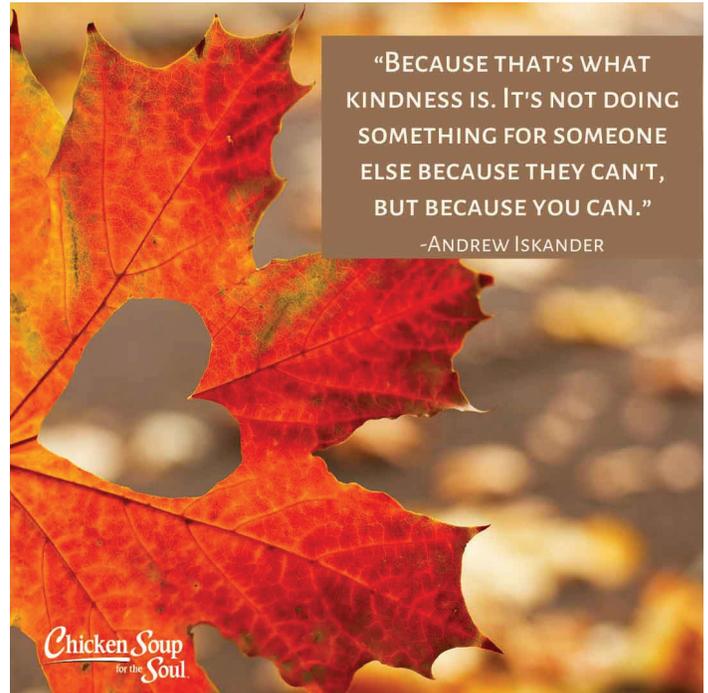


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FCCLA FOOD DRIVE GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Groton Area FCCLA will be hosting its annual food drive event with modifications for 2020.

Groton Area MS/HS Food Drive War

Who participates? Anyone in the Groton Community who would like to donate food items to local families in need.

How do I participate? Give your non-perishable food items to any student in grades 6-12 to take to the school!

When is the food drive happening? November 16-19

The class that bring the most non-perishable food item wins a pizza party!

**If you would like to donate to the food drive, and not sure how to contact someone, you can drop it off at the GDI office during the morning, or contact your AAN paper carrier and they can pick it up.
Paul at 605/397-7285 or Jeslyn at 605/290-7821**



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Welding the top

The crew from McGuire Iron was welding the top together for the new water tower. As some have called the main bowl a big wine glass as it stands now, it will soon be covered and there will be no more wine! (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Prairie Mixed

Nov. 12 Team Standings: Shih Tzus 5, Jackelopes 4, Cheetahs 4, Chipmunks 3

Men's High Games: Roger Spanier 236, 179, Brody Sombke 186, Mike Siegler 177

Women's High Games: Lori Wiley 203, 169, Sue Stanley 188, Dar Larson 169

Men's High Series: Roger Spanier 565, Brody Sombke 475, Brad Waage 452

Women's High Series: Lori Wiley 538, Sue Stanley 478, Karen Spanier 470

Conde National League

Nov. 9, 2020 Team Standings: Pirates 21, Cubs 21, Giants 20, Braves 17½, Tigers 16½, Mets 12

Men's High Games: Lance Frohling 222, 219; Russ Bethke 214; Ryan Bethke 204.

Men's High Series: Lance Frohling 613, Ryan Bethke 568, Russ Bethke 561

Women's High Games: Nancy Radke 165, Deb Fredrickson 157, Mary Larson 157, Amanda Morehouse 157, Vickie Kramp 151, Cheryl Reyalts 151.

Women's High Series: Vickie Kramp 450, Nancy Radke 449, Mary Larson 443.

Embrace the warmth of family and create

PERFECT HOLIDAY *Moments*

Send gifts they'll love, make meals they'll remember... with Omaha Steaks, Christmas this year will be worth the wait.



TRY THE EXCLUSIVE OMAHA STEAKS BUTCHER'S CUT TOP SIRLOIN

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- 4 (4 oz.) Boneless Pork Chops
- 4 Boneless Chicken Breasts (1 lb. pkg.)
- 8 (4 oz.) Omaha Steaks Burgers
- 8 (3 oz.) Gourmet Jumbo Franks
- 8 (3.8 oz.) Individual Scalloped Potatoes
- 8 (4 oz.) Caramel Apple Tartlets
- Steak Seasoning (1 oz.)

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and ask for free pork chops and chicken breasts with offer 66762EJL

*Savings shown over aggregated single item base price. Photos exemplary of product advertised. Limit 2. 4 free (4 oz.) pork chops and 4 free chicken breasts (1 lb. pkg.) will be sent to each shipping address that includes (66762). Free product(s) may be substituted. Standard S&H added per address. Offer available while supplies last. Items may be substituted due to inventory limitations. Cannot be combined with other offers. Other restrictions may apply. All purchases acknowledge acceptance of Terms of Use. Visit omahasteaks.com/termsof-useOSI or call 1-800-228-9872 for a copy. Expires 1/31/21.

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FREE WIRELESS REMOTE CONTROL —\$139 Value

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\$100 VISA® Reward Debit Card: \$100 Visa® reward debit card requires service activation. You will receive a claim voucher via email within 24 hours and the voucher must be returned within 60 days. Your \$100 Visa® reward debit card will arrive in approximately 6-8 weeks. Card is issued by MetaBank®, N.A., Member FDIC, pursuant to a license from Visa U.S.A. Inc. No cash access or recurring payments. Can be used everywhere Visa debit cards are accepted. Card valid for up to 6 months; unused funds will forfeit after the valid thru date. Card terms and conditions apply. **BASIC SYSTEM:** \$99 Installation. 36-Month Monitoring Agreement required at \$27.99 per month (\$1,007.64). 24-Month Monitoring Agreement required at \$27.99 per month (\$671.76) for California. Offer applies to homeowners only. Offer valid for new ADT Authorized Premier Provider customers only and not on purchases from ADT LLC. Cannot be combined with any other offer. The \$27.99 Offer does not include Quality Service Plan (QSP), ADT's Extended Limited Warranty, **ADT Command:** ADT Pulse Interactive Solutions Services ("ADT Pulse"), which help you manage your home environment and family lifestyle, require the purchase and/or activation of an ADT alarm system with monitored burglary service and a compatible computer, cell phone or PDA with Internet and email access. These ADT Pulse services do not cover the operation or maintenance of any household equipment/systems that are connected to the ADT Pulse equipment. All ADT Pulse services are not available with the various levels of ADT Pulse. All ADT Pulse services may not be available in all geographic areas. You may be required to pay additional charges to purchase equipment required to utilize the ADT Pulse features you desire. **ADT VIDEO LITE:** ADT Video Lite installation is an additional \$299. 36-month monitoring contract required from ADT Video Lite: \$59.99 per month, (\$2,159.64), including Quality Service Plan (QSP). Indoor camera may not be available in all areas. **GENERAL:** For all offers, the form of payment must be by credit card or electronic charge to your checking or savings account, satisfactory credit history is required and termination fee applies. Certain packages require approved landline phone. Local permit fees may be required. Certain restrictions may apply. Additional monitoring fees required for some services. For example, Burglary, Fire, Carbon Monoxide and Emergency Alert monitoring requires purchase and/or activation of an ADT security system with monitored Burglary, Fire, Carbon Monoxide and Emergency Alert devices and are an additional charge. Additional equipment may be purchased for an additional charge. Additional charges may apply in areas that require guard response service for municipal alarm verification. Prices subject to change. Prices may vary by market. Some insurance companies offer discounts on Homeowner's Insurance. Please consult your insurance company. Photos are for illustrative purposes only and may not reflect the exact product/service actually provided. **Licenses:** AL-21-001104, AR-CMPY.0001725, AZ-ROC217517, CA-ACO6320, CT-ELC.0193944-L5, DC-EMS902653, DC-602516000016, DE-07-212, FL-EC13003427, GA-LVA205395, IA-AS-0206, ID-ELE-SJ-39131, IL-127.001042, IN-C.P.D. Reg. No. - 19-08088, City of Indianapolis: LAC-000156, KY-City of Louisville: 483, LA-F1914, LA-F1915, LA-F1082, MA-1355C, MD-107-1626, ME-LM50017382, MI-3601205773, MN-TS01807, MO-City of St. Louis: CC#354, St. Louis County: 100194, MS-15007958, MT-PSP-ELS-LIC-247, NC-25310-SP-FA/LV, NC-1622-CSA, NE-14451, NJ Burglar Alarm Lic. # -NJ-34BF00021800, NM-353366, NV-0068518, City of Las Vegas: 30000008296, NY-Licensed by the N.Y.S. Department of State UID#12000317691, NYS #12000286451, OH-53891446, City of Cincinnati: AC86, OK-AC1048, OR-170997, Pennsylvania Home Improvement Contractor Registration Number: PA022999, RI-3582, RI-7508, SC-BAC5630, SD- 1025-7001-ET, TN-1520, TX-B13734, ACR-3492, UT-6422596-6501, VA-115120, VT-ES-2382(7C), WA-602588694/ECPROTEYH934RS, WI-City of Milwaukee: PAS-0002966, WV-WV042433, WY-LV-G-21499. 3750 Priority Way South Dr. Indianapolis, IN 46240

DF-CD-NP-Q420

#263 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Dear Lord! Here it is: 10,626,500 cases reported since the pandemic began. I don't see any way we avoid hitting 11 million on Sunday. We reported 157,100 new cases today, a 1.5% increase from yesterday and our third consecutive record-breaking day. California hit one million cases today, joining Texas in the millionaires' club, one we can sincerely hope remains exclusive, although it does look as though Florida will one day soon be knocking on that door. A week before Halloween, we'd never had a single day over 85,000; in the 19 days since then, 10 of them have been over 100,000. Our average daily new-case reporting has increased by 69% in two weeks. This is really catastrophic.

Yesterday, we set a record for hospitalized people; today, we set a new one. We're doing a lot of that lately, and we are now up to 66,606 hospitalized. Hospitals are hollering for mercy; the capacity for any kind of patient, Covid or not, is reduced and getting steadily worse. This situation is critical in more and more places. North and South Dakota are in particular trouble with health care systems barely hanging on and leading the nation, not just in per capita new cases (for weeks), but in per capita new deaths in the last few weeks as well. North Dakota's health care staffing is under so much pressure that health care workers are now being permitted to continue working after testing positive. Their governor said, "100% of our capacity is now being used." The state gave up on contact tracing a couple of weeks ago because there was simply no way to keep up; now they're giving up on isolating these cases—same reason. The chief medical officer at a critical-access hospital in Linton, North Dakota, population 997, reports last week she had a declining patient whose needs could not be met in their small facility and nowhere with an available bed to accept the transfer. "We have people we are not able to get to a higher level of care, and honestly, it's a horrible feeling. We have failed to do the things that prevented us from being here."

South Dakota has seen sharp increases in daily new cases, in daily deaths, in positivity rates (which were already running stupid-high—for weeks), and in hospitalizations. The state leads the nation in hospitalization rate with 54 of every 100,000 South Dakotans hospitalized with Covid-19. The Department of Health reported a record number of new cases—again!—today, and there are zero plans to change the trajectory. Officials indicate there is no need for a change, citing that 34% of the state's hospital and ICU beds remain open; but hospital officials point out that an open bed doesn't mean there's anyone to staff it. Monument Health, a hospital system in the state, said this week it is experiencing "stressed capacity" across the state. President of Rapid City Hospital, John Pierce, says "Our limiting factor isn't beds, it's staff." He explains they're having to transfer non-Covid patients to other hospitals and hire contract workers. I've been hearing in my corner of the state first-hand accounts of hospitals desperately making room for really sick patients by transferring slightly less sick ones to smaller hospitals. Then when the smaller hospital needs to make room for even sicker people, they're discharging patients who cannot stand unassisted or get themselves to the bathroom. This is not the hallmark of a system with lots of unused capacity.

Andrew T. Pavia, chief of pediatric infectious diseases at the University of Utah School of Medicine, said yesterday that the situation in these Plains states "really has to be described as dire," citing the political climate, reluctance of officials to impose any sort of restrictions, mass gatherings such as the Sturgis motorcycle rally, and university students attending classes largely in person as contributing factors. He said, "There's an awful lot of preventable deaths happening right now." One of the largest regional health systems, Avera Health which has facilities in South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, and North Dakota, said some of its facilities are nearing capacity and between 200 and 400 staffers are either out sick or in quarantine.

Minnesota is going to hell too with rising new-case reporting and a record number of deaths yesterday. Testing positivity rates have risen from five percent a month ago to 15% today. The state has had over 200,000 cases since the pandemic began, and modeling projects they could have another 100,000 by Thanksgiving. If you have a look at a calendar, that's not very far off; but they are getting over 7000 new cases a day, so it's certainly possible. Especially troubling is that there is no hot spot in the state; the entire state is on fire. The governor said, "This is going to be a long dark winter. You can't wish it away,

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can't hope it, can't think it's not real. This is killing large numbers of people." It is. It really, really is.

Winter's coming here, and I can say with some assurance there isn't much in the way of outdoor, socially distanced backyard cookouts and such these days; if folks are getting together—and they are—it's inside the house, a recipe for disaster in a place which has had a slow-rolling disaster for far too long already. Our leaders have been asking us to exercise "personal responsibility." I can say, also with some assurance, that's not really working for us at the moment.

I'm hearing a lot of talk about just letting the virus spread while protecting vulnerable individuals and increasing hospital capacity. There are three parts to this strategy: (1) letting the virus spread, (2) protecting vulnerable individuals, and (3) increasing hospital capacity. The big problem with this approach is that it turns out we're only good at the first one—the viral spreading thing. This is going to kill tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of Americans, and some of those will be people you know and love. Hell, it could be you. Brace yourselves: As long as we continue this foolhardy and immoral pursuit, there will be deaths. Preventable ones.

Yesterday, 31 states were at record seven-day averages for new cases, and 22 states had record hospitalizations. We're seeing test positivity rates over 10% in 28 states while 5% is the benchmark. Our current nationwide new-case average is getting close to double the summer wave at its worst. Look at it like this: From the beginning of the pandemic until March 28—roughly two months—we added 127,000 new cases. That's the number we're adding, on average, every day now. Every single day.

There were 1237 deaths reported today, a 0.5% increase. The death toll now stands at 242,787, which is 36% higher than our daily average two weeks ago. Yesterday, 10 states were at record seven-day average deaths, so we're now seeing those numbers creep up to match the new-case surge that started a few weeks ago. We now have rural counties with per capita death rates higher than New York City's, which is an astonishing one in every 351 residents. Deaths lag new cases, but we couldn't hold it off forever; expect death rates to continue sharp increases.

The primary fuel for this raging wildfire roaring across the country appears to be casual social occasions—dinner parties, game nights, sleepovers, and carpool. Teams getting together for a beer, families gathering for a birthday, classmates having a pizza night. Halloween gatherings—the timing's written all over this one. Asymptomatic people attending these events are "causing ongoing transmission, frequently infecting multiple people in a single gathering." Nirav Shah, director of the CDC in Maine where cases have skyrocketed in the past couple of weeks, says, "Earlier in the outbreak, much of the growth in new daily cases was being driven by focal outbreaks—long-term care facilities, things of that nature. Now, the kitchen table is a place of risk."

That's what contact tracing is telling us: People are widening their social bubbles or abandoning the concept altogether. Infected people list more close contacts than they did in months past; the average number of contacts identified in Maine rose from 3.5 in March through September to 5.8 in October. Shah said, "People's bubbles are getting big enough to burst." And this sort of thing is nearly impossible to police and likely to increase with the upcoming holidays. Because, I guess, folks haven't suffered enough yet. I have a bad feeling that problem's going to see a swift remedy; just looking at the explosion of cases among people of my acquaintance in the past couple of weeks tells me it won't be long until we all have seen, experienced, the pain, up close and personal. Looks like that's what it's going to take. Sigh.

Amy Westbrook, public health director of St. Louis County, Minnesota, says that 30% of the people in her county who test positive say they don't know where they caught the virus, and a rapidly growing number haven't even talked to tracers, who are overwhelmed. People have stopped listening to messages about precautions, and police have other things to do than check out dinner parties. She says, "Once there's community transmission that's so widespread, there's not a lot of good, targeted interventions." And everyone agrees limiting social gatherings in homes has to be on the honor system. And it appears there's not a great deal of honor to go around these days. In Rhode Island, some people have reported 50 close contacts, and a high school slumber party involving at least 20 youngsters led to at least five infections and hundreds in quarantine. That's not going to stop unless people decide to stop it, and I'm not seeing

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much will to do that. And so we'll continue to die, and some of us who do that will be paying the price of other people's indifference.

You know, I've been thinking a lot lately about my parents' generation. They lived through World War II. The government told you how much sugar you could buy. How much coffee. How much meat. Shoes. Medicine, for God's sake. Tires, gasoline, and cars only if you could prove a need for them. If you had more than five tires in your possession, the government confiscated them: Rubber was needed for the war effort. And our grandparents were not marching around in the streets hollering about their "Freedom!!!" and their "Rights!!!" and their "Liberty!!!" They sacrificed for the common good and toward the common goal. So that people could stop dying, some of those people not even in the US. People in other countries. It's probably good that most of those folks aren't around to see us crybaby our way through this pandemic. This is tragically embarrassing.

We've been hearing about at-risk populations throughout this pandemic, people who are at risk due to their life circumstances or living situations—long-term care residents, prisoners, health care workers. A population we haven't heard much about is the developmentally disabled. Some two million American adults have some developmental disability, and these disabilities place this population at risk for a number of reasons: They tend to work in front-line public-facing jobs, their work cannot be done remotely, they may have some difficulty remembering the proper precautions and remembering to employ these consistently, and they may live in closer quarters with others than do many adults in our society. And I am hearing from those who work with this population that this virus is ripping through their community. The consequences may be different here too: If you don't meet criteria for admission to a hospital, you might be sent home with a pulse oximeter and an oxygen supply, along with instructions to adjust the oxygen according to oximeter readings. That's a thing you can relatively easily do, but it is not necessarily a thing a disabled adult can do at all. A disabled adult might also have difficulty judging when she needs to go in to the hospital to be seen as symptoms worsen and likely has to rely on someone else getting her to the hospital. A disabled adult might not fully understand why he is restricted to his apartment and can no longer mingle with his friends and neighbors as he is accustomed. Services to this population have always run on a shoestring because we have never really prioritized caring for them as we should; and now at this time of crisis, the staffs who serve them are stretched, their ranks thinned by their own infections and quarantines and burnout at a time when the need for their services is greater than ever before. People whose expertise is teaching life skills and independent living are finding themselves providing actual medical care—monitoring oxygen and handing out medications and checking vital signs—care that should be properly provided in a hospital, but can't be because hospitals are full-up and stretched out themselves. What could go wrong in this scenario, right?

And yet there are bright spots. There is a developmentally disabled man I know; actually, he's a man everybody knows. His first name by itself serves to identify this guy to anyone in this locality who attends any college or recreational sporting event in town; most folks don't even know his last name: He's a one-name wonder like Cher or Adele. He knows you too, recognizes you, and calls you by his own special label for sorting you out from his dozens of other friends all over town. When I see him, he greets me with, "Hi, Laura's mom," because he met my daughter before he met me. He loves people, loves meeting new ones, loves seeing his friends everywhere he goes. His joy in living is infectious, and it is a privilege to have one of his special labels bestowed upon you.

He sits near the home team at local basketball games and hands out water to players during time-outs. He cheers as loudly as anyone at the game. He shoots hoops with an unused ball during half-time, the entire court to himself. And he greets everyone he sees with the same contagious enthusiasm; there are no strangers in his world, only friends he hasn't met yet—and there aren't very many of those either, truth be told; he's already met most everyone. When I think about him, I realize that, as poorly as we have served this population, guys like him are still serving us as they teach us about generosity and welcome and taking pleasure in living.

Well, this guy's sick. Pretty darned sick. Not hospitalized, but really sick. And although he lives independently, he's not up to managing as well right now as he normally does. I learned the other day that his

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employer, a local drinking establishment that serves bar food, a place where he serves as dishwasher, has been arranging delivery to his home of a hot meal every day he's been sick. Every day. Without fail. Without cost. With love. It's sort of beautiful to know that someone in this one little corner of the universe is giving back to this man in his time of need some portion of what he's been lavishing on the world for decades. And knowing that, I feel a little better about things. Here's to my friend's full recovery! 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	Nov. 12	Nov. 13				
Minnesota	189,681	194,570	201,795				
Nebraska	87,733	89,942	92,553				
Montana	41,151	42,070	43,031				
Colorado	138,427	142,042	147,599				
Wyoming	16,442	16,518	17,442				
North Dakota	56,342	57,373	59,173				
South Dakota	57,334	58,696	60,716				
United States	10,258,090	10,402,273	10,557,451				
US Deaths	239,695	241,808	242,436				
Minnesota	+4,893	+4,889	+7,225				
Nebraska	+2,182	+2,209	+2,611				
Montana	+1,098	+919	+961				
Colorado	+3,890	+3,615	+5,557				
Wyoming	+1,131	+76	+924				
North Dakota	+894	+1,031	+1,801				
South Dakota	+1,024	+1,362	+2,019				
United States	+147,538	+144,183	+155,178				
US Deaths	+1,444	+2,113	+628				

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November 12th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

We hit a new record of positive cases in South Dakota, now exceeding the 2000 mark at 2,019 for today. The positivity rate in South Dakota is 29.4 percent for today's figures. Brown County has 76 cases but the positivity rate is 8.4 percent with 900 tests administered. There were no deaths in South Dakota; 11 in North Dakota. State hospitalizations increased by 8, ICU units being used increased by 5 and Ventilation use decreased by 1.

Glacial Lakes hospital beds being occupied by COVID-19 patients as well as Minnehaha and Pennington counties: Walworth: 2 (-2) Occupied Beds.; Potter: 4 (+1) Occupied Beds; Hughes: 13 (+0) Occupied Beds, 5 (+2) ICU Beds, 2 (-0) Ventilation; Hand: 4 (+1) Occupied Beds (-1); Faulk: 2 (+1) Occupied Beds; Edmunds: 3 (-2) Occupied Bed; Brown: 33 (+0) Occupied Beds, 5 (-1) ICU, 0 (-0) Ventilation; Spink: 4 (+1) Occupied Beds; Day: 1 (-1) Occupied Beds; Marshall: 3 (+0) Occupied Beds; Grant: 1 (0) Occupied Beds; Codington: 18 (-0) Occupied Beds, 2 (-0) ICU, 2 (+0) Ventilation; None (some counties have no hospitals): Clark, Hyde, Stanley, Sully, Campbell, McPherson, Roberts; Minnehaha: 251 (-7) Occupied Beds, 62 (+7) ICU, 34 (-0) Ventilation; Pennington: 77 (+3) Occupied Beds, 14 (+0) ICU, 11 (+0) Ventilation

Brown County:

Total Positive: +76 (2,720) Positivity Rate: 8.4%
Total Tests: +900 (21,643)
Recovered: +25 (2,045)
Active Cases: +51 (667)
Ever Hospitalized: +3 (149)
Deaths: +0 (8)
Percent Recovered: 75.2%
Hospital Reports:

Avera St. Luke's: Covid-19 Occupied 23 (-2); ICU 5 (-1), Ventilation 0 (0).

Sanford Aberdeen: Covid-19 Occupied 10 (+2); ICU 0 (-0), Ventilation 0 (-0)

Sanford Webster: Covid-19 Occupied 1 (-1).

Marshall County Healthcare: Covid-19 Occupied: 3 (+0).

South Dakota:

Positive: +2019 (60,716 total) Positivity Rate: 29.4%
Total Tests: 6869 (499,140 total)
Hospitalized: +66 (3,455 total). 551 currently hospitalized +8)

Deaths: +0 (567 total)

Recovered: +759 (41,427 total)

Active Cases: +1295 (18,722)

Percent Recovered: 68.2%

Total COVID-19 Occupied Beds: 551 (+8), Black Hills Region 112 (+9), Glacial Lakes Region 88 (-1) Sioux Empire Region 271 (-2), South Central Plains 80 (+2).

ICU Units: Total 97 (+5), BH 15 (-0), GL 12 (+1), SE 62 (+7), SCP 8 (-3).

Ventilation: Total 49 (-1), BH 11 (+0), GL 4 (+0), SE 34 (-0), SCP 0 (-1).

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 20% Covid, 47% Non-Covid, 33% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 32% Covid, 38% Non-Covid, 31% Available

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

Beadle (19) +59 positive, +14 recovered (594 active cases)

Brown (8): +76 positive, +25 recovered (667 active cases)

Clark (1): +5 positive, +5 recovered (68 active cases)

Clay (8): +43 positive, +12 recovered (246 active cases)

Codington (22): +46 positive, +32 recovered (575 active cases)

Davison (13): +63 positive, +18 recovered (750 active cases)

Day (3): +20 positive, +5 recovered (71 active cases)

Edmunds (1): +6 positive, +1 recovered (60 active cases)

Faulk (5): +8 positive, +2 recovered (52 active cases)

Grant (4): +12 positive, +3 recovered (120 active cases)

Hanson (1): +6 positive, +1 recovered (81 active cases)

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Hughes (8): +34 positive, +10 recovered (350 active cases)

Lawrence (8): +60 positive, +42 recovered (548 active cases)

Lincoln (34): +166 positive, +48 recovered (1384 active cases)

Marshall (3): +6 positive, +1 recovered (29 active cases)

McCook (3): +27 positive, +7 recovered (177 active cases)

McPherson (1): +5 positive, +0 recovery (19 active case)

Minnehaha (126): +474 positive, +133 recovered (4607 active cases)

Potter: +5 positive, +4 recovered (59 active cases)

Roberts (10): +22 positive, +10 recovered (172 active cases)

Spink (6): +16 positive, +10 recovered (156 active cases)

Walworth (10): +18 positive, +4 recovered (97 active cases)

NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Nov. 12:

- 15.3% rolling 14-day positivity
- 1,801 new positives
- 12,995 susceptible test encounters
- 294 currently hospitalized (+40)
- 10,421 active cases (-1,235)
- 697 total deaths (+11)

Yesterday

Global Cases

52,232,051

10,402,273 US

8,683,916 India

5,747,660 Brazil

1,914,919 France

1,843,678 Russia

1,417,709 Spain

1,273,356 Argentina

1,260,198 United Kingdom

1,165,326 Colombia

1,028,424 Italy

986,177 Mexico

925,431 Peru

Today

Global Cases

52,864,762

10,557,451 US

8,728,795 India

5,781,582 Brazil

1,915,282 France

1,865,395 Russia

1,437,220 Spain

1,293,716 United Kingdom

1,284,519 Argentina

1,174,012 Colombia

1,066,401 Italy

991,835 Mexico

928,006 Peru

Global Deaths

1,286,322

241,808 deaths
US

163,368 deaths
Brazil

128,121 deaths
India

96,430 deaths
Mexico

50,457 deaths
United Kingdom

42,953 deaths
Italy

42,599 deaths
France

Global Deaths

1,295,403

242,436 deaths
US

164,281 deaths
Brazil

128,668 deaths
India

97,056 deaths
Mexico

51,020 deaths
United Kingdom

43,589 deaths
Italy

42,599 deaths
France

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County ▲	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity
Aurora	265	171	735	2	Substantial	34.78%
Beadle	1802	1189	4251	19	Substantial	37.74%
Bennett	263	160	1002	5	Substantial	24.32%
Bon Homme	1187	920	1667	4	Substantial	45.28%
Brookings	1889	1357	7114	12	Substantial	21.62%
Brown	2720	2045	9137	8	Substantial	27.17%
Brule	431	288	1467	3	Substantial	32.74%
Buffalo	324	277	801	5	Substantial	44.32%
Butte	557	347	2265	8	Substantial	27.31%
Campbell	88	70	171	1	Moderate	31.25%
Charles Mix	576	386	3151	1	Substantial	22.85%
Clark	180	111	717	1	Substantial	13.83%
Clay	1051	797	3632	8	Substantial	28.67%
Codington	2098	1501	6862	22	Substantial	34.77%
Corson	304	222	807	2	Substantial	51.39%
Custer	413	314	1867	4	Substantial	22.75%
Davison	1662	899	4836	13	Substantial	34.85%
Day	237	163	1261	3	Substantial	30.38%
Deuel	238	181	834	2	Substantial	32.88%
Dewey	643	273	3425	2	Substantial	31.33%
Douglas	236	160	721	5	Substantial	22.78%
Edmunds	196	135	774	1	Substantial	10.50%
Fall River	286	204	1909	7	Substantial	10.34%
Faulk	255	198	531	5	Substantial	20.00%
Grant	425	301	1586	4	Substantial	27.09%
Gregory	339	221	893	10	Substantial	33.13%
Haakon	115	83	431	3	Substantial	3.06%
Hamlin	296	195	1300	0	Substantial	10.37%
Hand	214	124	605	1	Substantial	33.88%
Hanson	166	84	494	1	Substantial	36.56%
Harding	63	42	119	0	Moderate	60.00%
Hughes	1195	837	4007	8	Substantial	21.84%
Hutchinson	357	214	1693	2	Substantial	20.62%

