

# Groton Daily Independent

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**The girls JH BB game vs Langford on 11-12 is postponed.**



## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

## The Life of Jarlene 'Jerry' Heupel

Private memorial services for Jarlene 'Jerry' Heupel, 83, of Groton, SD, will be 1:30 pm, Friday, November 13, 2020 at Spitzer-Miller Funeral Home, 1111 S. Main St., Aberdeen with Pastor Bill Duncan officiating. The family requests casual dress. Jerry died Sunday, November 8, 2020 at home in Groton, SD. You can watch the livestream of the service by following the link under her picture on the online obituary.

Jarlene Ann Sorenson was born on February 5, 1937 at Bristol, SD to Hans and Sophia (Sorensen) Sorenson. This is the area where she grew up and attended school. She graduated from Bristol High School with the class of 1957. She worked at the Club Café and Tiffany Laundry. On June 26, 1960 she married Harlan Heupel at Aberdeen. They lived in Aberdeen, Rapid City and Pierpont. They then moved to Groton where they have lived for forty-eight years. She was the first maid at the Super 8 Motel and also worked for the Groton School Lunch Program.

She loved gardening, flowers, playing cards, board games and working with ceramics. She loved spending time with her family, especially her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Grateful for having shared Jerry's life are her husband, Harlan Heupel; children, Robert 'Bob' (Lynn) Heupel, Aberdeen, Darlene (Russell) Sass, Groton, grandchildren, Jeramy Heupel (Taylor Jorgensen), Josh (Josie) Heupel, Spencer Heupel, Zachary Heupel, Kyra Heupel, Jacob Sass and Ethan (Sarah) Sass, great-grandchildren, Brooklynn and Shane and sister, Darlene Lockhart.

Preceding Jerry in death are her parents Hans & Sophia Sorenson; brother, Robert Sorenson and niece, Amber Lockhart.

The family would like to express their gratitude to Avera@Home for their excellent care for Jerry.



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## **That's Life** by Tony Bender

### **The things we have in common**

It's over. Despite the last bit of unseemly flailing about by the administration, the election is over, and when the last votes are counted in what will prove to be the most transparent election in history—despite the propaganda suggesting otherwise—Joe Biden will be the 46th president of the United States with 306 electoral votes, the same number Donald Trump got in 2016.

The results of the election absolutely should be verified and confidence in the foundation of American democracy, the electoral process, should be affirmed despite an unsubstantiated attack from the highest office in the land. The fact is that when the Trump Administration's own task force looked for fraud in the last election in which Hillary Clinton received three million more votes, they couldn't find any significant issues.

Each state manages its own elections right down to the local level, and to suggest dishonesty in a system in which poll watchers from each party are part of the process, is to discredit Republican officials in states that Biden flipped as well as Democrats.

I've been reporting on government for 30 years from the highest level right down to city councils, and despite the labyrinth and foibles of elected officers, I find that most of them are honest people trying to serve the greater good, and when you get into the nuts and bolts of administration, they generally make sound, informed decisions.

I know where I live and who reads this column and I know I'm in the minority. I laughingly described myself as a wild-eyed liberal to a conservative friend once, and she corrected me; "No, you're a moderate." But in North Dakota, where 65% of the population just voted for Donald Trump, comparatively, that makes me a crazed leftist. In South Dakota and Montana, where this column also runs, Trump won 62 and 57% of the vote, respectively.

"How do you survive among all those conservatives?" I'm asked often. Well, from a journalistic standpoint, we keep the front page and the opinion page separate. News is news. Opinion is opinion, and newspapers are the most democratic private institutions in the country. We actually pay to print and mail critical letters to the editor. If we make mistakes, we run corrections.

But it all comes down to community. I always say (and believe) that folks would give you the shirt off their back and never give a thought to politics. It's a big deal on cable television and social media, but on the streets and in the fields, it's abstract.

An emigre asked me last week why her hometown had tilted so hard to the right, why Trump and his bad behavior got so much support—nearly 80% of the vote in our county. "Well," I said, "They abhor the bad behavior but they like his policies and really are concerned about socialism."

Can we admit that there's been a whole lot of fear-mongering about socialism, amplified by a small minority in Congress? The reality is Joe Biden was elected; he's a moderate with a history of good relationships with Republicans. He'll need them because while this election was a referendum on Trump's unsteady and disconcerting behavior and his inability to control the Coronavirus that is wreaking havoc through our communities and economy, Democrats lost ground in the U.S. House and are unlikely to have a majority in the Senate when run-off races in Georgia shake out.

Plus, while Joe Biden got 75 million votes, Donald Trump got 70 million. That's a message that better come through loud and clear. To move forward will require compromise from both sides, and that's what most Americans want. Compromise and progress. Stability. There are hot-button issues employed to divide us but far more things unite us. We want safe communities where Americans can make a decent living, get a decent education, have the opportunity to advance through hard work in a system that isn't rigged against them by big-money players, and in the end, we all want the peace of mind of a dignified retirement. Along the way, we don't want to fear bankruptcy because we can't afford healthcare.



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It's time to turn down the heat in the kitchen. It's time for American citizens to take responsibility for the information they consume and share. There's a lot of fake news out there, but the majority of it comes from shady sources and not the traditional media. Research. Question all stories. Look for and identify bias. Know the difference between opinion and news. Challenge your beliefs.

Remember that we're all red white and blue. Joe Biden is calling on our better angels, and when our better angels unite, America is unstoppable and truly is a beacon of hope and freedom.

God bless America.

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## Political journalists: After unprecedented election, a tumultuous transition lies ahead

Nick Lowrey, South Dakota News Watch

The transition of power from President Donald Trump to President-elect Joe Biden will be unlike any other in modern America history and is likely to lead to significant turmoil, two of the nation's top political journalists said in a Nov. 9 virtual town hall meeting hosted by South Dakota News Watch.

Susan Page, Washington bureau chief for USA Today, and Jim VandeHei, co-founder and CEO of the news website Axios, said that Americans need to brace for a rocky couple of months as Trump, a Republican, appears unwilling to concede the election and Biden, a Democrat, plans to reverse many Trump administration policies.

Page and VandeHei spoke as part of the virtual town hall meeting, "The 2020 Election: What Just Happened?", hosted via Zoom by South Dakota News Watch.

The 2020 presidential election was held during a global pandemic, saw record numbers of people vote early or by mail and shattered overall voter turnout records. The election results were also unconventional. Biden won the presidency, but he will be the first Democratic president since Grover Cleveland in 1885 to take office without also carrying his party to majorities in both chambers of Congress, Page said.

Defying convention has been a hallmark of the Trump administration. That is unlikely to change just because he lost an election, Page said, pointing to the Nov. 9 firing of Defense Secretary Mark Esper. The secretary of defense is a key cabinet position and would be an essential part of the transition process even if America was not still at war in Afghanistan, Page said. Removing Esper could complicate the transition process, she said.

"We don't know if there are more firings on the horizon before (Trump) gets out of town, we don't even know that he'll voluntarily leave town since he has not yet acknowledged that he lost the election," Page said.

Trump is unlikely ever to admit that he lost the 2020 election, said VandeHei, the co-founder and former editor of Politico.

"I think he'll forever say that this election was stolen, that he was a victim of media bias," VandeHei said. "And I think 40% or more of the country will agree with him."

The president's refusal to accept defeat, coupled with the silence of many key Republican leaders on the election result, will likely serve to polarize the American people further and disrupt what is already



Susan Page, Washington bureau chief for USA Today; Axios co-founder Jim VandeHei

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expected to be one of the most important and complicated presidential transitions in history.

Not only is the U.S. facing a pandemic that has killed nearly 240,000 people, but there are substantial foreign policy challenges to face, including a changing climate. Meanwhile, the national economy needs to recover from the devastation caused by COVID-19, the speakers said. On top of all that is a ballooning federal budget deficit, VandeHei said.

"There are just so many things, and on any one of these, you could say, 'Oh, my gosh, I could spend my whole presidency on this and only tinker around the edges,'" VandeHei said. "God bless him [Biden]; this will be a tough one."

One of the things Biden has going for him is that he is a fairly moderate Democrat, VandeHei said. The president-elect has shown some trepidation about his party's extreme left wing and has a history of working with Republicans while a U.S. senator.

"In some ways, Joe Biden is the right person to run the country right now, in terms of the Democratic Party, to run the country because I do think he understands intuitively some of the grievances that 50% of the country feels," VandeHei said.

One of the big surprises to come out of the 2020 election was just how well Trump and the Republican party he has led for four years fared, despite polls showing big leads by Biden. Both VandeHei and Page acknowledged that the national press and polling firms missed something about how voters view Trump.

"I've never seen so many people take money out of their own pocket and paint a president's name on their boat or their truck or their house," VandeHei said. "Something was happening out there, where he became almost a fashion statement and an identity statement and a cultural statement."

Another unique factor about covering President Trump and the 2020 election is Trump's loose relationship with facts, the speakers said.

Reporters struggled early during Trump's tenure in office with his frequent stretching, bending or outright disregard of facts, Page said. News organizations were forced to beef up their ability to fact-check the president quickly and fairly. During the election and now during the transition, there has been a constant struggle to challenge the president when he misstates a fact while at the same time remaining objective.

"That's one of the ways in which we responded, but of course, with the erosion of trust in the news media, there are a lot of people who simply don't believe us when we do fact checks," Page said.

Part of the reason trust has eroded in the news media, VandeHei said, is that so many of the nation's best political reporters can be found on Twitter being very clear about which side of the political aisle they identify with and who they are cheering for.

"I've said this before and I'll believe it, I think, now forever; Twitter might have destroyed journalism or a big piece of it," VandeHei said.



## #261 in a series

### Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

We're on a roll, folks: another record at 139,000 new cases, increasing our total by 1.4% from yesterday. We now have 10,325,000 cases reported in the US. If we don't slow this freight train down, we'll hit 11 million over the upcoming weekend, which is pretty horrifying. For the record, I do not see signs of a slowdown in our near future. The 14-day change in new-case reporting is a 64% increase.

Record numbers of new cases were reported in Texas, Wisconsin, and Illinois. Missouri is reporting a rapidly increasing number of new cases and has a test positivity rate of nearly 20%; the WHO benchmark is 5%. California is again on the rise after a relatively long period of calm. While cases are up, test positivity is not yet out of hand, having increased from 2.5% to 3.7% over a three-week period; they have a chance to bring this under control before there is a large spike. New Jersey has its highest new-case rate since the bad old days in May; they are likely identifying most cases with a test positivity of just 6% which should be lower, but isn't super scary. Neighboring New York City's positivity rate is rising, but still staying just over 2%. They have a shot at containing this if they act quickly. Indications are they're going to do just that. I'll wish them well with it; one nightmare like they had last spring should be enough for any locality.

The nation hit a record for hospitalizations today: 61,964. Seventeen states, mostly in the Midwest and Plains also reported records. The good news—and there's precious little of that these days—is that we're probably better able to cope than we were in the spring and even in the summer. We've learned a lot about treatment so that higher percentages of patients who go into intensive care units are coming out alive. We have some treatments, none of which is any sort of panacea or cure, but each of which offers benefits at least on the margins. The bad news is that winter's coming and it will be months before outdoor gatherings are feasible in much of the country, also that pandemic fatigue has set in nearly everywhere so that people are resistant to basic precautionary measures that might help to blunt the spike in cases we're seeing. Overall, it is difficult to predict how this will go, but I am not hopeful.

In the meantime, North Dakota has a record number of people hospitalized; the governor says "hospitals are under enormous pressure." The state is first in the country for per capita new-case reports, and every county has been declared at high-risk and subject to capacity limits on businesses. They do not, however, have a mask mandate; the governor says masks "should be required," but declines to require them. Oklahoma had a record number of new cases on Saturday that, even after correcting for a backlog of cases reported and duplicate results, was double the previous record. Illinois has reported more than 10,000 daily new cases for five consecutive days, and last night late they passed the half-million mark. Hospitalizations are up 170%, ICU patients up 139%, and ventilator use up 152% in the state since October 1. Even though the state is testing at the third highest rate in the nation, it still has a rising positivity rate, which indicates testing is not yet capturing the size of the surge. Colorado is experiencing its highest rate of hospitalizations; estimates are that one in 105 residents is currently contagious.

Dr. Megan Ranney, emergency physician at Brown University, talked about her concern with the upcoming social gatherings over the winter holidays on CNN, "We're just heading into the very worst of this pandemic. We're about to see all of these little epidemics across the country, crossed and mixed, and it's going to be an awful lot like pouring gasoline on a fire."

We're back into high numbers of deaths as well. Our total is now at 240,184 with deaths increasing in 24 states. Today's toll was 1440, an 0.6% increase. I'm seeing projections of 400,000 deaths by February 1.

That said, here's the CDC's new list of Thanksgiving activities, classified as to risk. I've lifted them, pretty much verbatim, from the website.

#### Lower risk activities

- Having a small dinner with only people who live in your household
- Preparing traditional family recipes for family and neighbors, especially those at higher risk of severe illness from Covid-19, and delivering them in a way that doesn't involve contact with others
- Having a virtual dinner and sharing recipes with friends and family
- Shopping online rather than in person on the day after Thanksgiving or the next Monday

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- Watching sports events, parades, and movies from home
- Moderate risk activities
- Having a small outdoor dinner with family and friends who live in your community following CDC guidelines on hosting outdoor gatherings
  - Visiting pumpkin patches or orchards where people use hand sanitizer before touching pumpkins or picking apples, wearing masks is encouraged or enforced, and people are able to maintain social distancing
  - Attending a small outdoor sports event with safety precautions in place
- Higher risk activities – Avoid these activities:
- Going shopping in crowded stores just before, on, or after Thanksgiving
  - Participating or being a spectator at a crowded race
  - Attending crowded parades
  - Attending large indoor gatherings with people from outside your household
  - Using alcohol or drugs that may alter judgement and make it more difficult to practice Covid-19 safety measures

I don't much like this advice, but it's good advice all the same.

We do have an update in CDC guidance on mask-wearing; recommendations now state that using masks benefits the wearer, not just the people around you. It also points out the economic benefit of masking and cites several studies that confirm the benefit. Public health experts have expressed approval of this change. Dr. Monica Gandhi, infectious disease expert at the University of California, San Francisco, said, "That matters for public-health messaging, because we don't have people yet who are completely convinced about the benefits of masking until they see the CDC say that it also protects you and your family. I would encourage every American to adhere to masking guidelines now that we hear more clearly today that this will protect you and others. We cannot afford more lockdowns, but we can do our part to stop Covid-19 transmission and disease."

Eddie Ford was 6 when World War II came to his native Hungary. His Jewish parents did the unthinkable to protect their son and put him into hiding with a Christian family who kept him until the war was over. They were apart for years; in fact, he never saw his father again. Then after being raised without Jewish customs and rituals, he reconnected with the mother and brother he barely knew and moved with them to Canada. He cared for his mother when she became sick and died years ago and seldom saw his brother who lived in the US. Ford had a big personality and loved to sing and tell stories, and as he aged, he lost his friends one by one until, by the end of his life, he was quite alone.

In the hospital, dying of cancer, he requested a rabbi visit him because he wanted to connect to the Jewish faith he'd not learned about during his lost childhood. And so Rabbi Zale Newman began visiting him on Fridays to the end of his life. He taught Ford simple Jewish blessings and songs, and as the months went on, they got to know one another. At the end, Newman promised Ford a Jewish burial.

And so, when the time came last winter, Newman found a funeral home that would bury him at no charge and arranged for the graveside service. There was a problem though: To make a Jewish funeral official, you need a "minyan" of 10 men in attendance, and he didn't know where to find them. As a volunteer rabbi helping out, he didn't really know who to ask. So he put a request for a minyan on Facebook the night before the funeral, "Can you come escort a Hero of the Holocaust for his final journey. . . . Won't take long, but please dress warmly." He knew it was a long shot, but it was the best he could do for his friend. Three people responded, and with the rabbi, that makes four. It would have to do.

Next morning, when he arrived at the cemetery, he realized there must be another funeral that day. There were a lot of cars, and he had to park far down the road and walk back to Ford's gravesite in sub-zero temperatures. When he got back there, he found 200 people waiting in a circle. For Eddie Ford. He would have his minyan, after all. There was a proper Jewish burial. Newman was overwhelmed. "There was so much purity. There was no recognition, no way to get paid back. I'm not a mushy guy, but I went home and cried for an hour." He added, "One act of goodness leads to another." And so it does.

Be well. 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
	Nov. 11						
Minnesota	189,681						
Nebraska	87,733						
Montana	41,151						
Colorado	138,427						
Wyoming	16,442						
North Dakota	56,342						
South Dakota	57,334						
United States	10,258,090						
US Deaths	239,695						
Minnesota	+4,893						
Nebraska	+2,182						
Montana	+1,098						
Colorado	+3,890						
Wyoming	+1,131						
North Dakota	+894						
South Dakota	+1,024						
United States	+147,538						
US Deaths	+1,444						

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## November 10th COVID-19 UPDATE

### Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

North Dakota recorded 30 patients that have died from COVID-19 in today's report. South Dakota reported three with one female and two males, two in their 70s and one in the 80+ age group. They were from Pennington, Turner and Union counties.

Overall total hospitalizations have stabilized; however, in the Glacial Lakes Region, there was a lot of shuffling around of numbers as some counties had increases and others decreases.

Glacial Lakes hospital beds being occupied by COVID-19 patients as well as Minnehaha and Pennington counties: Walworth: 5 (+2) Occupied Beds.; Potter: 3 (+1) Occupied Beds; Hughes: 12 (-3) Occupied Beds, 6 (+0) ICU Beds, 2 (-0) Ventilation; Hand: 1 (-1) Occupied Beds (-1); Faulk: 1 (-1) Occupied Beds; Edmunds: 7 (+1) Occupied Bed; Brown: 33 (+3) Occupied Beds, 5 (+1) ICU, 0 (-1) Ventilation; Spink: 3 (+2) Occupied Beds; Day: 2 (-0) Occupied Beds; Marshall: 3 (+2) Occupied Beds; Grant: 1 (0) Occupied Beds; Codington: 22 (+3) Occupied Beds, 3 (+0) ICU, 1 (+1) Ventilation; None (some counties have no hospitals): Clark, Hyde, Stanley, Sully, Campbell, McPherson, Roberts; Minnehaha: 254 (-6) Occupied Beds, 59 (-1) ICU, 38 (+1) Ventilation; Pennington: 81 (-2) Occupied Beds, 13 (+1) ICU, 7 (-0) Ventilation

#### Brown County:

Total Positive: +28 (2,613) Positivity Rate: 22.0%

Total Tests: +127 (20,743)

Recovered: +24 (2,006)

Active Cases: +4 (599)

Ever Hospitalized: +6 (143)

Deaths: +0 (8)

Percent Recovered: 76.8%

Hospital Reports:

Avera St. Luke's: Covid-19 Occupied 24 (+2); ICU 4 (+1), Ventilation 0 (0).

Sanford Aberdeen: Covid-19 Occupied 9 (+1); ICU 1 (-1), Ventilation 0 (-1)

Sanford Webster: Covid-19 Occupied 2 (-0).

Marshall County Healthcare: Covid-19 Occupied: 3 (+2).

#### South Dakota:

Positive: +1024 (57,334 total) Positivity Rate: 16.4%

Total Tests: 6243 (485,940 total)

Hospitalized: +50 (3,277 total). 607 currently hospitalized +41)

Deaths: +3 (540 total)

Recovered: +691 (40,199 total)

Active Cases: +329 (16,595)

Percent Recovered: 70.1%

Total COVID-19 Occupied Beds: 607 (+41), Black Hills Region 157 (+34), Glacial Lakes Region 93 (+9) Sioux Empire Region 268 (-10), South Central Plains 89 (+8).

ICU Units: Total 100 (-6), BH 15 (-0), GL 14 (+0),

SE 59 (-3), SCP 12 (-3).

Ventilation: Total 50 (+1), BH 7 (+0), GL 3 (+0), SE 38 (+1), SCP 2 (+0).

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 22% Covid, 41% Non-Covid, 36% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 34% Covid, 32% Non-Covid, 34% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 12% Covid, 19% Non-Covid, 69% Available

Beadle (19) +17 positive, +14 recovered (513 active cases)

Brown (8): +28 positive, +24 recovered (599 active cases)

Clark (1): +3 positive, +2 recovered (65 active cases)

Clay (8): +7 positive, +4 recovered (187 active cases)

Codington (18): +22 positive, +20 recovered (559 active cases)

Davison (12): +39 positive, +21 recovered (665 active cases)

Day (3): +6 positive, +4 recovered (51 active cases)

Edmunds (1): +3 positive, +2 recovered (50 active cases)

Faulk (3): +1 positive, +4 recovered (45 active cases)

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

Hanson (1): +6 positive, +0 recovered (75 active cases)

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cases)

Hughes (8): +26 positive, +10 recovered (296 active cases)

Lawrence (8): +21 positive, +23 recovered (483 active cases)

Lincoln (32): +82 positive, +52 recovered (1189 active cases)

Marshall (3): +3 positive, +2 recovered (24 active cases)

McCook (3): +6 positive, +9 recovered (141 active cases)

McPherson (1): +4 positive, +1 recovery (14 active case)

Minnehaha (125): +294 positive, +183 recovered (4183 active cases)

Potter: +3 positive, +4 recovered (65 active cases)

Roberts (9): +11 positive, +5 recovered (153 active cases)

Spink (4): +4 positive, +2 recovered (146 active cases)

Walworth (10): +8 positive, +2 recovered (81 active cases)

## NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Nov. 10:

- 15.0% rolling 14-day positivity
- 894 new positives
- 4,771 susceptible test encounters
- TBD\* currently hospitalized
- TBD\* active cases
- 674 total deaths (+30)

\* Due to a software error in reporting of recovered and hospitalized cases, we do not have up-to-date active case numbers yet for 11/10/20; a post will be made to update this information when this error is fixed.

## Yesterday

Global Cases
<b>50,913,451</b>
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

## Today

Global Cases
<b>51,548,261</b>
10,258,090 US
8,636,011 India
5,699,005 Brazil
1,857,309 France
1,822,345 Russia
1,381,218 Spain
1,262,476 Argentina
1,237,198 United Kingdom
1,155,356 Colombia
995,463 Italy
978,531 Mexico
925,431 Peru

## 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

## Global Deaths

**1,273,642**

239,695 deaths US
162,802 deaths Brazil
127,571 deaths India
95,842 deaths Mexico
49,861 deaths United Kingdom
42,330 deaths Italy
41,062 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	250	169	737	2	Substantial	34.78%
Beadle	1699	1167	4217	19	Substantial	37.74%
Bennett	257	155	984	5	Substantial	24.32%
Bon Homme	1176	889	1658	4	Substantial	45.28%
Brookings	1827	1334	7032	9	Substantial	21.62%
Brown	2613	2006	9056	8	Substantial	27.17%
Brule	400	275	1464	3	Substantial	32.74%
Buffalo	310	271	802	5	Substantial	44.32%
Butte	514	304	2236	5	Substantial	27.31%
Campbell	88	70	170	1	Moderate	31.25%
Charles Mix	548	370	3118	1	Substantial	22.85%
Clark	172	106	716	1	Substantial	13.83%
Clay	979	784	3576	8	Substantial	28.67%
Codington	2024	1447	6773	18	Substantial	34.77%
Corson	281	206	811	2	Substantial	51.39%
Custer	390	300	1842	4	Substantial	22.75%
Davison	1542	865	4771	12	Substantial	34.85%
Day	211	157	1259	3	Substantial	30.38%
Deuel	230	175	825	2	Substantial	32.88%
Dewey	579	272	3417	2	Substantial	31.33%
Douglas	224	156	720	5	Substantial	22.78%
Edmunds	185	134	771	1	Substantial	10.50%
Fall River	266	199	1896	6	Substantial	10.34%
Faulk	243	197	527	3	Substantial	20.00%
Grant	402	293	1571	4	Substantial	27.09%
Gregory	317	212	892	10	Substantial	33.13%
Haakon	114	81	429	2	Substantial	3.06%
Hamlin	277	189	1288	0	Substantial	10.37%
Hand	206	111	599	1	Substantial	33.88%
Hanson	157	81	487	1	Substantial	36.56%
Harding	61	42	113	0	Moderate	60.00%
Hughes	1126	822	3992	8	Substantial	21.84%
Hutchinson	339	203	1686	2	Substantial	20.62%

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Hyde	76	42	303	0	Substantial	45.95%
Jackson	164	99	778	4	Substantial	33.96%
Jerauld	193	147	405	13	Substantial	16.67%
Jones	42	34	137	0	Moderate	28.57%
Kingsbury	294	163	1124	4	Substantial	20.11%
Lake	577	378	2012	9	Substantial	40.26%
Lawrence	1392	901	5942	8	Substantial	29.19%
Lincoln	3864	2643	14089	32	Substantial	32.07%
Lyman	334	275	1450	7	Substantial	22.94%
Marshall	87	60	804	3	Substantial	30.77%
McCook	401	244	1166	3	Substantial	32.50%
McPherson	78	63	420	1	Moderate	1.53%
Meade	1244	940	5443	10	Substantial	19.72%
Mellette	113	84	581	1	Substantial	22.22%
Miner	165	111	433	2	Substantial	18.75%
Minnehaha	15059	10876	55912	125	Substantial	30.27%
Moody	308	196	1428	4	Substantial	7.20%
Oglala Lakota	1269	728	5714	11	Substantial	34.52%
Pennington	5981	4234	26888	52	Substantial	23.76%
Perkins	99	67	496	0	Substantial	37.78%
Potter	182	118	622	0	Substantial	19.14%
Roberts	495	333	3355	9	Substantial	29.58%
Sanborn	162	74	482	1	Substantial	42.86%
Spink	407	257	1684	4	Substantial	11.55%
Stanley	137	88	566	0	Substantial	26.37%
Sully	60	41	178	0	Moderate	39.13%
Todd	614	479	3489	10	Substantial	29.33%
Tripp	350	271	1172	2	Substantial	42.48%
Turner	638	414	1941	31	Substantial	31.50%
Union	929	709	4315	17	Substantial	29.39%
Walworth	333	242	1367	10	Substantial	26.14%
Yankton	1148	766	6544	8	Substantial	16.49%
Ziebach	132	80	587	2	Substantial	30.38%
Unassigned	0	0	1103	0		

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## South Dakota



### AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	1802	0
10-19 years	6019	0
20-29 years	11379	2
30-39 years	9772	8
40-49 years	8201	15
50-59 years	8108	39
60-69 years	6307	77
70-79 years	3283	106
80+ years	2463	293

### SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	29692	264
Male	27642	276



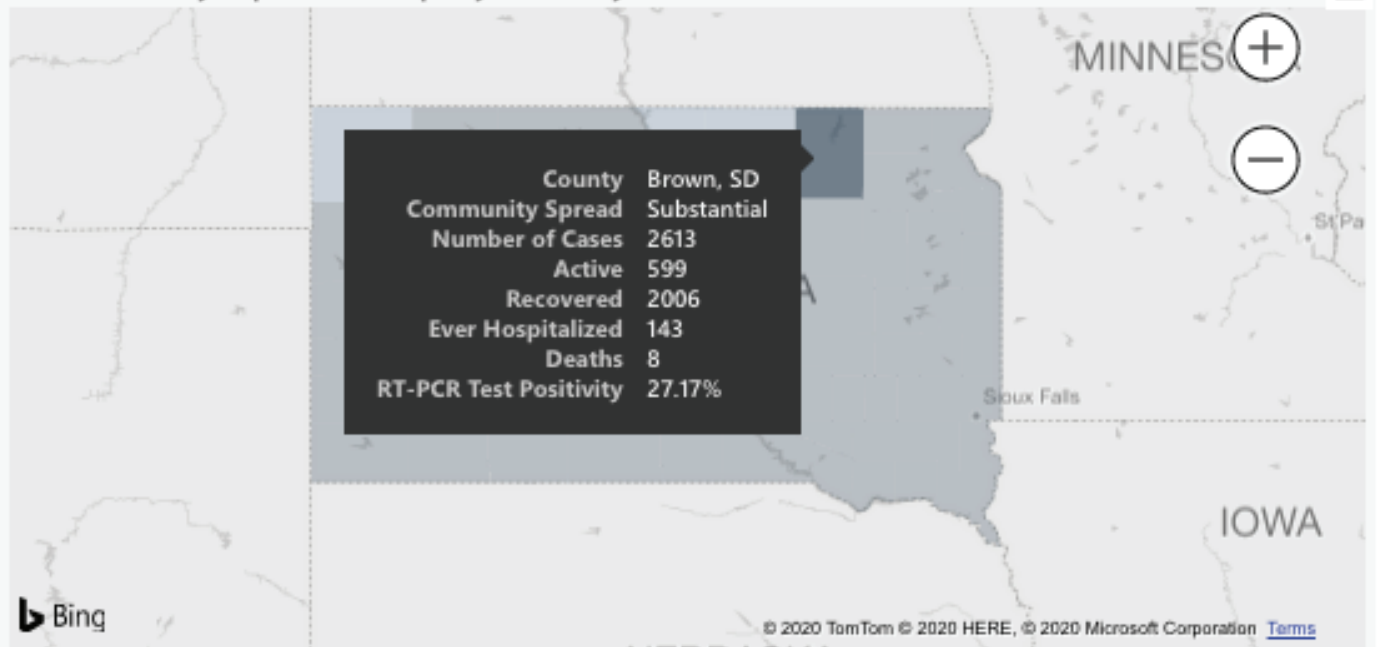
# Groton Daily Independent

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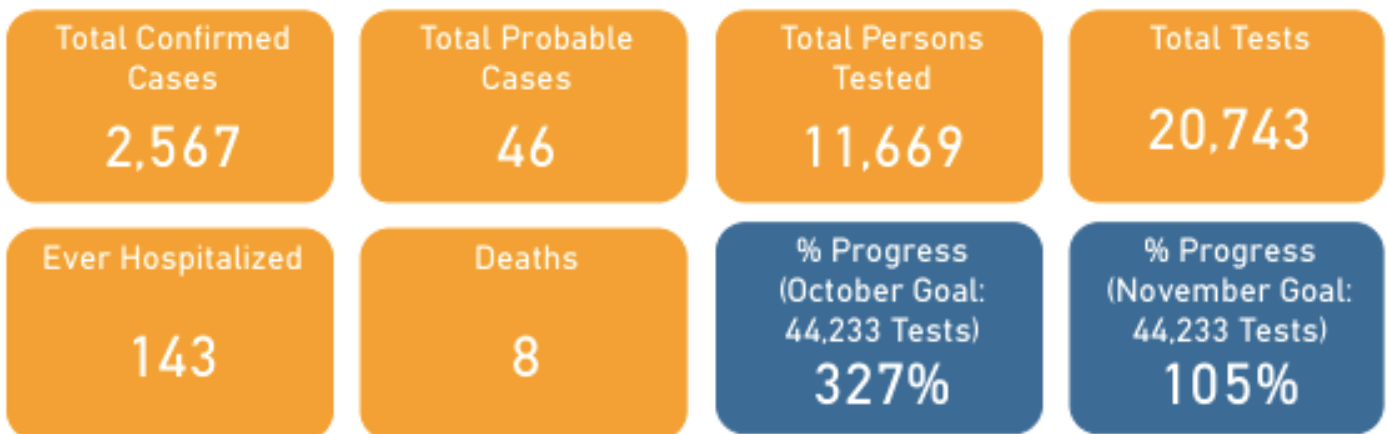
## Brown County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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



