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Church Services

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church: Worship in the church at 8:30 a.m. (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/215332349572015/>)

Groton Christian & Missinary Alliance Church: Worship in the church at 10:30 a.m.: (<https://www.facebook.com/GrotonCMA/>)

St. John's Lutheran Church: Worship in the church at 9 a.m. (<https://www.facebook.com/stjohnsgroton/>)
Emmanuel Lutheran Church - Worship inside at 9 a.m.

(<https://www.facebook.com/Emmanuel-Lutheran-Church-GrotonSD-ELCA-636505039852208/>)

United Methodist Church: Worship in the Sanctuary at 11 a.m. (<https://www.facebook.com/grotonsdumc>)

Buffalo Lake Lutheran Church, rural Eden, 10:30 a.m. Worship inside or stay in vehicle and listen on the FM.

Heaven Bound Ministries of Pierpont has worship on Saturdays at 5:30 p.m. in the basement.

Heaven Bound Ministries of Pierpont / Buffalo Lake Lutheran Church, rural Eden - will have a podcast posted. <https://anchor.fm/paul-irvin-kosel>



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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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*You will be enriched
in every way so that
you can be generous
on every occasion,
and through us
your generosity will result
in thanksgiving to God.*

2 CORINTHIANS 9:11



*"Carrying The Plenty"
(woodcut from 1661 book of Jewish customs)*

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email: waltersnork54@gmail.com



BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Which book of the Bible (KJV) mentions the word “thanksgiving” the most times at eight? *Genesis, Nehemiah, Psalms, Isaiah*

2. In 2 Timothy 3:1-2, what human qualities does Paul list as being signs of the last days? *Adulterers, Sun worshippers, Renegades, Unthankful people*

3. From Psalms 106:1, “O give thanks unto the Lord; for his ... endureth forever”? *Love, Good, Mercy, Spirit*

4. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the ... of God”? *Power, Will, Gratitude, Travail*

5. From Leviticus 22, a sacrifice of thanksgiving is most meaningful when it is ...? *Sincere, Often, At your own will, Extravagant*

6. Where was Jonah when he prayed with the voice of thanksgiving? *Fish’s belly, Aboard ship, In the wilderness, Mountaintop*

ANSWERS: 1) Psalms; 2) Unthankful people; 3) Mercy; 4) Will; 5) At your own will; 6) Fish’s belly

Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson’s Casey’s latest book, “Test Your Bible Knowledge,” available in bookstores and online.

Comfort foods

Made fast
and
healthy



by Healthy Exchanges

Thanksgiving Pumpkin Torte

You take care of the rest of the meal, and I’ll take care of dessert. Now if we could just find someone else to take care of the dishes, we’d have something else to be thankful for!

- 18 (2 1/2-inch) graham cracker squares
- 1 (15-ounce) can solid packed pumpkin
- 1 (4-serving) package sugar-free instant butterscotch pudding mix
- 2/3 cup nonfat dry milk powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 3/4 cup water
- 1 cup reduced-calorie whipped topping
- 2 tablespoons chopped pecans

1. Evenly arrange 9 graham crackers in a 9-by-9-inch cake pan. In a large bowl, combine pumpkin, dry pudding mix, dry milk powder, pumpkin pie spice and water. Mix well using a wire whisk. Blend in 1/4 cup whipped topping. Spread half of pumpkin mixture evenly over graham crackers.

2. Top with remaining 9 graham crackers. Spread remaining pumpkin mixture over top. Evenly spread remaining 3/4 cup whipped topping over pumpkin mixture. Sprinkle pecans evenly over top. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

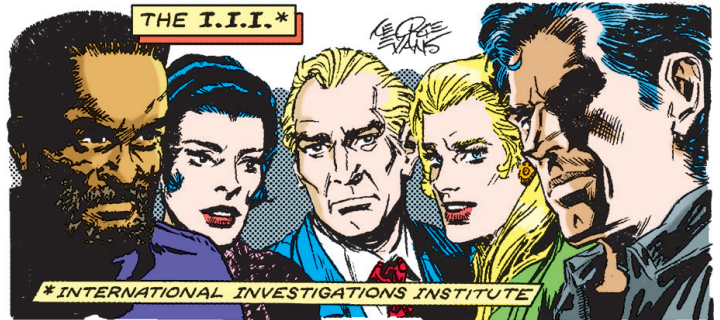
• Each serving equals: 115 calories, 3g fat, 3g protein, 19g carb., 225mg sodium, 2g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 1 1/2 Starch, 1/2 Fat.

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SECRET AGENT X-9

A.K.A. PHIL CORRIGAN



THE I.I.I.*

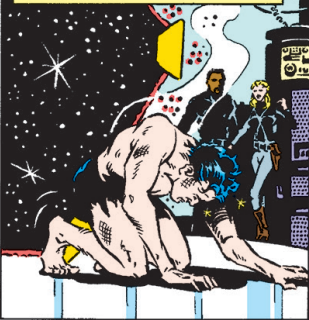
*INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS INSTITUTE

FLASH GORDON

11-8

By JIM KEEFE

LIKE A COSMIC BOOMERANG, SECRET AGENT X-9 IS RETURNED TO EARTH VIA MING'S SPACE PORTAL.



THOUGH GONE UNDETECTED BY THE MONITORING SYSTEMS--- ARCHAIC IN COMPARISON TO THE DEVICE FROM MONGO--- THE INCIDENT DOES NOT GO UNNOTICED.



PHIL! CHIEF TOLD US TO KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR YOU.

JEN... WOLF!



LET'S GET HIM OUT OF HERE.

WHAT'S YOUR REPORT?

MING'S BEEN STOPPED... SKOF BUT THE PORTAL'S TOO UNSTABLE TO KEEP ACTIVE.



AFFIRMATIVE. EXPLOSIVES ARE ALREADY IN PLACE.



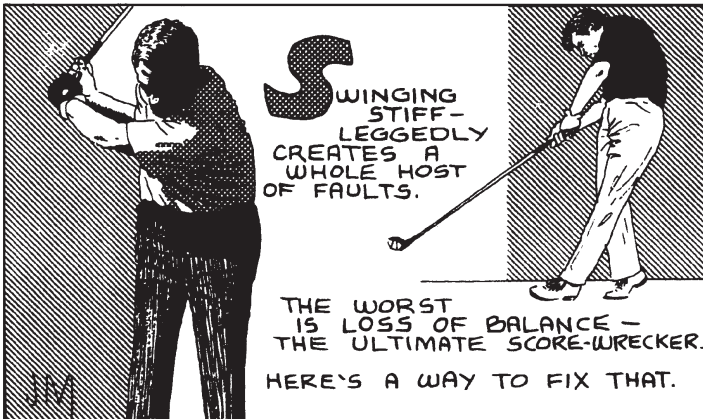
TIME TO SAY GOODBYE TO THE PLANET MONGO.

BOOM!

NEXT: NEW ADVENTURE!

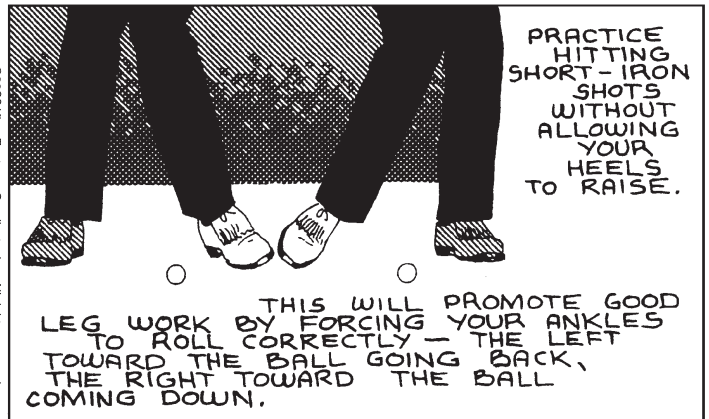
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Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



SWINGING STIFF-LEGGEDLY CREATES A WHOLE HOST OF FAULTS.

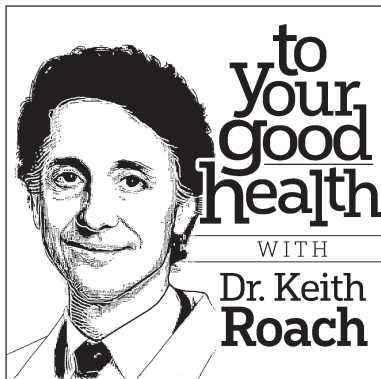
THE WORST IS LOSS OF BALANCE - THE ULTIMATE SCORE-WRECKER. HERE'S A WAY TO FIX THAT.



PRACTICE HITTING SHORT-IRON SHOTS WITHOUT ALLOWING YOUR HEELS TO RAISE.

THIS WILL PROMOTE GOOD LEG WORK BY FORCING YOUR ANKLES TO ROLL CORRECTLY - THE LEFT TOWARD THE BALL GOING BACK, THE RIGHT TOWARD THE BALL COMING DOWN.

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CBD Recommendation Awaits More Research

DEAR DR. ROACH: I have a friend whose daughter has an egg allergy. She said her daughter will break out in a rash if she eats anything that even has trace amounts of egg in it. Another friend of hers told her to use CBD oil to prevent reactions, but I am skeptical. I cannot find anything credible to support the claim. What are your thoughts? — *E.B.P.*

ANSWER: Almost every day I hear another claim that cannabidiol, the major nonpsychoactive component of cannabis, is effective for some medical condition. Unfortunately, the evidence of effectiveness of CBD is very limited.

The sole Food and Drug Administration indication for CBD is for the treatment of two uncommon childhood seizures: Dravet syndrome and Lennox-Gastaut syndrome. There is preliminary evidence that CBD may be useful for anxiety disorders, some types of sleep disorders and chronic pain. There is active research on other conditions, including asthma, multiple sclerosis and contact dermatitis. I believe it is likely that CBD will be proven effective for other conditions, but until there is better evidence of effectiveness, I cannot make a recommendation to use CBD (outside of the two forms of childhood epilepsy for which it is indicated).

Although there are laws in all 50 states legalizing CBD, the federal government's position is still that cannabis extracts are Schedule I controlled substances, although they do not seem to be enforcing action against CBD at present. Unfortunately, independent laboratory analysis of available CBD products show that about a quarter of them have less CBD than advertised,

and another quarter contained the psychoactive component THC.

For food allergies, I would recommend strongly against using any unproven treatment. Egg allergies have a broad range of severity in children, from mild rash to life-threatening airway swelling and anaphylaxis. Although many children outgrow egg allergies, your friend should listen to her daughter's doctor, not her CBD-supporting friend.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I recently changed primary doctors, and I saw the report of my echocardiogram. It said I have "mild left ventricular hypertrophy with some diastolic dysfunction." Could you tell me what this means and if it is serious? — *C.B.*

ANSWER: An echocardiogram uses sound waves to take precise images of the heart. The cardiologist interprets those images to make statements about the anatomy of the heart, including thickness of the walls of the heart, as well as its function.

The left ventricle is the chamber of the heart that pumps blood to all of the body, having received oxygenated blood from the lungs. Consequently, it is the thickest of the chambers. "Hypertrophy" means "too much growth" — that the wall is too thick. "Diastole" is the part of the cardiac cycle where the ventricles fill up. This should happen at very low pressures. In diastolic dysfunction, which commonly accompanies left ventricular hypertrophy, the left ventricle requires higher pressure to fill that thickened and stiffer wall.

LVH and diastolic dysfunction are most commonly results of high blood pressure. Some of the many medicines we use to control high blood pressure are good at helping the heart fill at lower pressure. Not everybody with these findings on an echo needs treatment. The key word in your report is "mild," which generally indicates no need for treatment beyond careful blood pressure monitoring.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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1. Name the only No. 1 song The Stampeders ever had.
2. Which singer co-wrote and released "Baby Workout"?
3. Who released "She's Not Just Another Woman"?
4. What group released "I've Got You Under My Skin" in 1967?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Don't come a knockin' around my door, Don't wanna see your shadow no more."

Answers

1. "Sweet City Woman," in 1971. Thing is, it was No. 1 in Canada. In the U.S. it only reached No. 8 on the Hot 100 chart.
2. Jackie Wilson, in 1963. In the song he's trying to get a girl to dance with him, not go to the gym.
3. Detroit R&B group 8th Day, in 1971. The song went gold. Later that year they released "You've Got to Crawl (Before You Walk)."
4. The Four Seasons. It was written by Cole Porter in 1936 and was originally used in the vintage film "Born to Dance."
5. "American Woman," by the Guess Who in 1970. When guitarist Randy Bachman was riffing onstage at a concert and wanted to remember what he was playing, he asked a kid in the audience for the tape from a cassette player the kid was using to record the concert.

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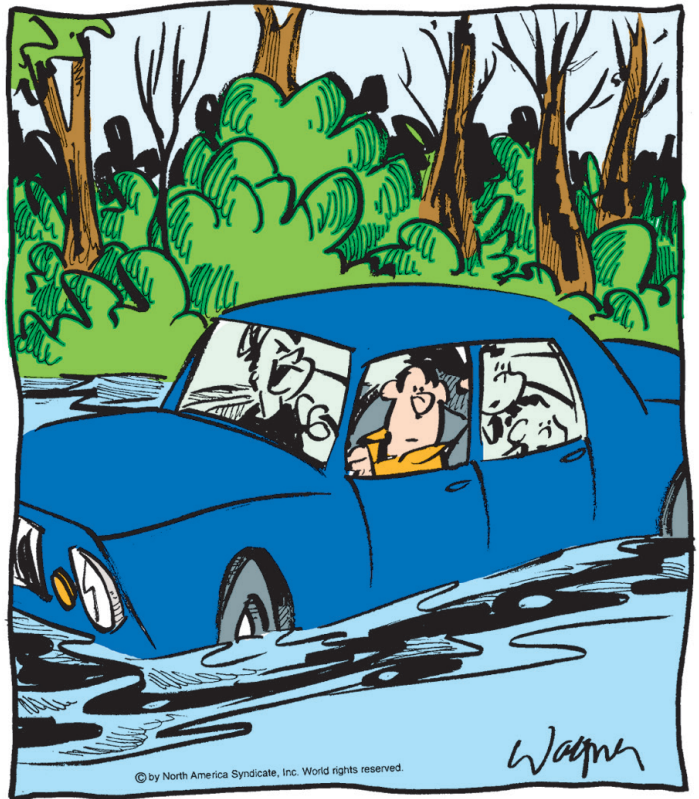
Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by} Wagner



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Wagner

"I believe it's OVER the river and THROUGH the woods to grandmother's house we go."

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Boy is taller. 2. Boy is taller. 3. Chair back is different. 4. Fewer papers on floor. 5. Boy's collar is different. 6. Two checks on book.

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- “At a home center recently, I saw a zip-up bag to store artificial Christmas trees in. This bag looked like luggage, with wheels on one end. I have purchased two, and I use them under my bed to store off-season clothes. I can pull the handle and they wheel right out, and I no longer have to get down on the ground and tug them out as I used to do. It’s a back saver.” —*I.W. via email*

- If you get a scratch in a white enamel sink or other white enamel surface, try touching it up with white fingernail polish.

- “Try soaking an ink stain in rubbing alcohol for a few minutes before putting the garment in the wash.” (Test first on a scrap.) —*B.D. in Virginia*

- “If you have a picture frame that just won’t stay straight, cut the eraser tip off of a pencil and glue the flat (not the domed) side to the back of your frame at the bottom. For stubborn frames, use one at each corner. Then

re-hang. Once you situate it on the wall, the erasers keep the frame from slipping to either side. It works great.” —*R.I. in California*

- Don’t just move dust around with that feather duster. Reserve it for dusting delicate items in a designated space (outdoors, preferably). Get a microfiber cleaning cloth instead. It catches dust and holds it.

- To make your own special flavor of coffee creamer, use a pint of fat-free or low-fat half and half and add the extract or spices of your choice. Some ideas: peppermint extract, chocolate syrup, almond extract, cinnamon, nutmeg or vanilla extract.

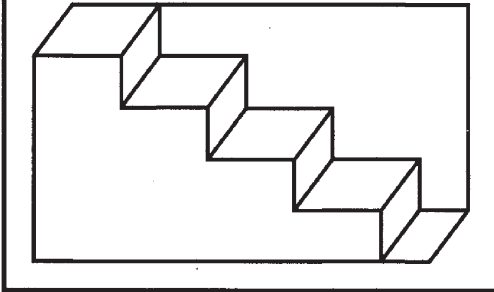
Send your tips to Now Here’s a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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OPTICALS



UP OR DOWN, WE GET AROUND! Is this staircase rightside up or upside down?

Answer: Look at it long enough and you will see that it goes both ways.

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Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

1. D _ D
 2. D _ _ D
 3. D _ _ _ D
 4. D _ _ _ _ D
 5. D _ _ _ _ _ D
 6. D _ _ _ _ _ _ D
 7. D _ _ _ _ _ _ _ D

A D-TO-D STEPWORDS QUIZ!

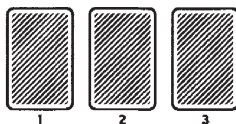
Today we're interested in finding "D" words. To the left are seven words that begin and end with the letter D. The following hints should help you fill in the missing letters.

1. Something that doesn't work.
2. Needed to sell property.
3. Roofed over.
4. A nameless trinket.
5. Something divided up (slang).
6. To confuse (variation).
7. Found in cars.

Answers: 1. Doodad, 2. Dues, 3. Domes, 4. Domes, 5. Divided, 6. Dumfound, 7. Dashboard

A SQUARE DEAL! Three cards have been removed from the deck and placed face down. See if you can figure out their values using the following four hints:

1. Two kings are side by side.
2. Two diamonds are side by side.
3. You'll find a queen next to a king.
4. You'll find a diamond directly to the left of a club.



Answer: Card 1: Queen of diamonds, Card 2: King of diamonds, Card 3: King of clubs

DON'T FUDGE THIS ONE! You'll enjoy the sweet taste of success if you can complete this word square. We give you the word FUDGE. Find four more 5-letter words so that all words used read the same across and down.

1. To make mention of.
2. To escape from.
3. A rich candy (given).
4. Trimmed the border.
5. A type of tall grass.

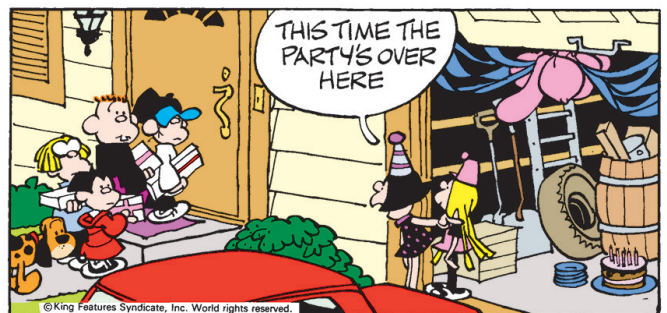
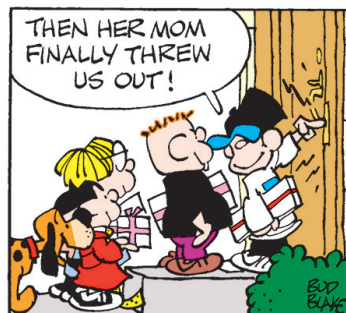
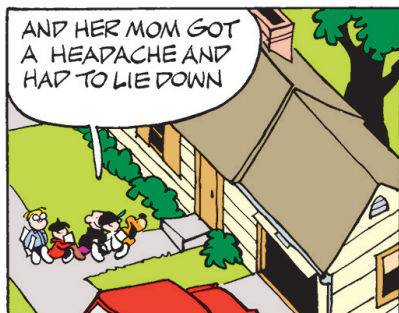
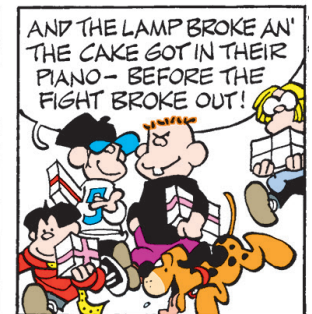
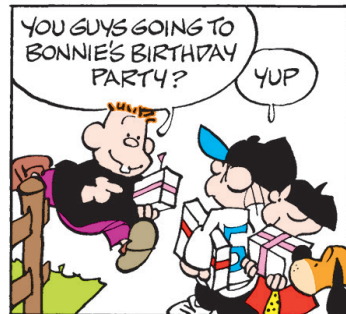


1	2	3	4	5
		F		
2			U	
3	F	U	D	G
4			G	
5			E	

Answers: 1. Refer, 2. Elude, 3. Fudge, 4. Edged, 5. Reeds

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Flourish
- 6 "Rabbit, Run" author
- 12 Tearjerker
- 13 Construction piece
- 14 "Anna Christie" playwright
- 15 Coats
- 16 Lima's place
- 17 Father of Thor
- 19 Away from WSW
- 20 Style
- 22 LummoX
- 24 Most Wanted List org.
- 27 Elite alternative

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	11
12												
14												
16												
14												
24												
32												
35												
19												
42												
50												
54												
56												

- 29 Bart's sister
- 32 Lincoln's election year
- 35 Region
- 36 Location
- 37 Storm center
- 38 Inseparable
- 40 Osso buco base
- 42 A cont.
- 44 Level
- 46 Apiece
- 50 Boardroom props
- 52 Prophet
- 54 Half a story-book duo
- 55 "My heavens!"

