult, with President Donald Trump blocking government officials from cooperating with President-elect Joe Biden's team and Attorney General William Barr authorizing the Justice Department to probe unsubstantiated allegations of voter fraud.

Some Republicans, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, rallied behind Trump's efforts to fight the election results. Few in the GOP acknowledged Biden's victory or condemned Trump's other concerning move on Monday: his firing of Defense Secretary Mark Esper.

The developments cast doubt on whether the nation would witness the same kind of smooth transition of power that has long anchored its democracy. The Electoral College is slated to formally confirm Biden's victory on Dec. 14, and the Democrat will be sworn into office in late January.

On Monday, Barr authorized U.S. attorneys to probe "substantial" allegations of voter irregularities and election fraud, though no widespread instances of that type of trouble in the 2020 election exist. In fact, election officials from both political parties have publicly stated that voting went well and international observers also confirmed that there were no serious irregularities.

Biden campaign lawyer Bob Bauer said Barr's memorandum authorizing investigations "will only fuel the 'specious, speculative, fanciful or far-fetched claims' he professes to guard against."

Biden pressed forward with plans to build out his administration, assembling a team of experts to face the surging pandemic. But the federal agency that needs to greenlight the beginnings of the transition of power held off on taking that step. And the White House moved to crack down on those not deemed sufficiently loyal as Trump continued to refuse to concede the race.

Trump remained out of sight at the White House, with conversations ongoing about how the defeated president would spend the coming days and weeks as he challenged the people's verdict. Trump is not expected to formally concede but is likely to grudgingly vacate the White House at the end of his term, according to several people around him.

Also being discussed: the possibility of more campaign-style rallies as he tries to keep his supporters fired up despite his defeat. It was possible they would feature his family and top supporters but not the president himself.

The ouster of Esper, the Pentagon chief, was expected by some aides to be the first of several firings by Trump, now freed from having to face voters again and angry at those in his administration perceived to be insufficiently loyal. Others believed to be vulnerable: FBI Director Christopher Wray, CIA head Gina Haspel and infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci.

The president was given cover to keep fighting by McConnell, seen by many in the GOP as the one who may eventually need to nudge Trump to the exit.

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"Our institutions are actually built for this," McConnell said as he opened the Senate on Monday. "We have the system in place to consider concerns and President Trump is 100% within his rights to look into allegations of irregularities and weigh his legal options."

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer countered that the Republicans' refusal to accept the election results was "extremely dangerous, extremely poisonous to our democracy."

"Joe Biden won the election fair and square," Schumer said.

A few other GOP senators sent tepid nods toward a transition. Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska offered congratulations to Biden, and Sen. Susan Collins of Maine noted the Democrat's "apparent victory." But many Republican lawmakers were reluctant to speak up about the election, seeing little political incentive to take a firm stance on Trump's transition from the White House.

Republicans on Capitol Hill have been hesitant to push Trump to concede to Biden, knowing it would anger their base of Trump's most devoted supporters. Most were also not overtly encouraging the president's unfounded claims of fraud, while allowing baseless questions about the election process to linger.

Adding to the sense of uncertainty, the General Services Administration held off on formally beginning the transition, preventing Biden's teams from gaining access to federal agencies. An agency spokesperson said late Monday that an "ascertainment" on the winner of the election had not yet been made. Citing what the agency did during the extended 2000 electoral recount, it signaled that it may not do so until Trump concedes or the Electoral College meets next month.

That Florida recount involved a margin of just 537 votes in the one state that would have determined which candidate reached 270 electoral votes. Biden's leads across Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan, which pushed him over the threshold to win the White House, are far more substantial — and greater than Trump's leads in the same states in 2016.

On a call Monday night with reporters, a transition official said the Biden team believes it is time for the GSA administrator to ascertain that Biden is president-elect. The official, who spoke only on anonymity as a ground rule for the call, said legal action is "certainly a possibility" if that doesn't happen, though there are also other options being considered.

Across government, there were signs of a slowdown.

White House officials and Trump political appointees informed career government staffers they were not to begin acting on transition planning until GSA approved it, according to officials familiar with the matter.

In weekly Monday morning all-hands phone calls for Midwest-based employees of the Environmental Protection Agency, mid-level administrators responded to questions about the transition by telling staffers they had no information yet, said Nicole Cantello, an agency employee and president of the Chicago local of a union representing EPA workers.

A senior administration official said presidential personnel director John McEntee, the president's former personal aide, has sent word to departments that they should terminate any political appointees seeking new work for now. Another official said the warning was not seen as likely to result in any firings but rather meant to reinforce to staff that they should not act counter to Trump while he refuses to concede. Those officials and others who were not authorized to discuss internal policies or describe private discussions requested anonymity.

But some elements of the federal government already were mobilizing to prepare for Biden to assume power. The U.S. Secret Service and Federal Aviation Administration extended a flight restriction over Biden's Wilmington, Delaware, home through Inauguration Day. Biden's security detail has been bolstered with agents from the Presidential Protective Division.

And despite Trump's public stance, there was a growing realization in his inner circle that the election result would be impossible to overturn. Some senior officials have tried to make the case that Trump should turn his efforts to cementing his legacy, but they are wary of being labeled disloyal for even thinking it.

Legal challenges already have been dismissed in battleground states like Georgia and Wisconsin. And Trump's legal efforts were dealt another blow Monday when campaign adviser David Bossie, tasked with leading the effort, tested positive for the coronavirus.

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Bossie had been at the indoor White House election night party now being perceived as a possible superspreader event after other attendees — including chief of staff Mark Meadows, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson and other aides — contracted the virus.

At the White House, attendance among aides had dropped off since election night — partly because of the result and partly because a number are in quarantine after contracting or being exposed to people who came down with COVID-19. Vice President Mike Pence was slated to depart Tuesday for a vacation in Florida after a visit to Capitol Hill.

Trump's public schedule hasn't included an intelligence briefing since Oct. 1. The White House hasn't provided a "readout" of any call between the president and a foreign leader in weeks. He hasn't met with members of the White House coronavirus task force in months. He also offered no public comment on Tropical Storm Eta lashing the Florida Keys.

The drawn-out resolution to the election has only added to the culture of suspicion that has permeated the hollowed-out West Wing.

Lemire reported from New York. Additional reporting by Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro, Colleen Long, Matthew Lee and Jill Colvin in Washington and Ellen Knickmeyer in Oklahoma City.

Election 2020 Today: Biden defends 'Obamacare,' Trump stalls

By The Associated Press undefined

Here's what's happening Tuesday in Election 2020.

TODAY'S TOP STORIES:

BIDEN'S PITCH: President-elect Joe Biden is championing the Obama administration's signature health care law as it goes before the Supreme Court in a case that could overturn it. Biden is delivering an Affordable Care Act speech on Tuesday, the day the high court will hear arguments on its merits. The Supreme Court ruled eight years ago to leave intact the essential components of the law known as Obamacare, but the court is now controlled 6-3 by a conservative majority. Biden's speech reflects the importance he is putting on health care as he prepares to take office in January amid the worst pandemic in more than a century.

'OBAMACARE' FIGHT: Republican elected officials and the Trump administration are advancing their latest arguments to get rid of the Affordable Care Act, a long-held GOP goal that has repeatedly failed in Congress and the courts. Arguments are scheduled in the Supreme Court's third major case over the 10-year-old law, popularly known as "Obamacare." Republican attorneys general in 18 states and the Trump administration want the law to be struck down, which would threaten coverage for more than 23 million people. California is leading a group of Democratic-controlled states that is urging the court to leave the law in place.

TRUMP STALLING: The Trump administration is throwing the presidential transition into tumult. President Donald Trump has fired the Pentagon chief and blocked government officials from cooperating with Biden's team. Even as Biden began assembling experts to face the surging coronavirus pandemic, the federal agency that needs to greenlight the beginnings of the transition of power held off.

NOT CONCEDED: Losing presidential candidates have conceded to their opponents in private chats, telegrams, phone calls and nationally televised speeches. Al Gore conceded twice in the same race. Trump isn't expected to concede at all — not even with a tweet. There's no law that says Trump has to concede, but if he doesn't, he will be the first presidential candidate in modern times to ignore a tradition that has marked peaceful transitions throughout American history. Most concession speeches are gracious — less about the loser and more about closure for the country.

BARR'S MOVE: Attorney General William Barr authorizes federal prosecutors across the U.S. to pursue "substantial allegations" of voting irregularities, if they exist, before the 2020 presidential election is certified. Barr's action comes despite little evidence of fraud in Biden's victory. It also raises the prospect that Trump will use the Justice Department to try to challenge the outcome. Longstanding Justice Department policy would normally prohibit such overt actions before an election is certified.

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QUOTABLE: "We could save tens of thousands of lives if everyone would just wear a mask for the next few months. Not Democratic or Republican lives, American lives. Please, I implore you, wear a mask." — Biden pleading with Americans to put aside their political differences and wear masks to protect themselves and their neighbors from the coronavirus.

ICYMI:

'This is proof': Biden's win reveals power of Black voters

Trump faces long odds in challenging state vote counts

Indigenous candidates' wins in Congress give hope for change

Find AP's full election coverage at [APNews.com/Election2020](https://www.apnews.com/Election2020).

Biden defends health care law as high court mulls its fate

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden is championing the Obama administration's signature health law as it goes before the Supreme Court in a case that could overturn it.

He will deliver a speech on the Affordable Care Act on Tuesday, the day the high court will hear arguments on its merits. The court ruled eight years ago to leave the essential components of the law known as Obamacare intact, but it is now controlled 6-3 by a conservative majority after President Donald Trump's appointment of Justice Amy Coney Barrett.

Biden's speech reflects the importance he is putting on health care as he prepares to take office in January amid the worst pandemic in more than a century. He's launching his transition process this week as the coronavirus surges across the country. The U.S. surpassed 10 million cases on Monday.

Biden also focused on health care Monday as he pleaded with Americans to put aside their political differences and wear masks to protect themselves and their neighbors from the virus.

"We could save tens of thousands of lives if everyone would just wear a mask for the next few months. Not Democratic or Republican lives, American lives," Biden said. "Please, I implore you, wear a mask."

The suit challenging the health care law was brought in America's largest conservative state, Texas, and is backed by Trump and top Republicans. It asks the Supreme Court to declare the law's mandate to buy health insurance unconstitutional because Congress had previously repealed the penalties for noncompliance.

After serving as President Barack Obama's vice president for eight years, Biden has pledged to build on the Affordable Care Act while championing a "public option" that would allow more people to opt into government-sponsored health insurance even as millions of others could stick with their current, usually employer-based coverage.

But such changes could be difficult to enact if Democrats fail to win a majority in the Senate. Control of the chamber hinges on two runoff races in Georgia that will be decided in January.

Biden, meanwhile, is moving forward with planning a presidential transition even as Trump refuses to concede the race and falsely argues it was stolen from him.

The president-elect is expected to quickly name a chief of staff and start considering Cabinet appointments, though those likely won't be finalized for weeks.

But he's running into hurdles from the General Services Administration, which is tasked with formally recognizing Biden as president-elect. That designation eases cooperation between the outgoing and incoming administrations. The agency's Trump-appointed administrator, Emily Murphy, has not started the process and has given no guidance on when she will.

That lack of clarity is fueling questions about whether Trump will spend as much of his remaining time in office as possible hindering Biden from building out his government. Biden has largely ignored Trump and instead called for bipartisanship — but he may not be able to keep doing so for much longer.

"This election is over," Biden said during his speech Monday. "It's time to put aside the partisanship, and the rhetoric that is designed to demonize one another."

As virus spikes, Europe runs low on ICU beds, hospital staff

By LORI HINNANT Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — In Italy lines of ambulances park outside hospitals awaiting beds, and in France the government coronavirus tracking app prominently displays the intensive care capacity taken up by COVID-19 patients: 92.5% and rising. In the ICU in Barcelona, there is no end in sight for the doctors and nurses who endured this once already.

Intensive care is the last line of defense for severely ill coronavirus patients and Europe is running out — of beds and the doctors and nurses to staff them.

In country after country, the intensive care burden of COVID-19 patients is nearing and sometimes surpassing levels seen at last spring's peak. Health officials, many advocating a return to stricter lockdowns, warn that adding beds will do no good because there aren't enough doctors and nurses trained to staff them.

In France, more than 7,000 health care workers have undergone training since last spring in intensive care techniques. Nursing students, interns, paramedics, all have been drafted, according to Health Minister Olivier Veran.

"If the mobilization is well and truly there, it is not infinite," he said last week, when the ICU units were filled to 85% capacity. "It is not enough."

Within days, it had jumped another 7 percentage points and he warned it would continue to tick upward. And, unlike in the first wave last spring, the virus is now everywhere in France, making transfers from one region to another by high-speed train less practical. One hospital in the southern city of Marseille recently wheeled in refrigerated rental trucks ahead of a feared rise in ICU deaths there.

In Italy, Filippo Anelli, the head of the national doctors' association, said at the current infection rate, there soon won't be enough physicians to go around. Recently in Naples, nurses started checking on people as they sat in cars outside emergency rooms, waiting for space to free up. Italy has a total of 11,000 ICU beds, but only enough anesthesiologists for 5,000 patients, Anelli said. As of Monday, 2,849 ICU beds were filled nationwide — up 100 from just the day before.