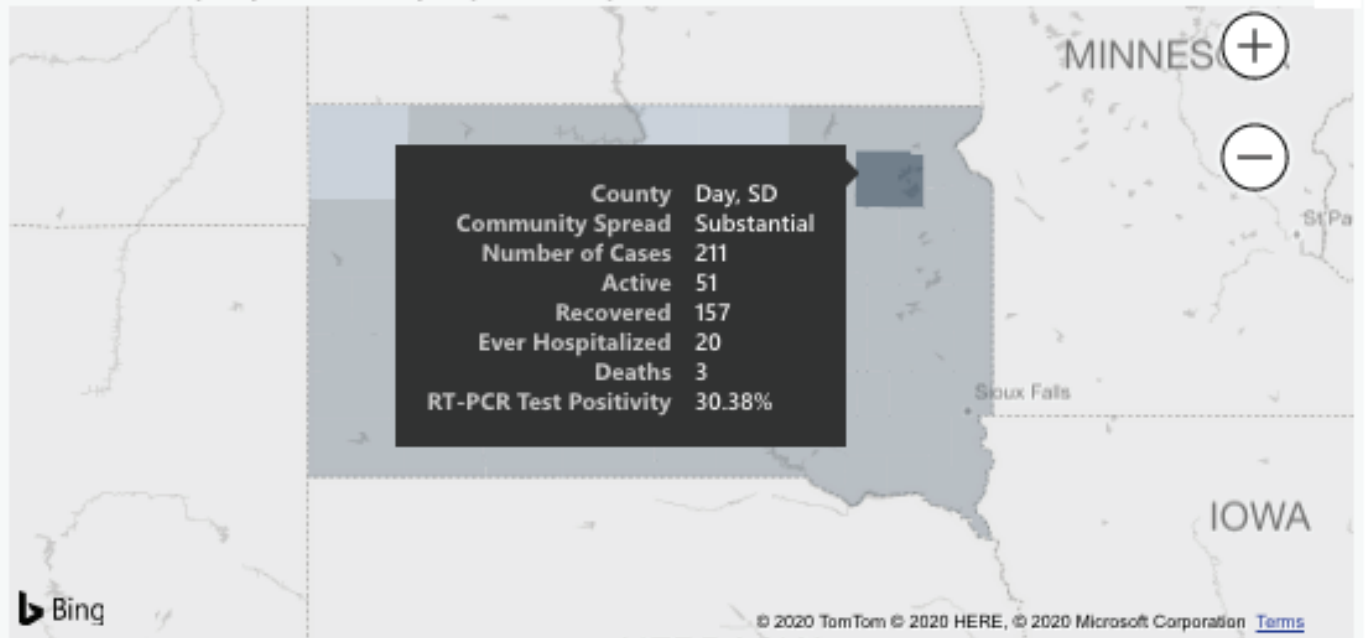
# Groton Daily Independent

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## Day County

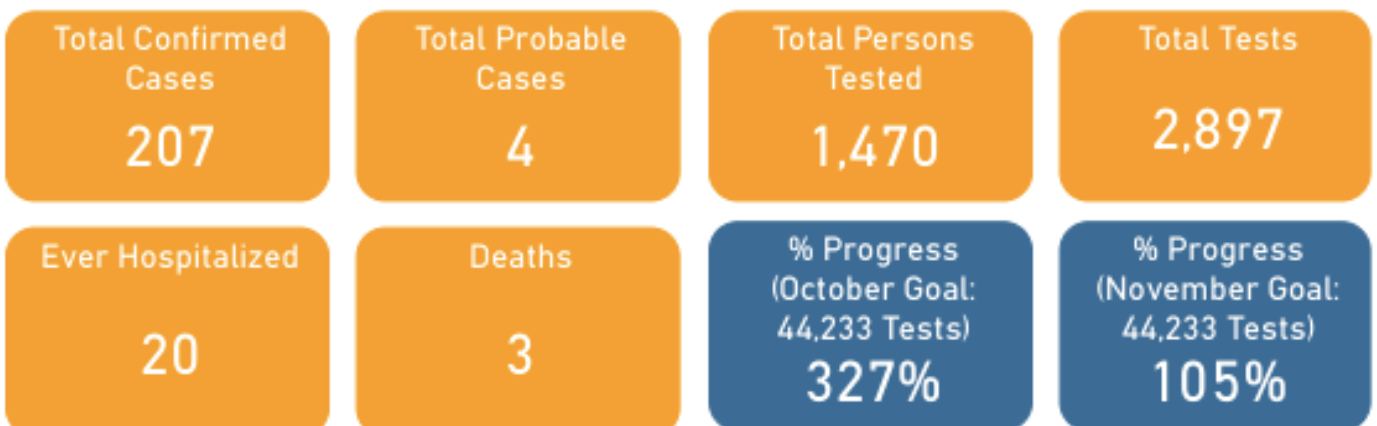


### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Moderate ● Substantial

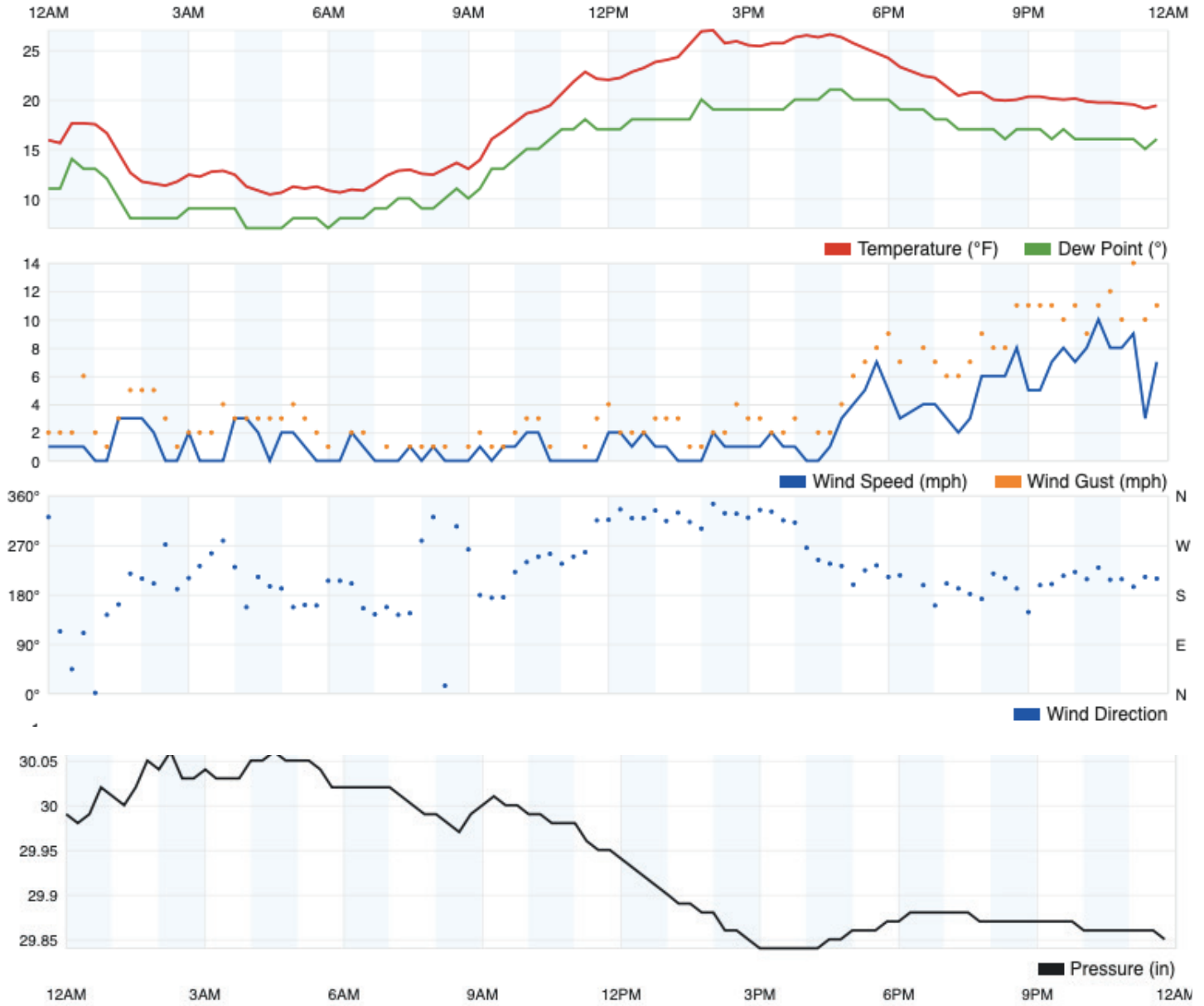
Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





# Groton Daily Independent

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Veterans Day



Becoming Sunny

High: 47 °F

Tonight



Increasing Clouds

Low: 18 °F

Thursday



Sunny

High: 31 °F

Thursday Night



Mostly Clear

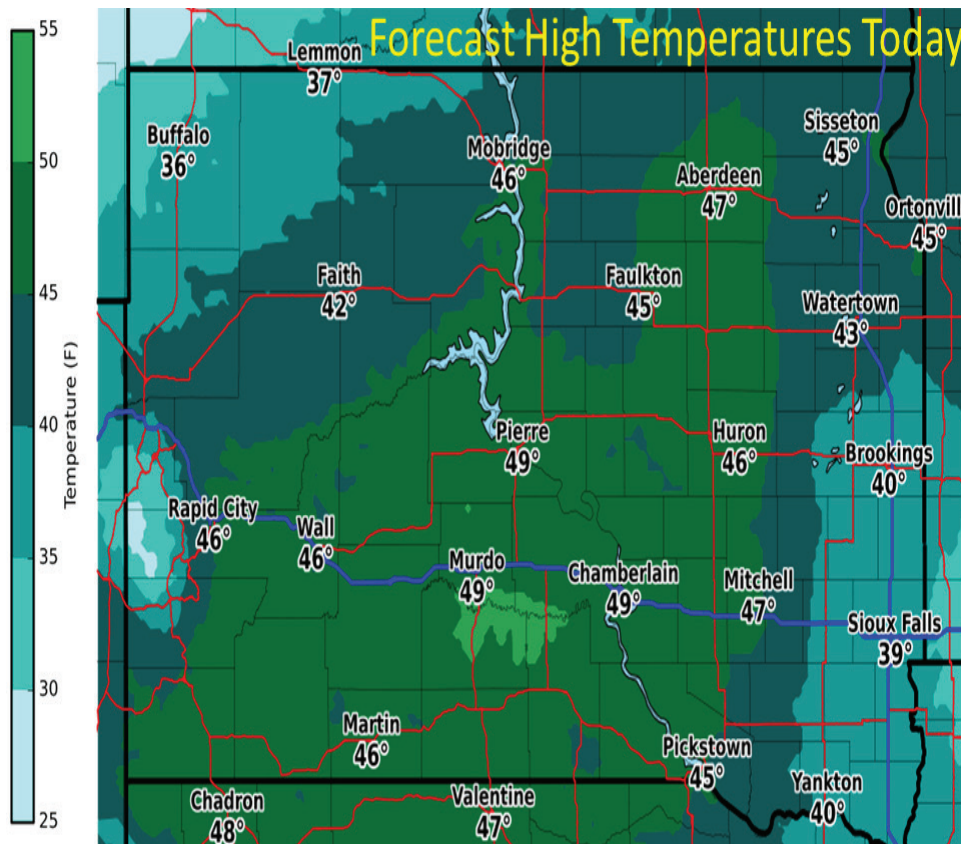
Low: 14 °F

Friday



Sunny

High: 42 °F



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen SD

11/11/2020 04:25 AM CST



Follow Us:



weather.gov/Aberdeen

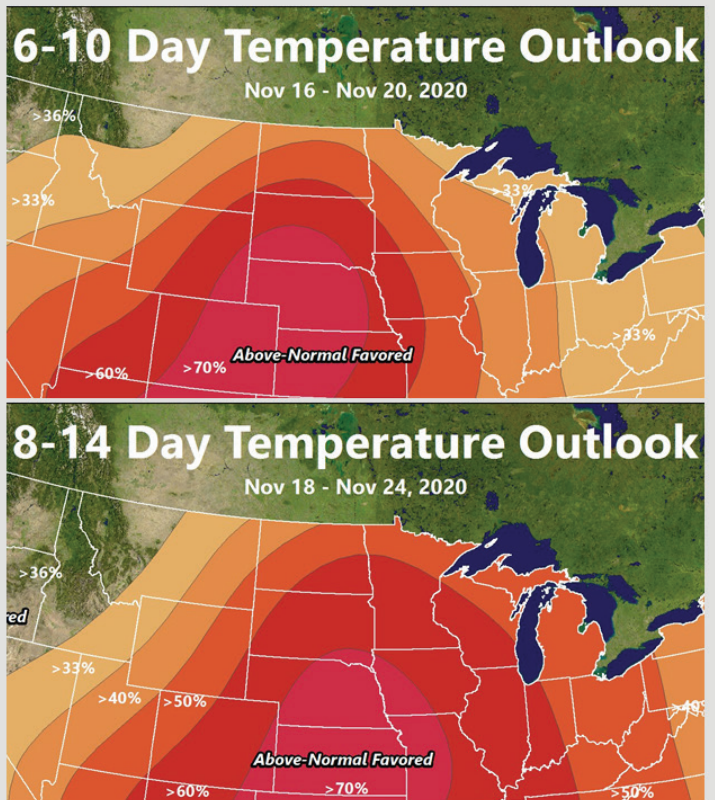
Dry and mostly sunny conditions today are expected to help temperatures warm up mainly into the 40s for most us. Places still melting off snow from Monday or Tuesday may not see the mercury nose up quite as much as bare ground areas.

## Milder Weather on the Horizon

**Above average temperatures are expected to begin this weekend, and the responsible pattern may last through at least the middle of the month.**

**Average highs through this time range between the mid 30s and mid 40s.**

**Below average precipitation is favored as well.**



A milder weather pattern is set to take shape across the area soon. Dreaming of the 70s/80s like we had earlier this month? Well, that's unlikely. To keep it in perspective, our average highs during the middle part of November range between the mid 30s and mid 40s.

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## Today in Weather History

November 11, 1982: Wet snow and winds gusting to over 50 mph snapped almost a thousand power lines and poles. Snowfall amounts were 4 to 6 inches but ranged to nearly a foot or more in Brookings County. Wind Gusts of 75 mph were recorded in McCook County. Several semi-trucks jackknifed on ice covered roads, and numerous other automobile accidents were also reported.

November 11, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 14 inches fell across central and northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota on November 11th and 12th, causing driving difficulties throughout the region. Many vehicles became stuck in the snow or slid into ditches. There were also several accidents, and many events were canceled. Some snowfall amounts include, 14.0 inches in Miller; 13.8 inches near Mellette; 12.5 inches in Highmore; 11.5 inches near Iona; 11 inches in Wilmot; 10 inches in Aberdeen, near Bryant, and Artichoke Lake MN; 9.5 inches in Clark; and 9.0 inches in Clear Lake, near Onida, and Webster.

1911 - The central U.S. experienced perhaps its most dramatic cold wave of record. During the early morning temperatures across the Central Plains ranged from 68 degrees at Kansas City to 4 above North Platte NE. In Kansas City, the temperature warmed to a record 76 degrees by late morning before the arctic front moved in from the northwest. Skies become overcast, winds shifted to the northwest, and the mercury began to plummet. By early afternoon it was cold enough to snow, and by midnight the temperature had dipped to a record cold reading of 11 degrees above zero. Oklahoma City also established a record high of 83 degrees and record low of 17 degrees that same day. In southeastern Kansas, the temperature at Independence plunged from 83 degrees to 33 degrees in just one hour. The arctic cold front produced severe thunderstorms and tornadoes in the Mississippi Valley, a blizzard in the Ohio Va

1940 - An Armistice Day storm raged across the Great Lakes Region and the Upper Midwest. A blizzard left 49 dead in Minnesota, and gales on Lake Michigan caused ship wrecks resulting in another 59 deaths. Up to seventeen inches of snow fell in Iowa, and at Duluth MN the barometric pressure reached 28.66 inches. The blizzard claimed a total of 154 lives, and killed thousands of cattle in Iowa. Whole towns were isolated by huge snowdrifts. (David Ludlum)

1955 - An early arctic outbreak set many November temperature records across Oregon and Washington. The severe cold damaged shrubs and fruit trees. Readings plunged to near zero in western Washington, and dipped to 19 degrees below zero in the eastern part of the state. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A deepening low pressure system brought heavy snow to the east central U.S. The Veteran's Day storm produced up to 17 inches of snow in the Washington D.C. area snarling traffic and closing schools and airports. Afternoon thunderstorms produced five inches of snow in three hours. Gale force winds lashed the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast. Norfolk VA reported their earliest measurable snow in 99 years of records. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Low pressure brought snow to parts of the Rocky Mountain Region. Totals in the San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado ranged up to 10 inches at Summitville. Evening thunderstorms produced large hail in central Oklahoma and north central Texas. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Veteran's Day was an unseasonably warm one across much of the nation east of the Rockies. Temperatures warmed into the 70s and 80s from the Southern and Central Plains to the southern half of the Atlantic coast. Thirty-four cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Saint Louis MO with a reading of 85 degrees. Calico AR and Gilbert AR reported record highs of 87 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)



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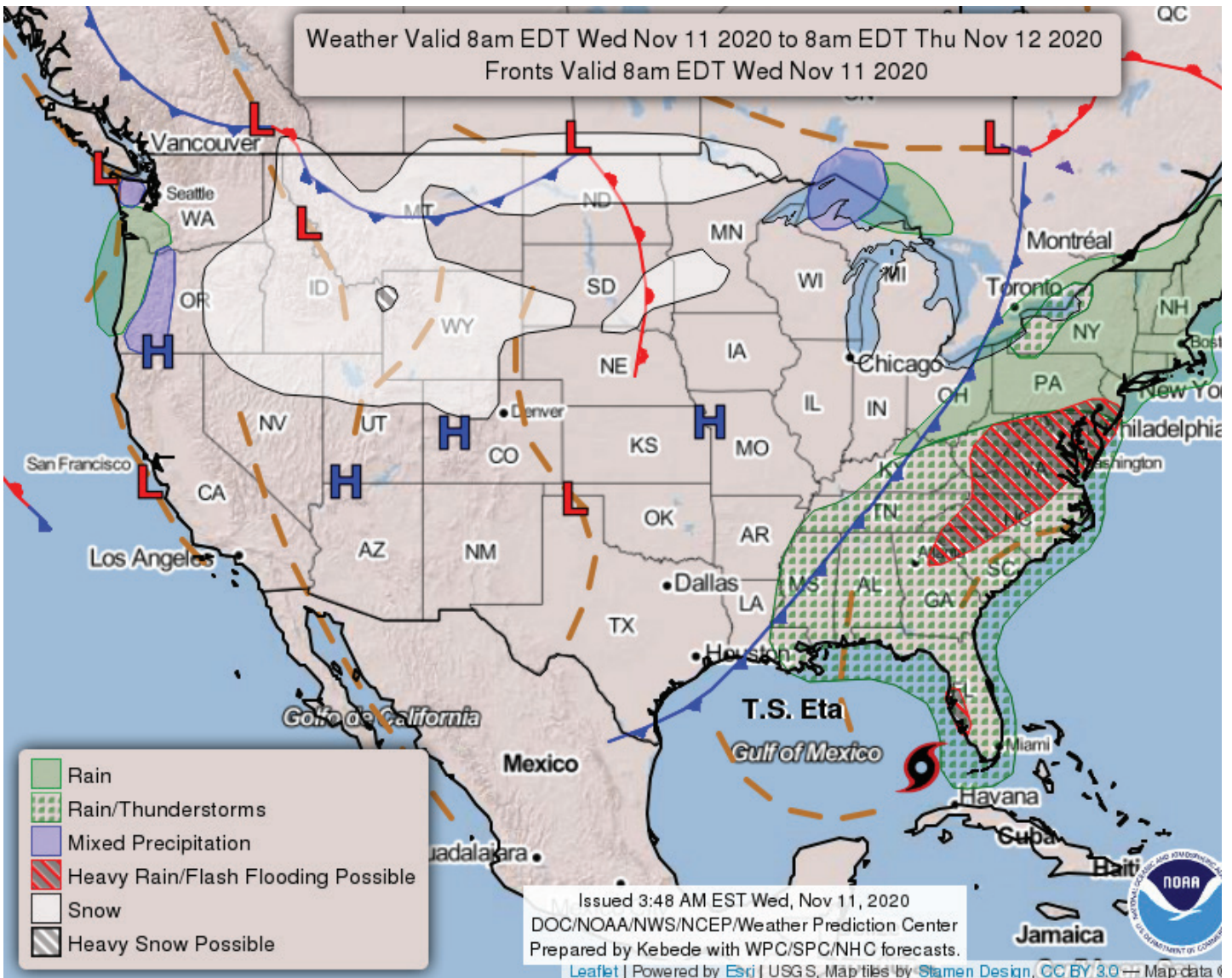
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 28 °F at 2:07 PM**  
**Low Temp: 10 °F at 6:09 AM**  
**Wind: 14 mph at 11:10 PM**  
**Precip: .00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 70° in 1909, 1912**  
**Record Low: -8° in 1896, 1966**  
**Average High: 42°F**  
**Average Low: 21°F**  
**Average Precip in Nov.: 0.29**  
**Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00**  
**Average Precip to date: 20.76**  
**Precip Year to Date: 16.34**  
**Sunset Tonight: 5:07 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:29 a.m.**





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## PROCLAIM HIS MIGHTY ACTS!

Not many people have ever heard of Mithridates the Great, King of Pontus, from northern Asia Minor, in 88 B.C. He was famous for his size, his strength, and his skill of mastering the languages of the twenty-five nations that he ruled. There's also Cardinal Mezzofanti, who was born in Bologna, Italy who spoke more than one hundred languages and dialects. Language enables us to understand one another and share ideas. It connects us.

Today, philologists claim that there are between 6,000 and 7,000 different languages that people use to communicate with one another. The majority of the languages in our world flow from one person to another. Some languages exist that have never been reduced to writing. Every language evolves and changes over time. When people connect with other people in other places, languages become richer and more inclusive. Some languages add new words while other words are deleted when they no longer make sense. Some words lose their meaning and are soon forgotten.

Yet, no matter how many words there may be or how many languages are spoken, the Psalmist put things into the proper context when he asked, "Who can proclaim the mighty acts of God, or fully declare His praise?"

We will never be able to praise God as much as He deserves, but we can praise Him with a sincere heart. If we ever begin to realize the magnitude of God's love and mercy that saves us, and sustains us, our hearts will be filled with such joy that our voices will never cease to express our gratitude and thanks!

Prayer: Thank you Father for your love and mercy that saves us. We lift our voices in praise and thanksgiving to You for Your love for us and the gift of Your Son, who came to share Your message of hope. In His Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Who can proclaim the mighty acts of God, or fully declare His praise? Psalm 106:2

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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

### **Sioux Falls rejects mask mandate, mayor breaks tie vote**

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls' mayor cast the tie-breaking vote that defeated a proposed mask mandate in the state's largest city Tuesday night.

After more than two hours of public comment, Mayor Paul TenHaken rejected the mandate after the City Council tied 4-4 on the ordinance.

The mandate would have required face coverings to be worn by people in most indoor public places where 6-foot social distancing was not achievable. Violations carried a \$50 fine.

"I believe the small uptick we'll see in compliance is not worth the community division that this will create," TenHaken said as he ended debate.

Councilor Greg Neitzert said he did not want to live in a city where people are calling the police because someone isn't wearing a mask.

"It's not just about health," Neitzert said. "We also have to look at principles."

The Greater Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce opposed it, saying there wasn't enough clarity around potential effects on businesses, the Argus Leader reported. Several faith leaders in the city supported the mandate.

### **US hits record COVID-19 hospitalizations amid virus surge**

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. hit a record number of coronavirus hospitalizations Tuesday and surpassed 1 million new confirmed cases in just the first 10 days of November amid a nationwide surge of infections that shows no signs of slowing.

The new wave appears bigger and more widespread than the surges that happened in the spring and summer — and threatens to be worse. But experts say there are also reasons to think the nation is better able to deal with the virus this time around.

"We're definitely in a better place" when it comes to improved medical tools and knowledge, said William Hanage, a Harvard University infectious-disease researcher.

Newly confirmed infections in the U.S. were running at all-time highs of well over 100,000 per day, pushing the total to more than 10 million and eclipsing 1 million since Halloween. There are now 61,964 people hospitalized, according to the COVID Tracking Project.

Several states posted records Tuesday, including over 12,600 new cases in Illinois, 10,800 in Texas and 7,000 in Wisconsin.

Deaths — a lagging indicator, since it takes time for people to get sick and die — are climbing again, reaching an average of more than 930 a day.

Hospitals are getting slammed. And unlike the earlier outbreaks, this one is not confined to a region or two.

"The virus is spreading in a largely uncontrolled fashion across the vast majority of the country," said Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious-disease expert at Vanderbilt University.

Governors made increasingly desperate pleas for people to take the fight against the virus more seriously.

In an unusual prime-time speech hours after Wisconsin set new records for infections and deaths, Democratic Gov. Tony Evers announced that he was advising people to stay in their houses and businesses to allow people to work remotely, require masks and limit the number of people in stores and offices.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat, ordered bars and restaurants to close at 10 p.m., and Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, a Republican, said she will require masks at indoor gatherings of 25 or more people, inching toward more stringent measures after months of holding out.

While deaths are still well below the U.S. peak of about 2,200 per day back in April, some researchers estimate the nation's overall toll will hit about 400,000 by Feb. 1, up from about 240,000 now.

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But there is also some good news.

Doctors now better know how to treat severe cases, meaning higher percentages of the COVID-19 patients who go into intensive care units are coming out alive. Patients have the benefit of new treatments, namely remdesivir, the steroid dexamethasone and an antibody drug that won emergency-use approval from the Food and Drug Administration on Monday. Also, testing is more widely available.

In addition, a vaccine appears to be on the horizon, perhaps around the end of the year, with Pfizer this week reporting early results showing that its experimental shots are a surprising 90% effective at preventing the disease.

And there's a change pending in the White House, with President-elect Joe Biden vowing to rely on a highly respected set of medical advisers and carry out a detailed coronavirus plan that experts say includes the kind of measures that will be necessary to bring the surge under control.

Biden pledged during the campaign to be guided by science, make testing free and widely available, hire thousands of health workers to undertake contact-tracing, and instruct the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide clear, expert advice.

"We are already seeing encouraging signs from President-elect Biden with regard to his handling of COVID-19," said Dr. Kelly Henning, a veteran epidemiologist who heads the Bloomberg Philanthropies' public health programs.

"I am relieved to see he's already put some of the smartest scientific minds on his new coronavirus task force and that they are acting urgently to try and get the pandemic under control as quickly as possible," Henning said.

While the first surge in the Northeast caught many Americans unprepared and cut an especially deadly swath through nursing homes, the second crest along the nation's Southern and Western rim was attributed mostly to heedless behavior, particularly among young adults over Memorial Day and July Fourth, and hot weather that sent people indoors, where the virus spreads more easily.

The fall surge similarly has been blamed largely on cold weather driving people inside and disdain for masks and social distancing, stoked by President Donald Trump and other politicians.

Even in parts of the country that have been through coronavirus surges before, "you see people breaking out of it" and letting their guard down, Schaffner said.

"There really is COVID fatigue that is blending into COVID annoyance," he said.

The short-term outlook is grim, with colder weather and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's ahead. Generations of family members gathering indoors for meals for extended periods "is not a recipe for anything good," Hanage said.

Other factors could contribute to the spread of the virus in the coming weeks: Last weekend saw big street celebrations and protests over the election. On Saturday night, an upset victory by Notre Dame's football team sent thousands of students swarming onto the field, many without masks.

Meanwhile, the next two months will see a lame-duck Congress and a president who might be even less inclined than before to enact disease-control measures. Those voted out of office or no longer worried about reelection for at least two more years, "are not going to be motivated to do a fantastic job," Hanage said.

Experts are increasingly alarmed about the virus's resurgence in places like Massachusetts, which has seen a dramatic rise in cases since Labor Day, blamed largely on young people socializing.

Republican Gov. Charlie Baker is warning that the health care system could become overwhelmed this winter, and he recently ordered restaurants to stop table service, required many businesses to close by 9:30 p.m., and instructed residents to stay home between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.

Brooke Nichols, a professor and infectious-disease mathematical modeler at Boston University School of Public Health, said the governor's actions don't go far enough.

"Right now because of the exponential growth, throw the kitchen sink at this, and then you can do it for not as long," Nichols said.