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Hyde	81	44	307	0	Substantial	45.95%
Jackson	167	103	787	4	Substantial	33.96%
Jerauld	199	150	407	13	Substantial	16.67%
Jones	44	34	137	0	Moderate	28.57%
Kingsbury	306	168	1132	5	Substantial	20.11%
Lake	632	389	2023	9	Substantial	40.26%
Lawrence	1514	958	6025	8	Substantial	29.19%
Lincoln	4140	2722	14218	34	Substantial	32.07%
Lyman	349	283	1473	7	Substantial	22.94%
Marshall	97	65	803	3	Substantial	30.77%
McCook	438	258	1168	3	Substantial	32.50%
McPherson	83	63	420	1	Moderate	1.53%
Meade	1315	974	5512	10	Substantial	19.72%
Mellette	118	87	583	1	Substantial	22.22%
Miner	166	114	435	3	Substantial	18.75%
Minnehaha	15840	11107	56497	126	Substantial	30.27%
Moody	319	198	1424	4	Substantial	7.20%
Oglala Lakota	1331	789	5748	11	Substantial	34.52%
Pennington	6519	4385	27073	56	Substantial	23.76%
Perkins	100	71	506	0	Substantial	37.78%
Potter	190	131	622	0	Substantial	19.14%
Roberts	529	347	3391	10	Substantial	29.58%
Sanborn	171	78	484	1	Substantial	42.86%
Spink	433	271	1681	6	Substantial	11.55%
Stanley	146	92	570	0	Substantial	26.37%
Sully	63	42	180	0	Moderate	39.13%
Todd	652	496	3510	10	Substantial	29.33%
Tripp	379	273	1183	2	Substantial	42.48%
Turner	666	433	1966	31	Substantial	31.50%
Union	973	721	4376	17	Substantial	29.39%
Walworth	355	248	1361	10	Substantial	26.14%
Yankton	1188	783	6572	8	Substantial	16.49%
Ziebach	142	81	590	2	Substantial	30.38%
Unassigned	0	0	1143	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	1928	0
10-19 years	6419	0
20-29 years	11983	2
30-39 years	10347	8
40-49 years	8717	15
50-59 years	8584	40
60-69 years	6672	79
70-79 years	3430	113
80+ years	2636	310

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	31498	274
Male	29218	293

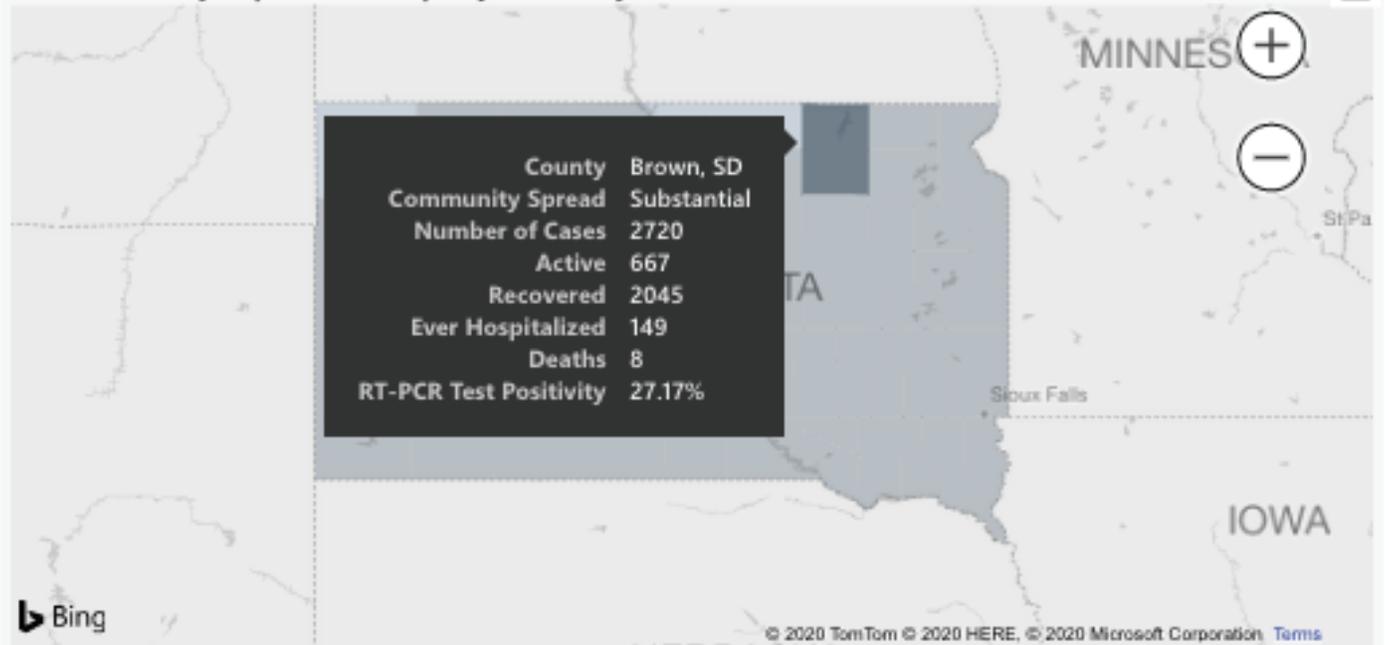
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Brown County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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



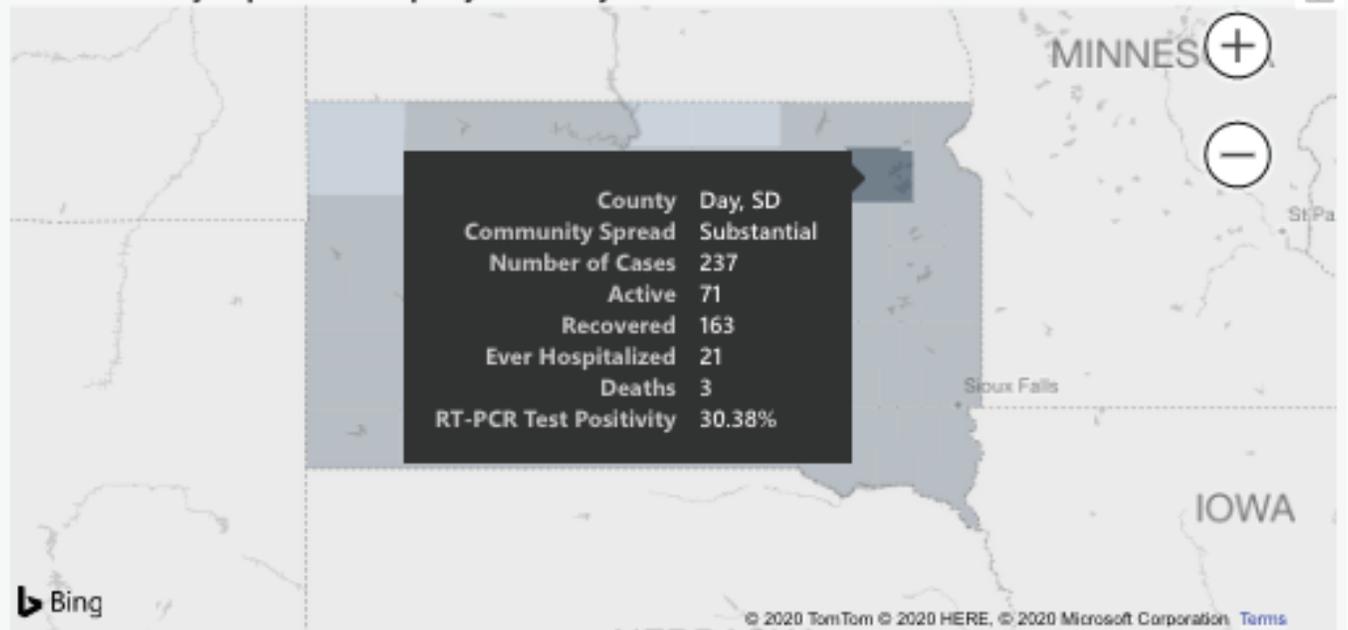
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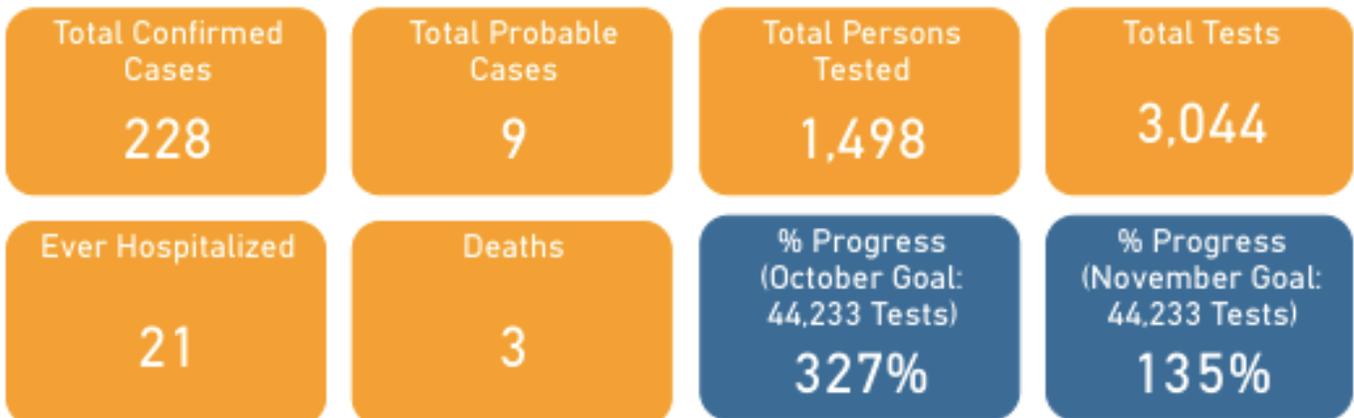
Day County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



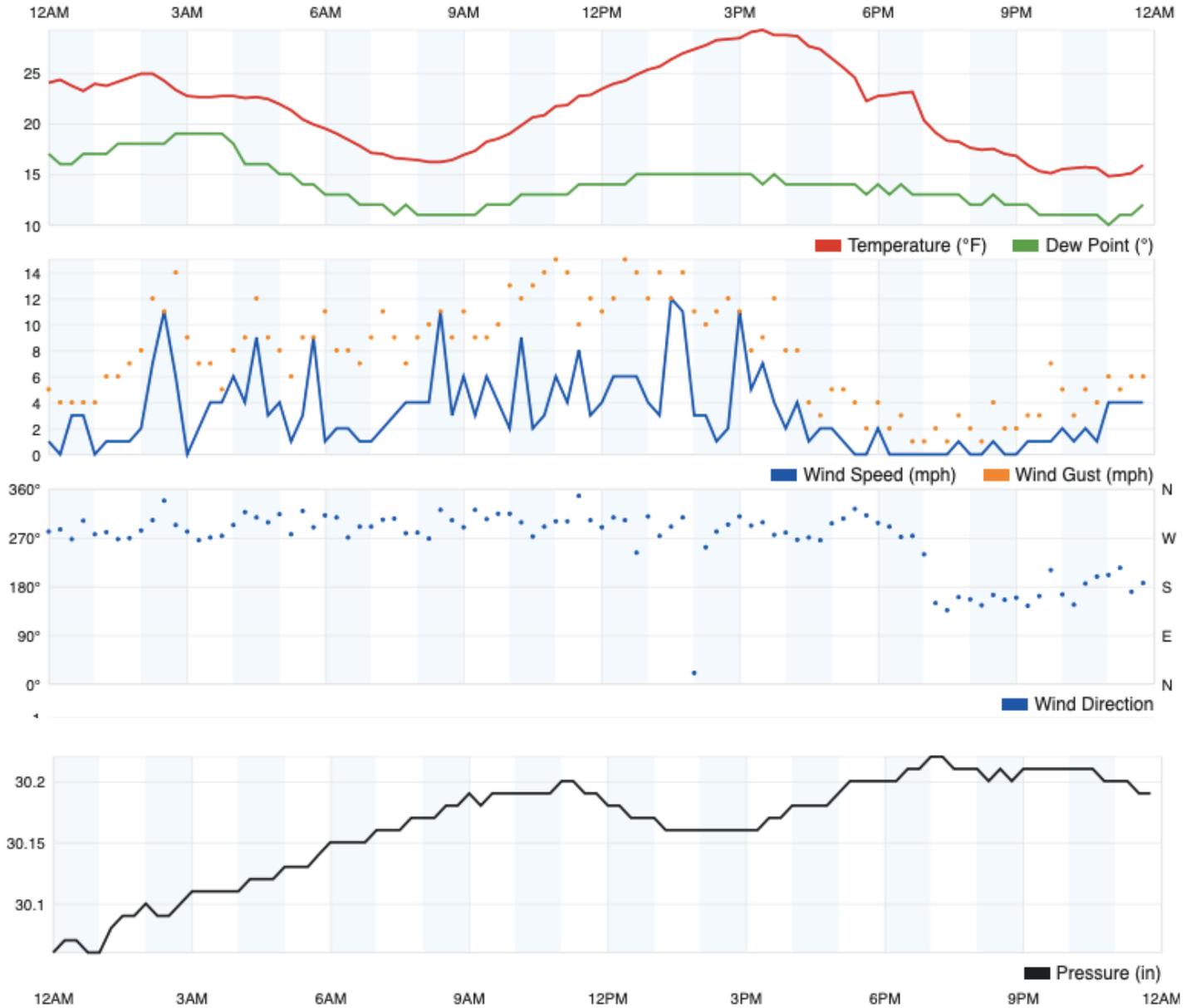
Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Partly Sunny

High: 42 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 26 °F

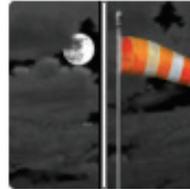
Saturday



Mostly Cloudy

High: 48 °F

Saturday
Night



Mostly Cloudy
then Mostly
Cloudy and
Blustery

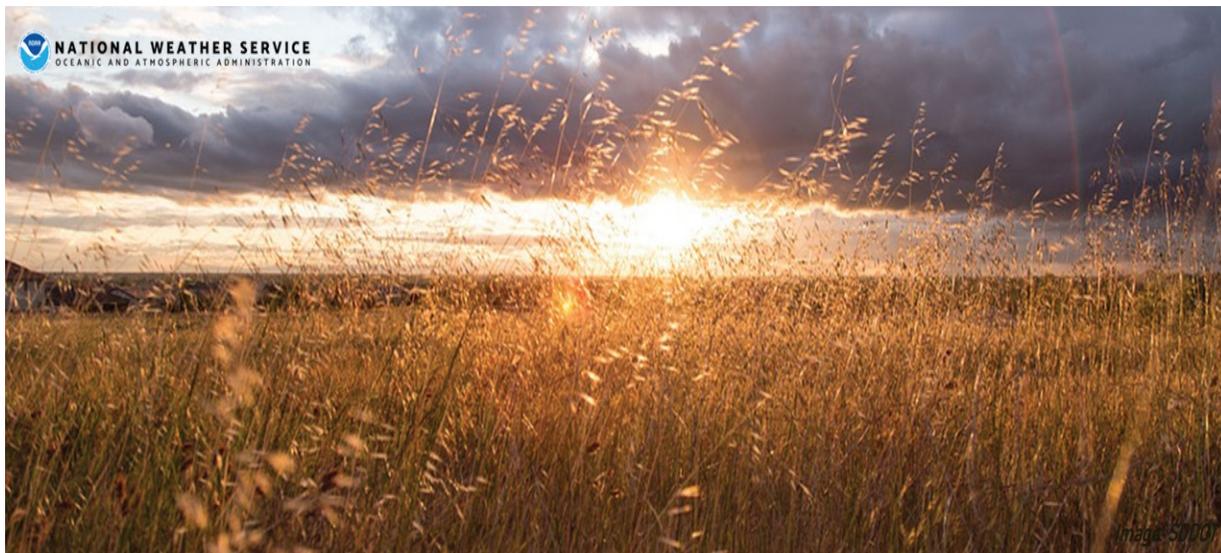
Low: 26 °F

Sunday



Sunny

High: 42 °F



Mainly Dry Weather

www.weather.gov/abr

Updated: 11/13/2020 5:47 AM Central

Friday

HI: 38 to 52°

LO: 26 to 32°



Saturday

HI: 42 to 50°

LO: 24 to 28°



Sunday

HI: 38 to 48°

LO: 22 to 26°



Monday

HI: 40 to 50°

LO: 18 to 26°



Tuesday

HI: 36 to 54°

LO: 22 to 34°



By in large, the weather pattern features dry conditions and near to above average temperatures in the days ahead. A few notes: Somewhat breezy conditions across the Coteau today could lead to low-level drifting of snow across roads wherever recent snows have fallen. Breezy conditions are also in store on Saturday mainly across Central South Dakota.

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Today in Weather History

November 13, 1985: Snowfall of 4 to 8 inches spread from the southwest part of South Dakota on the morning of the 13th to the northeast part of the state by early morning on the 14th. Winds gusted to 35 mph in the western half of the state and produced considerable blowing and drifting snow, which significantly reduced visibilities. The snowfall caused many accidents, including a four-vehicle pileup that occurred three miles east of De Smet in Kingsbury County, during the afternoon of the 13th. Some snowfall amounts include; 7.0 inches in Britton; 5.5 inches in Timber Lake and 5.0 inches in Leola.

1833: In 1833, observers were familiar with the Leonid meteor shower, but the event that year was very intense and leads to the first formulation of a theory on the origin of meteors. By some estimates, the 1833 Leonid meteor shower had 240,000 meteors in a nine-hour period.

1946: General Electric scientists produced snow in the Massachusetts Berkshires in the first modern-day cloud seeding experiment. Scientist Vincent Schaefer dropped six pounds of dry ice pellets into a cloud over Pittsfield, MA. The cloud seeding experiment produced snowfall, as a 4-mile long cloud was converted into snow flurries. The success of the experiment became the basis of many weather modification projects.

1933 - The first dust storm of the great dust bowl era of the 1930s occurred. The dust storm, which had spread from Montana to the Ohio Valley the day before, prevailed from Georgia to Maine resulting in a black rain over New York and a brown snow in Vermont. Parts of South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa reported zero visibility on the 12th. On the 13th, dust reduced the visibility to half a mile in Tennessee. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1946 - General Electric scientists produced snow in the Massachusetts Berkshires in the first modern day cloud seeding experiment. (The Weather Channel)

1953 - Strong southeasterly winds associated with a Pacific cold front reached 70 mph at Sacramento CA to equal their all-time record. The previous record had been established in a similar weather pattern on December 12th of the previous year. (The Weather Channel)

1981 - A powerful cyclone brought high winds to Washington State and Oregon. The cyclone, which formed about 1000 miles west of San Francisco, intensified rapidly as it approached the Oregon coast with the central pressure reaching 28.22 inches (956 millibars). A wind trace from the Whiskey Run Turbine Site, about 12 miles south of Coos Bay in Oregon, showed peak gusts to 97 mph fifty feet above ground level. The wind caused widespread damage in Washington and Oregon, with 12 deaths reported. As much as four feet of snow fell in the Sierra Nevada Range of northern California. (Storm Data)

1987 - A storm moving off the Pacific Ocean produced rain and gale force winds along the northern and central Pacific coast, and heavy snow in the Cascade Mountains. Cold weather prevailed in the southeastern U.S. Five cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Asheville NC with a reading of 21 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Low pressure brought rain and snow and gusty winds to the northeastern U.S. A thunderstorm drenched Agawam MA with 1.25 inches of rain in fifteen minutes. Winds gusted to 58 mph at Nantucket MA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thirty-two cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 70s as far north as Michigan and Pennsylvania. Afternoon highs in the 80s were reported from the Southern Plains to the southern Atlantic coast. Columbia SC reported a record high of 86 degrees, and the high of 71 degrees at Flint MI was their warmest of record for so late in the season. (The National Weather Summary)

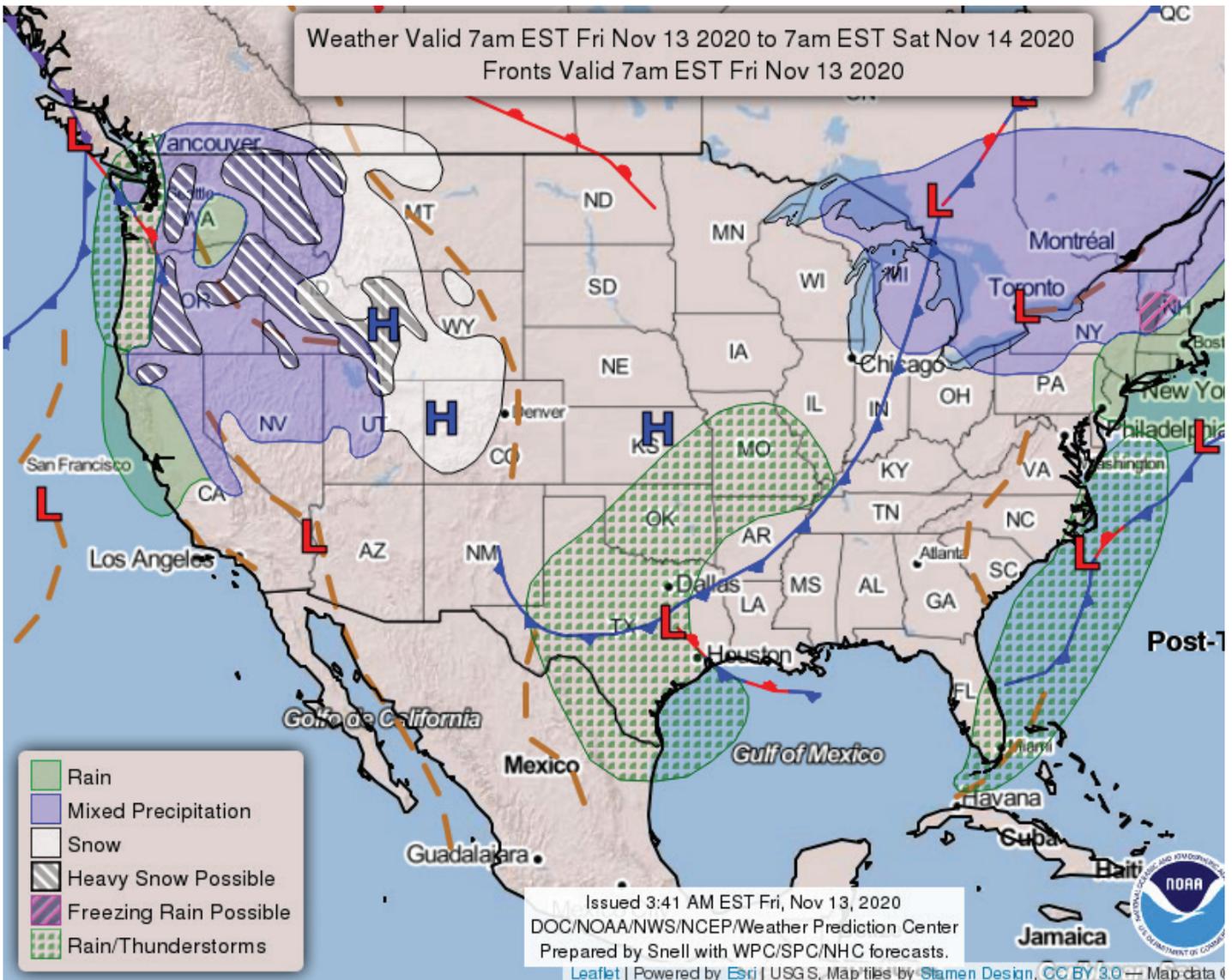
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 29 °F at 3:24 PM
Low Temp: 14 °F at 11:06 PM
Wind: 18 mph at 2:33 AM
Precip: .00

Record High: 71° in 2016
Record Low: -11° in 1919
Average High: 41°F
Average Low: 20°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.34
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.06
Average Precip to date: 20.81
Precip Year to Date: 16.40
Sunset Tonight: 5:05 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:32 a.m.



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REMEMBER ME!

"But I'm not that important to God. I have not accomplished anything with my life, and I'm too old now to do anything about it. I can't imagine that I will make any difference in God's scheme of things," he said. "How could any God love someone as worthless as me? I'm hopeless!"

It seems as though the writer of Psalm 106 felt the same way. "Remember me, O Lord, when You show favor to Your people, come to my aid when You save them." He felt alone, abandoned, forsaken - perhaps even worthless. He could not imagine God including him in His plan of redemption. "I'm excluded!" he cried. "No hope."

Another man made a similar statement. This one was a thief hanging on a cross dying for his crimes. How interesting it is to note that he was hanging next to some One who had never committed any crimes, but was dying for the crimes he - the thief - had committed. He had no time to turn over a new leaf and lead a better life. He could not go to the people he had wronged and ask for forgiveness, or attend a religious ceremony for cleansing. He could not perform any good works - his hands were nailed to a cross. All he could do was to call on the Name of the Lord and ask Jesus to "Remember me!" And, we too, must realize and remember that no one is beyond the grace of God.

Although he was a thief condemned to die for his crimes, our Lord loved him just as much as He loves us. "Today," Jesus assured him, "you will be with Me in paradise."

God has no favorites. His love includes everyone.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for Your love that includes all of us no matter who we are or what we have done! Help us to find our worth in Your love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Remember me, O Lord, when You show favor to Your people, come to my aid when You save them. Psalm 106:4

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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

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Class 9AA=

State Championship=

Platte-Geddes 42, Hamlin 12

Class 9A=

State Championship=

Canistota 12, Warner 0

Class 9B=

State Championship=

Wolsey-Wessington 32, Dell Rapids St. Mary 14

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

GOP backs off from seeking to strip Walz of emergency powers

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — With coronavirus cases and deaths soaring to record levels in Minnesota, Republican lawmakers backed down Thursday from making another futile attempt to strip Democratic Gov. Tim Walz of the emergency powers he has used to respond to the pandemic.

Lawmakers from both parties acknowledged as they gathered for the sixth special session of the year that the situation is serious. Democrats strongly defended the governor's handling of the public health crisis, while leaders of the House GOP minority dialed back their usual criticisms. Instead they offered a mostly symbolic proposal that would let the Legislature modify or rescind the governor's individual orders, in hopes of getting more of a voice in the pandemic response.

The Minnesota Department of Health reported a record 7,228 new cases Thursday, pushing the state's cumulative case count past 200,000 to 201,795. And it reported 39 new deaths — the second-highest one day total so far following a daily record of 56 deaths Wednesday — for a total of 2,793 since the pandemic reached the state eight months ago.

"The numbers are grim, the situation is dire, the number of deaths are increasing at an alarming rate. The number of hospitalizations are increasing at an alarming rate," Democratic House Speaker Melissa Hortman, of Brooklyn Park, told reporters. She went on to add: "The governor needs all the tools in the toolbox to get this virus under control."

Hortman said Walz is doing the best he can to balance public health and economic needs, given the lack of a federal plan to provide more aid, and resistance by leaders in neighboring states to stronger measures such as mask mandates.

"I think we've seen a colossal failure of leadership over there in the Dakotas," the speaker said. "We have the highest death rate per-capita in North Dakota and South Dakota on the entire planet. Those are not really good neighbors at this point."

Democratic House Majority Ryan Winkler, of Golden Valley, said it's "not that onerous" to ask people to wear masks, stay home when sick and practice social distancing. "We have essentially an invasion coming from the Dakotas and we need to do everything we can to stop it," he said.

House Republican leaders framed their bill as giving legislators their own tools in the toolbox to bring the concerns of their constituents, businesses and schools to the table. They said their only option is now to rescind the peacetime state of emergency that gives the governor his special powers. Doing so would cancel all his pandemic executive orders, and that would require both chambers to agree. House Demo-

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crats have blocked all previous GOP efforts to do that.

"What this bill is about is the Legislature having a little bit of a say. ...This bill isn't about whether people believe COVID is real or not. It is real. And people should wear masks, and they should be careful and they should social distance," GOP House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt, of Crown, said during the debate.

Under the bill by Rep. Barb Haley, of Red Wing, a governor's executive orders would still have full force for at least 30 days. But after 30 days, the Legislature would get the option of rescinding or amending those orders. The vote to suspend the rules and take up the proposal failed on a 60-to-73 vote that fell mostly along party lines.

Meanwhile, a complicated political chess game played out in the Republican-controlled Senate. The move was aimed at blocking Walz from appointing Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan to the U.S. Senate if U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar takes a position in President-elect Joe Biden's administration.

The state Senate elevated maverick Democratic Sen. David Tomassoni, of Chisholm, to serve as Senate president through the end of the year. He's meant to be a temporary replacement for GOP Senate President Jeremy Miller, of Winona.

Under the Minnesota Constitution, the Senate president becomes lieutenant governor if that position becomes open. That's a problem for Senate Republicans, whose majority is expected to slip from the current three seats to just one in the 2021 session. Democrats would stand a reasonable chance of flipping Miller's southeastern Minnesota seat in a special election if he became lieutenant governor. But Republicans might be able to capture Tomassoni's Iron Range seat if it becomes vacant.

The precedent was set in 2017 when then-Gov. Mark Dayton appointed then Lt. Gov. Tina Smith to the U.S. Senate, which meant Republican Senate President Michelle Fischbach had to replace Smith despite GOP objections

Democratic leaders denounced the preemptive move,

"People are dying and they're playing parlor games," Winkler said. "Irresponsible."