For the average coronavirus patient with serious symptoms, it takes seven to 10 days to go from infection to hospitalization. Those admitted often need to stay for weeks, even as more patients arrive. The math is inexorable as long as infection rates rise.

Patients from France, Belgium and the Netherlands are being evacuated to German intensive care units, but German doctors say they are watching the number of free beds dwindle quickly.

Dr. Uwe Janssens, who heads Germany's Interdisciplinary Association for Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine, said some urban areas are reaching precarious levels.

"When a city of millions only has 80, 90 beds left then that can be a critical mass, because you don't just have COVID-19, there are also traffic accidents, heart attacks, pulmonary embolisms and so forth," he said.

In the past two weeks alone the number of coronavirus patients treated in ICUs in Germany has almost tripled, from 943 to 2,546. Still Janssens acknowledged that the situation in Germany is better than that of France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Britain.

Germany has about 34.5 ICU beds per 100,000 inhabitants, not including the emergency reserve. Italy has 10, while France has 16, he said.

"But a bed, a ventilator and a monitor doesn't mean the patient can be cared for. When it comes to nurses and specialist staff, Germany is far behind," he said. "We have a lot of beds but we don't have enough staff for them."

Spain has the same limitations, but endured coronavirus deaths already on a scale Germany has yet to see.

"On the one hand, the health workers are tired; on the other hand, the number of people that are working on the front line is limited," said Dr. Robert Guerri, head of the infectious diseases department and coordinator of COVID-19 hospitalizations at Hospital del Mar in Barcelona.

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His coronavirus unit filled up in October, then the critical care unit filled up. Even with the rate of infection easing slightly, he doesn't know when any of those beds will be free.

In neighboring Portugal, Fernando Maltez has 40 years of experience preparing contingency plans for health threats as one of the country's leading infectious disease experts. This one is different.

In the seven months from early March through the end of September, Portugal officially counted more than 75,500 cases of COVID-19. In the month of October alone, it counted almost 66,000.

In all, 391 coronavirus patients were in Portuguese ICUs as of Monday, when the country imposed a curfew. During the worst week last spring, the ICUs had 271 coronavirus patients.

"There's no end in sight," Maltez said at the infectious disease ward he oversees at Lisbon's Curry Cabral Hospital, where 20 ICU beds set aside for coronavirus patients are now all occupied. "No health service in the world ... can withstand a deluge of cases that just keeps coming."

Much of Eastern Europe, spared the harrowing wave last spring, is in the same position. Hungary warned its ICU would run out of space by December under the worst-case scenario, and hospitalizations in Poland have risen to three times the levels seen in the spring. Late last month, American National Guard troops with medical training headed to the Czech Republic to work alongside doctors there, and the mayor of Prague took shifts at a hospital.

There are a few signs of hope. Belgium, proportionally among the worst-hit nations in Europe when it comes to coronavirus cases, is seeing increasing indications of a turning point in the crisis after a partial lockdown. Hospital admissions seem to have peaked at 879 on Nov. 3, and fell to about 400 on Sunday, virologist Yves Van Laethem said.

There were fears that the 2,000-bed ICU capacity would be reached last week, but Steven Van Gucht, a virologist with the Sciensano government health group, said the pace was slowing there as well.

"The high-speed train is slowing down," at least for now, he said.

Associated Press writers Frank Jordans in Berlin; Renata Brito in Barcelona, Spain; Danica Kirka in London; Lorne Cook and Raf Casert in Brussels; Frances D'Emilio in Rome; and Barry Hatton in Lisbon, Portugal, contributed to this report.

Ex-Vatican envoy faces sexual abuse charge in French court

PARIS (AP) — The Vatican's former ambassador to France goes on trial Tuesday for alleged sexual misconduct.

Multiple men have accused Archbishop Luigi Ventura of groping and inappropriate touching. Exceptionally, the Vatican last year lifted the ambassador's diplomatic immunity, allowing for his trial and for the allegations to be properly investigated.

Ventura has repeatedly denied wrongdoing.

Among his accusers is Mathieu De La Souchere. He filed a police report in Paris in 2019 accusing Ventura of touching his buttocks repeatedly during a reception at Paris City Hall.

The Vatican recalled Ventura last year and he later retired. The Vatican has previously recalled its diplomats when they get into trouble during overseas postings, as is common for governments with diplomats serving abroad.

In the most high-profile case, the Vatican recalled its ambassador to the Dominican Republic and prepared to put him on trial in the city state's criminal tribunal for allegedly sexually abusing young boys. But he died before the trial started.

Ventura's trial comes the same day that the Vatican is releasing a much-awaited report into Theodore McCarrick, a once-influential American cardinal who was defrocked by Pope Francis in 2019 after a Vatican investigation confirmed decades of rumors that he was a sexual predator.

Experts say no need to cancel Thanksgiving, but play it safe

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By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

A safe Thanksgiving during a pandemic is possible, but health experts know their advice is as tough to swallow as dry turkey: Stay home. Don't travel. If you must gather, do it outdoors.

With a fall surge of coronavirus infections gripping the U.S., many Americans are forgoing tradition and getting creative with celebrations.

For the first time in five years, Atlanta nutrition consultant Marisa Moore won't travel to South Carolina to see her large extended family. Instead, she plans to video chat with them as she attempts her first home-baked apple pie. When it's time to eat, they'll compare plates.

"We'll talk all day," Moore said.

On Monday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its holiday guidance, noting the virus crisis is worsening and that small household gatherings are "an important contributor." The CDC said older adults and others at heightened risk of severe illness should avoid gathering with people outside their households.

Experts point to Canada, where Thanksgiving was celebrated Oct. 12. Clusters of cases tied to family gatherings followed. "This sucks. It really, really does," Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said two weeks later.

There's no need to cancel the holiday. Spending time with loved ones is important for health too, said Lacy Fehrenbach, Washington state deputy secretary of health.

The coronavirus spreads more easily when people are crowded together inside, so Fehrenbach encourages new outdoor traditions such as hiking as a family. Guest lists for indoor feasts should be small enough so people can sit six feet apart while unmasked and eating, she said. Open the windows to keep air circulating.

The more people who attend a gathering, the greater the chances that someone in the party will be carrying the virus, Fehrenbach said, "even someone that you know and love."

On any other Thanksgiving, dozens of Olga Garcia's family members would squeeze into her home to make tamales, watch football and tell stories. This year, the 61-year-old professional caregiver will deliver food to family spread along 30 miles of the North Cascades Highway in Washington state.

If the plan works, everyone will sit down at the same time to eat in their own homes and join a group phone call.

"We're going to be wise about this," Garcia said. "We're just crossing our fingers that in 2021 we'll be able to sit down at our table and get crazy again."

What about a quarantine? The magic day to start a pre-Thanksgiving quarantine is Nov. 13, according to Lindsey Leininger, who leads the Nerdy Girls, a cadre of scientists collaborating on a website called Dear Pandemic.

A strict quarantine would mean no grocery shopping, no working outside the home and no in-person school for 14 days.

What about testing? The best day to test would be as close to Turkey Day as possible while still leaving enough time to get results. But a test might not catch a still brewing infection so the best plan is the quarantine for two weeks — the time it can take for symptoms to show up.

Instead of that rigmarole, Leininger said her children will see their grandparents via Zoom on Thanksgiving. After dinner, the family will meet neighbors in the driveway for pie.

"We bring our own pie and they bring their own pie," said Leininger of Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. "It's cold here in northern New England, but pie can be a quick activity."

When it seems cruel that everything most loved about Thanksgiving is forbidden, finding humor in absurdity can help. In a video on Twitter, New York comedian Matt Buechele offers an increasingly silly list of Thanksgiving precautions, including water balloons filled with gravy and kids' tables for all.

"Before we eat, everyone's going to go around the table, say one thing they're thankful for and one thing they scream into their pillow at night," Buechele said.

That's a joke, but the comedian thinks it could be a cathartic practice. "The thing I continue to scream into my pillow is, 'Why is it like this? It didn't have to be this way! And, my God, when will it end?'" he said.

In New Jersey, the nonprofit HealthBarn Foundation usually co-hosts a sit-down Thanksgiving feast for

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150 older adults. This year, volunteers prepared and froze individual meals and packaged them in insulated bags. Seniors will be able reheat the food at home.

"No one wanted to cancel it," said HealthBarn director Stacey Antine. "You want to show that you still love people and honor them. And you want to make sure that they have nutritious food for this important holiday dinner."

In Washington state, Garcia will get up before dawn to roast a 20-pound turkey and bake capirotada, a bread pudding layered with cheese, bananas, raisins, cinnamon and pecans. Her siblings will prepare other specialties in their homes: tamales, enchiladas, pico de gallo, ceviche, green bean casserole, yams with marshmallows, pumpkin pie and pecan pie. Up and down the route, the feast will be divided into boxes and delivered.

"It's a sad time," Garcia said. "But it can also be a grateful time: that we're all here, that we have a roof over our head, a job to go to and enough food to go around. And for those that don't have enough, we can say, 'Here's a plate.'"

AP video journalist Kathy Young contributed to this report.

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

Patriots storm back to beat Jets 30-27, end 4-game skid

By DENNIS WASZAK Jr. AP Pro Football Writer

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — Cam Newton and the New England Patriots appeared headed to a fifth straight loss — this one against the winless New York Jets, of all teams.

Then came the fourth quarter, and potential embarrassment turned into big-time relief.

Nick Folk kicked a 51-yard field goal as time expired to win it 30-27 on Monday night after Newton rallied the Patriots from a 10-point deficit to avoid the franchise's first five-game skid since 1995.

"It shows the character of this team," said Rex Burkhead, who had a 1-yard touchdown run in the third quarter. "Just battling, fighting. It shows the strength we have. We're not going to quit. We're not going to lay down."

Newton had two touchdown runs, with the second tying it at 27 with 1:57 remaining. He also brushed off his struggles of the past few weeks, including a fumble against Buffalo last week that sealed a loss.

"I'm getting tired of sucking," said Newton, who was 27 of 35 for 274 yards passing. "It's simple. As a competitor, you know what your standard is. Taking pride in your work, that's what it comes down to."

After the Jets (0-9) went three-and-out for the first time all night, the Patriots (3-5) got the ball back with 47 seconds left and went to work.

Newton had a 5-yard run on third-and-1 from the New England 42 and then spiked the ball with 8 seconds remaining. He followed with a 20-yard pass to Jakobi Meyers to put Folk — who made several big kicks for the Jets from 2010-16 — in position for the winning field goal.

"I had a lot of good memories here at MetLife (Stadium)," said Folk, who had been dealing with a back injury. "I just added one to the other sideline tonight."

Meanwhile, the Jets dropped to 0-9 for the first time in franchise history, and this was one was particularly agonizing.

"It's a tough pill to swallow," said wide receiver Jamison Crowder, whose 20-yard TD catch shortly before halftime gave the Jets a 20-10 lead. "That was a tough loss right there. That was a game we should've won."

After Folk's 29-yarder with 6:04 left cut the Patriots' deficit to 27-20, quarterback Joe Flacco — having a solid night until that point while starting for an injured Sam Darnold — tried to put the game away.

Instead, he swayed the momentum in New England's favor.

Flacco's deep pass down the middle for Denzel Mims was picked off by J.C. Jackson. That set up Newton's tying TD — and deflated the Jets, who couldn't recover.

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"I don't think I would've made a different decision in the moment," Flacco said. "But, obviously, I'd like to have that one back."

Flacco was 18 of 25 for 262 yards and three touchdown passes — two to Breshad Perriman and one to Crowder — but had the game-changing interception.

With the Patriots down by 10, Newton marched them down the field to open the second half, capping a 14-play drive with Burkhead's 1-yard plunge into the end zone to make it 20-17.

But the Jets answered right back, with Flacco finding a wide-open Perriman in the end zone for a 15-yard touchdown and a 27-17 lead with 30 seconds left in the third quarter.

A miscue by the Jets on special teams kept the Patriots' next drive alive.

After Newton stumbled on third-and-1 and was stopped for a 4-yard loss, New England appeared to have to settle for a 32-yard field goal. But the Jets were called for 12 men on the field — resulting in a first down for the Patriots. The defense made up for the mistake, getting a red-zone stop — with an assist from a holding penalty on New England right tackle Mike Onwenu — and holding the Patriots to a field goal to make it 27-20 with 6:04 left.

But New England got the ball right back when Flacco was picked off by Jackson, who has interceptions in four straight games.

With the Jets looking for a stop on third down, Bless Austin was called for defensive holding, keeping the drive alive.

Damien Harris ran for 21 yards to get New England into Jets territory. He followed with a 9-yard gain, but it was called back because of an offensive holding penalty on Meyers. Harris also took a big hit on the run and was down for several minutes before walking gingerly to the sideline.

Three plays later, Newton completed a 19-yard pass to Meyers and then ran for 3 yards on fourth-and-1. Newton hit Damiere Byrd for 31 yards to put the ball at the 3.

With a taxed Jets defense tiring, Newton ran for 2 yards on first down, was stopped for no gain and then pushed his way into the end zone for his second rushing TD of the game to tie it with 1:57 remaining.

"It was a good win," coach Bill Belichick said. "I thought we made the plays we needed to make at the end of the game. Certainly some things we can do better. But we played good complementary football at the end of the game."