Meanwhile, political leaders in a number of newer coronavirus hot spots are doing less. In hard-hit South Dakota, Gov. Kristi Noem has made it clear she will not institute a mask requirement and has voiced doubt in health experts who say face coverings prevent infections from spreading.



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Even higher case and death rates have been seen in North Dakota, where many people have refused to wear masks. Gov. Doug Burgum has pleaded with people to do so, and praised local towns and cities that have mandated masks. But he has avoided requiring masks himself.

Both Noem and Burgum are Republicans and have taken positions in line with those of the president. "It would be simplistic to say it's a red-vs.-a-blue experience, but it does kind of go along party lines of whether people took it seriously, tried to prevent it and took painful measures, versus those who said, 'Let it rip,'" said Dr. Howard Markel, a public health historian at the University of Michigan.

Associated Press writer Alanna Durkin Richer in Boston 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.

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

23-45-53-58-62, Mega Ball: 13, Megaplier: 5

(twenty-three, forty-five, fifty-three, fifty-eight, sixty-two; Mega Ball: thirteen; Megaplier: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$152 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$158 million

## Tuesday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Class A SoDak 16=

State Qualifier=

Dakota Valley def. St. Thomas More, 25-11, 25-10, 25-14

Hamlin def. Mobridge-Pollock, 25-13, 25-20, 25-14

Hill City def. Clark/Willow Lake, 25-13, 25-18, 25-14

Madison def. Aberdeen Roncalli, 25-16, 25-16, 25-15

Parker vs. Baltic, ppd. to Nov 11th.

Rapid City Christian def. Redfield, 25-8, 25-15, 25-14

Sioux Falls Christian def. Miller, 25-15, 25-13, 25-7

Winner def. Tea Area, 25-19, 25-14, 25-11

Class B SoDak 16=

State Qualifier=

Bridgewater-Emery def. Philip, 25-18, 25-12, 25-14

Chester def. Freeman, 25-23, 25-16, 25-13

Colman-Egan def. Kadoka Area, 25-16, 25-15, 25-13

Corsica/Stickney def. Castlewood, 26-28, 25-27, 25-23, 25-14, 17-15

Faulkton def. Kimball/White Lake, 28-26, 18-25, 19-25, 25-23, 15-5

Hitchcock-Tulare def. Ipswich, 19-25, 25-21, 25-17, 25-18

Northwestern def. Timber Lake, 25-6, 25-9, 25-7

Warner def. Faith, 25-11, 25-16, 25-13

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

## South Dakota including NICU beds in hospital availability

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials acknowledged Tuesday that they include intensive care unit beds designed for infants in their total count of hospital beds available in the state — a key metric that the governor has used to defend her handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

COVID-19 hospitalizations reached 607 on Tuesday, marking a new high for the fifth day in a row. The Department of Health reported that about 37% of general-care hospital beds and 32% of ICU beds are available.

State epidemiologist Josh Clayton said the number of neonatal ICU beds is much smaller than the total number of ICU beds, but did not immediately provide the number of neonatal ICU beds included in the count. The Department of Health receives a total count of ICU beds from hospitals and the number of neonatal ICU beds is not separated in the count, according to Clayton.

He also pointed out that adults could receive medical care in pediatric units if necessary.

Health officials have repeatedly guided people to the Department of Health's website that tracks the percentage of hospital beds available statewide. Republican Gov. Kristi Noem has insisted the state is doing well by pointing out the percentage of COVID-19 hospitalized patients against total beds.

Hospital systems have scrambled to make beds and staff available for COVID-19 patients. But the hospital systems' capacity also depends on doctors and nurses being available to staff the beds.

Monument Health hospitals, which serve the western part of the state, announced Friday that it is "experiencing stressed capacity." The system has hired more staff to help deal with the influx of patients, but said there is a nationwide shortage of nurses available. Many health care workers have also been infected from community spread.

"At this time, our limiting factor is not beds — it's staffing," said John Pierce, president of the Rapid City hospital.

Meanwhile, health officials are launching 10 surge testing sites around the state. Surgeon General Jerome Adams visited one of the sites in Pierre and met with health officials.

Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said Adams encouraged people to take precautions like wearing a mask, washing their hands and staying 6 feet away from others, but did not push for mask mandates.

In Sioux Falls, the largest city in the state, the City Council will likely make a decision on a mask requirement in indoor public places on Tuesday night. But Mayor Paul TenHaken has said he would vote against a mask mandate if he's called upon to break a tie vote.

"I'm probably gonna get put in the hot seat," TenHaken said. Eight council members will likely split evenly on the mandate, which carries a \$50 fine for violations.

TenHaken believes the mandate would be unenforceable by police and ineffective in lowering local hospitalization rates, the Argus Leader reported.

The Greater Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce opposes the ordinance, while local faith leaders have supported it.

Health officials reported three more COVID-19 deaths, bringing the state's death toll to 540.

## Ellsworth, Minneapolis St. Paul are 'red' Air Force bases

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and the Minneapolis St. Paul Air Reserve Base in Minnesota are among nine U.S. Air Force bases in the world that have been categorized as a "red" installation due to the rise of active COVID-19 cases in areas surrounding the bases.

The red categorization means any civilian or service member would have to meet specific requirements or have an approved waiver to either leave the bases for another military installation or arrive for duty, according the U.S. Department of Defense.

Department officials won't comment on the number of coronavirus cases on bases.

According to Ellsworth's protocols, off-base gyms and fitness centers are off-limits and base personnel are prohibited from dining at restaurants or going to bars, clubs, casinos, breweries, concerts, festivals or

anywhere with a large crowd.

Ellsworth requires all personnel to wear face masks on base and when going into any off-base retail establishment.

The other installations under the red category include Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico, Eielson Air Force Base in Alaska, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska, Kadena Air Base in Japan, Misawa Air Base in Japan, Ramstein Air Base in Germany and Yokota Air Base in Japan.

## **Sudan braces for up to 200,000 fleeing Ethiopia fighting**

By CARA ANNA and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Up to 200,000 refugees could pour into Sudan while fleeing the deadly conflict in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region, officials said Wednesday, while the first details are emerging of largely cut-off civilians under growing strain. Already at least 6,000 people have crossed the border, including some wounded in the fighting, and the flow is growing quickly.

Inside the Tigray region, long lines have appeared outside bread shops, and supply-laden trucks are stranded at its borders, the United Nations humanitarian chief in the country told The Associated Press in an interview.

"We want to have humanitarian access as soon as possible," Sajjad Mohammad Sajid said. "Fuel and food are needed urgently." Up to 2 million people in Tigray have a "very, very difficult time," he said late Tuesday, including hundreds of thousands of displaced people.

Communications remain almost completely severed with the Tigray region a week after Ethiopia's Nobel Peace Prize-winning Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced a military offensive in response to an alleged attack by regional forces. He insists there will be no negotiations with a regional government he considers illegal until its ruling "clique" is arrested and its well-stocked arsenal is destroyed.

Reports grew of the targeting of ethnic Tigrayans across Ethiopia, the Tigray Communication Affairs Bureau said in a Facebook post. Abiy has warned against ethnic profiling.

The administration of Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, announced rallies in support of the federal government's measures there and in other cities in the Oromia and Amhara regions Thursday, along with a blood drive for the Ethiopian army.

Britain and the African Union have urged Abiy for an immediate de-escalation as the conflict threatens to destabilize the strategic but vulnerable Horn of Africa region. The United States did not immediately give details on any outreach.

The standoff leaves nearly 900 aid workers in the Tigray region from the U.N. and other groups struggling to contact the outside world with pleas for help. "Nine U.N. agencies, almost 20 NGOs, all depending on two offices" with the means to communicate, Sajid said.

In addition, more than 1,000 people of different nationalities are stuck in the region, he said. That includes tourists. Countries urgently are seeking their evacuation.

With airports in Tigray closed, roads blocked, internet service cut off and even banks no longer operating, it "makes our life very difficult in terms of ensuring almost 2 million people receive humanitarian assistance," Sajid said.

There is no sign of a lull in the fighting that has included multiple airstrikes by federal forces and hundreds of people reported dead on each side.

"It looks like, unfortunately, this may not be something which can be resolved by any party in a week or two," Sajid said. "It looks like it's going to be a protracted conflict, which is a huge concern from the point of view of protection of civilians."

Ethiopia's federal government and Tigray's regional government, the Tigray People's Liberation Front, blame each other for starting the conflict. Each regards the other as illegal. The TPLF dominated Ethiopia's ruling coalition for years before Abiy came to office in 2018 but has since broken away while accusing the prime minister's administration of targeting and marginalizing its officials.

Ethiopia's air force chief, Maj. Gen. Yilma Merdasa, asserted to reporters that forces had destroyed

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weapons depots, gas stations and other targets with "supreme control of the skies." He said the airstrikes would continue.

It remains difficult for diplomats, experts and others to verify either side's claims about the fighting. And now some Ethiopian journalists are being arrested, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission said, calling it a "worrying development."

Experts have compared this to an inter-state conflict, with each side heavily armed and well-trained. The Tigray region has an estimated quarter-million various armed fighters, and of the Ethiopian military's six mechanized divisions, four are based in Tigray. That's a legacy of Ethiopia's long border war with Eritrea, which made peace after Abiy came to power but remains at bitter odds with the TPLF.

The Tigray president on Tuesday accused Eritrea of attacking his region at the request of Ethiopia, saying that "the war has now progressed to a different stage," he said. Eritrean officials have not responded to requests for comment.

Under growing pressure, at least 6,000 Ethiopian refugees have crossed the now-closed border into Sudan, the state-run SUNA news agency there reported. The agency, citing unidentified officials, said that over 200,000 Ethiopians were expected to cross into Sudan in the coming days.

A Sudanese official urged U.N. agencies to speed up their response in the provinces of Kassala and Qadarif along the Ethiopian border.

"More and more people, including wounded from the operations there, are still coming. The numbers are increasing rapidly. There are lots of children and women," Al-Sir Khalid, the head of the refugee agency in Kassala, told the AP. "They are arriving very tired and exhausted. They are hungry and thirsty since they have walked long distances on rugged terrain."

Local authorities are overwhelmed and the situation on the ground is deteriorating rapidly, he said.

Magdy reported from Cairo.

## Analysis: GOP lets doubts about Biden's legitimacy flourish

By JULIE PACE and STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In backing President Donald Trump's baseless claims of election fraud, Republicans risk leaving millions of Americans with the false impression that the results of the 2020 race are illegitimate.

And that may be the point.

None of Trump's legal challenges and assertions of voting irregularities has revealed any substantive issues with the election that would overturn the results. And some GOP lawmakers and party officials privately acknowledge that Trump has no choice but to step aside by Jan. 20 and cede power to President-elect Joe Biden.

But Trump is doing nothing to make that road to Inauguration Day easier for Biden. In fact, he's trying to block it, littering the path with misinformation and falsehoods about the election. As a result, Biden will almost certainly be viewed as an illegitimate president by some voters, potentially denying him that period of goodwill that typically greets a new president.

The stakes for Biden are even greater, especially if the Senate remains in Republican control, as he advances an agenda to arrest the spiraling coronavirus pandemic and faltering economy.

"Their intent is to delegitimize this election and thereby delegitimize President-elect Biden's presidency," said Valerie Jarrett, who was a White House senior adviser to President Barack Obama. "It is damaging to the democracy. Once again they're putting their short-term political interests ahead of the interests of the country."

The GOP strategy has echoes of the Republican approach to Obama's 2008 victory when he won by 9.5 million votes and with 365 Electoral College votes. Republicans largely allowed lies about Obama's citizenship to flourish, leaving millions of Americans with the impression that the nation's first Black president might not be eligible to serve.

The chief proponent of the "birtherism" lie was, of course, Trump.



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More than a decade later, Republicans again face a choice about whether to embrace Trump's falsehoods for political gain. So far, few are openly disputing his assertions or challenging his acts to impede the transition.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Tuesday there was "no reason for alarm" at Trump's refusal to acknowledge defeat. Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota balked at the notion that Republicans were enabling conspiracy theories, saying what "we're doing is following exactly what the Founding Fathers here wanted us to do, which is to follow the rule of law."

Even those who have taken a tougher stand against Trump are giving themselves room when it comes to Biden's victory.

"It's important we show confidence in our institutions, our ability to investigate cases and when that's completed, I think it's by far the most likely outcome there will not be a change in the tally in a substantial way," said Sen. Mitt Romney of Utah.

Yet Biden's victory is not an open question. He has cleared the 270 Electoral College votes needed to win the White House.

There has been no evidence of widespread voting fraud or irregularities. State election officials in both parties say voting went well, even in the middle of a pandemic. International observers have also concluded there were no serious issues.

Trump, however, has repeatedly and baselessly claimed that Democrats are stealing the election from him and that the results will be reversed after legal challenges, none of which has shown any evidence of problems so broad that it could swing the election. In fact, many of the lawsuits have already been dismissed by judges.

Still, Republicans have allowed Trump's misinformation to flourish, pushed along by conservative media and on the internet. And Trump's obstinance has practical, negative consequences.

In preventing Biden from tapping into the government resources typically associated with a presidential transition, Trump is hobbling the incoming administration from preparing for a full government response to the worst pandemic in a century. Trump's refusal to cooperate also could prevent background investigations and security clearances for prospective staff who will be needed to fill sensitive roles.

The commission that investigated the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks said the abbreviated transition following the 2000 election contributed to critical national security positions going unfilled until just weeks before the strikes.

Biden on Tuesday vowed to move forward with his transition plans whether Trump likes it or not. The turmoil surrounding the transition, he added, said more about the person leaving the White House than the one who will soon enter.

"It's an embarrassment, quite frankly," Biden said. "It will not help the president's legacy."

Republicans' willingness to align themselves with Trump's attacks on the election offers a preview for Biden of what may be to come once he takes office.

During Obama's presidency, many Republicans did little to tamp down questions about his eligibility for the nation's highest office. Those lies helped fuel some of the hard-line opposition to Obama within the party, making it difficult for more mainstream GOP leaders to work with the White House.

The result was gridlock — but also the mobilization of forces within the Republican Party that propelled them to the majority in the House and Senate, and Trump ultimately to the White House.

Trump is likely to remain the most powerful force in the Republican Party even when he's out of office, having drawn more than 71 million votes in the election. That's the second-highest number in history, surpassed only by Biden's 76.8 million.

"The president controls Republican voters in a way that nobody has in a long time," said Brendan Buck, a Republican who advised Paul Ryan when he was House speaker. "There's very little upside to speaking up against him because he will bring his ire down on you."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Washington Bureau Chief Julie Pace has covered the White House and politics for

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The Associated Press since 2007. Follow her at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>. Political editor Steven Sloan has covered politics for the AP since 2018. Follow him at <http://twitter.com/stevenpsloan>.

Associated Press writers Lindsay Whitehurst in Salt Lake City and Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this report.

## France: Several wounded in explosion at Saudi cemetery

By ANGELA CHARLTON and AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Multiple people were wounded Wednesday when an explosive device hit an international ceremony commemorating the end of World War I at a cemetery in the Saudi city of Jiddah, according to French government officials.

Several countries had representatives at the ceremony, held at a cemetery for non-Muslim dead, the officials from the French Foreign Ministry said. The identities of the victims were unclear.

Wednesday's attack follows on the heels of a stabbing Oct. 29 that slightly wounded a guard at the French Consulate in Jiddah. The stabbing was carried out by a Saudi man, who was arrested. His motives remain unclear.

France has suffered two deadly attacks by foreign-born Muslims in the past month. A teacher was beheaded outside Paris for showing caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad to his class for a debate on free expression, and three people were later killed in a church in the southern city of Nice.

The depictions of the prophet sparked protests and calls for boycotts of French products among some Muslims in the Middle East and South Asia. France has urged its citizens in Saudi Arabia and other Muslim-majority countries to be "on maximum alert" amid the heightened tensions.

Wednesday marked the 102nd anniversary of the armistice ending World War I and is commemorated in several European countries. The French officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, condemned the attack.

French official Nadia Chaaya told the French network BFM that she was at the cemetery when she heard an explosion as the consul general was near the end of his speech.

"At that moment we didn't really understand, but we felt that we were the target because directly we saw the smoke and we were of course in panic mode," she said. "We tried to understand, and we were most of all afraid to see if there was going to be a second wave."

She said the group scattered in different directions into the street.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. Saudi officials have not yet commented.

Several hours later, Saudi state television broadcast from outside the cemetery and acknowledged that an attack involving an explosive device took place, but stressed that the security situation was now "stable." The report said an official statement about the cause and casualty details was upcoming.

Jiddah, the Red Sea port city, saw its Ottoman troops surrender to the local troops backed by the British in 1916 amid the war. That sparked the start of the Kingdom of Hejaz, which later became part of Saudi Arabia's founding in 1932.

Jiddah's Non-Muslim Cemetery sits near the city's docks, hidden behind trees alongside a major thoroughfare in the city. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission shows just one soldier buried at the cemetery, Pvt. John Arthur Hogan, who died in June 1944.

Across France, which was particularly devastated by years of trench warfare in World War I, ceremonies were held Wednesday to mark the anniversary of the armistice but also to honor all those who have died for France, including during the Second World War and in current military operations abroad and at home, where troops are deployed to protect against terrorist attacks.

Diplomatic posts have been targeted in the past in Saudi Arabia. A 2004 armed assault on the U.S. Consulate in Jiddah blamed on al-Qaida killed five employees. In 2016, a suicide bomber blew himself up near that same U.S. Consulate, wounding two guards.

Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron has come under particular scrutiny among some Muslim

leaders for his description of the caricatures of Prophet Muhammad as a protected cornerstone of free speech and France's secular ideals. This has riled some Muslims who view the depictions as blasphemous and a form of hate speech.

Saudi Arabia's monarch and top clerics are among those who have condemned the depictions, but top Saudi clerics have also called for calm and urged people to follow the prophet's example of "mercy, justice, tolerance."

King Salman is scheduled to deliver an annual address to the nation on Wednesday, laying out policy priorities for the coming year.

Barrawy reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writer Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

## Hong Kong's pro-democracy lawmakers to resign en masse

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong's pro-democracy lawmakers announced Wednesday they would resign en masse after four of them were ousted from the semiautonomous Chinese territory's Legislature in a move one legislator said could sound the "death knell" for democracy there.

The resignation of the 15 remaining pro-democracy lawmakers will ratchet up tensions over the future of Hong Kong, a former British colony that has long been a regional financial hub and bastion of Western-style civil liberties but over which China's government has increasingly tightened its control. A new national security law imposed by Beijing this year has alarmed the international community.

The mass departure will also leave Hong Kong's Legislature with only pro-Beijing lawmakers, who already made up a majority but can now pass bills favored by Beijing without much opposition.

The lawmakers told a news conference they would submit their letters of resignation on Thursday. The announcement came hours after the Hong Kong government said it was disqualifying the four legislators — Alvin Yeung, Dennis Kwok, Kwok Ka-ki and Kenneth Leung.

The ousters came after China's National People's Congress Standing Committee passed a resolution this week saying that any lawmaker who supports Hong Kong's independence, refuses to acknowledge China's sovereignty over the city, threatens national security, or asks external forces to interfere in the city's affairs should be disqualified.

"Today we will resign from our positions because our partners, our colleagues have been disqualified by the central government's ruthless move," Wu Chi-wai, the leader of the pro-democracy camp, told reporters.

During the news conference, the lawmakers held hands and chanted, "Hong Kong add oil! Together we stand!" The phrase "add oil" is a direct translation of a Chinese expression of encouragement.

"This is an actual act by Beijing ... to sound the death knell of Hong Kong's democracy fight because they would think that, from now on, anyone they found to be politically incorrect or unpatriotic or are simply not likable to look at, they could just oust you using any means," lawmaker Claudia Mo told reporters.

In recent months, Beijing has increasingly clamped down on Hong Kong, which it took back control of in 1997, despite promising at the time to leave the territory's more open legal and economic systems intact for 50 years until 2047.

Beijing imposed a national security law in June that some have labeled draconian after anti-government protests rocked the city for months last year, and it has used it to crackdown on opposition voices.

In response, the U.S. leveled sanctions on several officials, including Hong Kong's pro-Beijing leader, several Western countries have suspended their extradition treaties with the territory, and Australia and Britain offered Hong Kongers easier paths to settle in those countries.

Britain said Wednesday that the decision to remove the lawmakers raises further concerns.

"This campaign to harass, stifle and disqualify democratic opposition tarnishes China's international reputation and undermines Hong Kong's long-term stability," Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said in a

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statement.

Beijing has rejected the criticism and lashed out at what it calls gross foreign interference in Chinese politics.

On Wednesday, Hong Kong's leader, Carrie Lam, defended the lawmakers' removal, telling reporters that legislators must act properly and that the city needs a body comprised of patriots.

"We cannot allow members of the Legislative Council who have been judged in accordance with the law to be unable to fulfill the requirements and prerequisites for serving on the Legislative Council to continue to operate in the Legislative Council," Lam said.

Still, Lam said that the Legislature would not become a rubber-stamp body, and that diverse opinion is welcome.

"In terms of legality and constitutionality, obviously, from our point of view, this is clearly in breach of the Basic Law and our rights to participate in public affairs, and a failure to observe due process," Kwok, one of the ousted lawmakers, told reporters, referring to Hong Kong's mini-constitution.

Earlier in the year, the four lawmakers were barred from seeking reelection in a vote originally scheduled for September — but remained in their posts. They were disqualified over their calls for foreign governments to impose sanctions on Hong Kong and Beijing.

The government eventually postponed the planned September election by a year, citing the coronavirus, but the pro-democracy camp criticized the move as an attempt to block them from taking a majority of seats in the Legislature — which was a possibility in the coming election.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said that the disqualification was necessary to maintain rule of law and constitutional order in Hong Kong.

"We firmly support the (Hong Kong) government in performing its duties in accordance with the Standing Committee's decision," Wang said at a regular news conference Wednesday.

## Biden vows to 'get right to work' despite Trump resistance

By STEVE PEOPLES and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Vowing "to get right to work," President-elect Joe Biden shrugged off President Donald Trump's fierce refusal to accept the election outcome as "inconsequential," even as Democrats elsewhere warned that the Republican president's actions were dangerous.

Raising unsupported claims of voter fraud, Trump has blocked the incoming president from receiving intelligence briefings and withheld federal funding intended to help facilitate the transfer of power. Trump's resistance, backed by senior Republicans in Washington and across the country, could also prevent background investigations and security clearances for prospective staff and access to federal agencies to discuss transition planning.

As some Democrats and former Republican officials warned of serious consequences, Biden sought to lower the national temperature Tuesday as he addressed reporters from a makeshift transition headquarters near his home in downtown Wilmington.

Biden described Trump's position as little more than an "embarrassing" mark on the outgoing president's legacy, while predicting that Republicans on Capitol Hill would eventually accept the reality of Biden's victory. The Republican resistance, Biden said, "does not change the dynamic at all in what we're able to do."

Additional intelligence briefings "would be useful," Biden added, but "we don't see anything slowing us down."

The measured comments come as Biden prepares to confront dueling national crises that actively threaten the health, safety and economic security of millions of Americans irrespective of the political debate. Coronavirus infections, hospitalizations and deaths are surging, the economy faces the prospect of long-term damage and the nation's political and cultural divides may be worsening.

Biden is betting that his low-key approach and bipartisan outreach — a sharp reversal from the current president's style — will help him govern effectively on Day One. But just a little over two months before Biden will be inaugurated, Trump and his allies seemed determined to make his transition as difficult as



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possible.

From his Twitter account on Tuesday, Trump again raised unsupported claims of “massive ballot counting abuse” and predicted he would ultimately win the race he has already lost. His allies on Capitol Hill, led by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, have encouraged the president’s baseless accusations. Trump’s tweets were swiftly flagged by the social media network as disputed claims about election fraud.

There is no evidence of widespread fraud in the 2020 election. In fact, election officials from both political parties have stated publicly that the election went well, and international observers confirmed there were no serious irregularities.

The issues Trump’s campaign and its allies have pointed to are typical in every election: problems with signatures, secrecy envelopes and postal marks on mail-in ballots, as well as the potential for a small number of ballots miscast or lost. With Biden leading Trump by wide margins in key battleground states, none of those issues would have any impact on the outcome of the election.

America’s allies began to acknowledge what Trump would not.

French President Emmanuel Macron met with Biden via videoconference. German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, among six world leaders overall, congratulated Biden on his election.

“I look forward to strengthening the partnership between our countries and to working with him on our shared priorities — from tackling climate change, to promoting democracy and building back better from the pandemic,” Johnson wrote on Twitter. “Build back better” is a slogan that Biden and the British government have in common.

Meanwhile, Biden tried to stay focused on health care in the midst of the worst health crisis in more than a century. One of Biden’s chief coronavirus advisers, former Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, briefed Senate Democrats on Tuesday by phone at their weekly virtual lunch.

In an afternoon speech, Biden delivered a forceful defense of the Affordable Care Act, just hours after the Supreme Court heard arguments on its merits. The high court ruled eight years ago to leave intact the essential components of the law known as “Obamacare,” but Trump and his Republican allies are seeking to have it overturned.

If the 6-3 conservative court ultimately agrees with the GOP, millions of Americans could lose their health care coverage. While Tuesday’s arguments indicate the court is unlikely to strike down the entire law, the prospect added new weight to the already heavy burden Biden inherits from the outgoing administration.

“It’s a law that saved lives and spared countless families from financial ruin,” Biden charged. He vowed to work with Congress to strengthen the health care law “as soon as humanly possible.”

For now, however, Republicans on Capitol Hill, like those in the Trump administration, are showing no desire to cooperate with a Biden administration.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Tuesday predicted there would be a smooth transition — to another four years of Trump in power. And McConnell largely endorsed Trump’s approach: “Until the Electoral College votes, anyone who is running for office can exhaust concerns.”

Biden spent much of Tuesday working alongside Vice President-elect Kamala Harris at a theater near his home. He is expected to quickly name a chief of staff and start considering Cabinet appointments, though those likely won’t be finalized for weeks.

Republicans are increasingly eyeing a December deadline to publicly accept the election result, giving Trump time and space to exhaust his legal challenges. That’s when the states face a deadline to certify results and a Dec. 14 deadline for the Electoral College to cast its votes. It’s also roughly the same amount of time it took to resolve the 2000 election dispute between Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore.

Biden’s team is calling on the General Services Administration, led by a Trump-appointed administrator, Emily Murphy, to formally recognize Biden’s victory. Until that happens, Biden will not receive comprehensive security briefings, transition funding or the ability to communicate with agencies to begin coordinating the transfer of power.

"Administrator Murphy's refusal to ascertain President-elect Biden's victory in the 2020 election puts American lives at risk," said Rep. Don Beyer, a Virginia Democrat who led the Obama administration's transition at the Commerce Department.

Former Republican officials agreed.

"Our adversaries aren't waiting for the transition to take place," said former Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Mich., insisting that Biden begin receiving the president's daily briefing immediately. "This isn't about politics; this is about national security."

Biden, meanwhile, didn't seem worried.

He answered several questions during his first press briefing as the president-elect, almost all of them focused on the Republican Party's refusal to acknowledge his victory.

"I just think it's an embarrassment, quite frankly," Biden said.

Peoples reported from New York. AP writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Lisa Mascaro, Alexandra Jaffe and Deb Reichmann in Washington contributed.

## The Latest: Belgium sees fewer cases, hospitalizations

By The Associated Press undefined

BRUSSELS — Decreasing hospitalizations, fewer confirmed cases and other major public health indicators show that the resurgence of the coronavirus in Belgium is abating.

Virologist Steven Van Gucht of the Sciensano government health group said Wednesday: "The decrease of infections and hospital admissions is continuing. And for the first time, the number of patients in intensive care units is no longer increasing," said

The daily number of deaths caused by COVID-19 "continues to rise, but here, too, the pace seems to slow down," he said.

It was welcome news for Belgium, which proportionally is among the worst-hit nations in Europe when it comes to confirmed coronavirus cases. Officials had feared that the nation's maximum intensive care unit occupancy of 2,000 beds would be reached last Friday. ICU bed use is now plateauing and slightly tapering off at 1,470.

"Possibly, we have reached a peak and the number of ICU patients will no longer rise," Van Gucht said.

Over the past month Belgium has taken increasingly stringent measures to contain the virus, with bar and restaurant closures capped by a partial lockdown, which started last week and put further restrictions on gatherings and forced non-essential shops to shut.

Belgium still had 7,834 new confirmed cases a day over the past week, but it amounted to a 46% decline from the previous 7-day period. The daily death toll for the past week stood at 190 people, a 35% increase.

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

- One of the world's largest cemeteries is struggling under Iran's coronavirus toll
- Business travel might never look the same in the wake of the coronavirus
- Texas becomes first US state with more than 1 million confirmed COVID-19 cases
- During the early days of the coronavirus, top World Health Organization scientists described some countries' approaches as "an unfortunate laboratory to study the virus" and a "macabre" opportunity to see what worked, recordings obtained by The Associated Press show. Yet in public, the U.N. health agency lauded governments for their responses.

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

### HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — A security authority in the southern Netherlands says that nearly half of

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the workers at a meatpacking company are infected with the coronavirus.

The Verhey Vlees company closed its plant in the village of Nuth on Nov. 4 after 41 of the 225 workers at the facility near the Dutch borders with Germany and Belgium tested positive for the virus.

The South Limburg Security Region said in a statement Tuesday evening that the number of confirmed cases has since risen to nearly half of the workers.

The local health authority is attempting to trace all contacts of the infected workers, many of whom are migrants employed by staffing agencies.

Many meatpacking plants and slaughterhouses in Europe and the United States have seen coronavirus clusters during the pandemic.

In May, the German government agreed to ban the use of subcontractors and to increase fines for breaches of labor law in the meat industry starting next year following a series of outbreaks at slaughterhouses.

**LONDON** — Britain is planning a strategy to get hundreds of thousands of university students home for Christmas without sparking a new upsurge in coronavirus cases.

Scientists say students traveling from their hometowns to colleges in September was one of the drivers of the current wave of COVID-19 in the U.K. There have been multiple campus outbreaks, with students confined to residences and group activities canceled.