South Dakota Parks Secretary Announces Retirement

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Secretary of Game, Fish and Parks is retiring in December, Gov. Kristi Noem announced on Thursday.

Kelly Hepler has headed the state office that oversees hunting and other outdoor recreation since 2015. He was appointed by former Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

Hepler is the third department secretary to retire this year. Secretary of Transportation Darin Bergquist and Secretary of Agriculture Kim Vanneman have both announced their retirements.

Hepler called the post his "dream job" and said in a statement, "When I was growing up, hunting and fishing in Spearfish, I never imagined that I would have (an) opportunity to serve as Secretary."

He said recently testing positive for the coronavirus, two separate crashes involving deer and concerns over the health of his wife's eyes influenced his decision to retire.

South Dakota reports all-time high for new virus cases

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota broke a record Thursday for the number of new coronavirus cases in one day, with more than 2,000 people testing positive.

The Department of Health reported 2,019 people with coronavirus infections — a troubling marker for a state that has already spent weeks suffering through one of the worst virus outbreaks in the nation.

South Dakota has the nation's second-worst rate of new infections per capita over the last two weeks. There were about 1,893 new cases per 100,000 people over the past two weeks, according to Johns Hopkins researchers. That means that that roughly one out of every 53 people has tested positive over that period.

No new deaths were reported, keeping the death tally at 567. But the number of hospitalizations rose slightly to 551.

Universities in South Dakota are encouraging their students to get tested for COVID-19 before returning

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home for Thanksgiving to help curb the spread of the virus.

South Dakota State University in Brookings and the University of South Dakota in Vermillion are offering free tests.

South Dakota Department of Health Secretary Kim Malsam-Rysdon said that the majority of recent COVID-19 spread has been among smaller gatherings of family members and friends, the Argus Leader reported.

"Protect your loved ones," a South Dakota State email to students said. "You may not show symptoms but that does not mean you cannot spread the virus to a parent, grandparent or other family member who is considered a higher risk category for illness from the virus."

Virus surge breaking infection records across the US

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

Texas on Wednesday became the first state with more than 1 million confirmed COVID-19 cases, and California closed in on that mark as a surge of coronavirus infections engulfs the country.

In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said all restaurants, bars and gyms statewide will have to close at 10 p.m. starting Friday, a major retreat in a corner of the U.S. that had seemingly brought the virus largely under control months ago. He also barred private gatherings of more than 10 people.

Texas, the second-most populous state, has recorded 1.02 million coronavirus cases and over 19,000 deaths since the outbreak began in early March, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. California, the most populous state, has logged more than 995,000 cases.

The U.S. has recorded over 240,000 deaths and more than 10.3 million confirmed infections, with new cases soaring to all-time highs of well over 120,000 per day over the past week. Health experts have blamed the increase in part on the onset of cold weather and growing frustration with mask-wearing and other precautions.

Cases per day are on the rise in 49 states, and deaths per day are climbing in 39. A month ago, the U.S. was seeing about 730 COVID-19 deaths per day on average; that has now surpassed 970.

Among the many health officials sounding the alarm was Dr. Julie Watson of Integris Health in Oklahoma. "We are in trouble," she said. "If nothing is done soon to slow the rise in cases, our hospitals will be more overwhelmed than they already are and we won't be able to be there for all of those who need it."

Oklahoma's health department said Wednesday that 1,248 people were hospitalized for confirmed or probable coronavirus, shattering the previous one-day record of 1,055.

Texas reported 10,865 new cases on Tuesday, breaking a record set in mid-July. One of the hardest-hit places is the border city of El Paso; its county has nearly 28,000 active cases and has suffered more than 680 COVID-19 deaths.

The American Medical Association renewed its plea for mask-wearing, physical distancing and frequent hand-washing.

"With the holidays quickly approaching, each of us must do everything possible to reduce the spread of COVID-19," AMA President Susan Bailey said. "Failing to do our part will prolong the suffering and disruption to our lives and inevitably lead to more deaths of our friends, neighbors and loved ones."

Meanwhile, many traditional Veterans Day celebrations gave way to somber virtual gatherings Wednesday. Many veterans homes have barred visitors to protect their residents from the virus.

In New York City, a quiet parade of military vehicles, with no spectators, rolled through Manhattan to maintain the 101-year tradition of veterans marching on Fifth Avenue.

More than 4,200 veterans have died from COVID-19 at hospitals and homes run by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and nearly 85,000 have been infected, according to the department.

Around the country:

— The NFL's Minnesota Vikings said it will close its remaining home games to fans, as the state blew past its record for new deaths in a day. Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz announced new restrictions on bars and restaurants and said he wishes the neighboring Dakotas would take more aggressive steps to slow the

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spread of the coronavirus. He said this summer's Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota was "absolutely unnecessary" and helped spread the virus beyond that state.

— Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine issued new orders on mask enforcement at businesses, while threatening to close bars, restaurants and fitness centers if infections keep surging. The Republican governor shifted the authority over mask enforcement from the counties to the state. If a business receives more than one violation, it must close for 24 hours. He's also requiring businesses to display 'No Mask, No Service' signs and refuse service to customers who don't comply. But DeWine's orders Wednesday were not as far-reaching as in March, when Ohio became one of the first states to go into lockdown.

— In Nebraska, which is setting records for COVID-19 hospitalizations, new restrictions took effect Wednesday. Those include a requirement to wear masks at businesses where employees have close contact with customers for more than 15 minutes, such as barbershops, and a limit on large indoor gatherings to 25% of a building's capacity. Gov. Pete Ricketts and his wife have gone into quarantine after being exposed to someone with the virus.

— North Carolina reported its highest single-day increase in coronavirus cases since the start of the pandemic, with 3,119 people — 8% of those tested — testing positive for the virus.

— Kentucky posted a record daily high for new confirmed cases, at 2,700, as the governor implored people to wear masks to counter the accelerating outbreak.

— A group of Utah teachers is encouraging colleagues statewide to call in sick Thursday and use the day to get tested for the virus. Some teachers believe the action could prompt state officials to do more to increase classroom safety.

— In Sioux Falls, the largest city in hard-hit South Dakota, Mayor Paul TenHaken cast a tie-breaking vote that defeated a proposed mask mandate. Violations would have carried a \$50 fine.

— North Dakota continues to have the most new COVID-19 cases per capita in the nation, according to Johns Hopkins data, with one in every 83 residents testing positive in the past week.

Top officials: Nov. 3 election most secure in US history

By ERIC TUCKER and FRANK BAJAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A coalition of federal and state officials found no evidence that votes were compromised or altered in last week's presidential election, rejecting unsubstantiated claims of widespread fraud advanced by President Donald Trump and many of his supporters.

The statement late Thursday, by government and industry officials who coordinate election cybersecurity, trumpeted the Nov. 3 election as the most secure in American history. It amounted to the most direct repudiation to date of Trump's efforts to undermine the integrity of the contest, and echoed repeated assertions by election experts and state officials over the last week that the election unfolded smoothly without broad irregularities.

"While we know there are many unfounded claims and opportunities for misinformation about the process of our elections, we can assure you we have the utmost confidence in the security and integrity of our elections, and you should too," the statement said. "When you have questions, turn to elections officials as trusted voices as they administer elections."

It was distributed by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, which spearheaded federal election protection efforts and tweeted by its director, Chris Krebs. Hours earlier, he was the subject of a Reuters story that said he had told associates he expected to be fired by Trump. Krebs has been vocal on Twitter in repeatedly reassuring Americans that the election was secure and that their votes would be counted.

"America, we have confidence in the security of your vote, you should, too," he wrote.

The statement's authors said they had no evidence that any voting system had deleted or lost votes, had changed votes, or was in any way compromised. They said all of the states with close results have paper records, which allows for the recounting of each ballot, if necessary, and for "the identification and correction of any mistakes or errors."

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"The November 3rd election was the most secure in American history. Right now, across the country, election officials are reviewing and double checking the entire election process prior to finalizing the result," the statement said.

The message is in stark contrast to Trump's unsupported claims of fraud and widespread problems that he insists could affect vote totals.

The issues Trump's campaign and its allies have pointed to are typical in every election: problems with signatures, secrecy envelopes and postmarks 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; again, none of the complaints show any evidence that the outcome of the election was affected.

The statement's authors include the presidents of the National Association of State Election Directors and the National Association of Secretaries of State — who run elections at the state level — and the executive committee of the government-industry coordinating council that includes all the major voting equipment vendors.

<https://www.cisa.gov/news/2020/11/12/joint-statement-elections-infrastructure-government-coordinating-council-election>

The Latest: Greek PM vows virus vaccinations will be free

By The Associated Press undefined

ATHENS, Greece — Greece's prime minister says the government will provide the coronavirus vaccine, when it becomes available, to all Greeks free of charge.

Kyriakos Mitsotakis made the comments while chairing a ministerial meeting about the government's vaccination strategy for COVID-19. Greece has seen a resurgence of the virus's spread that is putting pressure on the country's health system.

"I insist on the free access of all Greeks to the vaccine, because this government has treated the vaccine as a public good from the start," Mitsotakis said. "That is why it will be provided free of charge to all, with no exceptions."

On Thursday, Greece announced a record number of new daily coronavirus deaths and infections, with more than 3,300 new confirmed infections and 50 deaths in this country of 11 million people. Greece currently has more than 66,600 confirmed cases and 959 deaths.

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

- States ramp up for biggest vaccination drive in US history
- Virus ward doctor runs from dawn to dark in Italy, fears the devastation of the coming winter
- Daily infections hit new highs in Russia, Germany, Lithuania and Greece
- Meatpacking plant worker who died from COVID-19 left legacy of compassion
- India's festive mood ahead of Diwali raises fears of surge of coronavirus
- Follow AP's coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

MOSCOW -- Coronavirus infections in Russia kept on rising this week, with authorities reporting a record-high 21,983 new cases on Friday, bringing the country's total to nearly 1.9 million.

Russia, which has the fifth-highest tally of confirmed cases in the world, has been swept by a rapid resurgence of the outbreak since September. Despite the spike, Russian authorities insist there are no plans

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to impose a second lockdown or shut down businesses nationwide, even as media report overwhelmed hospitals, inundated doctors and shortages of medicines.

A series of restrictions aimed at curbing the outbreak took effect Friday in Moscow. The city authorities ordered restaurants, bars and nightclubs to close between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m., told university students to move to online classes, ordered theaters and cinemas to limit capacity to 25% and halted all mass entertainment events.

The restrictions will remain in place until Jan. 15 and will apply to New Year holidays as well, Moscow officials said.

PRAGUE — Coronavirus infections in the Czech Republic have been declining for more than a week after rising for over two months to record levels.

The Health Ministry says the day-to-day increase of new confirmed cases reached 7,874 on Thursday, about 5,400 less than the same day a week ago.

The new cases hit a record high of 15,727 last week and has been dropping since. Still, Health Minister Jan Blatny is expected to further extend the state of emergency that enables the government to keep in place its strict restrictive measures.

The country has also seen a decline in hospitalizations to 7,564, about 700 less than a week ago.

But COVID-19 deaths are still on the rise.

The seven-day rolling average of daily deaths has risen from 1.36 deaths per 100,000 people on Oct. 29 to 1.90 deaths per 100,000 on Thursday. Of the country's 5,755 virus dead, 2,270 of them died in November.

BERLIN — Germany's disease control center is reporting a new daily record of coronavirus infections as the country nears the halfway point of new lockdown measures meant to slow the spread of the pandemic.

The Robert Koch Institute said Friday that Germany's states had reported 23,542 daily cases, slightly more than the previous record of 23,399 set on Saturday.

Chancellor Angela Merkel is due to hold talks with state governors on Monday, the midway point into a series of measures the government has called "lockdown light."

Germany embarked Nov. 2 on the four-week partial shutdown aimed at flattening a sharp rise in new infections. Restaurants, bars, sports and leisure facilities have closed, but schools and nonessential shops remain open. Officials say it is still too early to tell whether the new measures are having the desired effect.

Merkel on Thursday warned Germans to expect "difficult winter months." Health Minister Jens Spahn said nobody should be expecting to hold Christmas parties with more than 10 or 15 people.

VILNIUS, Lithuania — Lithuania has once again seen a record high number of new infections with 2,066 reported Friday.

It was the highest number since the pandemic started, Lithuania's Health Ministry said.

Overall, the southernmost Baltic country that is the home to 2.8 million has reported 24,284 cases and 253 deaths.

ZAGREB, Croatia — Croatia has reported a new record daily virus death toll of 43 people died in the country of 4.2 million people.

Authorities said Friday that 3,056 more people tested positive, placing a burden on the health system.

Croatia says it will not impose a strict lockdown but authorities have instead limited gatherings and called on the people to wear face masks and respect social distancing.

In neighboring Slovenia, however, the government tightened its coronavirus lockdown late Thursday, shutting down public transport for two weeks, banning socializing outside immediate family and widening quarantine restrictions for people who travel abroad.

Slovenia on Friday said 38 people have died in the past 24 hours and 1,508 new infections have been confirmed.

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BEIJING — Residents of Mongolia's capital of Ulaanbaatar have been told to stay at home as part of nationwide lockdown measures due to remain in place through Tuesday following the detection of new coronavirus cases.

Residents of the city of 1.4 million will be permitted to leave for necessary errands, such as to purchase groceries and medications, the official Montsame news agency reported.

Social distancing measures must be maintained when leaving home, and employees of hospitals and other essential facilities must show identification when commuting. Police and military personnel were being deployed to ensure compliance.

Ulaanbaatar confirmed two cases of community transmission on Nov. 9 and another in an outlying area on Thursday. Since then, another six people who came into close contact with those infected have also tested positive.

A vast, but lightly populated nation landlocked between China and Russia, Mongolia has recorded just over 400 confirmed cases but no deaths.

TOKYO — Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga raised caution over coronavirus infections, urging officials to step up testing, tracing and cluster investigations, while reminding people to stick to wearing masks, handwashing and other basic preventive measures.

The country set a record Friday for daily new infections, with the health ministry reporting 1,649 new cases, bringing the national total to 113,298.

Suga said he has instructed health and economic revitalization ministers to "use maximum caution and take preventive measures firmly." He said the current situation does not immediately require another state of emergency or scaling down of domestic tourism.

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — U.S. Rep. Don Young said he has the coronavirus after the 87-year-old Alaskan won his 25th term in the U.S. House.

Young, the longest-ever Republican to serve in the House, made the announcement Thursday on Twitter.

"I am feeling strong, following proper protocols, working from home in Alaska and ask for privacy at this time," Young wrote in a tweet. "May God Bless Alaska."

The diagnosis came after Young initially downplayed the seriousness of the virus at the onset, claiming it was overblown and fueled by the media. Young's positive test came after he was campaigning for re-election in Alaska, which is experiencing a surge of cases. Alaska has had over 20,000 cases, including 477 new cases reported Thursday. There have been 96 deaths.

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea has reported its biggest daily jump in COVID-19 cases in 70 days as the government began fining people who fail to wear masks in public.

The 191 cases added to the country's caseload on Friday represented the sixth consecutive day of over 100 and most were from the Seoul metropolitan area.

The steady spread of the virus has alarmed government officials, who eased social distancing measures to the lowest level since October to soften the economic shock.

While this has allowed high-risk venues like nightclubs and karaoke bars to reopen, Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun said the continuing spread could force the government to "seriously consider" tightening social distancing again.

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — New Zealand's government could soon make wearing masks mandatory on public transit in Auckland and on planes nationwide as it continues to investigate a new community case of the coronavirus.

Virus Response Minister Chris Hipkins says there are no plans to raise the nation's alert level after genome testing linked the latest case, a student who also worked at a clothing store, with a military worker who caught the virus at a hotel used as a quarantine site.

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Hipkins says he will recommend the mask mandate to the Cabinet on Monday for its approval. New Zealand has been largely successful in its efforts to stamp out community spread of the virus.

LOS ANGELES — California has become the second state to record 1 million confirmed coronavirus infections. Texas reached the mark earlier this week.

Data compiled by Johns Hopkins University showed Thursday that California surpassed the grim milestone. It comes nearly 10 months after the first cases were confirmed in the most populous state.

California was the first in the nation to implement a statewide stay-at-home order on its nearly 40 million residents in March.

After spiking in the summer, the rate of confirmed COVID-19 cases in California declined markedly into the fall but now is surging again, like much of the nation. This week, 11 counties had rates high enough that state restrictions were reimposed on certain businesses and activities.

CHICAGO — Chicago has issued new COVID-19 restrictions, including limiting social gatherings to 10 people, in hopes of combating the surge in cases ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday.

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot is urging people to stay home except for essentials, like work or getting groceries, in measures that take effect Monday. Lightfoot said Thursday the city must work to counteract the rapid rise of COVID-19 cases, including canceling traditional Thanksgiving plans to gather with friends and family.

A month ago, Chicago reported 500 daily new infections on average. The city is now averaging roughly 1,900 daily cases.

BEIJING — China's government says it has helped facilitate the return home of more than 70,000 Chinese nationals from 92 foreign countries between the start of the coronavirus pandemic and Nov. 10.

Deputy Foreign Minister Luo Zhaohui said some had returned home aboard chartered flights while others deployed separate means.

While local transmissions have been largely eliminated, the country remains on guard over imported cases. Most recently, China suspended five inbound international flights after significant numbers of COVID-19 sufferers were reported among the passengers.

China congratulates Biden, but few US policy changes seen

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China on Friday became one of the last major countries to congratulate U.S. President-elect Joe Biden, who is expected to make few changes to U.S. policy in conflicts with Beijing over trade, technology and security.

China, along with Russia, avoided joining the throng that congratulated Biden last weekend after he and vice presidential running mate Kamala Harris secured enough Electoral College votes to unseat President Donald Trump.

"We respect the choice of the American people," said a foreign ministry spokesman, Wang Wenbin. "We congratulate Mr. Biden and Ms. Harris."

Wang gave no reason for the delay but said, "the result will be confirmed according to U.S. laws and procedures."

U.S.-Chinese relations have plunged to their lowest level in decades amid a tariff war over Beijing's technology ambitions and trade surplus, accusations of spying and tension over human rights, the coronavirus pandemic, Hong Kong and control of the South China Sea.

Trump labeled China a security threat and imposed export curbs and other sanctions on Chinese companies. On Thursday, he stepped up those sanctions by issuing an order that bars Americans from investing in securities issued by companies U.S. officials say are owned or controlled by the Chinese military.

Forecasters had said even if lost his re-election bid, Trump was likely to try to increase pressure on

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Beijing before he leaves office on Jan. 20.

Political analysts expect Biden to try to resume cooperation with Beijing on climate change, North Korea, Iran and the coronavirus. And they say Biden might pursue a more traditional, predictable policy toward China.

However, economists and political analysts expect few big changes due to widespread frustration with Beijing's trade and human rights record and accusations of spying and technology theft.

"A tough stance on China has broad support across the U.S. political spectrum," Louis Kuijs of Oxford Economics said in a report this week. "Biden's own pronouncements and policy program suggest he will continue to try to maintain the U.S. technological lead and to attract manufacturing activity."

Some forecasters suggest the change from Trump, who rejected multilateral alliances, to Biden might increase pressure on China if Washington forms a coalition with other developed countries to push for policy changes.

China has tried to recruit Germany, France, South Korea and other governments as allies against Washington but all have refused. They criticized Trump's trade tactics of surprise tariff hikes, which also were used against allies, but echo U.S. complaints that China is violating its free-trade commitments.

Some Chinese trade experts have suggested Beijing might try to renegotiate the "Phase 1" agreement signed in January as a first step toward ending the trade war. It calls for China to increase purchases of U.S. goods in exchange for postponing further tariff hikes. But that came before the coronavirus derailed global trade, leaving China behind on meeting its commitments.

Renegotiation might fit a "more strategic, longer-term orientation" expected from a Biden administration, but he "cannot be seen to be 'soft' on China" after the "hard rhetoric" of the campaign, Kuijs said.

Chinese leaders were quieter during this year's election than in the 2016 presidential race, when they favored Trump over former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. They disliked her for carrying out then-President Barack Obama's foreign policy, which included pressuring Beijing on human rights. Trump's public image of business success resonated with the Chinese public.

Trump shook up China's leaders by hiking tariffs on Chinese products in 2018 over complaints Beijing steals or pressures companies to hand over technology.

The White House has lobbied allies to exclude telecom equipment giant Huawei Technologies Ltd., China's first global tech brand, from next-generation telecom networks on security grounds. Huawei's access to American components and technology was cut off over the past year, threatening to cripple its global sales.

Trump is trying to bar Chinese social media companies from the United States, citing fears they might gather too much personal information about Americans. The White House is pressing video service TikTok to sell its U.S. operation and is trying to block companies from dealing with WeChat, the popular Chinese message service.

Biden has room on health care, though limited by Congress

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden is unlikely to get sweeping health care changes through a closely divided Congress, but there's a menu of narrower actions he can choose from to make a tangible difference on affordability and coverage for millions of people.

With the balance of power in the Senate hinging on a couple of Georgia races headed to a runoff, and Democrats losing seats in the House, Biden's proposals for a public health insurance option and empowering Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices seem out of reach. Those would be tough fights even if Democrats controlled Congress with votes to spare.

But there's bipartisan interest in prescription drug legislation to limit what Medicare recipients with high costs are asked to pay and to restrain price increases generally. Biden also could nudge legislation to curb surprise medical bills over the finish line.

Moreover, millions of people already eligible for subsidized coverage through "Obamacare" remain un-

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insured. A determined effort to sign them up might make a difference, particularly in a pandemic. And just like the Trump administration, Biden is expected to aggressively wield the rule-making powers of the executive branch to address health insurance coverage and prescription drug costs.

With COVID-19 surging across the country, Biden's top health care priority is whipping the federal government's response into shape. In his victory speech Saturday, he pledged to "spare no effort, or commitment, to turn this pandemic around." He appointed a pandemic task force to develop "an action blueprint" that could be put into place on Inauguration Day.

On broader health policy issues, Biden has signaled he will stick with his robust campaign platform, which called for covering all Americans by building on the Affordable Care Act, adding a new public insurance option modeled on Medicare and lowering the eligibility age for Medicare.

"We're going to work quickly with the Congress to dramatically ramp up health care protections, get Americans universal coverage, lower health care costs, as soon as humanly possible," the president-elect said earlier this week.

Progressives who drive the Democratic Party's health care agenda say Biden must try as hard as he can to deliver, no matter if Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., remains majority leader of the Senate.

"I would vote for anything that improves health care for the American public, but what we need to do is push boldly and clearly for progressive policies," said Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., first vice chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

Khanna says he'd like to see a President Biden calling out McConnell in public. "Right at the State of the Union, he should say, 'One person potentially stands in the way of this, and that is Mitch McConnell,'" said Khanna.

Republicans say that's unlikely in the real world.

They say the only way Democrats could get a big health care bill through is to first win the two Senate seats in Georgia and then rely on a special budget procedure that would allow them to pass legislation in the Senate on a simple majority vote. Either that or change Senate rules to abolish the filibuster. None of that can be done with a snap of one's fingers.

"I put the odds of large-scale comprehensive health care reform at almost zero," said Brendan Buck, who served as a top adviser to former House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis.

Biden's to-do list on health care begins with new hires and a rewrite of Trump administration policies.

Democrats have a deep talent pool he can tap for top jobs. Among the leading contenders for health secretary is former Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, who is a co-chair of Biden's coronavirus task force. North Carolina state health secretary Dr. Mandy Cohen, another Obama administration alum, is also being promoted.

The rewrite project involves rescinding regulations and policies put in place by the Trump administration that allowed states to impose work requirements on Medicaid recipients, barred family planning clinics from referring women for abortions, made it easier to market bare-bones health insurance and made other changes.

But Biden can also use the government's rule-making powers proactively. Prescription drugs is one area. The Trump administration was unable to finalize a plan to rely on lower overseas prices to limit what Medicare pays for some drugs. It's a concept that Democrats support and that Biden may be able to put into practice.

On Capitol Hill, there doesn't seem to be a clear path.

A Republican advocate for action to curb prescription drug costs, Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, is expected to take on a new role in the next Congress, with less direct influence over health care issues.

A factor that may work in Biden's favor is that many Republicans want to change the subject on health care. Exhaustion has set in over the party's decadelong campaign to overturn the Affordable Care Act, which has left the main pillars of former President Barack Obama's health law standing, while knocking off some parts.

Though not ready to embrace the ACA, "Republicans have tired of banging their heads against the wall in an effort to get rid of it," said Buck.

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Brian Blase, a former Trump White House health care adviser, says he thinks there is potential on prescription drugs.

"Biden, I think, will be pragmatic in this area," Blase said.

He expects a Biden administration to wield its rule-making powers aggressively, looking at international prices to try to limit U.S. prescription drug costs.

Coronavirus relief legislation could provide an early vehicle for some broader health care changes.

Former Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, who oversaw the rollout of the ACA under Obama, says it's not a question of all or nothing.

"Will it be as much progress as if we had had a big Senate win?" she asked.

It may not look that way.

"But can he make progress? I think he can."

UK's "Yorkshire Ripper" serial killer Peter Sutcliffe dies

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The British serial killer known as the "Yorkshire Ripper," a man who instilled terror and fear across northern England in the 1970s, died Friday at a hospital there. He was 74.

Peter Sutcliffe, a former grave digger, was serving concurrent life sentences for killing 13 women in Yorkshire and northwest England between 1975 and 1980.

British media reported he had refused treatment after testing positive for COVID-19 and was suffering from a number of underlying health conditions. His death will be investigated by the coroner.

Sutcliffe's barbaric attacks on young women were compounded by the police incompetence that allowed him to evade arrest and continue killing. The manhunt for the Ripper was one of the biggest the country had ever known, with some 2.5 million hours spent trying to catch him. Documentaries have chronicled how stubborn U.K. investigators stuck to their theories, missing key leads, ignoring contradictory evidence and wasting time in the hunt for the killer.

Although he was interviewed nine times in the investigation, Sutcliffe was only caught after being found with a prostitute in his car.

He was arrested on Jan. 2, 1981, in the English city of Sheffield, and later confessed, although he denied it at his trial. He was convicted on May 22, 1981, at London's Central Criminal Court of 13 counts of murder, seven cases of attempted murder and was sentenced to 20 concurrent life terms.

During his trial, even Sutcliffe expressed surprise that he was able to carry on for so long.

"It was just a miracle they did not apprehend me earlier — they had all the facts," he said.

The police had found themselves overwhelmed with information, and a card system they created was improperly cross-referenced, causing key facts to be misplaced. Details about his appearance, such as a gap in his teeth and size seven feet, were not flagged.

During one of his interviews, officers showed Sutcliffe a picture of the Ripper's boot print near a body but failed to notice that he was actually wearing the boots in question.

In another blunder, a victim who survived being hit in the head with a hammer, Marcella Claxton, was able to help police produce an image of the suspect that later proved to be accurate. But her testimony was discounted by police, who thought she was not a Ripper victim because she was not a prostitute, as were some of his other victims.

After he was convicted, Sutcliffe spent a long time in Broadmoor Hospital in Berkshire. He was transferred to HMP Frankland in 2016 after being deemed stable enough to serve time in prison.

A Prison Service spokesman said: "HMP Frankland prisoner Peter Coonan (born Sutcliffe) died in hospital on November 13. The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman has been informed."

Sutcliffe reportedly suffered from a range of poor health conditions before his death, including heart trouble, diabetes and obesity.

India's festive mood raises fears of surge of coronavirus

By ASHOK SHARMA and SHONAL GANGULY Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — The crowds filling shopping areas ahead of the Diwali festival of lights on Saturday are raising hopes of India's distressed business community after months of lockdown losses but also spawning fears of a massive coronavirus upsurge.

People who've restricted their purchases to essentials for months appear to be in a celebratory mood and traders are lapping it up, said Praveen Khandelwal, general secretary of the Confederation of All India Traders.

"The past three days have seen a tremendous increase in customer footfall in shopping markets for festival purchases," he said.

But among the millions of shoppers, a large number of people are seen ignoring masks and social distancing norms in major Indian cities and towns. India has confirmed more than 8.7 million cases of coronavirus infection, second-most in the world, and more than 128,600 fatalities.

In neighboring Nepal, another predominant Hindu nation, people appear to have responded better to a government appeal to celebrate the festival indoors and only with immediate family and avoid large gatherings or public celebrations.

Many areas in the Himalayan state have prohibited the tradition of "Deusi-Bhailo" where groups of girls and boys go to their neighbor's houses to sing and dance and in return get money and sweets. The festival is spread over five days in Nepal with different days for worshipping the cows, gods, cows and brothers.

India's festival season this year started on a subdued note with Dussehra celebrations last month, but traders say now people have come out of homes and are flocking to shopping areas in key Indian cities, including New Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Lucknow and Patna, this week.

Most people are shopping for flowers, sweets, dry fruits, candles and lamps for Diwali. The Hindu celebrations of Dussehra, Diwali and Durga Puja in October and November each year are also an occasion to splurge on big-ticket items like gold, homes and cars as well as clothing, smartphones and electronics.

Traders are hoping for the Diwali festival sales touching \$8 billion, Khandelwal said.