- 56 Clothing
 - 57 Unlike a rolling stone?
- DOWN**
- 1 Part of N.B.
 - 2 Lecherous look
 - 3 Poppy drug
 - 4 Lubricate
 - 5 Tunes
 - 6 Wrinkly fruit
 - 7 Challenge for Hardy in "The Music Box"
 - 8 Saharan
 - 9 Obsession
 - 10 "Show Boat"
 - 11 Gaelic
 - 12 Doo- — music
 - 18 Fool
 - 21 Make a choice, with "for"
 - 23 "The Greatest"
 - 24 Shriner's cha-peau
 - 25 Life story, for short
 - 26 Unknowing
 - 28 Waiting area
 - 30 Pigpen
 - 31 Nay canceler
 - 33 Coop denizen

- 34 Multitude
- 39 Old anesthetic
- 41 Starts
- 42 Turkish potentate
- 43 "Animal House" group
- 45 Capri or Wight
- 47 Dogfight participants
- 48 23-Down's old name
- 49 The lady
- 51 Sixth letter after 53-Down
- 53 See 51-Down

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 24 mins.

	B	L	O	O	M		U	P	D	I	K	E
W	E	E	P	I	E		G	I	R	D	E	R
O	N	E	I	L	L		L	A	Y	E	R	S
P	E	R	U		O	D	I	N		E	N	E
			M	O	D	E		O	A	F		
F	B	I		P	I	C	A		L	I	S	A
E	I	G	H	T	E	E	N	S	I	X	T	Y
Z	O	N	E		S	I	T	E		E	Y	E
			O	N	E		V	E	A	L		
A	F	R		T	I	E	R		E	A	C	H
G	R	A	P	H	S		O	R	A	C	L	E
H	A	N	S	E	L		O	H	D	E	A	R
A	T	T	I	R	E		M	O	S	S	Y	

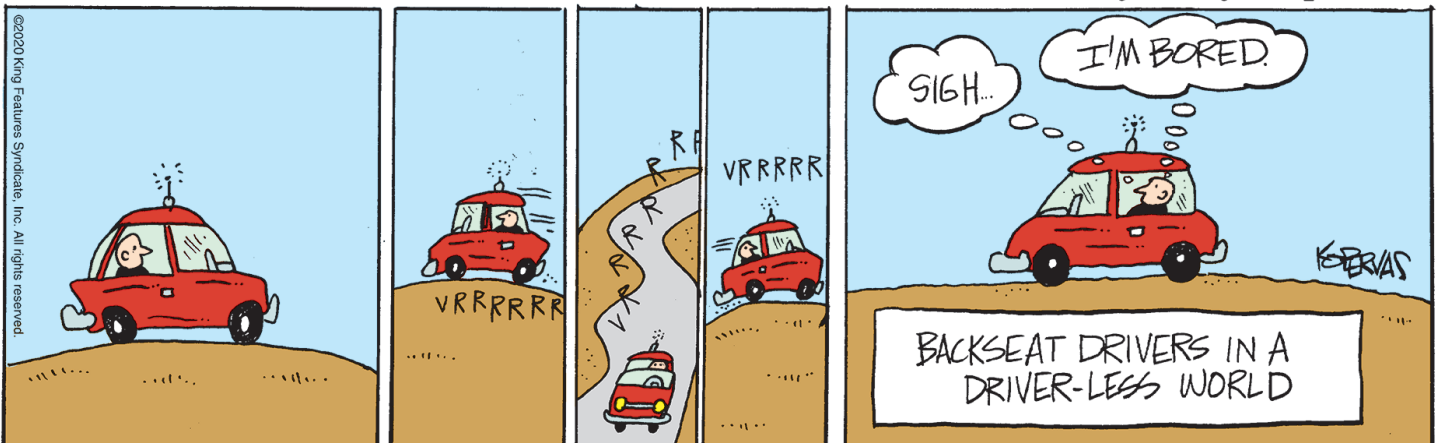
LAFF - A - DAY



"Oh, no! Eating again!?"

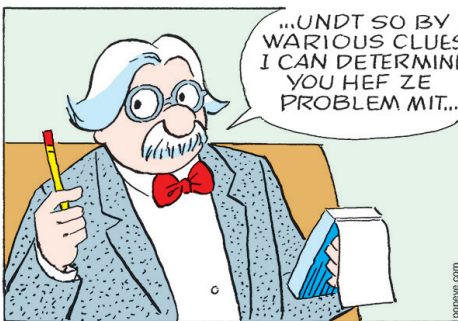
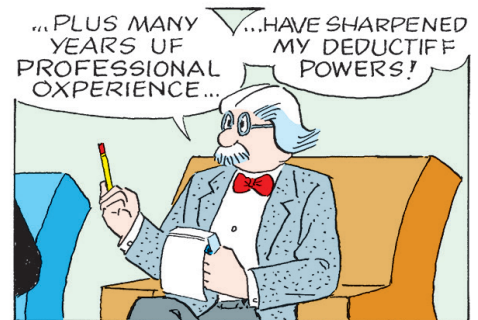
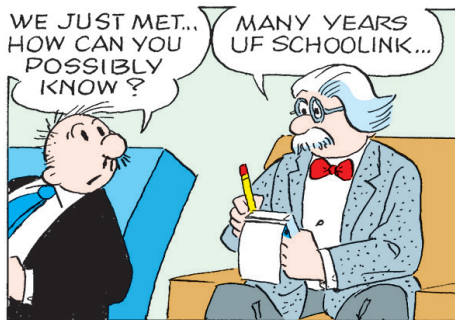
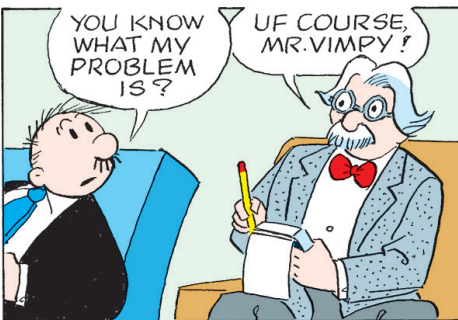
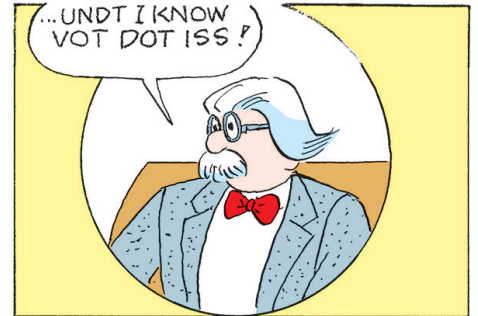
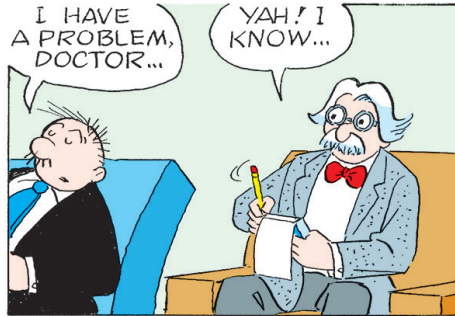
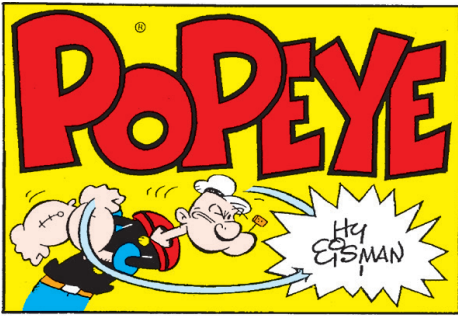
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



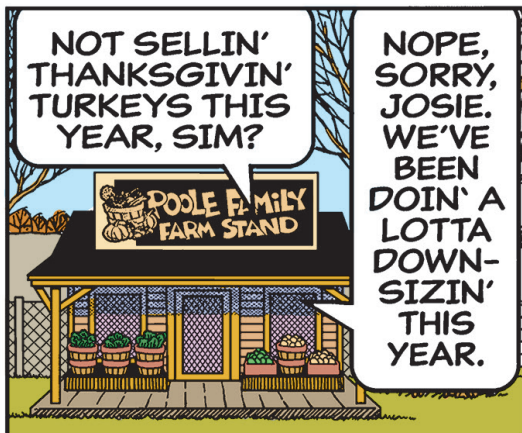
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland

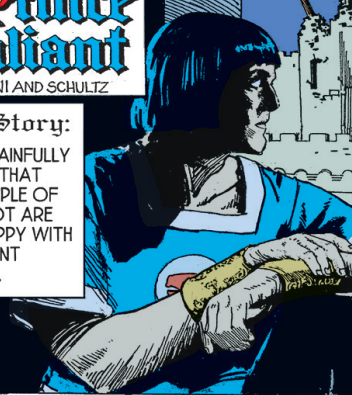


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Hal Foster's
Prince Valiant
By Gianni and Schultz

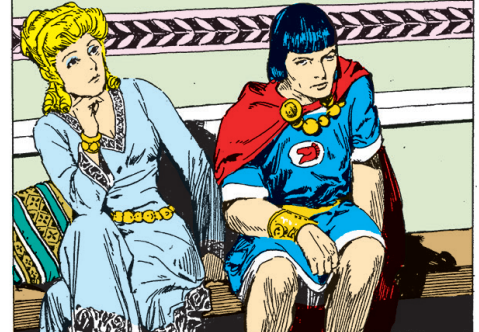
Our Story:
VAL IS PAINFULLY AWARE THAT THE PEOPLE OF CAMELOT ARE NOT HAPPY WITH HIS RECENT FOLLIES.



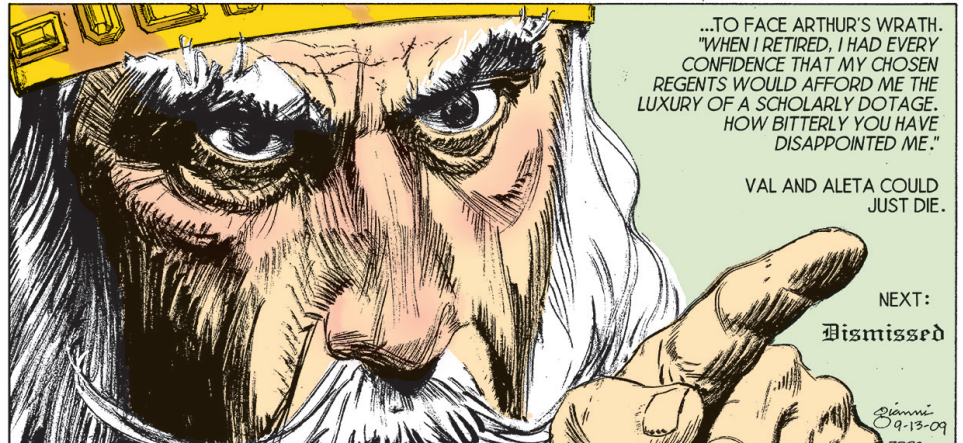
RUMOR HAS IT THAT KING ARTHUR HAS BEEN FORCED FROM RETIREMENT TO DEAL WITH THE DISCONTENT.

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INDEED, VAL AND ALETA SOON RECEIVE A SUMMONS—BEARING A DISTINCTIVE SEAL—AND SO FIND THEMSELVES FIDGETING IN A LITTLE-USED CHAMBER WITHIN THE ROYAL QUARTERS.



VAL HAS ALWAYS RESENTED THE YOKE OF REGENCY. QUEEN ALETA UNDERSTANDS THE SEVERITY OF THEIR IRRESPONSIBLE ACTIONS. NEITHER IS PREPARED...



...TO FACE ARTHUR'S WRATH. "WHEN I RETIRED, I HAD EVERY CONFIDENCE THAT MY CHOSEN REGENTS WOULD AFFORD ME THE LUXURY OF A SCHOLARLY DOTAGE. HOW BITTERLY YOU HAVE DISAPPOINTED ME."

VAL AND ALETA COULD JUST DIE.

NEXT:
Dismissed

Gianni
09-13-09

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering

THAT'S IT!! I CAN'T READ THE NEWSPAPER ANYMORE!!



WHY, IS THE NEWS TOO DEPRESSING FOR YOU?



NO, MY SUBSCRIPTION RAN OUT.



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Fighting Boredom

Are we bored yet? Of course we are. We're staying indoors, especially now that cold weather has arrived, not shopping, not visiting friends, not doing much of anything. Somehow we have to get through this winter, though, and now might be the time to explore things that are new and different to us. Here are some ideas:

Change the channel. If you watch the same television news every night, switch to a different one (or better yet, skip a night or two). If you watch the same shows all the time, consider watching something different, even if you think it won't appeal to you.

Step outside. Even though it's cold outside, wrap up and go outdoors anyway. Don't try this if there's ice, of course, but even a few minutes spent walking around outside in fresh air can raise your spirits.

Grab your camera. Set up still shots around your house. A fabric back-

ground on a table or shelf, a few small statues or trinkets (especially ones from trips you've taken) and a lamp for lighting, and you might discover that you have a real eye for photography.

Or read a new author, learn to watercolor, take a free online course, watch zoo cams...

The idea is to try new things, even given our "stay at home" limitations.

As of this writing, most states are seeing big increases in coronavirus levels, even states that were stable with relatively low rates even a few weeks ago. We seniors are, unfortunately, in the high-risk group because of our age, even if we don't have health concerns.

And as of this writing, the U.S. has more active cases of the coronavirus than any other country in the world, including India. It has four times the population but half the deaths that we do. It's everywhere, and we can't let down our guard.

Stay home, stay safe and look for new things to occupy yourself.

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1. Running back Curtis Enis rushed for 1,363 yards and 19 touchdowns in 1997 as a member of what college team?

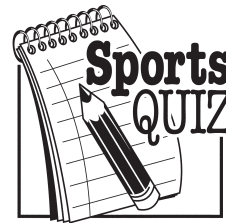
2. NHL right winger Claude Lemieux won four Stanley Cup championships playing for three different teams. What were they?

3. What piece of sports equipment did Rev. Robert Adams Paterson revolutionize in 1848 when he made it out of a latex called gutta-percha?

4. What was the name of the 1996 inspirational film that starred Green Bay Packers defensive end Reggie White and actor Pat Morita?

5. Name the Cleveland Browns quarterback and Pro Football Hall of Famer who was NFL MVP in 1951, '53 and '55.

6. What 10-time NBA All-Star and Basketball Hall of Famer is known as "The Glide"?



7. What Brazilian footballer twice won FIFA World Player of the Year (2004-05) and won the Ballon d'Or in 2005?

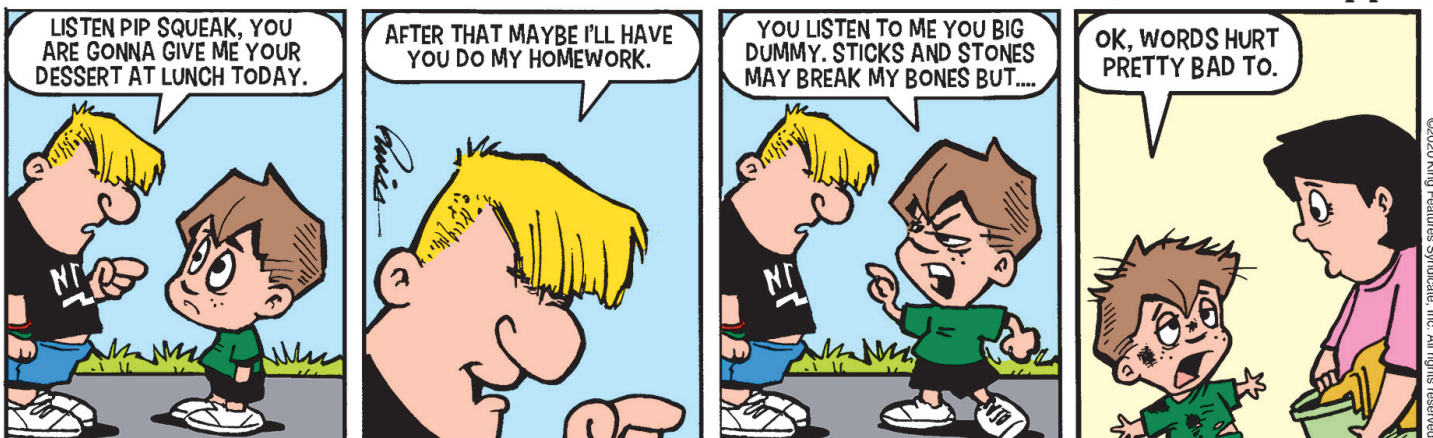
Answers

1. The Penn State Nittany Lions.
2. Montreal Canadiens (1986), New Jersey Devils (1995, 2000) and Colorado Avalanche (1996).
3. The golf ball.
4. "Reggie's Prayer."
5. Otto Graham.
6. Clyde Drexler.
7. Ronaldinho.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Spend Thanksgiving Cuddled Up With Pets

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: This summer, when we thought the pandemic was easing up, my husband and I made plans to visit his family in Georgia for Thanksgiving. Now, we've canceled those plans due to the new wave of infections. I was quite sad about it for a while, but I realized that this is an opportunity to spend time with our pets, something we rarely get to do during a busy holiday.

For the first time in a decade, I will not be boarding our two Golden Retrievers, Arlo and Woody, so we can fly south to visit my mother-in-law, who's allergic to pets. Our two cats, Jinx and Star, won't have to stay at my friend's house across town.

Our house will not be filled with visitors and guests in the days after Thanksgiving. The annual post-Thanksgiving cookout that my

husband hosts the weekend afterward, when I'm out shopping for Christmas gifts, is canceled, as well.

Instead, we'll be snuggled up on the sofa, with our dear pets all around. I will do most of my shopping online. We'll visit with friends and relatives on FaceTime and Zoom.

I realize that for the first time, instead of dreading the holiday season with all of the stress of catering to family and friends, we will be focusing on simple joys. I am thankful for that. These are difficult times, but in the midst of it all, we can stop and just hug our pets and feel love and joy. I hope your readers feel the same way. — *Carol M., Canton, Ohio*

DEAR CAROL: You've encapsulated just how I feel about the holidays this year. Thank you for sharing it with us, and Happy Thanksgiving to all.

Send your tips, questions or comments to ask@pawscorner.com.

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- The weight of all the ants on earth is greater than that of all humans.
- Doctors who perform laparoscopic surgery, which involves inserting a tiny camera into a patient's body through a small incision, have better coordination if they play video games at least three hours per week. According to a 2003 study, gamer surgeons made 37% fewer errors and worked 27% faster than those whose only "video game" experience was the surgery itself.
- The ancient Romans used swan fat or donkey milk to soften wrinkles, while sores and freckles were treated with the ashes of snails.
- Eskimos use refrigerators to stop their food from freezing.
- Disney's musical fantasy comedy "The Princess and the Frog" led to an unexpected salmonella outbreak in the United States. More than 50 chil-

ren were hospitalized after the film's release when they attempted to free handsome princes with a kiss from what turned out to be perfectly ordinary, definitely *non*-prince frogs.

- Redheads produce more vitamin D than other hair colors.
- Bao Xishun, a Mongolian herdsman, saved the lives of two dolphins by using his incredibly long arms to remove plastic from their stomachs. Bao stands nearly 8 feet tall and each arm extends more than 3 feet. All other attempts at saving the dolphins had failed.
- Watermelons may be a tasty treat today, but that wasn't always the case. Originating in Africa, they were first cultivated solely for their water content — their flavor was very bitter!
- In Sweden, the body warmth of more than 200,000 commuters passing through Stockholm's Central Station is harvested to provide heat for an office building across the road.