The British government said Wednesday that it plans to stagger students' departures at the end of term to avoid a mass exodus. They want universities in England to send students home over a nine-day period after the current four-week lockdown in England ends on Dec. 2.

As many students as possible will get rapid-results COVID-19 tests before they travel, the government said -- though it was unclear exactly how many would be tested.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer Jenny Harries said "the mass movement of students across the country at the end of term presents a really significant challenge within the COVID-19 response," but that the measures would reduce the risk.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are likely to bring in similar measures.

**NAIROBI, Kenya** — Ethiopia now has more than 100,000 confirmed coronavirus infections, joining a handful of countries across Africa that have surpassed that milestone as COVID-19 cases begin to creep up again in multiple places.

The Horn of Africa regional power faces multiple humanitarian crises and now has a growing deadly conflict in its northern Tigray region between federal forces and regional ones.

The United Nations is pleading for humanitarian access to Tigray as trucks with medical and other supplies are stranded outside the regional border.

Other African nations with over 100,000 confirmed virus cases on Wednesday are Egypt with over 109,000; Morocco with over 265,000 and South Africa with over 740,000. The 54-nation African continent is closing in on 2 million confirmed cases, with a little over 1.9 million.

The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says Ethiopia has more than 1,500 deaths from COVID-19.

**HONG KONG** — Hong Kong and Singapore will start an air travel bubble later this month, allowing travelers from each city to visit the other without entering quarantine.

The travelers must test negative for the coronavirus before they leave, when they arrive and before they return. The bubble starts Nov. 22 with one designated flight a day to each city carrying a maximum of 200 travelers each. It will expand to two flights Dec. 7.

The bubble will be suspended for two weeks if either Hong Kong or Singapore reports a seven-day moving average of more than five untraceable coronavirus infections, according to the Hong Kong government.

"Hong Kong and Singapore are similar in terms of epidemic control. Both are regional aviation hubs and

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international cities, enjoying strong trade, investment, finance, tourism and people-to-people ties," said Hong Kong's secretary for commerce and economic development Edward Yau. "The revival of cross-border air travel between the two places is of utmost importance."

He said that he hopes the aviation, tourism, hotel and retail businesses will benefit from the bubble, and that it would gradually help Hong Kong's economy to recover.

BEIJING — A leading Chinese health official has expressed confidence the country may avoid a second wave of coronavirus infections this winter if it maintains current precautions.

Feng Zijian, deputy director of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, told leading financial magazine Caixin that China "will very likely prevent" a new round of infections given present trends.

China has largely eliminated new local outbreaks by requiring masks indoors and on public transport, requiring two-week quarantines for those entering the country and banning some foreign travelers entirely.

Authorities have quickly moved to address local outbreaks by tracing potential contacts, carrying out widespread testing and sometimes locking down entire communities.

While China was accused of suppressing information initially, its recent data have not been seriously challenged and local officials have moved swiftly to disclose new cases. That has allowed the world's second-largest economy to largely recover.

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — The Pacific nation of Vanuatu has recorded its first case of the coronavirus after a citizen who had been repatriated from the United States tested positive while in quarantine. Vanuatu had been among the last handful of countries to have avoided the virus.

Health authorities say the 23-year-old man was asymptomatic when he returned home Nov. 4. His infection was confirmed Tuesday after routine testing.

Officials say they plan to keep everyone from the same flight in quarantine and to trace the man's close contacts, but they don't plan to impose any broader measures in the nation of 300,000 people.

## Some big, early shifts on immigration expected under Biden

By BEN FOX and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Some dramatic moves on immigration are expected in the early days of the Biden administration. Joe Biden will likely use executive orders to reverse some of President Donald Trump's most controversial actions, rolling back moves that were a central feature of his administration and important to his base.

The Biden administration plans to restore protection for people brought to the U.S. illegally as minors and stop using Pentagon funds to build a border wall. Biden unveiled a detailed, highly ambitious plan on immigration, but it will take time to undo many actions taken by Trump.

The incoming president will also likely face a divided Congress, making it difficult to enact any kind of sweeping, comprehensive changes to the nation's immigration system. Here's a look at what to expect:

### A CHANGE OF TONE

Restricting immigration was a signature issue for Trump, who infamously called Mexicans rapists as he pledged to build a border wall in launching his campaign. His administration banned travelers from some predominantly Muslim countries as one of its first acts, took many steps to limit legal immigration and cut the number of refugees allowed in the country by 80%.

Biden has said "immigration is central to who we are as a nation," noting that most Americans can trace their ancestry to immigrants, but it isn't a core issue. It's not even mentioned on his transition website's top priorities: COVID-19, economic recovery, racial justice and climate change.

Biden named Cecilia Munoz, President Barack Obama's top immigration adviser, to his transition team, which some interpreted as signaling a more moderate tack.



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## BIG, EARLY MOVES

Biden has said he will move quickly to undo some of Trump's signature immigration initiatives. The border wall? The roughly 400 miles (644 kilometers) built so far won't come down but the new administration won't keep building it or taking money from the Pentagon to fund it over the objections of Congress.

The incoming administration plans to reinstate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which currently shields from deportation about 650,000 people who came to the country when they were young. He plans to overturn the travel ban on people visiting the United States from 13 countries, many of them Muslim-majority.

One of Trump's first moves in office was to tell immigration officials that everyone in the country illegally was subject to deportation. Biden is expected to return to criteria similar to what Obama adopted toward the end of his tenure, largely limiting deportations to people with serious criminal records in the United States.

Biden said he wants the government to help find parents of hundreds of children who were separated from their parents at the border early in the Trump administration.

Biden wants to get rid of policies that have been "detrimental" to seeking asylum — such as the policy to make asylum-seekers wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration court — but he is expected to move cautiously to avoid triggering more arrivals.

Rep. Veronica Escobar, a Texas Democrat who was a Biden appointee to the joint immigration task force with Bernie Sanders, said a resolution will require coordination with Mexico.

"This is a moment that's going to require true leadership," she said.

## WHY SOME CHANGES WILL TAKE TIME

Nearly every major policy change under Trump is in court and may take effort to disentangle, including considerations of protecting executive power. Other reversals would be subject to formal rule-making procedures that require time.

Stephen Yale-Loehr, a professor of immigration law practice at Cornell Law School, thinks Biden will move cautiously on asylum to avoid setting off a new wave of arrivals and says other changes will face "procedural and practical problems."

Take the "public charge" rule, which disqualifies more people from green cards if they rely on government benefits. Biden wants it reversed but would need to go through the extensive, rule-making exercise. A federal appeals court sided with Trump on ending humanitarian protections that have allowed hundreds of thousands of people from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Haiti and Sudan to remain in the United States. Biden says only that he would order an "immediate review" of "Temporary Protected Status."

Yale-Loehr, a strong critic of Trump's policies, says it is "going to take four years to undo all the damage that the Trump administration has done" while Biden attends to the pandemic and other issues.

## WHAT COULD STAY THE SAME

At least initially, Biden may keep in place a Trump administration order that authorizes Customs and Border Protection to quickly expel any migrant as a public health measure during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even though critics question the health justification for the order, the new administration may decide it's necessary to avoid a rush of migrants and to protect Border Patrol agents and other CBP employees, says Doris Meissner, a former senior U.S. immigration official now with the Migration Policy Institute.

"This health circumstance is not likely to just disappear come January or February," she says.

## PROSPECTS FOR MAJOR IMMIGRATION OVERHAUL

Biden says he will "commit significant political capital to finally deliver legislative immigration reform," which would be necessary to fix problems with the American immigration system and resolve the fate of millions of undocumented people living in the U.S. That's a long shot, at best, with the divided Congress. President George W. Bush called for a big immigration bill, to no avail. Obama pushed for one as well,

and it died in the House.

Spagat reported from San Diego.

## **In Iran, a massive cemetery struggles to keep up with virus**

By MOHAMMAD NASIRI Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — For over half a century, a massive graveyard on the edge of Iran's capital has provided a final resting place for this country's war dead, its celebrities and artists, its thinkers and leaders and all those in between.

But Behesht-e-Zahra is now struggling to keep up with the coronavirus pandemic ravaging Iran, with double the usual number of bodies arriving each day and grave diggers excavating thousands of new plots.

"All of the crises that we have experienced at this cemetery over the past 50 years of its history have lasted for just a few days or a week at most," said Saeed Khaal, the cemetery's manager. Never before — not during earthquakes or even the country's 1980s war with Iraq — has the pace of bodies flowing into Behesht-e-Zahra been so high for so long, he said.

"Now we have been in a crisis for 260 days, and it is not clear how many months more we are going to be facing this crisis," he said.

With 1.6 million people buried on its grounds, which stretch across more than 5 square kilometers (1,320 acres), Behesht-e-Zahra is one of the world's largest cemeteries and the primary one for Tehran's 8.6 million people. The golden minarets of its Imam Khomeini Shrine, the burial site of the leader of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, are visible for kilometers (miles).

But it was not big enough for the coronavirus, which roared into Iran early this year, seeding the region's worst outbreak.

Iran has reported over 715,000 infections and said that 39,664 have died so far of the coronavirus. The country has set single-day death records 10 times over the past month. Another record came on Wednesday, with 462 deaths. Almost half of the country's reported virus fatalities have happened in Tehran, putting pressure on the cemetery.

Far past the graves of the dead from Iran's war with Iraq and those of politicians, the cemetery has expanded to a new area. Tehran's leaders announced in June that they were preparing 15,000 new graves there — about 5,000 more than in a typical year. Satellite pictures from September show the plots — deep enough to allow for as many as three bodies in each — newly dug, each separated by a layer of dirt and bricks.

While not all of the new graves are for coronavirus victims, most are.

For Khaal, sometimes referred to as the "mayor" of this vast necropolis, the pace is beyond anything he's seen before.

"We used to accept between 150 to 170 dead bodies every day, but these days when we are experiencing the peak of deaths, we are accepting 350 bodies on average," he told The Associated Press.

The tremendous workload is also putting a strain on the cemetery's employees, Khaal said.

It's unclear how other cemeteries in Iran are coping. In March, authorities arrested a man for posting a video online of bodies wrapped in white shrouds and zipped into black body bags at a cemetery in the Shiite holy city of Qom, alleging they all were "corona-infected." Officials at that cemetery at the time said they were testing the bodies for the virus.

At Behesht-e-Zahra — or "Zahra's Paradise" in Farsi, named after a daughter of the Prophet Muhammad — the bodies of known coronavirus victims arrive every day by ambulance. Mortuary attendants prepare each body for the ritual washing required for the Muslim dead. During the pandemic, that now includes the use of disinfectants.

Later, an imam recites prayers, while mourners stand on spaced-out squares that ensure they keep their distance from one another.

"These days I perform about 25 to 30 death prayers (for COVID-19 victims) on average, just myself,"

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cleric Meysam Rajavi said. "There are about 12 of us who pray for the same number of the dead on a daily basis. This is a big number."

Mourners follow the body to the graveyard, where another masked staffer in gloves and disposable coveralls lowers the body to its final resting place.

The wails of loved ones echo across the expanse of freshly dug graves that await the next funeral.

Associated Press writers Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and Nasser Karimi and Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Iran, contributed to this report.

Follow Mohammad Nasiri on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/moenasiri](http://www.twitter.com/moenasiri).

## Election 2020 Today: Smooth election, Biden ready to work

By The Associated Press undefined

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

TODAY'S TOP STORIES:

**SMOOTH ELECTION:** State officials and election experts say the 2020 election unfolded smoothly across the country and without any widespread irregularities. That's a stark contrast with the baseless claims of fraud being leveled by President Donald Trump following his defeat. Election experts say the large increase in advance voting helped take pressure off Election Day operations. There were also no incidents of violence at the polls or voter intimidation. Trump has made numerous claims of fraud but has not provided evidence to back up those claims.

**'GET RIGHT TO WORK':** President-elect Joe Biden is shrugging off Trump's fierce refusal to accept the election outcome as "inconsequential," even as Democrats elsewhere warn that the Republican president's actions are dangerous. Trump has blocked the incoming president from receiving intelligence briefings and withheld federal funding intended to help facilitate the transfer of power.

**GOP BACKS TRUMP:** Republicans are largely standing with Trump as he launches false attacks on the integrity of the 2020 election. The effort appears aimed at trying to discredit Biden, who has secured more than the 270 Electoral College votes needed to win the White House. The GOP efforts to malign the election could create challenges for Biden as he seeks to govern next year and address the nation's pressing problems, including the coronavirus pandemic and economic uncertainty.

**HOUSE CONTROL:** Democrats have clinched two more years of controlling the House. But they'll do it with a potentially razor-thin majority. That would mean a bittersweet finale to last week's elections that's leaving them divided and with scant margin for error for advancing their agenda. But while they will control the chamber, they had expected to win perhaps 15 new seats until they were blindsided by a surge of Republican voters in districts around the country.

**BREAKING STEREOTYPES:** The husband of Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, Doug Emhoff, plans to leave his private law practice by Inauguration Day to focus on White House duties. Emhoff's decision to leave DLA Piper also avoids any appearance of conflicts of interest, as the firm has a lobbying presence in Washington. Emhoff, 56, will be the first man to hold the role of vice presidential spouse; Harris will be the nation's first female vice president. Emhoff's decision to leave his high-profile job tracks with choices female political spouses have made for years. He hasn't said what issues he'll take on.

**QUOTABLE:** "The 2020 general election was one of the smoothest and most well-run elections that we have ever seen, and that is remarkable considering all the challenges." — Ben Hovland, a Democrat appointed by Trump to serve on the Election Assistance Commission, which works closely with officials on election administration.

ICYMI:

False claims of voting fraud, pushed by Trump, thrive online

Trump election challenge not same as 2000 Florida recount

AP Explains: Election's validity intact despite Trump claims

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

## Future of business travel unclear as virus upends work life

By DEE-ANN DURBIN and DAVID KOENIG AP Business Writers

Brian Contreras represents the worst fears of the lucrative business travel industry.

A partner account executive at a U.S. tech firm, Contreras was used to traveling frequently for his company. But nine months into the pandemic, he and thousands of others are working from home and dialing into video conferences instead of boarding planes.

Contreras manages his North American accounts from Sacramento, California and doesn't expect to travel for work until the middle of next year. Even then, he's not sure how much he will need to.

"Maybe it's just the acceptance of the new normal. I have all of the resources necessary to be on the calls, all of the communicative devices to make sure I can do my job," he said. "There's an element of face-to-face that's necessary, but I would be OK without it."

That trend could spell big trouble for hotels, airlines, convention centers and other industries that rely so heavily on business travelers like Contreras.

Work travel represented 21% of the \$8.9 trillion spent on global travel and tourism in 2019, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council.

Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian recently suggested business travel might settle into a "new normal" that is 10% to 20% lower than it used to be.

"I do think corporate travel is going to come back faster than people suspect. I just don't know if it will be come back to the full volume," Bastian told The Associated Press. Right now, Delta's business travel revenue is down 85%.

Dubai-based MBC Group, which operates 18 television stations, says it's unlikely employees will travel as often once the pandemic ends because they've proven they don't need to.

"We have managed to deliver projects and negotiate deals very successfully, though remotely," MBC spokesman Mazen Hayek said. MBC has reduced trips by more than 85%, Hayek said.

Amazon, which told it employees to stop traveling in March, says it has saved nearly \$1 billion in travel expenses so far this year. The online shopping giant, with more than 1.1 million employees, is the second-largest employer in the U.S.

At Southwest Airlines, CEO Gary Kelly said while overall passenger revenue is down 70%, business travel — normally more than one-third of Southwest's traffic -- is off 90%.

"I think that's going to continue for a long time. I'm very confident it will recover and pass 2019 levels, I just don't know when," Kelly told the AP.

U.S. hotels relied on business travel for around half their revenue in 2019, or closer to 60% in big cities like Washington, according to Cindy Estis Green, the CEO of hospitality data firm Kalibri Labs.

Peter Belobaba, who teaches airline management at MIT, said business travel is down partly because some people are afraid to fly and partly because companies fear liability if employees contract COVID-19 while traveling for work.

Companies have also reined in travel because times are lean, he said. ExxonMobil cut business travel in February — even before the pandemic's full impact was felt in the U.S. — because of falling global demand for oil.

Those who want to travel may also be limited by travel restrictions, Belobaba added. Last month, Polestar CEO Thomas Ingenlath observed a mandatory 14-day quarantine in China after flying in from Sweden for the Beijing Auto Show.

Polestar, an electric car brand jointly owned by Sweden's Volvo and China's Geely, has always tried to limit travel for environmental reasons. But the 14-day quarantine has restricted travel even further, said Kiki Liu, Polestar's head of communications.

The cutback in travel has been a boon for teleconferencing services. Zoom said it had 370,200 customer



businesses with at least 10 employees at the end of July, more than triple the number it had at the end of April.

But for some workers, teleconferencing can't replace being there in person.

Rebecca Lindland, an automotive consultant and founder of Rebecca Drives, used to travel 38 weeks each year for test drives and auto shows. This year, she didn't fly from March until September. Test drives have been cut back to regional events, so attendees don't have to travel as far.

Lindland misses the downtime air travel gave her, and she's confident she can return to the skies safely. She wears a mask, and even before the pandemic she always carried Lysol wipes and hand sanitizer.

"I've been wiping down my tray tables since 1985," she said with a laugh.

Sam Clarke, an assistant professor in the college of business at California State University San Marcos, agrees that some in-person events — like trade shows — will still be important in the future. But he thinks new kinds of business travel could also emerge.

Lockdowns have taught employees how to adapt to different work environments, he says, so hotels, airlines and even cruise ships should beef up their connectivity and cater to business travelers.

Late last month, Marriott introduced flexible options aimed at business travelers, including one-day stays with an evening check-out.

Clarke also expects some companies will flip their travel. Instead of letting a few executives travel a lot, he said, companies could let most employees work from home and fly them all back to their headquarters once a year.

Some businesses are already changing the way their work is done. Cynthia Kay and Co., a media production company based in Grand Rapids, Michigan, used to send its seven employees around the country to make videos for clients like Siemens.

When travel came to a halt in March, the company invested in proprietary software and sent iPads and other equipment to clients so it could coach them through their own video shoots, President Cynthia Kay said.

As a result, the company's sales are down only 15-20% even though its travel spending has plunged 75%.

Still, Kay and her staff were eager to get back on the road once they felt they could do that safely. Kay began traveling again last month.

"For some people, this is the way they will work going forward," Kay said. "But you can't account for the spark that happens when you get people in the same room."

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AP Business Writers Joe McDonald in Beijing, Aya Batrawy in Dubai and Joseph Pisani in New York contributed.

## US hits record COVID-19 hospitalizations amid virus surge

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. hit a record number of coronavirus hospitalizations Tuesday and surpassed 1 million new confirmed cases in just the first 10 days of November amid a nationwide surge of infections that shows no signs of slowing.

The new wave appears bigger and more widespread than the surges that happened in the spring and summer — and threatens to be worse. But experts say there are also reasons to think the nation is better able to deal with the virus this time around.

"We're definitely in a better place" when it comes to improved medical tools and knowledge, said William Hanage, a Harvard University infectious-disease researcher.

Newly confirmed infections in the U.S. were running at all-time highs of well over 100,000 per day, pushing the total to more than 10 million and eclipsing 1 million since Halloween. There are now 61,964 people hospitalized, according to the COVID Tracking Project.

Several states posted records Tuesday, including over 12,600 new cases in Illinois, 10,800 in Texas and 7,000 in Wisconsin.

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Deaths — a lagging indicator, since it takes time for people to get sick and die — are climbing again, reaching an average of more than 930 a day.

Hospitals are getting slammed. And unlike the earlier outbreaks, this one is not confined to a region or two.

“The virus is spreading in a largely uncontrolled fashion across the vast majority of the country,” said Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious-disease expert at Vanderbilt University.

Governors made increasingly desperate pleas for people to take the fight against the virus more seriously.

In an unusual prime-time speech hours after Wisconsin set new records for infections and deaths, Democratic Gov. Tony Evers announced that he was advising people to stay in their houses and businesses to allow people to work remotely, require masks and limit the number of people in stores and offices.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat, ordered bars and restaurants to close at 10 p.m., and Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, a Republican, said she will require masks at indoor gatherings of 25 or more people, inching toward more stringent measures after months of holding out.

While deaths are still well below the U.S. peak of about 2,200 per day back in April, some researchers estimate the nation’s overall toll will hit about 400,000 by Feb. 1, up from about 240,000 now.

But there is also some good news.

Doctors now better know how to treat severe cases, meaning higher percentages of the COVID-19 patients who go into intensive care units are coming out alive. Patients have the benefit of new treatments, namely remdesivir, the steroid dexamethasone and an antibody drug that won emergency-use approval from the Food and Drug Administration on Monday. Also, testing is more widely available.

In addition, a vaccine appears to be on the horizon, perhaps around the end of the year, with Pfizer this week reporting early results showing that its experimental shots are a surprising 90% effective at preventing the disease.

And there’s a change pending in the White House, with President-elect Joe Biden vowing to rely on a highly respected set of medical advisers and carry out a detailed coronavirus plan that experts say includes the kind of measures that will be necessary to bring the surge under control.

Biden pledged during the campaign to be guided by science, make testing free and widely available, hire thousands of health workers to undertake contact-tracing, and instruct the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide clear, expert advice.

“We are already seeing encouraging signs from President-elect Biden with regard to his handling of COVID-19,” said Dr. Kelly Henning, a veteran epidemiologist who heads the Bloomberg Philanthropies’ public health programs.

“I am relieved to see he’s already put some of the smartest scientific minds on his new coronavirus task force and that they are acting urgently to try and get the pandemic under control as quickly as possible,” Henning said.

While the first surge in the Northeast caught many Americans unprepared and cut an especially deadly swath through nursing homes, the second crest along the nation’s Southern and Western rim was attributed mostly to heedless behavior, particularly among young adults over Memorial Day and July Fourth, and hot weather that sent people indoors, where the virus spreads more easily.

The fall surge similarly has been blamed largely on cold weather driving people inside and disdain for masks and social distancing, stoked by President Donald Trump and other politicians.

Even in parts of the country that have been through coronavirus surges before, “you see people breaking out of it” and letting their guard down, Schaffner said.

“There really is COVID fatigue that is blending into COVID annoyance,” he said.

The short-term outlook is grim, with colder weather and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s ahead. Generations of family members gathering indoors for meals for extended periods “is not a recipe for anything good,” Hanage said.

Other factors could contribute to the spread of the virus in the coming weeks: Last weekend saw big street celebrations and protests over the election. On Saturday night, an upset victory by Notre Dame’s

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football team sent thousands of students swarming onto the field, many without masks.

Meanwhile, the next two months will see a lame-duck Congress and a president who might be even less inclined than before to enact disease-control measures. Those voted out of office or no longer worried about reelection for at least two more years, "are not going to be motivated to do a fantastic job," Hanage said.

Experts are increasingly alarmed about the virus's resurgence in places like Massachusetts, which has seen a dramatic rise in cases since Labor Day, blamed largely on young people socializing.

Republican Gov. Charlie Baker is warning that the health care system could become overwhelmed this winter, and he recently ordered restaurants to stop table service, required many businesses to close by 9:30 p.m., and instructed residents to stay home between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.

Brooke Nichols, a professor and infectious-disease mathematical modeler at Boston University School of Public Health, said the governor's actions don't go far enough.

"Right now because of the exponential growth, throw the kitchen sink at this, and then you can do it for not as long," Nichols said.

Meanwhile, political leaders in a number of newer coronavirus hot spots are doing less. In hard-hit South Dakota, Gov. Kristi Noem has made it clear she will not institute a mask requirement and has voiced doubt in health experts who say face coverings prevent infections from spreading.

Even higher case and death rates have been seen in North Dakota, where many people have refused to wear masks. Gov. Doug Burgum has pleaded with people to do so, and praised local towns and cities that have mandated masks. But he has avoided requiring masks himself.

Both Noem and Burgum are Republicans and have taken positions in line with those of the president.

"It would be simplistic to say it's a red-vs.-a-blue experience, but it does kind of go along party lines of whether people took it seriously, tried to prevent it and took painful measures, versus those who said, 'Let it rip,'" said Dr. Howard Markel, a public health historian at the University of Michigan.

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Associated Press writer Alanna Durkin Richer in Boston contributed to this report.

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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.

## Bahrain's long-serving prime minister dies at age 84

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Bahrain's Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, one of the world's longest-serving prime ministers who led his island nation's government for decades and survived the 2011 Arab Spring protests that demanded his ouster over corruption allegations, died on Wednesday. He was 84.

Bahrain's state-run news agency announced his death, saying he had been receiving treatment at the Mayo Clinic in the United States, without elaborating. The Mayo Clinic declined to comment.

Prince Khalifa's power and wealth could be seen everywhere in this small nation off the coast of Saudi Arabia home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet. His official portrait hung for decades on walls alongside the country's ruler. He had his own private island where he met foreign dignitaries, complete with a marina and a park that had peacocks and gazelle roam its grounds.

The prince represented an older style of Gulf leadership, one that granted patronage and favors for support of the Sunni Al Khalifa family. That style would be challenged in the 2011 protests by the island's Shiite majority and others, who demonstrated against him over long-running corruption allegations surrounding his rule.

Though less powerful and frailer in recent years, his machinations still drew attention in the kingdom as a new generation now jostles for power.

"Khalifa bin Salman represented the old guard in more ways than just age and seniority," said Kristin Smith Diwan, a senior resident scholar at the Washington-based Arab Gulf States Institute. "He repre-

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sented an old social understanding rooted in royal privilege and expressed through personal patronage.”

Bahrain’s Royal Court announced a week of official mourning, with a burial coming after the return of his body. State television aired a recitation of Quranic verses, showing a black-and-white image of the prince.

Prince Khalifa was born into the Al Khalifa dynasty that for more than two centuries has ruled Bahrain, an island in the Persian Gulf whose name in Arabic means the “two seas.” The son of Bahrain’s former ruler, Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa who ruled from 1942 to 1961, the prince learned governance at his father’s side as the island remained a British protectorate.

Prince Khalifa’s brother, Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa, took power in 1961 and served as monarch when Bahrain gained its independence from Britain in 1971. Under an informal arrangement, Sheikh Isa handled the island’s diplomacy and ceremonial duties while Prince Khalifa ran the government and economy.

The years that followed saw Bahrain develop rapidly as it sought to move beyond its dependence on dwindling oil reserves. Manama at that time served as what Dubai in the United Arab Emirates ultimately became, a regional financial, service and tourism hub. The opening of the King Fahd Causeway in 1986 gave the island nation its first land link with its rich and powerful neighbor, Saudi Arabia, and offered an escape for Westerners in the kingdom who wanted to enjoy Bahrain’s alcohol-soaked nightclubs and beaches.

But Prince Khalifa increasingly saw his name entangled in corruption allegations, such as a major foreign corruption practices case against aluminum producer Alcoa over using a London-based middleman to facilitate bribes for Bahraini officials. Alcoa agreed to pay \$384 million in fines to the U.S. government to settle the case in 2014.

The U.S. Embassy in Manama similarly had its own suspicions about Prince Khalifa.

“I believe that Shaikh Khalifa is not wholly a negative influence,” former U.S. Ambassador Ronald E. Neumann wrote in a 2004 cable released by WikiLeaks. “While certainly corrupt he has built much of modern Bahrain.”

Those corruption allegations fueled discontent, particularly among Bahrain’s Shiite majority who still today complain of discrimination by the government. In February 2011, protesters inspired by Arab Spring demonstrations across the Mideast filled the streets and occupied the capital Manama’s Pearl Roundabout to demand political reforms and a greater say in the country’s future.

While some called for a constitutional monarchy, many others pressed for the removal of the long-ruling prime minister and other members of the Sunni royal family altogether, including King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

At one point during the height of the unrest in March 2011, thousands of protesters besieged the prime minister’s office while officials met inside, demanding that Prince Khalifa step down over corruption allegations and an earlier, deadly crackdown on the demonstrations. Protesters also took to waving one Bahraini dinar notes over allegations Prince Khalifa bought the land on which Bahrain’s Financial Harbour development sits for just a single dinar.

Robert Gates, a former U.S. secretary of defense under President Barack Obama, wrote in his memoirs that he urged the king at the time to force Prince Khalifa from the premiership, describing him as “disliked by nearly everyone but especially the Shia.”

Bahraini officials soon crushed the protests with the backing of troops from neighboring Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. A government-sponsored report into the protests and crackdown later described security forces beating detainees and forcing them to kiss pictures of King Hamad and Prince Khalifa.

Low-level unrest continued in the years that followed, with Shiite protesters frequently clashing with riot police. Shiite militant groups, whom Bahrain’s government allege receive support from Iran, planted bombs that killed and wounded several members of the country’s security forces.

But while other hard-line members of the Al Khalifa family actively pushed for a confrontation with Shiites, Prince Khalifa maintained contacts with those the government opposed. Even with his influence waning, he called Qatar’s ruling emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, in 2019 during the holy month of Ramadan despite Bahrain being one of four Arab nations boycotting Doha in a political dispute.

“Khalifa bin Salman could and did work with both Sunni and Shia, especially through his relations with Bahrain’s business community,” Diwan said. “He brought this same personalistic approach to relations



with other Gulf monarchs, and was genuinely uncomfortable with the new politics exemplified by coarse attacks on the Qatari leadership.”

Slowly though, Prince Khalifa’s influence waned as he faced unexplained health problems. He was admitted to hospital in November 2015 but was later released. He also traveled to southeast Asia for medical appointments. In late November 2019, he traveled to Germany for undisclosed medical treatments, remaining there for months.

In September, a U.S. Air Force C-17 flying hospital flew from Germany to Rochester, Minnesota, following by a royal Bahraini aircraft. While U.S. and Bahraini officials declined to comment on the flights, it came just after America offered the same care to Kuwait’s ruling emir just before his death.

Prince Khalifa was married and has three surviving children, sons Ali and Salman and daughter Lulwa. Another son, Mohammed, died previously.

Associated Press writers Adam Schreck and Isabel DeBre contributed to this report.