JOE PASSES JOE

Flacco passed Pro Football Hall of Famer Joe Montana (40,551) for 20th on the NFL's career yards passing list on his first TD pass to Perriman, a 50-yarder in the second quarter that put the Jets up 13-7. Flacco has thrown for 40,726 yards.

CATCHING ON

Meyers had 12 catches for a career-best 169 yards, joining Rob Gronkowski and Julian Edelman as the only Patriots players with 150 or more yards receiving in a game in the past five seasons.

INJURIES

Patriots: LT Isaiah Wynn left briefly in the first half with an ankle injury, but returned.

Jets: Rookie left tackle Mekhi Becton left in the first half with a chest injury, but coach Adam Gase was unsure if it was a torn pectoral. Cornerback Brian Poole was also ruled out at halftime after injuring a knee in the second quarter.

UP NEXT

Patriots: Host the Baltimore Ravens next Sunday night.

Jets: Bye week. New York is at the Los Angeles Chargers on Nov. 22.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

Candidate concessions have been colorful, funny — or absent

By DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Losing presidential candidates have conceded to their opponents in private chats,

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telegrams, phone calls and nationally televised speeches. Al Gore conceded twice in the same race. President Donald Trump isn't expected to concede at all — not even with a tweet.

There's no law that says he has to concede, but if he doesn't, Trump will be the first presidential candidate in modern times to ignore a tradition that has marked peaceful transitions throughout American history.

Most concessions are gracious — less about the loser and more about closure for the country. Others have a little dry humor mixed in.

After failing to win reelection in 1992, George H.W. Bush quoted Winston Churchill and said he had been given the "Order of the Boot," according to presidential historian Michael Beschloss. Bush said he could accept defeat because of his "deep devotion to the political system under which this nation has thrived for two centuries."

The concession tradition had a hiccup in 2000 when Gore called George W. Bush to concede and then called him back to recant as the results from Florida went sideways.

Their tight campaign ended with the Florida vote in limbo.

"Let me make sure I understand," Bush told Gore on the phone. "You're calling me back to retract your concession?"

When Bush was declared the winner after the Supreme Court halted further recount action, Gore delivered his second concession.

"Just moments ago I spoke with George W. Bush and congratulated him on becoming the 43rd president of the United States. And I promised him that I wouldn't call him back this time," Gore said.

Democratic and Republican candidates in the presidential primaries give concession speeches too. In 1976, after he lost the race to be the Democratic presidential nominee, congressman Morris Udall quipped, "The voters have spoken — the bastards."

Most concession speeches are about mending the country.

After his loss in 2008, Republican Sen. John McCain said: "The American people have spoken, and they have spoken clearly. A little while ago, I had the honor of calling Sen. Barack Obama to congratulate him on being elected the next president of the country that we both love.

"I urge all Americans who supported me to join me in not just congratulating him, but offering our next president our goodwill and earnest effort to find ways to come together."

Richard Nixon, who lost to John F. Kennedy in 1960, said in his concession speech: "One of the individual features of America is that we have political contests — that they are very hard-fought as this one is hard-fought. And once the decision is made, we unite behind the man who was elected."

When Jimmy Carter lost in 1980, he said matter-of-factly, "The people of the United States have made a choice and, of course, I accept that decision."

Bob Dole had to concede in more than one race, but he did so both times with his trademark humor.

After Gerald Ford and Dole lost the 1976 presidential election to Carter and Walter Mondale, Dole, quipped: "Contrary to reports that I took the loss badly, I want to say that I went home last night and slept like a baby — every two hours I woke up and cried."

Dole fell back on humor again in 1996 during his concession speech following his loss to Bill Clinton. When Dole talked of having just congratulated Clinton, he had to discourage boos from the crowd.

He later hushed a particularly raucous supporter by smiling and joking, "You're not gonna get that tax cut if you don't be quiet."

Trump isn't the only candidate to be disgruntled after a loss.

President John Adams was glum, too. He was elected the nation's second president in 1796, but failed to win reelection.

"Adams was very bitter after losing the election of 1800," said John Vile, a political science professor at Middle Tennessee State University who wrote a book about presidents and their words of victory and concession. "He slipped out of Washington, D.C., the morning of or the night before the election. He did not stay for the inauguration."

Vile said in all fairness, there was no clear precedent at the time about what Adams was supposed to

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do. "But it was interpreted at the time that, at least, he was really unhappy," he said.

Vile said the tradition of acknowledging defeat started in the late 1890s when Democrat William Jennings Bryan sent Republican William McKinley a telegram of congratulations. It read, "We have submitted the issue to the American people and their will is law."

Vile said he thinks the funniest concession came from Thomas Dewey, who lost to Harry S. Truman in 1948. In his concession, Dewey likened himself to a corpse and told the story about a drunk at a wake.

As a practical joke, the inebriated man's friends laid him in a coffin, his hands folded on his chest holding a lily. In the morning, he awoke confused.

"If I am alive, what am I doing in this coffin?" Vile said the man wondered. "If I am dead, why do I have to go to the bathroom?" It was sort of a humorous way of letting people know that he was still alive and that it was going to be OK."

Asian stocks rise for 2nd day on coronavirus vaccine hopes

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Asian stock markets rose for second day Tuesday on hopes for progress toward a possible coronavirus vaccine that might allow the world to revive manufacturing, shopping and normal life.

Benchmarks in Tokyo, Hong Kong and Sydney rose by more than 1% while Shanghai and Seoul also advanced.

On Wall Street, the benchmark S&P 500 index closed 1.2% higher on Monday after Pfizer Inc. said early data on a vaccine under development suggest it might be 90% effective at preventing COVID-19, though that doesn't mean its release is imminent.

"This offers a ray of hope that the market did not hesitate to take advantage of," Tai Hui of J.P. Morgan Asset Management said in a report.

Also Tuesday, China reported October inflation fell to its lowest level in a decade. That gives Beijing room to spend more heavily and ease access to credit further if necessary to support an economic recovery that is gathering strength.

The Nikkei 225 rose 1.1% to 25,108.21 and the Hang Seng in Hong Kong added 1.1% to 26,299.06. The Shanghai Composite Index gained less than 0.1% to 3,375.42.

The S&P-ASX 200 in Sydney advanced 1.2% to 6,375.60. The Kospi in Seoul was off 0.2% at 2,443.86. New Zealand, Singapore and Jakarta also rose.

Markets also were relieved by the resolution to the extended uncertainty about the battle for the U.S. presidency. Over the weekend, Democrat Joe Biden clinched the final Electoral College votes to unseat President Donald Trump, though Trump has yet to concede.

Congress may be split between Democratic control of the House of Representatives and Republicans in the Senate. Investors appear to be encouraged by that, which they hope will constrain a Biden administration's possible moves on tax increases and regulatory changes.

On Wall Street, S&P 500 rose to 3,550.50. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 2.9% to 29,157.97.

Pfizer rose 7.7% after indicating the company and its German partner, BioNTech, are on track to file an emergency application for use of their vaccine with U.S. regulators.

Chevron rose 11.6% and The Walt Disney Co. gained 11.9% on hopes people might drive more and visit theme parks again.

Big Tech companies declined. They had surged during the pandemic on expectations they would thrive regardless of whether workers and consumers stayed home. Apple Inc. fell 2% and Microsoft Corp. lost 2.4%. Zoom Video Communications, whose online meetings allow millions of remote students and workers to communicate, sank 17.4%.

The Nasdaq composite, dominated by tech stocks, lost 1.5% to 11,713.78.

The impact of Pfizer's vaccine announcement highlighted the virus's economic dominance, temporarily overshadowing concerns over who controls the U.S. government. The number of confirmed U.S. virus cases passed 10 million on Monday, the world's highest total.

Potential legislative gridlock also makes chances of a rescue package for the economy from Congress likely to be smaller than if Democrats had swept control of all of Washington.

In energy markets, U.S. benchmark crude oil lost 39 cents to \$39.90 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract soared \$3.15 on Monday to \$40.29. Brent crude, the price standard for international oils, shed 27 cents to \$42.13 per barrel in London. It rose \$2.95 the previous session to \$42.40.

The dollar declined to 104.84 yen from Monday's 105.45 yen. The euro was little-changed at \$1.1830.

Barr tells DOJ to probe election fraud claims if they exist

By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General William Barr has authorized federal prosecutors across the U.S. to pursue "substantial allegations" of voting irregularities, if they exist, before the 2020 presidential election is certified, despite no evidence of widespread fraud.

Barr's action comes days after Democrat Joe Biden defeated President Donald Trump and raises the prospect that Trump will use the Justice Department to try to challenge the outcome. It gives prosecutors the ability to go around longstanding Justice Department policy that normally would prohibit such overt actions before the election is certified.

Trump has not conceded the election and is instead claiming without evidence that there has been a widespread, multi-state conspiracy by Democrats to skew the vote tally in Biden's favor.

Biden holds a sizable lead in multiple battleground states and there has been no indication of enough improperly counted or illegally cast votes that would shift the outcome. In fact, election officials from both political parties have publicly stated the election went well, though there have been minor issues that are typical in elections, including voting machines breaking and ballots that were miscast and lost.

In a memo to U.S. attorneys, obtained by The Associated Press, Barr wrote that investigations "may be conducted if there are clear and apparently-credible allegations of irregularities that, if true, could potentially impact the outcome of a federal election in an individual State."

He said any allegations that would "clearly not impact the outcome of a federal election" should be delayed until after those elections are certified and prosecutors should likely open so-called preliminary inquiries, which would allow investigators and prosecutors to see if there is evidence that would allow them to take further investigative measures.

Barr does not identify any specific instances of purported fraud in the memo.

"While it is imperative that credible allegations be addressed in a timely and effective manner, it is equally imperative that Department personnel exercise appropriate caution and maintain the Department's absolute commitment to fairness, neutrality and non-partisanship," Barr wrote.

States have until Dec. 8 to resolve election disputes, including recounts and court contests over the results. Members of the Electoral College meet Dec. 14 to finalize the outcome.

On Monday night, the Justice Department's top prosecutor for election crimes, Richard Pilger, said he would step down from that post in response to the attorney general's memo, according to an email he sent to colleagues and obtained by the AP. He is still expected to remain as an attorney within the Justice Department's criminal division.

Barr, a loyal ally of President Donald Trump, helped broadcast Trump's claims of voter fraud before the election, attacking mail-in voting as prone to undue influence and coercion, despite multiple studies debunking the notion of pervasive voter fraud in general and in the vote-by-mail process.

Generally, Justice Department policy is "not to conduct overt investigations, including interviews with individual voters, until after the outcome of the election allegedly affected by the fraud is certified."

But Barr argues in the memo that concerns such acts could inadvertently impact an election are minimized once voting has concluded and that, in some cases, investigations could not be delayed until the election is certified.

A Justice Department official said Barr had not been asked by Trump, anyone else at the White House

or any lawmakers to issue the memo. The official could not discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Barr was in Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's office on Capitol Hill on Monday afternoon and refused to answer questions from reporters when he left. Earlier Monday, McConnell threw his support behind Trump after a period of post-election silence.

Biden campaign attorney Bob Bauer said in a statement that it is "deeply unfortunate that Attorney General Barr chose to issue a memorandum that will only fuel the 'specious, speculative, fanciful or far-fetched claims' he professes to guard against."

"Those are the very kind of claims that the president and his lawyers are making unsuccessfully every day, as their lawsuits are laughed out of one court after another," Bauer said. "But, in the end, American democracy is stronger than any clumsy and cynical partisan political scheme."

US allows 1st emergency use of a COVID-19 antibody drug

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. health officials have allowed emergency use of the first antibody drug to help the immune system fight COVID-19, an experimental approach against the virus that has killed more than 238,000 Americans.

The Food and Drug Administration on Monday cleared the experimental drug from Eli Lilly for people 12 and older with mild or moderate COVID-19 not requiring hospitalization. It's a one-time treatment given through an IV.

The therapy is still undergoing additional testing to establish its safety and effectiveness. It is similar to a treatment President Donald Trump received after contracting the virus last month.

Early results suggest the drug, called bamlanivimab, may help clear the coronavirus sooner and possibly cut hospitalizations in people with mild to moderate COVID-19. A study of it in hospitalized patients was stopped when independent monitors saw the drug did not seem to be helping in that situation.

The government previously reached an agreement to buy and supply much of the early production of Lilly's drug.

Only one drug -- Gilead Sciences' remdesivir -- has full FDA approval for treating COVID-19. Government treatment guidelines also back using dexamethasone and other steroids for certain severely ill, hospitalized patients.

One other treatment has an emergency use designation now — convalescent plasma, or the blood of COVID-19 survivors. No large studies have shown it to be more effective than usual care alone, however.

The new drug is part of an emerging family of biologic therapies that offer a promising new approach to preventing serious disease and death from COVID-19. Experts say the infused drugs could serve as a therapeutic bridge to help manage the virus until vaccines are widely available.

The drugs are laboratory-made versions of antibodies, blood proteins which the body creates to help target and eliminate foreign infections. The new therapies are concentrated versions of the antibodies that proved most effective against the virus in patient studies.

Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc. also has asked for emergency authorization for an antibody drug it is testing, the one Trump received.