But several say they are trying not to let their hopes get too high since the crowds could be seeking bargains and people are cautious in spending their money during the pandemic.

"If we compare our business to last year's, then it's only 40 percent right now. Sixty percent of customers are not there. Because everyone is afraid of COVID-19," said Jitender Sachdeva, a shop owner in New Delhi's upscale Sarojini market.

"I had gone to the market and there is a lot of crowd because of Diwali. So I think it (coronavirus) may spread more," Payal Jha, a 20-year-old student, said.

India's Hindu festivals draw tens of thousands of people, packed in temples, shopping districts and family gatherings exchanging gifts.

On Diwali night, people lit up the sky with firecrackers — their smoke causing air pollution that takes days to clear. New Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has banned firecrackers this year. A thick smog lingered over the Indian capital and its suburbs on Friday, fed by smoke from raging agricultural fires.

Health experts warn of crowded festival celebrations causing a virus resurgence that batters India's health care system. New Delhi already has seen rising cases with more than 7,000 daily in recent days and a rising death toll as well.

In upscale areas, authorities and traders have put up coronavirus protocols in place, but the crush of people waiting to get in was a major cause of concern for traders. There are announcements over the public address systems to wear masks and maintain safe distance.

A bright spot is domestic brands are getting a boost from a trend to boycott inexpensive Chinese-made statues of Hindu deities, festive LED lights and electronics in favor of locally made products following India's border standoff with China.

With this boycott, China is set to lose business worth about \$5.3 billion in the Indian market this festive season, said B. C. Bhartia, president of the Confederation of All India Traders.

For India's nearly 70 million traders, who employ about 400 million people, an upturn could not come fast enough.

Associated Press writer Binaj Gurubacharya contributed from Kathmandu, Nepal.

Zimbabweans mend shabby dollar notes amid economic crisis

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Albert Marombe takes a grimy, tattered \$1 note and delicately, expertly glues it back into one piece, holding it up for inspection.

"I don't care how torn it is. All I want to see is the serial number being visible on both sides," said Marombe. He'll sell that shabby \$1 note for 80 cents and it will get back into circulation. Many shops will reject it but market traders will take it, although at a reduced value.

Worn out or shredded by rats, \$1 notes are king in Zimbabwe, beset by a continuing economic crisis. One dollar bills are used by many people to buy their daily bread and other small purchases. Crisp new notes are not coming into Zimbabwe, so enterprising traders are repairing old ones for desperate customers.

Formal businesses reject such notes, forcing people to sell them to traders like Marombe for a fraction of their original value. Informal street markets will usually - with some negotiation - accept the glue-patched notes that Marombe sells for transactions. Zimbabwe's booming informal economy employs about two-thirds of the population, according to the International Monetary Fund, so there are lots of such dirty dollars in circulation.

The U.S. dollar has dominated transactions in Zimbabwe since the country's hyperinflation soared to more than 5 billion percent and forced the government to abandon the local currency in 2009.

Last year the government re-introduced a Zimbabwe currency and banned foreign currencies for local transactions. Few took heed though and the black market thrived, while the local currency quickly devalued. In March this year, the government relented and unbanned the dollar. Now shortages of small denominations of the dollar are a nightmare.

The once-prosperous southern African country's economy is so weak from de-industrialization, low investment, low exports and high debt that it does not generate an adequate inflow of fresh greenbacks needed for its largely dollarized local economy, Harare-based economist John Robertson said.

"If people do have a small denomination in U.S. dollars they don't want to put those in the bank. They want to keep it to themselves," said Robertson, explaining that banks generally do not pay account holders in cash.

Larger denominations are too big for many purchases. Traders such as Marombe fill the gap by patching up torn dollar bills of many denominations, but the \$1 note is their main business.

"I am here by 6 a.m. daily and leave late ... business is good. I am surviving," said Marombe, popularly called "the money sanitizer" by other market traders.

He said he buys the \$1 notes for between 40 cents and 60 cents each, depending on their condition, and sells them at a profit.

Marombe, 38, sold second-hand clothes until six months ago when he saw the opportunity to make money by patching up old dollar bills and selling them at a profit. He's making enough to support his pregnant wife and two children, including one who is a teenager and writing final year secondary examinations this year.

In cities across the country, currency traders line the streets holding wads of both local currency and U.S. dollars. The \$1 notes that are in good condition go for a 10% premium. Traders said they buy the better-looking notes from retail shop owners and workers and from street vendors who hoard \$1 notes paid by purchasers of small items.

The street traders also take larger bills and provide the equivalent amount in smaller denominations for a 10% fee.

The government says the practice is illegal and the police sometimes raid the currency traders, seizing their precious dollar notes and issuing fines.

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But there aren't many choices for shoppers. If they buy goods at a supermarket that cannot provide change for their purchase, they are given paper coupons to be used at the same supermarket at a later date.

"At times they run out of these coupons so I am forced to take candy," said Innocent Chirume, outside a supermarket in Harare. "It is very inconveniencing. I can't take a bus into town using a coupon," he said.

Banks are encouraging electronic payments for transactions to resolve the problem of small change "given that U.S dollars are not produced in Zimbabwe and are imported at high cost," Bankers Association of Zimbabwe president Ralph Watungwa said.

Bank customers can exchange soiled notes for "usable" ones, although "the process of exporting the soiled notes and importing fresh ones is a long and costly process" for banks, he said.

The shortage of dollar notes and people's lack of trust in banks means that many stash their cash at home. This is a boon to currency traders like Marombe.

"One customer came with \$100 dollar notes worth \$1,000. He was saving for a car but the rats got to the money first," chuckled Marombe, who said he charged to repair the gnawed notes. "It was a big payday for me!"

France marks 5 years since deadly attacks on Bataclan, cafes

PARIS (AP) — In silence and mourning, France marked five years since 130 people were killed by Islamic State extremists who targeted the Bataclan concert hall, Paris cafes and the national stadium in a series of coordinated attacks.

It was France's deadliest peacetime attack, deeply shaking the nation. It led to intensified French military action against extremists abroad and a security crackdown at home.

Five years later, Prime Minister Jean Castex was leading silent ceremonies Friday at the multiple sites targeted by coordinated attackers around the French capital on Nov. 13, 2015: the Stade de France in the Paris suburb of Saint-Denis, the Bataclan, and five cafes in eastern Paris where gunfire shattered the balmy Friday night.

The public could not join this year's commemorations because of France's partial virus lockdown.

The ceremonies came as France is again under high alert for terrorist attacks after three Islamic extremist attacks since September have killed four people.

Eta races off to sea from Carolinas after soaking Florida

By CURT ANDERSON and FREIDA FRISARO Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — The former Tropical Storm Eta was classified as a post-tropical cyclone early Friday, racing off the Southeast Atlantic coast and bringing heavy rains and gusty winds to the Carolinas after blustering across north Florida.

One death in Florida was linked to the storm, along with some scattered flooding, and forecasters said the system was on a path offshore of South Carolina that is expected to take it further out to sea.

Early Friday, the storm was centered about 85 miles (135 kilometers) southeast of Wilmington, North Carolina. It had top sustained winds of 45 mph (75 kph) and was moving to the east-northeast at 21 mph (33 kph). The National Hurricane Center in Miami said Eta — which was now an extra-tropical low — was expected to pick up forward speed in the next day or so as it pulls away from the Southeast seaboard.

The storm system triggered flash flooding, multiple water rescues and road closures, and at least one collapsed bridge in South Carolina, said Sandy LaCourte, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Greenville, South Carolina.

Some parts of the Carolinas saw three to seven inches (7.5 to 17 centimeters) of rainfall already by Thursday afternoon with more expected. That came amid a combination of moisture from the Gulf of Mexico being carried up by a cold front that had pushed Eta across Florida earlier.

Earlier Thursday, Eta was in the Gulf of Mexico when it slogged ashore near Cedar Key, Florida. It then moved northeast across Florida in a matter of hours before crossing over into the Atlantic, forecasters said.

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Although it was not the most powerful storm to hit the U.S. this year, Eta had broad impacts across the Tampa Bay region on Florida's Gulf Coast, buffeting an area of more than 3.5 million people with gusty winds and rain.

In Bradenton Beach, Florida, Mark Mixon stepped into his flooded garage as he was laying sandbags around his home Wednesday evening and was electrocuted, said Jacob Saur, director of public safety for Manatee County. There were appliances plugged into the garage and Mixon was killed when he stepped into the water, Saur said.

The storm earlier forced the closure of some lanes of Tampa Bay bridges because of storm surge but they began reopening Thursday. Also reopened was the Sunshine Skyway Bridge in the region.

Earlier, firefighters in Tampa had to rescue around a dozen people who got stuck in storm surge flooding on a boulevard adjacent to the bay. Some vehicles remained on the roadway Thursday. Isolated neighborhoods also experienced enough flooding to evacuate.

J.P. Brewer, owner of Salty's Gulfport, was cleaning up after her beachside restaurant flooded early Thursday.

"It was pretty bad last night when I came in," she said, adding that there were already 3 to 4 inches (8 to 10 centimeters) of water inside by just before high tide. "We're in here doing our cleanup today and assessing the damage. I think we fared pretty well considering as bad as it looked last night."

Several sailboats broke free from their moorings and washed ashore in Gulfport, Florida, including the vessel where Mo Taggart has lived for two years with her dog. She thinks the boat is a total loss.

"I mean, it was disaster," Taggart said. "I mean, I came out here. My boat's just up against the seawall, just smashing, smashing ... I need to get another boat. I want to be back on the water, (my dog) wants to be back on the water."

The storm had made an earlier landfall in South Florida on Sunday after lashing Central America and Mexico with deadly force. Before that first brush with Florida, Eta first hit Nicaragua as a Category 4 hurricane and killed at least 120 people in Central America and Mexico, with scores more missing.

It was the 28th named storm of a busy Atlantic hurricane season, tying the 2005 record for named storms. A 29th named system, Tropical Storm Theta, was centered early Friday about 445 miles (715 kilometers) south-southeast of the Azores and moving east. It had top sustained winds of 60 mph (95 kph).

This extraordinarily busy season has focused attention on climate change, which scientists say is causing wetter, stronger and more destructive storms.

Frisaro reported from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Associated Press photographer Lynne Sladky and video reporter Cody Jackson contributed to this report from Pinellas County and AP reporter Michelle Liu contributed from Columbia, S.C.

Colts grab AFC South tiebreaker by beating Titans 34-17

By TERESA M. WALKER AP Pro Football Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Coaches and quarterbacks change for the Indianapolis Colts. What remains the same is they keep beating Tennessee in its own building.

Philip Rivers threw for 308 yards and a touchdown, and Nyheim Hines scored twice as the Colts trounced the Titans 34-17 Thursday night to grab the head-to-head edge atop the AFC South.

The Colts (6-3) will host the rematch in Indianapolis on Nov. 29 after helping coach Frank Reich improve to 4-1 against Titans coach Mike Vrabel. Indianapolis is 14-5 at Nissan Stadium.

"We get a huge special teams touchdown and then offensively, shoot, we were rolling pretty good all day," said Rivers, in his first season with the Colts after spending 16 with the Chargers. "We were very balanced, kind of got in a rhythm with the no-huddle. This was a huge road division win."

Indianapolis came in with the NFL's best defense in terms of fewest yards allowed. The Colts smothered a Tennessee offense that had been averaging 384.6 yards per game, 10th-best in the league, and ranked seventh averaging 29 points. E.J. Speed also blocked a punt that T.J. Carrie returned 6 yards for a TD

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late in the third quarter.

The Colts outgained Tennessee 430-294, though Derrick Henry ran for 103 yards.

The Titans (6-3) lost for the third time in four games as they head into the toughest stretch of their season, with Indianapolis the first of four straight opponents currently with winning records.

Tennessee led 17-13 at halftime. Indianapolis took advantage of the Titans' special teams woes to score twice in the third quarter for a 27-17 lead.

The Titans went with a third different punter in three games, promoting Trevor Daniel after signing him to the practice squad last weekend. Daniel's first punt went 17 yards, and Hines scored four plays later on a 2-yard TD run. The Titans gave Daniel no help on his second, with Speed easily breaking through for the block.

Stephen Gostkowski then missed a 44-yard field goal wide right early in the fourth.

"We're going to have to evaluate everything that we do," Vrabel said.

The Colts padded their lead to 34-17 with backup quarterback Jacoby Brissett capping the next drive with a 2-yard TD run with 9:21 left.

"We finished the way we needed to finish," Reich said.

Indianapolis' final margin would've been larger, but the Colts settled for a 43-yard field goal at the end of the first half and the Titans forced a turnover on downs on Indianapolis' opening drive of the third.

RIVERS PASSES MARINO

Rivers came in needing only 4 yards passing to move by Hall of Famer Dan Marino for the fifth-most in NFL history. He passed Marino on the Colts' first play from scrimmage with an 11-yard pass to rookie Jonathan Taylor. Rivers now has 61,666 yards for his career. He also made his 233rd consecutive start and is one away from tying Eli Manning for the 10th-longest streak in league history.

The Colts used a lot of no-huddle to put Rivers in control of the offense and take advantage of a struggling Titans defense.

"He's just really good in that mode," Reich said. "Very accurate, good checks in the run game, he was really in it tonight."

BIRTHDAY PRESENT

Hines finished with 12 carries for 70 yards and a TD, and caught five passes for 45 more yards and another TD. He called this his best birthday ever.

"I've never had a game like this on my birthday, so my 24th birthday is going to be one I'm always going to remember," Hines said. "I knew one thing: I didn't want to settle for average, I wanted to play great."

HEAVY HEART

Titans wide receiver Corey Davis played a day after his older brother, Titus, died at age 27 from a rare form of kidney cancer. Davis did not practice Wednesday hours after his brother died. He was crying before kickoff, then finished with a team-high five catches for 67 yards.

Davis' brother told their sister the receiver should play regardless, and Davis said he felt his brother with him in the game.

"Since I was a little kid, I was always chasing after him and trying to be like him," Davis said. "I wore his number every year to copy him. He thought it was annoying, but I looked up to him tremendously. That was my idol, my hero. I tried to honor him tonight."

INJURIES

Colts cornerback Xavier Rhodes went down on the second play from scrimmage. He walked off on his own and was back before the first quarter ended. Reich said cornerback Kenny Moore II will have an MRI on his ribs Friday.

Tennessee center Ben Jones hurt a knee but returned. Titans left guard Rodger Saffold limped to the sideline late in the second quarter with an injured ankle, but he also returned. Defensive lineman Larrell Murchison hurt his back.

UP NEXT

Colts host Green Bay on Nov. 22.

Titans visit Baltimore on Nov. 22.

Follow Teresa M. Walker at <https://twitter.com/TeresaMWalker>

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

Israel's settlements could test ties with Biden

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden may never forget Ramat Shlomo.

On a visit to Israel in 2010, Biden was caught off guard when authorities announced plans to build hundreds of new homes in the sprawling Jewish settlement in east Jerusalem. The incident embarrassed Biden and sparked a diplomatic rift with the Obama administration that never quite healed. Yet despite Biden's opposition to the project, a decade later Ramat Shlomo has ballooned.

The episode could foreshadow what lies ahead under the Biden administration — with a U.S. president opposed to Israeli construction on occupied lands claimed by the Palestinians but seemingly limited in his ability to stop it, particularly when dealing with a changing Middle East and preoccupied by domestic priorities.

The coming two months provide a key test for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the matter. The Israeli leader, a longtime supporter of the settlements, may seek to take advantage of the final days of the settlement-friendly Trump administration and push through a flurry of last-minute construction projects. But doing so could antagonize the incoming administration.

Both settlement supporters and critics expect Netanyahu to proceed with caution. With the Biden administration expected to re-engage with Iran over its nuclear program, Netanyahu's top security concern, he seems unlikely to pick a fight with the president-elect. Netanyahu's office did not respond to a request for comment.

Martin Indyk, a former U.S. peace negotiator during the Clinton and Obama administrations, said the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is no longer a "vital national interest" for Washington and that he did not expect Biden to make it a priority. Nonetheless, he said Biden still has a strong familiarity with the region.

"I don't think he's going to want to have a fight over settlements. But if Bibi makes it an issue, then there will be a problem there," said Indyk, using Netanyahu's nickname.

Trump has delivered a number of diplomatic gifts to Netanyahu, including the withdrawal of the U.S. from the international nuclear deal with Iran, recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moving the U.S. Embassy there. Trump recently brokered three normalization deals between Israel and Arab countries, shattering a longstanding position by Arab states that have traditionally withheld recognizing Israel until it made major concessions to the Palestinians.

In a break from his Republican and Democratic predecessors, Trump also has taken a much softer line toward the settlements. Surrounded by advisers with close ties to the settler movement, Trump's administration declared last year that it did not consider the settlements to be illegal under international law. Then, in January, he unveiled a Mideast plan that envisions placing parts of the West Bank, including all of the settlements, under permanent Israeli control.

Israel this year appeared poised to begin annexing West Bank territory under the Trump plan but was dissuaded as part of the deal establishing ties with the United Arab Emirates. Nonetheless, Israel has ramped up plans to build thousands of new homes throughout the West Bank. Anti-settlement monitoring groups expect additional settlement approvals in the West Bank and east Jerusalem before the end of Trump's term.

Biden, while claiming to have "ironclad" support for Israel, has already indicated he will reverse many of Trump's decisions. He has come out against unilateral annexation and supports a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians. Although he has said he will not move the embassy back to Tel Aviv, he is expected to reopen the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem that managed relations with the Palestinians

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and restore hundreds of millions of dollars of aid to the Palestinians that Trump cut off.

Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi called on the incoming administration not to return to “mistakes of the past” and said the traditional U.S. condemnations of settlement expansion would not be enough.

“There must be accountability and consequences if Israel continues its settlement policies,” she said. “Otherwise, what will be the benefit of statements of condemnation if Israel continues with expansion and settlements?”

The Palestinians, with wide international backing, seek all of the West Bank and east Jerusalem, captured by Israel in 1967, as parts of a future independent state. With nearly 500,000 settlers now living in the West Bank, and over 220,000 more in east Jerusalem, the Palestinians say the chances of establishing their state are quickly dwindling.

Previous American administrations viewed settlements as illegitimate and obstacles to peace. President Barack Obama took an even harsher tack and repeatedly clashed with Netanyahu over new construction. Weeks before leaving office, Obama allowed the U.N. Security Council to pass a resolution declaring the settlements illegal.

A nadir in those ties came at Biden’s expense with the 2010 Ramat Shlomo incident. As he held friendly meetings with Israeli officials, Israel’s Interior Ministry approved the construction of 1,600 new apartments in the neighborhood. Netanyahu said at the time that he had been blindsided by the announcement by low-level technocrats and tried to contain the damage at a late-night dinner with Biden.

Nonetheless, Biden issued a harshly worded statement, saying the approvals undermined trust.

At the time, Ramat Shlomo had about 2,000 apartments, according to Ir Amim, a group that tracks settlement building in Jerusalem.

Today, the area, which Israel considers a neighborhood of its capital, is undergoing a construction boom, with nearly 600 homes being built, according to Peace Now, another anti-settlement monitoring group. Ir Amim says over 700 additional apartments are in the pipeline. This week, bulldozers shoveled dirt and cranes whirred in the neighborhood’s building frenzy.

Brian Reeves, a spokesman for Peace Now, said the group expects Biden to change the tone on settlements but not to put enough pressure on Israel to stop.

“The U.S. will resume its condemnations of settlements but it’s not going to take any drastic action against it, so it’s going to seem like it’s ringing hollow,” he said.

Settler leaders, disappointed to be losing a friend in Trump, said they hope Biden will be different than Obama and not push for curbs on construction.

“I would hope that they don’t fall back into the old approach that led us into a deadlock,” said Oded Revivi, mayor of the Efrat settlement.

For now, Israel seems unlikely to make too many bold moves in the settlements if it wants to curry favor with an administration likely to renegotiate the Iran nuclear deal.

“The No. 1 issue for Israel is Iran. Not the settlements, not the peace process, not the Palestinians,” said Eytan Gilboa, an expert on U.S.-Israel relations. “Anything that could disrupt collaboration with the United States on Iran is going to be off.”

Associated Press cameraman Alon Bernstein in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

Military voters fear they’re part of unsupported fraud claim

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, MICHAEL BALSAMO and ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Even before Attorney General William Barr issued a memo that authorized federal prosecutors across the country to investigate “substantial allegations” of voting irregularities if they exist, the Justice Department had already begun looking into two specific allegations.

One was a claim from the Trump campaign that thousands of people may have improperly voted. The other was an allegation from a postal worker in Pennsylvania that a postmaster had instructed workers to backdate ballots mailed after Election Day.

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But so far, neither case appears to hold much water, according to details about the probes. And the first accusation has U.S. military personnel in Nevada concerned they have been drawn into unsubstantiated fraud claims.

There is no evidence of widespread fraud in the 2020 election despite President Donald Trump's claims. 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 that elected Democrat Joe Biden the next president.

Still, lawyers from Trump's campaign sent a letter to Barr alleging they had uncovered what they described as "criminal voter fraud" in Nevada and saying they had identified 3,062 people who "improperly" cast mail ballots in Clark County, a Democrat-heavy area that includes Las Vegas and about 75% of the state's population.

Those people were identified by "cross-referencing the names and addresses of voters with the National Change of Address database," according to the letter.

A copy of the Nevada letter provided to The Associated Press included a 62-page chart enumerating each voter but the listing did not include the name, address or party affiliation. Instead, it listed voters by the county, city, state and zip code they moved from, and the city, state and nine-digit zip code they moved to. The full nine-digit zip code can narrow an address down to a particular segment of a few blocks or even one side of a street, according to the U.S. Postal Service.

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, including Nevada and Pennsylvania, where Biden is winning by 37,000 votes and 54,000 votes, respectively.

But voting rights activists say hundreds of people on the list appear to be linked to the U.S. military. The American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada, which is doing election protection work, found 157 voters who listed a military base post office, according to staff attorney Nikki Levy, meaning they likely voted legally under added protections in federal law allowing absentee voting for military members and their families.

Nevada election law stipulates that in order to register to vote, an individual must have been a resident for 30 days preceding an election, but does not specify how long an already registered voter must be physically present in the state in order to participate in an election.

The Nevada Secretary of State's office said voters do not lose their eligibility to vote or void their registration when they leave the state temporarily, even for long periods of time, and they may travel for 30 days or more and still cast a ballot.

Federal and state law allows otherwise eligible voters to be exempt from any requirements that they reside in a state for any amount of time in order to cast a vote in a presidential election. A citizen who moves within 30 days before an election has the right to vote in their new state or their prior state of residence. Voters who take advantage of that only vote for president and vice president. They do not get to vote in any other contests.

Clark County Registrar of Voters Joe Gloria responded to the Trump campaign's allegations at a news conference last week, saying his office was reviewing a list of names that the campaign sent him, but said the allegation involves "something that happens regularly."

"You don't have to live here in order to be eligible to vote here. This is a military town," he said, referring to Nellis Air Force Base, which sits northeast of Las Vegas. He also noted that Nevadans who leave the state for college often vote by mail. The students and military families, while not physically in the state, "are eligible to vote here in Nevada," he said.

It's hard to know offhand how many military families are on the Trump campaign list because not all service members use their base post office as their address, ACLU lawyer Levy said. It includes voters living in cities where there are military installations and it likely includes a good number of college students as well, she said.

Rebekah Mattes, a civil servant who now lives in Stuttgart, Germany, said she believes she found herself and her husband, who is in the Air Force, on the list because it includes only two voters who made the

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same move they did from North Las Vegas to their new zip code in Germany.

"It's a little disheartening that this process that's in place for people like my family, to be able to exercise their right to vote, is being questioned," Mattes said.

Mattes said absentee voting is something she and her family relied on growing up as her father was in the Air Force. She said it was concerning that it appeared her vote was being labeled as potentially fraudulent, along with hundreds of others, without anything to base it on.

"That's a pretty broad brush to be painting with for something that's this important," she said.

Her comments were echoed by other military families who had the same concerns. Some cited security worries about having details about their past residences and their new nine-digit zip codes being linked and released.

Justice officials would not comment on the investigation.

Shortly after the Trump campaign sent the letter, Barr gave prosecutors the ability to go around long-standing Justice Department policy that normally would prohibit such overt actions before the election is certified. Soon after it was issued, the department's top elections crime official announced he would step aside from that position because of the memo.

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.

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 again, none of the complaints show any evidence that the outcome of the election was impacted.

Another active probe in Pennsylvania, meanwhile, appears to have fallen apart after the employee recanted the allegations in an interview with the postal service's inspector general's office, people familiar with the matter said. It is a federal crime to make a materially false statement to a federal agent. The people were not authorized to speak about an ongoing investigation and spoke to The AP on condition of anonymity.

The employee, Richard Hopkins, admitted in an interview with the Postal Service's inspector general that allegations were based on parts of a conversation he overheard among co-workers at the mail facility where he works in Erie. He also said an affidavit cited by Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee — and forwarded to the Justice Department by Graham — was written by Project Veritas, a conservative group that has been promoting voter fraud accusations on social media.

He agreed that some of the statements in the affidavit should have included amendments or caveats and also agreed to sign a new statement that undercut some of his main claims in the initial affidavit, according to a recording of the interview posted by Project Veritas.

Balsamo reported from Washington, and Izaguirre from Lindenhurst, N.Y.

Trump, stewing over election loss, silent as virus surges

By AAMER MADHANI and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has publicly disengaged from the battle against the coronavirus at a moment when the disease is tearing across the United States at an alarming pace.

Trump, fresh off his reelection loss to President-elect Joe Biden, remains angry that an announcement about progress in developing a vaccine for the disease came after Election Day. And aides say the president has shown little interest in the growing crisis even as new confirmed cases are skyrocketing and hospital intensive care units in parts of the country are nearing capacity.

Public health experts worry that Trump's refusal to take aggressive action on the pandemic or to coordinate with the Biden team during the final two months of his presidency will only worsen the effects of the virus and hinder the nation's ability to swiftly distribute a vaccine next year.

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The White House coronavirus task force held its first post-election meeting Monday. Officials discussed the rising case numbers and the promise of a vaccine in development by Pfizer, and they recognized the service of Navy Rear Adm. John Polowczyk, a member of the task force who retired Monday.

But Trump, who does not take part in the task force meetings, remains preoccupied with last week's election results. He has yet to weigh in on the recent spike in virus cases that has state and local officials scrambling and hospitals concerned about their ability to treat those stricken.

With more than 100,000 new confirmed U.S. cases reported daily for more than a week, Trump has been more focused on tracking the rollout of a vaccine, which won't be widely available for months. He has fumed that Pfizer intentionally withheld an announcement about progress on its vaccine trial until after Election Day, according to a White House official who was not authorized to publicly comment and spoke on condition of anonymity. Pfizer said it did not purposely withhold trial results.

Although the president has consistently played down the pandemic, which has killed more than 240,000 Americans and infected more than 10 million people in the U.S., public health experts expressed worry about Trump's silence on the troubling spike in cases, as well as his refusal to begin coordination on virus issues with Biden's transition team.

"It's a big problem," said Dr. Abraar Karan, a global health specialist at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School. "The transition is not going to happen until January, and we are in a complete crisis right now. We already know where this is headed. ... It's not good enough to say we're going to wait until the next president to address this."

The president's silence comes as numerous White House and campaign officials have tested positive for the virus in recent days.

White House chief of staff Mark Meadows tested positive last week after attending an election night party at the White House. Others at the party also have tested positive, including White House political director Brian Jack, former White House aide Healy Baumgardner and Trump campaign advisers David Bossie and Corey Lewandowski. Lewandowski said Thursday that he believes he contracted the virus in Philadelphia while assisting the president's election challenge there.

Meanwhile, state and local officials around the country are scrambling in the midst of mounting caseloads. While Trump stays silent, they are urging their residents to step up mask wearing and social distancing, as they brace for what many epidemiologists worry is the beginning of a tumultuous period.

In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo has issued an order starting Friday for bars, restaurants and gyms to be closed by 10 p.m., and has set a cap of 10 people for private gatherings. In Illinois, public health officials asked employers to allow their personnel to work from home when possible and urged residents to stay at home as much as possible and skip nonessential travel.

In Iowa, Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds, who resisted coronavirus restrictions, announced earlier this week that masks will now be required at indoor events of more than 25 people, and she banned outside events of 100 or more people unless all attendees wear masks.

Trump hasn't answered questions since before Election Day. That hasn't slowed his Twitter habit, but he's used it almost exclusively in recent days to rage over the election results and spread unsubstantiated allegations of voter fraud.

By late Thursday afternoon, Trump had tweeted or retweeted more than three dozen times that day. Just one was related to the virus — a retweet of a posting by Sen. David Perdue about Georgia receiving 2,000 vials of a new antibody treatment.

White House officials declined to comment Thursday on when Trump last engaged with members of the coronavirus task force but insisted he remains focused on the pandemic.

"The president is regularly briefed about the coronavirus," said White House spokesperson Sarah Matthews. "The relevant information is brought to him on the big decisions, and then he moves forward in the way that's best for our country."

The White House announced Thursday evening that Trump would get an update Friday on Operation Warp Speed, the multi-agency effort to get a vaccine to market as speedily and safely as possible.