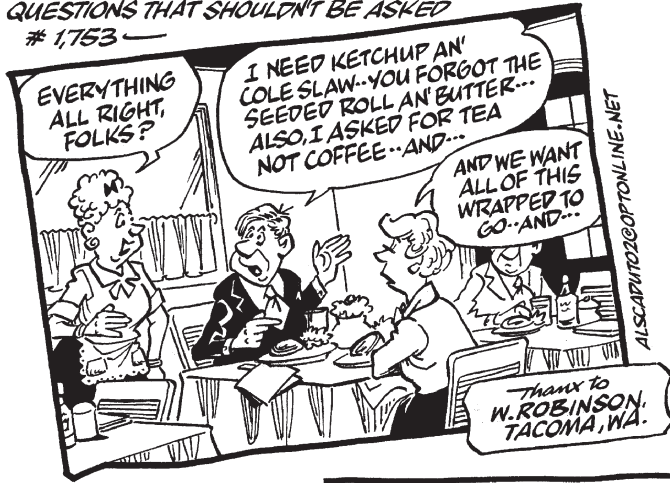
Thought for the Day: "When I was young, I admired clever people. Now that I am old, I admire kind people." — *Abraham Joshua Heschel*

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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

QUESTIONS THAT SHOULDN'T BE ASKED
1,753

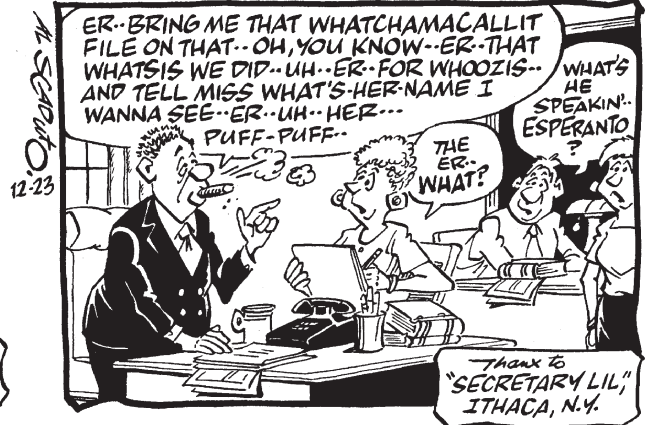


THE SOOPER MARKET
CUSTOMER SERVICE
COUNTER HANDLES
CUSTOMERS' PROBLEMS...
BUT...TALK ABOUT
PROBLEMS...
LIKE WHOSE?
GIVE A LISTEN...

THANK TO
F. FIORINO,
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

BY AL SCADUTO

SAY AGAIN? PUL-EESE, BUT SLOW and CLEAR—



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WWW.KINGFEATURES.COM



Roasting with herbs

Combining softened butter with fresh thyme, rosemary, sage and parsley in a food processor makes an excellent rub for your holiday turkey:

www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/bobby-flay/thanksgiving-pioneer-style-herb-roasted-turkey-recipe

Try this site for recipes using all kinds of fresh herbs:

www.herbsociety.org

Brenda Weaver





by Freddy Groves

911 Getting a Partner With VA Crisis Link

We all know to call 911 when there's an emergency — car crash, burglary, need of an ambulance — but we'll soon be getting an additional number. Starting in the summer of 2022, we'll also have 988 as a direct line for suicide prevention and mental health crises.

It's been in the works since last summer, giving telephone companies time to set things up. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Department of Veteran Affairs and the North American Numbering Council all have been working together, and this summer the FCC adopted rules to designate this

number — 988.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline will still be working at 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK). As different parts of the country come online, those calling the new number will be transferred over to the crisis line, but the old number will continue to work.

Veterans who call either number should press 1 after dialing to reach the Veterans Crisis Line. They also can chat online at www.veteranscrisisline.net or text 838255. There's also support for the deaf or hard of hearing at TTY 1-800-799-4889.

When you read the nationwide stats, you know how important the crisis lines are. Two years ago, the hotline answered over 2 million calls, averaging over 180,000 calls per month. Chats are used as well, averaging 8,500 per month.

On the Veterans Crisis Line, there is a network of 400 suicide prevention coordinators at VA facilities around the country. After a completed call to the crisis line, within a day, one of those coordinators will hook up with the caller as follow-up.

The support for veterans in crisis is free. The crisis line serves all veterans, service members, National Guard and Reserve, as well as family members and friends. Go online to www.veteranscrisisline.net to see the signs of crisis. Then make the call if needed.

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CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



What Our Heroes Can Teach Our Politicians

On Veterans Day, I spoke at the dedication of Patriot's Plaza on the campus of the University of South Dakota. This memorial honors all who have served our country, while highlighting the three USD alumni who have received our nation's highest military honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Captain Joe Foss was the leading fighter ace in World War II, personally shooting down 26 enemy aircraft at Guadalcanal. Colonel Bud Day was an accomplished Vietnam War pilot who offered maximum resistance to his captors as he was interrogated and tortured for almost 6 years. Captain Arlo Olson was a hero of the WWII Italian campaign, leading his troops in multiple harrowing engagements with the Germans.

The Medal of Honor citations and the official military records of these three men contain inspiring phrases like "outstanding heroism," "personal bravery," "incredible courage," "inspiring leadership," "intrepidity," and "conspicuous gallantry." This soaring language is particularly noteworthy coming from the U.S. Armed Services, which are more known for their dry, boring language than for flowery poetry and hyperbole.

Even if the military isn't known for overwrought language, politicians are. Many phrases and words are used as though public office holders are deployed on the front lines of armed conflict, which of course we aren't. Politicians act as though every vote is an "act of courage," because "we are at war" with the House or the Senate. Members of Congress proclaim that "they are the last bastions of defense" who are "throwing bombs" as they "take casualties" while "battling enemies." This is the language of the modern political battlefield.

Their language may be war-like, but too often the behavior of our elected officials is quite unlike that of our Marines, sailors, soldiers, and airmen. There are many reasons to cherish Veterans Day, but one of the most important is that it reminds us of the selflessness, dedication, patriotism, and honor of those who have served. How much our politicians could learn from Colonel Day, Captain Foss, and Captain Olson.

As I noted, Joe Foss was America's top fighter pilot. In World War II he was known as the "Ace of Aces." His Japanese counterpart was Suburo Sakai, the leading ace of the Imperial Japanese Navy. In dogfight after dogfight Foss and Sakai and their colleagues downed enemy planes and fired at one another.

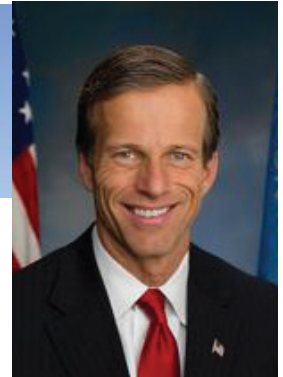
After watching Japanese pilots like Sakai kill his closest friends and try to kill him, Joe Foss could have been forgiven for hating Suburo Sakai with his whole heart forever. That's not the way of a true hero, however.

As I was rereading Foss's excellent autobiography about his time as South Dakota Governor, head of the American Football League, and head of the National Rifle Association, I noticed a photo toward the back of the book of Foss in his later years alongside a Japanese gentleman. Foss notes that the two of them were "the best of friends" for years.

The best friend in that picture is Japanese ace and former archenemy Suburo Sakai. Joe Foss was a tough man, but he was also an incredible example of grace, love, forgiveness, and friendship.

I'm glad Patriots Plaza is on USD's campus as an inspiration. For decades to come it will remind future teachers, police officers, accountants, nurses, researchers, and business owners (and perhaps even politicians) of how to properly live life and honorably serve our country.

John Thune U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Giving South Dakotans a Voice in Washington

Recently, I was humbled to have been reelected by my colleagues to serve as the Republican whip, or assistant majority leader, the second-highest position in Senate Republican leadership. To boil it down, serving as whip will help me to continue advancing South Dakota's priorities and give a strong voice to rural America in Washington.

While there are a couple of Senate races that have yet to be settled, I am confident that Republicans will control the Senate in the 117th Congress, which begins in January. Regardless of the outcome, though, my focus will remain the same: delivering real results to South Dakotans.

When I was first elected as whip in 2018, Republicans had just strengthened our majority. Democrats had regained control of the House, which meant we were facing a divided government, but I knew there was an opportunity to use my new role to ensure South Dakotans had a seat at the table for key decisions in Congress.

Early in my tenure, and throughout my first year as whip, getting the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) past the finish line was one of my top priorities. I understood how important this pro-agriculture trade deal was for the agriculture industry – South Dakota's top industry. I heard from farmers and ranchers throughout the state who voiced how critical USMCA was to help strengthen the already struggling agriculture economy.

Low commodity and livestock prices, numerous natural disasters, and protracted trade disputes have left our agriculture economy trailing behind the broader economy for far too long. I worked hard to get this legislation passed, which will help create thousands of new jobs and expand economic growth for South Dakota's producers. There is still more work to be done to help our agriculture economy, and I will continue to fight for South Dakota's leading industry.

In March, as the COVID-19 virus pandemic began to hit, the nation felt a world of uncertainty. The Senate immediately got to work to provide much-needed relief to the American people. As whip, I worked hard to ensure multiple rounds of COVID relief bills made it through the Senate and onto the president's desk. Among other things, these relief efforts put emergency cash into the hands of American families and workers who needed it the most. These bills provided relief to small businesses and invested in our health care workers on the front lines.

I've already helped negotiate another COVID relief bill, one that's targeted and fiscally responsible. I'm hopeful Democrats will ditch their partisan demands and come to the table to finalize this package and help those who are hurting during these difficult times.

Another part of my job as whip over the last few years has been to help confirm well-qualified judges who believe in the rule of law and actually base their rulings on it. In October, the Senate confirmed now-Justice Amy Coney Barrett to serve on the Supreme Court, the third justice we've confirmed in the last four years. I believe most South Dakotans want us to confirm judges who fit the mold of Justice Barrett – judges who are smart, qualified, and check their own opinions at the door. I'm proud of our work over the last few years to confirm hundreds of judges who will help reshape the judiciary and return it to the branch of government that our founders envisioned it should be.

These are just a few examples of the work we've done in the last few years. As always, fighting for South Dakota is my number one priority. It's been a privilege and an honor to give our state a seat at the leadership table in Washington and to make sure the voices of South Dakotans are being heard. I'm looking forward to continuing this work once again.

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Unforgettable

I don't think I'll ever forget the weekend of September 15, 2006. It's one of those memories in life you'll always remember, no matter how long you live.

I was working as governor at the time and that weekend we hosted the dedication ceremony for the state's Vietnam War Memorial in Pierre. We tried to pull out all the stops to honor our heroes. We scheduled flyovers from various war planes like the B-1B Lancer bomber based at Ellsworth, the F-16 Fighting Falcon stationed at Joe Foss Field in Sioux Falls, and the Vietnam-era Huey helicopter. We threw a parade that lasted more than two hours with 187 entries, 258 motorcyclists and 40 marching bands. We created a field of white crosses with duplicated dog tags for every soldier who died, so families could take the cross and dog tags of their loved ones home. And we had a grand fireworks display over Capitol Lake. In total, more than 32,000 people came to town for all the activities that weekend. We did our best to give our Vietnam veterans the welcome home they never received.

But the thing I'll always remember are the concerts. In preparing for this weekend, we asked the veterans how they wanted to celebrate and they came back with a unified response— through music. We brought in bands the veterans of that era requested - Creedence Clearwater Revisited, the Steve Miller Band, Big & Rich, the Beach Boys and the Red Willow Band. In front of a packed crowd, Big & Rich performed their hit song "8th of November" with on-stage guest Niles Harris, the Deadwood man who inspired the song which tells the story of a boy who left South Dakota to fight for the red, white and blue in Vietnam. Unforgettable.

Fast forward a few years to a different concert. Jean and I attended the annual Christmas Concert in Hoven at St. Anthony's Catholic Church, or as it's better known, The Cathedral of the Prairie. As we went to leave, I received a tap on the shoulder. I turned around to find a lady who said, "Thanks for giving me my husband back." As you might imagine, I was pretty confused. She went on to explain that her husband had served in the Vietnam War and upon returning home was not the same. War had changed him and not for the better.

He'd remain the same until 2006. That's when, much to his protest, she managed to talk him into driving to Pierre to attend the dedication ceremony. As part of our tribute, we arranged for an appearance of the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall, a moving model of the permanent memorial in Washington, D.C. He looked up at the names on the wall – the names of friends he lost during the war – and that's when it all clicked. He realized he needed to get help. He sought counseling and turned his life around.

As I was talking to his wife, I received another tap on the shoulder - this time from the Vietnam hero. "Thanks for giving me my life back," he said. I told him it wasn't me, but rather the 1,900 volunteers led by Vietnam-era veteran John Moisan. Clearly, I wasn't the only one who will never forget that September weekend in 2006. Unforgettable indeed.

I have said this before, but I think it's worth repeating: It's not the speech-giver who protects our freedom of speech. It's not the reporter who protects our freedom of press. It's not the politician who protects our right to vote. And it's not the preacher who protects our freedom of religion. All of our freedoms are defended and protected by the men and women who wear and have worn the uniform of our great nation. Veterans Day is our opportunity to honor these heroes and thank them for their sacrifice which allows us to enjoy life in the greatest country in the world: the United States of America.

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SOUTH DAKOTA GOVERNOR
KRISTI NOEM



Providing for Our Communities

From Belle Fourche, Buffalo, and Bison to Aberdeen, Groton, Webster, and Parkston I recently had the chance to sit down with so many South Dakotans. As the country continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to remember that many people – of all walks of life – are struggling, but that we are in this together and we will get through it.

My visits with the wonderful South Dakotans in these communities again reminded me of this state's unique spirit. Our people are taking care of those who get sick. Our businesses are finding new ways to help their communities. And the state is doing all it can to give families the flexibility they need to keep food on the table and a roof over their heads.

While in Aberdeen, I got to celebrate with 3M as they unveiled an expansion of their facility. 3M's plant in Aberdeen already produced more N-95s than anywhere in the world, and they've tripled their production since the start of 2020. Now, they'll be able to produce even more of these crucial supplies for our frontline healthcare workers.

But this story extends so far beyond 3M itself. Immediately after the event, we visited Banner Engineering, a facility that develops innovative products, including several that 3M incorporates into their production lines. And I got to visit a dear favorite of mine at the Hitch'n Post.

In Groton, we visited Bierman Farm Services, a business that started providing breakfast for its clientele after restaurants in town closed early on in the pandemic. We swung by BaseKamp Lodge, where hunters can enjoy the natural social distancing of the outdoors while participating in one of South Dakota's greatest pastimes, pheasant hunting. In Webster, we saw how Dakota Foundry stepped up to provide workout equipment (especially kettle bells) when supplies were low across the country. This spirit was repeated everywhere we went.

I spent Veterans' Day in Parkston. While I was there, I saw a community united behind a desire to honor our fallen heroes, as well as the veterans who gave of themselves to serve our nation when duty called.

In Belle Fourche, we visited a western apparel store, Cowboy Too, whose owner and store manager had both recently transplanted from Minnesota and Oregon to live a life of freedom in South Dakota. We also stopped in Bison and Buffalo. In all three towns, we saw small businesses who were working together to keep their communities safe, strong, and healthy in the face of challenges.

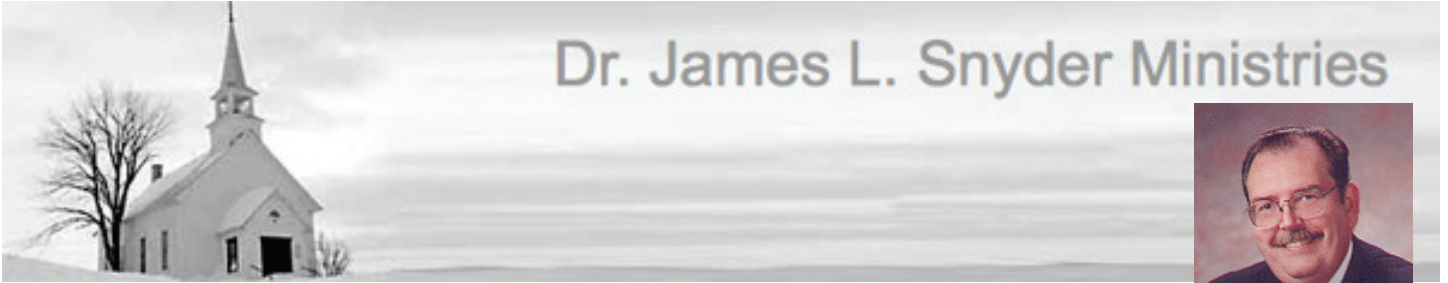
In each of these towns, I met with the mayors and other community leaders. Time and time again, they thanked me for allowing them to have the flexibility to continue to provide for their communities, to innovate to help their neighbors, and to put food on the table.

I knew that South Dakotans could be trusted to exercise their personal responsibility, and each and every one of these people have proven me right. I owe tremendous thanks to the small business owners who are keeping our economy strong and growing stronger, who are providing for their communities while working to keep their neighbors healthy.

Our fight against COVID is not over. Cases and hospitalizations are up in our state. As I write this, more than 550 South Dakotans have passed away from this silent enemy. Each and every one of their deaths is tragic, and my heart breaks for the families who will never see their loved-ones again. As we continue this fight, let's remember that we're in this together. Let's also remember that our future is brighter than ever.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



Bug! Bug! Where's The Bug?

As far back as I can remember, every time I would leave the house, the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage would say, "Be careful. Drive safely."

It's as though she doesn't think I could drive carefully without giving me some instructions. I think it has become just a routine for her.

There are reasons behind all of that. I've been involved in quite a few accidents, although not serious. An accident can create a whole lot of trouble, especially with the insurance company. There have also been times I have run out of gas.

When I have an accident, I have to call the insurance company.

When I run out of gas, I have to call the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

One of those calls, and I will not say which one, I do not want to make.

Although I've not had many accidents, they still are accidents. Although most of them were not my fault, I still got blamed.

"Well," my wife explained to me, "you were the one behind the wheel, so it has to be your responsibility. You should know how to control your car."

She does have a point. I should know how to control my car, but there are times, and it's hard to explain, when the control is completely out of hand. This is something the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage cannot understand.

She has a marvelous and wonderful way of controlling everything in front of her. Even me. If she can't control it or fix it then there is absolutely no hope.

We've been married longer than the number of fingers on my hand and toes on my feet and during that time she has never had an accident. At least, I don't know of any accident that she might've had.

Every year when it comes time to renew our insurance, she reminds me, "Don't forget to renew our insurance because you just might need it this coming year."

I suppose she's right more times and wrong. That's the frustrating thing. If I were right every time she was wrong, I would never be right.

Giving this some thought over the years, I have just accepted the fact that I'm the one in the house that has the accidents, which is why we need to have car insurance.

That was until recently.

I love it when the tables are turned, and last week the tables were wonderfully turned in her direction.

Nobody saw this coming, but that in itself makes it rather enjoyable.

My wife had various places to go last Thursday, which is a normal thing for her. She's always busy, particularly visiting thrift stores.

One thing about my wife is that she does not like insects. I, on the other side of the marital aisle, are fascinated with insects of all kinds. It is very hard for me to kill a fly even when it's bugging me.

I love critters of all denominations.

As she was driving, she felt something on her leg. She simply shook it off and kept driving. She is always a very well focused person, and she was entirely focused on getting to her next destination. All the while, something seemed to be crawling up her leg.

While driving, she couldn't see what was crawling up her leg, so she shook her leg.

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Then she stopped at a red light. There was a car in front of her which she didn't pay much attention to. While she was stopped, she thought she would look into what was crawling up her leg.

Her foot was on the brake pedal, and as she looked down, she saw a bug crawling up her leg, which threw her into a frenzy. She jumped, her foot got off of the brake pedal, and she reached down to grab the bug and throw it out the window.

As she did this, her car lunged forward and hit the back of the car in front of her.

Officially, this was an accident. She got out, and the man in the car in front of her get out, and they looked at the damage, fortunately, there was very little damage. They exchange insurance cards and names, and so forth.

Then she went home. I was already home, and as she came in the door, her cell phone rang, and it was our insurance company. I sat there, overhearing all the information about her "accident."

She hung up the phone, looked at me, and said, "It wasn't my fault. It was that stinking bug's fault."

"But," I said as soberly as possible, "weren't you behind the wheel?"

She just looked at me with both hands on her hips and then turned around and walked away.

Nobody was hurt, not even the vehicles themselves. But it was an "accident."

The next morning she had to go somewhere else, and as she opened the door, I said to her very carefully, "Be safe. Drive carefully."

She looked back at me and said, "Very funny."

It's so wonderful to have the upper hand finally.

As she closed the door behind her, I chuckled and then thought of a Scripture verse. "Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

One thing I have learned in life is to be careful what you allow to bug you.

Groton Area School District															
Active COVID-19 Cases															
Updated November 13, 2020; 12:49 PM															
JK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Staff	Total
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	4

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#265 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Another big number today, but not a record; yesterday's stands. Still, we're looking at 169,900 new case reports today, which is certainly bad enough, a 1.6% increase from yesterday's total. We now stand at 10,973,000 cases reported, which is plenty. Should be no problem breaking 11 million tomorrow, probably before noon, which would be in record time, at a cool seven days—just one week. Count up, if you wish, the number of weeks to the end of the year and figure out where we'll be on New Year's Day at this rate. I find it too depressing to contemplate.