FDA regulators authorized the Lilly drug using their emergency powers to quickly speed the availability of experimental drugs and other medical products during public health crises.

In normal times the FDA requires "substantial evidence" to show that a drug is safe and effective, usually through one or more large, rigorously controlled patient studies. But during public health emergencies the agency can lower those standards and require only that an experimental treatment's potential benefits outweigh its risks.

The emergency authorization functions like a temporary approval for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. To win full approval, Lilly will have to submit additional research to fully define the drug's safety and benefit for patients.

The government has signed an agreement with Lilly to spend \$375 million to buy 300,000 vials of the drug. How many doses that would provide is unclear. Each vial contains 700 milligrams and that dose proved ineffective in the early results. It took four times that amount — 2,800 milligrams — to show any effect.

The Lilly drug is authorized for people 12 and older who weigh at least 40 kilograms (about 88 pounds), and who are at high risk for progressing to severe COVID-19 and/or hospitalization. This includes those who are 65 years of age or older, or who have certain chronic medical conditions.

AP chief medical writer Marilyn Marchione in Milwaukee contributed to this report.

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Testing timeline: What's ahead for COVID-19 vaccines

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

Pfizer's surprising news that its COVID-19 vaccine might offer more protection than anticipated — an announcement right after a fraught U.S. presidential election campaign — is raising questions about exactly how the different shots will make it to market.

Pfizer Inc. and the maker of the other leading U.S. vaccine candidate, Moderna Inc., have been cautioning for weeks that the earliest they could seek regulatory approval for wider use of their shots would be late November. In Britain, AstraZeneca recently said it hoped to prove its own vaccine was effective by year's end.

Late on Monday in a series of tweets President Donald Trump accused the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and Pfizer of waiting until after the election to announce its positive vaccine news for political reasons. Pfizer did not receive data from independent trial monitors until Sunday, however. The FDA was not involved in Pfizer's decision to announce its early results and made no announcements of its own.

The hard truth: Science moves at its own pace. While COVID-19 vaccines are being developed at record speeds in hope of ending the pandemic, when they're ready for prime time depends on a long list of research steps including how many study volunteers wind up getting the coronavirus — something scientists cannot control.

Here's a look at the process:

HOW THE STUDIES WORK

Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech have enrolled nearly 44,000 people in final testing of their vaccine. Neither participants, their doctors nor Pfizer know who gets the real vaccine and who gets a dummy shot. They get a second dose about three weeks after the first.

And then another week after the second dose, key tracking begins: Counting anyone who experiences COVID-19 symptoms and tests positive for the virus as participants go about their daily routines, especially in hot spots.

Late-stage testing of other vaccine candidates is similar, varying slightly in the number of volunteers and timing.

HOW TO TELL SHOTS WORK

Every vaccine study is overseen by an independent "data and safety monitoring board," or DSMB. These boards include scientists and statisticians who have no ties to the vaccine makers.

Before a study is complete, only the DSMB has the power to unlock the code of who got real vaccine and who got placebo, and to recommend if the shots are working well enough to stop testing early.

Those boards take sneak peeks at pre-determined times agreed to by the manufacturer and the Food and Drug Administration. The first interim analysis for Pfizer came Sunday. The company reported its data monitors had counted 94 infections so far -- and that among those initial cases, the vaccine appeared 90% effective.

But the study isn't stopping: To be sure of protection, it's set to run until there are 164 infections. The more COVID-19 cases occur in the trial, the better idea scientists will have of just how protective the shots

really are.

COULD THAT SNEAK PEEK HAVE COME EARLIER?

Pfizer's initial plans called for evaluating when just 32 infections had been counted. But many scientists warned that was simply too small to draw conclusions about a vaccine needed by billions.

Pfizer said it reconsidered, going back to the FDA for permission to change the plan and do its first interim analysis when there were more cases. By the time Pfizer made the change and caught up with a backlog of virus tests, the DSMB had 94 infections to analyze.

The higher number increases confidence in those still preliminary results, said Dr. Jesse Goodman, a former FDA vaccine scientist now at Georgetown University.

Moderna, AstraZeneca and other companies not quite as far along in their final testing all have set slightly different timepoints for when their data monitors will peek at how the shots are working.

DON'T FORGET SAFETY

Safety is the top priority. Monitors also watch for unexpected or serious side effects. Earlier this fall, separate studies of vaccine candidates made by AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson were temporarily halted after some participants experienced health problems, delaying the research until safety investigations allowed both to resume.

Pfizer said Monday no serious safety concerns have emerged so far with its vaccine.

But the FDA is requiring that companies track at least half of study volunteers for two months to look for side effects before asking the agency to review their vaccine. That's about when side effects have cropped in studies of other vaccines.

Pfizer and Moderna both expect to reach that safety milestone later in November.

WHAT HAPPENS THEN?

Companies are expected to seek permission for "emergency use" of their vaccines, rather than waiting to fully complete their studies and then seeking traditional approval.

The FDA's scientific advisers will debate each company's study findings in a public meeting before the agency decides.

Manufacturers already have begun stockpiling vaccine doses in anticipation of eventual approval, but the first shots will be in short supply and rationed. And the first people vaccinated will need to undergo extra safety tracking, as the government watches for rare side effects that might crop up when the shots are given to many more people than were in the research studies.

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Much at stake as Supreme Court weighs future of 'Obamacare'

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When the Supreme Court weighs the fate of "Obamacare" on Tuesday, arguments will revolve around arcane points of law like severability — whether the justices can surgically snip out part of the law and leave the rest.

But what's at stake has real-world consequences for just about every American, as well as the health care industry, a major source of jobs and tax revenues. Whether the Affordable Care Act stays, goes, or is significantly changed, will affect the way life is lived in the U.S.

The argument against the law from the Trump administration and conservative states is that the 10-year-old statute was rendered unconstitutional in its entirety when Congress dialed down to zero a penalty on those remaining uninsured. The court has shifted solidly to the political right under President Donald Trump. Here's a look at some of what's at stake if the opponents of the law prevail:

COVID-19 A NEW PRE-EXISTING CONDITION

Before the ACA, insurers could turn a person down for an individual policy, or charge them more, based on their medical history. The nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that about 54 million working-age adults have health issues that would have made them "uninsurable" before former President Barack

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Obama's signature law.

Tens of millions more have issues that could have led to higher premiums. Female gender was one, as insurers routinely charged women more.

COVID-19 would become America's newest pre-existing condition, for more than 10 million people who have tested positive so far.

Under the ACA, a coronavirus case cannot be used to deny someone coverage or charge them more. If Obamacare is gone, that becomes a real question.

Trump promised to always protect people with preexisting conditions, but never said how he'd do it.

COVERAGE FOR MORE THAN 20 MILLION

The ACA's two main programs for covering uninsured people would be wiped out if the law is overturned, leaving more than 20 million people uninsured unless a divided Congress can put a new safety net in place.

About 12 million low-income people are covered through the health law's Medicaid expansion, now available in most states. Most of them are adults working in jobs that don't pay all that much, and don't come with health insurance. Some have lost jobs in businesses like hotels, restaurants, and movie theaters, which continue to struggle because of the pandemic.

Another group, more than 11 million people, has private coverage purchased through taxpayer-subsidized private markets such as HealthCare.gov

That's also in jeopardy.

PREVENTION

Most American women now pay nothing out of their own pockets for birth control. That's covered as a preventive service, free of charge to the patient, under the ACA.

Many other services, from colonoscopies to flu shots, are also free.

If people again face copays for routine preventive care, that may discourage some to go for tests shown to detect diseases like cancer at early stages when they are easier to treat.

RETURN OF A MEDICARE GAP

"Obamacare" took the first major steps to close Medicare's unpopular "doughnut hole," a coverage gap that used to leave seniors on the hook for hundreds of dollars in prescriptions drug costs. Congress later accelerated the timetable.

Repealing the ACA would mean the return of the coverage gap, sure to infuriate older voters, many of whom say their medications still cost too much.

That's just one of many potential consequences to Medicare. The ACA slowed payments to hospitals and insurers to extend the life of the Medicare trust fund.

LONGER RUNWAY SHORTENED

One of the earliest benefits to take effect after the passage of "Obamacare" was a requirement that insurers allow young adults to stay on a parent's plan until they turned 26.

That provided a longer economic runway for millions of young adults, who back then were struggling with the lingering effects of the Great Recession. Nowadays it's the consequences of the coronavirus economy.

Before the ACA's coverage extension, insurers routinely cut off young adults upon graduation.

TAX CUT FOR THE WEALTHY

"Obamacare" raised taxes on upper income individuals to help finance its coverage expansion.

If the entire law is repealed, that would deliver a tax cut to well-to-do people, many of whom have escaped the economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic because stock market investors have continued to do well.

POLITICAL RUBIK'S CUBE

Passing the 900-page-plus ACA was a political challenge that took more than a year at a time when Democrats controlled the White House and both chambers in Congress.

Putting together a replacement under a divided government would be the ultimate political puzzle. Neither Democrats nor Republicans agree even within their own ranks what that should look like.

President-elect Joe Biden would build on the ACA by improving it and adding a new public health insur-

ance option. But party liberals want a government-run system for all Americans, including the 160 million covered through employer plans.

Many Republicans, meanwhile, want to scale back the government's support for health care. They would make deep cuts to Medicaid financing, and leave the ACA's insurance markets as a state option. Protections for people with pre-existing conditions could be eroded under new rules.

Trump once famously said, "nobody knew health care could be so complicated." That was in 2017, when he and a Republican-controlled Congress harbored hopes they could "repeal and replace" the ACA.

It didn't happen then because Republicans could never agree on what a replacement would look like. Fast forward to 2020. Health care has only gotten more complicated.

As cases rise, states say they'll work with Biden on virus

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

The incoming Biden administration is promising a cohesive national strategy to combat the worsening coronavirus outbreak, something many public health officials and Democratic governors say they welcome after months of mixed messaging under the Trump administration.

Consistency about the need to wear a mask to reduce the virus spread is just a start. Among other things, they say they need help with testing and contact tracing, deploying an eventual vaccine and more money to shore up their budgets, including to help keep schools open.

Biden on Monday announced members of a coronavirus task force and his staff started reaching out to governors. In New Mexico, Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham praised Biden for "leading with science and de-politicizing the federal government's pandemic response."

Lujan Grisham was an early adopter of aggressive pandemic restrictions that included a mask mandate, self-quarantine orders for travelers and a ban on public gatherings -- now capped at five people. Despite that approach, daily statewide infections and deaths have surged steadily to new heights in October and November.

"New Mexico is an example of the fact that even the best state-level policies are insufficient on their own," she said in a statement. "The entire country, including the people of New Mexico, deserves the full force of the federal government to address the ongoing emergency and it is encouraging to see President-elect Biden preparing to do exactly that."

Another Democrat, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, praised Biden's embrace of a national strategy to combat the virus. Minnesota's per-capita new case counts are better than neighboring Wisconsin and the Dakotas, which have some of the country's highest transmission rates, but have still raised alarm with the state's health officials. Walz planned to announce new steps Tuesday aimed at younger adults.

"Conscious decisions were made in states to approach this differently, and some states had better outcomes. But here's the deal: it was only a matter of time before we're in this with all 50 states, and it's bleeding over," he said. "So I have been asking for a long time for a concerted national strategy around this. I think that starts today."

Biden's announcement of a virus task force on Monday coincided with tougher actions or statements from a number of governors, including Republicans, as COVID-19 cases soared past 10 million in the U.S. and deaths were approaching 240,000.

In Utah, Republican Gov. Gary Herbert ordered a statewide mask mandate for the first time late Sunday. He also is pausing extracurricular school activities, along with most sports and social gatherings with people outside the household.

Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts, also a Republican, required masks Monday in businesses such as salons and massage parlors where customers and employees are in close contact for more than 15 minutes. In Idaho, where 1 of every 223 residents tested positive for the virus over the last week, Republican Gov. Brad Little wrote an opinion piece Monday imploring people to wear masks, though he said he does not have the authority to issue a statewide mandate.

With Trump still not conceding the race, some Republican governors have greeted Biden's efforts in a

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more measured way.

In Wyoming, where the number of new daily coronavirus cases has nearly doubled over the past two weeks, Gov. Mark Gordon has so far refused to say who he thinks won the presidential election and said he has not heard from Biden's team about a coronavirus response. He said his administration will continue working with the White House coronavirus task force and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on the issue.

"If and when the Biden team reaches out to our office, we will be receptive to their communication," Gordon spokesman Michael Pearlman said.

In Oklahoma, where cases also are on the rise, Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt will remain open to working with the federal government on a virus response, said his spokesman, Charlie Hannema. But he cautioned against a heavy hand.

"If they are going to come out and request 5,000 pages of documents or make a lot of requests that pull valuable resources away from managing the response on the ground here in Oklahoma, that may be a different conversation," Hannema said.

Biden has sought to normalize social distancing and mask wearing to check the spread of the virus, a contrast to Trump who held packed campaign rallies with many supporters unmasked, even after his own battle with the virus. Biden said he is asking governors and local leaders to require mask use in public. Most states have some version of a mandate in place already.