## Recordings reveal WHO’s analysis of pandemic in private

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

GENEVA (AP) — As the coronavirus explodes again, the World Health Organization finds itself both under intense pressure to reform and holding out hope that U.S. President-elect Joe Biden will reverse a decision by Washington to leave the health agency.

With its annual meeting underway this week, WHO has been sharply criticized for not taking a stronger and more vocal role in handling the pandemic. For example, in private internal meetings in the early days of the virus, top scientists described some countries’ approaches as “an unfortunate laboratory to study the virus” and a “macabre” opportunity to see what worked, recordings obtained by The Associated Press show. Yet in public, the U.N. health agency lauded governments for their responses.

Biden has promised to overturn President Donald Trump’s decision in June to cut off funds to WHO and withdraw the U.S. WHO has also bowed to demands from member countries for an independent panel to review its management of the pandemic response, and WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Monday that the agency welcomed “any and all attempts” to strengthen it “for the sake of the people we serve.”

One of the central dilemmas facing the WHO is that it has no enforcement powers or authority to independently investigate within countries. Instead, the health agency relies on behind-the-scenes talks and the cooperation of member states.

Critics say WHO’s traditional aversion to confronting its member countries has come at a high price. As COVID-19 spread, WHO often shied away from calling out countries, as big donors such as Japan, France and Britain made repeated mistakes, according to dozens of leaked recordings of internal WHO meetings and documents from January to April obtained by The Associated Press.

Some public health experts say WHO’s failure to exert its influence lent credence to countries adopting risky outbreak policies, possibly compromising efforts to stop the virus.

“We need WHO to be bold and to use their political power to name and shame because the consequences are so devastating,” said Sophie Harman, a professor of international politics at Queen Mary University in London. “This is their Spanish flu moment ... By not speaking up when countries are doing questionable things, WHO is undermining its own authority while the planet burns.”

Others said it would be politically unwise for WHO to be too outspoken unless countries give the agency more power and the ability to censure countries — an option that Germany and France have recently proposed.

“If Tedros was to take a very aggressive stance toward member countries, there would be repercussions,” said Suerie Moon, co-director of the Global Health Centre at the Graduate Institute of Geneva, referring to WHO’s director-general.

WHO spokeswoman Farah Dakhlallah said that since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak, “WHO

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officials have had and continue to have, frank and open discussions with government counterparts ... We are proud of an organizational culture that fosters candid discussion with the aim of reaching life-saving solutions."

One of the scientists in the meetings, emergencies chief Dr. Michael Ryan, also laid out WHO's approach in answer to a media question March 11 on whether the agency was willing to say which countries weren't doing enough.

"The answer to that question is, you know who you are," Ryan said. "The WHO doesn't interact in public debate or criticize our member states in public. What we try to do is work with our member states constructively."

It's not unprecedented, however, for WHO to publicly question its member states. It threatened to close its China office when the country was hiding cases during the SARS outbreak, loudly called for Nigeria to reverse its boycott of the polio vaccine in 2003 and accused Tanzania of not sharing enough information about an Ebola epidemic last year.

The review of WHO's role in the pandemic comes at a critical time because the agency is now tasked with helping to buy and distribute coronavirus vaccines around the world once any prove effective, especially to poorer nations. Some countries, including the U.S. and Russia, have refused to join the effort, but on Sunday, WHO chief scientist Dr. Soumya Swaminathan said she hoped Biden's election would "open the door" to U.S. inclusion.

WHO's reticence to call out countries started with China, as the AP earlier reported. Despite a January meeting between Tedros and Chinese President Xi Jinping, information on the outbreak was still sparse throughout February. Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's technical lead for COVID-19, noted that the agency lacked "enough detail to say what has worked and what hasn't."

Yet at a media briefing shortly afterwards, Tedros said, "China is doing many good things that are slowing the virus and the facts speak for themselves."

Also in February, WHO scientists were concerned about Japan. On Feb. 1, a passenger who disembarked the Diamond Princess cruise ship in Hong Kong tested positive for the coronavirus. At the ship's next stop in Yokohama, 10 more cases were found and authorities put all 3,711 people on board under lockdown.

Ryan told reporters at the time: "Let's be careful here not to overreact." But on Feb. 10, the case count nearly doubled overnight.

"(That's) not surprising given the nature of the response of the investigation," Ryan said at an internal meeting, saying only a small number of epidemiologists had been assigned to the outbreak. "If you double the number of cases in a ship in a day, something is not right."

Dr. Thomas Grein, WHO's chief of acute events management team, reported to his colleagues that WHO had discussed the outbreak with their Japanese counterparts, but failed to glean much useful information.

"It's a very, very sensitive issue and we need to tread carefully," he warned.

Although WHO was keenly aware the situation was deteriorating, scientists said the outbreak could help in understanding COVID-19 transmission patterns.

"(It's) unfortunate, but a useful opportunity to study the natural history of the virus," Ryan said.

Several days later, Japanese outbreak specialist Dr. Kentaro Iwata went aboard the Diamond Princess and called the response "completely chaotic." Soon afterward, WHO announced more than half of the world's known COVID-19 cases outside China were aboard the Diamond Princess.

"It was very obvious on that cruise ship that things were going badly wrong and WHO should have said something," said Lawrence Gostin, director of the WHO Collaborating Center on Public Health Law and Human Rights at Georgetown University. "When what countries are doing is flat-out wrong, we need WHO to say so."

While WHO wasn't specific, Tedros said on Feb. 26: "One of the biggest challenges we face is that too many affected countries are still not sharing data with WHO."

Throughout February and March, COVID-19 triggered outbreaks in South Korea, Singapore, Iran and elsewhere. The virus also gained a foothold in Italy, turning Europe into the epicenter of the pandemic.

At WHO, officials worried in internal meetings about the lack of information from European member

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states. Grein said WHO's efforts to get more detail about the spiraling outbreaks had "spectacularly failed."

Yet on March 8, Tedros tweeted that "the government & the people of Italy are taking bold, courageous steps aimed at slowing the spread of the #coronavirus & protecting their country & world." Three days later, Tedros declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic, saying the announcement was made partly due to "alarming levels of inaction" by countries, which he didn't name.

Georgetown University's Gostin said WHO should be obligated to publicly report when countries aren't sharing enough data.

"If a country is not providing vital epidemiological or biological information, then WHO and the world are flying blind in an outbreak and we can't have that," he said.

WHO also complained in private about Western countries hoarding scarce pandemic supplies.

"We had the terrible situation yesterday with (protective personal equipment) where all the supplies were requisitioned in France and we lost access," Ryan told his colleagues. He said WHO needed to pressure countries and companies to avoid similar situations.

As countries across Europe moved to adopt social distancing measures and cancel mass gatherings in early March, Ryan noticed one country didn't: Britain.

"There isn't a single sports event in Europe and yet all of the Premier League matches in the U.K. are to go ahead as normal," he said. Ryan described Britain's pandemic strategy as "problematic" after hearing the U.K.'s chief scientific officer publicly say the country was aiming for herd immunity.

"For that to happen, hundreds of thousands and millions of older people are going to become infected and there is just going to be so much death," Ryan said. Still, he said, the different approaches to tackling COVID-19 globally could prove to be "a massive ecological study" that would allow WHO to document what worked best.

"It's macabre in some ways, but it's reality," he said.

Going forward, WHO's role in the continued unfolding of the pandemic will depend in part on the panel review. Harman, the expert from Queen Mary University, sympathized that WHO had enormous responsibility in the early months of COVID-19, but said even greater challenges loom now.

"This is not an experiment for WHO to learn lessons for the future, the stakes are too high for that," she said. "With the next wave of the pandemic, I think the time for quiet diplomacy has passed."

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Jamey Keaten in Geneva, and Dake Kang, in Beijing contributed to this report.

## States cite smooth election, despite Trump's baseless claims

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY, ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The 2020 election unfolded smoothly across the country and without any widespread irregularities, according to state officials and election experts, a stark contrast to the baseless claims of fraud being leveled by President Donald Trump following his defeat.

Election experts said the large increase in advance voting — 107 million people voting early in person and by mail — helped take pressure off Election Day operations. There were also no incidents of violence at the polls or voter intimidation.

"The 2020 general election was one of the smoothest and most well-run elections that we have ever seen, and that is remarkable considering all the challenges," said Ben Hovland, a Democrat appointed by Trump to serve on the Election Assistance Commission, which works closely with officials on election administration.

Following Democrat Joe Biden's victory, Trump has sought to discredit the integrity of the election and argued without evidence that the results will be overturned. Republican lawmakers have said the president should be allowed to launch legal challenges, though many of those lawsuits have already been turned away by judges and those that remain do not include evidence of problems that would change the outcome of the race.

In Wisconsin, a battleground state where Biden narrowly edged Trump, top election official Meagan Wolfe said there were no problems with the election reported to her office and no complaints filed alleg-

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ing any irregularities.

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel, a Democrat, said the same was true in her state, which Biden also won.

"Let me be clear — the November elections in Michigan ran as smoothly as ever," Nessel said, adding that there were no "instances of irregularities in the process of counting the votes, only evidence-free allegations, wild speculation, and conspiracy theories."

Ahead of Election Day, the pandemic upended longstanding voting plans and forced election officials to make systemic changes largely on the fly. They did so with limited federal money to cover increased costs for mail ballots, which take more staff and money to send, process and count.

After problems erupted during spring primaries, the nation worried whether election officials could pull off a problem-free presidential election during a pandemic while confronting the threat of foreign interference from sophisticated adversaries led by Russia.

"In the spring, there were just so many challenges we were facing, and we were just wondering how we were going to manage to do it," said Larry Norden, an elections expert with the Brennan Center for Justice. "It's an incredible story."

Long before a single ballot was cast, Trump raised questions about the integrity of the election and railed against mail voting despite a long history of mail ballots being used successfully in this country. At one point, he claimed the only way he could lose was if the election were rigged.

Some states that expanded mail-in voting to make it safer to cast a ballot during the virus outbreak lean Republican and voted for Trump — Nebraska, North Dakota and Montana. He has raised no concerns about the results there.

On Monday, Attorney General William Barr authorized federal prosecutors across the U.S. to probe "substantial allegations" of voting irregularities.

The groundless claims pushed by Trump and his allies about voting and ballot counting have only intensified since The Associated Press and other news organizations called the race Saturday for Biden, who leads in both the popular vote and in the Electoral College.

Among the many lawsuits filed since Election Day is one in Nevada by the Trump campaign alleging voter fraud. Without explanation, Trump tweeted that the state is "turning out to be a cesspool of Fake Votes."

Such claims have put pressure on Republican election officials fielding scores of reports of fraud that so far have turned out to be human error or limited in scope.

Nevada Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske, a Republican, said her office wouldn't quantify how many complaints it had received, adding, "Many voter fraud complaints lack any evidence and are more complaints about process or policy."

In Iowa, Secretary of State Paul Pate, a Republican, ordered all counties in the state to double-check results after a data entry error was discovered in one precinct.

"These human errors are unfortunate and frustrating, but the system is working," he said.

On Monday, Georgia's two U.S. senators, both Trump supporters facing close runoff elections that could determine which party controls the Senate next year, called on the state's top election official, a fellow Republican, to resign over unspecified claims of election mismanagement.

The official, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, said he would not step down and assured the public there had been no widespread problems.

"Was there illegal voting? I'm sure there was, and my office is investigating all of it," Raffensperger said. "Does it rise to the numbers or margin necessary to change the outcome to where President Trump is given Georgia's electoral votes? That is unlikely."

Studies have repeatedly shown that voter fraud is exceptionally rare.

Much of Trump's ire has centered on Pennsylvania, where the campaign has launched multiple lawsuits despite no indications of fraud or large-scale problems.

"On Election Day, we didn't have any reports of anything significant," said Lisa Schaefer, who leads the bipartisan County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania. "We have every reason to have confidence



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in the result of this election, as we do every other election.”

Some incidents did get attention: In some Ohio and Texas counties, electronic poll books used to check in voters were sidelined when polls opened because they were still downloading a database update. That forced officials turn to paper backups or extend voting hours on Election Day. Some Georgia counties also grappled with poll book issues and with ballot-processing difficulties in a new statewide voting system.

That said, the errors seemed to have occurred at lower rates than in most elections, University of Iowa computer scientist Doug Jones said.

“The practical consequence of Trump’s call to vigilance to prevent fraud was increased scrutiny from both sides, and this increased scrutiny seems to have worked,” Jones said. “Election officials have been more careful, and election procedures have been followed more scrupulously than usual.”

The federal agency charged with leading efforts to secure U.S. elections has said there were no significant problems aside from small, ordinary glitches.

This year’s presidential election marked a significant step in the use of paper voting records, with more ballots being cast either on paper or with an electronic voting machine that generates a paper backup than in any previous election. The election was also the most transparent. Several election offices offered live webcams to show the ballot-review process and added the ability for voters to track their ballots through the process.

“The system held up given the extraordinary circumstances that election officials faced,” said Amber McReynolds, who leads the National Vote at Home Institute. “Election officials managed to do their jobs even though, in most cases, they had one hand tied behind their back.”

Izaguirre reported from Lindenhurst, New York, and Carr Smyth from Columbus, Ohio. Associated Press writers Frank Bajak in Boston, Ken Ritter in Las Vegas, Kate Brumback in Atlanta, Ben Fox in Washington and David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan, contributed to this report.

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## Frantic search after medicines vanish from Lebanon shelves

By SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — She is a nurse at a Beirut hospital, and still Rita Harb can’t find her grandfather’s heart drugs.

She has searched pharmacies up and down Lebanon, called friends abroad. Not even her connections with doctors could secure the drugs. Unlike many amid Lebanon’s financial crash, she can afford them — they just aren’t there.

To get by, her 85-year-old grandfather is substituting his medicine with more pills of a smaller concentration to reach his dosage. That too could run out soon.

“But if he dies, he dies,” Harb said with a small, bitter laugh of resignation that has become a common reaction among Lebanese to their country’s multiple crises.

Drugs for everything from diabetes and blood pressure to anti-depressants and fever pills used in COVID-19 treatment have disappeared from shelves around Lebanon.

Officials and pharmacists say the shortage was exacerbated by panic buying and hoarding after the Central Bank governor said that with foreign reserves running low, the government won’t be able to keep up subsidies, including on drugs.

That announcement “caused a storm, an earthquake,” said Ghassan al-Amin, head of the pharmacist syndicate.

Lebanese now scour the country and beyond for crucial medications. The elderly ask around religious charities and aid groups. Family members plead on social media or travel to neighboring Syria. Expats are sending in donations.

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It's the newest stage in the economic collapse of this country of 5 million, once a regional hub for banking, real estate and medical services.

More than half the population has been pushed into poverty and people's savings have lost value. Public debt is crippling, and the local currency plunged, losing nearly 80% of its value. The health sector is buckling under the financial strain and coronavirus pandemic.

Lebanese are back to hoarding basics, such as water and fuel, like they did during the country's 15-year civil war. Trust in the ruling class — mostly in power since the war ended in 1990 — vanished as the country grapples with a financial breakdown, the pandemic, and the fallout from the deadly Aug. 4 explosion at Beirut's port that wrecked the facility and large swaths of the city.

Lebanon imports nearly everything, including 85% of its pharmaceuticals.

Lifting subsidies is an inevitable step for the highly-indebted government. This is expected to send prices and inflation soaring and the Lebanese pound further tumbling. Fixed at 1,500 to the dollar for decades, it now hovers around 7,000 for \$1 on the black market.

People are hoarding medications, fearing they will no longer be able to afford them. Suppliers are shelving drugs, worried they won't have enough dollars to buy more — or hoping to sell for higher when subsidies are lifted. Strapped pharmacies can't stock shelves because suppliers now demand cash payment.

Meanwhile, the difference between the official and black market dollar rate energized smuggling, and subsidized Lebanese drugs were now whisked out to neighboring countries.

In the chaos, six out of every 10 brand drugs have become unavailable, said Malak Khiami, the pharmacist at Amel Association, a humanitarian group that offers primary health care.

Out of 3,400 unionized pharmacies, nearly 300 have shut down, al-Amin said.

The problem became so bad that one enraged buyer, an off-duty soldier, pulled out his gun and threatened a pharmacist who told him he didn't have Panadol, a basic pain reliever.

At his pharmacy in Bchamoune, outside Beirut, Ziad Jomaa said he and the gun-toting buyer were both victims of a corrupt and failed political class.

The incident, caught on CCTV footage, brought Jomaa sympathy, including from the pain relief suppliers who immediately sent him 50 boxes.

But he had to take new security measures. He closed the pharmacy door at night, only taking orders through a window, and hired a guard.

"They put me in confrontation with the public," Jomaa said.

Civil groups stepped in to fill the gaps.

At one of Amel's centers, in Beirut's Baajour district, 800 people sought medicine or health care at nominal fees in October, nearly double the number in August. Amel has been keeping up its longest emergency relief program since 2006, when a war with Israel destroyed large parts of Beirut and killed over 1,000 people.

"People are suffering big, big time," said Zeina Mohanna, a board member. They "are set in fear for survival."

Intissar Hatoum, 63, lined up at the center's dispensary. Gripping a plastic bag with her empty drug boxes, she came for whatever is available: inhalers, hypertension and heart pills, anti-coagulants. Her unemployed husband suffers from kidney disease. Less urgent are her cholesterol pills.

A housewife, Hatoum relies on her taxi driver son to pay medical bills, often skipping warm meals to afford them. He has asked around southern Lebanon and Syria for their prescriptions.

"He didn't leave a place he didn't look," she said.

Lebanese rely heavily on pharmaceuticals. Nearly 44% of all health care spending is on drugs, compared to around 17% percent in Western nations, according to a BlomInvest Bank study.

For decades, the market has been controlled by some two dozen importers. The law awards select importers exclusive rights in each sector, keeping out competitors and giving them enormous power to resist reforms.

The exclusive import rights are a key feature of Lebanon's economic order, which after the civil war's end became controlled by militia chiefs, wealthy traders and real estate owners. Focusing on services, it

was reliant on imports and foreign labor.

As that model falls apart, the market for foreign drugs is bound to shrink, said Viviane Akiki, an economic reporter who also covers pharmaceuticals. "The dollar shortage will impose new solutions."

But it is not clear Lebanon's small domestic drug production can fill the gap.

In Beirut's Zoukaq al-Blat neighborhood, Mahmoud Mahmoud's pharmacy was quiet. A few painkillers, supplements and shampoo bottles were scattered on otherwise empty shelves.

Mahmoud believes suppliers are holding back medications waiting for higher prices — or smuggling them. One gout drug, he said, was found in Iraq, selling for \$7, more than five times its price in Lebanon.

"They are destroying the profession," said Mahmoud. "With the way the country is going, the profession is collapsing."

## Dems clinch House control, but majority likely to shrink

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats clinched two more years of controlling the House on Tuesday but with a potentially razor-thin majority, a bittersweet finale to last week's elections that has left them divided and with scant margin for error for advancing their agenda.

The party has now nailed down at least 218 seats, according to The Associated Press, and could win a few others when more votes are counted. While that assures command of the 435-member chamber, blindsided Democrats were all but certain to see their current 232-seat majority shrink after an unforeseen surge of Republican voters transformed expected gains of perhaps 15 seats into losses potentially approaching that amount.

"We have the gavel, we have the gavel," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., who seems all but certain to continue in that role. While she bemoaned Democrats' losses in districts where GOP votes proved "almost insurmountable," she told reporters last week, "We've lost some battles but we've won the war."

By retaining the House, Democrats will control the chamber for four consecutive years for only the second time since 1995, when Republicans ended 40 years of Democratic dominance.

Yet though Joe Biden won the presidential election, there was a strong chance Republicans would keep Senate control. That would force Democrats to scale back their dreams of sweeping health care, infrastructure and other initiatives, instead needing compromises with the GOP.

As the bad news sunk in, Rep. Cheri Bustos, D-Ill., who led House Democrats' campaign committee, announced Monday she wouldn't seek another term leading that organization. Democrats said privately she would have lost had she again sought the post, for which the party's lawmakers vote.

Republicans have been heartened by the House results, which many believe position them for a strong run for the majority in the 2022 elections. They also bolstered their distressingly low number of women representatives from 13 to at least 26, a record for the GOP, according to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, and were adding new ethnic minority lawmakers as well.

"The Republican coalition is bigger, more diverse, more energetic than ever before," House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said the day after the election.

Democrats went into Election Day with a 232-197 House advantage, plus an independent and five open seats. With some races remaining undecided, it was possible that in the new Congress that convenes in January they'll have the smallest majority since Republicans had just 221 seats two decades ago.

Democrats secured the majority after The Associated Press declared three winners late Tuesday: incumbents Kim Schrier in Washington, Tom O'Halleran in Arizona and Jimmy Gomez in California.

A tight majority could cause headaches for Pelosi, empowering any determined group of lawmakers to pressure her on what bills should be considered or look like. But sometimes, a slender margin can help unify a party because its members know they must stick together to achieve anything.

Democratic moderates and progressives clash periodically, and while the moderates are more numerous, the progressives' ranks include influential social media stars like Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y.

Underscoring that tension, House Democrats vented during a three-hour conference call last week in

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which both factions blamed the other for rhetoric and policies they said proved costly in the campaign.

"We should be honest that this was not a good outcome," Rep. Tom Malinowski, D-N.J., a moderate freshman, said in an interview. He said terms like "defunding the police" hurt Democrats by making it sound like they oppose law enforcement, and said they shouldn't speak "as if we were talking to woke progressives in neighborhoods where 90% of the votes are for Democrats."

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., a progressive leader, said in an interview that Democrats need to discuss "how we talk about some of these issues that are critical to different parts of our base." But with moderates complaining that the GOP hurt Democrats by repeatedly accusing them of pushing socialism, Jayapal said such accusations "will be used against us no matter what we say."

Democrats believed they'd pick up seats, especially in suburbs, because of a decisive fundraising edge, President Donald Trump's unpopularity and exasperation over the pandemic. Many Republicans and independent polls supported that expectation.

But with some races still uncalled, Democrats haven't defeated a single GOP incumbent and failed to capture open GOP-held seats in Texas, Missouri and Indiana they thought they'd win.

Instead, they've lost at least seven incumbents: six freshmen from states including Florida, Oklahoma and South Carolina plus 30-year veteran Rep. Collin Peterson from rural Minnesota. And while they successfully defended most of their 29 districts that Trump carried in his 2016 victory, they saw stronger than expected performances by GOP candidates all around the country.

"With President Trump on the ballot, it just drove enormous turnout that was almost impossible to surmount," said Rep. Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich., a reelected freshman.

"The country has become more polarized and divided," said Rep. Gerald Connolly, D-Va. "If you're running in alien territory, you're always at risk of failure."

So far, Democrats' only pickups were three open seats from which Republicans retired. Two were in North Carolina, where court-ordered remapping made the districts strongly Democratic, and one was outside Atlanta.

Going into the election, Democrats envisioned strengthening their moderate wing, since most districts they seemed likely to capture were closely divided between GOP and Democratic voters. But they ended up suffering losses in those same type of districts, meaning it was mostly moderates who lost.

"In electoral politics, moderates are the beachfront property," said Jim Kessler, an official with Third Way, a centrist Democratic group. "And if there's flooding, they're the ones that get washed away."

Illustrating that, the Blue Dog Coalition of the most conservative House Democrats, whose membership has dwindled in recent years, lost at least six of its roughly two dozen members.

On the other hand, a handful of hard-left progressive freshmen will be coming to Congress, including Democrats Jamaal Bowman and Mondaire Jones of New York and Cori Bush of Missouri, who each won seats in overwhelmingly blue districts.

On the Republican side, the conservative House Freedom Caucus was hoping to grow from its roughly 30 members.

The group has tried pushing GOP leaders to the right over the years and was a consistent source of trouble for the past two Republican speakers, John Boehner of Ohio and Paul Ryan of Wisconsin.

## Kevin Cash, Don Mattingly win Manager of the Year awards

By JAY COHEN AP Sports Writer

By the time Kevin Cash pulled Tampa Bay ace Blake Snell from the last game of the World Series, he had already been voted Manager of the Year in the American League.

Even if he ended up losing the biggest prize.

It was a Sunshine State sweep for skippers Tuesday night, with Miami's Don Mattingly winning NL Manager of the Year and Cash receiving the AL award.

Long regarded as one of baseball's brightest young minds, Cash guided the thrifty Rays to an AL-best 40-20 record during the pandemic-shortened season. But he was roundly criticized for pulling a dominant Snell



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in the sixth inning of the decisive Game 6 of the Fall Classic against the champion Los Angeles Dodgers.

"Have I reflected on it? There's not a day that goes by that I don't reflect on it," Cash said. "Being in this position we owe it to ourselves and more importantly our players to continue to reflect on those decisions."

After Snell exited, the Dodgers rallied against Nick Anderson and went on to a 3-1 victory. Cash said he has had multiple conversations with many people within the game since the loss and has received a lot of positive support.

"Yes, I would do it the same way all over again. I would plead for a different outcome, that's for sure," Cash said with a chuckle.

"That decision was not reflective of my confidence in Blake. It was very reflective of my confidence in Nick, and that's (what) I felt was, at the moment, the best chance for us to win the game."

Voting by the Baseball Writers' Association of America concluded before the beginning of the playoffs. Rick Renteria, let go by the Chicago White Sox after the team made the postseason for the first time since 2008, finished second in the AL, followed by Toronto's Charlie Montoyo.

Mattingly led the Marlins to their first playoff appearance since 2003 despite dealing with a COVID-19 outbreak that paused their season and ravaged the roster.

The Marlins' 31-29 record was Mattingly's first winning season in his fifth year with the club. The former New York Yankees first baseman and captain had a winning record in each of his five seasons as manager of the Dodgers.

Mattingly, the first Manager of the Year for the Marlins since Joe Girardi in 2006, was the AL MVP in 1985. He became the fifth person to win both MVP and Manager of the Year.

"They're just different. The first one feels personal and this one feels more like a team thing," Mattingly said, "and that's why I'm proud of it because we've struggled for a couple years and for us to move forward is important, and I think this is a sign that we're heading in that direction."

San Diego's Jayce Tingler finished second behind Mattingly in balloting by the BBWAA, followed by David Ross of the Chicago Cubs.

The Cy Young Awards will be announced by the BBWAA on Wednesday night, followed by the MVPs on Thursday.

After losing 105 games a year ago, Miami had its 2020 season nearly derailed by a coronavirus outbreak during the first weekend of play. The team had to make 174 roster moves but still managed the franchise's first winning record since 2009.

The steady hand of the 59-year-old Mattingly played a big role in the turnaround, which continued in the playoffs. Miami eliminated the NL Central champion Cubs in the first round before getting swept by the Atlanta Braves in the Division Series.

"Over 100 losses, that's the tough part," Mattingly said. "It just feels good that we're moving in the right direction."

Cash, who turns 43 on Dec. 6, hit .183 with 12 homers and 58 RBIs in 246 major league games as a catcher for five teams, including Tampa Bay. After his playing career ended, he worked as an advance scout for Texas and Toronto before joining manager Terry Francona's staff in Cleveland as the bullpen coach.

The Tampa, Florida, native and Florida State alum was hired as Tampa Bay manager the day before his 37th birthday. He finished third in balloting for AL Manager of the Year in each of the past two seasons. He is the franchise's first winner of the award since Joe Maddon in 2011.

"There is a sense of pride being a Tampa guy," said Cash, who is 454-416 in six years as manager of the Rays.

Tampa Bay had a \$29 million prorated payroll as of Aug. 1, which ranked 28th out of 30 teams. Still, the Rays won the AL East for the first time since 2010.

The Rays leaned heavily on their bullpen throughout the truncated season, with 12 pitchers recording at least one save — matching the major league record. So the move to get Snell was in line with what made the Rays so successful all year.

"Yes, we did that multiple times throughout the year. Does that mean that it has to be done in Game 6?"

No, it doesn't," Cash said. "I think there's many things that go into those decisions."

More AP MLB: <https://apnews.com/MLB> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## Lawyer: Britney Spears fears father, wants him out of career

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Britney Spears fears her father and will not resume her career so long as he has power over it, her attorney said in court Tuesday.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Brenda Penny declined to suspend James Spears from his central role in the court conservatorship that has controlled his daughter's life and career for 12 years as Britney Spears' attorney Samuel D. Ingham III requested at the contentious hearing. But the judge said she would consider future petitions for his suspension or outright removal, which Ingham plans to file.

"My client has informed me that she is afraid of her father," Ingham told the judge. "She will not perform again if her father is in charge of her career."

The pop star has been on an indefinite work hiatus since early 2019.

James Spears' attorney, Vivian Lee Thoreen, defended what she said was his perfect record in his run as her conservator, which has seen her net worth go from in debt to well over \$60 million.

Thoreen argued that the disruption caused by his removal would do her the very harm the suspension is meant to prevent.

"I don't believe there is a shred of evidence to support my client's suspension," she said.

Thoreen also objected to Ingham's statements about the father-daughter relationship as inadmissible hearsay.

The judge did approve that a corporate fiduciary, the Bessemer Trust, will now serve as co-conservator over her estate along with her father, which Britney Spears had requested.

Most of the attorneys involved, along with Britney Spears' parents, took part in the hearing via phone and videoconference. The pop star did not attend in any form.

The conservatorship, known in many states as a guardianship, began in 2008 when she was having serious mental struggles and an often public meltdown. The arrangements are normally limited to people with severely diminished ability to make decisions for themselves, and are meant to be temporary, but Britney Spears, 38, has remained under court control longer than anyone expected.

Ingham on Tuesday called her a "high-functioning conservatee" who deserves at least notice of the actions her father is taking, which he has declined to provide.

Ingham said Spears has not spoken to her father in a very long time.

Thoreen argued that the reason father and daughter have not communicated is because Ingham has prevented it.

Britney Spears has acknowledged that the conservatorship was necessary when it began, and probably saved her career, and she remained silent both in public and in court for nearly all of its existence, with her attorney acting mostly as a neutral observer.

But starting in August she began publicly seeking to choose who had power over her, asking for greater transparency in the court's often secret moves, and even declaring that she was sympathetic to fans who have increasingly demanded in protests and online posts that those in control must #FreeBritney.