Nationwide, the seven-day new-case average is over 140,000 and is trending upward in 49 states. Thirty states added more cases in the past week than in any other seven-day period so far. More than one in 400 Americans tested positive this week. Alaska, Montana, Utah, North Dakota, Minnesota, Indiana, New Jersey, West Virginia, and Maryland all set single-day new-case records today.

There were 1334 deaths reported today, a 0.5% increase. We have lost 245,444 Americans to this virus so far. The US's seven-day death average is over 1000, an increase of over 50% in the last month. Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, and Oklahoma all set records for deaths today. And New Mexico, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Tennessee have had more deaths this week than in any other seven-day stretch in the pandemic. Medical examiners are stocking extra body bags, ordering up mobile morgues. These deaths reflect transmission that happened several weeks ago because illness lags infection, and death lags illness. That means if we magically began to do all of the right things this evening (spoiler: we won't), it would be weeks before the pressure on the health care system relents and before the bodies stop piling up.

According to Dr. Ali Mokdad, professor at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, the current rate of infections and deaths per capita in the Dakotas is what you'd expect to see in a war-torn nation, not the US. The Dakotas' death rates at present are similar to the hardest-hit countries in the world and the worst in the US. Dr. Mokdad cites high rates of preexisting conditions, economic inequality, and health care that lags the US standard as contributing factors; but the lack of public health measures is what has tipped the balance to produce these abysmal results.

Jennifer Nuzzo, epidemiologist and senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, says, "It's getting bad and it's potentially going to get a lot worse. The months ahead are looking quite horrifying." Funny, I thought the current month was quite horrifying enough.

If you've been asking yourself if there is anything more you can do to protect yourself, it appears a new answer is "Maybe." Let's talk humidity. We know indoor air is dryer in the winter (relative humidity runs around 30% or less, as low as 10%); this is because, when you heat air, you dry it out. Even though air conditioning also removes humidity from indoor air, it starts out with more humid air and removes less than heating does such that indoor relative humidity in summer is more likely to be 40 to 60%. We've known forever that respiratory infections of many kinds are more common when the air is dry and less common when the air is humid. We also now understand some of the reasons for this. Let's explore those and contemplate whether they might apply to the current situation.

One factor is transmission. Here's what happens: As you speak or cough, you emit particles of moisture made out of mucus, salts, protein, dead cells, and water—mostly water. In relatively humid air, that water evaporates slowly; in dry air, it evaporates faster. Evaporation makes the particles smaller, and smaller particles float around longer, travel farther, get through masks in higher numbers, and go deeper into the lungs when they're inhaled. And any viruses hanging out on the particles go with them into the lungs. Larger particles are more apt to be caught in air filters. A recent modeling study from Japan shows air with 30% relative humidity can carry more than twice as many infectious particles as air with relative humidity of 60% or more.

The other factor is that dry air hobbles some of your first lines of defense against viruses. One of the first things a virus encounters when it gets into your respiratory system is the physical barrier formed by the layer of cells lining the passages. Some of these cells secrete mucus, one layer of it thicker and stickier and the other thinner and more watery. Some other of these cells are equipped with little hair-like projections called cilia which wave back and forth in that watery layer, which provides a slippery surface

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on which moves the thicker, stickier layer above it upward and outward—away from your lungs and toward the world outside. This is the gook you cough up and out. The sticky stuff catches viruses, bacteria, dust, and stray bits of flotsam that come wandering in, then the watery layer acts as lubricant while those cilia beat madly to convey the whole mess up and out—that is, when there's enough humidity in the air. When it's dry, the mucus layers dessicate, settle down on the cilia, and immobilize them. This means virus can spread to the lungs more successfully and at higher rates and you're more likely to get sick. And that's not all.

Additionally, viruses that get past the mucus flow will make their way into the epithelial cells that line the passages and begin to replicate there. When a cell becomes infected, it activates a whole constellation of genes that make defensive proteins: enzymes that damage the virus, fibers that trap viruses on the cell membrane so they can't release copies to go infect other cells, and interferons, sort of chemical SOS signals. We've talked about interferons before; they're cytokines, chemicals that message other cells, recruiting them to come in and lend a hand. And it appears the ability of those epithelial cells to send out signals is impeded by very dry air. We're not sure yet just what's operating here, but the effect has been observed.

There was an observation in a school system which triggered interest in humidity as a factor. In this system, one school was conducting science experiments with zebrafish; so there were several large tanks of fish spotted here and there throughout the school. Teachers had noted how often the fish tanks had to be topped off with additional water due to evaporation in the bone-dry environment of the building. And it was noted coincidentally that this school system had higher-than-average absenteeism due to a rough flu season that year, that is all of them did except this one school with the zebrafish tanks all over the place. Someone wondered whether humidity in the air from the evaporation of all that fish-tank water had something to do with the lower infection rate. The effect was so notable that it led to a controlled experiment to test the hypothesis.

This experiment to explore whether it was humidity creating the difference in infection rates was conducted in a nursery school and provided different levels of humidity in different classrooms, testing students for viruses periodically through the winter and tracking how many kids developed respiratory symptoms. There was an observable effect. Now a single experiment in one school is not proof of anything, but it is suggestive.

And the fact that we have a plausible mechanism by which the humidity appears to operate in affecting susceptibility to viral respiratory infections adds to the interest. It's too soon to tell just how this particular coronavirus we're currently dealing with operates and this one study is by itself insufficient to show causation; but I'm thinking it's worth a look. And I'm not the only one who thinks so. Stephanie Taylor, physician and Incite Health Fellow at Harvard Medical School, as well as a distinguished lecturer and member of the Epidemic Task Force at the American Society for Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), thinks fine-tuning humidity could save lives. She worked with a team at MIT to do a massive analysis of data from 125 countries about preparation and response to the pandemic, about cases, and about the environment using a machine-learning model to look for connections. It took three months, but they found a powerful correlation between national numbers of daily new coronavirus cases and deaths with indoor relative humidity. She said, "It's so powerful, it's crazy." This study has not been published, so I have not seen the paper, but reports are there's plenty to see.

The idea here is not that you can abandon all the other precautions and just sit about sniffing beautifully moist air; but it's fair to say it wouldn't hurt to add humidification to the constellation of other things you're doing—masking, distancing, ventilation, staying home when you can, hand hygiene, etc. She says, "Humidifiers aren't a replacement for masks or social distancing or ventilation. But when you have more humidification, it enhances all these other things we're already doing."

So how do you humidify the air in a building? Many heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems have humidifiers built in; the fancy ones have a set-up where water sprays onto a blanket through which travels air that will be circulated through rooms. If I had one of those, I'd be making sure it's functioning well this winter. You can buy stand-alone humidifiers for a room. Putting a pot of water on to simmer will put a lot of that water into the air; of course you do have to watch the pot so it doesn't boil dry. Even having open containers of water sitting around (remember those classroom fish tanks) will boost indoor

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humidity. Chris Pierret, a molecular biologist at Mayo Clinic who worked on the nursery school experiment, says, "If you could humidify only one space, I'd make it the one where you're sleeping." Research shows you sleep better in rooms with humidity between 40 and 60% anyhow and good sleep is important to your ability to fight off infections, so even if the direct effect of humidity turns out not to be as powerful as we're thinking, there will still be an important indirect benefit. Pierret also takes pains to point out that humidification is not a magic arrow; it's just one more thing you can add to your arsenal of tools for protecting your health and the health of those around you. Speaking of all the recommended precautions, he says, "Any one of those alone is not enough. But each one is like a card that you're putting into a deck to stack the odds in your favor." Food for thought.

We've seen hints of this next before, but there's another study out which reinforces some of the earlier thinking about why children seem so much less likely to become infected and ill with Covid-19. This one's from the Retroviral Immunology Laboratory at the Francis Crick Institute in London and was published just last week in Science. I did not see the paper, so I'm working here from a report, but there appears to be something here. About one in five of the colds children get are caused by coronaviruses—not the one that causes Covid-19, but a set of cousins to it. Earlier in the pandemic, this research team, in directing its research at this virus, as were so many other researchers, developed a highly sensitive lab test for SARS-CoV-2 antibodies. That done, to evaluate their new test, for positive samples they used blood samples from people known to have been infected and, as their negative control, blood taken before the pandemic. And they hit a snag. Blood from before the pandemic was showing up with one particular antibody that was very good at preventing SARS-CoV-2 from entering cells. Now that's weird because these were from people we know for sure had not been exposed to the virus—no one had at that point. Turns out this antibody reacted with the base of those spikes we've talked about so much, and the base of the spike is pretty much the same in all coronaviruses. The tips are different in the different viruses, but the base is apparently the same—and interfering with the base was enough to prevent infection. In studying pre-pandemic blood from over 300 adults and 48 children, they discovered that around five percent of adults and 43% of children had these antibodies. They're preparing to have a closer look at a larger group of adults and children because some of the antibodies found were so-called neutralizing antibodies (the ones that can prevent or stop an infection), and others were not; we'll be watching for further news.

We've talked a few times now about coronavirus infections in mink, first in the US, then in Denmark with a worrisome mutated variant (see my Update #255 posted November 4 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4141305369219171>). Now we're looking at infections in Greece, which also has a thriving mink industry. Mink on two farms have been diagnosed with a variant found in humans, but I do not have word whether it is the mutated strain from Denmark. I'm thinking not, or it would have been mentioned. Twenty-five hundred animals have been culled on one farm. This will bear watching.

I'm going to leave you tonight with a reflection from my sister Donna on Thanksgiving. This perfectly crafted thought needs no editorial comment, so with her permission, here you go:

I've seen several posts about Thanksgiving being ruined.

What is Thanksgiving?

A time of reflection as to what you are thankful for.

Stop being selfish and think of others.

If the holiday is about cooking food, go ahead and cook. When you are done make some plates of your creations and take them to people. No one will turn you away. Talk to people and ask them if they have plans.

Just think of the prayers you will be in if you do one thing one day.

This holiday is different and new. Don't let that translate to bad. Make it good.

People of the United States, embrace different and new, it's our cause.

BE THE PERSON SOMEONE IS THANKFUL FOR.

Yes, do that.

Stay 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	Nov. 14	Nov. 15		
Minnesota	189,681	194,570	201,795	207,339	213,582		
Nebraska	87,733	89,942	92,553	94,922	96,834		
Montana	41,151	42,070	43,031	44,244	45,886		
Colorado	138,427	142,042	147,599	154,038	159,234		
Wyoming	16,442	16,518	17,442	18,243	18,726		
North Dakota	56,342	57,373	59,173	60,602	62,872		
South Dakota	57,334	58,696	60,716	62,327	64,182		
United States	10,258,090	10,402,273	10,557,451	10,746,996	10,905,597		
US Deaths	239,695	241,808	242,436	244,366	245,614		
Minnesota	+4,893	+4,889	+7,225	+5,554	+6,243		
Nebraska	+2,182	+2,209	+2,611	+2,369	+1,912		
Montana	+1,098	+919	+961	+1,213	+1,642		
Colorado	+3,890	+3,615	+5,557	+6,439	+5,196		
Wyoming	+1,131	+76	+924	+801	+483		
North Dakota	+894	+1,031	+1,801	+1,429	+2,270		
South Dakota	+1,024	+1,362	+2,019	+1,611	+1,855		
United States	+147,538	+144,183	+155,178	+189,545	+158,601		
US Deaths	+1,444	+2,113	+628	+1,930	+1,248		

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November 14th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

South Dakota recorded 58 people who died, according to today's report. People currently hospitalized only dropped by 7 so there were a bunch that were admitted.

The death tolls were 29 females and 24 males with 34 in the 80+ age group, 13 in their 70s, 3 in their 60s, 2 in their 50s and 1 in their 30s. Death toll by county: Beadle-2, Bon Homme-2, Brookings-1, Brown-1, Brule-2, Codington-4, Corson-1, Davison-1, Faulk-1, Grant-1, Gregory-2, Jackson-1, Lincoln-3, McCook-6, Meade-1, Minnehaha-10, Moody-2, Oglala Lakota-1, Pennington-4, Roberts-3, Turner-23, Union-1 Ziebach-1.

North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum announced new requirements for businesses, gatherings and masks, delays winter activities. This includes all high school winter sports and other extracurricular K-12 school activities are suspended until Dec. 14. To see what North Dakota is now implementing, Click here:

https://www.health.nd.gov/news/burgum-announces-new-requirements-businesses-gatherings-and-masks-delays-winter-activities?fbclid=IwAR3lzVqZIMkKrr3Y6bee1w0KPu1IT8TLxeeB6FKaNR0eju_oMuqOAw48DX

Glacial Lakes hospital beds being occupied by COVID-19 patients as well as Minnehaha and Pennington counties: Walworth: 3 (+1) Occupied Beds; Potter: 5 (+1) Occupied Beds; Hughes: 11 (-0) Occupied Beds, 4 (+1) ICU Beds, 0 (-1) Ventilation; Hand: 5 (+0) Occupied Beds (-1); Faulk: 1 (-1) Occupied Beds;

Edmunds: 2 (-1) Occupied Bed; Brown: 36 (-2) Occupied Beds, 1 (-5) ICU, 0 (-0) Ventilation; Spink: 5 (+1) Occupied Beds; Day: 1 (-0) Occupied Beds; Marshall: 4 (+1) Occupied Beds; Grant: 1 (0) Occupied Beds; Codington: 17 (-0) Occupied Beds, 3 (+0) ICU, 2 (+0) Ventilation; None (some counties have no hospitals): Clark, Hyde, Stanley, Sully, Campbell, McPherson, Roberts; Minnehaha: 262 (+4) Occupied Beds, 58 (-4) ICU, 32 (-2) Ventilation; Pennington: 68 (-6) Occupied Beds, 14 (+0) ICU, 11 (+0) Ventilation

Brown County:

Total Positive: +81 (2,847) Positivity Rate: 17.7%
Total Tests: +457 (22,306)
Total Individuals Tested: +110 (12,045)
Recovered: +56 (2,155)
Active Cases: +24 (683)
Ever Hospitalized: +1 (158)
Deaths: +1 (9)
Percent Recovered: 75.7%
Hospital Reports:
Avera St. Luke's: Covid-19 Occupied 23 (-3); ICU 1 (-3), Ventilation 0 (0).
Sanford Aberdeen: Covid-19 Occupied 13 (+1); ICU 0 (-2), Ventilation 0 (-0)
Sanford Webster: Covid-19 Occupied 1 (-0).
Marshall County Healthcare: Covid-19 Occupied: 4 (+1).

South Dakota:

Positive: +1855 (64,182 total) Positivity Rate: 26.0%

Total Tests: 7111 (512,835 total)
Total Individuals Tested: 3162 (291,823)
Hospitalized: +58 (3,598 total). 549 currently hospitalized (-7)

Deaths: +53 (621 total)
Recovered: +1682 (44,814 total)
Active Cases: +120 (18,747)
Percent Recovered: 69.8%

Total COVID-19 Occupied Beds: 549 (-7), Black Hills Region 97 (-9), Glacial Lakes Region 91 (+0) Sioux Empire Region 282 (+2), South Central Plains 79 (-0).
ICU Units: Total 92 (-10), BH 16 (+0), GL 8 (-4), SE 59 (-4), SCP 9 (-2).

Ventilation: Total 45 (-3), BH 11 (+0), GL 2 (-1), SE 32 (-2), SCP 0 (-0).

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 20% Covid, 46% Non-Covid, 34% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 31% Covid, 36% Non-Covid, 33% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 11% Covid, 17% Non-Covid, 73% Available

Beadle (21) +51 positive, +50 recovered (572 active cases)

Brown (9): +81 positive, +56 recovered (683 active cases)

Clark (1): +3 positive, +6 recovered (61 active cases)

Clay (8): +23 positive, +12 recovered (266 active cases)

Codington (26): +24 positive, +58 recovered (522

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active cases)

Davison (14): +86 positive, +60 recovered (779 active cases)

Day (3): +13 positive, +6 recovered (84 active cases)

Edmunds (1): +5 positive, +3 recovered (59 active cases)

Faulk (6): +2 positive, +6 recovered (41 active cases)

Grant (5): +20 positive, +7 recovered (135 active cases)

Hanson (1): +13 positive, +16 recovered (75 active cases)

Hughes (8): +47 positive, +29 recovered (367 active cases)

Lawrence (8): +50 positive, +47 recovered (545 active cases)

Lincoln (37): +123 positive, +112 recovered (1388 active cases)

Marshall (3): +7 positive, +3 recovered (34 active cases)

McCook (9): +22 positive, +9 recovered (189 active cases)

McPherson (1): +6 positive, +0 recovery (26 active case)

Minnehaha (137): +465 positive, +380 recovered (4757 active cases)

Potter: +9 positive, +8 recovered (65 active cases)

Roberts (13): +12 positive, +6 recovered (179 active cases)

Spink (6): +9 positive, +12 recovered (155 active cases)

Walworth (10): +10 positive, +7 recovered (95 active cases)

NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Nov. 14:

- 15.7% rolling 14-day positivity
- 2,278 new positives
- 13,339 susceptible test encounters
- 305 currently hospitalized (+12)
- 11,311 active cases (+825)
- 726 total deaths (+19)

Yesterday

Today

Global Cases

53,497,593

Global Cases

54,027,785

10,746,996 US

8,773,479 India

5,810,652 Brazil

1,915,677 France

1,887,836 Russia

1,458,591 Spain

1,321,042 United Kingdom

1,296,378 Argentina

1,182,697 Colombia

1,107,303 Italy

997,393 Mexico

930,237 Peru

10,905,597 US

8,814,579 India

5,848,959 Brazil

1,915,713 France

1,910,149 Russia

1,458,591 Spain

1,347,907 United Kingdom

1,304,846 Argentina

1,191,634 Colombia

1,144,552 Italy

1,003,253 Mexico

934,899 Peru

Global Deaths

1,305,014

Global Deaths

1,312,918

244,366 deaths
US

164,737 deaths
Brazil

129,188 deaths
India

97,624 deaths
Mexico

51,396 deaths
United Kingdom

44,139 deaths
Italy

42,600 deaths
France

245,614 deaths
US

165,658 deaths
Brazil

129,635 deaths
India

98,259 deaths
Mexico

51,858 deaths
United Kingdom

44,683 deaths
Italy

42,600 deaths
France

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity
Aurora	284	184	742	2	Substantial	34.78%
Beadle	1893	1300	4344	21	Substantial	37.74%
Bennett	265	189	1007	5	Substantial	24.32%
Bon Homme	1203	1029	1676	6	Substantial	45.28%
Brookings	2025	1485	7309	13	Substantial	21.62%
Brown	2847	2155	9198	9	Substantial	27.17%
Brule	458	314	1472	5	Substantial	32.74%
Buffalo	331	288	801	5	Substantial	44.32%
Butte	594	391	2291	8	Substantial	27.31%
Campbell	93	76	173	1	Moderate	31.25%
Charles Mix	611	421	3160	1	Substantial	22.85%
Clark	183	121	723	1	Substantial	13.83%
Clay	1100	826	3668	8	Substantial	28.67%
Codington	2174	1626	6925	26	Substantial	34.77%
Corson	318	241	809	3	Substantial	51.39%
Custer	431	325	1885	4	Substantial	22.75%
Davison	1803	1010	4889	14	Substantial	34.85%
Day	260	173	1278	3	Substantial	30.38%
Deuel	249	195	841	2	Substantial	32.88%
Dewey	690	291	3411	2	Substantial	31.33%
Douglas	246	174	727	5	Substantial	22.78%
Edmunds	203	143	780	1	Substantial	10.50%
Fall River	309	216	1922	7	Substantial	10.34%
Faulk	258	211	537	6	Substantial	20.00%
Grant	462	322	1610	5	Substantial	27.09%
Gregory	356	243	909	12	Substantial	33.13%
Haakon	118	88	433	3	Substantial	3.06%
Hamlin	320	217	1311	0	Substantial	10.37%
Hand	231	138	615	1	Substantial	33.88%
Hanson	181	105	495	1	Substantial	36.56%
Harding	65	55	119	0	Moderate	60.00%
Hughes	1276	901	4066	8	Substantial	21.84%
Hutchinson	408	236	1704	2	Substantial	20.62%