In the closing days of the campaign, Trump sought to reassure Americans that the country was "rounding

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the corner" on the virus, and he wrongly predicted that Democrats' focus on the disease would go away right after the election. The president pushed a sunny public tone even after he tested positive for the virus in early October and was hospitalized for three days after contracting the virus. His wife, Melania, and teenage son, Barron, also contracted the virus.

Biden, for his part, largely framed the election as a referendum on Trump's handling of the pandemic. He has made addressing the virus his top priority as he moves forward with his transition. He spoke by phone Thursday with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer about the intensifying pandemic and prospects for passage of a COVID-19 relief bill in the lame duck session of Congress.

Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris met virtually with his new coronavirus advisers this week, and Biden delivered remarks warning Americans that "the challenge before us right now is still immense and growing."

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

Incoming White House chief of staff Ron Klain said Biden will appoint a "COVID coordinator" who will lead the administration's pandemic response. Klain, speaking on MSNBC Thursday night, said the individual will have "direct access" to the president and will brief him daily on the pandemic. A team of people underneath the coordinator will supervise vaccine distribution, address supply chain disruptions and improve access to testing.

Lawrence Gostin, a public health expert at Georgetown University's law school, said Biden will only be able to "scratch the surface" of tackling a pandemic that could be a "raging forest fire" by the time he takes office on Jan. 20.

He added that even the good news on Pfizer's development of a vaccine that showed 90% efficacy in early trial results could be diminished if Trump doesn't begin coordination efforts with Biden's team on how to roll out the vaccine. Some public health experts believe the task of persuading Americans to take the vaccine and widely distributing it could be as complicated as the vaccine's development.

"I fear the next three months ahead could be the worst we've faced during the pandemic," Gostin said. "America is like a ship at storm, and the captain has decided to go play golf."

Madhani reported from Chicago. Associated Press writers Jill Colvin and Alexandra Jaffe contributed to this report.

AC/DC is back and fighting off the black with new album

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Through decades, deaths and disasters, AC/DC keeps thundering on.

Forty-seven years along, and with the closest thing possible to their original lineup, the rockers on Friday are releasing "Power Up," their first album in six years.

It's also the first since the 2017 death of Malcolm Young, who founded the band in Sydney, Australia in 1973 with his little brother, Angus. "Power Up" is dedicated to the elder brother and is shot through with his spirit and songwriting.

"We all felt Malcolm around us, he was there. We're not spiritual type people, but, boy, oh boy," lead singer Brian Johnson, 73, told The Associated Press in an interview via Zoom from his home in Sarasota, Florida. "Malcolm was a very strong character in real life, and him passing away wasn't gonna stop that. He was there, everywhere, and I think you can tell it on the record."

All 12 tracks are co-written by Malcolm and Angus Young, selected by the younger Young from a trove of unused songs that piled up during the band's long life.

"Malcolm and myself over the years, whenever we'd come to an album we always walked in with a lot of A-grade songs," the 65-year-old Angus Young said via Zoom from his home in Sydney. "We always had

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a stack full more left that were all great, great tracks.”

Most of the songs came from a fruitful writing period in a long gap between albums from 2000 to 2008, and Angus Young chose those that most evoked his big brother.

“I concentrated on the ones I knew were Mal’s favorites,” Young said. “It’s a fitting project for him. He always liked being simple and direct, so I felt, what better than his music?”

“Power Up,” their 17th studio album, whose first single and video, the blues-inflected “Shot in the Dark,” were released in October, is overflowing with the same thundering chords and schoolboy sneers that made them legends with albums like “Highway to Hell” and “Back in Black.” The latter was also dedicated to a recently deceased essential bandmate, original singer Bon Scott, who died in 1980.

“There is the similarity between Bon’s tragedy and Mal’s,” Angus Young said.

With Malcolm Young suffering from the dementia that would lead to his death, his nephew Stevie Young stood in for him on 2014’s “Rock or Bust,” and did it again on “Power Up,” though at 63 he’s hardly the new kid.

“We’ve known Stevie forever and ever. He’s been around us for decades,” bassist Cliff Williams said via Zoom from his home in North Carolina. “So there was no trying to fit him into any kind of thing.”

After a tough tour in 2016 that Johnson couldn’t finish because of hearing loss that had grown increasingly severe, it appeared the classic version of the band might never play together again.

He’s since been equipped with state-of-the-art hearing-aid technology and had been anxious to get back on stage, especially after feeling how well it worked to rehearse with the band at full power.

“It was just a lot of fun to be with the boys, and I felt like I was equipped to actually go out and do something,” Johnson said. “My ammunition belt was full. I was ready to go.”

The album had been recorded in 2018 and early 2019, and the jam sessions came in preparation for the planned release date, early in 2020.

“We rehearsed quite a bit, because we were hoping to be able to maybe do some shows,” Young said. “We’d done a couple of weeks of that, and then a few days later the world started to shut down.”

When the coronavirus reached pandemic levels, the album was shelved and the band went dark, stuck across different continents as they isolated with families and friends.

After nearly a year passed, the band and Columbia Records opted to release it in November.

“We’re doing a lot of promotional stuff to let people know, to get the message out that AC/DC’s got a new album,” Young said. “Hopefully to cheer you up.”

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

Georgia counties prepare for hand tally of presidential race

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — As Georgia counties prepare for a hand tally of the presidential race, the state’s top elections official planned to quarantine after his wife tested positive for the coronavirus, his office said Thursday.

The count stems from an audit required by a new state law, not because there are any questions about the integrity of the election in Georgia or the results. Democrat Joe Biden leads Republican President Donald Trump by 14,000 votes. There are no examples of similar recounts that have overturned leads of that magnitude.

“The point of the audit is to show the machines counted the ballots fairly,” said Gabriel Sterling, who oversaw the implementation of the state’s new voting system for the secretary of state’s office.

County election officials must begin the hand tally by 9 a.m. Friday and complete it by 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, state officials said. The state certification deadline is Nov. 20.

Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger’s wife, Tricia, tested positive on Thursday, the deputy secretary of state, Jordan Fuchs, told The Associated Press. Brad Raffensperger tested negative but planned to self-quarantine as a precaution, Fuchs said, adding that the secretary’s quarantine will not affect the audit.

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Raffensperger has been under fire from fellow Republicans.

U.S. Sens. David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler on Monday called for his resignation, claiming he ran the election poorly but citing no specific incidents of wrongdoing. Both senators face Jan. 5 runoffs that will determine which party controls the Senate.

Raffensperger said he would not step down and defended his office's handling of the election.

U.S. Rep Doug Collins, who's leading Trump's recount team in Georgia, and state Republican Party Chairman David Shafer on Tuesday sent a letter to Raffensperger requesting that he order a hand recount of Georgia's nearly 5 million ballots before certifying the results, among other demands.

That has led to criticism accusing Raffensperger of caving to Trump. An audit of one race is required by law but it's up to the secretary of state to choose the race. Sterling emphatically denied that the selection of the presidential race and subsequent decision to do a full hand count was the result of pressure from the president.

"Even before the Trump campaign was talking about the possibility of a recount or recanvassing, we knew that there was a specific purpose for an audit in the law. That specific purpose was to instill confidence in the outcome of that election," Sterling said at a news conference Thursday.

The audit is a new requirement that was included in a 2019 law that also provided guidelines that the state used to purchase a new election system from Dominion Voting Systems for more than \$100 million. Doing a hand count of the nearly 5 million votes cast in Georgia during the Nov. 3 election is a massive task.

"It's a tremendously bold undertaking, to hand count every ballot cast in a presidential contest, on basically an entirely new voting system, in the middle of a pandemic. It's not a small enterprise," said Mark Lindeman, the interim co-director of Verified Voting, a nonpartisan group that tracks voting technology and is providing technical support for Georgia's audit.

Chris Harvey, elections director for the secretary of state's office, sought during a training call Thursday to assuage any apprehension county election officials might be feeling.

"Keep in mind through all this stuff what we're doing is relatively simple," he said. "We're identifying votes and counting pieces of paper."

For the audit, county election staffers will work with the paper ballots in batches, dividing them into piles for each candidate. Then they will count each pile by hand, Fuchs said. Sterling had said Wednesday that the ballots would be counted by machine.

During the training call, county election officials were shown a video with children demonstrating how it would work.

For the tally, ballots are distributed in batches to teams of two auditors. The first auditor picks up the ballot, reads the selection for the presidential race out loud and passes it to the second auditor who also reads the name out loud before putting it in a pile corresponding to that candidate, according to the video.

Some ballots are set aside to be checked by a bipartisan review panel, including those where the auditors can't agree on the voter's intent and those with write-in candidates.

Once the auditors finish sorting the ballots into piles, the first auditor picks up a ballot and counts it out loud before passing it to the second auditor who does the same as they sort the ballots for each candidate into piles of 10 for easy tallying, according to the video.

After they've counted all the votes, they record the total for each candidate and return the ballots to their box.

The process of deliberately saying the candidate name and count out loud is meant to help avoid mistakes, said Ginny Roest with VotingWorks, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that focuses on building a voting and auditing system and is helping the secretary of state's office.

Sterling said the final numbers found in the audit count will almost definitely be slightly different than the numbers previously reported by the counties but that the overall outcome should remain the same. The results will not be released piecemeal as the counties finish counting but instead will be announced once the full tally is complete, he said. The results of the new count from the audit is what will be certified.

There is no mandatory recount law in Georgia, but state law provides that option to a trailing candidate if the margin is less than 0.5 percentage points. Biden's lead stood at 0.28 percentage points as of Thurs-

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day afternoon.

Once the results from the audit are certified, the losing campaign can request that recount, which will be done using scanners that read and tally the votes, Raffensperger said.

Associated Press writer Ben Nadler in Atlanta contributed reporting.

Tropical Storm Eta races off Carolinas after soaking Florida

By CURT ANDERSON and FREIDA FRISARO Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Tropical Storm Eta raced off the Southeast Atlantic seacoast late Thursday, spreading heavy rains and gusty winds around the Carolinas only hours after blustering across north Florida.

One death in Florida was linked to the storm, along with some scattered flooding and forecasters said the tropical storm was on a path offshore of South Carolina that would eventually take it further out to sea.

The storm system triggered flash flooding, multiple water rescues and road closures, and at least one collapsed bridge in South Carolina, said Sandy LaCourte, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Greenville, South Carolina.

"It's unfortunately been a tough day for the Carolinas today," LaCourte said.

Some parts of the Carolinas saw three to seven inches (7.5 to 17 centimeters) of rainfall already by Thursday afternoon with more expected. That came amid a combination of moisture from the Gulf of Mexico being carried up by a cold front that had pushed Eta across Florida earlier.

At 10 p.m., the storm was centered about 65 miles (100 kilometers) east-southeast of Charleston, South Carolina. It had top sustained winds of 45 mph (17 kph) and was moving to the northeast at 17 mph (28 kph). The National Hurricane Center in Miami said Eta was expected to pick up forward speed in the next day or so as it pulls away from the Southeast seaboard.

Earlier Thursday, Eta was in the Gulf of Mexico when it slogged ashore near Cedar Key, Florida. It then moved northeast across Florida in a matter of hours before crossing over into the Atlantic, forecasters said.

Although it was not the most powerful storm to hit the U.S. this year, Eta had broad impacts across the Tampa Bay region on Florida's Gulf Coast, buffeting an area of more than 3.5 million people with gusty winds and rain.

In Bradenton Beach, Florida, Mark Mixon stepped into his flooded garage as he was laying sandbags around his home Wednesday evening and was electrocuted, said Jacob Saur, director of public safety for Manatee County. There were appliances plugged into the garage and Mixon was killed when he stepped into the water, Saur said.

The storm earlier forced the closure of some lanes of Tampa Bay bridges because of storm surge but they began reopening Thursday. Also reopened was the Sunshine Skyway Bridge in the region.

Earlier, firefighters in Tampa had to rescue around a dozen people who got stuck in storm surge flooding on a boulevard adjacent to the bay. Some vehicles remained on the roadway Thursday. Isolated neighborhoods also experienced enough flooding to evacuate.

J.P. Brewer, owner of Salty's Gulfport, was cleaning up after her beachside restaurant flooded early Thursday.

"It was pretty bad last night when I came in," she said, adding that there were already 3 to 4 inches (8 to 10 centimeters) of water inside by just before high tide. "We're in here doing our cleanup today and assessing the damage. I think we fared pretty well considering as bad as it looked last night."

Several sailboats broke free from their moorings and washed ashore in Gulfport, Florida, including the vessel where Mo Taggart has lived for two years with her dog. She thinks the boat is a total loss.

"I mean, it was disaster," Taggart said. "I mean, I came out here. My boat's just up against the seawall, just smashing, smashing ... I need to get another boat. I want to be back on the water, (my dog) wants to be back on the water."

The storm had made an earlier landfall in South Florida on Sunday after lashing Central America and Mexico with deadly force. Before that first brush with Florida, Eta first hit Nicaragua as a Category 4 hurricane and killed at least 120 people in Central America and Mexico, with scores more missing.

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It was the 28th named storm of a busy Atlantic hurricane season, tying the 2005 record for named storms. A 29th named system, Tropical Storm Theta, was centered late Thursday about 440 miles (705 kilometers) south of the Azores and moving east. It had top sustained winds of 60 mph (95 kph).

This extraordinarily busy season has focused attention on climate change, which scientists say is causing wetter, stronger and more destructive storms.

Frisaro reported from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Associated Press photographer Lynne Sladky and video reporter Cody Jackson contributed to this report from Pinellas County and AP reporter Michelle Liu contributed from Columbia, S.C.

Asian shares drop amid worries over spreading COVID-19 cases

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares have opened lower as rising cases of coronavirus infections in the U.S., Europe and Asia add to worries that economies will once again be hamstrung by pandemic restrictions on travel and businesses.

Reports of surging COVID-19 cases have had a sobering effect on markets that had advanced on hopes for a vaccine and expectations that pro-business policies will continue after last week's U.S. elections.

"It feels a bit deflated today as investors look to hunker down for what is bound to be a winter of discontent. But beyond the market concerns, the vaccine cannot get here quick enough as what should be a festive time of the year looks bound to be weeks of holiday gloom," Stephen Innes of Axi said in a report.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 sank 1.0% to 25,254.31. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 fell 0.5% to 6,383.70. South Korea's Kospi edged 0.2% lower to 2,471.26. Hong Kong's Hang Seng slipped 0.8% to 25,958.49, while the Shanghai Composite dipped 1.3% to 3,294.57.

In Japan, where the pandemic had been relatively under control at fewer than 2,000 cumulative deaths, the number of reported daily cases nationwide reached a record for the country on Thursday, at more than 1,660 people. Especially affected were Tokyo and the northern island of Hokkaido, raising worries that a recent government campaign to discount domestic travel might have been a cause.

Outbreaks in many parts of the world have doused optimism over early results for a potential vaccine that had investors envisioning a possible return to normal. Such hopes have been tempered by a recognition that hurdles remain before the vaccine can become widespread, with medical workers and those with health risks likely getting access to such protection first.

Pessimism over scant chances the Democrats and Republicans will manage to reach agreement on further economic stimulus before the end of the year is another factor pulling shares lower, said Nobuhiko Kuramochi, market strategist at Mizuho Securities.

On the Tokyo Stock Exchange, issues related to real estate, transportation and energy were all falling, he said.

On Wall Street, the S&P 500 index fell 1%, to 3,537.01. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 1.1% to 29,080.17 and the Nasdaq composite lost 0.7%, to 11,709.59.

The trend is worsening in the U.S., in almost every state. In New York, for example, the state is ordering restaurants, bars and gyms to close at 10 p.m., beginning Friday.

New York was devastated by the virus earlier this year but seemed to have gotten it largely under control. In Europe, several governments have brought back even tougher restrictions that will likely restrain the economy.

Declines in U.S. Big Tech stocks, which have held out well throughout much of the pandemic, helped pull the market lower. Microsoft and Facebook each slipped 0.5% on Wall Street.

In energy trading, benchmark U.S. crude lost 45 cents to \$40.67 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It lost 33 cents to \$41.12 on Thursday. Brent crude, the international standard, fell 43 cents to \$43.10 a barrel.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar edged down to 104.88 Japanese yen from 105.13 yen late Thursday.

The euro cost \$1.1810, up from \$1.1803.

AP Business Writers Stan Choe and Daimian J. Troise contributed.

Justice Dept.: 'Poor judgment' used in Epstein plea deal

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Justice Department report has found that former Labor Secretary Alex Acosta exercised “poor judgment” in handling an investigation into wealthy financier Jeffrey Epstein when he was a top federal prosecutor in Florida. But it also says he did not engage in professional misconduct.

The 350-page report, obtained by The Associated Press, marks the culmination of an investigation by the Justice Department’s Office of Professional Responsibility into Acosta’s handling of a secret plea deal with Epstein, who had been accused of sexually abusing dozens of underage girls.

Though the report faulted Acosta for his judgment, it concluded that his actions in arranging the deal did not constitute misconduct, and that none of the prosecutors involved committed misconduct in their interactions with the victims. The conclusions are likely to disappoint the victims, who have long hoped the internal investigation would hold Justice Department officials accountable for actions they say allowed Epstein to escape justice.

In a statement, Acosta expressed vindication at the report’s conclusion that he had not committed misconduct, saying it “fully debunks” allegations that he had cut a sweetheart deal for Epstein. He said the report confirmed that his decision to open an investigation into Epstein had resulted in a jail sentence and a sex offender registration for the financier.

“OPR’s report and public records document that without federal involvement, Epstein would have walked free,” Acosta said in the statement.

Under the 2008 non-prosecution agreement — also known as an NPA — Epstein pleaded guilty to state charges in Florida of soliciting and procuring a minor for prostitution. That allowed him to avert a possible life sentence, instead serving 13 months in a work-release program. He was required to make payments to victims and register as a sex offender.

Epstein was later charged by federal prosecutors in Manhattan for nearly identical allegations in 2019, but he took his own life while in federal custody as he awaited trial. Acosta said the “Epstein affair” was vastly “more lurid and sweeping” than when he was first involved, an allusion to some of the high-profile names referenced in media reports as friends or associates of Epstein, and the fact that more evidence has now been assembled as additional victims have come forward.

In a separate statement, Marie Villafana, who was a lead prosecutor in the Florida investigation, said she was pleased OPR had completed the report but was “disappointed that it has not released the full report so the victims and the public can have a fuller accounting of the depth of interference that led to the patently unjust outcome in the Epstein case.

“That injustice, I believe, was the result of deep, implicit institutional biases that prevented me and the FBI agents who worked diligently on this case from holding Mr. Epstein accountable for his crimes,” she said.

Brad Edwards, an attorney for several of Epstein’s victims, called the report a “disappointing sidestep of the issue. He said the Justice Department “appears to have backed in to a desired result that is difficult to reconcile with the facts.”

“We are left still wondering why Jeffrey Epstein got the sweetheart deal he did and who exactly made the decision to transform a lengthy sex trafficking indictment into a non-prosecution agreement,” Edwards said.

The report was also condemned by Republican Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska, who has questioned Justice Department officials about the plea deal repeatedly.

“Letting a well-connected billionaire get away with child rape and international sex trafficking isn’t ‘poor judgment’ – it is a disgusting failure. Americans ought to be enraged,” Sasse said. “Jeffrey Epstein should be rotting behind bars today, but the Justice Department failed Epstein’s victims at every turn.”

The OPR investigation centered on two aspects of the Epstein case — whether prosecutors committed

misconduct by resolving the allegations through a non-prosecution agreement, and also whether they failed to keep victims adequately in the loop on developments in the case.

The report concluded that prosecutors did not commit misconduct in their interactions with the victims because there was no "clear and unambiguous duty" to consult with them before entering into the non-prosecution agreement. But it says the lack of consultation reflected poorly on the Justice Department and "is contradictory to the Department's mission to minimize the frustration and confusion that victims of a crime endure."

The internal probe also concluded that Acosta's decision to resolve the federal investigation through the non-prosecution agreement constituted poor judgment. Investigators found that although it was within his broad discretion and did not result from "improper factors," the agreement was nonetheless "a flawed mechanism for satisfying the federal interest that caused the government to open its investigation of Epstein."

Still, the report concluded that Acosta had the authority as U.S. attorney "to resolve the case as he deemed necessary and appropriate, as long as his decision was not motivated or influenced by improper factors."

The office said its investigation had turned up no evidence that Acosta was swayed by "impermissible considerations, such as Epstein's wealth, status, or associations" and in fact had resisted efforts by defense lawyers to return the case to the state for whatever outcome the state wanted.

The report also did not find that a well-publicized 2007 breakfast meeting with one of Epstein's attorneys led to the non-prosecution agreement — which had been signed weeks earlier — "or to any other significant decision that benefited Epstein." Records reviewed by the professional responsibility office show that prosecutors weighed concerns about witness credibility and the impact of a trial on victims, as well as Acosta's concerns about the Justice Department's proper role in prosecuting solicitation crimes.

"Accordingly," the report said, "OPR does not find that Acosta engaged in professional misconduct by resolving the federal investigation of Epstein in the way he did or that the other subjects committed professional misconduct through their implementation of Acosta's decisions."

Associated Press writer Jim Mustian in New York contributed to this report.

States ramp up for biggest vaccination effort in US history

By CANDICE CHOI and MICHELLE R. SMITH Associated Press

With a COVID-19 vaccine drawing closer, public health officials across the country are gearing up for the biggest vaccination effort in U.S. history — a monumental undertaking that must distribute hundreds of millions of doses, prioritize who's first in line and ensure that people who get the initial shot return for the necessary second one.

The push could begin as early as next month, when federal officials say the first vaccine may be authorized for emergency use and immediately deployed to high-risk groups, such as health care workers.

"The cavalry is coming," Dr. Anthony Fauci said Thursday on ABC's "Good Morning America." He said he hopes shots will be available to all Americans in April, May and June.

Pfizer also boosted hopes this week, saying early data suggests its vaccine is 90% effective. But the good news came in one of the grimmest weeks of the pandemic so far. Deaths, hospitalizations and new infections are surging across the U.S. — and turning up the pressure to get the vaccine effort right.

In Philadelphia, the health department is counting how many health care workers and others would be among the first in line. In Louisiana, officials are planning a remote exercise this week to play out different scenarios exploring how the process might unfold.

"If you get 10,000 doses, what are you going to do, versus 100,000 doses?" said Dr. Frank Welch, director of Louisiana's immunization program.

State and local officials are also planning for the likelihood that the first shipments will not be enough to cover everyone in high-priority groups.

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Similar preparations are happening at the federal level. Welch listened in last week on a “war gaming” session by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For the vaccination effort to get off the ground, state officials have been readying systems to track supplies and who has been vaccinated. That information will be fed into a national network and will be critical in giving federal health officials an up-to-date picture of vaccinations around the country.

Providers such as pharmacies and doctors’ offices will also need to be able to look up records, so people do not have to return to the same place for their second shot. More than one vaccine could also become available, and doses cannot be mixed and matched.

“We not only have to bring people back for a second dose, but need to make sure that we have very good records of which vaccine they received the first time,” said Dr. Jinlene Chan of Maryland’s health department.

States already have immunization registries, which will be used for COVID-19.

To better understand whether at-risk groups are getting vaccinated, the CDC wanted providers to report the race and ethnicity of the people they vaccinate. But pharmacies and other providers that do not always collect that information objected.

“We have to be careful not to put too many administrative burdens on providers that are already stressed,” said Mitchel Rothholz of the American Pharmacists Association, an industry group.

He said providers have been told they will have the option to leave that information out.

Providers will also have to report vaccination information daily, which will be an adjustment for those that typically enter data weekly or every couple of weeks, state officials said.

To help people find doses in their area, the CDC wants to put information on a vaccine finder website, which will be updated each day with the latest inventory.

Supplying that inventory information might be a staffing strain for some providers, including a hospital in Utah that said it only has one person who currently enters the information, said Jon Reid, who manages the state’s immunization registry.

“And they don’t do it every day. They do it whenever,” Reid said. State officials in Utah plan to update the inventory, rather than ask each provider to enter it, he said.

States are also working to expand the number of pharmacies, doctors’ offices and other providers that can administer COVID-19 vaccines, to ensure shots are conveniently available.

But enrollment can be time-consuming, Reid said, because providers often need help filling out forms, getting technical systems working and going through inspections to ensure they can meet storage requirements. The Pfizer vaccine needs to be kept at minus 70 degrees Celsius (minus 94 F).

Given the hurdles, Reid does not expect smaller pharmacies to become COVID-19 vaccine providers.

Because of the likely need for two doses given three or four weeks apart, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is considering ways of helping Americans remember the second shot, including issuing cards that people would get with their first shot, akin to the polio immunization cards many older Americans remember carrying.

Many people will likely need additional prodding.

In a rural part of South Carolina, one community health center is planning multiple reminders, including text messages and calls from health workers.

Still, “there will still be some that slip through the cracks,” said Ann Lewis, CEO of CareSouth Carolina, which runs the health centers.

Distributing doses is another issue. The Pfizer vaccine, which could be the first to get the green light, comes in shipments of nearly 1,000 doses.

“A minimum of 1,000 doses makes it very difficult to get smaller facilities vaccinated,” said Rich Lakin, director of Utah’s immunization program.

Shipments might go to a hospital that is easily accessible to health care workers from multiple sites, Lakin said.

“They may have to drive to that hospital to get the vaccine,” he said.

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In North Dakota, providers receiving fewer than 1,000 doses will have them shipped to a state warehouse that can maintain the ultra-cold storage.

"We'll break them down into the smaller quantities and then drive them to the provider," said Molly Howell, the state's immunization director.

State and local health departments will break up and redistribute shipments of other vaccines, which are expected to require orders of at least 100 doses, for smaller providers that do not need that many. But even if distribution goes smoothly, officials worry people will not want the shots.

"If there's going to be any real challenge, to be honest with you, it's going to be convincing folks to get the vaccine," said Patrick Peer, who runs the Good Neighbor Community Health Center in Columbus, Nebraska.

So far, states have received far less money than they say they need for vaccine distribution, and it's unclear if any more federal help is coming. Public health groups estimate that an additional \$8.4 billion is needed to pay for staff, data systems and outreach and supply costs.

In rural Minnesota this fall, masked nurses in traffic vests reached into cars to give passengers flu shots. The drive-thru clinic was a way to social distance in the pandemic, but it also served as a test run for someday administering a COVID-19 vaccine.

Carlton County has purchased mobile vaccination stations to prepare for similar mass clinics for the coronavirus. But county health officials are also suddenly dealing with a spike in cases, and many questions remain unanswered, including when a vaccine might arrive and how many doses there will be.

"It's all kind of up in the air," said Jenny Barta, a public health nurse specialist.

Virus surge: Schools abandon classes, states retreat

By MICHELLE R. SMITH and SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

School systems in Detroit, Indianapolis, Philadelphia and suburban Minneapolis are giving up on in-person classes, and some governors are reimposing restrictions on bars and restaurants or getting more serious about masks, as the coast-to-coast resurgence of the coronavirus sends deaths, hospitalizations and new infections soaring.

The crisis deepened at hospitals, with the situation so bad in North Dakota that the governor this week said nurses who test positive but have no symptoms can still work. Idaho clinics struggled to handle the deluge of phone calls from patients. And one of Utah's biggest hospital systems is bringing in nearly 200 traveling nurses, some of them from New York City.

The virus is blamed for more than 242,000 deaths and over 10.5 million confirmed infections in the U.S., with the country facing what health experts say will be a dark winter because of disregard for mask-wearing and other precautions, the onset of cold weather and crowded holiday gatherings.

"It should frighten all of us," Dr. David Peterman, CEO of Idaho's Primary Health Medical Group, said of the virus numbers. "It's easy to look at TV, and say, 'I'm not in the intensive care unit, my grandmother's not in the intensive care unit.' But if I say to you your doctor cannot treat your child with an ear infection because I cannot answer your phone call, or your doctor is on quarantine, or our clinics are full with people with coronavirus?"

Deaths per day in the U.S. have soared more than 40% over the past two weeks, from an average of about 790 to more than 1,100 as of Wednesday, the highest level in three months.

That is still well below the peak of about 2,200 deaths per day in late April, in what may reflect the availability of better treatments and the increased share of cases among young people, who are more likely than older ones to survive a bout with COVID-19.

But newly confirmed cases per day in the U.S. have rocketed more than 70% over the past two weeks, reaching an average of about 127,000 — the highest on record. And the number of people hospitalized with the virus hit an all-time high of more than 65,000.

Amid the staggering numbers, some state leaders maintained a hands-off approach, pushing "personal responsibility" rather than government-imposed restrictions such as mandatory mask-wearing.

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Reflecting what has largely been a divide between red and blue states, Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt of Oklahoma has refused to impose a mask mandate, citing concerns about enforcement and a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Instead, he held a news conference this week with doctors who implored residents to wear masks.

In North Dakota, nurses opposed GOP Gov. Doug Burgum's move to allow health care workers who test positive to remain on the job, saying scientifically proven measures such as a mask mandate should be tried first. Burgum has declined to do that.

In Idaho, Republican Gov. Brad Little also resisted calls for a statewide mask requirement even as health clinics grappled with dozens of staff absences and thousands of calls from people seeking help.