Dozens of those fans protested outside the downtown Los Angeles courthouse as they do for every Spears hearing, and a few, wearing #FreeBritney face masks, sat in the courtroom that was sparsely attended because of coronavirus spacing guidelines.

For most of the conservatorship James Spears also served as conservator over not just his daughter's finances but her person, giving him great control over her life decisions. He stepped down temporarily from that role last year, citing health reasons, and Britney Spears has requested that his temporary replacement, Jodi Montgomery, be made permanent.

In documents requesting James Spears' suspension, Britney Spears said he had no intention of working

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with the Bessemer Trust as co-conservator, and that he meant "to retain full functional control of her assets, books and records in the face of Britney's objections."

She also cited his recent failure to notify her that her business manager had resigned and he had appointed a new one.

James Spears' attorneys argued that in appointing a new business manager he was only keeping the continuity of his daughter's business flowing and doing his job as conservator, and had no legal requirement to inform her of his moves.

His attorneys said in court filings that his "sole motivation has been his unconditional love for his daughter and a fierce desire to protect her from those trying to take advantage of her."

Most of the proceedings in the Spears conservatorship have been closed to the public, making Tuesday's hearing a rare glimpse into the family drama happening behind the scenes.

Britney Spears' mother and James Spears' ex-wife Lynne Spears, who has been allowed to take part as an interested party, said through her attorney that her daughter should not be forced to obey her father's unreasonable demands, calling their relationship "toxic."

"It has broken Lynne's heart that things have come to this point," the attorney, Gladstone N. Jones, said.

Jones said Lynne Spears has no ill will toward her ex-husband, but she thinks it's "time to start fresh" and remove him.

"Contentiousness is not uncommon in families," Jones said, "but this is not a usual family."

Follow AP Entertainment Reporter Andrew Dalton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/andyjamesdalton>

## **Bidenomics: More stimulus, tougher regulation, and gridlock**

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and TALİ ARBEL AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden will inherit a vulnerable economic recovery under threat from a resurgent virus, likely with a divided Congress that will hinder his ability to address the challenges.

Yet despite the obstacles, the former vice president and senator will pursue a drastic shift in America's economic policy. He has vowed to reverse much of the Trump administration's aggressive deregulation and indifference to domestic spending and economic development in favor of big investments in education, infrastructure and clean energy. He wants stricter rules to rein in big tech companies and to fight climate change.

And to help pay for it all, the president-elect would turn to large tax increases for corporations and wealthy individuals by reversing much of President Donald Trump's tax cuts.

Biden is already distinguishing himself from Trump in his approach to the pandemic, which economists generally see as the gravest threat to the recovery. Trump saw the pandemic's impact on the economy through the lens of government-mandated shutdowns: He argued that to fight the pandemic by imposing curbs on face-to-face businesses like restaurants — the approach favored by most health experts — was to doom the economy. Yet even when states reopened, many consumers stayed cautious about dining out, going to movies or flying.

"It wasn't all about shutdowns — it was about people getting scared," said Claudia Sahm, a former Federal Reserve economist. "I imagine people are getting scared again."

Biden's view reflects the warning from most economists that until the virus is controlled, the economy cannot fully recover.

"It starts with doing everything possible to get the COVID-19 under control," Biden said Monday, "so that we can reopen our businesses safely and sustainably."

Striking an ominous tone, the president-elect has warned, "We're still facing a very dark winter," with confirmed cases surging by roughly 120,000 a day — four times the pace of last spring. That trend, along with colder weather, will severely restrict the outdoor dining that has been a lifeline for restaurants and bars across the country. It could also hamper travel plans and visits to barber shops and yoga studios.

That slower growth, in turn, could intensify calls for more stimulus spending. Most economists, along with

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Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, are warning that the economy needs more rescue aid from Congress.

The \$2 trillion aid package that Congress approved in March is widely credited with fueling a sharp economic rebound this summer. But that stimulus is largely exhausted. Without additional aid, the hardships for roughly 10 million jobless Americans and thousands of struggling small businesses will deepen, along with the economy.

Biden's election victory makes another shot of stimulus spending more likely, though probably not until after his inauguration in January. A package of \$1 trillion to \$1.5 trillion would add as much as 4.5% to growth next year, according to Capital Economics. That would be enough to return the economy to its pre-pandemic level by the end of 2021. Most economists note that the economy's painfully sluggish recovery from the 2008-2009 Great Recession was due in large part to government spending limits that took effect in 2010.

"The most important economic issue today, tomorrow and into the next several years is fiscal policy," said Eric Winograd, U.S. economist at AllianceBernstein, referring to the government's tax and spending policies. "With monetary policy (by the Fed) largely bled dry, fiscal policy is the only game in town."

Unlike Trump, Biden regards big increases in spending on social, education and development programs as critical to longer-term growth. The president-elect has proposed nearly \$5.4 trillion in new spending over the next decade, according to the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Wharton Budget Model. That includes \$1.9 trillion on education and \$1.6 trillion on new infrastructure — roads, bridges, highways and other public structures — and research and development.

The president-elect has also said he would raise \$3.4 trillion in additional tax revenue over a decade to help pay for it, Penn Wharton found. He has proposed raising the corporate income-tax to 28% from 21%, reversing half of Trump's cut from 35% in 2017. Biden would also raise income and payroll taxes for people making \$400,000 a year or more — about 2% of the population.

Yet Biden may be the first president since George H.W. Bush not to have both the House and Senate controlled by his party during at least his first two years in office. Whether that becomes true will depend on the outcome of two Senate runoff elections in Georgia in January. But most observers expect Biden to face a GOP Senate, which would likely block much of his agenda. Republican senators would fight Biden's tax increases and at least limit the size of a new economic stimulus package.

"The outcome of the Senate race, arguably, is the most important consideration as far as likely tax legislation is concerned," said Robert Willens, a professor of finance at Columbia University.

Biden's spending proposals include \$2 trillion over four years to counter climate change, a reversal from Trump's focus on supporting oil and gas drilling. He wants to spend money to retrofit homes and buildings to make them more energy efficient and building out an infrastructure for electric vehicles.

In many areas, Biden can operate through executive orders or regulation. He could also reverse much of the administration's approach to legal immigration, which has cut the annual number of new arrivals to about 600,000 from 1 million. Most economists say the effects of Biden's policies would be negligible in the short run but would expand the nation's long-run economic output by accelerating population growth.

Biden also plans to rejoin the Paris Agreement on behalf of the nation and has said he will sign executive orders to fight climate change. He aims to stop climate-damaging emissions from power plants by 2035 and to reach net-zero emissions in the economy overall no later than 2050.

The president-elect could also reverse some of Trump's executive orders by imposing tougher fuel economy standards, compelling coal plants to reduce emissions or restoring requirements that strengthen the oil and gas industry's reporting and reduction of toxic chemicals.

On trade, Biden will jettison Trump's go-it-alone style in confronting China. Instead, the president-elect says he will seek to build alliances with Europe and Japan to confront China's government subsidies, intellectual property rights violations and market restrictions, among other trade concerns.

To maintain those alliances, Biden is all but certain to drop his predecessor's inclination to target America's allies by threatening tariffs on car imports from Europe, or imposing tariffs on steel imports from Canada and Mexico. Still, Democrats in Congress are suspicious of China, and trade tensions will likely persist.

Trump has sought to ban Chinese apps TikTok and WeChat and has taken steps to root out Huawei from



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the small space it occupies in U.S. telecom networks. He has done so while pressuring other countries not to use Huawei in their next-generation 5G networks.

Though Republican and Democrats are both suspicious of Huawei, TikTok could get a reprieve under Biden. Robert Atkinson, the president of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, which is funded by U.S. tech companies, said the TikTok ban was "much more of a Trump issue" that Biden might drop.

The president-elect could continue the government's rising efforts to curb the outsize power of the tech industry. The Trump administration launched what could be a landmark antitrust case against Google that will likely continue.

And, like the Trump administration, Biden has also taken aim at Section 230, a law that is foundational to the modern internet and gives tech firms liability protection from lawsuits for what users post. The president-elect has said it should be revoked. Trump and other Republicans have baselessly asserted that the social media companies were censoring conservatives. Democrats criticize the law because they think social-media companies are failing to suppress misinformation and hate speech.

Atkinson said he also sees relations between the White House and business returning to a more normal, predictable state under Biden, after Trump's willingness to loudly condemn companies that criticized him.

"If they would ever pressure a company, it would be very quiet," Atkinson said. "Biden is not going to use the bully pulpit to name and shame American companies."

Arbel reported from Phoenix. AP Business Writer Sarah Skidmore Sell in Portland, Oregon, contributed to this report.

## Vatican report reveals anonymous letters accusing McCarrick

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO and ELANA SCHOR Associated Press

The Vatican's report on ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick revealed the previously unknown contents of six anonymous letters accusing him of pedophilia that were sent to U.S. church leaders in the early 1990s and later forwarded to the Holy See.

New York's then-archbishop, Cardinal John O'Connor, forwarded them to the Vatican in 1999, shortly before he died, along with a six-page confidential memo in which he recommended McCarrick not be promoted to any important U.S. diocese because of a "scandal of great proportions" that would erupt if the allegations became public.

The 449-page report also included testimony from a woman identified only as "Mother 1" who told Vatican investigators she, too, tried to raise the alarm with anonymous letters in the 1980s when McCarrick was bishop in Metuchen, New Jersey, after she saw McCarrick "massaging (her sons') inner thighs" at her home.

The woman said she sent the letters to members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy "expressing her distress about McCarrick's conduct with minors," and she believed they "may have been thrown aside" because they were anonymous.

Jeff Anderson, an attorney for several of McCarrick's accusers, said at a news conference Tuesday that he also represents two people in the woman's family and criticized the church for turning a blind eye to the warning.

There is "no evidence in this report or anyplace else that that account, that warning, that detailed, courageous effort by that mom in approximately 1984 was even investigated," Anderson said. "Nobody looked. Nobody asked."

The other anonymous letters, which were sent in 1992-1993, were addressed to top U.S. church leaders, the bishops conference and the Vatican's ambassador to the U.S., who reported that he had destroyed them upon receipt.

The Vatican has long ignored anonymous reports about abuse, insisting on receiving signed complaints before initiating any investigation. And the U.S. bishops conference had a policy forbidding the use of anonymous allegations as the basis to start abuse investigations, while requiring the information be passed

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onto the accused prelate.

The Vatican has now changed that policy for the universal church: According to a new manual issued earlier this year, anonymous reports can be used to justify opening a probe.

## LETTER ONE

In late 1992, O'Connor received the anonymous, handwritten letter, postmarked in Newark, New Jersey, and addressed to "NCCB members," a reference to the bishops conference.

Written in capital letters, it said: "A SCANDAL INVOLVING AN ARCHBISHOP LOOMS! NCCB HAS BEEN RELUCTANT TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM, THOUGH HIS MISCONDUCT HAS BEEN COMMON KNOWLEDGE IN CLERICAL AND RELIGIOUS CIRCLES FOR YEARS."

The letter added that "SUBSTANTIAL" charges against McCarrick, including "PEDOPHILIA OR INCEST," would "SHATTER THE AMERICAN CHURCH."

The report says O'Connor forwarded it to McCarrick, who thanked him and suggested an investigation to determine its author. McCarrick also told O'Connor he had shared it "with some of our friends in the FBI."

"I am afraid he is a sick person and someone who has a lot of hate in his heart," McCarrick said of the unknown sender.

## LETTER TWO

Received by O'Connor in early 1993, it said McCarrick "POSTURES AS A HUMBLE SERVANT" and "ADVOCATE OF FAMILY LIFE AND FAMILY VALUES," but was in fact "A CUNNING PEDOPHILE."

The letter added that church officials in Rome and the U.S. had "KNOWN FOR DECADES OF MC CARRICK'S PROCLIVITY FOR YOUNG BOYS."

McCarrick responded to O'Connor that then-Cardinal Joseph Bernardin "had already been kind enough" to alert him about a letter from "my 'secret admirer.'"

According to the report, McCarrick wrote on the same date to Archbishop Agostino Cacciavillan, the Vatican's ambassador to the U.S., advising him of the letters "attacking my reputation" and describing them as "obviously very annoying."

## LETTER THREE

Sent in early 1993 and signed by a "follower of Christ," it struck an even more urgent tone.

"WITH THE ROCK OF CLERICAL CREDIBILITY SHATTERED, ALL SORTS OF EVILS ARE CRAWLING OUT INTO THE LIGHT. ARCHBISHOP THEODORE McCARRICK'S SEXUAL MISCONDUCT WILL BE REVEALED," the letter stated.

O'Connor sent a copy to McCarrick, according to the report, with a handwritten note: "This stuff drives me crazy. I hate to send it to you, but would want you to do the same for me."

Another church leader who received the letter later told McCarrick he had destroyed his copies.

## LETTER FOUR

Also from early 1993, it called McCarrick's conduct "an abomination" that took place "in cathedral residences in Newark and Metuchen."

"MC CARRICK USES THE PRIESTHOOD FOR OPPORTUNITY AND ACCESS TO YOUNG BOYS BY INGRATIATING HIMSELF WITH THEIR FAMILIES ... SEXUALLY EXPLOITING THEM WHILE THEIR TRUSTING FAMILIES GENUFLECT BEFORE HIM," the letter read.

It called for an "honest internal investigation."

## LETTER FIVE

Sent later in 1993 to the Vatican envoy, it included a 1992 article published by McCarrick in the Catholic Advocate, the Newark Archdiocese's newspaper, about its policies on sexual abuse.

It accused him of pedophilia and said his words were full of "deadly deceit." According to the report, there is no evidence any other church leaders received this note.

## LETTER SIX

Addressed to the Vatican ambassador, O'Connor and other leaders in mid-1993, it asked why McCarrick would allow another priest who committed sexual abuse into the diocese.

"The answer is simple — Bishop McCarrick himself is a pedophile," it said.

An attorney at the National Council of Catholic Bishops forwarded the letter and it later reached McCarrick.

That was the last of the anonymous letters, according to the Vatican report, and there is no record of other, similar messages at that time. It is not known whether they were written by the same person or by multiple people acting either in concert or independently.

"Given the prior exemplary reports of Archbishop McCarrick's moral fitness from ecclesiastical sources and the absence of named complaints ... the anonymous letters appear to have been viewed as libelous attacks made for improper political or personal motives," the Vatican report concluded.

Associated Press writers Nicole Winfield in Rome and Sarah Rankin in Richmond, Virginia contributed to this report.

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## **AP FACT CHECK: Trump's claims on vaccine, election are wrong**

By HOPE YEN, LAURAN NEERGAARD and LINDA A. JOHNSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Refusing to concede a presidential election he lost, President Donald Trump sought falsely to take full credit for drugmaker Pfizer Inc.'s announcement that its COVID-19 vaccine may be 90% effective, wrongly asserted the vaccine news was delayed until after Election Day to undermine him and repeated baseless claims of voter fraud.

Here's a look:

### VACCINE

TRUMP: "President Trump told us for some time we would be getting a Vaccine by the end of the year and people laughed at him, and here we are with Pfizer getting FDA approval by the end of this month. He was right.' @MariaBartiromo." — tweet Tuesday.

THE FACTS: Trump's suggestion — quoting Fox Business anchor Maria Bartiromo — that he stood alone in saying a COVID-19 vaccine was possible by year's end is incorrect. Actually, top health experts said they considered that possible, though far from certain, and were more skeptical of Trump's claim that a coronavirus vaccine would become available before the Nov. 3 election. The vaccine isn't expected to become widely available to the general public before 2021.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious diseases expert, had previously said that he was "cautiously optimistic" that a vaccine will be ready by late 2020 or early 2021. On Monday, he called Pfizer's news "extraordinary" but reiterated that it did not mean the U.S. had its immediate cure-all for the coronavirus.

The first step for Pfizer would be to apply for "emergency use authorization" by the Food and Drug Administration, likely later this month, which would allow for limited distribution before it seeks full FDA approval for wider use. Neither step is guaranteed to happen.

"There's still some questions about, you know, the durability of the effect about whether how effective it is in the elderly versus younger people," Fauci told CNN. "We know this is light at the end of the tunnel, but that doesn't mean that we're going to give up the important public health measures that we continually still have to do every single day."

Pfizer's interim analysis, from an independent data monitoring board, looked at 94 infections recorded so far in a study that has enrolled nearly 44,000 people in the U.S. and five other countries.

Some participants got the vaccine, while others got dummy shots. Pfizer says only the data and safety monitoring board knows the breakdowns, not Pfizer researchers or executives. For the vaccine to be 90%

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effective, nearly all the infections must have occurred in placebo recipients. The study is continuing, and Pfizer cautioned that the protection rate might change as more COVID-19 cases are added to the calculations.

During the presidential campaign, Trump frequently suggested a vaccine might arrive before the Nov. 3 election.

"What I said is by the end of the year, but I think it could even be sooner than that," Trump said in September about a vaccine. "It could be during the month of October, actually could be before November."

TRUMP: "As I have long said, @Pfizer and the others would only announce a Vaccine after the Election, because they didn't have the courage to do it before. Likewise, the @US\_FDA should have announced it earlier, not for political purposes, but for saving lives!" — tweet Monday.

TRUMP: "The @US\_FDA and the Democrats didn't want to have me get a Vaccine WIN, prior to the election, so instead it came out five days later – As I've said all along!" — tweet Monday.

THE FACTS: His claim that Pfizer and the FDA withheld vaccine information until after the election is false. The company itself learned of the interim results on Sunday, and the FDA was not involved in Pfizer's decision to announce its early results.

Every vaccine study such as the one done on Pfizer's 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 a real vaccine and who got a placebo, and to recommend if the shots are working well enough to stop testing early.

Those boards take sneak peeks at predetermined times agreed to by the manufacturer and the FDA. It provided the first interim analysis for Pfizer on Sunday.

John Burkhardt, senior vice president of drug safety research and development at Pfizer, said Monday that the timing of the company's vaccine announcement was not related in any way to the presidential election and was made as soon as the efficacy data was ready. Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla told CNN the timing had nothing to do with politics.

Pfizer 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.

TRUMP: "Only because of President Trump, we are going to have a Vaccine by the end of the year." Ronny Jackson, Texas Congressman-Elect." — tweet Tuesday.

VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE: "HUGE NEWS: Thanks to the public-private partnership forged by President @realDonaldTrump, @pfizer announced its Coronavirus Vaccine trial is EFFECTIVE, preventing infection in 90% of its volunteers." — tweet Monday.

THE FACTS: Trump (quoting his former White House physician) and Pence are wrongly seeking full credit for forging the partnership that made the potential breakthrough possible. Pfizer notably did not accept government money to develop, test or expand manufacturing capacity under Trump's Operation Warp Speed initiative to quickly find a vaccine and treatments for the disease sweeping the country.

In fact, Pfizer partnered with the vaccine's original developer, Germany's BioNTech, in March and the following month announced the first human study in Germany. The White House announced Operation Warp Speed in May.

Pfizer opted not to join Operation Warp Speed initially but is following the same general requirements for the vaccine's development as competitors who received government research money. The company says it has risked \$2 billion of its own money on vaccine development and won't get anything from Washington unless the effort is successful.

"Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine development and manufacturing costs have been entirely self-funded," Pfizer spokeswoman Jerica Pitts said Monday. "We decided to self-fund our efforts so we could move as fast as



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possible.”

However, Pfizer did sign an agreement with the U.S. government in July worth \$1.95 billion — if the vaccine pans out and is cleared by the FDA — to supply 100 million doses. That guarantees Pfizer a U.S. market, an important incentive.

The supply side of Operation Warp Speed also allows Pfizer logistical help, although the company will directly ship its own vaccine, while the government will control shipping of other COVID-19 vaccines.

## ELECTION

TRUMP: “Georgia will be a big presidential win, as it was the night of the Election!” — tweet Monday.

THE FACTS: He’s falsely suggesting that any ballot counted after Election Day in Georgia and other states is illegitimate and illegal. In fact, that is explicitly allowed in roughly 20 states, and the Supreme Court did not stand in the way of it.

Trump refused to concede and said he will press his legal challenges, despite seeing several lawsuits dismissed by courts.

TRUMP: “Pennsylvania prevented us from watching much of the Ballot count. Unthinkable and illegal in this country.” — tweet Monday.

THE FACTS: His assertion is false.

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

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

The counting in Philadelphia was being livestreamed and Trump’s lawyers admitted in court that their campaign had observers in the room — “a non-zero” number of them, as they put it.

It was well-known that huge numbers of mailed-in ballots as well as in-person ballots were to be counted after Election Day and that many would be from Democratic-leaning areas. That’s why news organizations did not call Pennsylvania for Trump.

TRUMP: “WATCH FOR MASSIVE BALLOT COUNTING ABUSE AND, JUST LIKE THE EARLY VACCINE, REMEMBER I TOLD YOU SO!” — tweet Tuesday.

TRUMP: “WE WILL WIN!” — tweet Tuesday.

THE FACTS: He’s making unsubstantiated claims. There is no evidence of widespread fraud in the 2020 election. In fact, election officials from both political parties have stated publicly that the election went well and international observers confirmed there were no serious irregularities.

The issues Trump’s campaign and its allies have pointed to are typical in every election: problems with signatures, secrecy envelopes and postal marks on mail-in ballots, as well as the potential for a small number of ballots miscast or lost. With Democrat Joe Biden leading Trump by wide margins in key battleground states, none of those issues would have any impact on the outcome of the election.

Trump’s campaign has also launched legal challenges complaining that their poll watchers were unable to scrutinize the voting process. Many of those challenges have been tossed out by judges, some within hours of their filing, and none of the complaints show any evidence that the outcome of the election was affected.

Johnson reported from Fairless Hills, Pa. Associated Press writers Colleen Long and Calvin Woodward contributed to this report.

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

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## Vatican faults others for McCarrick's rise, spares Francis

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — A Vatican investigation into former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick found that bishops, cardinals and popes downplayed or dismissed multiple reports of sexual misconduct and determined that Pope Francis merely continued his predecessors' handling of the predator until taking action when a former altar boy alleged abuse.

The Vatican took the extraordinary step Tuesday of publishing its two-year, 449-page internal investigation into the American prelate's rise and fall in a bid to restore credibility to the U.S. and Vatican hierarchies, which have been shattered by the McCarrick scandal.

The report put the lion's share of blame on a dead saint: Pope John Paul II, who appointed McCarrick archbishop of Washington, D.C., in 2000, despite having commissioned an inquiry that confirmed he slept with seminarians. The report found that John Paul believed McCarrick's last-minute, handwritten denial: "I have made mistakes and may have sometimes lacked in prudence, but in the seventy years of my life I have never had sexual relations with any person, male or female, young or old, cleric or lay," McCarrick wrote.

But the report also charted the alarm bells that were ignored, excused or dismissed in 1992-93 when six anonymous letters were sent to U.S. church officials and the Vatican's ambassador to the U.S. alleging McCarrick was a "pedophile" who would sleep in the same bed with young men and boys. Those alarms continued, when a Catholic psychiatrist traveled to the Vatican in 1997 to report that his priest-patient was a victim of McCarrick's sexual abuse.

McCarrick, 90, was defrocked by Francis last year after a Vatican investigation confirmed the globe-trotting envoy and fundraiser had sexually molested adults as well as children. The case created a credibility crisis for the church since the Vatican had reports from authoritative cardinals dating to 1999 that McCarrick's behavior was problematic, yet he became an influential cardinal, kingmaker and emissary of the Holy See's "soft diplomacy."

The findings accused bishops dead and alive of turning a blind eye to his misconduct and said the charismatic McCarrick simply ignored informal restrictions ordered up in 2006 after Pope Benedict XVI, receiving yet another alarming report, decided not to investigate or sanction him seriously.

Significantly, the report greatly undermined allegations that Francis was at fault for the McCarrick scandal that were lodged in 2018 by a former Vatican ambassador to the U.S. The report actually provided evidence that the ambassador, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, was part of the cover-up.

The report said Francis never lifted or modified Benedict's informal restrictions on McCarrick, as Vigano claimed, because the restrictions were never enforced in the first place. The report provided evidence that Vigano was well aware during Benedict's papacy that McCarrick had ignored the restrictions, admitting in a 2012 letter to the Vatican that its written admonition to McCarrick "is a dead letter."

"Pope Francis had heard only that there had been allegations and rumors related to immoral conduct with adults occurring prior to McCarrick's appointment to Washington," the report said. "Believing that the allegations had already been reviewed and rejected by Pope John Paul II, and well aware that McCarrick was active during the papacy of Benedict XVI, Pope Francis did not see the need to alter the approach that had been adopted."

Francis changed course after a former altar boy came forward in 2017, alleging McCarrick groped him when he was a teenager during preparations for Christmas Mass in 1971 and 1972 in New York. The allegation was the first solid claim against McCarrick involving a minor and triggered the canonical trial that resulted in his defrocking.

McCarrick now lives in a residence for priests as a layman. His lawyer, Barry Coburn, declined to comment.

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Vigano on Tuesday blasted the Vatican report as “further proof of the corruption and bad faith of those who for too long have been silent, made denials and turned their gaze elsewhere, who today must be held accountable.”

The report contains heartbreaking testimony from people who tried to raise the alarm about McCarrick’s inappropriate behavior, including with children, in the mid-1980s.

One woman identified only as “Mother 1” told investigators she sent a series of anonymous letters to U.S. Catholic leaders, warning about McCarrick. She described how she once discovered McCarrick, a family friend, with his hands rubbing her two sons’ inner thighs in the living room. “It was more than strange. It was abnormal. I almost dropped the casserole dish I was holding in my hands.” Her letters went unheeded.

While the findings provided new details about what the Vatican knew and when, it didn’t directly blame or admit that the church’s internal “old boys club” culture allowed McCarrick’s behavior to continue unchecked. Cardinals and bishops have long been considered beyond reproach and claims of homosexual behavior are used to discredit or blackmail prelates, so often are dismissed as rumor. There also has been a widespread but unspoken tolerance of sexually active men in what is supposed to be a celibate priesthood.

The church has long considered sex by priests with other adult men or women as sinful but consensual, with flags only raised in recent years when minors were involved.

But the McCarrick scandal, which erupted during the #MeToo era, demonstrated that adult seminarians and priests can be sexually victimized by superiors because of the power imbalance. And yet the church’s legal system has had no real way to address such abuse of authority.

James Grein, whose testimony that McCarrick abused him for two decades starting when he was 11 was key to McCarrick’s downfall, said he was pleased the report was finally released. He said he was hopeful it would bring some relief as well as a chance to “clean” up the church.

“There are so many people suffering out there because of one man,” Grein said. “He’s destroyed me and he’s destroyed thousands of other lives. ... It’s time that the Catholic Church comes clean with all of its destruction.”

The bishops of the four U.S. dioceses where McCarrick served — Metuchen and Newark, N.J., New York and Washington — welcomed the report, despite the shame the scandal has brought and the pain McCarrick caused his victims.

“Like everyone else, I am disgusted and appalled by what has taken place,” Metuchen Bishop James Checchio said.

He lamented that his diocese’s founding in 1981, with McCarrick as its first bishop, would “always be associated with the history of Theodore McCarrick and the culture of abuse, silence and shame that was allowed to perpetuate in the dark corners of our past.”

Francis commissioned the report after Vigano issued a blistering expose of the two-decade McCarrick cover-up in 2018, naming about two dozen U.S. and Vatican officials who knew of his misconduct but failed to effectively sanction him.

Vigano cited former seminarians who described the harassment and abuse they endured while “Uncle Ted,” as McCarrick liked to call himself, was their bishop in New Jersey, and they were forced to sleep in his bed during weekend trips to his beach house.

Vigano’s most explosive claim was that Francis himself lifted “sanctions” imposed by Benedict and made McCarrick a trusted adviser. Vigano demanded Francis resign, claiming he had warned the pope in 2013 that McCarrick had “corrupted generations of seminarians and priests.”

Several of Vigano’s central assertions were confirmed, but others were disproved. The report rejected Vigano’s claims involving Francis outright: “No records support Vigano’s account and evidence as to what he said is sharply disputed.”

The summary also cites a previously unreported case in which Vigano in 2012 failed to act on Vatican instructions to investigate new claims against McCarrick by a Brazilian-born New Jersey priest.

The report drew on documents from Vatican departments, U.S. dioceses and seminaries and the Vatican’s U.S. Embassy. Investigators interviewed 90 people, including McCarrick’s victims, former seminarians and

priests, and officials from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

## Cunningham concedes to US Sen. Tillis in North Carolina

By GARY D. ROBERTSON Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Democrat Cal Cunningham conceded to incumbent Republican U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis in North Carolina on Tuesday, saying “the voters have spoken” and it was clear Tillis had won.

With Cunningham’s concession, all eyes turned to Georgia, where two U.S. Senate runoff races in January are likely to determine the balance of the upper chamber.

With votes still uncounted and the races in North Carolina and Alaska still too early to call Tuesday, the Senate remained tied 48-48. Alaska GOP Sen. Dan Sullivan is favored for another term against Al Gross, an independent running as a Democrat. If the Senate ended up tied 50-50, Democratic Vice President-elect Kamala Harris would wield the tiebreaking vote.

Georgia is closely divided, with Democrats making gains on Republicans, fueled by a surge of new voters. But no Democrat has been elected U.S. senator in 20 years.

In North Carolina, Tillis led Cunningham by 94,500 votes, from among more than 5.4 million votes counted so far. Additional absentee and provisional ballots are being counted. Counties finalize their results on Friday.

“I just called Sen. Tillis to congratulate him on winning reelection to a second term in the U.S. Senate and wished him and his family the best in their continued service in the months and years ahead,” Cunningham said. “The voters have spoken and I respect their decision.”

Cunningham accepted defeat after outraging Tillis during what became the most expensive U.S. Senate race in history. All together, the two campaigns and outside groups spent \$282 million on the general election, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

Tillis benefited from fallout over a Cunningham sex scandal in the campaign’s final month. Cunningham admitted to a recent extramarital relationship with a public relations consultant. Tillis said Cunningham’s emphasis on his personal story in the campaign made the misconduct a defining issue.