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Hyde	94	49	308	0	Substantial	45.95%
Jackson	178	123	789	5	Substantial	33.96%
Jerauld	207	151	412	13	Substantial	16.67%
Jones	46	36	138	0	Moderate	28.57%
Kingsbury	333	200	1144	5	Substantial	20.11%
Lake	673	429	2049	9	Substantial	40.26%
Lawrence	1607	1054	6128	8	Substantial	29.19%
Lincoln	4393	2968	14390	37	Substantial	32.07%
Lyman	366	290	1476	7	Substantial	22.94%
Marshall	109	72	812	3	Substantial	30.77%
McCook	475	277	1165	9	Substantial	32.50%
McPherson	92	65	427	1	Moderate	1.53%
Meade	1379	1035	5555	11	Substantial	19.72%
Mellette	126	92	581	1	Substantial	22.22%
Miner	172	132	442	3	Substantial	18.75%
Minnehaha	16770	11876	57021	137	Substantial	30.27%
Moody	329	219	1427	6	Substantial	7.20%
Oglala Lakota	1378	951	5781	12	Substantial	34.52%
Pennington	6847	4715	27335	60	Substantial	23.76%
Perkins	108	78	509	0	Substantial	37.78%
Potter	208	143	623	0	Substantial	19.14%
Roberts	557	365	3423	13	Substantial	29.58%
Sanborn	193	96	497	1	Substantial	42.86%
Spink	456	295	1681	6	Substantial	11.55%
Stanley	158	102	578	0	Substantial	26.37%
Sully	74	48	183	0	Moderate	39.13%
Todd	694	534	3517	10	Substantial	29.33%
Tripp	397	292	1182	2	Substantial	42.48%
Turner	693	468	1976	33	Substantial	31.50%
Union	1014	761	4425	18	Substantial	29.39%
Walworth	371	266	1363	10	Substantial	26.14%
Yankton	1291	859	6624	8	Substantial	16.49%
Ziebach	149	84	593	3	Substantial	30.38%
Unassigned	0	0	1257	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	2075	0
10-19 years	6847	0
20-29 years	12638	2
30-39 years	10879	9
40-49 years	9189	15
50-59 years	9076	42
60-69 years	7069	82
70-79 years	3622	126
80+ years	2787	345

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	33358	303
Male	30824	318

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Brown County

New Confirmed Cases

75

New Probable Cases

6

Active Cases

683

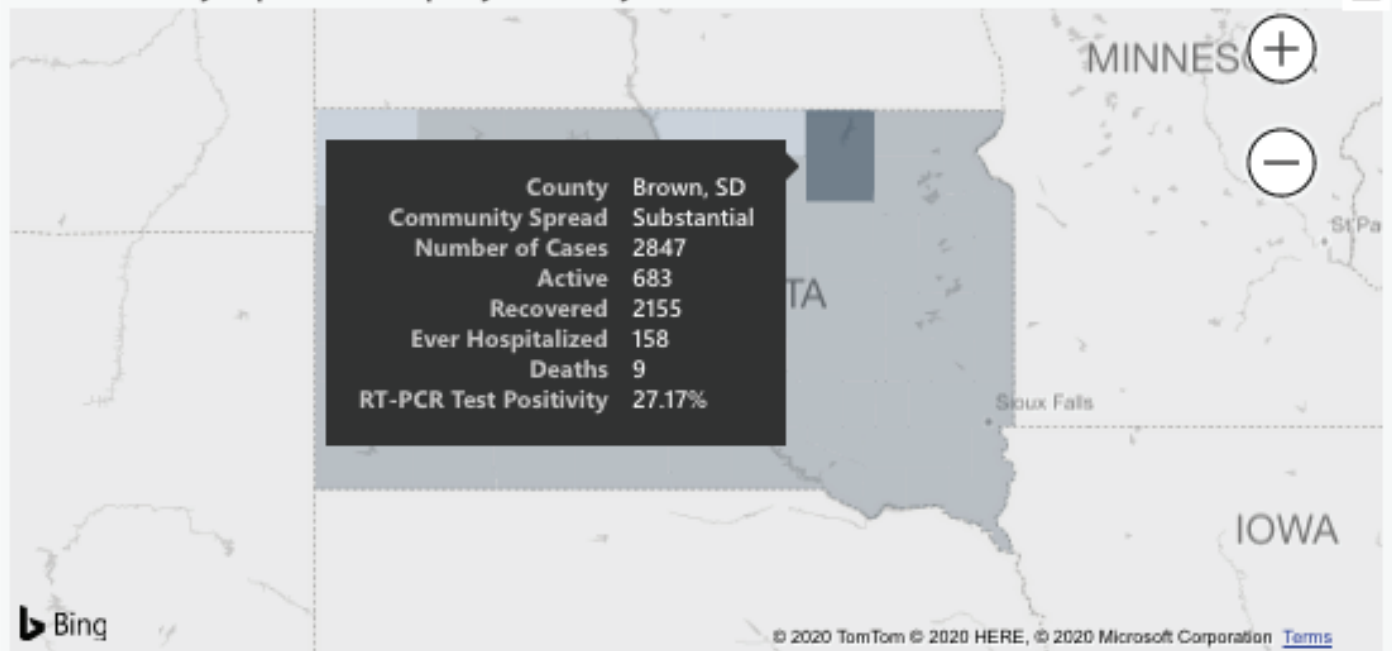
Recovered Cases

2,155

Currently Hospitalized

549

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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

Total Confirmed Cases

2,786

Total Probable Cases

61

Total Persons Tested

12,045

Total Tests

22,306

Ever Hospitalized

158

Deaths

9

% Progress
(October Goal:
44,233 Tests)

327%

% Progress
(November Goal:
44,233 Tests)

166%

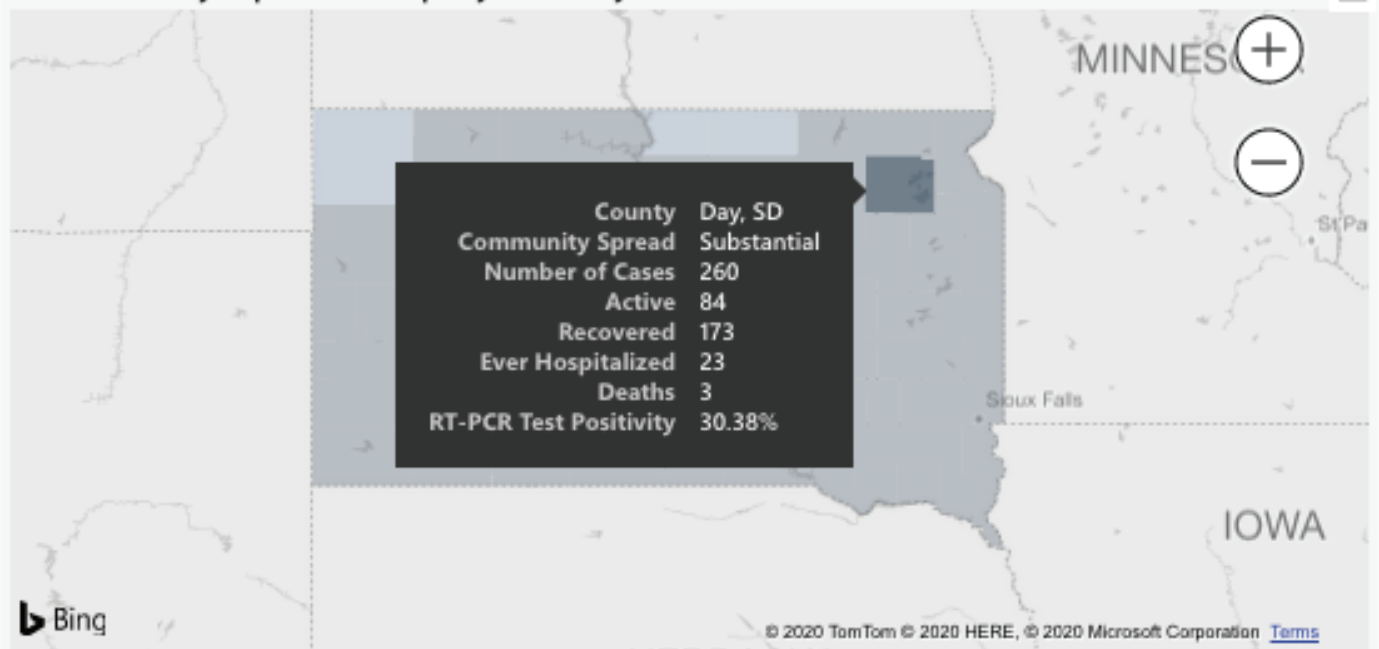
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Day County

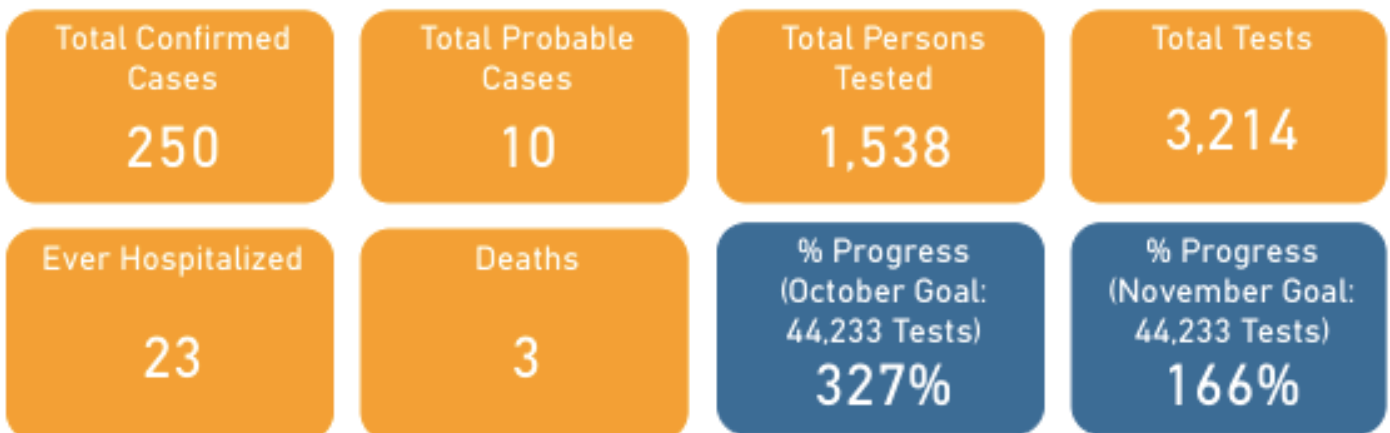


Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Moderate ● Substantial

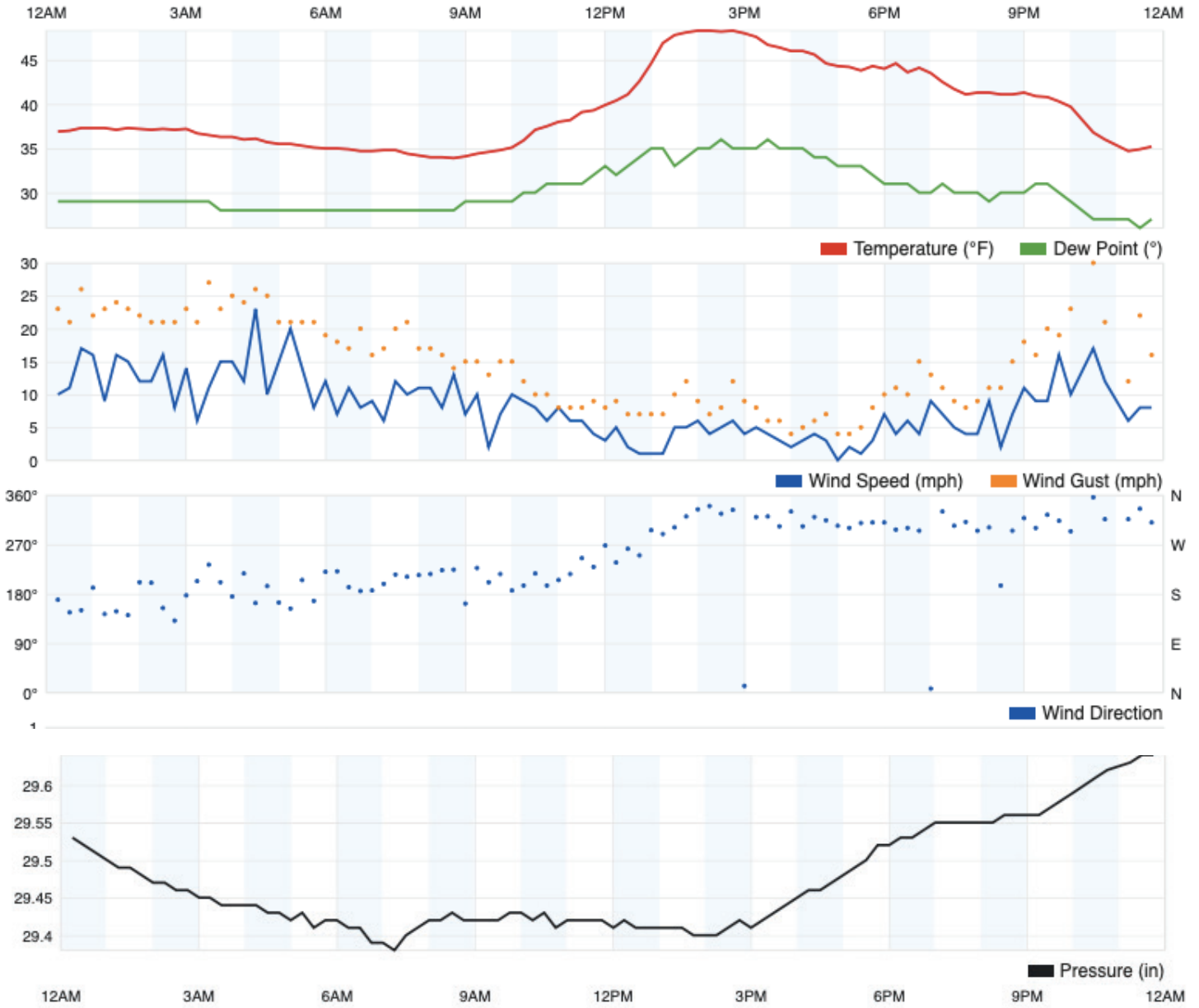
Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today

Tonight

Monday

Monday
Night

Tuesday



Becoming
Sunny and
Breezy

High: 41 °F



Partly Cloudy

Low: 25 °F



Sunny and
Breezy

High: 49 °F



Mostly Clear

Low: 19 °F




Mostly Sunny

High: 44 °F

Sunday
November 15

Blustery

Decreasing through the afternoon

 Upper 30s Coteau,
40s Elsewhere



4-Day Outlook

Mon Tue Wed Thu



42-56° 36-54° 50-70° 48-58°

Breezy to windy conditions return on Monday.
Mild conditions expected Wednesday.
Dry weather persists.

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Updated: 11/15/2020 5:49 AM Central



Wind gusts of 30 to 40+ mph will persist through the morning before diminishing through the afternoon, only to increase during the day on Monday once again. Mild weather is expected Wednesday, and dry conditions should prevail through the next several days.

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Today in Weather History

November 15, 1988: A mixture of sleet, freezing rain and snow fell from north central South Dakota into west central Minnesota before changing over to all snow by the afternoon of the 15th. Snow continued across Minnesota during the morning hours on the 16th, along with increasing winds. The winds and falling snow created near zero visibility due to blowing snow in the northwest and west central Minnesota. A 60 mph wind gust was recorded in Morris, MN. Snow and blowing snow blocked roads, caused power outages and closed schools. Snow in many locations accumulated over a sheet of ice that coated roads from preceding rainfall.

1987: On November 15 and 16, intense thunderstorms rumbled through the South-Central US producing 49 tornadoes in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi during a 34 hour period. Of the 49 tornadoes, four were F3, 12 were F2, 27 were F1, and 6 were F0. These severe storms caused 11 deaths and 303 injuries. This storm system also brought heavy rain to central Louisiana where five stations recorded over 10 inches in 24 hours. The highest amount was 14.22 inches at Olla on the 16.

1996: An intense, lake effect snow event came to an end over western New York, northeastern Ohio, and northwest Pennsylvania. Chardon, Ohio was buried under 68.9 of snow over a six-day period. Edinboro, Pennsylvania checked in with 54.8 inches. 18.5 inches blanketed Cleveland, Ohio and 42 inches fell at Sherman, New York.

2007: Tropical Cyclone Sidr, a Category 4 storm on the Saffir-Simpson scale, brings torrential rain 150-mph winds and a four ft storm surge to the Bangladesh coast. At least 3200 people die, and millions are left homeless. Since records began in 1877, Sidr obtained the title of the second-strongest cyclone to make landfall in Bangladesh.

1900 - A record lake-effect snowstorm at Watertown, NY, produced 45 inches in 24 hours. The storm total was 49 inches. (14th-15th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1967 - A surprise snow and ice coating paralyzed Boston during the evening rush hour. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Thunderstorms spawned twenty-two tornadoes in eastern Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma. A tornado moving out of northeastern Texas killed one person and injured ninety-six others around Shreveport LA causing more than five million dollars damage. Tornadoes in Texas claimed ten lives, and injured 191 persons. A tornado caused more than nineteen million dollars damage around Palestine TX. Severe thunderstorms spawned eighteen tornadoes in Mississippi and seven in Georgia the next day, and thunderstorms in southeastern Texas produced wind gusts to 102 mph at Galveston, and wind gusts to 110 mph at Bay City, killing one person. There were a total of forty-nine tornadoes in the south central U.S. in two days. The tornadoes claimed eleven lives, injured 303 persons, and caused more than seventy million dollars damage. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Oklahoma and northeastern Texas to northern Indiana and southern Wisconsin from mid morning through the pre-dawn hours of the following day. Thunderstorms spawned forty-four tornadoes, including thirteen in Missouri, and there were more than two hundred reports of large hail or damaging winds. A tornado in central Arkansas hit Scott and Lonoke killing five people, injuring sixty others, and causing fifteen million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A tornado hit Southside, AR, killing one person, injuring ten others, and causing more than two million dollars damage, and a tornado near Clarksville AR injured nine persons and caused more than two million dollars damage. A tornado moving through the southwest part of Topeka KS injured twenty-two persons and caused nearly four million dollars damage. A tornado near Jane MO killed one person and injured twelve others, and a tornado moving across the southwest part of O'Fallon MO injured ten persons. Severe thunderstorms also produced hail three and a half inches in diameter east of Denison TX, and wind gusts to 85 mph at Kirksville MO. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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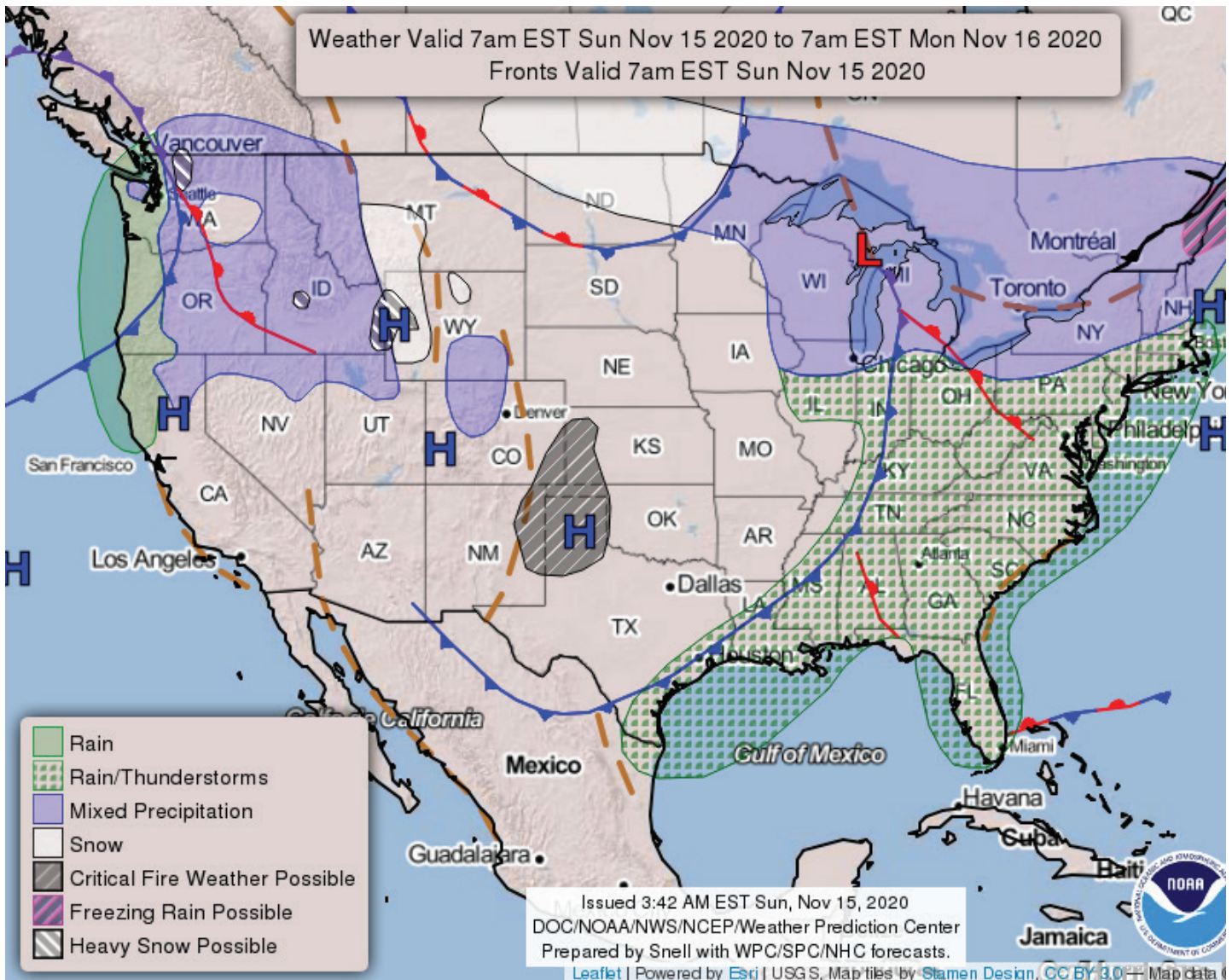
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 49 °F at 1:52 PM
Low Temp: 34 °F at 8:19 AM
Wind: 31 mph at 10:15 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 72° in 1953
Record Low: -8° in 1900
Average High: 40°F
Average Low: 19°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.39
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.06
Average Precip to date: 20.86
Precip Year to Date: 16.40
Sunset Tonight: 5:03 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:35 a.m.