Biden was elected as cases are at an all-time high, with a record average of nearly 109,000 new ones each day over the past week. They're up over two weeks ago in every state but Alabama and Rhode Island. Hospitalizations are also up, as are COVID-linked deaths, which stand at 939 a day over the past week, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

While the federal government under Trump set up testing centers in some places and has funded tests, public health experts have said there has not been an adequate national strategy for testing or contact-tracing, which is also carried out largely at the local level. Trump has emphasized vaccine development.

"Part of the problem with the response so far is that there really hasn't been a testing plan, and a contact tracing plan and any kind of meaningful disease containment plan that all of us understood," said Dr. Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association. "We've been doing this, but it's been pretty scattershot."

Early in the pandemic, for instance, Trump told states that they were responsible for buying their own protective gear. With worldwide shortages, governors complained that meant they had to bid against each other to get the equipment they needed.

With cases rising, protective equipment needs are running high again. And health experts say there will be more needs sometime next year to distribute a vaccine.

"We're very concerned that as we start to scale up to administer a new vaccine, our rate-limiting factor could become the fact that that we've got people trained up and ready to go, but we don't have the protective equipment for them to wear, so they can't administer vaccines," said Dr. Marcus Plescia, chief medical officer at the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

While he has signed bills to provide \$2.6 trillion in help to businesses, laid-off workers and governments, Trump has not reached an agreement with the Democrats who control the House and the Republicans who run the U.S. Senate on another round of aid, and it's not clear whether a deal will be reached while he remains in office.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo has called for as much as \$60 billion in federal relief to offset the coronavirus' hit to the state's economy. Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont said it has been difficult for states to plan amid uncertainty in Washington about the aid.

"That herky-jerky model of governing is just disastrous for the states," Lamont said

Mulvihill reported from Davenport, Iowa, and Lieb from Jefferson City, Missouri. Andrew Taylor in Washington, D.C., and Associated Press state government reporters across the U.S. contributed.

Cat at Northeast's highest peak dies after 12 years on duty

NORTH CONWAY, N.H. (AP) — A cat who patrolled the highest peak in the northeast U.S. for a dozen years as its weather observatory's mascot has died.

Marty, a black Maine coon cat, succumbed to "an unforeseen illness," Mount Washington Summit Operations Manager Rebecca Scholand said in a news release Monday.

"As a past observer who lived on the summit for four years, I can tell you Marty was a special companion, entertainer and so incredibly loved by observers and state park staff and will be sadly missed," she wrote.

The Mount Washington Observatory staff have had a cat at the 6,288-foot (1,915-meter) summit, called the "home of the world's worst weather," since 1932. The observatory had recently shared the news that Marty would retire from the mountain early in 2021.

"The summit feline tradition will continue," the news release said.

Marty, a shelter cat, won 53% of the Mount Washington Mascot Primary in January 2008, the same time that Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican John McCain won their respective races in New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation presidential primary.

Biden eyes Washington veterans for key administration posts

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden is looking to build out his nascent White House staff with more traditional Washington insiders, a notable departure from four years in which President Donald Trump filled his team with outsiders and government antagonists.

Ron Klain is an early favorite to become Biden's chief of staff, according to multiple people familiar with planning who spoke on condition of anonymity to speak freely about private discussions. He has decades of Washington experience that includes being Biden's chief of staff when he was vice president in addition to serving as the Ebola response coordinator in 2014 and having a central role in the Obama administration's financial crisis response.

Delaware Sen. Chris Coons, a longtime Biden ally and friend, is seen as a potential choice for secretary of state. Rep. Karen Bass of California, whom Biden considered for vice president, is seen as a potential housing and urban development secretary. Both served in Congress for the past decade.

Biden is expected to move quickly to name a chief of staff, but other top Cabinet positions will likely take longer.

The names under consideration represent Biden's effort to move Washington past the tumult of President Donald Trump's administration and fill out his government with more seasoned professionals. The task is taking on even greater urgency than in past transitions because Biden will take office in January amid a raging pandemic that will likely consume the early days of his presidency and require a full government response.

Biden made clear on Monday that he would focus on the pandemic by forming a coronavirus advisory board. Former Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, who was named a co-chair of that panel, is seen as a contender for the top job at the Department of Health and Human Services. New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, who ran her state's health department, is also being eyed for the position.

Even for roles where Biden has the opportunity to make history and appoint the first woman or African American Cabinet secretary, like at defense and treasury, Biden is said to be considering options with decades of experience in their chosen fields.

Roger Ferguson, who served as vice chair of the Federal Reserve under Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, is a potential treasury secretary, while Michele Flournoy, a former under secretary of defense, is seen as a top pick to lead the Pentagon.

Some Democrats are hopeful that the more traditional picks will help rebuild morale among the thousands of civil servants who felt thwarted at doing their jobs under Trump.

"You're not only talking about people who have an expertise in government functions, you're talking

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about people who have a great deal of respect for government functions," said Ed Espinoza, former western states political director for the Democratic National Committee. "That's a key distinction between the Trump administration and a Biden administration."

It's a striking shift from Trump, who built out his Cabinet with a raft of unorthodox picks, many of whom were openly skeptical of the federal government's role in the jobs they were tasked with.

Betsy DeVos, an advocate for steering federal money to private charter schools, led the Education Department. Scott Pruitt, the former Oklahoma attorney general who's a skeptic of the science showing humans contribute to climate change, ran the Environmental Protection Agency.

And Republican Rep. Mick Mulvaney of South Carolina, who initially served as White House budget director, supported shutting down the government to rein in federal spending and was critical of some of the proposals Trump aimed to invest in, like a massive infrastructure policy.

Still, Biden faces a number of major unknowns as he prepares for the presidency.

First, the scope of Biden's first-term agenda will hinge on which party controls the Senate, which remains in question with two special Senate elections in Georgia scheduled for the first week in January. Democrats have acknowledged they will likely need to pare back some of Biden's campaign trail promises even if they do hold the majority in a closely divided Senate, and a slim majority could also affect the kinds of nominees Biden can hope to get approved for top Cabinet slots.

The most imminent unknown for Biden, however, remains to what extent Trump and his administration will work with the former vice president as his team begins its efforts to transition the government.

The General Services Administration is tasked with formally recognizing Biden as president-elect, beginning the transition process. But the agency's Trump-appointed administrator, Emily Murphy, has not started the process and has given no guidance on when she will do so.

That lack of clarity is fueling questions about whether Trump, who has not publicly recognized Biden's victory and has falsely claimed the election was stolen, will impede Democrats as they try to establish a government.

There is little precedent in the modern era of a president erecting such hurdles for his successor. The stakes are especially high this year because of the coronavirus pandemic, which will require a comprehensive government response.

"America's national security and economic interests depend on the federal government signaling clearly and swiftly that the United States government will respect the will of the American people and engage in a smooth and peaceful transfer of power," Jen Psaki, a Biden transition aide, tweeted Sunday.

South Carolina Rep. Jim Clyburn, an ally of Biden's on Capitol Hill, said that if Trump continues to drag his feet, then he hopes that "my conservative friends in Congress will have an intervention."

"This country is bigger than one person, and to allow the people of this country to suffer -- we are near 245,000 deaths, and we're still messing around and won't get the relief that people need," he said.

Indeed, some Republicans on Capitol Hill called for a smooth transition Monday. Maine Sen. Susan Collins, a moderate Republican and occasional Trump antagonist, congratulated Biden on his victory and said in a statement that "presidential transitions are important" and that Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris should "be given every opportunity to ensure that they are ready to govern on January 20th."

Jaffe reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Meg Kinnard in Columbia, S.C., and Patrick Whittle in Portland, Maine, contributed to this report.

Notre Dame mandates virus testing after football celebration

By CASEY SMITH Associated Press/Report for America

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — University of Notre Dame students are now subject to mandatory coronavirus testing with stricter penalties if they leave town before getting their test results after thousands of fans stormed the football field and threw parties to celebrate a double-overtime upset over Clemson.

The mass of students, players and coaches crammed close together on the field in the minutes follow-

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ing the Fighting Irish's 47-40 win Saturday night in South Bend, Indiana, over then-No. 1 Clemson. Many were not wearing masks or had them pulled down.

All Notre Dame students are required to undergo coronavirus testing before they leave South Bend for the extended winter break, Notre Dame President the Rev. John Jenkins told students in an email Sunday night. Jenkins didn't specifically reference the storming of the field, but rather "many gatherings" over the weekend.

If a student is exposed or tests positive, they will be required to quarantine on campus for two weeks. If students don't complete the mandatory coronavirus test — or if they leave before they receive their test results — they will be prevented from registering for classes, university officials said.

The campus has also introduced a zero-tolerance rule for gatherings that do not follow safety guidelines. Any student hosting a large gathering will face "severe sanctions."

"As exciting as last night's victory against Clemson was, it was very disappointing to see evidence of widespread disregard of our health protocols at many gatherings over the weekend," Jenkins said in his letter. In addition to the game, numerous parties were held across campus.

Following the win, Notre Dame moved up two spots to No. 2 in The Associated Press college football poll, while Clemson dropped to No. 4.

The celebration came just two days after Jenkins released a video warning students about spikes in COVID-19 cases on campus and imploring them to redouble their efforts to follow safety measures. Notre Dame reported 24 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, with 220 active cases overall. The university has reported 1,355 positive cases since the start of the fall semester.

Jenkins has come under criticism in recent weeks after he failed to wear a mask at a White House Rose Garden ceremony at which President Donald Trump introduced Amy Coney Barrett as his nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court. Jenkins, who tested positive for COVID-19 days later, shook hands and sat shoulder-to-shoulder with others at the event.

Jenkins later apologized, admitting he had "failed to lead by example." Notre Dame's Faculty Senate formally expressed disappointment in his actions in a resolution passed Thursday.

Casey Smith 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.

'This is proof': Biden's win reveals power of Black voters

By KAT STAFFORD, AARON MORRISON and ANGELIKI KASTANIS Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Power. Respect. Finally.

When Eric Sheffield first saw Joe Biden take the lead in the vote count in Georgia, the 52-year-old Black man immediately thought about all the years he spent urging his Black friends and family to vote and all the times he saw his preferred candidate lose.

"Over the years, a lot of Black people have said, 'Well, my vote doesn't matter,'" the real estate development analyst in Atlanta said Friday. "This is proof that our vote does matter."

Even as votes are still tallied, there's little dispute that Black voters were a driving national force pushing the former vice president to the winner's column. By overwhelmingly backing Biden and showing up in strong numbers, Black voters not only helped deliver familiar battleground states to the Democrat, but they also created a new one in the longtime GOP bastion of Georgia — potentially remaking presidential politics for years to come.

Activists pointed to the results as a repudiation of the racist rhetoric of President Donald Trump and an endorsement of Biden's choice of Kamala Harris, the first Black woman on a major party presidential ticket, as his running mate. But they also credited their years of work organizing voters and signaled they intended to seek a return on their investment.

"We saw this early — we believed in us," said Maurice Mitchell, a Movement for Black Lives strategist and

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national director of the Working Families Party — a progressive multiracial grassroots effort. “We believed in the power of Black voters and Black organizers in our movement.”

Black voters made up 11% of the national electorate, and 9 in 10 of them supported Biden, according to AP VoteCast, an expansive survey of more than 110,000 voters nationwide. Both figures are about on par with 2016, when Democrat Hillary Clinton also overwhelmingly won Black voters’ support but fell short of winning the White House, according to Pew Research Center estimates.

But when compared to Clinton, Biden drew more voters in critical areas with large Black populations. In Wayne County, Michigan, which includes Detroit, and in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, Biden added to his vote totals and his margins compared to Clinton, while Trump’s votes failed to match the Democratic gains. The increase in the Democratic vote in Milwaukee, about 28,000 votes, was more than the 20,000-vote lead Biden had in the state.

While votes are still being counted in Philadelphia, Biden had not surpassed Clinton’s 2016 total vote tally in the county. Still, he received at least 93% of the vote in the city’s wards where more than 75% of the population is Black, according to an Associated Press analysis.

But perhaps the most striking evidence for the influence of Black voters was in Georgia, where Biden’s slim edge could make him the first Democratic presidential candidate to win the Republican stronghold in nearly three decades. The AP has not called that race.

So far, the Democrat has added 588,600 voters in Georgia compared to Clinton’s tally in 2016, while Trump saw an increase of only 366,900. Almost half of Biden’s gains came from the four largest counties — Fulton, DeKalb, Gwinnett and Cobb — all in the Atlanta metro area with large Black populations.

Biden acknowledged Black voters’ role during his victory speech Saturday night, noting the “African American community stood up again for me.”

“You’ve always had my back, and I’ll have yours,” he said.

In 2008 and 2012, Black voters showed up in record numbers for Barack Obama, the nation’s first Black president — setting a new high bar. But Black voter turnout dropped significantly in key cities in 2016, prompting debate within the party about why and a feeling among Black voters that they were being blamed for Trump’s victory.

But as Biden declared his candidacy and was competitive in the Democratic primary, it was Black voters in states such as South Carolina, Virginia and Alabama who aligned with the former vice president and helped him win the nomination.

The choice of Biden was a source of tension within the party — particularly among progressive activists who were critical of his role in the passage of federal criminal justice legislation in the 1990s that lengthened sentences for violent crimes, helped fill prisons and flooded Black communities with police officers. Others in the party were unhappy with his positions on health care, climate change and economic policy.