Tillis, 60, a former IBM consultant and state House speaker from the Charlotte suburbs, was one of President Donald Trump’s strongest defenders during impeachment but was criticized by the GOP base last year when he initially took a stance opposite the president on how to fund the border wall. Tillis later changed his mind on the issue.

“This was a hard-fought campaign and I wish nothing but the best to Cal and his family going forward,” Tillis said in a statement. “I am incredibly humbled by the chance to serve the people of North Carolina in the United States Senate for six more years and I pledge to continue keeping my promises and delivering results.”

The race in the presidential battleground state was already being closely watched before word of both Cunningham’s extramarital admission and Tillis’ coronavirus diagnosis upended it in early October.

Tillis tested positive for COVID-19 several days after attending a White House event announcing the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court. Unlike most people at the event, Tillis wore a face mask, but he took it off once indoors. Many attendees — including Trump — later tested positive.

Tillis campaigned on a record of passing Trump’s 2017 tax cuts, confirming conservative judges and helping the country recover from the pandemic. Cunningham, 47, is a Raleigh attorney and U.S. Army Reserve officer.

It was also still too early to call North Carolina’s presidential race and several other statewide races. Trump led President-elect Joe Biden by more than 73,000 votes.

North Carolina counties had yet to process about 27,500 absentee ballots and about 23,000 provisional ballots. In addition, approximately 93,000 voters requested absentee ballots that had not yet been received as of Tuesday afternoon. Ballots postmarked by Election Day can be counted as long as they are received by Thursday.

**False claims of voting fraud, pushed by Trump, thrive online**



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By AMANDA SEITZ, DAVID KLEPPER and BARBARA ORTUTAY Associated Press

It started months before Election Day with false claims on Facebook and Twitter that mail-in ballots cast for President Donald Trump had been chucked in dumpsters or rivers.

Now, a week after the final polls closed, falsehoods about dead people voting and ballots being thrown out by poll workers are still thriving on social media, reaching an audience of millions. Trump and his supporters are pointing to those debunked claims on social media as reason to not accept that Democrat Joe Biden won the election.

"These will probably persist for years or even decades unfortunately," Kate Starbird, a University of Washington professor and online misinformation expert, said of the false claims about the U.S. election process. "People are very motivated to both participate in them and believe them."

There is no evidence of widespread fraud in the 2020 election. In fact, voting officials from both political parties have stated publicly that the election went well and international observers confirmed there were no serious irregularities.

The issues raised by Trump's campaign and his allies are typical in every election: problems with signatures, secrecy envelopes and postal marks on mail-in ballots, as well as the potential for a small number of ballots miscast or lost. With Biden leading Trump by substantial margins in key battleground states, none of those issues would have any impact on the outcome of the election. Many of the legal challenges brought by Trump's campaign have been tossed out by judges, some within hours of their filing.

But Trump, who primed his supporters for months to doubt this election's outcome with false tales of ballots being "dumped in rivers" and baseless tweets warning of a "rigged election," has continued his assault on the U.S. vote in more than 40 Facebook and Twitter posts since Election Day.

"This was a stolen election," Trump tweeted on Sunday, the day after Biden became president-elect.

Trump's supporters have readily echoed the president's cries of an unfair election on Facebook and Twitter.

Tweets and retweets with terms such as "steal," "fraud," "rigged" and "dead" referring to the election spiked more than 2,800% from Nov. 2 to Nov. 6, according to an analysis by VineSight, a tech company that tracks misinformation. The company found more than 1.6 million retweets containing some of those words on Nov. 6 alone.

The false claims have shapeshifted over the last week, ranging from misleading assertions that ballots filled out with Sharpie pens in Illinois, Arizona and Michigan were thrown out to an inaccurate social media post from Eric Trump that the number of ballots cast in Wisconsin exceeded the number of registered voters.

In recent days, prominent Republicans and Trump allies have peddled social media claims that hundreds or thousands of dead people voted in key battleground states like Pennsylvania or Michigan.

One tweet, shared more than 50,000 times, falsely claimed that a dead woman named Donna Brydges voted in the election. Brydges is very much alive, she confirmed to the AP by phone last week. In fact, she had "just beat me in a game of Cribbage," her husband told a reporter.

Between Election Day and Monday, roughly 5 million mentions of voter fraud and "Stop the Steal" were made across social media and online news sites, with most of the claims focusing on closely contested states like Pennsylvania, Georgia and Michigan, according to an analysis by media intelligence firm Signal Labs. Mentions of voter fraud have not waned since final votes were cast Tuesday.

Last week, as Biden pulled ahead in the race, Trump supporters quickly launched dozens of "Stop the Steal" groups on Facebook and began using the platform to organize "Stop the Steal" rallies.

The social media platforms have tried to rein in the false claims.

Facebook quickly shut down one "Stop the Steal" Facebook group, which ballooned to more than 350,000 members in just one day, after some called for violence in it, and has taken down additional "Stop the Steal" groups. And over the last week, Twitter has covered nearly a dozen of the president's tweets that make false or unproven claims that voter fraud occurred.

That's pushed a small but vocal faction of conservatives to lesser-known social media sites like Parler, which does not moderate content posted by users as closely as mainstream tech companies like Facebook, YouTube or Twitter.

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Parler has fewer than 8 million users, but its reach is quickly growing. As of Tuesday, Parler was the most downloaded app in Apple's store, followed by MeWe. Newsmax, a conservative cable network, was in fourth place. According to Sensor Tower, which tracks such data, Parler was downloaded over 2 million times on Apple and Android in the U.S. from Nov. 3 to Nov. 9. This is more than 31 times the downloads it saw in the prior week. In that same period, Newsmax saw 583,000 installs, up more than 11 times from the previous week. MeWe hit 218,000 installs, more than 14 times the 15,000 installs it saw in the previous week.

The conversation on Parler has centered around voter fraud and an election stolen from Trump over the last week.

"Show the world we won't let communist steal the White House," one Parler user wrote Tuesday, in one of many thousands of posts using the hashtag #StopTheSteal.

That migration of social media users could be one drawback of the good job Facebook and Twitter did fact-checking and removing false content around the U.S. election, Starbird, the misinformation expert, noted.

"What they tried to do is commendable, which is why people are moving to other platforms," Starbird said.

Associated Press writer Beatrice Dupuy in New York contributed to this report.

## Report sounds an alarm on ongoing decline of US coral reefs

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — A first of its kind assessment of coral reefs in U.S. waters is again sounding the alarm over the continued decline of these sensitive underwater ecosystems, which scientists deem essential to the health of the world's oceans amid the environmental effects posed by human activity and climate change.

The report, released Tuesday by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of Maryland, took stock of the health of coral reefs under U.S. jurisdiction, from Guam and Hawaii in the Pacific to Florida and the U.S. Virgin Islands in the Atlantic.

"Our work in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans shows a dire outlook for coral reef ecosystem health, from warming ocean waters, fishing, disease, and pollution from the land," said Heath Kelsey, director of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.

The reefs off the Florida coast are the country's most degraded, with perhaps as little as 2% remaining, officials said.

When healthy, coral constitute breathtaking underwater colonies of tiny organisms, known as polyps, whose hardened skeletons form clumps or fingerlings of underwater rock known as reefs. The profusion of life they support, including fish and other aquatic creatures, is an important component of the marine ecosystem.

The reefs are natural barriers to storm surges, particularly in regions susceptible to hurricanes.

And they also are important to coastal economies that depend on tourism, marine aquaculture and commercial fishing — the so-called blue economy that depends on the conservation of ocean resources to help sustain livelihoods from the sea.

"The economic impacts of coral reefs in the United States are around \$3.4 billion annually. So this is really of great importance to our nation," said retired Navy Rear Adm. Tim Gallaudet, an assistant secretary at NOAA.

Officials said it was the first time that a nationwide assessment was conducted, despite years of concern over the health of coral reefs, not just in the U.S. but around the world. Some studies say more than half of the world's reefs have been lost, and that more are in danger.

The status report used data collected between 2012 and 2018 and classified regions as "very good," "good," "fair," "impaired," and "critical."

While the report says the condition of most coral reef regions in the United States was "fair," it added

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that sewage, lawn chemicals and other pollutants that flow into the oceans pose potentially catastrophic threats to their survival.

That threat is most pronounced in waters off South Florida, from the Keys to north of Palm Beach. The region is one of the country's densest population centers with a population of more than 9 million.

"It shouldn't be surprising. There's an immense population of people living in close proximity to those reefs," said Jennifer Koss, the director of NOAA's coral reef conservation program.

But even in more remote oceans where human interaction is limited, coral reefs remain under threat because of climate change, which has caused oceans to warm and make some coastal areas inhospitable to delicate coral.

"Climate change is the single biggest threat to shallow water coral reefs in the U.S. and worldwide," said Kelsey of the University of Maryland.

The report, its authors signaled, is meant to be a call to arms.

"This report represents a snapshot of reef condition and is a great resource for communities and decision-makers throughout the nation. We hope the report starts a dialogue about the various factors and potential solutions to the threats affecting coral reefs," Koss said.

Most U.S. territories were designated as "fair," including those in Hawaii and Puerto Rico. Reefs were in American Samoa and the most remote areas of the Pacific were in "good condition." Florida reefs were said to be in "impaired" condition.

Officials in the state of Florida have become more mindful of the streams of pollution flowing into its coastal waters and the harm they can do to coral. The pollutants also have been blamed for red tides and other ecologically devastating algae blooms.

A bipartisan federal bill cosponsored by lawmakers from Hawaii and Florida — two of the states with the highest stakes on the matter — would provide federal funding to help restore and manage the nation's reefs.

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Follow Bobby Caina Calvin on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BobbyCalvan>.

## Apple unveils first Macs built to run more like iPhones

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SAN RAMON, Calif. (AP) — Apple is rolling out new Mac computers powered by the same kind of chips that run iPhones and iPads, a move aimed at making it easier for its most popular products to work together.

For instance, Macs using the new chips will be able to run the same apps designed for the iPhone's mobile operating system, although it appears some developers aren't immediately keen on making those apps available for Macs. Apple didn't demonstrate any other interoperability features based on the new chips, although analysts expect more cross-pollination.

The new Mac lineup unveiled Tuesday will be in stores five months after Apple announced it would abandon its longtime partner Intel in favor of using its own processors for Mac computers. Apple said its new Mac chips make possible faster processing speeds, sleeker designs and longer running times on a single battery charge.

For instance, some Macs have eliminated a cooling fan inside the machines, helping slim down their design.

The transition to the new in-house chips could also create stumbling blocks for Apple and other software makers aiming to adapt existing Mac software so it will also run smoothly on the new models.

Initially, Apple will only be putting its chips in smaller computers — the 13-inch MacBook Air and 13-inch MacBook Pro, as well as the Mac Mini desktop. The company expects it will take another two years before all its Macs are running on the in-house chips.

All three new computers are supposed to be available in stores next week, with prices starting at almost \$700 for the Mac Mini to \$1,200 for the 13-inch MacBook Pro.

The new Macs are debuting amid high demand for laptop computers as consumers, companies, schools and government agencies adjust to a work-at-home shift triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Even if a vaccine eases the threat posed by the novel coronavirus, people still are expected to be working more

frequently from home than they previously did..

Apple's Mac sales surged 17% during the first nine months of this year compared to 2019. The company's iPhone revenue fell 9% over the same span as people continued to hold on to their older models for longer periods or bought devices powered by Google's Android software instead.

Apple still get four times more revenue from iPhones than it does from Macs Sales of Macs also lag far behind those of PCs made by Lenovo, HP and Dell that run Microsoft's Windows software and primarily use chips made by Intel and AMD.

## US plans sale of F-35 fighter jets to UAE in \$23B arms deal

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration formally notified Congress on Tuesday that it plans to sell 50 stealth F-35 fighter jets to the United Arab Emirates as part of a broader arms deal worth \$23 billion aimed at deterring potential threats from Iran despite concern in Israel.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he had authorized the sale in keeping with the administration's Middle East peace efforts. The notification to lawmakers follows the signing of the Abraham Accords between Israel, Bahrain and the UAE, under which the Arab states have agreed to normalize relations with Israel.

"This is in recognition of our deepening relationship and the UAE's need for advanced defense capabilities to deter and defend itself against heightened threats from Iran," Pompeo said in a statement.

Israeli officials have previously expressed some concern about an F-35 sale because it could affect the balance of military power in the region. But Pompeo said it would be "fully consistent" with the longstanding policy of maintaining Israel's qualitative military advantage.

The sale, worth up to \$23.37 billion, includes 50 F-35s, 18 advanced armed drone systems and a package of air-to-air and air-to-ground munitions.

"The UAE's historic agreement to normalize relations with Israel under the Abraham Accords offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to positively transform the region's strategic landscape," Pompeo said. "Our adversaries, especially those in Iran, know this and will stop at nothing to disrupt this shared success."

After agreeing to normalize relations with Israel in August, Emirati officials had said purchasing the F-35s was among their main goals. At the time Israeli officials denied they had agreed to the sale but later dropped public objections to it.

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This story has been corrected to put the total amount of the arms deal at \$23 billion in paragraph one.

## Final weeks of historic hurricane season bring new storms

By SETH BORENSTEIN, FREIDA FRISARO and KELLI KENNEDY Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Just when you thought it should be safe to go back to the water, the record-setting tropics are going crazy. Again.

Tropical Storm Eta is parked off the western coast of Cuba, dumping rain. When it finally moves again, computer models and human forecasters are befuddled about where it will go and how strong it will be.

Meanwhile, Tropical Storm Theta — which formed overnight and broke a record as the 29th named Atlantic storm of the season — is chugging east toward Europe on the cusp of hurricane status. The last time there were two named storms churning at the same time this late in the year was in December 1887, Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach said.

But wait there's more. A tropical wave moving across the Atlantic somehow survived the mid-November winds that usually decapitate storms. The system now has a 70% chance of becoming the 30th named storm. That's Iota on your already filled scorecard. If it forms, it is heading generally toward the same region of Central America that was hit by Eta.

Never before have three named storms been twirling at the same time this late in the year, Klotzbach said. Hurricane records go back to 1851, but before the satellite era, some storms were likely missed.

"Someone didn't give the tropics the memo that its mid-November. This map doesn't look normal," said



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University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy. "Usually by this time of year, the season is basically over. Now we've got the 28th, 29th and maybe 30th storm going on at the same time."

Generally fewer than one storm forms in the Atlantic hurricane basin in November but not this year, said Mike Brennan, branch chief for hurricane specialists at the hurricane center.

For the moment, the biggest threat and biggest conundrum is Eta, which struck Nicaragua as a Category 4 hurricane, killing more than 100 people from Mexico to Panama. By Tuesday afternoon, it was lingering just north of the Yucatan Channel between Cuba and Mexico, with top winds of 60 mph (95 kmh).

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 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 the storm dumped water over densely populated neighborhoods from Monroe to Palm Beach counties. McNoldy has logged more than 90 inches of rain at his Miami house this year, a record.

"Once the ground becomes saturated, there's really no place for the water to go," Fort Lauderdale Mayor Dean Trantalis said.

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

The problem with forecasting Eta is the lack of steering currents that push or pull a storm. Eta's ultimate track depends on how strong it gets because weaker and stronger storms are steered by different parts of the atmosphere, scientists said.

A report from the National Hurricane Center included the line that forecasters have "little confidence in the long-range track forecast."

The map of computer model tracks for Eta looks like a "squashed spider," Klotzbach said, referring to the many outstretched lines that trace its possible movement.

The weaker the storm is the more west it should spin after Thursday, steered by lower-level winds. But if it's stronger, it is more likely to go north or northeast, directed by deeper winds, McNoldy said.

For now, the hurricane center expects the system to go north, not showing a distinct turn, at least not quickly. The overall message is that everyone in the area should pay attention to Eta, Brennan said.

"The good news is in the short term, it's not going to move anywhere fast," Brennan said.

Past research has shown that hurricanes across the globe are moving slower and stalling more, perhaps due to man-made climate change, according to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration climate and hurricane scientist Jim Kossin.

So far this year, Eta, Zeta, Beta, Sally and Isaias stalled or slowed, but it is too soon to tell if there's any pattern, Brennan said.

When it made landfall in the Florida Keys, Eta was the fourth Greek alphabet named storm to hit the United States, which is a record that like Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak that may never be broken again, Klotzbach said. The others were Zeta, Delta and Beta.

The only thing this weird hurricane season lacked until now was a strange track. Eta with its already odd turns, including moving southwest from Florida back to Cuba, a track that's an unusual reverse S-curve, now qualifies, Klotzbach said.

And if you think when hurricane season formally ends on Nov. 30, this will all stop, that's not necessarily the case.

"We can certainly see activity bleed over into December," Brennan said. "We've seen it before."

Borenstein reported from Kensington, Maryland. 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.

## 'Obamacare' likely to survive, high court arguments indicate

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

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WASHINGTON (AP) — A more conservative Supreme Court appears unwilling to do what Republicans have long desired: kill off the Affordable Care Act, including its key protections for pre-existing health conditions and subsidized insurance premiums that affect tens of millions of Americans.

Meeting remotely a week after the election and in the midst of a pandemic that has closed their majestic courtroom, the justices on Tuesday took on the latest Republican challenge to the Obama-era health care law, with three appointees of President Donald Trump, an avowed foe of the law, among them.

But at least one of those Trump appointees, Justice Brett Kavanaugh, seemed likely to vote to leave the bulk of the law intact, even if he were to find the law's now-toothless mandate that everyone obtain health insurance to be unconstitutional.

"It does seem fairly clear that the proper remedy would be to sever the mandate provision and leave the rest of the act in place," Kavanaugh said.

Chief Justice John Roberts, who wrote two earlier opinions preserving the law, stated similar views, and the court's three liberal justices are almost certain to vote to uphold the law in its entirety. That presumably would form a majority by joining a decision to cut away only the mandate, which now has no financial penalty attached to it. Congress zeroed out the penalty in 2017, but left the rest of the law untouched.

"I think it's hard for you to argue that Congress intended the entire act to fall if the mandate were struck down when the same Congress that lowered the penalty to zero did not even try to repeal the rest of the act. I think, frankly, that they wanted the court to do that, but that's not our job," Roberts said.

In the court's third major case over the 10-year-old law, popularly known as "Obamacare," Republican attorneys general in 18 states and the administration want the entire law to be struck down. That would threaten coverage for more than 23 million people, as well as millions of others with preexisting conditions that now would include COVID-19.

California, leading a group of Democratic-controlled states, and the Democratic-controlled U.S. House of Representatives are urging the court to leave the law in place.

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.

Speaking after the arguments, Biden called the Republican-backed challenge to the law "cruel and needlessly divisive" and vowed to enact reforms to expand coverage when he's in office next January, regardless of the outcome of the Supreme Court case.

Tuesday's arguments, conducted by telephone and lasting two hours, reached back to the earlier cases and also included reminders of the coronavirus pandemic. The justices asked about other mandates, only hypothetical, that might have no penalties attached: To fly a flag, to mow the lawn or even, in a nod to current times, to wear a mask.

"I assume that in most places there is no penalty for wearing a face mask or a mask during COVID, but there is some degree of opprobrium if one does not wear it in certain settings," Justice Clarence Thomas said.

The court also spent a fair amount of time debating whether the GOP-led states and several individuals who initially filed lawsuits had the right to go into court.

The suits are against the federal government and U.S. agencies, "but doesn't it really seem that Congress is the one who's injured the individual plaintiffs here and you can't sue Congress and say: 'Hey, you've put us under this mandate that's forcing us to buy insurance and that's harming us,' right?" Justice Amy Coney Barrett said to Texas Solicitor General Kyle Hawkins.

A ruling that those parties do not have that right, known as legal standing, would result in the dismissal of the case and leave the entire law in place, including the mandate.

Questions from Barrett, who joined the court late last month following her hurried nomination and confirmation to replace the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, did not point to a clear outcome. Trump's other high-court appointee is Justice Neil Gorsuch.

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 Roberts.

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The current case stems from a change made by the Republican-controlled Congress in 2017 that reduced the penalty for not obtaining 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.

However, enrollment in the law's insurance markets has 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.

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

If the case turns on the legal doctrine of severability, it would be in line with other rulings in recent years in which the justices have excised a problematic provision from a law and allowed the rest to remain in force.

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

Roberts has endured a torrent of conservative criticism, including from Trump, for his earlier opinions, including the initial case in 2012 that upheld the mandate.

Eight years ago, the law's defenders emphasized that the mandate was the linchpin of the whole law, Roberts said to Donald Verrilli, who represented the House on Tuesday, but was the Obama administration's top Supreme Court lawyer in 2012. "But now the representation is that, 'Oh no, everything is fine without it.' Why the bait and switch?" Roberts asked.

The law originally had subsidies and other carrots to entice people to enroll in health insurance, as well as a stick, the penalty, Verrilli said. "It's turned out that the carrots work without the stick," he said.

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

The arguments were not without their lighter moments, especially in an exchange between Breyer and Jeffrey Wall, Trump's top Supreme Court lawyer, over whether the mandate that Americans "shall" have insurance means anything now that the penalty is gone.

Breyer said "shall" is used in many homes as an earnest request, not a threat.

"In my family, when I tell my kids that they shall do things, that's a command backed by a penalty," Wall said.

Breyer replied, "Well, that's a much more organized family than mine."

A decision is expected by late spring.

## Republican wins back US House seat in Southern California

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD AP Political Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Republican Michelle Steel defeated first-term Rep. Harley Rouda on Tuesday in a Southern California district, only the second time in more than two decades that a GOP candidate in the state has defeated an incumbent Democrat.

Rouda captured Orange County's 48th District in 2018 from longtime Republican Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, part of a Democratic sweep of seven House seats in California that year.

Steel said the vote this year showed the American dream "is alive and well in Orange County." She vowed to fight for lower taxes, small businesses and their workers, and to defeat the coronavirus.

"I stand ready to work with both parties," she said in a statement.

Steel joins Washington state's Marilyn Strickland as the first Korean American women elected to Congress. Strickland, a Democrat, last week won the open 10th Congressional District southwest of Seattle.

Steel won about 51% of the votes in a year when Joe Biden trounced President Donald Trump in the state. Trump was backed by about 33% of California voters.

Steel, who heads the Orange County Board of Supervisors, benefited from the district's Republican

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registration edge and also surmounted widespread distaste for Trump in the strongly Democratic state. In addition to Steel's victory, Republican candidates are leading in two other undecided races in Democratic-held districts:

Young Kim is running ahead of Democratic Rep. Gil Cisneros in the 39th District anchored in Orange County, and Republican former Rep. David Valadao is leading Democratic Rep. TJ Cox in the Central Valley's the 21st District.

In the 25th District north of Los Angeles, Republican Rep. Mike Garcia is narrowly trailing Democrat Christy Smith. And Republican former Rep. Darrell Issa captured the conservative-leaning 50th District, which was vacated earlier this year by GOP Congressman Duncan Hunter after he pleaded guilty to a federal corruption charge.

The campaign involving Steel and Rouda was marked by nasty campaign ads and finger-pointing. Steel argued that Rouda would raise taxes, while the incumbent depicted Steel as a corrupt politician.

Rouda indicated he would challenge Steel in 2022 and lamented the "toxicity" in politics that he said was threatening democracy.

"Politics that tears America apart and turns us against each other is unsustainable. We saw it firsthand in this election," he said.

Orange County this year is one of the crucial House battlegrounds in California and the U.S.

Known for its beaches, suburbs and sunshine, the county was a foundational block in the rise of the modern conservative movement and President Ronald Reagan likened it to a Republican heaven. But like much of the state, the district has been in political transition, with its once largely white population becoming more diverse while its percentage of registered Republicans slipped.

In a sign of dramatic change, Democrats seized four House districts all or partly in the county in 2018, placing a vast stretch of the Los Angeles metropolitan area under Democratic control in the U.S. House. Democrats now outnumber registered Republicans in the county by about 2 points.

Fred Whitaker, who heads the Republican Party of Orange County, said Steel's victory "is the start of the Orange County comeback for Republicans."

Steel, who is married to Republican National Committeeman Shawn Steel, emphasized her work on the county board and longtime opposition to higher taxes, while also criticizing Democratic leadership in state government.

Rouda, a former businessman, sought to position himself as a moderate problem-solver and highlighted his efforts to work across party lines.

## Some big, early shifts on immigration expected under Biden

By BEN FOX and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Some dramatic moves on immigration are expected in the early days of the Biden administration. Joe Biden will likely use executive orders to reverse some of President Donald Trump's most controversial actions, rolling back moves that were a central feature of his administration and important to his base. The Biden administration plans to restore protection for people brought to the U.S. illegally as minors and stop using Pentagon funds to build a border wall. Biden unveiled a detailed, highly ambitious plan on immigration but it will take time to undo many actions taken by Trump. The incoming president will also likely face a divided Congress, making it difficult to enact any kind of sweeping, comprehensive changes to the nation's immigration system. Here's a look at what to expect:

### A CHANGE OF TONE

Restricting immigration was a signature issue for Trump, who infamously called Mexicans rapists as he pledged to build border wall in launching his campaign. His administration banned travelers from some predominantly Muslim countries as one of its first acts, took many steps to limit legal immigration and cut the number of refugees allowed in the country by 80%.

Biden has said "immigration is central to who we are as a nation," noting that most Americans can trace



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their ancestry to immigrants, but it isn't a core issue. It's not even mentioned on his transition website's top priorities: COVID-19, economic recovery, racial justice and climate change.

Biden named Cecilia Munoz, President Barack Obama's top immigration adviser, to his transition team, which some interpreted as signaling a more moderate tack.

## BIG, EARLY MOVES

Biden has said he will move quickly to undo some of Trump's signature immigration initiatives. The border wall? The roughly 400 miles built so far won't come down but the new administration won't keep building it, or taking money from the Pentagon to fund it over the objections of Congress.

The incoming administration plans to reinstate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which currently shields from deportation about 650,000 people who came to the country when they were young. He plans to overturn the travel ban on people visiting the United States from 13 countries, many of them Muslim-majority.

One of Trump's first moves in office was to tell immigration officials that everyone in the country illegally was subject to deportation. Biden is expected to return to criteria similar to what Obama adopted toward the end of his tenure, largely limiting deportations to people with serious criminal records in the United States.

Biden said he wants the government to help find parents of hundreds of children who were separated from their parents at the border early in the Trump administration.

Biden wants to get rid of policies that have been "detrimental" to seeking asylum — such as the policy to make asylum-seekers wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration court — but he is expected to move cautiously to avoid triggering more arrivals.

Rep. Veronica Escobar, a Texas Democrat who was a Biden appointee to the joint immigration task force with Bernie Sanders, said a resolution will require coordination with Mexico.

"This is a moment that's going to require true leadership," she said.

## WHY SOME CHANGES WILL TAKE TIME

Nearly every major policy change under Trump is in court and may take effort to disentangle, including considerations of protecting executive power. Other reversals would be subject to formal rule-making procedures that require time.

Stephen Yale-Loehr, a professor of immigration law practice at Cornell Law School, thinks Biden will move cautiously on asylum to avoid setting off a new wave of arrivals and says other changes will face "procedural and practical problems."

Take the "public charge" rule, which disqualifies more people from green cards if they rely on government benefits. Biden wants it reversed but would need to go through the extensive, rule-making exercise. A federal appeals court sided with Trump on ending humanitarian protections that have allowed hundreds of thousands of people from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Haiti and Sudan to remain in the United States. Biden says only that he would order an "immediate review" of "Temporary Protected Status."

Yale-Loehr, a strong critic of Trump's policies, says it is "going to take four years to undo all the damage that the Trump administration has done" while Biden attends to the pandemic and other issues.

## WHAT COULD STAY THE SAME

At least initially, Biden may keep in place a Trump administration order that authorizes Customs and Border Protection to quickly expel any migrant as a public health measure during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even though critics question the health justification for the order, the new administration may decide it's necessary to avoid a rush of migrants and to protect Border Patrol agents and other CBP employees, says Doris Meissner, a former senior U.S. immigration official now with the Migration Policy Institute.

"This health circumstance is not likely to just disappear come January or February," she says.

## PROSPECTS FOR MAJOR IMMIGRATION OVERHAUL

Biden says he will “commit significant political capital to finally deliver legislative immigration reform,” which would be necessary to fix problems with the American immigration system and resolve the fate of millions of undocumented people living in the U.S. That’s a long shot, at best, with the divided Congress. President George W. Bush called for a big immigration bill, to no avail. Obama pushed for one as well, and it died in the House.

Spagat reported from San Diego.

## Backers blast halt to Brazil trials of Chinese-made vaccine

By MAURICIO SAVARESE and DAVID BILLER Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazil’s health regulator has halted clinical trials of the potential coronavirus vaccine CoronaVac, citing an “adverse, serious event.”

Adversaries of President Jair Bolsonaro said they feared the decision — posted Monday night on Anvisa’s website — was motivated not by science but by the leader’s political hostility to the country and state involved in producing the vaccine candidate.

The potential vaccine is being developed by Chinese biopharmaceutical firm Sinovac and in Brazil would be mostly produced by Sao Paulo’s state-run Butantan Institute. About 10,000 volunteers are taking part in the phase three tests in one of the nations hardest hit by COVID-19.

Sao Paulo state health authorities said in a press conference on Tuesday that Anvisa sent a single email at 8:40 p.m. saying the tests should be halted. They also said the incident with one of the trial volunteers was unrelated to the trials.

“Such news coming the way it did causes our surprise, insecurity and, in our case, indignation,” said Dimas Covas, the head of the Butantan Institute.

He said it was “impossible” that the volunteer’s incident had any relation to the tests.

Anvisa did not describe the Oct. 29 event that prompted the halt. But its president, Antonio Barra Torres, a close ally of Bolsonaro, denied on Tuesday that politics was involved, calling it a “purely technical decision.”

“This no joke,” Torres said. “Clear, precise and complete documents need to be sent to us, which did not happen.”

He said trials will resume only after an independent international review of the case.

Covas said on TV Cultura late Monday that a volunteer had died, but on Tuesday he said he had just been giving a hypothetical example and could not confirm details about the case for ethical reasons.