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WHERE IS HE WHEN WE NEED HIM?

The night was so dark that even the stars were hidden behind the clouds. The winds were so fierce and the rains so heavy that it was nearly impossible to see. A chaplain noticed a young sailor trying to hide behind the ship's guns where there was a dim light. Trying to comfort him, the chaplain opened his New Testament to John 3:16 and asked him to read that verse. He wanted to talk to him about God. "For God so loved the world," he began reading quietly, "that He gave His only forgotten Son."

Many of us frequently forget the Lord, His Word, and His works until we need His help. This happened to the people of Israel. The Psalmist reminds us of this in two simple words that all of us, unfortunately, can relate to: "They forgot."

Often when we face a crisis, it is easy to focus on the crisis rather than the Christ who can guide and guard us through it safely if we would only allow Him. We think of everything that we can do rather than what He can do. So, we delay calling on Him. More than we can understand, He is waiting and willing, to hear our voice. He wants to comfort and care for us, strengthen and sustain us. But, we choose to tackle tasks by ourselves - believing that we can live life without His help. Then, when we realize that we are helpless, we turn to Him and, as always, He responds. Could it be that He allows us to "try it" on our own and fail so that He can remind us of our weakness and His enduring strength?

Can we find promises to assure us of His help? Indeed! "Call on me, and I will answer you..." And again, "I will never leave you nor forsake you!"

Prayer: Thank you Lord for always hearing our voice. How foolish we are, Father, to ever forget that You are always present in our lives, waiting, willing, and wanting to help us. Enable us to believe! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But they soon forgot what He had done. Psalm 106:13a

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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 Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

09-18-19-30-34

(nine, eighteen, nineteen, thirty, thirty-four)

Estimated jackpot: \$371,000

Lotto America

06-08-14-17-27, Star Ball: 2, ASB: 2

(six, eight, fourteen, seventeen, twenty-seven; Star Ball: two; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$3.2 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$176 million

Powerball

07-15-18-32-45, Powerball: 20, Power Play: 2

(seven, fifteen, eighteen, thirty-two, forty-five; Powerball: twenty; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$168 million

Saturday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Class 11AAA=

State Championship=

Brandon Valley 35, Harrisburg 14

Class 11A=

State Championship=

Tea Area 35, Canton 16

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

South Dakota reports daily record of 53 coronavirus deaths

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials on Saturday reported 53 new COVID-19 deaths, making it the highest single-day total during the pandemic.

South Dakota has recorded 621 deaths since the pandemic began.

Health officials also reported a near record for new coronavirus cases reported in a single day on Saturday, with 1,855 new infections. The largest report came on Thursday when more than 2,000 people tested positive.

The state has reported the nation's second-worst number of new cases per capita over the last two weeks, behind only North Dakota, according to Johns Hopkins researchers. There were 2,014 new cases per 100,000 people.

One in 91 people in South Dakota have tested positive for the virus in the past week, the researchers said.

The health department said 549 people were hospitalized on Saturday, down from more than 600 COVID-19 patients in the hospital on Tuesday, an all-time record.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems,

it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death.

Surging virus cases get a shrug in many Midwestern towns

By GRANT SCHULTE Associated Press

ELMWOOD, Neb. (AP) — Danny Rice has a good sense of how dangerous the coronavirus can be.

What puzzles him are the people who have curtailed so much of their lives to avoid being infected by the virus.

"I'm not going out and looking to catch it," he said, sitting at a cluttered desk in his auto repair shop in the tiny eastern Nebraska community of Elmwood. "I don't want to catch it. But if I get it, I get it. That's just how I feel."

Plenty of people agree with Rice, and health experts acknowledge those views are powering soaring COVID-19 infection rates, especially in parts of the rural Midwest where the disease is spreading unabated and threatening to overwhelm hospitals.

It's not that people in Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Iowa and elsewhere don't realize their states are leading the nation in new cases per capita. It's that many of them aren't especially concerned.

Wayne County, home to 6,400 people in southern Iowa, has the state's second-highest case rate, yet its public health administrator, Shelley Bickel, says mask-wearing is rare. She finds it particularly appalling when she sees older people, who are at high risk, shopping at a grocery store without one.

"I just want to get on the speaker and say, 'Why don't you have your mask on?' It's just amazing," Bickel said.

Jenna Lovaas, public health director of Jones County, Iowa, said even now that her rural county has the state's highest virus rate, people have opted not to make any changes, such as protecting themselves and others by wearing masks.

"They don't think it's real," she said. "They don't think it's going to be that bad or they just don't want to wear a mask because we've made it a whole political thing at this point."

In part, though, some of those views are hard to fight because of the reality that many people have no symptoms, and most of those who do get sick recover quickly. And treatment advances mean that those who become seriously ill are less likely to die from the virus than when it first emerged in the spring. Even though cases and the death toll are rising, infectious disease experts note that death rates appear to be falling.

Like most people, Jay Stibbe, 52, of Fargo, North Dakota, said he and his family are respectful of COVID-19 protocols and wear masks where required. However, Stibbe said he doesn't see enough "concrete information" about the virus to stop him from going about his normal life, even though North Dakota leads the nation in the number of virus cases per capita.

"We have an 18-year-old and a 16-year-old, and we certainly believe this is an important time of life to maybe shine a little bit," he said. "We're trying to create as much normalcy as we can. We try not to live in fear. We've traveled. We go out to dinner."

In Plattsmouth, Nebraska, Karen Prohaska, 76, said she generally doesn't wear a mask in her downtown purse and jewelry shop but will put one on at the request of a customer. When customers come into the store with a face covering, she asks if they'd like her to don one as well. Most say no and ask if it's OK for them to remove theirs.

"I hope that I don't get the virus, but I've never really been a germophobe," Prohaska said.

The pandemic hasn't stopped Mary Gerteisen, of Eagle, Nebraska, from visiting her 96-year-old father on weekends to watch football. Gerteisen said she understands the risks, given her father's age and vulnerability, but she also weighed the fact that he's in the early stages of dementia and often believes family members have abandoned him.

"There are times when I think that I do need to take the pandemic more seriously," she said. "But I want to see my dad, and I don't know much longer I have with him. I would love for him to live to 100-some years old, but if he comes down with (the virus), he's lived a good, long life."

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Even as virus rates have soared in the Midwest, the Republican governors of Nebraska, Iowa and South Dakota have ruled out requiring masks in all public places, though Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds this week required masks for indoor events with more than 25 people and outdoor events of more than 100 people. Iowa schools are exempted, and bars and restaurants are only required to ensure social distancing. Meanwhile, North Dakota's Republican governor, Doug Burgum, imposed statewide mask and business restrictions on Friday after resisting doing so for months. The state had only nine free Intensive Care Unit hospital beds as of Friday.

Although doctors and public health officials have criticized the governors for their lack of action, voters in all of the states last week backed Republicans, including President Donald Trump, who has mocked mask wearing and downplayed the seriousness of a pandemic that has killed more than 240,000 people.

That has left Midwest medical professionals wondering how they will reverse a tide of people being treated for the coronavirus if residents of their states still aren't taking the illness seriously.

Suresh Gunasekaran, CEO of University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City, said they're managing the surge of patients for now but don't know what will happen if the numbers keep rising.

"The real question is where are we going to be in December? Where are we going to be in January?" he asked. "These are the kinds of questions that I think that we as a state have to continue to ask ourselves but more importantly each local community has to ask themselves."

Associated Press writers David Pitt in Des Moines, Iowa, and Dave Kolpack in Fargo, North Dakota, contributed to this story.

Follow Grant Schulte on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/GrantSchulte>

Hurricane Iota heads for battered Honduras, Nicaragua

By CURT ANDERSON and FREIDA FRISARO Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Iota became the thirteenth hurricane of the Atlantic season early Sunday, threatening to bring another dangerous system to Nicaragua and Honduras — countries recently clobbered by a Category 4 Hurricane Eta.

Iota was already a record-breaking system, being the 30th named storm of this year's extraordinarily busy Atlantic hurricane season. Such activity has focused attention on climate change, which scientists say is causing wetter, stronger and more destructive storms.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Sunday morning that Iota had maximum sustained winds of 85 mph (140 kph), making it a Category 1 hurricane. But, forecasters said Iota would rapidly strengthen and was expected to be a major hurricane by the time it reaches Central America.

Iota was centered about 240 miles (390 kilometers) east of Isla de Providencia, Colombia, and was moving west-northwest at 6 mph (9 kph) Sunday morning. Forecasters said Iota was expected to pass or cross over Providencia sometime Monday and then approach the coasts of Nicaragua and Honduras on Monday evening.

The system was forecast to bring up to 30 inches (750 millimeters) of rain from northeast Nicaragua into northern Honduras. Costa Rica, Panama and El Salvador could also experience heavy rain and possible flooding, the hurricane center said.

Forecasters said the island of Providencia and parts of Nicaragua and Honduras were under hurricane warnings. Storm surge could increase water levels by up to 13 feet (4 meters) in Nicaragua and Honduras.

Iota threatened to wreak more havoc in a region where people are still grappling with the aftermath of Eta. That system hit Nicaragua just over a week ago as a Category 4 hurricane, killing at least 120 people as torrential rains brought flash floods and landslides to parts of Central America and Mexico. Then it meandered across Cuba, the Florida Keys and around the Gulf of Mexico before slogging ashore again near Cedar Key, Florida, and dashing across Florida and the Carolinas.

Eta was the 28th named storm of this year's hurricane season, tying the 2005 record for named storms.

Theta, the 29th, was weakening over the far eastern Atlantic Ocean. It was expected to become a remnant low sometime Sunday, forecasters said.

The official end of hurricane season is Nov. 30.

Frisaro reported from Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Israel advances plans in sensitive east Jerusalem settlement

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A settlement watchdog group said Sunday Israel is moving ahead with new construction of hundreds of homes in a strategic east Jerusalem settlement that threatens to cut off parts of the city claimed by Palestinians from the West Bank.

The group, Peace Now, said the Israel Land Authority announced on its website Sunday that it had opened up tenders for more than 1,200 new homes in the key settlement of Givat Hamatos in east Jerusalem.

The move may test ties with the incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden, who is expected to take a firmer tack against Israeli settlement expansion after four years of a more lenient policy under President Donald Trump, who has largely turned a blind eye to settlement construction.

The approval of the 1,200 homes is a further setback to dwindling hopes of an internationally backed partition deal that would enable the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

The Palestinians along with critics of Israel's settlement policy say construction in the Givat Hamatos settlement would seal off the Palestinian city of Bethlehem and the southern West Bank from east Jerusalem, further cutting off access for the Palestinians to that part of the city.

"This is a continuation of the current Israeli government policy in destroying the two-state solution," said Nabil Abu Rdeneh, a spokesman to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Sunday's development comes as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is set to travel to the region this week, where he is expected to visit an Israeli settlement in the West Bank— a stop previous U.S. secretaries of state have avoided. Palestinian officials, who have cut off ties with the Trump administration over its policies in favor of Israel, have denounced Pompeo's planned visit. Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh tweeted on Friday that this was a "dangerous precedent" that legalizes settlements.

Brian Reeves, a spokesman for Peace Now, said the move Sunday allows contractors to begin bidding on the tenders, a process that will conclude just days before Biden's inauguration. Construction could then begin within months.

"This is a lethal blow to the prospects for peace," Peace Now said in a statement, adding that Israel was "taking advantage of the final weeks of the Trump administration in order to set facts on the ground that will be exceedingly hard to undo in order to achieve peace."

The Palestinians seek the West Bank, along with the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem — areas Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war — for their future 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.

Israel views the entire city of Jerusalem as its eternal, undivided capital.

Much of Jerusalem is already blocked off from the West Bank by a series of checkpoints and the separation barrier. Israel has previously moved forward on plans to build in E1, another sensitive area east of Jerusalem that critics say, with Givat Hamatos, would block east Jerusalem off entirely from the West Bank.

After four years of Trump, whose policies were hugely favorable toward Israel and who shrugged at settlement building, Israel faces a new reality under Biden, who will likely restore the previous U.S. position that viewed settlements as illegitimate and an obstacle to peace with the Palestinians.

Under previous administrations, Israel held back on building plans in the most sensitive areas, including Givat Hamatos, amid opposition by both Washington and the international community, which saw such plans as dashing hopes for a contiguous Palestinian state.

But Israel has been emboldened under Trump, approving thousands of new settlement homes during

his term, including in highly contested areas. Many of those plans are expected to break ground after Biden assumes the presidency.

With the Trump administration in its final weeks in office, Israel may be aiming to push ahead on contentious projects before Biden's term starts, a move that could set it on the wrong foot with the new president.

Asia Today: India reports 41,100 new coronavirus cases

NEW DELHI (AP) — India has reported 41,100 new cases of the coronavirus, raising the country's overall tally since the pandemic began to 8.79 million.

The Health Ministry on Sunday also reported 447 deaths in the same period, driving total fatalities to 129,635.

India is second in the world in total reported cases behind the U.S., but daily infections have been on the decline since the middle of September. There has been, however, a resurgence of infections in New Delhi, which has seen a renewed surge in recent weeks, recording more new cases than any other Indian state.

On Sunday, New Delhi registered 7,340 new cases, including 96 deaths.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— Authorities in Sri Lanka say about 400 inmates and officers in the country's highly congested prisons have tested positive for the coronavirus as infections spike in the capital and its suburbs. Twelve of those who tested positive are officers, while the rest are inmates. The cases were detected at five prisons in different parts of the country. Sri Lankan prisons are filled with more than 26,000 inmates in facilities meant to hold 10,000. The island nation has seen a fresh outbreak of the virus since last month when two clusters — one centered at a garment factory and another at a fish market — emerged in the capital, Colombo, and its suburbs. The confirmed cases from the two clusters have grown to 13,079. Sri Lanka has confirmed a total of 16,582 cases, including 53 deaths.

The Latest: France sees drop in COVID-19 hospitalizations

By The Associated Press undefined

PARIS — The number of coronavirus patients hospitalized in France dropped this weekend for this first time since September, after two weeks of new nationwide lockdown measures aimed at slowing surging infections and easing hospital strains.

The number of COVID-19 patients in intensive care also fell for the first time in six weeks, according to figures released Saturday night, though virus patients still occupy 96% of France's standard ICU beds.

The number of weekly infections per 100,000 people in France has now been falling for 14 straight days, and some doctors say they're starting to see signs of relief in over-stretched ICUs.

But it remains too early to say whether the one-day drop in hospital numbers means France has hit the peak in this second surge of the pandemic.

France has reported more virus infections than any European country and has had 44,246 virus-related deaths. The government imposed a nationwide partial lockdown starting Oct. 30 as the second surge hit and could start easing the measures Dec. 1 if the number of virus patients in hospitals shows consistent decline.

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

- Second round of lockdowns brings misery for Europe's Michelin-rated chefs
- President-elect Joe Biden faces tough choice of whether to back virus lockdowns
- Mexico reaches 1 million virus cases, nears 100,000 deaths
- French doctors use their experience to improve treatments for COVID-19 patients
- San Diego restaurants, gyms sue for right to operate indoors despite pandemic

Follow AP's coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic> and <https://apnews.com/Under->

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standingtheOutbreak

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Authorities in Sri Lanka say about 400 inmates from the country's highly-congested prisons have tested positive for COVID-19 as infected cases are surging in the capital and its suburbs.

Twelve of the 400 are prison officers while the rest are inmates. The cases are detected from five prisons in different parts of the country.

Sri Lankan prisons are highly congested with more than 26,000 inmates crowded in facilities designed to hold about 10,000.

Sri Lanka has seen a fresh outbreak of the disease since last month when two clusters — one centered on a garment factory and other on the fish market — emerged in Colombo and its suburbs. Confirmed cases from just those two clusters have grown by Sunday to 13,079 people.

Sri Lanka's total number of positive cases reached 16,582 on Sunday with 53 fatalities.

ANTWERP, Belgium — Many a three-star Michelin meal has been put into a takeout box and sent out on Deliveroo scooters, as renowned chefs in Belgium and elsewhere try to scrape through a second pandemic lockdown that is likely to threaten even the lucrative Christmas season.

Sergio Herman, who has run three-star, two-star and many other establishments that have wowed the Michelin powers and the most refined palates around the world, doesn't really see any positives to come out of working amid the pandemic.

"Sometimes you feel that whatever you built up over the years is slipping like sand through your fingers. It gives you this kind of fear," he told The Associated Press.

Across much of Europe, exclusive restaurants have lost the precious appeal of the luxury dining experience — from eating several inventive courses, to basking in sommelier tastings, to savoring the after-dinner sweet and having that little extra chat with the chef.

"All that cannot just be replaced by a box and a plastic tray. That is just impossible," Herman said amid the whirl of his new restaurant, Le Pristine, in the Belgian port of Antwerp.

NEW DELHI — India has reported 41,100 new cases of coronavirus in the past 24 hours, taking the country's overall tally since the pandemic began to 8.79 million.

The Health Ministry on Sunday also reported 447 deaths in the same period, driving total fatalities to 129,635.

India is second in the world in total reported cases behind the U.S., but daily infections have been on the decline since the middle of September. There has been, however, a resurgence of infections in New Delhi, which has seen a renewed surge in recent weeks, recording more new cases than any other Indian state.

On Sunday, New Delhi registered 7,340 new coronavirus cases, including 96 deaths.

SEATTLE — Washington Gov. Jay Inslee has scheduled a news conference for Sunday morning as COVID-19 case numbers soar throughout the Pacific Northwest where he will reportedly detail new restrictions.

Inslee's office said he would discuss actions to combat the crisis but offered no details. The Seattle Times reports that among Inslee's announcements will be a ban on indoor service at restaurants and bars and significantly reduced capacity at grocery stores and retail shops.

The newspaper cited industry officials briefed by Inslee's staff. The Democratic governor will also prohibit all indoor social gatherings. And Inslee will reportedly limit grocery stores and retailers to 25% occupancy.

HARTFORD, Conn. — Connecticut's two U.S. senators were self-isolating Saturday after a member of Democratic Gov. Ned Lamont's staff tested positive for COVID-19.

Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy each tweeted Saturday that they had not had close contact with the staffer but were taking the step out of an abundance of caution.

Lamont's chief spokesperson, Max Reiss, identified himself as the senior staff member who had tested

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positive in a release posted to Twitter on Friday. Reiss wrote he wasn't sure how or where he had contracted the virus.

Murphy tweeted Saturday that he had "attended an event yesterday with the Governor but was not in close contact with the staff member who tested positive. Out of an abundance of caution, though, I am isolating until I get tested and consult with the Office of Attending Physician Monday morning."

Blumenthal tweeted Saturday afternoon that he had "just returned from being tested myself and am currently self-isolating."

CARSON CITY, Nev. — Nevada has reported a record number of new confirmed cases of the coronavirus for the second day in a row amid warnings from Gov. Steve Sisolak that the state is at a "critical juncture."

Sisolak implored residents to stay home and do what they can to protect themselves a day after he announced he had tested positive for COVID-19. Sisolak told reporters on Friday that he wasn't feeling any symptoms and would enter a quarantine.

Nevada reported 2,269 new cases and 15 additional deaths on Saturday, topping the record of 1,857 new cases set Friday.