In other states, officials have tightened restrictions, though not as much as when the virus first hit in the spring.

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot called on residents to cancel Thanksgiving gatherings, limit all social gatherings to 10 people, and stay home except for essentials, like work or getting groceries, starting on Monday.

Minnesota joined states including New York in ordering bars and restaurants to close by 10 p.m. Wisconsin's governor this week advised people to stay home. Utah's governor put in place a statewide mask mandate, while Indiana's governor extended his state's mask rule for another month.

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy said Thursday he will sign an executive order to give towns and cities the option to limit hours at nonessential businesses after 8 p.m. The mayor of Newark, New Jersey, imposed a 9 p.m. curfew for residents of three hard-hit ZIP codes.

Maine Gov. Janet Mills joined governors of six other states in the Northeast in suspending interstate youth hockey games.

Philadelphia dropped plans to start bringing students back to school on Nov. 30. Michigan's largest school district, Detroit, said it will suspend in-person classes next week for its roughly 50,000 students, joining other districts that have shifted to online-only classes.

"The district relied on science and the data to reopen schools for in-person learning this summer and fall and relied on the same to decide that it was no longer safe for our students and employees to work in an in-person school environment," Detroit Superintendent Nikolai Vitti said.

In New York City, the looming threat of a shutdown of the 1.1-million-student school system had families and teachers watching case numbers closely. Mayor Bill de Blasio has said that in-person schooling will be halted if the rate of tests coming back positive for the virus in the city reaches 3%.

Associated Press writers Sophia Tareen in Chicago and Rebecca Boone in Boise, Idaho, contributed to this story.

A few cracks but no big GOP break with Trump on Biden's win

By STEVE PEOPLES, LISA MASCARO and KATHY McCORMACK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The most powerful Republicans in Washington stood firmly behind President Donald Trump and his unsupported claims of voter fraud on Thursday, but new cracks emerged among GOP leaders elsewhere who believe it's time to treat Democrat Joe Biden like the president-elect he is.

New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu, who endorsed Trump's reelection, became the latest Republican official to say what Trump and his allies refuse to accept. The GOP governor acknowledged that Biden's lead is getting "bigger and bigger by the day" and Trump's legal options are dissipating.

"Joe Biden is the president-elect, and I think like most Americans, we suspect he'll be taking the oath of office in January," Sununu told reporters, insisting there was no legal fraud in his state, which Biden easily carried.

Separately, and party arguing aside, the state and federal officials and election technology companies that run U.S. elections declared Thursday that the Nov. 3 national election was "the most secure in American history." The Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency said, "There is no evidence that any voting system deleted or lost votes, changed votes or was in any way compromised."

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In a barely veiled shot at Trump and his supporters, the agency said Americans should have confidence in the results although “we know there are many unfounded claims and opportunities for misinformation about the process of our elections.”

That’s a departure from the overwhelming majority of Republican officials who still refuse to publicly accept Biden’s victory. The resistance is complicating Biden’s effort to lead a smooth transition to the January inauguration, keeping him from the funding and agency resources typically afforded to an incoming administration.

But some Republicans, worried about the national security implications of those hurdles, are beginning to say that Biden should at least have access to intelligence briefings so he has the most complete information about threats facing the country when he takes office.

“I think — especially on classified briefings — the answer is yes,” said the Senate’s most senior Republican, Chuck Grassley of Iowa. That echoed comments by South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham and Oklahoma Sen. James Lankford, among other GOP colleagues.

However, Grassley also said he saw no reason for Biden to have fuller transition access, sticking with an approach from the disputed 2000 election that was later blamed as a national security shortcoming in the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

The Republicans willing to break publicly with Trump’s unprecedented effort to undermine the election remain an extremely small minority. Just a handful of the Senate’s 53 and five of the 28 Republican governors had publicly recognized Biden as the president-elect as of Thursday afternoon.

Many Trump allies in Washington see no path to a Trump victory but remain wary of crossing the outgoing Republican president — or his supporters — especially with control of the Senate still uncertain.

Trump turned out a record 72 million voters in the presidential election, which shattered the previous record yet fell 5 million votes short of Biden. Republican leaders believe they need to keep Trump and his base happy and engaged ahead of two upcoming Georgia runoff elections that will determine the Senate majority.

That’s likely why, even in the face of overwhelming evidence of Biden’s victory, senior Republicans continue to support the president’s claims even as he loses a mounting number of legal challenges.

GOP Leader Kevin McCarthy suggested Thursday that Biden doesn’t need intelligence briefings because Trump might remain president in the new year.

“He’s not president right now, don’t know if he will be Jan. 20, but whoever is will get the information,” McCarthy said of Biden at his weekly press conference.

Biden’s victory is not actually an open question. He’s already cleared the 270 Electoral College votes to clinch the presidency.

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.

Trump’s campaign has also launched legal challenges complaining that its 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 again, none of the complaints show any evidence that the outcome of the election was impacted.

Privately, Republicans on Capitol Hill signaled they would let Trump spin out his election lawsuits and claims for several weeks until states certify the election results by early December and the Electoral College meets Dec. 14.

But beyond Washington, several high-profile Republicans were not willing to wait that long, particularly as good-government advocates warn that a Trump fight to undermine the election results for selfish reasons

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could do lasting damage to American democracy.

"I am deeply troubled at the general acceptance of unproven allegations that undermine our electoral system," Utah's incoming Gov. Spencer Cox wrote on Twitter, citing the significant number of Democrats who doubted the legitimacy of Trump's 2016 election victory. "It was wrong then, and it's wrong now."

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, who endorsed Trump's reelection, said earlier in the week that Americans should honor the election outcome only after the president's legal challenges had been exhausted. By Thursday, he had seen enough.

"We need to consider the former vice president as the president-elect," DeWine told CNN. "Joe Biden is the president-elect."

George W. Bush, the only living former Republican president, acknowledged Biden's victory on Sunday. And on Thursday, Bush's former chief strategist Karl Rove penned an op-ed in The Wall Street Journal entitled, "This Election Result Won't be Overturned."

Bush's successor in the White House, Democrat Barack Obama, said Thursday that he was less troubled by Trump's expected behavior than "that other Republican officials who clearly know better are going along with this, are humoring him in this fashion."

"It is one more step in delegitimizing not just the incoming Biden administration, but democracy generally. And that's a dangerous path," Obama said in an excerpt from an interview airing Sunday on CBS' "60 Minutes."

Biden, meanwhile, continues to shrug off Trump's refusal to accept the election outcome.

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

Peoples reported from New York and McCormack from Concord, New Hampshire. Julie Carr Smyth in Columbus, Ohio, Amy Hanson in Helena, Montana, and Mary Clare Jalonick in Washington contributed.

Casey rides the buzz of Masters history to 65 and early lead

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Already seven months behind schedule because of the pandemic, the most unusual Masters was 30 minutes old Thursday when the silence was interrupted by a rumble down by Amen Corner.

No roars this week. Just thunder. And then a weather delay of nearly three hours.

All that, and it was still worth the wait.

Paul Casey matched his lowest score at the Masters with a 7-under 65, giving him a two-shot lead among half the field fortunate to play in perfect scoring conditions. Tiger Woods matched his lowest start, a 68, and kept a bogey-free card in a major for the first time in 11 years.

The course was different than what they expected, a result of the rain and the calendar. The silence was exactly what they expected because majors haven't had spectators in 16 months.

But it was still the Masters.

"So many people like myself are just excited to play this," Casey said. "This is a treat. It always has been and always will be a real treat."

No doubt, the absence of roars was as eerie as the sound of a drone that approached the first tee as Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player prepared to hit their ceremonial tee shots. The Masters is using two drones this year, a first.

"A lot of firsts today. That's kind of the way this entire year has been," Woods said. "The fact that we're able to compete for a Masters this year, considering all that's been going on, it's a great opportunity for all of us."

Casey found energy from the familiarity of the course, from the history, from the mystique. And it was enough to carry him to a round he needed on a day — a partial day — of low scoring. Twelve of the 48

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players who finished shot in the 60s.

Woods, a notorious slow starter despite his five green jackets, had one moment where he thought trouble might lurk. It was the fifth hole, which he bogeyed all four rounds last year when he won the Masters. He hit a low fade off the tee that left him 227 yards to the hole.

"Hit a 4-iron to the back edge and it only rolled out a foot," Woods said. "That doesn't happen here."

The biggest crowd — about 100 people in this case — was two groups ahead of Woods watching Bryson DeChambeau smash shots into trees and one shot into the azaleas bushes behind the 13th green. He was lucky to find it because his provisional shot went into the creek. He still made double bogey, though he managed to scratch out a 70.

So much action, typical of the Masters, and so little volume.

And for so many players, they wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

"I was vocal earlier in the year about not enjoying golf in a pandemic," Casey said. "I didn't know how the fan-less experience would be and so far, I've not enjoyed it. I've had nothing, or very little, to draw on from being out playing tournament golf. The Masters, though, this week it still has a buzz to it. There's an energy and a little bit of vibe.

"Yes, it's clearly a lot less than what we're used to. But there's something about this place. I felt excited to be here."

The excitement for Casey began on the fearsome 10th hole when he hit his approach to a front pin about 5 feet away for birdie. He had eagle chances on both par 5s on the back nine and settled for birdies. He took on a left pin at the par-5 second with a 6-iron and watched the ball plop 6 feet away for eagle.

"You can't hit that shot in April," he said. "It pitched and stopped instantly, and that shot in April would have one-hopped over into the patrons."

Webb Simpson played a tidy round, making eagle on No. 2 after the turn and finishing with seven pars for a 67. He was joined by Xander Schauffele, a runner-up to Woods last year, who had seven birdies in his round of 67.

"You're going at pins that you wouldn't really feel that comfortable with," Schauffele said. "There's so many spots where your ball will stay. It was just really strange."

Lee Westwood wasn't sure he would ever make it back to the Masters, earning a ticket back with his tie for fourth in the British Open last summer. The best player without a major showed he still has some life at age 47. He shot 31 on the front and limited the damage on the back for a 68, joining the group that included Woods, former Masters champion Patrick Reed, Hideki Matsuyama and Louis Oosthuizen.

Dustin Johnson, the world's No. 1 player, was among those who played in the afternoon and had to return Friday morning to finish. He opened with an eagle on No. 2 and was 3 under at the turn. Justin Thomas started with three straight birdies and was at 5 under through 10 holes.

Rory McIlroy also played in the afternoon, made bogey on his first hole and was struggling to make birdies. He was even par at the turn, which felt worse on a day like this.

The delay was the last thing the Masters needed with limited daylight hours leading to the two-tee start. Every minute counts, and it was doubtful 36 holes could be completed by Friday.

The loudest cheer — applause, certainly not a roar — came for Nicklaus and Player hitting tee shots so early that they couldn't see where they landed. Five groups got through one hole before the siren sounded to stop play for 2 hours, 45 minutes. And then players began to light up the course as the clouds moved to the east and those famous shadows from Georgia pines stretched across the fairways.

It looked just the Masters, minus the spring blooms, even if it didn't sound like one.

EXPLAINER: Is Georgia's upcoming ballot 'audit' a recount?

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Georgia says it's going to be tallying — by hand — nearly 5 million ballots that were cast in its very close presidential election on Nov. 3. But is it a recount? An "audit"? And why are they doing it?

It's all a bit confusing, but election experts say what's happening in Georgia is unlikely to change the

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outcome and are warning that discrepancies in the final vote count are likely. That doesn't mean anything nefarious happened. Experts say some discrepancies are expected when so many votes are counted a second time using an entirely different method — hand versus machine.

While President Donald Trump has been making unsubstantiated claims of fraud as he challenges the election's outcome, Georgia's secretary of state, Brad Raffensperger, has defended the work of election officials in the state and said the review was unlikely to change the outcome. Unofficial results show Democrat Joe Biden leading Trump by about 14,000 votes.

Here's more:

IS THIS AN OFFICIAL RECOUNT?

No. State election officials have said this is not a recount, but rather a post-election audit.

The main difference between the two: A recount is typically tied to a close margin in an election, whereas post-election audits are routine and used by states to ensure that equipment and procedures counting the vote all worked properly.

In Georgia, for instance, a recount is conducted using the same scanners that read and tallied the unofficial results already released. And recounts in Georgia generally take place after election results are certified by the state. That hasn't happened yet. Once an election is certified, a trailing candidate can request a recount if the margin is less than 0.5 percentage points. Biden currently leads by 0.28 percentage points, so Trump could still request a recount later.

SO WHAT IS GEORGIA DOING, THEN?

The post-election audit is being held under a new state law that required one to be conducted for the first time this year on a race of the secretary of state's choosing. Raffensperger said he selected the presidential contest given the "national significance of this race and the closeness of this race."

The specific type of audit that Georgia has chosen is known as "risk-limiting." It involves checking paper ballots against machine tallies to ensure the accuracy of those machines. This year was the first time Georgia used a fleet of ballot-marking, voting machines that produce a paper record of every ballot cast in person.

Risk-limiting audits typically start with an initial sample of ballots. That sample increases depending on the level of discrepancies that are found. This kind of audit ends when either election officials reach a certain level of confidence that the outcome is correct or a full count has been performed. It is not meant to produce results that are an exact match to a previous tally.

But Georgia election officials say they will be reviewing every ballot to start. They say it will be easier for county officials to manage because the large number of ballots and the close margin are likely to result in a tally of every ballot anyway.

WAS THIS PROMPTED BY ALLEGATIONS OF FRAUD?

No. Raffensperger has said repeatedly that his office has seen no evidence of widespread fraud with the Nov. 3 election. A top official said Thursday that the point of the audit was "to show the equipment scanned the ballots properly and the counts we got were the right counts."

Nevertheless, it's hard to ignore the high stakes surrounding the decision.

Before the decision to conduct the audit was announced, Trump allies in the state sent Raffensperger, a fellow Republican, a letter requesting that he order a hand recount before certifying the results. State election officials have said the decision to do the audit was being discussed prior to the letter.

In addition, Raffensperger has faced calls to resign by Georgia's two U.S. senators, both Trump supporters facing close runoff elections that could determine which party controls the U.S. Senate next year.

WHEN DOES THIS BEGIN, AND HOW SOON WILL WE KNOW THE OUTCOME?

Counties must begin the process no later than 9 a.m. Friday, a week before the state's deadline to certify the election.

The state is asking for counties to complete the hand tally by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m. It's a tight turnaround time. Representatives from each party will be allowed to watch the process, although they will not be permitted to challenge any ballots.

State election officials said they would not be releasing interim tallies and would announce results after the hand tally was complete.

COULD VOTE TALLIES CHANGE?

Yes. Both election experts and the Georgia secretary of state's office have said the final vote tallies will almost certainly be different than the unofficial results reported previously. "The outcome will change slightly at the end, more than likely," says Gabriel Sterling with the secretary's office.

Hand counts are generally less reliable than machine counts, according to Larry Norden, an elections expert with the Brennan Center for Justice. "Humans make mistakes," Norden says, adding that the margin between Biden and Trump meant it was unlikely that the overall outcome would change. "It's extremely unlikely you are going to find enough discrepancies to overcome 14,000 votes, and at the end of the day that is what matters."

State election officials have said the results of the hand tally will be used to ultimately certify the election.

Christina A. Cassidy covers voting and election security for The Associated Press. Follow her on Twitter at http://twitter.com/AP_Christina

Prosecutor reads racist messages by Ahmaud Arbery's killer

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

BRUNSWICK, Ga. (AP) — The man who fatally shot Ahmaud Arbery had previously used racial slurs in a text message and on social media, a prosecutor said Thursday as a judge weighed whether to grant bond for the defendant and his father.

Travis McMichael and his father, Gregory McMichael, have been jailed since their arrests in May, more than two months after Arbery was slain. The McMichaels, who are white, chased and fatally shot the 25-year-old Black man after they spotted him running in their neighborhood just outside the port city of Brunswick.

Questions about whether racism played a role in the killing sharpened during a previous hearing when an investigator testified that a third defendant, who took cellphone video of the shooting, told authorities he heard Travis McMichael, 34, utter a racial slur after he blasted Arbery three times with a shotgun.

In the courtroom Thursday, Zachary Langford — a friend of Travis McMichael's since boyhood — testified his friend was a jokester who got along with everyone and had at least one Black friend.

Then prosecutor Jesse Evans asked Langford about a text message Travis McMichael had sent him last year that used a slur for Black people when referring to a "crackhead ... with gold teeth."

Langford at first said he didn't recall receiving the message. Then after reviewing a transcript of the exchange, he answered: "He was referring to a raccoon, I believe."

Evans also cited a photo Langford posted to Facebook last year to which Travis McMichael replied: "Sayonara," along with an offensive term for Asians followed by an expletive. Langford said he didn't recall that, either.

Defense attorneys for both McMichaels have denied any racist motives in the shooting. Right after the Feb. 23 shooting, Gregory McMichael told police that he and his son armed themselves and got in a pickup truck to pursue Arbery because they suspected he was a burglar.

"These men are proud of what they have done," Arbery's mother, Wanda Cooper-Jones, told the judge as she asked him to deny them bond. "They want to go home because they think in their selfish minds that they are the good guys."

Prosecutors say Arbery was merely jogging when the McMichaels pursued him. Their defense attorneys insisted in court Thursday that's not true.

"We have substantial evidence that, on the day in question, Mr. Arbery was not a jogger," said Robert Rubin, one of Travis McMichael's attorneys. "He was there for nefarious purposes."

Rubin gave no evidence in court that Arbery was doing anything wrong the day he was shot.

Langford's wife, Ashley Langford, testified that Travis McMichael expressed remorse about shooting Arbery.

"He told me he wished it never happened like that," she said. "He prayed for Ahmaud's mother and his

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family daily.”

Superior Court Judge Timothy Walmsley adjourned court Thursday evening without a bond decision because there was still more evidence to be presented. He planned to continue the hearing Friday.

The McMichaels weren't arrested until the cellphone video of the shooting leaked online and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation took over the case. In June, a grand jury indicted both McMichaels and a neighbor, William "Roddie" Bryan, on charges.

Each is charged with malice murder, felony murder, aggravated assault, false imprisonment and criminal attempt to commit false imprisonment.

Travis McMichael's mother, Lee McMichael, testified that he lived with her and his father, has a 4-year-old son and doesn't have a passport. His attorneys cited his past service as a U.S. Coast Guard mechanic as proof of his character.

"In no way, shape or form is Travis hateful towards any group of people, nor does he look down on anyone based on race, religion or beliefs," Curt Hall, a former Coast Guard roommate of Travis McMichael who described himself as "multiracial," wrote in a letter supporting bond for his friend.

Gregory McMichael, 64, is a retired investigator for the Brunswick Judicial Circuit district attorney's office and a former Glynn County police officer.

The McMichaels' attorneys are also asking the judge to reject the indictment's malice murder charge, saying it was written in a way that improperly "charges two crimes in one count." They made a similar argument for tossing out a charge of criminal attempt to commit false imprisonment.

Bryan was previously denied bond. His attorney has argued in court motions that the entire indictment should be dismissed.

Republican senators push for Biden to receive intelligence

By DEB RIECHMANN and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As President Donald Trump refuses to allow President-elect Joe Biden to receive intelligence briefings — even those he was getting during the campaign — an increasing number of Trump's allies are calling for Biden to have access to the information.

"I just don't know of any justification for withholding the briefing," Texas Sen. John Cornyn, a member of the Senate intelligence committee, said Thursday.

"I see no problem with that," said Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley, the Republican Party's longest-serving senator.

"I think so, yes," said Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham, one of Trump's closest confidants, when asked if Biden should be briefed.

The Senate Republicans advocated for Biden to receive the classified national security information even as they refused to acknowledge that the Democrat has won the presidential election, citing Trump's baseless claims of fraudulent votes.

"At this point at least, I think he should absolutely be getting intelligence briefings," Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley said of Biden. "The briefings he's been getting as a candidate should continue. I think he should continue to get what he's been getting and then let's get on with the resolutions on some of these disputes."

The GOP pile-on supporting the intelligence briefings amounted to miniscule cracks in support for Trump as he refuses to concede the race, but was also in line with Republicans' occasional, carefully worded answers about his actions during his presidency. While only a handful of Republicans have called Biden the president-elect, most were comfortable Thursday challenging the Trump administration on withholding intelligence information, which could constitute a national security risk when Biden assumes office.

"Both sides need to have access to the information because we don't know who the president is going to be, so allow that part of this process to still continue just for the sake of national security," said Sen. James Lankford, echoing Trump's unsubstantiated claims of voting problems.

Lankford said he would pressure Trump administration bureaucrats to move ahead with the process of transition so Biden could be read in on classified matters. He said Wednesday that he would "get involved" if that didn't move forward.

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For now, the office of National Intelligence Director John Ratcliffe, a loyal ally to Trump, says it can't begin talking with the Biden transition team until the government starts that transition process. But the Trump administration is delaying it.

Ratcliffe's office, which oversees more than a dozen U.S. intelligence agencies, said it must follow the Presidential Transition Act, which requires the General Services Administration to first ascertain the winner of the election, which Trump is contesting without evidence. GSA administrator Emily Murphy, who was appointed by Trump, has not yet officially designated Biden as the president-elect.

Intelligence agencies have given generalized intelligence briefings — minus information on covert operations and sources and methods — for presidential nominees since 1952. President Harry S. Truman authorized them for both parties' candidates because he was upset about not learning about the U.S. effort to develop an atomic bomb until 12 days into his presidency.

Biden was receiving those briefings, along with counterintelligence briefings, but is no longer getting that information, according to a person familiar with the process who was not authorized to discuss it publicly. A spokesman for Biden's transition team declined to comment.

Biden has played down the significance of the delay in getting access to the intelligence.

"Look, access to classified information is useful. But I'm not in a position to make any decisions on those issues anyway," Biden said Tuesday. "As I said, one president at a time. He will be president until Jan. 20. It would be nice to have it, but it's not critical."

Biden is familiar with the President's Daily Brief, having read the most sensitive intelligence document prepared for U.S. officials during his eight years as vice president. But threats are ever-changing and as Inauguration Day nears, his need for Trump to let him get eyes on the classified information will become more critical.

National security and intelligence experts say they hope Trump changes his mind, citing the need for an incoming president to be fully prepared to confront any national security issues on Day One.

U.S. adversaries can take advantage of the country during an American presidential transition, and key foreign issues will be bearing down on Biden the moment he steps into the Oval Office in January.

For example, unless Trump extends or negotiates a new nuclear arms accord with Russia before Inauguration Day, Biden will have only 16 days to act before the expiration of the last remaining treaty reining in the world's two largest nuclear arsenals. Perhaps U.S. spies have picked up tidbits about the Russians' red lines in the negotiations or about weapons it really wants to keep out of the treaty.

That's the type of information that might be in the daily summary of high-level, classified information and analysis on national security issues that's been offered to presidents since 1946.

Having access to it also could help Biden craft a possible response to North Korea, which has a history of firing off missiles or conducting nuclear tests shortly before or after a new president takes office.

Biden, a former vice president, has decades of experience in foreign affairs and national security. But he probably has not been privy to the latest details about how Iran is back to enriching uranium or the active cyber attack operations of Russia, China and Iran. China's crackdown on Hong Kong is heating up. The threat from Islamic extremists, although curbed, still remains.

The 9/11 Commission Report on the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks warns of the danger in slow-walking presidential transition work in general, not just the intelligence piece. The George W. Bush administration didn't have its deputy Cabinet officers in place until the spring of 2001 and critical subcabinet positions were not confirmed until that summer — if then, the report said.

"President-elect Joe Biden and his transition team should not suffer a similar delay," John Podesta, who served as White House chief of staff under Clinton, and Bush's chief of staff Andrew Card wrote this week in *The Washington Post*. "We have since learned the serious costs of a delayed transition."

Associated Press writer Amer Madhani in Washington and Will Weissert in Wilmington, Delaware, contributed to this report.

Vatican calling: Pope congratulates Joe Biden on election

By WILL WEISSERT and DAVID CRARY Associated Press

It's not exactly divine intervention, but even the pope considers the U.S. presidential race over.

President-elect Joe Biden, a lifelong Roman Catholic, spoke to Pope Francis on Thursday, despite President Donald Trump refusing to concede. Trump claims — without evidence — that the election was stolen from him through massive but unspecified acts of fraud.

Biden's transition team said in a statement that the president-elect thanked Francis for "extending blessings and congratulations and noted his appreciation." He also saluted the pontiff's "leadership in promoting peace, reconciliation, and the common bonds of humanity around the world."

Biden said he hopes to work with Francis on issues such as climate change, poverty and immigration.

News of the call came even as some Catholic bishops in the U.S. decline to acknowledge Biden's victory and argue that the faithful should not back him because of his support for abortion rights.

On Tuesday, for example, Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas, tweeted that Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris support "the slaughter of innocents" at any point during pregnancy.

Biden has said he accepts church doctrine about abortion on a personal level, but does not want to impose that belief on everyone.

Biden has had several phone calls this week with foreign leaders, including British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel. They have congratulated him on winning and consider the election settled.

Having the pope on board, too, likely has special significance for Biden.

He is just the second Catholic to be elected president in U.S. history, and the first since John F. Kennedy. Biden speaks frequently and openly about the importance of faith in his life and attends Mass near his home in Wilmington, Delaware, nearly every week.

No matter their faith, American politicians are often eager to meet with the pope when traveling near Rome, though Francis declined to meet with Trump's secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, in September, citing rules against such sit-downs during election periods. Francis last visited the U.S. in 2015.

Known for advocating for openness on issues like gay rights, the environment and religious tolerance, Francis has been embraced by some liberals as furthering their causes.

In its statement, the Biden transition team said the president-elect told the pontiff he would like to work together to further "a shared belief in the dignity and equality of all humankind on issues such as caring for the marginalized and the poor, addressing the crisis of climate change, and welcoming and integrating immigrants."

The Vatican issued no statement confirming the call.

The U.S. ambassador to the Holy See is Callista Gingrich, whose husband, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, has been among the vocal supporters of Trump as he refuses acknowledge Biden's victory.

In the election, 50% of Catholic voters backed Trump and 49% favored Biden, according to VoteCast, a survey of more than 110,000 voters nationwide conducted for The Associated Press by NORC at the University of Chicago.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through the Religion News Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

McEnany wears 2 hats as WH press secretary, campaign adviser

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A White House press secretary who refers questions to the White House?

Kayleigh McEnany is wearing two hats, one as a Trump 2020 campaign adviser and the other as the White House press secretary, charged with articulating the administration's policies and positions to the press and the public.

The dual role raises questions about the appropriateness of taking on both tasks while drawing a taxpayer-

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financed salary of \$183,000 a year.

And it has created some odd moments. On Thursday morning, McEnany appeared on Fox News as a campaign adviser and punted when asked if President Donald Trump should be providing President-elect Joe Biden access to the President's Daily Briefing on top intelligence matters.

"Well, I haven't spoken to the president about that, so that would be a question more for the White House," she said.

Joe Lockhart, who served as White House press secretary under President Bill Clinton, tweeted that McEnany's "behavior is both outrageous and damaging." He called for House lawmakers to conduct an inquiry.

But Noah Bookbinder, executive director of the private Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, said he did not believe McEnany was in violation of the Hatch Act, the law that prohibits federal employees from engaging in political activities while they are working in an official capacity. Bookbinder said McEnany bolstered her position by not taking a question about White House policy in the Fox interview.

"If she says that she is speaking in a campaign role and not in her official role, and she refuses to answer questions about official White House issues, it's hard to see how she is using her official role for politics, and it looks like, at least as a technical matter, not a violation of the Hatch Act," Bookbinder said.

Bookbinder's group has been highly critical of Trump administration officials when it comes to abiding by the Hatch Act.

It has filed complaints against acting Department of Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf and Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue. It has also alleged previously that McEnany used her official position to engage in a political attack aimed at hurting Biden before the election.

When it comes to McEnany's recent campaign work, Bookbinder said it was not a technical violation of the law. Rather, he described it as "unfortunate, problematic and bad for the country" because she was disputing "clear election results on behalf of a campaign that is over."

McEnany responded to her critics by tweeting from her personal account.

"When you enter government, you do not lose First Amendment rights. Hatch Act says to separate govt & political activity, which I diligently work to do," she tweeted. "Reporters (who ironically have freedom of press embedded in the 1st Amendment), are complaining about my 1A right to speech!"

McEnany did not respond to follow-up questions about how much of her time is spent on her job as press secretary versus her work as a campaign adviser, and whether she is continuing to collect her full government salary.

With Trump largely staying out of the public eye since losing his reelection bid, McEnany has embraced being the campaign's messenger, appearing at a press conference and on Fox News in her "personal capacity" to raise unfounded allegations of voter fraud.

The campaign has filed at least 17 lawsuits in various state and federal courts. Most make similar claims that have not been proved to have affected any votes, including allegations that Trump election observers didn't have the access they sought or that mail-in ballots were fraudulently cast.

Claire Finkelstein, a law professor at the University of Pennsylvania, was skeptical that McEnany avoided Hatch Act violations by stipulating that she was speaking in her personal capacity. She said that's particularly the case for someone who oversees messaging from the White House.

"In certain positions you just can't separate yourself as an individual from your official duties," Finkelstein said.