Polling suggests those tensions did not hurt Biden in the end. Black Biden voters were much more likely than other Biden voters — especially those who were white — to say they were casting their ballots for the Democrat rather than against Trump, according to AP VoteCast.

For many Black women, Biden’s choice of Harris, who will be the first Black woman and the first South Asian woman to hold the vice presidency, made their votes an extension of the legacy of civil rights workers Fannie Lou Hamer and Shirley Chisholm.

“This literally is what our ancestors have fought and died for — the freedom, liberation and survival that they knew they would never live to see, but they knew that it was so important for generations to come,” said Alencia Johnson, a political strategist and Biden adviser.

Behind that sentiment was massive voter mobilization.

Black Voters Matter Fund targeted more than 15 states, sending a fleet of buses on road trips across the nation. In Georgia alone, they reached more than 500,000 voters and sent nearly 2 million text messages.

The effort was helped in that state by implementation of statewide automatic registration when voters obtain or renew state IDs. Black voter registrations increased by 40% in both Fulton and Gwinnett counties, according to the Georgia secretary of state. The increase in the growing counties outpaced the 6%

increase in the Black population over the same time period.

Turnout may also have been boosted by new rules making it easier to vote during the pandemic. After many Black voters experienced long lines during primary elections in Georgia and Wisconsin, many were motivated to take advantage of mail-in and early voting options, helping Biden's campaign bank those votes early.

Fair Fight, the voting rights group founded by Stacey Abrams, launched widespread voter education efforts and pushed back aggressively against GOP-led efforts to limit mail voting. Abrams, a former candidate for Georgia governor, said she saw the election as a critical moment to try to "mitigate harm" done under the Trump administration.

"It's one of those few moments where we have this power to shape the future for ourselves, to insist upon at least attention to our plight," she said. "And to demand behavior that meets this notion that we have as a nation that there should be justice for all."

Organizers and activists are now pivoting to plans to hold Biden accountable for promises of economic investment, tackling systemic racism, policing reforms and improved health care.

The Rev. William Barber II, a civil rights leader, said he expects Black poverty — a rate of 18.8% worsened by the coronavirus pandemic — to be an immediate priority for a Biden administration.

"We'll be expecting follow-through," said Barber, a leader of the Poor People's Campaign. "Biden needs to have a 50-day strategy, not a 100-day strategy, for addressing the issues."

Swift action on Biden's agenda, however, will be impossible without Democratic control of the Senate. That could be determined by the outcome of two Georgia runoff elections on Jan. 5.

Activists said they intended to keep up momentum and expected a flood of attention and money, giving Black voters another chance to demonstrate their power.

"We are going to put everything we have into them, just as much, if not more, than the presidential," said Cliff Albright, co-founder of Black Voters Matter Fund. "The choice is clear and we don't have a choice to sit this one out, and we're going to highlight the fierce urgency of it."

Morrison reported from New York; Kastanis reported from Los Angeles. Polling reporter Hannah Fingerhut in Washington also contributed to this report.

Morrison and Stafford are members of AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Follow them on Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/aaronlmorrison> and https://www.twitter.com/@kat__stafford

Ukraine's president tests positive for COVID-19

MOSCOW (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced Monday that he has tested positive for the coronavirus and will be working in self-isolation while being treated.

"There are no lucky people in the world for whom COVID-19 does not pose a threat," Zelenskyy tweeted. "However, I feel good. I promise to isolate myself and I continue to work."

Zelenskyy said he was running a temperature of 37.5 Celsius (99.5 Fahrenheit).

The 42-year-old Zelenskyy became president in 2019 as a political neophyte, previously known as an actor and comedian. He became popular in the country for a TV sitcom, "Servant of the People," in which he played the role of a teacher who unexpectedly becomes president after making a rant about corruption that goes viral. He handily defeated incumbent Petro Poroshenko.

Ukraine's coronavirus infections began surging in late summer and have put the country's underpaid doctors and under-equipped hospitals under severe pressure.

On Monday, Ukraine reported 8,867 new cases of infection and 115 deaths over the past day. Throughout the pandemic, 8,565 people have died of COVID-19 in the country.

Ethiopia says its jets are 'pounding' targets in Tigray

By CARA ANNA and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

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NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Ethiopia's air force is "pounding targets with precision," a military official said Monday, as the federal government continues its offensive against the heavily armed northern region of Tigray and no clear route to peace is seen.

Neighboring Sudan has sent more than 6,000 troops to the border, a military official there said, while Ethiopia's Nobel Peace Prize-winning Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed again sought to calm concerns that the deadly confrontation could slide into civil war and destabilize the strategic Horn of Africa region.

It remains unclear how many people have been killed in the fighting that erupted last week in Tigray as Abiy's government comes under increasing international pressure to calm tensions. The United Nations and others have warned of a brewing humanitarian disaster affecting up to 9 million people.

The northern Tigray region is largely cut off from the outside world, making it difficult to verify each side's assertions. Each accuses the other of starting the fighting.

Ethiopian Maj. Gen. Mohammed Tssema, who spoke of the "pounding" by the air force, in a Facebook post also denied as "totally wrong" a claim by the Tigray regional government on Sunday that a fighter jet had been shot down.

The Tigray regional government, the Tigray People's Liberation Front, did confirm the federal government's aerial assault, saying in a Facebook post that the air force had carried out more than 10 such attacks so far.

Ethiopia's prime minister has shown no sign of opening talks with the TPLF, which once dominated Ethiopia's ruling coalition but is now regarded by the federal government as illegal after it broke away last year as Abiy sought to transform the coalition into a single Prosperity Party. The TPLF felt marginalized by Abiy's political reforms and defied the federal government by holding a local election in September.

"Concerns that Ethiopia will descend into chaos are unfounded," Abiy said in a brief statement Monday, and vowed that what he calls a law enforcement action "will wrap up soon." Abiy on Sunday reshuffled his Cabinet to make major changes to his government's military and intelligence leadership in an apparent move to bring supporters of the military offensive to the forefront.

"There's no indication this is anything but a full-scale federal government attempt to remove the TPLF leadership. They seem intent on that course," International Crisis Group analyst Will Davison told The Associated Press. "No one's interested in negotiations at this stage. At least, no one's interested in making concessions toward them."

He asked: "If this conflict becomes entrenched, will the federal government start to look for a negotiated solution and the Tigray leadership do the same?"

Diplomats and others assert that the conflict in Tigray could destabilize other parts of Ethiopia, Africa's second-most populous country with 110 million people, scores of ethnic groups, and other regions that have sought more autonomy even as Abiy, who won the Nobel just last year, tries to hold the country together with exhortations of national unity.

The conflict in Tigray pits two heavily armed forces against each other in the heart of the strategic Horn of Africa, and experts worry that neighbors including Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia could be sucked in.

In a sign of rapidly escalating tensions, Sudan's leader said his country is concerned about the fighting and urged the warring sides to find a peaceful solution to their disputes. Sudan forms Tigray's western border.

Gen. Abdel-Fatah Burhan, head of the ruling Sovereign Council, issued the statement after chairing a meeting of Sudan's National Defence Council, the highest body that makes decisions in security matters in the country. He called on the international and regional communities to "carry out their duties for the stability of the region and peace opportunities in Ethiopia."

A military official in Khartoum said the Sudanese military has deployed more than 6,000 troops to the area bordering Ethiopia since the start of the fighting in Tigray last week. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief the media.

Sudan has already sealed off its borders with Ethiopia's Tigray and Amhara regions. But it is bracing for a potential flow of people fleeing the fighting.

"We have completed our preparedness," Lt. Gen. Shams el-Din Kabashi, a member of the Sovereign Council, said in an interview with the Youm al-Taly newspaper published Monday.

Magdy contributed from Cairo.

Kamala Harris win inspires women and girls nationwide

By KAT STAFFORD and CHRISTINE FERNANDO ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT (AP) — When Ashley Richardson-George's 5-year-old daughter saw Kamala Harris wearing a white suffragette suit during her prime-time victory speech on Saturday, she ran into her room and came back minutes later wearing a white dress and sweater.

Not only did her daughter, Andrea, want to be like the Vice President-elect, she wanted to look like her, too. And on that night, it was more possible than ever.

"I was just really happy for her because you really don't believe that you can be anything that you want unless you see it," said Richardson-George of New York. "So for her, she was like, 'I can be the president.' So to see that glimmer in her eyes as a parent, it really is powerful to me as her mom."

For countless women and girls, Harris' achievement of reaching the second highest office in the country represents hope, validation and the shattering of a proverbial glass ceiling that has kept mostly white men perched at the top tiers of American government.

"She's literally the blueprint to women's political possibility and now she is stepping literally into the Oval Office and she's going to put an intersectional lens on everything this administration does from a gender or race lens," said Glynda Carr, the president and CEO of Higher Heights, which focuses on electing Black women into political offices.

Harris, a 56-year-old California senator who is the first Black woman and the first person of South Asian descent elected to the vice presidency, has long credited civil rights legends like Shirley Chisholm, Mary McLeod Bethune and Fannie Lou Hamer as sources of inspiration, as well as her Indian mother, Shyamala Gopalan.

On Saturday, she paid tribute to the women, particularly Black women, who paved the way for her.

"While I may be the first woman in this office, I will not be the last," Harris said in her first post-election address to the nation.

Los Angeles mother Kim Rincon sat with her arm around her 9-year-old daughter, Jordan, to watch the speech.

A year ago, Rincon and Jordan had met Harris backstage at a rally during her bid for president in the 2020 Democratic primaries. Jordan gave Harris the "Kamala for President" button she was wearing before Harris crouched to the ground to thank her at eye level.

"Harris was being celebrated as this superstar at that rally and now on stage accepting the vice presidency," said Rincon, whose daughter is Mexican and Vietnamese American. "My biggest hope is that Jordan grows up thinking this is normal."

A similar scene played out in Phoenix, Arizona in Nicol Russell's home.

As Harris stepped onto the stage, Russell's 5-year-old daughter Makena and her best friend immediately sprang up and ran to the TV. For minutes, they stood transfixed.

"She's brown like my mom," Makena told her friend.

For Russell, a Black and Native Hawaiian woman, Harris' election has profound meaning not just as it relates to her daughter but to herself as well.

"In watching her, I see my sisters, I see my mother. I see every hard-working Black or brown woman," Russell said. "I see Stacey Abrams. I see Queen Liliuokalani. I see all the women who endured so many terrible things to help clear a pathway for us to have this moment. She symbolizes everything we've been working for."

Flint, Michigan resident Egypt Otis and her 9-year-old daughter Eva Allen met Harris in September when she stopped by Otis' bookstore, Comma Bookstore & Social Hub, during a campaign trip focused on Black communities across the battleground state.

So when Allen and Otis watched Harris' historic speech Saturday, it was a full circle moment for the

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Black mother and daughter.

"My daughter is going to be a part of history because she had the opportunity to have a conversation with our first Black woman vice president," Otis said. "It just shows you how important representation is."

In Fairbanks, Alaska, Trina Bailey and her 13-year-old daughter, Leilah, sat arm-in-arm on the couch watching Harris' speech. It was a moment of hope and mourning as Bailey reflected on the Black women she loves who never had the chance to step on a stage like that.

"I believe Black women belong in all places where decisions are being made," said Bailey, who is Black herself. "Today, that's Senator Kamala Harris. Tomorrow, it's my daughter, Leilah Bailey."

Leilah, who wants to be president one day, said Harris' speech made her confident her dream is possible. "Young girls are feeling like they are able to do more than they thought they were able to," Leilah said. "I felt amazing because it made me feel like I had a chance to do things that mostly men have done."

Fernando reported from Carmel, Indiana.

No. 1 Zags: Gonzaga begins season atop Top 25 for first time

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Basketball Writer

Just about the only thing Gonzaga has left to accomplish under Mark Few is win a national championship.

The 'Zags scratched another first off the list Monday: They will open the season at No. 1.

Despite losing West Coast Conference player of the year Filip Petrushev, the Bulldogs received 28 first-place votes and 1,541 points from a 64-member national media panel. That was just enough to edge Baylor (24 first-place vote) by a single point for the top spot in the preseason Associated Press Top 25 heading toward the delayed Nov. 25 start of the season.

"It's a great honor to be selected No. 1," Few said. "We understand that it is more a reflection of what our program has accomplished over the years and hope to play up to that standard as we start our season."

Villanova received 11 first-place votes and was third, followed by Virginia with the remaining first-place vote. Iowa was picked fifth behind national player of the year front-runner Luka Garza, its highest pre-season ranking in school history.

Then came a wave of bluebloods with Kansas, Wisconsin, Illinois, Duke and Kentucky completing the top 10.

The Bulldogs spent four weeks at No. 1 last season before finishing second to the Jayhawks in the final poll, which was taken when the NCAA Tournament was canceled by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Petrushev's choice to play professionally in Serbia and then enter the draft was a blow, but the Bulldogs still have the pieces to win it all. Corey Kispert and Joel Ayayi provide scoring punch and the arrival of potential one-and-done guard Jalen Suggs should steady their backcourt.