Sisolak warned Nevadans earlier in the week that if the state fails to slow the spread of the virus within two weeks, he will be forced to reimplement stricter measures.

NEW YORK — Students, parents and teachers are continuing to anxiously watch New York City's coronavirus test results. The latest figures Saturday fell under the city's threshold for shutting down school buildings, but the mayor warned that the city was at a "crucial" point in fighting the virus' resurgence.

Mayor Bill de Blasio cautioned parents and teachers Friday to plan for a potential school shutdown as soon as Monday, saying the city could cross its deciding line — 3% of coronavirus tests citywide coming back positive over a seven-day period — over the weekend.

The rate stayed short of that on Saturday, at 2.47%, he said.

"But that could change," the Democratic mayor tweeted, warning that the city was facing "a critical weekend" in combating the pandemic.

New York City has the United States' largest public school system, with more than 1 million students. It became one of few big cities to reopen classrooms this fall after the pandemic forced schools online in the spring, though families had the option of continuing all-remote learning this fall.

About 280,000 students have attended in person, far fewer than the city originally expected.

ATHENS, Greece — Deaths from the coronavirus have topped 1,000 in Greece, and authorities say that over half occurred since Oct. 18.

The Greek government has decided to shut down elementary schools, kindergartens and day care centers for two weeks starting Monday. Children will be schooled at home, as is already happening with high school and university students.

Authorities have stepped up enforcement of a 9 p.m. – 5 a.m. curfew, including by making arrests.

Two foreign exchange students who hosted an after-hours party at their apartment in the northern city of Thessaloniki were arrested Friday and fined 3,000 euros (\$3,550) each on the spot. The 24-year-old Palestinian man and 21-year-old woman from France received also suspended prison sentences of 2 years and two months on Saturday.

Their 15 party guests, all university students from western Europe, were fined 300 euros (\$355) each but not arrested.

BALTIMORE — The number of people testing positive for the coronavirus has soared to a new daily high in the United States.

Data from Johns Hopkins University indicates the number of confirmed cases reached 184,514 on Friday, as the number of people infected continues to surge.

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The Johns Hopkins data shows the seven-day rolling average for virus-related deaths reported daily in the U.S. rose over the past two weeks from about 828 on Oct. 30 to 1,047 on Friday, an increase of about 26%

The seven-day rolling positivity rate also rose over the past two weeks from 6.4 to 9.6, an increase of about 50%, even as the number of tests performed has grown.

Ethiopia's Tigray leader confirms firing missiles at Eritrea

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — The leader of Ethiopia's rebellious Tigray region has confirmed firing missiles at neighboring Eritrea's capital and is threatening more, marking a huge escalation as the deadly fighting in northern Ethiopia between Tigray forces and the federal government spills across an international border.

Tigray regional President Debretsion Gebremichael, in a phone interview Sunday with The Associated Press, would not say how many missiles were fired at the city of Asmara on Saturday but said it was the only city in Eritrea that was targeted.

"As long as troops are here fighting, we will take any legitimate military target and we will fire," he said, accusing Eritrea of sending troops into the Tigray region and denying reports that Tigray regional forces have entered Eritrea.

"We will fight them on all fronts with whatever means we have," he said. He asserted that around 16 Eritrean divisions are fighting in what he called a "full-scale war."

The brewing civil war in Ethiopia between a regional government that once dominated the country's ruling coalition, and a Nobel Peace Prize-winning prime minister whose sweeping reforms marginalized the Tigray region's power, could fracture a key U.S. security ally and destabilize the strategic Horn of Africa, with the potential to send scores of thousands of refugees into Sudan.

At least three rockets appeared to be aimed at the airport in Asmara, hours after the Tigray regional government warned it might attack. It accuses Eritrea of attacking at the invitation of Ethiopia's government after the conflict in the Tigray region erupted on Nov. 4 with an attack by regional forces on a federal military base there.

In a security alert, the U.S. Embassy in Eritrea said "a series of loud noises were heard in Asmara" on Saturday night, and "unconfirmed reports indicate they may have been explosive devices believed to be in the vicinity of the Asmara International Airport. There are no indications the airport was struck."

The Tigray regional leader would not say how many missiles remain at his forces' disposal but said "we have several. We can use it selectively, anywhere." When asked about targeting Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, he replied: "I don't want to tell you, but the missiles are long-range as well."

Eritrean officials have not responded to requests for comment.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in a brief statement declared that "Ethiopia is more than capable of attaining the objectives of the operation by itself." He did not mention the missiles or Eritrea but added: "Justice will prevail. Ethiopia will prevail!"

The Tigray leader said he had no communication with Ethiopia's federal government. The African Union is pushing for a cease-fire, he said, "but the prime minister is not ready to listen. He believes in the might he has." He called this a "really messy situation which requires international intervention."

Tigray's heavily armed regional government broke away from Ethiopia's ruling coalition last year, and it objects to the postponement of national elections until next year, which extends Abiy's rule. In September it held a regional election in defiance.

Each side regards the other as illegal, and the federal government says members of the Tigray region's ruling "clique" must be arrested and their arsenal destroyed. Abiy calls it a "law enforcement action" while his military officials call it war.

The Tigray leader told the AP he didn't have a number of people killed in the fighting but said "a very massive displacement is happening. The fighting is happening on all fronts, in addition to airstrikes." He added, "we have to defend ourselves, you know?"

The Tigray region is boxed in among Ethiopian forces, Eritrea and Sudan, which has closed its border

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but allows in refugees.

The Tigray leader said his government, the Tigray People's Liberation Front, had no communications channel with Eritrea even before the conflict. The two sides are at bitter odds after a long and deadly border war that ended after Abiy took office in 2018.

Abiy has rejected international pleas for an immediate de-escalation as his government refuses to regard the TPLF as an entity to negotiate with.

Another senior TPLF official, Getachew Reda, on social media asserted that Ethiopia's prime minister "is now enlisting the support of UAE drones based in (the Eritrean city of) Assab in his devastating war against the people of Tigray." He offered no evidence.

Officials in the United Arab Emirates did not immediately respond to a request for comment. For years, the UAE has built up a military presence in Eritrea at the port of Assab and a once-abandoned airfield there, but it has since reportedly drawn down its forces after largely withdrawing from the Saudi-led war in Yemen. Satellite photos this year of the airfield show attack helicopters, transport planes and other aircraft.

The United Nations and others have warned of a looming humanitarian disaster in the growing conflict as some 25,000 Ethiopian refugees, hungry and scared, have fled the Tigray region into Sudan. Communications and transport links with the Tigray region remain almost completely severed, and millions are at risk as food, fuel and other supplies run low.

Over the border in Sudan, the refugees — roughly half of them children — huddled in makeshift tents of sheets, even umbrellas, as authorities rushed to organize assistance in the remote area and more arrivals were on the way.

"The situation is very bad at the moment," Jens Hesemann with the U.N. refugee agency said in Hamdayet town, which he described as a generous but "very burdened" community.

"War is meaningless," one refugee, Fabrik Tessafay, said. "This is genocide, it seems to me. This is genocide, to destroy Tigray and Tigray people."

Shaken, they described being under attack even as they fled.

"Like this, all of Tigray will be killed," said another refugee, Alem Gabriel. "The (Eritrean) President Isaias Afwerki also attacked us, we were hit in the al-Hamra region, we went to the river and we were attacked there, and some of the people died, and the others crossed into Sudan."

One woman wailed as she was told her son had died in the fighting.

Associated Press writer Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed.

Azerbaijani leader: Christian churches will be protected

MOSCOW (AP) — The president of Azerbaijan is promising that Christian churches will be protected when the strongly Muslim country takes possession of areas formerly controlled by Armenians.

President Ilham Aliyev's office said he made the promise in a telephone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is deploying peacekeeping forces in the areas under an agreement that ended six weeks of fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Ethnic Armenian forces had controlled Nagorno-Karabakh and sizeable adjacent territories since the 1994 end of a separatist war. Fighting resumed in late September and ended with an agreement that calls for Azerbaijan to regain control of the outlying territories as well as allowing it to hold on to parts of Nagorno-Karabakh that it seized during the fighting.

The first of the territories, Kalbajar, is being turned over on Sunday.

Kalbajar is home to the well-known Dadivank monastery of the Armenian Apostolic Church. A day before the territory's handover, workers removed many of the monastery's sacred objects. Other residents in Kalbajar torched their own homes, fearing what will happen when Azerbaijani forces take over.

Azerbaijan is about 95% Muslim and Armenians fear that churches would be damaged or closed when it takes control of the territories.

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"President Aliyev said that Christian churches in Azerbaijani territories, which are returned to Azerbaijan in accordance with the trilateral statement, will also be properly protected by the state. Christians of Azerbaijan will have access to these churches," said the statement from his office.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of combatants and civilians have been killed since fighting flared anew in late September.

Pandemic holds few lessons for European chefs, mostly misery

By RAF CASERT and VIRGINIA MAYO Associated Press

ANTWERP, Belgium (AP) — Necessity is supposed to be the mother of invention. If that were the case for the high-end restaurant industry, the coronavirus pandemic should have offered ample opportunities for creativity and renewal.

Instead, it is turning into a bitter struggle for survival.

Many a three-star Michelin meal has been put into a takeout box and sent out on Deliveroo scooters, as renowned chefs in Belgium and elsewhere try to scrape through a second pandemic lockdown that is likely to threaten even the lucrative Christmas season.

Sergio Herman, who has run three-star, two-star and many other establishments that have wowed the Michelin powers and the most refined palates around the world, doesn't really see any positives to come out of working against and around the pandemic.

"Sometimes you feel that whatever you built up over the years is slipping like sand through your fingers. It gives you this kind of fear," he told The Associated Press.

Across much of Europe, still the apex of the finest dining in the world, exclusive restaurants have lost the precious appeal of the luxury dining experience — from the moment of taking your coat at the door, to eating several inventive courses with the finest silverware, to basking in sommelier tastings, to savoring the after-dinner sweet and having that little extra chat with the chef.

"All that cannot just be replaced by a box and a plastic tray. That is just impossible," Herman said amid the whirl of his new restaurant, Le Pristine, in the Belgian port of Antwerp, where he mixes the terroir of his native Dutch Zeeland with an Italian approach.

Throughout much of history, religious strictures forced cooks to think outside the box and still produce sterling cuisine despite the limits. Poverty also imposed challenges, and in Italy the creativity to do so much with so little even created its own style — *Cucina Povera*.

But this pandemic so far mainly has chefs just thinking of how to get through each day.

On a recent day, a man in a face mask was folding pizza boxes and tables were precariously stacked with other takeout material and rolls of labels. On the wall, a list was pasted with addresses and dates of delivery. A box from Le Pristine, without drinks but with a few supplements, can easily push past 100 euros (around \$115) a head.

A frenetic energy emerged from its kitchen as his team was trying get around 600 dinner boxes ready by the next day. They held anything from turbot to sea buckthorn, from artichokes to Zeeland mussels.

If there is one thing that defines restaurant owners and staff around the world, it's their drive, energy and a zest for survival. They more than need that now.

In the Michelin three-star restaurant De Librije, to the north in the Netherlands, chef Jonnie Boer has been offering online classes so people at home can get as close as possible to one of his three-course dinners. A "Librije's Atelier in your Kitchen" online session goes for 140 euros (\$165).

"This way, you can dine in De Librije, cozily in your own living room," a restaurant statement said, though some might take exception to such a claim for at-home cooks.

Clare Smyth of the two-star establishment Core by Clare Smyth in London said, with the lockdown take-outs and other initiatives, "people really wanted a bit of our restaurants in their own home." In the end though, "it will never replace coming to a restaurant" for the overall experience of near-perfect cooking and hospitality, she said in a discussion organized by The World's 50 Best Restaurants.

One thing unites every side of the debate though — the daily quest to amass even some of the income

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they lost when their sellout dining rooms had to be suddenly closed or forced into reduced service.

Even if detailed statistics aren't yet available, the 27-nation European Union saw a precipitous drop of 79.3% in hotel and restaurant activity between February and April in the spring COVID-19 lockdowns. Even though business bounced back over summer, the resurgence of the virus with new lockdowns across Europe this fall amounts to a double blow.

The grapevine has told Herman about a world of pain still to come.

"There will be a lot of hits coming. It will leave its mark," he said. "A serious amount of companies have already closed and many more will follow."

He said the industry's top echelon was especially vulnerable because of its high overhead. He welcomed government measures in much of Europe that were shielding restaurants up to a point and gave staff temporary unemployment pay. But that can only do so much.

"Bills continue to come in," Herman said, adding that "costs are much higher than at other restaurants, so it can go real fast — that bank account."

Herman is now involved in eight restaurants, including two two-stars and another one-star eatery. Le Pristine is his latest project.

"Our companies are all healthy, but, hey, you can see that you can get a hit," he said.

Little wonder he will never look kindly on a virus and certainly not as any lesson to be learned.

"The takeout, the boxes. It didn't really make me any wiser," Herman said. "I hope we can get back to normal as soon as possible."

Raf Casert reported from Buizingen, Belgium.

Follow AP's coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic> and <https://apnews.com/Under-standingtheOutbreak>

Palestinians torn as Israel seeks Gulf tourists in Jerusalem

By AREEJ HAZBOUN and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — When the United Arab Emirates agreed to normalize relations with Israel, the Palestinians decried the move as a "betrayal" of both Jerusalem, where they hope to establish the capital of their future state, and the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, the city's holiest Muslim site.

But with Israel now courting wealthy Gulf tourists and establishing new air links to the major travel hubs of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Palestinians in east Jerusalem could soon see a tourism boon after months in which the coronavirus transformed the Holy City into a ghost town.

"There will be some benefits for the Palestinian sector of tourism, and this is what I'm hoping for," said Sami Abu-Dayyeh, a Palestinian businessman in east Jerusalem who owns four hotels and a tourism agency. "Forget about politics, we have to survive."

Palestinian leaders have sharply rejected the recent decisions by the UAE, Bahrain and Sudan to establish ties with Israel because they severely weakened a longstanding Arab consensus that recognition only be extended in return for Palestinian statehood.

The Palestinians hope to establish a state including east Jerusalem and the West Bank, territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war. Arab support, seen as a key form of leverage in decades of on-again, off-again peace negotiations, now appears to be evaporating, leaving the Palestinians arguably weaker and more isolated than at any point in recent history.

In a striking development last week, a delegation of Israeli settlers visited the Emirates to discuss business opportunities. The Palestinians view settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem as the main obstacle to peace, and most of the international community considers them to be illegal.

But the prospect of expanded religious tourism could end up benefiting Israelis and Palestinians alike, as wealthy Gulf tourists and Muslim pilgrims from further afield take advantage of new air links and improved relations to visit Al-Aqsa and other holy sites.

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Israel considers all of Jerusalem to be its capital, and its Jerusalem Municipality is organizing conferences and seminars to help tourism operators market the city to Gulf travelers.

"I'm very excited because I think it opens us up to a new era of Muslim tourism that we never really had," said Fleur Hassan-Nahoum, the deputy mayor of Jerusalem. "Even though we have peace with Jordan and Egypt, I've never really seen any Egyptian tourists or Jordanian tourists because the peace wasn't a warm peace."

Hassan-Nahoum, who recently visited the Emirates and is a co-founder of the UAE-Israel Business Council, said the municipality is reaching out to local Arab tour operators to ensure the benefits extend to all.

"You have mixed feelings," she said. "Some of them are a little bit suspicious, (but) most of them understand that this is going to be incredibly prosperous for them, because ultimately they're Arab speaking and so they have, I think, a unique advantage."

Abu-Dayyeh expects up to 28 flights a day arriving in Tel Aviv from Dubai and Abu Dhabi, global travel hubs for long-haul carriers Emirates and Etihad, making it easier for travelers from the Far East and South America to reach the Holy Land.

He's confident Palestinian operators will be able to compete. "We're on the ground here and we've been giving this service for many years, for hundreds of years," he said.

Other Palestinians appear to be more skeptical. More than a dozen Palestinian shop owners in Jerusalem's Old City, which is largely shut down because of the coronavirus, declined to comment on the push for Gulf tourism, saying it was too politically sensitive.

There are also concerns that an Israeli push to promote tourism to Al-Aqsa could heighten tensions.

The hilltop esplanade in the Old City, home to the Al-Aqsa mosque and the iconic Dome of the Rock shrine, is the third holiest site in Islam. It is also the holiest site for Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount because it was the location of the two biblical temples in ancient times.

The site is a raw nerve in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and tensions have soared in recent years as religious and nationalist Jews have visited in ever-larger numbers, escorted by the Israeli police.

Last month a delegation of Emirati officials visited the site, entering through a gate normally used by Israelis and under an Israeli security escort. A small group of Palestinians heckled them. In August, Palestinian demonstrators burned a portrait of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan near the Dome of the Rock.

Officials from the Waqf, the Jordanian religious body that oversees the mosque compound, declined to comment on Israel's efforts to promote Gulf tourism to the site, underscoring the political sensitivities.

Ikrema Sabri, the imam who leads Friday prayers at Al-Aqsa, said any visits must be coordinated with the Waqf so that they do not advance any Israeli claim to sovereignty over the site. The Palestinians have long feared that Israel intends to take over the site or partition it. The Israeli government says it is committed to the status quo.

"Any visitor from outside Palestine must coordinate with the Waqf," Sabri said. "But any visitor from the side of the occupation, we do not welcome or accept them."

He acknowledged that the visiting Emiratis may have been unaware of the complex arrangement and said the heckling was a "reaction" by individuals to them entering with Israeli security.

"If they come to do business with the occupation, they are free. But when they come to Al-Aqsa, they must come in coordination with the Islamic Waqf," he said.

Hassan-Nahoum, the deputy mayor, said authorities are currently seeking recommendations from security companies to ensure that Emirati and other pilgrims can visit the site safely.

"I don't think it's going to raise too many tensions," she said. "What I want is for the average Emirati tourist to have a pleasant experience of going and praying at Al-Aqsa for the first time."

As virus mutes Dubai nightlife, Filipino bands feel the pain

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Eric Roman struts onstage in his torn jeans and grasps the micro-

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phone.

It's midnight on a Friday and in normal times, he'd hear wild applause from this tightly packed hotel bar in one of the old neighborhoods alongside the Dubai Creek. Sweaty throngs of fellow Filipinos, Arab businessmen and mall employees fresh from their shifts would hit the dance floor as he belted out Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'" with his nine-piece Filipino band.

But now the crowds, along with his bandmates, have vanished — in compliance with coronavirus restrictions that ban dancing and cap the number of musicians onstage. Roman took a 65% pay cut when his club reopened after the lockdown. Guitarists, bassists and drummers weren't so lucky.

"Dubai is dead," said Roman, 40. "Every day we're wondering where we're going to get our next meal, our next glass of water, how we're going to survive in this city."

Show bands from the Philippines have long animated Dubai's nightlife, satisfying an appetite for rock, R&B and pop that has grown with the emirate's expat population. Now, as the pandemic mutes the city's live-music scene and clobbers its economy, hundreds of Filipino performers are struggling to survive.

Traveling Filipino house bands burst into prominence in the early 1900s during the U.S. occupation of the archipelago. Already well-versed in Western church music and military anthems from three centuries of Spanish imperialism, Filipinos deftly picked up on the latest American music trends, from jazz to rock 'n' roll, said Mary Lacanlale, an assistant professor of Asian-Pacific Studies at California State University Dominguez Hills.

By the century's end, karaoke was a national pastime. Filipino performers — with an uncanny ability to imitate Western music legends — became a mainstay in the nightclubs of emerging entrepôts throughout Asia and the Persian Gulf. Dubai drew legions of Filipino cover bands to fuel its rapid transformation from a desert pearling port into regional party capital.

"Our music builds Dubai's reputation as a place that transcends political, racial and geographical divides," said Paul Cortes, the Philippine consul general in Dubai, who also happens to be a singer.

An uncertain fate now awaits the musicians, plucked from impoverished provinces to work in smoky lounges and hotel bars overseas.

"Agents promise you heaven and give you hell," said AJ Zacarias, a singer-keyboardist and president of the UAE's Filipino Bands Alliance, an advocacy group. "We're some of the world's most sought-after artists, and they treat us like garbage here."

British vocalists can earn close to what Filipinos make in a month, Zacarias said. Managers reserve "the good hotel suites" for traveling Indian dancers, while Filipinos are often packed eight to a room in unsanitary accommodations, he added.

"It's unfortunately the reality of the market. It's cheaper to hire a band from the Philippines," said Ricardo Trimillos, expert in Asian performance at the University of Hawaii.

When clubs closed in Dubai, dozens of Filipino musicians living in dormitories at the mercy of their employers were kicked out with nowhere to go.