"At the very least," she added, "the appearance of impropriety is great there."

75-foot spruce to be NYC's Rockefeller Center Christmas tree

ONEONTA, N.Y. (AP) — The 75-foot (23-meter) Norway spruce that will anchor New York City's holiday festivities as the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree was cut down in upstate New York on Thursday and will soon be headed to Manhattan.

The tree was donated by Al Dick of Daddy Al's General Store in Oneonta, developer Tishman Speyer said

in a release. It will be trucked to New York City and erected at Rockefeller Center on Saturday.

Details about the tree-lighting ceremony will be released in the coming days, the developers said.

"This year, we just feel the tree is vital," Tishman Speyer CEO Rob Speyer said, alluding to the coronavirus pandemic that has forced the cancellation of other holiday traditions like the Radio City Christmas Spectacular.

Speyer said the company is "particularly proud to continue the joyous tradition this year."

Fever, symptom screening misses many coronavirus cases

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer

Temperature and COVID-19 symptom checks like the ones used at schools and doctor's offices have again proved inadequate for spotting coronavirus infections and preventing outbreaks.

A study of Marine recruits found that despite these measures and strict quarantines before they started training, the recruits spread the virus to others even though hardly any of them had symptoms. None of the infections were caught through symptom screening.

The study, published Wednesday in the New England Journal of Medicine, has implications for colleges, prisons, meatpacking plants and other places that rely on this sort of screening to detect infections and prevent outbreaks.

"We spent a lot of time putting measures like that in place and they're probably not worth the time as we had hoped," said Jodie Guest, a public health researcher at Atlanta's Emory University who had no role in the research.

"Routine testing seems to be better in this age group" because younger adults often have no symptoms, she said.

The study was led by researchers from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York and the Naval Medical Research Center.

It involved 1,848 Marine recruits, about 90% of them men, who were told to isolate themselves for two weeks at home, then in a supervised military quarantine at a closed college campus, The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina, for two more weeks. That included having a single roommate, wearing masks, keeping at least 6 feet apart and doing most training outdoors. They also had daily fever and symptom checks.

The recruits were tested for coronavirus when they arrived for the military quarantine and 7 and 14 days afterward. Sixteen, or about 1%, tested positive on arrival and only one had any symptoms. Another 35 -- an additional 2% -- tested positive during the two-week military quarantine and only four had symptoms.

Only recruits who tested negative at the end of both quarantine periods were allowed to go on to Parris Island for basic training.

Genetic testing revealed six separate clusters of cases among the recruits.

"A lot of the infection that occurs, we don't even realize it is occurring," said one study leader, Navy Cmdr. Andrew Letizia, a doctor at the Naval Medical Research Center.

The quarantine measures and adherence to them were far more strict than what would occur at a typical college campus, said another study leader, Mount Sinai's Dr. Stuart Sealfon.

"This is a really infectious virus. You really need to use a combination of good public health measures, temperature checks, mask wearing, social distancing, hand washing ... and comprehensive testing" to prevent spread, he said.

Previously, federal officials said a screening project to check temperatures and symptoms at U.S. airports caught fewer than 15 cases out of 675,000 travelers. It's not known how many cases were missed, just that very few were detected.

A separate study published Wednesday in the New England journal reports on an outbreak last spring on the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt. Among the crew of 4,779, mostly young people, 1,271 became infected; 77% did not show symptoms when diagnosed and 45% never developed any.

The case shows that "young, healthy persons can contribute to community spread of infection, often silently," Dr. Nelson Michael of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research wrote in a commentary.

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.

This story was first published on Nov. 11, 2020. It was updated on Nov. 12, 2020 to correct the percentage of infected Roosevelt crew members who never developed symptoms to 45%, not 55%.

Key role for Black policy leaders on Biden's transition team

By KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Black policy leaders will play a pivotal role in President-elect Joe Biden's transition, marking one of the most diverse agency review teams in history.

Of the 500-plus team members announced this week, more than half are women, and Black men and women are leading more than one-quarter of the teams.

The diversity is significant because the teams will be responsible for evaluating the operations of federal agencies that have a broad impact on Americans' lives. And it's especially important because Biden will take office at a time when the United States is confronting a historic pandemic, joblessness and police brutality -- crises that have disparately impacted Black Americans.

"The agency review process will help lay the foundation for meeting these challenges on Day One," said Tony Allen, a transition advisory board member and president of historically Black Delaware State University. "We are building a team to reflect America and these Black leaders are dedicated experts in their fields."

The teams announced by Biden this week will lay much of the groundwork so the thousands of new staffers and appointees starting work in January will have a road map and guidelines for how to continue the federal government's work without pause. The teams face hurdles because President Donald Trump has yet to publicly acknowledge Biden's victory and his administration has prevented a formal start to the transition.

The makeup of the teams is a sign that Biden is focused on rewarding Black voters for their support in the election. Black voters powered Biden and his running mate, California Sen. Kamala Harris, to victory in critical states such as Michigan and Pennsylvania.

They were also instrumental in Georgia, a longtime GOP bastion where Biden holds a narrow lead.

"The Biden coalition owes a debt to Black folks," said Niambi Carter, a Howard University political science professor. "Black people helped them survive the primary and then in this election cycle they showed up in key states like Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin that really pulled Joe Biden over the line. So absolutely, I think this is an attempt by not just Biden but also the Democratic Party to keep Black people in the fold."

Many of the review team appointees are graduates of historically Black colleges and universities.

They include Charmion Kinder, who will help lead or guide transition efforts at the Commerce Department. Kinder was a White House press aide to first lady Michelle Obama and served as a public affairs appointee at the departments of Commerce and Housing and Urban Development.

Patrice Simms will lead the transition effort for the Environmental Protection Agency. He is a prominent environmental attorney and legal scholar who was a deputy assistant attorney general in the Obama Justice Department's environment and natural resources division.

Civil rights leaders and activists have pledged to push Biden's administration to create more progressive policies on criminal justice, housing, the economy and more.

Black Lives Matter co-founder Patrisse Cullors, in a letter this week, congratulated Biden and Harris on their victory and sought a meeting to discuss "commitments that must be made to Black people."

"Without the resounding support of Black people, we would be saddled with a very different electoral outcome," Cullors wrote. "In short, Black people won this election. ... We want to be heard and our agenda to be prioritized. We issue these expectations not just because Black people are the most consistent and reliable voters for Democrats, but also because Black people are truly living in crisis in a nation that was

built on our subjugation.”

UN: 870K measles cases in 2019, highest number in 23 years

LONDON (AP) — The number of children sickened by measles in 2019 was the highest in 23 years, according to new data published by the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In a study published on Thursday, WHO and CDC said there were nearly 870,000 cases of measles last year, and the number of deaths — about 207,500 — increased by almost 50% since 2016. Officials blamed the record number of cases on a significant drop in vaccination; children must receive two doses of the measles vaccine to avoid being sickened by the highly contagious disease.

“These data send a clear message that we are failing to protect children from measles in every region of the world,” said WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in a statement.

To prevent measles outbreaks, WHO estimates about 95% of the population must be immunized. Vaccination coverage using two measles vaccines has stalled between about 70% and 85% globally.

WHO and CDC warned that the global efforts to stop the coronavirus pandemic have also complicated measles vaccination campaigns, allowing the disease to spread further. The agencies said that, as of this month, more than 94 million people in 26 countries are at risk of missing their measles shots because of paused measles vaccination campaigns — and many of those countries are suffering ongoing epidemics.

Of countries with delayed immunization services this year, only eight have restarted: Brazil, Central African Republic, Congo, Ethiopia, Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines and Somalia.

Measles mostly strikes children under five and can be fatal in those who are malnourished or have compromised immune systems. While more than 95% of deaths caused by measles occur in developing countries, the disease routinely causes large outbreaks across Europe every year.

Appeals court clears Harvard of racial bias in admissions

By COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Harvard does not discriminate against Asian American applicants, a federal appeals court ruled Thursday in a decision that offers relief to other colleges that consider race in admissions, but also sets the stage for a potential review by an increasingly conservative U.S. Supreme Court.

The decision came from two judges on the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston who rejected claims from an anti-affirmative action group that accused the Ivy League University of imposing a “racial penalty” on Asian Americans. The judges upheld a previous ruling clearing Harvard of discrimination when choosing students.

It delivers a blow to the suit’s plaintiff, Students for Fair Admissions, a nonprofit that aims to eliminate the use of race in college admissions. In a statement, the group’s president, Edward Blum, said he was disappointed but that “our hope is not lost.”

“This lawsuit is now on track to go up to the U.S. Supreme Court where we will ask the justices to end these unfair and unconstitutional race-based admissions policies at Harvard and all colleges and universities,” Blum said.

Both sides have been preparing for a possible review by the Supreme Court, and some legal scholars say the issue is ripe to be revisited.

Filed in 2014, the lawsuit has revived a national debate about race’s role in college admissions. In multiple decisions spanning decades, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that colleges can consider race as a limited factor in order to promote campus diversity. But the practice faces mounting challenges in the courts, including three suits from Students from Fair Admissions.

Many elite colleges consider applicants’ race and give an edge to some underrepresented students to promote diversity on campus. The Trump administration has opposed the practice and backed the lawsuit against Harvard. In October, the Justice Department filed a similar suit accusing Yale University of

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discriminating against Asian American and white applicants.

In Thursday's decision, however, the judges ruled that Harvard's admissions process passes legal muster and aligns with requirements that the Supreme Court laid out in previous cases.

"The issue before us is whether Harvard's limited use of race in its admissions process in order to achieve diversity in the period in question is consistent with the requirements of Supreme Court precedent. There was no error," the judges wrote.

Blum, a legal strategist, has spent years working to rid racial considerations from college admissions. Before the Harvard case, he orchestrated an unsuccessful fight challenging the use of race at the University of Texas. In that case, a white student said she was rejected by the university because she was white.

Several Asian American groups filed legal briefs supporting Harvard, while some others filed briefs backing the suit and alleging discrimination in Ivy League admissions.

The suit alleges that Harvard's admissions officers use a subjective "personal rating" to discriminate against Asian Americans who apply to the school. Using six years of admissions data, the group found that Asian American applicants were given the highest scores in an academic category but received the lowest scores on the personal rating.

The group's analysis found that Harvard accepted Asian Americans at lower rates than any other racial group, while giving preference to Black and Hispanic students with lower grades. The lawsuit also alleged that Harvard works to keep a consistent racial breakdown among new students, which the organization says amounts to illegal "racial balancing."

Harvard denies any discrimination and says it considers applicants' race only in the narrow way approved by the U.S. Supreme Court. In close calls between students, some underrepresented students may get a "tip" in their favor, school officials have said, but students' race is never counted against them.

After a three-week trial that cast new light on Harvard's secretive selection process, a federal judge ruled that other factors could explain why Asian Americans are admitted at lower rates than other students. In her 2019 ruling, District Judge Allison D. Burroughs said Harvard's admissions process is "not perfect" but concluded that there was "no evidence of any racial animus whatsoever."

A three-judge panel of the appeals court heard arguments in September, but one of the judges, Juan Torruella, died in October before the case was decided. The ruling notes that Torruella heard oral arguments but did not participate in issuing the decision.

The judges agreed with a district court finding that Harvard's personal rating is not influenced by race. Although the rating may be correlated with race, the judges wrote, the link is more likely to be caused by outside factors including students' personal essays or letters of recommendation.

Ultimately, the judges wrote, Asian American identity has a statistically insignificant effect on admissions probability, and they concluded that Harvard does not place outsized emphasis on race.

"Harvard has demonstrated that it values all types of diversity, not just racial diversity," the judges wrote. "Harvard's use of race in admissions is contextual and it does not consider race exclusively."

The decision received praise from the American Council on Education, an association of university presidents, which called it a "clear win" for Harvard and other universities.

Some legal scholars, however, believe that the current makeup of the Supreme Court may be more likely to place tighter limits around the use of race in admissions or to forbid the practice entirely.

The three Supreme Court justices appointed to the court by President Donald Trump have pushed the nation's highest court more conservative than when it last ruled in favor of the consideration of race in college admissions in 2016.

Along with the Harvard case, the Virginia-based Students for Fair Admissions is also suing to rid racial considerations at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a separate case at the University of Texas at Austin.

Associated Press writer Mark Sherman in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

Grief, anger, disbelief: Trump voters face Biden's victory

By TAMARA LUSH, ADAM GELLER and MICHELLE PRICE Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — When Joan Martin heard that Joe Biden had been declared the winner of the presidential election, the retired nurse and avowed supporter of President Donald Trump was deeply unsettled. To steel herself, she thought about how her household weathered Hurricane Katrina when it battered her hometown of Picayune, Mississippi, in 2005.

As the storm blew toward the town, Martin rushed out into her yard to carry her 85 show chickens to safety. Outside, howling winds lashed her family's barn, lifting the edges of the roof off its moorings.

"The next day they (the chickens) were very concerned about the changes in the yard — we had trees down," said Martin, 79. "They were very eyes-wide. But within two days, they said, 'Oh, yeah, we can deal with this,' and they did. So I have to follow their lead."

Across the country, many of the 71.9 million people who voted for Trump — especially his loyal, passionate base — are working through turbulent emotions in the wake of his loss. Grief, anger and shock are among the feelings expressed by supporters who assumed he would score a rock-solid victory — by a slim margin, maybe easily, perhaps even by a landslide.

There is also denial. Many are skeptical of the results, saying they don't trust the media's race call for Biden, the way election officials counted the ballots, the entire voting system in America. Their views echo the unsupported claims Trump has made since Election Day.

This despite the fact that state officials and election experts say the 2020 election unfolded smoothly across the country and without widespread irregularities. Trump and other Republicans have pointed to isolated problems, but many are explained by human error. Many of the Trump campaign's legal challenges have been dismissed in court. And with Biden leading Trump by solid margins in key battleground states, none of those issues would have any impact on the outcome of the election.

Still, any fragment of possibility is enough for some Trump supporters to reject reality, feel aggrieved and rebuff Biden's calls for unity. Their comments lay out the political challenge ahead for the president-elect: The longer Trump casts doubt on the legitimacy of Biden's win, the harder it will be for the new president to unite a riven country, as he has said he wants to do.

"I'm really not in a live and let live mood," said Daniel Echebarria, a 39-year-old school teacher who lives in Sparks, Nevada.

Echebarria said he was surprised by the election results, questioned some of the numbers and would like to see the president continue with his legal challenges. But he also said he doesn't consider the result "a big rig job" and doesn't want to see Trump deny the results into January. Still, he's not feeling particularly united, either.

Echebarria said he believes Democrats never gave Trump a chance to govern and cites the Russia investigation and the impeachment trial as examples.

"I think that the president was prohibited from getting a lot of his agenda done because so much time and effort had to be put against defending against these," he said.

Several Trump supporters interviewed by The Associated Press in recent days were rankled by widespread celebrations of Biden's win in liberal cities. They saw hypocrisy in the public, outdoor gatherings after Democrats condemned Trump supporters for attending big rallies — some were held indoors — during the coronavirus pandemic.

"Sad" is how Lori Piotrowski sums up her mood. The president of the Boulder City Republican Women club in Nevada at first sounds much like any other deflated supporter.

"You always want your candidate to win. You're a little let down. You worked hard," she said.

But Piotrowski also described herself as "extremely" surprised by the result of the election. She's struggling to reconcile her version of the campaign with the results. She says she saw so many images of large Trump rallies in the final days. On a recent drive from Las Vegas to Reno — through rural, GOP-leaning Nevada — she saw only Trump signs and banners, she said.

"The votes didn't reflect that amount of enthusiasm. I just find that very surprising," she said. "It makes me wonder."

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Biden won Nevada by racking up votes in the state's urban areas.

Piotrowski, like many Trump supporters, wants to see Trump's legal challenges continue. A massive surge in mail voting and the slower tally of those votes made the vote count look unfamiliar and strange. Piotrowski said it concerns her that races were called with so many ballots outstanding, although that is often the case.

"It just seems to me that there's a lot of things that can be improved in the system so that people felt more confident," she said.

She said she hasn't listened to any of Biden's speeches since Election Day.

Za Awng, of Aurora, Colorado, is also suspicious of the vote count.

Awng, who came to the U.S. as a refugee from Myanmar, has embraced Trump as a politician who echoes his conviction that China's influence in the world must be sharply curtailed, and as one who Awng says shares his Christian values.

This spring, Awng lost his job as a chef for two months when the pandemic forced the closure of the restaurant where he works. Back at work now, he credits Trump with working hard over the last four years to improve the economy. It was hard for him to grasp how the president could lose.

"I believe there is something wrong," he said, pointing to what appear to be Democratic shifts in the tally but were a result of mail-in votes being counted later. Democrats were more likely than Republicans to cast mail-in ballots after Trump baselessly declared mail voting fraudulent.

"I hope there will be counting again and maybe it will change," he said.

Even in less tense times, Jim Czebiniak seeks solace in hours of evening prayer. So when Czebiniak, an avid Trump supporter who lives in the upstate community of Knox, New York, heard that Biden had been declared the winner, he turned once again to worship in a search for answers.

"First of all, I went to the Lord and I asked him why, why is it going like this? The Lord said, 'Because I'm working on stuff. Just relax and let things work themselves out,'" said Czebiniak, 72, who is semi-retired from a career writing custom software.

"To quote what's-his-name from the Rolling Stones, Mick Jagger: 'You can't always get what you want,'" Czebiniak said.

Still, Czebiniak said he is far from ready to accept a Biden presidency. He cited several unsupported claims made by the Trump campaign.

"The election isn't really called yet," Czebiniak said, days after all the major U.S. television networks and the AP examined vote counts in key states to declare Biden the overall winner. "I don't trust anything that's going on there with all this vote counting."

Unlike many Trump supporters, Michelle Sassouni wasn't shocked by the outcome of the election or the aftermath.

The 29-year-old in Tampa, Florida, is an active member of her region's Young Republicans Club and a co-host of a video show, "Moderately Outraged." She floated the idea of Biden's nomination, and potential to win, months ago.

"Everyone laughed at me on the show," she said. With many liberal friends, she had seen the strong opposition to Trump. She even understands it somewhat. "I don't love everything he does, but I voted for him because I'm a Republican."

But Sassouni doesn't see danger in Trump's vow to fight the results in court. People need to be reassured of the results, and a court fight might give them confidence, she said.

"If you voted for Joe Biden, wouldn't you want to know that he won fair and square so that there's not this cloud over his head?" she asked. "If half the country believes there was some sort of election tampering, then that creates distrust in the system, that creates distrust in Western democracy as a whole."

Martin, the retiree in Mississippi, says she's planning to resume her daily life, tending to her animals and avoiding talking about the country's change in leadership as a way to deal with the stress and trepidation she feels.

"I'll go out in the yard to check and talk to my chickens and say my old-fashioned hymns and get by," she said.

Geller reported from New York and Price reported from Las Vegas.

UN migration agency: 74 drown after boat capsizes near Libya

By NOHA ELHENNAWY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — At least 74 migrants drowned after their Europe-bound ship capsized off the coast of Libya on Thursday, the U.N.'s migration agency said, in the latest in a series of at least eight shipwrecks in the Central Mediterranean since last month.

The boat was carrying over 120 migrants, including women and children, when it capsized off the coast of the Libyan port of al-Khums, said the International Organization for Migration. Only 47 people were rescued by the Libyan coast guard and fishermen and brought to shore.

So far 31 bodies were retrieved as the search for the remaining victims continued, added the IOM.

In the years since the 2011 uprising that ousted and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi, war-torn Libya has emerged as the dominant transit point for migrants hoping to get to Europe from Africa and the Middle East. Smugglers often pack desperate families into ill-equipped rubber boats that stall and founder along the perilous Central Mediterranean route. At least 20,000 people have died in those waters since 2014, according to the IOM.

"The mounting loss of life in the Mediterranean is a manifestation of the inability of States to take decisive action to redeploy much needed, dedicated Search and Rescue capacity in the deadliest sea-crossing in the world," said Federico Soda, IOM Libya Chief of Mission.

On Tuesday, 13 African migrants including three women and one child had drowned in a similar shipwreck off the Libyan coast.

The IOM said that it had noticed a recent surge in the number of departures from the Libyan shores, with over 780 arrivals in Italy since the beginning of October. More than 11,000 migrants had been intercepted and returned to Libya, where they face the risk of human rights violations and detention, read the IOM statement.

"IOM maintains that Libya is not a safe port for return and reiterates its call on the international community and the European Union to take urgent and concrete action to end the cycle of return and exploitation," added the statement.

The Weeknd to headline the Pepsi Super Bowl halftime show

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Weeknd will bring his popular falsetto vocals to the 2021 Pepsi Super Bowl Halftime Show.

NFL, Pepsi and Roc Nation announced Thursday that the three-time Grammy Award winner will be the headline performer on Feb. 7 at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida.

The Weeknd said he's humbled by the opportunity. He posted a photo of himself with the logo of the halftime show on social media to announce the news.

"We all grow up watching the world's biggest acts playing the Super Bowl and one can only dream of being in that position," the singer said in a statement. "I'm humbled, honored and ecstatic to be the center of that infamous stage."

The Weeknd broke through into mainstream with his smash hit "Can't Feel My Face" that was featured on his second studio album, "Beauty Behind the Madness," which topped the Billboard 200 in 2015 and won a Grammy. He's had three other chart-topping albums including his recent offering "After Hours," which was released in March.

Earlier this year, The Weeknd's hit single "Blinding Lights" became his fifth song to peak at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. He's also won Grammys for his album "Starboy" and the song "Earned It (Fifty Shades of Grey)."

"The Weeknd has introduced a sound all his own," said Jay-Z, founder of Roc Nation. "His soulful unique-

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ness has defined a new generation of greatness in music and artistry. This is an extraordinary moment in time and the Pepsi Super Bowl LV Halftime Show is going to be an extraordinary experience with an extraordinary performer."

Roc Nation and Emmy-nominated producer Jesse Collins will serve as co-executive producers of the halftime show. The game and halftime show will air live on CBS.

It's the second year of collaboration between the NFL, Pepsi and Roc Nation.

"We are thrilled to have The Weeknd join us in Tampa Bay on the Pepsi Halftime Stage," said Brian Rapp, the NFL's chief media and business officer. "Halftime show performances have a history of excellence and creativity and we look forward to seeing what he will bring to Super Bowl LV."

The Weeknd, whose real name is, Abel Tesfaye, joins a list of celebrated musicians who have played during Super Bowl halftime shows, including Madonna, Beyoncé, Coldplay, Katy Perry, U2, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Lady Gaga, Michael Jackson and last year's duo of Shakira and Jennifer Lopez.

Dems, GOP take different approaches on Georgia Senate blitz

By BILL BARROW and BEN NADLER Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Jon Ossoff took the stage in Columbus and looked out over a parking lot filled with cars, with supporters blaring their horns in approval as he declared that "change has come to Georgia."

Hours earlier, Republican Sen. Kelly Loeffler stepped to a microphone in suburban Atlanta and addressed hundreds of eager supporters packed into the Cobb County GOP headquarters. The freshman senator and her Florida colleague, Sen. Marco Rubio, stirred the crowd with their insistence that the change offered by Ossoff and his fellow Democratic Senate hopeful Raphael Warnock means "radical elements" would control Washington.

Those opening salvos of Georgia's twin Senate runoff campaign -- Ossoff looking to unseat Republican Sen. David Perdue and Warnock facing off with Loeffler -- showcase starkly different approaches the two parties are taking to the unusual circumstances that make this newfound two-party battleground the epicenter of a national battle for control of the Senate.

Both sides are playing to core supporters, the most reliable voters among the 5 million who split their ballots roughly evenly between the two parties in the first round. But for Democrats, it's seemingly a more piecemeal, voter-by-voter approach, while Republicans are pushing a broad branding message through mass media. Whichever strategy proves more effective on Jan. 5 will help determine the ambitions and reach of President-elect Joe Biden's tenure depending on which party ultimately controls the chamber.

Republicans need one of the Georgia seats for a majority. Democrats must win both to yield a 50-50 Senate, with Vice President-elect Kamala Harris then holding the tie-breaking vote.

"This is literally the showdown of all showdowns," Rubio told the Cobb County crowd, many of them not wearing masks as the Florida senator did. "This is Georgia's decision to make. But it's America that will live with the consequences."

Against that backdrop, the Democratic campaigns still are limiting the scope of their in-person events as coronavirus cases spike nationally, observing social distancing and mask protocols just as Biden did in his presidential bid. Meanwhile, they are quietly ramping up voter contact and registration efforts as they try to replicate their record turnout after Biden drew almost 2.5 million votes to lead President Donald Trump at the top of the ticket.

Republicans counter by reflecting their presidential standard-bearer, as well, even after his national defeat. They're embracing unrestricted in-person events just as Trump spent the closing weeks of the presidential campaign holding his signature mass rallies in battleground states across the country -- including two rallies in Georgia. And Republicans are using the events to embrace fully the nationalization of the runoffs, urging voters to see the choice as a simple one: A Senate with New York Democrat Chuck Schumer as majority leader or one with Kentucky Republican Mitch McConnell continuing in that role.

"Runoffs favor strong, well-organized campaigns," Ossoff campaign manager Ellen Foster told The Associated Press, explaining Democrats' tactical emphasis beyond their public events.

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In the days since the runoffs were confirmed, Foster said the campaign has made “tens of thousands of calls” to existing voters while hiring new staffers focused on registering new voters ahead of the Dec. 7 registration deadline. Their targets include an estimated 23,000 young Georgians who reach the legal voting age of 18 between the Nov. 3 general election and the January runoff.

The Democratic campaign also said it has almost 22,000 volunteers scheduled for more than 60,000 hours of volunteers shifts over the next two weeks.

To be sure, Republicans have an expansive campaign infrastructure to reach their voters, as well. But the opening days of the runoff campaign have been dominated publicly, at least, by sweeping attacks, from framing Ossoff and Warnock as too far left to questioning Georgia’s election process with Biden holding a narrow lead for the state’s 16 electoral votes.

Loeffler went so far Wednesday as to accuse Warnock of possessing “a Marxist ideology,” an over-the-top caricature that the Atlanta minister’s campaign spokesman Terrence Clark said was meant to “scare Georgians.” A day before, Loeffler had joined Perdue in a joint statement condemning Georgia’s vote-counting procedures as an “embarrassment” and calling for their fellow Republican, Brad Raffensperger, to step down as secretary of state.

In both instances, Republicans have been short on supporting details. But that’s not necessarily the point, and there’s no evidence the process will reverse Biden’s lead before the count is finalized and certified.

U.S. Rep. Doug Collins, who is leading Trump’s recount effort in Georgia after his own unsuccessful bid for Loeffler’s seat, said Republican voters are staying “fired up because they don’t want to see our country turn to a liberal perspective.”

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina told Fox News Channel’s “Fox & Friends” on Thursday that he’s donating \$1 million from his campaign to help Perdue and Loeffler, saying Republicans need to counter a “tsunami of liberal money” flowing into Georgia.

Democrats, meanwhile, hope the presidential result is a boon for runoff turnout simply because it validates, finally, party leaders’ perennial claim that Georgia is a genuine battleground state. Replicating the feat would run counter to the party’s history in recent decades, with Republicans proving more adept at maintaining enthusiasm for second-round voting.

“You know they say that we don’t show up for runoffs,” former Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin told Democrats this week at another Ossoff drive-in rally. “Well, we’re going to prove them wrong.”

Ghana’s former president Jerry Rawlings dies at 73

By FRANCIS KOKUTSE Associated Press

ACCRA, Ghana (AP) — Ghana’s former president Jerry Rawlings, who staged two coups and later led the West African country’s transition to a stable democracy, has died, according to the state’s Radio Ghana and the president. Rawlings was 73.

President Nana Akufo-Addo said that Rawlings died Thursday morning at the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital in the capital, Accra, where he had been receiving treatment after a short illness.

“A great tree has fallen, and Ghana is poorer for this loss,” he said in an official statement after sending condolences to the family and announcing that flags would fly at half-mast for 7 days as the nation prepares for a state funeral.

Rawlings was born in 1947 to a Scottish father and a Ghanaian mother who died in September at the age of 101. Rawlings, who trained as an air force officer, came to power in 1979 after leading his first coup, and then transferring power to civilian rule soon after.

In December 1981, he staged a second coup and was Ghana’s military leader until he introduced multi-party elections in 1992 that returned the country to democracy. He won the elections and was sworn in as president in 1993 and served two elected four-year terms, leaving office in 2001.

His longtime friend and later his rival, Maj. Kojo Boakye Gyan who served as spokesman for the party that took over after the first coup, told The Associated Press that Rawling’s death was a loss for Ghana.

“He was God’s gift to the country and I can only ask that God keeps his soul in peace,” said Gyan.

Soon after his death was announced, crowds started gathering at his Ridge Office in Accra. Rawlings is survived by his wife, Nana Konadu Agyeman, whom he met while at Achimota School. They have three daughters: Zanetor Rawlings, Yaa Asantewaa Rawlings, Amina Rawlings; and one son, Kimathi Rawlings.