The 'Zags certainly scheduled like title contenders. They open Nov. 26 against Kansas at the Fort Myers Tip-Off, where they also will play Auburn, and face Baylor in Indianapolis and Iowa in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

The Bears, who also have their highest preseason ranking, spent five weeks at No. 1 last season and only lost one starter in big man Freddie Gillespie. But coach Scott Drew could have the nation's best backcourt in Jared Butler, Davion Mitchell and MaCio Teague, the best defender in Mark Vital and depth behind top-100 recruit L.J. Cryer and transfer Adam Flagler.

The Bears also built a brutal schedule, playing Illinois and potentially Villanova in the Empire Classic along with Gonzaga.

"I think it starts with experience," Drew said. "Whenever you return a lot of players that were successful, in a season that got moved back and a short summer, you're definitely benefited from having guys that have college experience."

The Wildcats, who matched their highest preseason ranking at No. 3 in 1995-96, harbored hope that Saddiq Bey would return for another season. But despite losing the versatile forward to the NBA, coach Jay Wright still has standout guard Collin Gillespie, double-double machine Jeremiah Robinson-Earl and

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solid starter Jermaine Samuels.

After back-to-back 30-win seasons and a national title, Virginia took a slight step back last season, going 23-7 before the season was called off. But coach Tony Bennett's team should again be an ACC favorite behind Marquette transfer Sam Hauser, top-100 prospects Reece Beekman and Jabri Abdur-Rahim, and the Cavs' lockdown defense.

Garza was second to Dayton's Obi Toppin for national player of the year last season, and the Iowa big man flirted with the NBA before returning to the Hawkeyes. But he's hardly a one-man show: Joe Wieskamp averaged 14.0 points, C.J. Fredrick and Connor McCaffery are experienced, and Jordan Bohannon is healthy after missing all but 10 games last season.

"Having seven players with starting experience provides us with incredible versatility," Hawkeyes coach Fran McCaffery said. "In a year where you may have a player out for a couple weeks (due to COVID-19), depth will be important."

THE SECOND FIVE

The Jayhawks lost Devon Dotson and Udoka Azubuike from a team that was the likely No. 1 overall seed had the NCAA Tournament been played, but they return enough firepower to give Baylor a challenge in the Big 12.

Wisconsin and Illinois join the Hawkeyes in giving the Big Ten some fresh flavor atop the poll. Young and rebuilding Duke and Kentucky could take some lumps early in the season but could be championship contenders by March.

THE REST OF THE POLL

Creighton lost Ty-Shon Alexander to the NBA and Davion Mintz to Kentucky but still landed the highest preseason ranking in school history at No. 11, followed by Tennessee, Michigan State, Texas Tech and West Virginia.

North Carolina was next with Houston at No. 17, its highest preseason ranking since the final Phi Slama Jama team of Hakeem Olajuwon began the 1983-84 season at No. 3. Arizona State, Texas and Oregon finish the first 20 with Florida State, UCLA, Ohio State, Rutgers and Michigan rounding out the Top 25.

ON THE DOORSTEP

LSU was the first team outside the rankings, followed by Memphis, Florida, Alabama and Indiana. San Diego State got six votes after finishing No. 6 in the final poll last season but losing Mountain West player of the year Malachi Flynn and two other elite producers. Louisville and Seton Hall also are unranked after finishing in the top 15 last season.

More AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

The story has been corrected to change the date of Gonzaga-Kansas opener to Nov. 26.

Kremlin: Putin won't congratulate Biden until challenges end

By JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin won't congratulate President-elect Joe Biden until legal challenges to the U.S. election are resolved and the result is official, the Kremlin announced Monday.

Putin is one of a handful of world leaders who have not commented on Biden's victory, which was called by major news organizations on Saturday. But President Donald Trump's team has promised legal action in the coming days and refused to concede his loss, while alleging large-scale voter fraud, so far without proof.

When Trump won in 2016, Putin was prompt in offering congratulations — but Trump's challenger in that election, Hillary Clinton, also conceded the day after the vote.

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Monday that this year is different.

"Obviously, you can see that certain legal procedures are coming there, which were announced by the incumbent president — therefore this situation is different, so we consider it correct to wait for the official announcement," he said.

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The leaders of China, Brazil and Turkey also are holdouts in offering congratulations. And Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador also said he would wait to comment until the legal challenges were resolved.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin offered a similar explanation of why President Xi Jinping has stayed silent.

"We understand the presidential election result will be determined following U.S. laws and procedures," he said.

A senior Turkish official said Ankara also was waiting for the various legal challenges to be settled before congratulating "the winner."

"Turkey will congratulate the winner as soon as the results of the election will become official as part of the respect it has for the U.S. people and democracy," said Omer Celik, spokesman for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling party. "We are waiting for the final results ... because there are objections and other disputes."

Celik said Turkey knows both Trump and Biden and is prepared to work with "whichever wing" is the winner.

Peskov suggested that when the time comes, a congratulatory message from Putin would come with all the expected protocol.

"I remind you that Vladimir Putin said more than once that he will respect any choice of American people, and will be ready to work with any chosen president of the United States," he said.

For now, Putin's holding back allows a delay in addressing that fraught question of how to improve relations. Although Russian politicians widely lauded Trump's election in 2016, expecting him to make good on his promises of improving ties, his administration disappointed Moscow by enacting sanctions, expelling scores of Russian diplomats in the wake of the poisoning of double agent Sergei Skripal in the U.K., and authorizing lethal weapons sales to Ukraine.

But Russia is characteristically wary of Democratic U.S. administrations because they tend to be more forward about criticizing Russia on human rights and democracy issues.

Biden, in a 2011 trip to Russia as vice president, epitomized that approach in a speech at Moscow State University, the country's most prestigious higher education institution.

"Don't compromise on the basic elements of democracy. You need not make that Faustian bargain," he told students.

Biden also is tainted in Russia's eyes by having been the Obama administration's point-man in Ukraine after the uprising that drove the country's Kremlin-friendly president from power in 2014. Russia contended that those protests were fomented by the United States.

Russian officials frequently blamed the difficulties of Moscow-Washington relations during the Trump administration on alleged "Russophobia" carried over from the Obama years. Some politicians expect that could increase under Biden.

"With the victory of a Democrat, one can expect revenge from all nonconservative forces around the world. This means more Russophobia in Europe, more deaths in (eastern Ukraine) and in many other hot spots of the world, as well as more politically motivated sanctions, if we talk about the direct and simplest consequences," said Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the foreign affairs committee in the upper house of parliament, whose views generally parallel the Kremlin's.

"The Biden administration may return to a much more assertive policy in the post-Soviet space, which is always extremely unnerving for Moscow," Fyodor Lukyanov, editor of the Russia In Global Affairs journal, told the state news agency Tass.

Both, however, noted that a Biden administration is likely to be more amenable to international cooperation, especially in arms control such as renewing the New START treaty between Russia and the U.S. that is to expire next year.

Kosachev also suggested that Biden's election would largely eliminate complaints about Russian election interference, thereby smoothing the way for armaments agreements.

"Not that we believe Washington will be sobering up, but at least a key irritant can go away. Is this not a reason for the resumption of negotiations, for example, on arms control? We are definitely ready," he said.

Roles aren't for keeps on 'Crown,' even newcomer Princess Di

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — For viewers, "The Crown" offers a peek into a modern royal family's life and times, or at least an engaging dramatization. For the cast, it's meant the lofty equivalent of gig work as the Netflix series ticks through the decades.

Claire Foy played Britain's young Queen Elizabeth II for the first two seasons, with Olivia Colman stepping in to chart her middle years last season and in the 10 new episodes out Sunday. Imelda Staunton ascends to the throne for the final two chapters.

When Diana Spencer makes her pivotal entrance this season, largely set in the 1980s, it's Emma Corrin in the part opposite Josh O'Connor's Prince Charles. Corrin's job is one and done: Elizabeth Debicki takes over in seasons five and six as the bound-for-tragedy Princess Diana, opposite a new, yet-to-be announced Charles.

A role in "The Crown" is akin to a relay-race baton destined to be handed off, said Helena Bonham Carter, back for her second whirl as tempestuous Princess Margaret. The actor is sandwiched between Vanessa Kirby (seasons one and two) and Lesley Manville, who will take Margaret across the finish line.

"I'm very sad that it's over, but it's time that she was played by somebody else at some point.... She's just a great gift of a part," Bonham Carter said during a joint interview with Colman and Tobias Menzies, returning as Prince Philip.

Colman called Staunton's casting "amazing," then suggested the newcomer could overshadow her. "It's almost, 'wish she wasn't quite good,'" she said, smiling. That prompted Bonham Carter to predict a battle of the stars after the series ends.

"Rate your Margarets, rate your queens, rate your Philips," she said, comparing it to "who wore it best" celebrity fashion critiques.

Colman was asked if she had any advice for her successor. Her terse reply: "Good luck. The wig's itchy."

"The Crown" casting director Robert Sterne said swapping out actors wasn't preordained when he began working with series creator and writer Peter Morgan.

It was an open question "whether we aged-up actors across their life span or were bold and we cast each time," Sterne said in an interview. Choosing the latter option meant a series of challenges and opportunities, for the show and its parade of actors.

"You spend a lot of time looking at the pictures and images of people at particular stages of their life" to find the right actor to portray them at a particular stage of their lives, he said. Then he invoked the relay-race analogy in citing another key stop.

"You also have to take into account the way that that previous actor portrayed it. Who do you think can take that baton and run with it?" he said, which he described as reinventing the role "but hopefully not in a jarring way."

Every move, especially a major cast change, is a critical one for the popular series that reportedly cost more than \$100 million for its first two seasons alone.

Actors, including illustrious ones, have been happy to accept hand-me-downs. Colman came to "The Crown" after winning an Academy Award and other honors for 2018's "The Favourite," in which she played a far earlier British monarch, Queen Anne.

Staunton was an Oscar nominee for "Vera Drake"; Manville for "Phantom Thread"; Bonham Carter for "The King's Speech" and "The Wings of the Dove," and Jonathan Pryce, the future Prince Philip, for "The Two Popes."

John Lithgow, another Oscar nominee and a rare American in the primarily British cast, had the part of political leader Winston Churchill to himself and snared an Emmy Award for it.

All those playing the pivotal role of Elizabeth are able to convey "an ordinary woman put in extraor-

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dinary circumstances," Sterne said of the queen as portrayed in "The Crown."

It requires an actor "who can carry you along with that, and make you feel for them and believe in the reality of it. They're all really extraordinary at that," he said. Foy won a 2018 Emmy for her performance.

There's also room on the royal family tree for younger, less familiar talent, including Corrin and Erin Doherty, who plays the queen's feisty daughter, Princess Anne, and proved a revelation.

"Actors will have this incredible connection with this character that you don't see coming," Sterne said. When Doherty auditioned, "she just had such a connection with that character. She'd watched a lot of YouTube videos (of Anne) and said, 'I just love this woman, I just know her, I think she's great.'"

Doherty delivered in the tryout and in the series with a "really excellent" performance, Sterne said.

The casting veteran, who won three Emmys for his work on HBO's "Game of Thrones" and a 2018 trophy for "The Crown," found himself jumping into Corrin's audition. She was put on the spot by acclaimed writer Morgan ("The Queen," "Frost/Nixon") to sing Andrew Lloyd Webber's "All I Ask of You."

Sterne called up a karaoke version on a computer and offered to sing along.

"She was blushing as she was doing it, and sang it completely beautifully," Sterne recounted. "It was incredibly sweet and kind of encapsulated the spirit of Diana that we were looking for.... I thought, 'Well, this part isn't going to go anywhere else now.'"

O'Connor said he relished his time on the series, including saying goodbye to a role he knew wasn't for keeps — just as with Shakespeare's works.

"If you play 'Hamlet,' you know that there's 100 people who've played Hamlet before you, there's going to be 100 people after you," O'Connor said. "And they'll all do it differently, and that's the joy."

Lynn Elber can be reached at lelber@ap.org and is on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/lynnelber>.

Europe hunkers down but also notes wins against virus surge

By BARRY HATTON, JUSTIN SPIKE and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

LISBON, Portugal (AP) — Portugal and Hungary on Monday became the latest European countries to impose curfews against the resurgent tide of coronavirus infections and deaths lashing the continent and filing its emergency wards. But glimmers of hope emerged from France, Belgium and elsewhere that tough restrictions might be starting to work.

Portugal, which like other European countries has seen new cases and hospital admissions surge in recent weeks, imposed a state of emergency and ordered some 7 million people — around 70% of its population — to stay home on weeknights from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. for at least the next two weeks. They'll be even more limited over the weekends, allowed out only in the morning until 1 p.m., unless to buy essentials at supermarkets.

"People need to comply. If they don't, we are in a bad situation," said Miriam Ferreira, a 44-year-old laundry worker in Lisbon.

Portugal's government warned that the measures may be broadened and prolonged if they prove insufficient.

Hungary also imposed its strictest measures so far: an 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew announced by Prime Minister Viktor Orban. All businesses must close by 7 p.m.

Other measures in Hungary mirrored those becoming depressingly familiar across Europe, including limits on eateries and sports events, family gatherings limited to 10 people and remote learning for high school and university students. The restrictions kick in Tuesday at midnight and will remain for at least 30 days.

"I know, we all know, that this will not be easy. The next weeks will be difficult. But the vaccine is within sight, we've got to hold out until then," Orban said.