Sinovac issued a short statement in China on Tuesday saying it was in touch with Brazilian authorities and insisted, “The clinical study in Brazil is strictly carried out in accordance with GCP requirements and we are confident in the safety of the vaccine,” referring to Good Clinical Practice, a set of international standards for ethics and data quality in clinical research.

Temporary halts of drug and vaccine testing are relatively common. In research involving thousands of participants, some are likely to fall ill. Pausing a study allows researchers to investigate whether an illness is a side effect or a coincidence. Last month, two drugmakers resumed testing of their prospective coronavirus vaccines in the U.S. after they were halted earlier.

Sao Paulo health authorities said they met with Anvisa leaders on Tuesday, but received no feedback on when the tests will be allowed to continue.

“This is unpleasant news; it worries all volunteers that enrolled to take the shot,” Covas said. “This might raise doubts among those that still planned to volunteer.”

The CoronaVac shot has already stirred controversy in Brazil, where President Bolsonaro has cast doubt on its prospective effectiveness. He publicly rejected it last month, saying Brazilians would not be used as guinea pigs. The declaration followed news that his health minister, Eduardo Pazuello, had agreed to purchase CoronaVac doses produced locally by Butantan.

Bolsonaro has often expressed mistrust of China, particularly on the campaign trail in 2018, although

he has softened his rhetoric somewhat in office. And the governor of the state producing the vaccine, Sao Paulo's. João Doria, is a political rival and an outspoken critic of the president's pandemic response.

Bolsonaro took another jab at the Sinovac shot on Tuesday.

"Death, invalidity, anomaly. This is the vaccine that Doria wanted to force all in Sao Paulo to take," he wrote on his Facebook page. "The president said the vaccine should never be mandatory. Another one that Jair Bolsonaro wins."

João Gabbardo, the executive-secretary of Sao Paulo's COVID-19 committee and until months ago the No. 2 at Brazil's Health Ministry, criticized Bolsonaro's statement without mentioning him.

"What shocks us is that while everyone is rushing, doing what is possible so we have this vaccine available to the population, some people are betting on the opposite, coincidentally on the same day that the Sao Paulo government announces the arrival of the first doses of the vaccine," he said.

"Some people celebrate the fact that a death appeared to create this mess and try to denigrate a vaccine that is being produced in this partnership with the Chinese lab. It is very sad that I have to answer in such way."

Former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, one of the leaders of Gov. Doria's center-right party, said Anvisa's decision appeared to be unscientific.

"What is happening is regrettable; the politization of the vaccine that will rid us of the coronavirus...," Cardoso said on Twitter. "Anvisa needs to explain. And quick."

CoronaVac is being tested in seven Brazilian states, plus the federal district where the capital Brasilia lies.

Following the imbroglio last month surrounding the CoronaVac shot, Anvisa authorized the import from China of 6 million doses. The potential vaccine cannot be administered to Brazilians as it isn't yet approved locally, the agency said at the time.

Earlier Monday, Sao Paulo state's health secretary, Jean Gorinchteyn, said the first 120,000 CoronaVac shots would arrive at Sao Paulo's international airport Nov. 20, though he said, "They will only be taken to the public after a final authorization from Brazil's health regulator."

The secretary added that nearly all of the volunteers who were given two doses of the vaccine produced antibodies thought to protect people from the virus.

Sao Paulo is also importing raw material to produce 40 million CoronaVac shots, which is due to start arriving Nov. 27.

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Associated Press writer Huizhong Wu in Taipei, Taiwan, contributed to this story.

## Census Bureau denies fake data allegations by census workers

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

The U.S. Census Bureau denied any attempts to systemically falsify information during the 2020 head count used to determine the allocation of congressional seats and federal spending, even as more census takers told The Associated Press they were pressured to do so.

The Census Bureau statement was issued Monday night in response to AP reports of census workers who said they were told by supervisors to enter fake answers on the head-count forms in order to close cases in the waning days of the census.

After the AP reported the allegations in Massachusetts and Indiana, 10 other census takers stepped forward and told similar stories of being rushed to close cases as they faced a shortened deadline to end field operations for the 2020 census — even if it meant getting things wrong.

The workers, in states spanning the country from North Carolina to Washington, told of being instructed to make up answers about households where they were unable to get information, in one instance by looking in the windows of homes and in another by basing a guess on the number of cars in a driveway or bicycles in the yard.

The Trump administration ended the once-a-decade head count on Oct. 15 after the Supreme Court suspended a lower court's order allowing it to continue through Oct. 31. The Census Bureau is now in

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the numbers-crunching phase in which duplicate answers are eliminated, errors are corrected and gaps in information are filled in.

"The Census Bureau takes falsification allegations very seriously," the bureau said. "Intentional falsification of respondent information by a Census Bureau employee is a serious federal offense, will be fully investigated, and referred for prosecution, if appropriate."

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

The bureau also said it has employed new technology and safeguards in the 2020 census to prevent and identify mistakes or the misreporting of data. At the height of the door-knocking phase of the census in mid-August, there were more than 285,000 temporary census takers on the Census Bureau's payroll.

"Some alleged incidents reported to the media may represent employment-related disputes and/or misunderstandings of operations," the bureau said.

As the Census Bureau defended the data collection from the 2020 census on Monday, more census takers shared stories with the AP about being pressured to cut corners and fudge numbers in order to close cases.

Census taker AJ Cheimis says his supervisor demanded to know why he wasn't closing more cases in the Atlanta area. When he told her people weren't opening their doors, she responded that he should try to look in their windows to see how many people were home. If that didn't work, he said, she told him to enter that one person was living in the home and the person refused to provide any information.

"I immediately knew from our training that what she was telling me to do was considered falsifying census data," said Cheimis, who added that he ignored those instructions.

In Terre Haute, Indiana, at the beginning of October, census taker Jenny Zacha said she was told by a supervisor to sit in her car outside two apartment buildings popular with college students and not even bother trying to interview residents. Instead, she was told to mark that one person lived in each apartment, even though she knew some had two or three bedrooms. Zacha was nervous about doing that and said she noted with each entry that she had been instructed to do so by her supervisor.

In the rush to wrap up the head count, "they decided the better option was to fake the numbers," Zacha said.

In central Washington state, census takers calling in for advice to a hot line run by the bureau's Spokane office were told to guess how many people live in a house based on the number of cars in a driveway or bicycles in the yard, if they couldn't get information from residents or a neighbor. In response, a manager wrote an email to the workers he supervised that "you are not allowed to guess."

"Can you make a guess based on observation of five people in the living room watching Tiger King? Still no," wrote the census field manager, Terry Bain, in an email a census taker shared with the AP.

A coalition of local governments and advocacy groups that sued the Census Bureau in federal court in California over the shortened deadline also has documented cases of census takers who say they were instructed to cut corners in order to close cases under the sped-up deadline. The coalition is asking a judge to allow the numbers-crunching to be extended to the end of April 2021 instead of the congressionally-mandated deadline of Dec. 31.

The Census Bureau's watchdog agency, the Office of Inspector General, says it's evaluating the quality of the data collected. The Census Bureau says it reached 99.9% of households during the count.

The bureau's deputy director said last week that a preliminary review of the data hadn't uncovered anything that raises red flags.

"It's been a challenging road as we battled COVID-19, hurricanes, wildfires, and more," Census Bureau director Steven Dillingham said Tuesday in a blog post. "Through it all, you — our census takers — adapted and kept moving forward by doing all that you could to count those who hadn't yet been counted."

If the Census Bureau is going to fix any problems because of data-collection problems, the first step is



determining the quality of the 2020 census, said John Thompson, a former Census Bureau director in the Obama administration.

"Once there is an accepted understanding of the quality, then conversations can begin about next steps," Thompson said.

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

## Russian peacekeepers deploy to secure Nagorno-Karabakh truce

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Dozens of Russian peacekeepers destined for Nagorno-Karabakh began deploying Tuesday, hours after Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to halt fighting over the separatist region and amid signs the cease-fire would hold where others hadn't.

The truce came after significant advances by Azerbaijani forces that the Armenian-backed leader of Nagorno-Karabakh said made it impossible for his side to carry on. It was celebrated in Azerbaijan, but left Armenians bitter, and many stormed government buildings overnight, demanding Parliament invalidate the agreement.

The two countries have been locked in a conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh for decades, and there were concerns the hostilities could escalate and draw in Turkey, which threw its weight behind Azerbaijan, and Russia, which has a security pact with Armenia.

If the truce proves lasting, it would be a major diplomatic coup for Russia, which appears to have brokered a deal where others failed and was in a tight spot since it has ties with both sides. Turkey also seemed to come out well, though it remained to be seen if it would be able to expand its influence by securing a higher-profile role in the peace process.

Nagorno-Karabakh 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. That includes some 1,300 Nagorno-Karabakh troops, according to the region's officials, and scores of civilians on both sides.

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, which has claimed numerous territorial gains, pressed its offensive deeper into the region and took control of the city of Shushi, strategically positioned on heights overlooking the regional capital of Stepanakert.

Nagorno-Karabakh's separatist leader Arayik Harutyunyan admitted on Tuesday that "had the hostilities continued at the same pace, we would have lost all of Artsakh (an Armenian name for Nagorno-Karabakh) within days."

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian said it was "extremely painful for me personally and for our people," calling the situation a "catastrophe."

But Pashinian said he was left with no choice and the army had told him it was necessary to stop the fighting.

Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev called the agreement "a glorious victory."

The pact was announced by President Vladimir Putin personally early Tuesday, several hours after Azerbaijan downed a Russian helicopter that was flying over Armenia, killing two crew members aboard.

The agreement calls for Armenian forces to turn over control of some areas it held outside the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh, including the Lachin region, which 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.

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

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Russia's Defense Ministry said Tuesday that at least 22 planes will be used to transport the peacekeepers, and 12 have already landed in Armenia, on their way to Nagorno-Karabakh. A total of 1,960 Russian peacekeepers are to be deployed under a five-year mandate.

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, but the efforts yielded little progress.

Putin on Tuesday called the fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh "a truly great tragedy" and expressed satisfaction over "agreements reached to end the bloodshed." Some lawmakers touted Russia's success.

"Russia managed to do what neither (U.S. President Donald) Trump, nor (French President Emmanuel) Macron did — to end a war," Yelena Panina, a lawmaker in Russia's lower house of Parliament, said Tuesday. "Our country has once again reaffirmed its status of a guarantor of peace in South Caucasus."

The truce was also welcomed by Iran, which has borders with both Armenia and Azerbaijan and has been worried by the fighting after stray mortar rounds and rockets on occasion injured people and damaged buildings in rural areas near the borders.

Turkey hailed Azerbaijan's "victory."

"This is a great success," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told a news conference. "Territories that were under occupation for 30 years are being taken back."

Leaders of Azerbaijan and Turkey announced that Ankara will be involved in monitoring the cease-fire along with Moscow as part of a peacekeeping center, which will be set up to host both Russian and Turkish military.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Tuesday that the center will be located in Azerbaijan and isn't connected to the peacekeeping efforts outlined in Tuesday's agreement. Rather, it is "a completely different mission, another part of joint efforts," Zakharova said.

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

## Kenosha shooter's mother tries to deflect blame from her son

ANTIOCH, Ill. (AP) — The mother of an Illinois 17-year-old charged in the fatal shooting of two men during a protest in Wisconsin said neither her son nor the protesters should have been on the street that night and put much of the blame for what happened on police and the governor.

Kyle Rittenhouse, of Antioch, Illinois, is also charged in the wounding of a third person Aug. 25 in Kenosha, Wisconsin, during the demonstration to protest the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man.

"It's a tragedy what happened to Mr. Blake. It is," Wendy Rittenhouse told the Chicago Tribune. "But my son and everybody else should not have been in Kenosha."

Rittenhouse said her son felt he needed to protect businesses in Kenosha from the looting that erupted after Blake was shot seven times in the back two nights earlier. Blake's family says he is paralyzed from the waist down.

"The police should have helped the businesses out instead of having a 17-year-old kid helping him," she said. "The police should have been involved with these people that lost their businesses. They should have stepped up."

She stressed that she understands the pressure the police are under and said Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers, a Democrat, should have deployed reinforcements.

A Kenosha County court commissioner determined that Kyle Rittenhouse would be a flight risk if he was released from jail and ordered his bail to remain at \$2 million.

Wendy Rittenhouse, a single mother of three, dismissed any suggestion that her son could flee, saying: "I have \$1.20 in my bank account. You think I can get on a plane."

But the Rittenhouse case has attracted significant conservative financial support.

Her attorney, John Pierce, said a legal defense fund has raised nearly \$2 million, and that Rittenhouse

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has received a total of \$100,000 for personal expenses from an organization that supports gun rights and another that backs domestic militias. Pierce told the newspaper he has control of that money.

President Donald Trump has suggested the shootings may have been justified because it appeared Kyle Rittenhouse was trying to fend off violent attackers.

Rittenhouse and Pierce said the teenager went to Kenosha to help remove graffiti from a school. It was after they arrived that they offered to help protect a car dealership that had come under attack by looters the night before.

Videos show armed civilians arriving in Kenosha after a local militia group, the Kenosha Guard, put out a call to arms on Facebook. Police didn't stop them as they walked down the street and, in one video, officers handed them bottles of water.

In another video, Kyle Rittenhouse, armed with an assault rifle, explained to a reporter that he was protecting a business from looting. His mother told the Tribune he doesn't belong to the Kenosha Guard or any militia group and prosecutors also have not suggested any connection between her son and militias.

She declined to discuss how her son acquired the weapon that he used in the shootings.

Dominic Black, an 18-year-old friend of Rittenhouse, told authorities that he purchased the weapon at a hardware store in Wisconsin. On Monday, a court commissioner set Black's bail at \$2,500 on felony charges that he supplied a dangerous weapon to a minor, causing death.

According to police reports, Black told investigators that Wendy Rittenhouse had been planning to apply for a firearm owner's identification card in Illinois so they could legally keep the weapon in Antioch.

Wendy Rittenhouse told the newspaper that she sees nothing wrong with teenagers possessing firearms.

## McConnell, Schumer to lead, but Senate majority uncertain

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senators chose party leaders Tuesday with few changes at the top, but it's unclear who will be the majority leader in the new Congress with no party having secured control of the Senate until a January runoff election in Georgia.

Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., won another term as Republican leader, his office said, cementing his role as the longest-serving GOP leader in U.S. history. Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. won his party's support to stay on leading the Democrats, according to a Democrat granted anonymity to discuss the closed-door balloting.

None of the leaders were being challenged in Tuesday's private party elections, with their entire leadership teams set to be reinstated.

But it's still to be determined whether McConnell will retain his role as majority leader or cede it to Schumer as the final races for the U.S. Senate play out.

Last week's elections left the chamber split, 48-48, heading into the new Congress next year. Republicans brushed back Democratic challengers in several states, but failed to lock down the seats needed to retain their majority.

Races for two seats in Georgia heading to a Jan. 5 runoff are swiftly becoming a showdown over control of the chamber. The state is closely divided, with Democrats making gains on Republicans, fueled by a surge of new voters. But no Democrat has been elected senator in some 20 years.

Two other seats in North Carolina and Alaska remain too early to call. In North Carolina, Sen. Thom Tillis is trying to fend off Democratic challenger Cal Cunningham in a tight race. Alaska GOP Sen. Dan Sullivan is favored for another term against Al Gross, an independent running as a Democrat.

Even if Republicans secure the final two races where ballots are still being counted in North Carolina and Alaska, they would still fall short of the 51 seats needed.

The math has become more challenging for McConnell because the vice president of the party holding the White House casts the tie-breaking vote in the Senate. Next year that would be Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. That means 50 seats for Democrats would result in control over the chamber. But Republicans would need 51 seats to cement their hold on power.

The stakes are high for all sides, with strategists expecting an eye-popping \$500 million could be spent on the Georgia runoff elections in the weeks ahead.

GOP Sen. Kelly Loeffler will face Rafael Warnock, a Black pastor from the church where Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached. And Republican Sen. David Perdue, a top Trump ally, will face Democratic challenger Jon Ossoff.

A Democratic majority in the Senate, the party that also controls the House would give the party a firm grasp on power in Washington. Biden would have latitude over nominees, including for his Cabinet, and a chance to push major portions of his legislative agenda through Congress. If Democrats fall short, McConnell could wield the power to check Biden's ambitions.

The Democratic leadership team includes Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., as whip; Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., assistant leader, and several others, including Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., keeping leadership roles. Democrats added Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., and Sen. Catherine Cortez-Masto, D-Nev., to the leadership team.

The Republican leadership team is set to include Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., as whip; with Sen. John Barasso, R-Wyo., and others holding other leadership roles.

## EU files antitrust charges against Amazon over use of data

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — European Union regulators filed antitrust charges Tuesday against Amazon, accusing the e-commerce giant of using its access to data from companies that sell products on its platform to gain an unfair advantage over them.

The charges, filed two years after the bloc's antitrust enforcer began looking into the company, are the latest effort by European regulators to curb the power of big technology companies. Margrethe Vestager, the EU commissioner in charge of competition issues, has slapped Google with antitrust fines totaling nearly \$10 billion and opened twin antitrust investigations this summer into Apple. The EU's executive Commission also opened a second investigation Tuesday into whether Amazon favors product offers and merchants that use its own logistics and delivery system.

While the U.S. initially criticized the EU for targeting American companies, it has more recently started taking a tougher line on big tech as well, suing Google this year for abusing its dominance in online search and advertising.

The EU investigation found that Amazon is accessing and analyzing real-time data from other vendors that sell goods on its platform to help it decide which new products of its own to launch and how to price and market them. That "appears to distort genuine competition," Vestager said.

Investigators focused on that practice in France and Germany, the company's two biggest markets in the EU, but Vestager didn't give specific examples of merchants affected by Amazon's behavior.

The stakes have risen for retailers as many European countries have shut nonessential shops temporarily to try to contain the coronavirus pandemic, pushing more shopping online, where Amazon is a major presence.

Amazon faces a possible fine of up to 10% of its annual worldwide revenue. That could amount to as much as \$28 billion, based on its 2019 earnings. The Seattle-based 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, adding that it represents less than 1% of the global retail market and that there are bigger retailers in every country where it operates. Under EU rules, it can reply to the charges in writing and present its case in an oral hearing.

It could still be a while before a final decision as there are no deadlines for bringing an EU antitrust case to an end.

Vestager said that an analysis of millions of transactions and products listed on Amazon's site found that "very granular, real-time business data" on third-party product listings and transactions was fed into



algorithms for Amazon's retail business that decide which new products to launch, their price and supplier. Ordinary retailers take risks when they invest heavily to find new products, bring them to market and decide how much to sell them for, Vestager said.

"Our concern is that Amazon can avoid some of those risks by using the data it has access to," she told reporters at a briefing in Brussels.

The preliminary conclusion, she said, is that by using the data Amazon can focus on the best-selling products, "and this marginalizes third-party sellers and caps their ability to grow."

The EU's second investigation will look at the criteria Amazon uses to decide which seller's product gets chosen for the "buy box" and for its Prime membership service, and whether that means they get preferential treatment by the company's logistics and delivery services.

The "buy box" lets shoppers add items directly to their shopping baskets. It features a single seller's product even though multiple merchants might offer the item.

The second investigation excludes Italy because the country's competition watchdog has already launched a similar probe last year.

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## **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,

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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.

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, 433 coronavirus patients were in Portuguese ICUs when the country imposed a curfew on Monday. During the worst week last spring, the ICUs had 271 coronavirus patients. The number hospitalized has risen sevenfold since Sept. 1 and is still climbing.

"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.

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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.

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

## Rolling with it, Keith Richards is chilling in the garden

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Keith Richards is so old-school that when he does his interviews — he'll do so from a landline.

The Rolling Stones icon isn't a fan of technology. Years ago he admitted to not owning an iPod when the device was most popular. He's one of the few people who hasn't downloaded Zoom during the pandemic. And he doesn't even own a cell phone.

"I'm not at all hooked in any high-tech internets," he says. "I don't even have a (cell) phone, man. I'm talking to you from on a landline. Why would I want a (cell) phone? You crazy?"

The unbothered 76-year-old rocker has been home for a full year now — a first for Richards, he reveals. He, Mick Jagger, Ronnie Wood and Charlie Watts wrapped part of their No Filter Tour in August 2019, and they had plans to hit the road again in May 2020, but things changed following coronavirus outbreak.

"I saw the garden grow, really quite unbelievable," Richards explains. "Usually I come, it's spring and suddenly it's fall when I get back. I spent the whole summer actually admiring the garden and also doing a bit of gardening myself; watering the veggies and the stuff. I got into a more probably normal way of life, which is un-normal."

While some performers in their seventies, including Stevie Nicks and Bruce Springsteen, fear the pandemic is preventing them from hitting the road during their key years, Richards isn't too concerned: "I can't say I feel like a year has been stolen. I'll just make up for it later."

"I'm getting antsy," he admits. "I guess I can take a year off but it's in the bones. I guess after all these years, it's in our calling, the body and everything. It's like, 'Come on, where's our show, brother?' It's kind of a little weird, but at the same time, we've all got greater things to deal with at the moment."

In the meantime, Richards does have something to give his die-hard fans that involves live music: On Friday he's releasing a limited edition box set of his 1988 concert at the Hollywood Palladium recorded during his first solo tour.

"Live at the Hollywood Palladium" will be available on CD, vinyl and digitally, and the show was in support of "Talk Is Cheap," his first solo album also released in 1988. He's backed by The X-Pensive Winos, a group of all-star players and good friends, including drummer Steve Jordan, guitarist Waddy Wachtel, bassist Charley Drayton, keyboard player Ivan Neville, singer Sarah Dash and the late Bobby Keys, who played saxophone during the shows.

The tour came at an uncertain time for the Rolling Stones — some thought the group might break up.

"The Winos came together because of the Stones around '86 said, there was a definite hiatus. Let's put it that way," Richards says, laughing. "It's understandable, especially in retrospect, after those many years, Mick and I and the whole band (thinking), 'Is the whole world just the Rolling Stones?' I suppose it was that kind of feeling. And I think Mick had it more than I did. But at the same time, we did need a break from each other and as it turned out, it was a great help to us both."

Richards admits being a bandleader allowed him to fully understand what it was like to wear Jagger's shoes: "I learned so much about what Mick's job is — about being the frontman. That opened my eyes to it."

"With the Stones, I do a couple of songs anyway, so my appetite was kind of wetted that way. I wasn't totally foreign to the idea of it. Although, doing the whole show like that, yeah, that's what I appreciated (about) Mick's job," he continued. "It's a relentless thing being the frontman. In the Stones, I can move back and forth, hide behind Charlie or stick my nose up. With the Winos, there's no retreating."

Though Richards is currently in the U.S. and Jagger is in Europe, they've been in touch and have even traded song lyrics for the new Stones album.

"We kind of got used to that ever since the exile. Having to work at a distance up until they threw us out of England," he says. "Over the years we've figured out how to put our stuff together in different ways. We're writing stuff now. I think we have about half an album done. We kind of got hung up because of the usual, 2020. I haven't seen any of the boys since last year. We talk, but I haven't actually seen them."

We can't finish this album that we're working on."

The world got a taste of what the album sounds like with the track "Living in a Ghost Town," which was written before the pandemic but released during it because the band felt it strongly resonated with the current times.

"Once the thing hit, I called Mick and said, 'This 'Ghost Town' is so appropriate, man. Let's put it out.' We did. It was amazing. It sort of became an anthem in Europe for the whole damn thing, up till now. Let's say, for wave one," he says.

"Mick wrote the lyrics," he adds. "Maybe he's a prophet, huh?"

## Alaska Tlingits hold memorial ceremony online amid pandemic

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — When a Tlingit elder dies, leaders from the Alaska Native tribe's two houses, the Raven and Eagle clans, typically come together along with family and well-wishers for a memorial ceremony featuring displays of traditional tribal regalia.

After elder, tribal leader and college professor David Katzeek died last month, the tribe scrambled to find a way to observe their sacred traditions while keeping everyone safe during the pandemic, with coronavirus cases surging in the state.

"We know that many of our people are grieving over this great loss, but we also recognized that we need to protect each other and make sure we stay healthy. We also wanted to honor Kingesti in our traditional way," Sealaska Heritage Institute president Rosita Worl said, using Katzeek's Tlingit name.

Katzeek, 77, died unexpectedly Oct. 28, according to the Juneau-based institute, an Alaska Native non-profit that promotes Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian cultures. Worl said they understood the cause to be heart failure.

The first president of what has since become the institute, Katzeek is credited with helping revive Alaska Native culture in the state's southeast, encouraging oral histories and efforts to preserve the Tlingit language.

To honor him safely, the institute turned to the same technologies that people across the world have employed to remain connected in the coronavirus age, using Zoom video conferencing to bring people together while broadcasting live on its YouTube channel.

The institute had already been transforming in-person programming such as theater lectures to virtual events due to the coronavirus.

They figured, "If we can do that for all of these other activities, why can't we do that for our cultural activities?" Worl said.

During a memorial ceremony, leaders of the clans typically offer comforting words while also bringing out regalia such as Chilkat robes, clan hats and blankets, invoking the spirits of clan ancestors to assist the grieving process.

Held virtually, there had to be some adjustments such as not having people stand near others in support but instead taking turns speaking on the video call. The chatroom served for tribe members to give the traditional thanks to speakers and comfort others. The clan regalia was visible in the background of those who spoke instead of being displayed in front of a coffin or held in person as at a traditional memorial.

Perhaps the biggest change was capping how many could speak and limiting each person to five minutes. So while memorials can run as long as 10 hours, this one happened in just about four.

Holding the memorial online had at least one advantage, in that it allowed some 2,000 people to take part from New Mexico to California — "they were all over the country, wherever our clan members are living," Worl said.

She said the memorial was an innovative and successful merging of traditional rites with modern technology and the public health and safety requirements demanded by the pandemic. The institute is now using the experience to write guides for others to do the same.

"One of the strengths of our people is our ability to transform our cultural needs to current circumstances ... while at the same time maintaining our culture," Worl said.



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"One Good Thing" is a series that highlights individuals whose actions provide glimmers of joy in hard times — stories of people who find a way to make a difference, no matter how small. Read the collection of stories at <https://apnews.com/hub/one-good-thing>

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Nov. 11, the 316th day of 2020. There are 50 days left in the year. Today is Veterans Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 11, 1918, fighting in World War I ended as the Allies and Germany signed an armistice in the Forest of Compiègne (kohm-PYEHN'-yeh).

On this date:

In 1620, 41 Pilgrims aboard the Mayflower, anchored off Massachusetts, signed a compact calling for a "body politick."

In 1831, former slave Nat Turner, who'd led a slave uprising, was executed in Jerusalem, Virginia.

In 1889, Washington became the 42nd state.

In 1921, the remains of an unidentified American service member were interred in a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in a ceremony presided over by President Warren G. Harding.

In 1929, the Ambassador Bridge spanning the Detroit River between Michigan and Windsor, Ontario, Canada, was dedicated.

In 1942, during World War II, Germany completed its occupation of France.

In 1965, Rhodesia proclaimed its independence from Britain.

In 1966, Gemini 12 blasted off on a four-day mission with astronauts James A. Lovell and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin Jr. aboard; it was the tenth and final flight of NASA's Gemini program.

In 1972, the U.S. Army turned over its base at Long Binh to the South Vietnamese, symbolizing the end of direct U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War.

In 1987, following the failure of two Supreme Court nominations, President Ronald Reagan announced his choice of Judge Anthony M. Kennedy, who went on to win confirmation.

In 1992, the Church of England voted to ordain women as priests.

In 1998, President Clinton ordered warships, planes and troops to the Persian Gulf as he laid out his case for a possible attack on Iraq. Iraq, meanwhile, showed no sign of backing down from its refusal to deal with U.N. weapons inspectors.

Ten years ago: A disabled Carnival Splendor cruise liner inched into San Diego Bay after three nightmarish days adrift on the Pacific, bringing cheers from passengers who described trying to pass the time with limited food, backed-up toilets and dark cabins. A dispute between the U.S. and China over currency values overshadowed a meeting of Group of 20 nations in Seoul, South Korea. Marie Osborne Yeats, a silent film child star who was known as Baby Marie Osborne, died in San Clemente, California, six days after turning 99.

Five years ago: The world's two biggest beer makers, AB InBev and SABMiller, announced they would join forces in a \$107 billion merger to create a company that would produce almost a third of the world's beer. Phil Taylor, 61, a former drummer with the heavy metal band Motorhead nicknamed "Philthy Animal," died in London.

One year ago: A day after stepping down amid election fraud allegations, former Bolivian President Evo Morales said he was headed for Mexico; his supporters and foes clashed on the streets of the Bolivian capital following his resignation. (Morales would settle in Argentina; he said after his party's victory in October elections that he planned to return to Bolivia.) SpaceX launched 60 mini satellites from a Falcon rocket; they joined 60 others that had been launched in May. Australia's most populous state, New South

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Wales, declared a state of emergency because of unprecedented wildfire danger.

Today's Birthdays: Country singer Narvel Felts is 82. Former Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., is 80. Americana roots singer/songwriter Chris Smither is 76. Rock singer-musician Vince Martell (Vanilla Fudge) is 75. The president of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, is 75. Rock singer Jim Peterik (PEE'-ter-ihk) (Ides of March, Survivor) is 70. Golfer Fuzzy Zoeller is 69. Pop singer-musician Paul Cowsill (The Cowsills) is 69. Rock singer-musician Andy Partridge (XTC) is 67. Singer Marshall Crenshaw is 67. Rock singer Dave Alvin is 65. Rock musician Ian Craig Marsh (Human League; Heaven 17) is 64. Actor Stanley Tucci is 60. Actor Demi Moore is 58. Actor Calista Flockhart is 56. Actor Frank John Hughes is 53. TV personality Carson Kressley is 51. Actor David DeLuise is 49. Actor Adam Beach is 48. Actor Tyler Christopher is 48. Actor Leonardo DiCaprio is 46. Actor Scoot McNairy is 43. Rock musician Jonathan Pretus (formerly with Cowboy Mouth) is 39. Actor Frankie Shaw is 39. Musician Jon Batiste is 34. Actor Christa B. Allen is 29. Actor Tye Sheridan is 24. Actor Ian Patrick is 18.