Armenians protest Nagorno-Karabakh truce terms for a 3rd day

By AVET DEMOURIAN Associated Press

YEREVAN, Armenia (AP) — Thousands massed Thursday in Armenia's capital to protest the terms of a cease-fire agreement that gave territorial concessions to Azerbaijan in the long-running conflict over the separatist territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The rally marked the third straight day of demonstrations triggered by the truce to halt more than six weeks of deadly fighting between the two ex-Soviet nations. 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.

The Moscow-brokered agreement calls for Armenia to turn over control of some areas it holds outside Nagorno-Karabakh's borders to Azerbaijan.

It prompted celebrations in Baku, but angered Armenians, and many took to the streets soon after it was announced early Tuesday. Protesters stormed government buildings and demanded that the pact be invalidated.

At a large rally Wednesday, Armenian opposition parties and their supporters demanded that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian resign, calling the agreement he signed "treacherous" and "humiliating."

Late in the evening, lawmakers called an emergency session of parliament to consider Pashinian's dismissal but didn't have a quorum to follow through with it. Pashinian's faction holds 88 of 132 seats in parliament, and its members didn't show up.

Armenian authorities said Thursday they detained 10 opposition politicians on charges of fomenting mass unrest. Naira Zograbyan, a member of the Prosperous Armenia opposition party, said at Thursday's rally that those detained were political prisoners and expressed concern about further crackdowns on the opposition.

Crowds of people marched through the center of Yerevan and denounced Pashinian, chanting "Nikol, go away!" and "Nikol the traitor!" Over 60 people were detained, Russia's state news agency RIA Novosti reported.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been locked in a conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh for decades. Heavy fighting that flared up on Sept. 27 marked the biggest escalation in over a quarter-century, killing hundreds and possibly thousands of people.

Several cease-fires in the past six weeks failed to halt the violence, but the current agreement appeared to be holding, with neither side reporting any more fighting since it came into force.

The truce came days after Azerbaijan pushed deeper into Nagorno-Karabakh and took control of the city of Shushi, strategically positioned on heights overlooking the regional capital of Stepanakert.

While Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev called the agreement a "glorious victory," Pashinian insisted in a series of video statements that he had no other choice. On Thursday, he said he signed the pact after the military reported that "the war urgently needs to be stopped," and the separatist leader of Nagorno-Karabakh told him that "we could lose Stepanakert in a matter of hours."

Under the agreement, Russia began to deploy peacekeepers to the region — a total of 1,960 of them are to move in under a five-year mandate.

Turkey, which threw its weight behind Azerbaijan in the conflict and sought to play a more prominent role in the peace process, will be involved in monitoring the cease-fire.

Russian and Turkish defense ministers signed a memorandum Wednesday to create a joint monitoring center in Azerbaijan — a move announced earlier this week by Aliyev.

At the same time Russian officials underscored that Ankara's involvement will be limited to the work of

the center on Azerbaijani soil, and Turkish peacekeepers will not go to Nagorno-Karabakh.

"The center will operate remotely, using technical means of control, including drones, to determine the situation on the ground in Karabakh and determine which side is observing and which is violating the cease-fire," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.

Associated Press writer Daria Litvinova in Moscow contributed.

Russian city to demolish derided 'Robot' building

MOSCOW (AP) — A hulking, never-occupied building sardonically likened to a robot's head that has loomed over the Russian city of Kaliningrad for decades is to be demolished next year, the region's governor says.

The 21-story House of Soviets was left unfinished when funding ran out in 1985 amid the Soviet Union's economic struggles. The building, which later was assessed to be structurally unsound, and became one of the city's most widely known emblems, particularly when the fan zone for the 2018 World Cup matches in Kaliningrad was set up in a vast square next to it.

The Brutalist building's protruding covered balconies resembling two eyes and a mouth led to it being nicknamed "The Buried Robot."

Regional governor Anton Alikhanov said demolition is expected to begin early next year and that officials are discussing the possibility of making fragments of it available as souvenirs, the Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper reported Wednesday.

Kaliningrad is the administrative center of the Russian exclave of the same name, which is located between Poland, Lithuania and the Baltic Sea.

South Bronx restaurant turns into soup kitchen to help poor

By CLAUDIA TORRENS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The special dish at La Morada, a small Mexican restaurant in the Bronx, varies from day to day: Perhaps it's enfrijoladas, handmade tortillas covered with black bean sauce and pico de gallo. Or beef with a side salad.

One thing doesn't change: It's free.

The family-run restaurant, which opened in 2009 and has won Michelin acclaim for its Oaxacan food, has also served as a soup kitchen during the pandemic. In addition to serving paying customers, it makes about 650 meals a day for the unemployed, New Yorkers who live without gas and can't cook, older adults or the disabled.

The Mexican owners of the restaurant are activists who speak up in defense of immigrants without authorization to live in the U.S. — a sign, "No Deportations," hangs behind the door.

They describe the soup kitchen as fulfilling work.

"We always say that activism is our secret spice, so I feel like it was just very natural for us to serve the community with what we have," said Yajaira Saavedra, 32, co-owner of the restaurant with her parents. "It also goes back to our Indigenous roots when we all pitched in, gathered small ingredients and made a big pot as a meal."

The Bronx is among the areas hardest hit by the virus. When La Morada's soup kitchen opened in April, people lined up in the street and 200 soups were gone in less than an hour, the family said.

"We realized the necessity was huge. The next day, without thinking, we cooked double," said Saavedra's mother, Natalia Méndez.

The family was sickened with COVID-19 symptoms early in the pandemic, and had to close the restaurant for a month. When they reopened — with help from an online crowdfunding campaign — they started cooking for the poor, as well.

Their requests for emergency federal small business loans had been rejected due to their immigration status. The Small Business Administration says applicants for small business loans must be U.S. citizens or

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"qualified aliens," which includes immigrants lawfully admitted for permanent residence.

Saavedra is a beneficiary of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, which gives young immigrants who were brought to the country as children but never obtained legal residency the right to work and shields them from deportation.

Her parents are living in the country without authorization, having crossed the Sonoran Desert in 1992. Saavedra and brother Marco followed a year later with relatives. Marco, who also works in the restaurant, applied for asylum last year.

Before the pandemic, La Morada was a community book exchange center and had named a poet in residence. Images of protests and of immigrants demanding an end to deportations of family members decorate the restaurant's purple walls.

Today, volunteers and local service organizations, churches and businesses help distribute the food and donate ingredients, and a Brooklyn nonprofit, Rethink Food, provides key funds. The food is delivered to communities in need and to community fridges, a network of over a dozen refrigerators on New York sidewalks.

The soup kitchen runs Tuesday through Friday. On Mondays, Méndez and several helpers do prep work, cleaning and chopping lettuce, garlic, onions, tomatoes and other ingredients.

Volunteers come and go throughout the day, grabbing boxes of food to distribute. With the help of small local grants, the restaurant has even hired a few new employees.

"It is mostly the community pitching in and friends and allies just saying, 'We are going to do this, we are going to fight together and survive,'" Saavedra said.

"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>

In ruins, Syria marks 50 years of Assad family rule

By ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — On Nov. 13, 1970, a young air force officer from the coastal hills of Syria launched a bloodless coup. It was the latest in a succession of military takeovers since independence from France in 1946, and there was no reason to think it would be the last.

Yet 50 years later, Hafez Assad's family still rules Syria.

The country is in ruins from a decade of civil war that killed a half million people, displaced half the population and wiped out the economy. Entire regions are lost from government control. But Hafez's son, Bashar Assad, has an unquestioned grip on what remains.

His rule, half of it spent in war, is different from his father's in some ways — dependent on allies like Iran and Russia rather than projecting Arab nationalism, run with a crony kleptocracy rather than socialism. The tools are the same: repression, rejection of compromise and brutal bloodshed.

Like the Castro family in Cuba and North Korea's Kim dynasty, the Assads have attached their name to their country the way few non-monarchical rulers have done.

It wasn't clear whether the government intended to mark the 50-year milestone this year. While the anniversary has been marked with fanfare in previous years, it has been a more subdued celebration during the war.

"There can be no doubt that 50 years of Assad family rule, which has been ruthless, cruel and self-defeating, has left the country what can only be described as broken, failed and almost forgotten," said Neil Quilliam, an associate fellow at Chatham House's Middle East and North Africa program.

"RUTHLESS BUT BRILLIANT"

After his 1970 takeover, Hafez Assad consolidated power. He brought into key positions members of his Alawite sect, a minority in Sunni-majority Syria, and established a Soviet-style single-party police state.

His power was absolute. His Mukhabarat — or intelligence officers — were omnipresent.

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He turned Syria into a Middle East powerhouse. In the Arab world, he gained respect for his uncompromising position on the Golan Heights, the strategic high ground lost to Israel in the 1967 war. He engaged in U.S.-mediated peace talks, sometimes appearing to soften, only to frustrate the Americans by pulling back and asking for more territory.

In 1981, in Iraq's war with Iran, he sided with the Iranians against the entire Arab world backing Saddam Hussein — starting an alliance that would help save his son later. He supported the U.S.-led coalition to liberate Kuwait after Saddam's 1990 invasion, gaining credit with the Americans.

"He was a ruthless but brilliant man who had once wiped out a whole village as a lesson to his opponents," former U.S. President Bill Clinton, who met with Assad several times, wrote in his memoirs "My Life."

Clinton was referring to the 1982 massacre in Hama, where security forces killed thousands to crush a Muslim Brotherhood uprising.

The massacre, one of the most notorious in the modern Middle East, left hatreds that fanned the flames of another uprising against his son years later.

"A key element of the Assad regime's survival has been: No compromise domestically, exploit the geopolitical shifts regionally and globally, and wait your enemies out," said Sam Dagher, author of the book "Assad or we Burn the Country: How One Family's Lust for Power Destroyed Syria."

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Bashar Assad borrowed heavily from that playbook after his father's death in 2000. Unlike his father, critics say he repeatedly squandered opportunities and went too far.

First welcomed as a reformer and modernizer, Bashar, a British-trained eye doctor, opened the country and allowed political debates. He quickly clamped back down, faced with challenges and a rapidly changing world, beginning with the Sept. 11 attacks in America.

He opposed the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, worried he would be next. He let foreign fighters enter Iraq from his territory, fueling an insurgency against the U.S. occupation and enraging the Americans.

He was forced to end Syria's long domination of Lebanon after Damascus was blamed for the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Still, he tightened ties with Lebanon's Hezbollah.

Like his father, Bashar Assad elevated family to insulate his power — a younger, more modern generation, but one seen by many Syrians as more rapacious in amassing wealth.

The Assad family's gravest challenge came with the Arab Spring uprisings that swept the region, reaching Syria in March 2011.

His response to the initially peaceful protests was to unleash security forces to snuff them out. Instead, protests grew, turning later into an armed insurgency backed by Turkey, the U.S. and Gulf Arab nations. His military fragmented.

With his army nearing collapse, Assad opened his territory to Russia's and Iran's militaries and their proxies. Cities were pulverized. He was accused of using chemical weapons against his own people and killing or jailing opponents en masse. Millions fled to Europe or beyond.

For much of the world, he became a pariah. But Assad masterfully portrayed the war as a choice between his rule and Islamic extremists, including the Islamic State group. Many Syrians and even European states became convinced it was the lesser evil.

Eventually, he effectively eliminated the military threat against him. He is all but certain to win presidential elections due next year in the shattered husk that is Syria.

Still, Dagher said the war transformed Syrians in irreversible ways. An economic meltdown and mounting hardship may change the calculus.

"A whole generation of people has been awakened and will eventually find a way to take back the country and their future," he said.

As U.S. election results rolled in, showing Joe Biden the winner, memes by Syrian opposition trolls mocked how the Assads have now outlasted nine American presidents since Richard Nixon.

"In my life, my fellow Syrians had to vote four times for the only president on the ballot ... Hafez Assad. His son is still president. After migration to the U.S., I voted for six different presidents," wrote Zaher

Sahloul, a Chicago-based Syrian-American doctor who left Syria in 1989. "I wish that my homeland will witness free elections one day."

Hafez Assad's legacy might have looked quite different had he not shoe-horned Bashar into succeeding him, Quilliam said.

"It would not have been favorable, but Bashar's legacy will overshadow Assad's legacy and make it synonymous with cruelty, willful destruction of a great country and the brutalization of a beautiful people," he said.

Zimbabwean journalist denied bail for alleging corruption

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — A Zimbabwean magistrate Thursday denied bail to an investigative journalist who has been in detention for more than a week for alleging corruption in the country's prosecuting agency, sending him back to a harsh prison in which he recently spent six weeks on a separate charge.

Hopewell Chin'ono is being charged with obstruction of justice arising from a tweet he made alleging corrupt practices within Zimbabwe's National Prosecuting Authority. He faces up to a year in jail or a fine if convicted. Prosecutors dropped a separate charge of contempt of court.

Chin'ono was denied bail on the grounds that he could commit other offenses if released. The magistrate cited a pending case in which he is accused of tweeting support for an anti-government protest.

"The accused is not a good candidate for bail," magistrate Marehwanazvo Gofa said.

Chin'ono recently spent nearly six weeks in the harsh Chikurubi prison on accusations of supporting an anti-government protest. He was released on bail in September pending trial, which has been set for December.

"It's clear that he is being targeted for his journalism, that was made very clear in these charges that they are about his journalism and his sources. He has been fearlessly reporting on corruption issues and that's what this is about," said Doug Coltart, one of his lawyers. He said they will appeal to the High Court "as soon as possible."

During the bail hearing, Chin'ono refused to reveal the sources allegedly feeding him information about the prosecution agency. His other lawyer, Beatrice Mtetwa, argued during earlier bail hearing proceedings that Chin'ono should not be punished for doing his job.

"Hopewell is a journalist and it's his day to day job to share information," she argued, saying Chin'ono "is a whistleblower. Prosecuting him would discourage other whistleblowers from exposing corruption in Zimbabwe."

Chin'ono is one of Zimbabwe's most prominent critics of President Emmerson Mnangagwa's administration, accusing it of corruption and human rights abuses. The government denies the charges.

Before he was arrested in July, Chin'ono had published an expose on Twitter in which he alleged corruption involving a \$60 million purchase of protective equipment for health workers. Mnangagwa later fired the health minister, who has been formally charged with corruption in the case.

709,000 seek US jobless aid as pandemic escalates

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of people seeking U.S. unemployment benefits fell last week to 709,000, a still-high level but the lowest figure since March and a further sign that the job market might be slowly healing.

Yet the improvement will be put at risk by the sharp resurgence in confirmed viral infections to an all-time high well above 120,000 a day. Cases are rising in 49 states, and deaths are increasing in 39. The nation has now recorded 240,000 virus-related deaths and 10.3 million confirmed infections.

As colder weather sets in and fear of the virus escalates, consumers may turn more cautious about traveling, shopping, dining out and visiting gyms, barber shops and retailers. Companies in many sectors

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could cut jobs or workers' hours. In recent days, the virus' resurgence has triggered tighter restrictions on businesses, mostly restaurants and bars, in a range of states, including Texas, New York, Maryland, and Oregon.

"The risk may be for more layoffs as coronavirus cases surge and some states impose restrictions on activity," said Nancy Vanden Houten, an economist at the forecasting firm Oxford Economics.

Last week's count of new applications for unemployment benefits was down from 757,000 the previous week, the Labor Department said Thursday. The still-elevated figure shows that eight months after the pandemic flattened the economy, many employers are still slashing jobs.

So far, the spike in viral cases hasn't triggered a wave of new layoffs. The number of applications for unemployment insurance fell last week in 29 states, including such hot spots as Wisconsin and Illinois. At the same time, the figure jumped by more than 5,000 in California, 10,000 in Washington State and 2,800 in Massachusetts.

The number of people who are continuing to receive traditional unemployment benefits fell to 6.8 million, the government said, from 7.2 million. That suggests that more Americans are finding jobs and no longer receiving unemployment aid. But it also indicates that many jobless people have used up their state unemployment aid — which typically expires after six months — and have transitioned to a federal extended benefits program that lasts 13 more weeks.

The number of people on federal and state extended benefits rose 130,000 in the week that ended Oct. 24, the latest period for which data is available, to 4.7 million.

The viral outbreak is threatening to upend the improvement in the job market in recent months. The unemployment rate plunged a full percentage point in October to 6.9% while employers added a solid 640,000 new jobs. Yet weekly applications for jobless aid remain at historically high levels. The applications likely include some people who lost jobs weeks ago but who have had to wait for states to process their claims. Some of them might not have filed for benefits until last week even though they were laid off earlier.

Workers can also seek aid if they're still working but have had their hours cut. Still others might have lost jobs more than once; when they file for benefits again, it can count as a new claim.

The economy still has roughly 10 million fewer jobs than it had before the pandemic — a total that exceeds all the jobs that vanished in the 2008-2009 Great Recession. Government stimulus, in the form of federal unemployment benefits, aid for small businesses and checks to most individuals has largely run out. Without further assistance, economists worry that more restaurants and other small businesses will close and the plight of the unemployed will worsen.

And unless Congress continues the extended benefit program, millions of jobless people will run out of aid entirely by year's end.

Among them is Victoria Perez, who was working two delivery jobs before the pandemic struck. Having lost both jobs in the spring, she is now living with her children in city-subsidized housing near Oakland, California, and hoping to avoid homelessness.

The city housing, provided to people at heightened risk of the coronavirus, lasts only through December. Perez, 38, is a cancer survivor.

"The pandemic just ruined everything," she said. "I was doing really good, and then nothing."

Before the virus struck, Perez had been delivering lunch from restaurants to office workers. She also had a job with a company called Replate, taking leftover food from tech firms in San Francisco to homeless shelters. Both jobs dried up once everyone began working from home.

She did some grocery deliveries for DoorDash but stopped doing that out of fear of contracting the virus.

Perez now receives just \$91 in jobless aid every two weeks. She recently began working for Replate again for about 15 to 20 hours a week.

"It is not much compared to what I had before, but it is better than nothing," she said.

New device puts music in your head — no headphones required

By LOUISE DIXON Associated Press

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LONDON (AP) — Imagine a world where you move around in your own personal sound bubble. You listen to your favorite tunes, play loud computer games, watch a movie or get navigation directions in your car — all without disturbing those around you.

That's the possibility presented by "sound beaming," a new futuristic audio technology from Noveto Systems, an Israeli company. On Friday it will debut a desktop device that beams sound directly to a listener without the need for headphones.

The company provided The Associated Press with an exclusive demo of the desktop prototype of its SoundBeamer 1.0 before its launch Friday.

The listening sensation is straight out of a sci-fi movie. The 3-D sound is so close it feels like it's inside your ears while also in front, above and behind them.

Noveto expects the device will have plenty of practical uses, from allowing office workers to listen to music or conference calls without interrupting colleagues to letting someone play a game, movie or music without disturbing their significant others.

The lack of headphones means it's possible to hear other sounds in the room clearly.

The technology uses a 3-D sensing module and locates and tracks the ear position sending audio via ultrasonic waves to create sound pockets by the user's ears. Sound can be heard in stereo or a spatial 3-D mode that creates 360 degree sound around the listener, the company said.

The demo includes nature video clips of swans on a lake, bees buzzing and a babbling brook, where the listener feels completely transported into the scene.

But even CEO Christophe Ramstein finds it hard to put the concept into words. "The brain doesn't understand what it doesn't know," he said.

In a Noveto demonstration conducted via Zoom from Tel Aviv, SoundBeamer Product Manager Ayana Wallwater was unable to hear the sound of gunshots on a gaming demo.

That's the point. But she does get to enjoy the reactions of people trying the software for the first time.

"Most people just say, 'Wow, I really don't believe it,'" she said.

"You don't believe it because it sounds like a speaker, but no one else can hear it...it's supporting you and you're in the middle of everything. It's happening around you."

By changing a setting, the sound can follow a listener around when they move their head. It's also possible to move out of the beam's path and hear nothing at all, which creates a surreal experience.

"You don't need to tell the device where you are. It's not streaming to one exact place," Wallwater said.

"It follows you wherever you go. So it's personally for you — follows you, plays what you want inside your head."

"This is what we dream of," she adds. "A world where we get the sound you want. You don't need to disturb others and others don't get disturbed by your sound. But you can still interact with them."

After his first listening experience Ramstein asked himself how it was different from other audio devices.

"I was thinking, 'Yeah, but is it the same with headphones?' No, because I have the freedom and it's like I have the freedom of doing what I want to do. And I have these sounds playing in my head as there would be something happening here, which is difficult to explain because we have no reference for that."

While the concept of sound beaming is not new, Noveto was the first to launch the technology and their SoundBeamer 1.0 desktop device will be the first branded consumer product.

Ramstein said a "smaller, sexier" version of the prototype will be ready for consumer release in time for Christmas 2021.

"You know, I was trying to think how we compare sound beaming with any other inventions in history. And I think the only one that came to mind is... the first time I tried the iPod I was like, 'Oh, my God. What's that?' I think sound beaming is something that is as disruptive as that. There's something to be said about it doesn't exist before. There's the freedom of using it. And it's really amazing."

Hong Kong pro-democracy legislators hand in resignations

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

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HONG KONG (AP) — Pro-democracy legislators in Hong Kong began resigning Thursday to protest the expulsion of four other lawmakers, heightening a conflict with Beijing over the semi-autonomous Chinese territory's future.

Pro-democracy activists say China's ruling Communist Party, which has tightened control in Hong Kong in response to demands for more democracy, is destroying the civil liberties and rights that were promised the territory when Britain returned it to China in 1997.

The 15 remaining lawmakers in the pro-democracy bloc said Wednesday they will resign en masse after China's central government passed a resolution this week that led to the four lawmakers' disqualification.

The four had urged foreign governments to sanction China and Hong Kong over Beijing's crackdown on dissent in the territory. The Communist Party accused them of violating their oaths of office.

Most of the 15 lawmakers did not attend a regular session of the legislature on Thursday, and some later handed in resignation letters at the Legislative Council's secretariat.

China sharply criticized the move. Its Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office called the mass resignation "an open challenge" to the authority of the central government and the Basic Law, Hong Kong's constitution.

"If these lawmakers hope to use their resignation to provoke opposition and beg for foreign interference, they have miscalculated," it said in a statement.

Wu Chi-wai, the head of the pro-democracy bloc, said the Chinese and Hong Kong governments were trying to take away the separation of powers in the city, since the ousting of the four lawmakers bypassed the courts.

"We lost our check-and-balance power, and all the constitutional power in Hong Kong rests in the chief executive's hands," Wu said.

He said it was the end of the city's "one country, two systems" framework under which Hong Kong enjoyed autonomy and freedoms not found on the mainland since it was returned to China in 1997.

Claudia Mo, a pro-democracy lawmaker who also handed in her resignation, said: "We are quitting the legislature only at this juncture. We're not quitting Hong Kong's democracy fight."

Earlier in the day, one of the pro-democracy lawmakers, Lam Cheuk-ting, unfurled a banner from a balcony inside the Legislative Council building saying city leader Carrie Lam had brought disaster to Hong Kong and its people, and that her infamy would last ten thousand years.

The mass departure will leave Hong Kong's legislature with just 43 legislators, 41 of whom belong to the pro-Beijing bloc. This means that the legislature could pass bills favored by Beijing with little opposition.

The lawmakers announced their decision to resign hours after the Hong Kong government said it was disqualifying the four legislators — Alvin Yeung, Dennis Kwok, Kwok Ka-ki and Kenneth Leung.

A resolution passed this week by the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress said 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.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin on Thursday reiterated Beijing's support for Hong Kong's government in "fulfilling its duty according to the NPC Standing Committee's decision."

"No country will turn a blind eye to acts of betrayal of the country by public officials, including members of the Legislative Council, who break their oaths of office," Wang said at a daily news briefing.

Britain, the United States, Australia and the EU denounced China's move.

The U.K. summoned China's ambassador in London to register "deep concern at this latest action by his government," Foreign Office minister Nigel Adams told lawmakers Thursday.

Adams said it was "another sad day for the people of Hong Kong" and that the British government has declared it the third breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration on the territory's handover since it came into force in 1997 and the second time in the last six months.

He said China's actions are "designed to harass and stifle all voices critical of China's policies."

Hong Kong's people, he added, are left now with a "neutered legislature."

President Donald Trump's national security adviser, Robert O'Brien, said the Chinese Communist Party

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has violated its international commitment to the people of Hong Kong.

"'One country, two systems' is now merely a fig leaf covering for the CCP's expanding one-party dictatorship in Hong Kong," he said.

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne said the disqualification of the four lawmakers "seriously undermined" Hong Kong's democratic processes and institutions.

The EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, said China's moves "constitute a further severe blow to political pluralism and freedom of opinion in Hong Kong."

"We call for the immediate reversal of these decisions by the authorities in Beijing and Hong Kong Government and for the immediate reinstatement of the Legislative Council members," he said in a statement.

In recent months, Beijing has increasingly clamped down on Hong Kong, despite promising when it took control in 1997 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 crack down on opposition voices.

In response, the U.S. leveled sanctions on several officials, including Carrie Lam. Several Western countries have suspended their extradition treaties with the territory, and Australia and Britain have offered Hong Kongers easier paths to settle in those countries.

Earlier in the year, the four lawmakers were barred from seeking reelection in a vote originally scheduled for September.

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

Associated Press writers Deb Riechmann in Washington, Pan Pylas in London and Lorne Cook in Brussels contributed to this report.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Nov. 13, the 318th day of 2020. There are 48 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 13, 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

On this date:

In 1789, Benjamin Franklin wrote in a letter to a friend, Jean-Baptiste Leroy: "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

In 1927, the Holland Tunnel opened to the public, providing access between lower Manhattan and New Jersey beneath the Hudson River.

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a measure lowering the minimum draft age from 21 to 18.

In 1956, the Supreme Court struck down laws calling for racial segregation on public buses.

In 1969, speaking in Des Moines, Iowa, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew accused network television news departments of bias and distortion, and urged viewers to lodge complaints.

In 1971, the U.S. space probe Mariner 9 went into orbit around Mars.

In 1974, Karen Silkwood, a 28-year-old technician and union activist at the Kerr-McGee Cimarron plutonium plant near Crescent, Oklahoma, died in a car crash while on her way to meet a reporter.

In 1985, some 23,000 residents of Armero, Colombia, died when a volcanic mudslide buried the city.

In 2000, lawyers for George W. Bush failed to win a court order barring manual recounts of ballots in Florida. Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris announced she would end the recounting at 5 p.m. Eastern time the next day -- prompting an immediate appeal by lawyers for Al Gore.

In 2001, President George W. Bush approved the use of a special military tribunal that could put accused terrorists on trial faster and in greater secrecy than an ordinary criminal court. President Bush and Rus-

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sian President Vladimir Putin met at the White House, where they pledged to slash Cold War-era nuclear arsenals by two-thirds.

In 2014, Clayton Kershaw became the first pitcher to win the National League MVP award since Bob Gibson in 1968; Los Angeles Angels' outfielder Mike Trout was a unanimous pick for the AL MVP.

In 2016, President-elect Donald Trump named Republican Party chief Reince Priebus (ryns PREE'-bus) as White House chief of staff and conservative media executive Stephen Bannon as his top presidential strategist.

Ten years ago: Pro-democracy hero Aung San Suu Kyi (soo chee) walked free in Myanmar after more than seven years under house arrest. Former White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel officially announced his ultimately successful candidacy for mayor of Chicago.

Five years ago: Islamic State militants carried out a set of coordinated attacks in Paris on the national stadium, restaurants and streets, and a crowded concert hall, killing 130 people in the worst attack on French soil since World War II.

One year ago: The House Intelligence Committee opened two weeks of public impeachment hearings with a dozen current and former career foreign service officials and political appointees scheduled to testify about efforts by President Donald Trump and others to pressure Ukraine to investigate Trump's political rivals. The top U.S. diplomat in Ukraine, William Taylor, offered new evidence that Trump was overheard asking about political "investigations" that he later demanded from Ukraine in exchange for military aid. Justin Verlander won a second American League Cy Young Award, beating fellow Houston Astros pitcher Gerrit Cole; New York Mets ace Jacob DeGrom won the National League prize for the second straight year.

Today's Birthdays: Journalist-author Peter Arnett is 86. Actor Jimmy Hawkins is 79. Blues singer John Hammond is 78. Country singer-songwriter Ray Wylie Hubbard is 74. Actor Joe Mantegna is 73. Actor Sheila Frazier is 72. Musician Andrew Ranken (The Pogues) is 67. Actor Tracy Scoggins is 67. Actor Chris Noth (noth) is 66. Actor-comedian Whoopi Goldberg is 65. Actor Rex Linn is 64. Actor Caroline Goodall is 61. Actor Neil Flynn is 60. Former NFL quarterback and College Football Hall of Famer Vinny Testaverde (tehs-teh-VUR'-dee) is 57. Rock musician Walter Kibby (Fishbone) is 56. Comedian and talk show host Jimmy Kimmel is 53. Actor Steve Zahn is 53. Actor Gerard Butler is 51. Writer-activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali is 51. Actor Jordan Bridges is 47. Actor Aisha Hinds is 45. Rock musician Nikolai Fraiture is 42. Former NBA All-Star Metta World Peace (formerly Ron Artest) is 41. Actor Monique Coleman is 40. Actor Rahul Kohli is 35. Actor Devon Bostick is 29.