Last week, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto announced that a small amount of a Russian coronavirus vaccine would arrive in Hungary in December for final tests, with larger deliveries in January.

The French government has gradually ratcheted up from localized curfews and bar closings to what is now a full-blown nationwide lockdown, albeit with schools and essential businesses open. Health Minister

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Olivier Veran said early indications are that the measures may be starting to slow the latest virus surge and that it would "have flared up faster and stronger" without them.

Still, the situation in French hospitals and nursing homes was grim, with emergency wards approaching saturation levels and some sick patients being evacuated from struggling hospitals to others that still had space. With more than 1.8 million infections since the start of the pandemic, France has Europe's highest total of recorded cases and the fourth-highest worldwide.

Other European nations also reported the fledgling beginnings of a possible turnaround.

The Welsh government's First Minister Mark Drakeford spoke of "some tentative early positive signs" from a 17-day lockdown that ended Monday in Wales.

"Those give us some hope," he said, as Wales' seven-day average for new coronavirus cases fell from 250 per 100,000 people to just under 220.

From Monday, Wales again allowed people to meet in small groups, and businesses — including pubs, restaurants and hairdressers — to reopen. But nonessential travel remains barred to and from neighbouring England, which is in the midst of a planned 28-day lockdown.

Infections in the Czech Republic have started to decline after a two-month rise to record high levels, and the number of people hospitalized also dropped below the 8,000-mark.

In hard-hit Belgium, health authorities also were confident that a partial lockdown dealt a blow to COVID-19.

Belgian hospital admissions for the virus appear to have peaked at 879 on Nov. 3, and fell to about 400 on Sunday, virologist Yves Van Laethem said. The drop follows a return to partial lockdown measures including the closure of nonessential businesses and extending a school vacation.

In Germany, the health minister said increased infections seem to be leveling off but that it's too early to talk of a trend.

Germany is one week into a four-week partial shutdown. New infections have continued to increase, reaching a new one-day record of 23,399 on Saturday.

But Health Minister Jens Spahn said Monday "we are seeing that the momentum is flattening, that we have less strong increases."

He added that more progress is needed and that only later this week "at the earliest" will the restrictions' effects become visible, "if at all."

"We don't want less strong increases," he said. "We have to get the figures down."

With the continent increasingly hunkered-down, the director general of the World Health Organization said unity between countries would be key going forward.

"We might be tired of COVID-19, but it's not tired of us. Yes, it preys on those in weaker health, but it preys on other weaknesses, too: Inequality, division, denial and wishful thinking and willful ignorance," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

"We cannot negotiate with it nor close our eyes and hope it goes away. It pays no heed to political rhetoric or conspiracy theories. Our only hope is science, solutions and solidarity."

Spike reported from Budapest, Hungary and Leicester from Le Pecq, France. Jamey Keaten in Geneva, Sam Petrequin in Brussels, Jill Lawless in London, Jim Heintz in Moscow, Geir Moulson in Berlin and other AP journalists also contributed.

Fraud claims aimed in part at keeping Trump base loyal

By COLLEEN LONG and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump campaign's strategy to file a barrage of lawsuits challenging President-elect Joe Biden's win is more about providing President Donald Trump with an off-ramp for a loss he can't quite grasp and less about changing the election's outcome, according to senior officials, campaign aides and allies who spoke to The Associated Press.

Trump has promised legal action in the coming days as he refused to concede his loss to Biden, making

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an aggressive pitch for donors to help finance any court fight. Trump and his campaign have leveled accusations of large-scale voter fraud in Pennsylvania and other states that broke for Biden, so far without proof.

But proof isn't really the point, said the people. The AP spoke with 10 Trump senior officials, campaign aides and allies who were not authorized to discuss the subject publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Trump aides and allies also acknowledged privately the legal fights would — at best — forestall the inevitable, and some had deep reservations about the president's attempts to undermine faith in the vote. But they said Trump and a core group of allies were aiming to keep his loyal base of supporters on his side even in defeat.

There has been no presidential election in recent memory in which such widespread fraud was alleged. The closest was the 1960 election in which Democrat John F. Kennedy beat Republican Richard Nixon, and there were scattered allegations that fraud helped Kennedy win.

Moments after the AP called the race for Biden, Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani stood in front of campaign banner taped over the garage door of a landscaping company in Philadelphia, wedged near a cremation center and an adult book store called "Fantasy Island," with a handful of poll watchers and declared they'd been kept too far away to check for any inaccuracies. Something fishy was going on, he said.

"We have no way of knowing, because we've been deprived of the right to inspect ballots," he said.

Partisan poll watchers are designated by a political party or campaign to report any concerns they may have. They are not poll workers who actually tally ballots. Monitoring polling places and election offices is allowed in most states, but rules vary and there are certain limits to avoid any harassment or intimidation. They are not allowed to interfere with the conduct of the election and are typically required to register in advance with the local election office.

This year, because of the coronavirus that has killed more than 230,000 people across the country, there was litigation in a few states, including Pennsylvania, over where poll watchers could stand to ensure social distancing.

Lawyers could potentially argue the vote tally should be cast aside over fraud observed by poll watchers, but in order to win that argument they'd need strong evidence, not just allegations the monitors weren't allowed to see clearly enough. Judges are loathe to disenfranchise any voters and there would need to be substantial proof that fraud had so damaged the count it must be set aside. And it would have to happen across multiple states.

Democratic poll watchers, who were also given the same access, have not raised concerns. Giuliani called evidence of fraud circumstantial at the news conference. He said he'd be filing suit in federal court, but the issue has already been before judges.

A federal judge in Philadelphia Thursday night ordered the two sides to work out an agreement on the number of poll watchers and how close they could be to the counting. The judge also voiced concerns about the safety of poll workers during the pandemic if poll watchers were allowed to peer over their shoulders.

On Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures" Sunday, Giuliani said two additional lawsuits were in the process of being drafted, in addition to existing litigation in Pennsylvania.

By the end of this week, Giuliani predicted the campaign would have filed "four or five" lawsuits, with a total of 10 possible. Republican lawyers planned a Monday news conference to announce additional litigation.

Voter fraud is extremely rare, and when it does happen, people are generally caught and prosecuted and it does not change the outcome of the election. Typically, it 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.

Trump campaign officials have also alleged that more than 21,000 had been cast in the name of the dead in Pennsylvania. The claims stem from a conservative legal group's lawsuit against the Secretary of State, accusing her of wrongly including some 21,000 supposedly dead residents on voter rolls.

The federal judge who has the case, John Jones, has said he was doubtful of the claims. He said the Public Interest Legal Foundation that brought the claims was asking the court to accept that there were dead people on voter rolls, and he asked for proof and questioned why they had waited until the "eleventh hour" to file suit.

"We cannot and will not take plaintiff's word for it — in an election where every vote matters, we will

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not disenfranchise potentially eligible voters based solely upon the allegations of a private foundation," he wrote in an Oct. 20 ruling.

But even if those 21,000 votes were to be cast aside, Biden would still lead the state by more than 20,000 votes, according to AP data.

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, the 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.

Meanwhile, on a call with supporters Saturday, Trump campaign manager Bill Stepien encouraged them to be ready to continue the fight for Trump, including standing by for rallies and demonstrations. Other aides outlined what they argued were irregularities in the count.

And Republicans were sticking to the idea that all "legal" votes must be counted — the language freighted with a clear implication that Democrats want illegal votes counted, a claim for which there is no evidence.

It's a precarious balance for Trump's allies as they try to be supportive of the president -- and avoid risking further fallout -- but face the reality of the vote count.

According to one Republican granted anonymity to discuss the private conversation, Republicans on Capitol Hill were giving Trump the space to consider all legal options, and allowing the process to play out.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has not yet made any public statements -- neither congratulating Biden nor joining Trump's complaints about the results.

"I'm not sure his position would have changed from yesterday -- count all the votes, adjudicate all the claims," said Scott Jennings, a Republican strategist in Kentucky allied with McConnell. "My sense is there's won't be any tolerance for beyond what the law allows. There will be tolerance for what the law allows."

It was a view being echoed by several other Republicans neither supporting or rejecting the outcome.

"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.

Associated Press Writers Lisa Mascaro and Meg Kinnard in Columbia, S.C., contributed to this report.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Nov. 10, the 315th day of 2020. There are 51 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 10, 1775, the U.S. Marines were organized under authority of the Continental Congress.

On this date:

In 1766, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, had its beginnings as William Franklin, the Royal Governor of New Jersey, signed a charter establishing Queen's College in New Brunswick.

In 1919, the American Legion opened its first national convention in Minneapolis.

In 1928, Hirohito (hee-roh-hee-toh) was enthroned as Emperor of Japan.

In 1938, Kate Smith first sang Irving Berlin's "God Bless America" on her CBS radio program.

In 1944, during World War II, the ammunition ship USS Mount Hood (AE-11) exploded while moored at the Manus Naval Base in the Admiralty Islands in the South Pacific, leaving 45 confirmed dead and 327 missing and presumed dead.

In 1951, customer-dialed long-distance telephone service began as Mayor M. Leslie Denning of Engle-

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wood, New Jersey, called Alameda, California, Mayor Frank Osborne without operator assistance.

In 1975, the U.N. General Assembly approved a resolution equating Zionism with racism (the world body repealed the resolution in Dec. 1991). The ore-hauling ship SS Edmund Fitzgerald mysteriously sank during a storm in Lake Superior with the loss of all 29 crew members.

In 1982, the newly finished Vietnam Veterans Memorial was opened to its first visitors in Washington, D.C., three days before its dedication. Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev died at age 75.

In 1997, a judge in Cambridge, Massachusetts, reduced Louise Woodward's murder conviction to involuntary manslaughter and sentenced the English au pair to the 279 days she'd already served in the death of 8-month-old Matthew Eappen (EE'-puhn).

In 2009, John Allen Muhammad, mastermind of the 2002 sniper attacks that killed 10 in the Washington, D.C. region, was executed. President Barack Obama visited Fort Hood, Texas, where he somberly saluted the 13 Americans killed in a shooting rampage, and pledged that the killer would be "met with justice — in this world, and the next."

In 2017, facing allegations of sexual misconduct, comedian Louis C.K. said the harassment claims by five women that were detailed in a New York Times report "are true," and he expressed remorse for using his influence "irresponsibly."

In 2018, President Donald Trump, in France to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I, canceled a visit to a cemetery east of Paris where Americans killed in that war are buried; rainy weather had grounded the presidential helicopter. Authorities in Northern California said 14 additional bodies had been found in the ruins from a fire that virtually destroyed the town of Paradise.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama cut short his visit to his boyhood home in Indonesia because of an ash cloud from Mount Merapi, and flew to South Korea for an economic summit. French President Nicolas Sarkozy's reform raising the retirement age from 60 to 62 became law, a victory for the conservative government and a defeat for unions that had waged massive strikes and street protests. Miranda Lambert received three Country Music Association Awards on her 27th birthday, including album of the year; Brad Paisley was named entertainer of the year. Movie producer Dino De Laurentiis, 91, died in Beverly Hills, California.

Five years ago: Jeb Bush and Ben Carson sought to steady their presidential campaigns during a GOP debate held in Milwaukee, with Bush taking advantage of a policy-focused contest to detail positions on the economy and immigration while Carson swatted away mounting questions about the veracity of his celebrated biography. Nine people were killed when a small jet crashed into an apartment house in Akron, Ohio; seven of the dead worked for a Florida real estate development company. Former West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, 96, died in Hamburg. Legendary New Orleans musician and composer Allen Toussaint, 77, died in Madrid.

One year ago: Bolivian President Evo Morales resigned under mounting pressure from the country's military and public after his re-election victory triggered weeks of fraud allegations and deadly protests.

Today's Birthdays: Blues singer Bobby Rush is 86. Actor Albert Hall is 83. Country singer Donna Fargo is 79. Former Sen. Saxby Chambliss, R-Ga., is 77. Lyricist Tim Rice is 76. Actor-dancer Ann Reinking is 71. Actor Jack Scalia is 70. Movie director Roland Emmerich is 65. Actor Matt Craven is 64. Actor-comedian Sinbad is 64. Actor Mackenzie Phillips is 61. Author Neil Gaiman (GAY'-mihn) is 60. Actor Vanessa Angel is 57. Actor Hugh Bonneville is 57. Actor-comedian Tommy Davidson is 57. Actor Michael Jai (jy) White is 56. Country singer Chris Cagle is 52. Actor-comedian Tracy Morgan is 52. Actor Ellen Pompeo (pahm-PAY'-oh) is 51. Actor-comedian Orny Adams is 50. Rapper U-God is 50. Rapper-producer Warren G is 50. Actor Walton Goggins is 49. Comedian-actor Chris Lilley is 46. Contemporary Christian singer Matt Maher is 46. Rock singer-musician Jim Adkins (Jimmy Eat World) is 45. Rapper Eve is 42. Rock musician Chris Joannou (joh-AN'-yoo) (Silverchair) is 41. Actor Heather Matarazzo is 38. Country singer Miranda Lambert is 37. Actor Josh Peck is 34. Pop singer Vinz Dery (Nico & Vinz) is 30. Actor Genevieve Beuchner is 29. Actor Zoey Deutch (DOYCH) is 26. Actor Kiernan Shipka is 21. Actor Mackenzie Foy is 20.