According to the band association, 70% never received their promised gratuity to buy food and other basics. Some are selling their clothes to survive. Out-of-work dancers, like 33-year-old Catherine Gallano, have taken to livestreaming their routines — gyrating, backflipping and blowing kisses to followers who send them money.

The UAE's Filipino Bands Alliance said some 80% of Filipino artists have had their visas canceled by their employers, a consequence of the UAE's "kafala" labor system that links expatriates' residency to their jobs.

For the millions of low-paid migrant workers from Asia, Africa and elsewhere that have built up the UAE as a hub of the global economy, the virus has magnified decades-old abuses like wage theft, delayed salaries and dire living conditions, said Hiba Zayadin, a Gulf researcher at Human Rights Watch. That's especially true for domestic laborers, she added — another precarious job that Filipinos dominate.

When the virus struck in March, Jhune Neri, a 38-year-old singer and stand-up comedian, was trapped — literally. As a "public health precaution," he said, his manager bolted all the doors and shut down the elevator of his crowded dormitory, locking the 11 performers inside for months. Living off just weekly

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deliveries of rice and red sauce, the bands pressed on, cranking out renditions of Whitney Houston's hits. "I was thinking, at least I'm still singing, at least still I'm alive," Neri said.

Weeks later, he was jolted awake by the landlord cutting the electricity and evicting everyone. He's still determined to make it in Dubai, though he said most of his friends have "given up hope" and gone home.

But quitting the city isn't so simple. Like thousands of other Filipinos, Rommel Cuison, a 30-year-old guitarist at a hotel bar, has languished for months on a repatriation waiting list, his employer unable to pay his way and the Philippines unable to quarantine masses of returnees. When Cuison's cash-strapped club brought back only solo singers from lockdown, he sold his cherished guitar to afford food.

For performers fortunate enough to have a gig these days, Dubai's newly resumed music scene looks very different. Hotels struggle to fill rooms. Partygoers are dwindling as the pandemic hits everyone in their pocketbooks. Undercover health inspectors patrol clubs and threaten \$13,600 fines for violations. No more reveling into the wee hours — the speakers switch off at 1 a.m.

Marino Raboy, a rock singer in Dubai's working-class district of Deira, said his club feels desolate. Some nights, he performs only for the hostesses lined up at the bar waiting to serve pitchers of Heineken.

As the virus continues to surge in the UAE, many expect the hard times to last. Dubai's live shows and big conventions, including its Expo 2020, have been pushed back. S&P Global, a ratings agency, predicts the city-state's economy will shrink 11% this year, recovering only by 2023.

Roman, with a voice like Journey's former frontman Steve Perry, said the new reality means fewer tips and meager pay — not enough to cover the bills for his aging mother and four kids in the Philippines. Still, he feels he has "no choice" but to hope.

"This is the worst time of my life," he said. "I have to believe at some point it will end."

Follow Isabel DeBre on Twitter at www.twitter.com/isabeldebre.

ASEAN, China, other partners set world's biggest trade pact

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

China and 14 other countries agreed Sunday to set up the world's largest trading bloc, encompassing nearly a third of all economic activity, in a deal many in Asia are hoping will help hasten a recovery from the shocks of the pandemic.

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, or RCEP, was signed virtually on Sunday on the sidelines of the annual summit of the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

"I am delighted to say that after eight years of hard work, as of today, we have officially brought RCEP negotiations to a conclusion for signing," said host country Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc.

"The conclusion of RCEP negotiation, the largest free trade agreement in the world, will send a strong message that affirms ASEAN's leading role in supporting the multilateral trading system, creating a new trading structure in the region, enabling sustainable trade facilitation, revitalizing the supply chains disrupted by COVID-19 and assisting the post pandemic recovery," Phuc said.

The accord will take already low tariffs on trade between member countries still lower, over time, and is less comprehensive than an 11-nation trans-Pacific trade deal that President Donald Trump pulled out of shortly after taking office.

Apart from the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, it includes China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, but not the United States. Officials said the accord leaves the door open for India, which dropped out due to fierce domestic opposition to its market-opening requirements, to rejoin the bloc.

It is not expected to go as far as the European Union in integrating member economies but does build on existing free trade arrangements.

The deal has powerful symbolic ramifications, showing that nearly four years after Trump launched his "America First" policy of forging trade deals with individual countries, Asia remains committed to multi-nation efforts toward freer trade that are seen as a formula for future prosperity.

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Ahead of Sunday's RCEP "special summit" meeting, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said he would firmly convey his government's support for "broadening a free and fair economic zone, including a possibility of India's future return to the deal, and hope to gain support from the other countries."

The accord is also a coup for China, by far the biggest market in the region with more than 1.3 billion people, allowing Beijing to cast itself as a "champion of globalization and multilateral cooperation" and giving it greater influence over rules governing regional trade, Gareth Leather, senior Asian economist for Capital Economics, said in a report.

China's official Xinhua News Agency quoted Premier Li Keqiang hailing the agreement as a victory against protectionism, in remarks delivered via a video link.

"The signing of the RCEP is not only a landmark achievement of East Asian regional cooperation, but also a victory of multilateralism and free trade," Li said.

Now that Trump's opponent Joe Biden has been declared president-elect, the region is watching to see how U.S. policy on trade and other issues will evolve.

Analysts are skeptical Biden will push hard to rejoin the trans-Pacific trade pact or to roll back many of the U.S. trade sanctions imposed on China by the Trump administration given widespread frustration with Beijing's trade and human rights records and accusations of spying and technology theft.

Critics of free trade agreements say they tend to encourage companies to move manufacturing jobs overseas. So, having won over disaffected rust-belt voters in Michigan and western Pennsylvania in the Nov. 3 election, Biden is "not going to squander that by going back into TPP," Michael Jonathan Green of the Center for Strategic and International Studies said in a web seminar.

But given concerns over China's growing influence, Biden is likely to seek much more engagement with Southeast Asia to protect U.S. interests, he said.

The fast-growing and increasingly affluent Southeast Asian market of 650 million people has been hit hard by the pandemic and is urgently seeking fresh drivers for growth.

RCEP originally would have included about 3.6 billion people and encompassed about a third of world trade and global GDP. Minus India, it still covers more than 2 billion people and close to a third of all trade and business activity.

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA, the retooled version of the North American Free Trade Agreement under Trump, covers slightly less economic activity but less than a tenth of the world's population. The EU and Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership, the revised version of the deal Trump rejected, also are smaller. RCEP includes six of the 11 remaining CPTPP members.

India balked at exposing its farmers and factories to more foreign competition. Among other concerns, Indian dairy farmers are worried about competition from New Zealand and Australian milk and cheese producers. Automakers fear imports from across the region. But overall the biggest fear is over a flood of manufactured goods from China.

Trade and investment flows within Asia have vastly expanded over the past decade, a trend that has accelerated amid feuding between the U.S. and China, which have imposed billions of dollars' worth of punitive tariffs on each other's exports.

The RCEP agreement is loose enough to stretch to fit the disparate needs of member countries as diverse as Myanmar, Singapore, Vietnam and Australia. Unlike the CPTPP and EU, it does not establish unified standards on labor and the environment or commit countries to open services and other vulnerable areas of their economies.

But it does set rules for trade that will facilitate investment and other business within the region, Jeffrey Wilson, research director at the Perth USAsia Center, said in a report for the Asia Society.

"RCEP, therefore, is a much-needed platform for the Indo-Pacific's post-COVID recovery," he wrote.

ASEAN members include Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Brunei, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam.

Associated Press writers Hau Dinh in Hanoi and Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo contributed.

Trump supporters morning protests turn into violent clashes

By ASHRAF KHALIL and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Several thousand supporters of President Donald Trump in Washington protested election results and then hailed Trump's passing motorcade before nighttime clashes with counterdemonstrators sparked fistfights, at least one stabbing and at least 20 arrests.

Several other cities on Saturday also saw gatherings of Trump supporters unwilling to accept Democrat Joe Biden's Electoral College and popular vote victory as legitimate. Cries of "Stop the Steal" and "Count Every Vote" continued in spite of a lack of evidence of voter fraud or other problems that could reverse the result.

After night fell, the relatively peaceful demonstrations in Washington turned from tense to violent. Videos posted on social media showed fistfights, projectiles and clubs as Trump supporters clashed with those demanding they take their MAGA hats and banners and leave. The tensions extended to Sunday morning. A variety of charges, including assault and weapons possession, were filed against those arrested, officials said. Two police officers were injured and several firearms were recovered by police.

Trump himself had given an approving nod to the gathering Saturday morning by dispatching his motorcade through streets lined with supporters before rolling on to his Virginia golf club. People chanted "USA, USA" and "four more years," and many carried American flags and signs to show their displeasure with the vote tally and insistence that, as Trump has baselessly asserted, fraud was the reason.

"I just want to keep up his spirits and let him know we support him," said one loyalist, Anthony Whitaker of Winchester, Virginia. He was outside the Supreme Court, where a few thousand assembled after a march along Pennsylvania Avenue from Freedom Plaza, near the White House.

A broad coalition of top government and industry officials has declared that the Nov. 3 voting and the following count unfolded smoothly with no more than the usual minor hiccups — "the most secure in American history," they said, repudiating Trump's efforts to undermine the integrity of the contest.

In Delray Beach, Florida, several hundred people marched, some carrying signs reading "Count every vote" and "We cannot live under a Marxist government." In Lansing, Michigan, protesters gathered at the Capitol to hear speakers cast doubt on results that showed Biden winning the state by more than 140,000 votes. Phoenix police estimated 1,500 people gathered outside the Arizona Capitol to protest Biden's narrow victory in the state. Protesters in Salem, Oregon, gathered at the Capitol.

Among the speakers in Washington was a Georgia Republican newly elected to the U.S. House. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who has expressed racist views and support for QAnon conspiracy theories, urged people to march peacefully toward the Supreme Court.

The marchers included members of the Proud Boys, a neo-fascist group known for street brawling with ideological opponents at political rallies.

Multiple confrontations appeared later in the day as small groups of Trump supporters attempted to enter the area around Black Lives Matter Plaza, about a block from the White House, where several hundred anti-Trump demonstrators had gathered.

In a pattern that kept repeating itself, those Trump supporters who approached the area were harassed, doused with water and saw their MAGA hats and pro-Trump flags snatched and burned, amid cheers. As night fell, multiple police lines kept the two sides apart.

Videos posted on social media showed some demonstrators and counterdemonstrators trading shoves, punches and slaps. A man with a bullhorn yelling "Get out of here!" was shoved and pushed to the street by a man who was then surrounded by several people and shoved and punched until he fell face first into the street. Bloody and dazed, he was picked up and walked to a police officer.

The "Million MAGA March" was heavily promoted on social media, raising concerns that it could spark conflict with anti-Trump demonstrators, who have gathered near the White House in Black Lives Matter Plaza for weeks.

In preparation, police closed off wide swaths of downtown, where many stores and offices have been

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boarded up since Election Day. Chris Rodriguez, director of the city's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, said the police were experienced at keeping the peace.

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

A former administration official, Sebastian Gorka, whipped up the crowd by the Supreme Court by saying, "We can win because he did win." But, he added, "It's going to be tough."

Thousands rally behind Trump, insisting he won race he lost

By ASHRAF KHALIL and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fervent supporters of President Donald Trump rallied in Washington on Saturday behind his spurious claim of a stolen election and swarmed his motorcade in adulation when he detoured for a drive-by on his way out of town.

Hours later, after night fell in the nation's capital, demonstrators favoring Trump clashed in the streets with counterprotesters, videos posted on social media showing fistfights, projectiles and clubs. Police arrested at least 20 people on a variety of charges, including assault and weapons possession, officials said. One stabbing was reported, two police officers were injured and several firearms were also recovered by police.

A week after Democrat Joe Biden was declared the winner of the election, demonstrations in support of Trump also took place in other cities. Fury at the prospect of a transfer of executive power showed no signs of abating, taking a cue the president's unrelenting assertion of victory in a race he actually lost.

"I just want to keep up his spirits and let him know we support him," one loyalist, Anthony Whittaker of Winchester, Virginia, said from outside the Supreme Court, where a few thousand assembled after a march along Pennsylvania Avenue from Freedom Plaza, near the White House.

A broad coalition of top government and industry officials has declared that the Nov. 3 voting and the following count unfolded smoothly with no more than the usual minor hiccups — "the most secure in American history," they said, repudiating Trump's efforts to undermine the integrity of the contest.

In Delray Beach, Florida, several hundred people marched, some carrying signs reading "Count every vote" and "We cannot live under a Marxist government." In Lansing, Michigan, protesters gathered at the Capitol to hear speakers cast doubt on results that showed Biden winning the state by more than 140,000 votes. Phoenix police estimated 1,500 people gathered outside the Arizona Capitol to protest Biden's narrow victory in the state. Protesters in Salem, Oregon, gathered at the Capitol.

The crowd in Washington was beginning to gather Saturday morning when cheers rang out as Trump's limousine neared Freedom Plaza. People lined both sides of the street, some standing just a few feet away from Trump's vehicle. Others showed their enthusiasm by running along with the caravan.

They chanted "USA, USA" and "four more years," and many carried American flags and signs to show their displeasure with the vote tally. After making the short detour for the slow drive around the site, the motorcade headed to the president's Virginia golf club.

Among the speakers was a Georgia Republican newly elected to the U.S. House. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who has expressed racist views and support for QAnon conspiracy theories, urged people to march peacefully toward the Supreme Court.

The marchers included members of the Proud Boys, a neo-fascist group known for street brawling with ideological opponents at political rallies.

The march was largely peaceful during the day before turning tense at night, with multiple confrontations as small groups of Trump supporters attempted to enter the area around Black Lives Matter Plaza, about a block from the White House, where several hundred anti-Trump demonstrators had gathered.

In a pattern that kept repeating itself, those Trump supporters who approached the area were harassed, doused with water and saw their MAGA hats and pro-Trump flags snatched and burned, amid cheers. As night fell, multiple police lines kept the two sides apart.

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

Trump's campaign has also filed 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.

A former administration official, Sebastian Gorka, whipped up the crowd by the Supreme Court by saying, "We can win because he did win." But, he added, "It's going to be tough."

US, Israel worked together to track and kill al-Qaida No. 2

By MATTHEW LEE and JAMES LaPORTA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States and Israel worked together to track and kill a senior al-Qaida operative in Iran earlier this year, a bold intelligence operation by the two allied nations that came as the Trump administration was ramping up pressure on Tehran.

Four current and former U.S. officials said Abu Mohammed al-Masri, al-Qaida's No. 2, was killed by assassins in the Iranian capital in August. The U.S. provided intelligence to the Israelis on where they could find al-Masri and the alias he was using at the time, while Israeli agents carried out the killing, according to two of the officials. The two other officials confirmed al-Masri's killing but could not provide specific details.

Al-Masri was gunned down in a Tehran alley on Aug. 7, the anniversary of the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Al-Masri was widely believed to have participated in the planning of those attacks and was wanted on terrorism charges by the FBI.

Al-Masri's death is a blow to al-Qaida, the terror network that orchestrated the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the U.S. and comes amid rumors in the Middle East about the fate of the group's leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri. The officials could not confirm those reports but said the U.S. intelligence community was trying to determine their credibility.

Two of the officials — one within the intelligence community and with direct knowledge of the operation and another former CIA officer briefed on the matter — said al-Masri was killed by Kidon, a unit within the secretive Israeli spy organization Mossad allegedly responsible for the assassination of high-value targets. In Hebrew, Kidon means bayonet or "tip of the spear."

The official in the intelligence community said al-Masri's daughter, Maryam, was also a target of the operation. The U.S. believed she was being groomed for a leadership role in al-Qaida and intelligence suggested she was involved in operational planning, according to the official, who like the others, spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence.

Al-Masri's daughter was the widow of Hamza bin Laden, the son of al-Qaida mastermind Osama bin Laden. He was killed last year in a U.S. counterterrorism operation in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.

The news of al-Masri's death was first reported by The New York Times.

Both the CIA and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office, which oversees the Mossad intelligence agency, declined to comment.

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Israel and Iran are bitter enemies, with the Iranian nuclear program Israel's top security concern. Israel has welcomed the Trump administration's withdrawal from the 2015 Iranian nuclear accord and the U.S. pressure campaign on Tehran.

At the time of the killings, the Trump administration was in the advanced stages of trying to push through the U.N. Security Council the reinstatement of all international sanctions on Iran that were lifted under the nuclear agreement. None of the other Security Council members went along with the U.S., which has vowed to punish countries that do not enforce the sanctions as part of its "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran.

Israeli officials are concerned the incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden could return to the nuclear accord. It is likely that if Biden does engage with the Iranians, Israel will press for the accord to be modified to address Iran's long-range missile program and its military activity across the region, specifically in Syria and its support for groups like Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad.

The revelations that Iran was harboring an al-Qaida leader could help Israel bolster its case with the new U.S. administration.

Al-Masri had been on a kill or capture list for years, but his presence in Iran, which has a long history of hostility toward al-Qaida, presented significant obstacles to either apprehending or killing him.

Iran denied the reports, saying the government is not harboring any al-Qaida leaders and blaming the U.S. and Israel for trying to foment anti-Iranian sentiment. U.S. officials have long believed a number of al-Qaida leaders have been living quietly in Iran for years and publicly released intelligence assessments have made that case.

Al-Masri's death, albeit under an assumed name, was reported in Iranian media on Aug. 8. Reports identified him as a Lebanese history professor potentially affiliated with Lebanon's Iranian-linked Hezbollah movement and said he had been killed by motorcycle gunmen along with his daughter.

Lebanese media, citing Iranian reports, said that those killed were Lebanese citizen Habib Daoud and his daughter Maraym.

The deaths of al-Masri and his daughter occurred three days after the catastrophic Aug. 4 explosion at the port of Beirut and did not get much attention. Hezbollah never commented on reports and Lebanese security officials did not report that any citizens were killed in Tehran.

A Hezbollah official on Saturday would not comment on al-Masri's death, saying Iran's foreign ministry had already denied it.

The alleged killings seem to fit a pattern of behavior attributed to Israel in the past.

In 1995, the founder of the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad was killed by a gunman on a motorcycle in Malta, in an assassination widely attributed to the Mossad. The Mossad also reportedly carried out a string of similar killings of Iranian nuclear scientists in Iran early last decade. Iran has accused Israel of being behind those killings.

Yoel Guzansky, a senior fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies and former analyst on Iranian affairs in the prime minister's office, said it has been known for some time that Iran is hiding top al-Qaeda figures. While he had no direct knowledge of al-Masri's death, he said a joint operation between the U.S. and Israel would reflect the two nations' close intelligence cooperation, with the U.S. typically stronger in the technical aspects of intelligence gathering and Israel adept at operating agents behind enemy lines.

LaPorta reported from Delray Beach, Florida, Bassam Mroue in Beirut, Qassim Abdul-Zahra in Baghdad, and Josef Federman in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

Mexico reaches 1 million virus cases, nears 100,000 deaths

By MARK STEVENSON and DIEGO DELGADO Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico on Saturday topped 1 million registered coronavirus cases and nearly 100,000 test-confirmed deaths, though officials agree the number is probably much higher.

How did Mexico get here? By marching resolutely, even defiantly, against many internationally accepted

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practices in pandemic management, from face mask wearing, to lockdowns, testing and contact tracing.

What is more, officials in Mexico claim science is on their side. Assistant Health Secretary Hugo López-Gatell says any wider testing would be "a waste of time, effort and money." Face masks, López-Gatell says, "are an auxiliary measure to prevent spreading the virus. They do not protect us, but they are useful for protecting other people."

President Andres Manuel López Obrador almost never wears a mask, and López-Gatell only occasionally does.

Except science does not appear to be on their side. International experts have recommended mass testing, and say face masks protect both the wearer and other people.

"They say there is no evidence. No, excuse me, there is evidence," said former health secretary Dr. José Narro. "In May, we already began to have empirical evidence and well-documented scientific studies began to appear stressing the importance of face masks and the need for testing."

"What I can say is the (government) strategy did not have the necessary flexibility to adjust to the increasing amount of knowledge" about the disease, Narro said.

In part that has been a hallmark of López Obrador's administration: never back down, never change course, and if challenged, double down.

His main promise to Mexicans is that there would be enough hospital beds for everyone who needs one, and his government has largely fulfilled that basic promise — even if Mexicans are so afraid of those hospitals they often wait until the last moment to go for treatment, at which point, doctors say, it's often too late. That fear was not unfounded; early in the pandemic, three-quarters of patients intubated and put on ventilators in Mexico's largest hospital network died.

That resistance was what Mexico City human resources manager Lorena Salas felt when her 76-year-old father, Jaime Salas Osuna, began to show signs of what could be COVID-19.

"The idea was mainly to stay at home, no? Thinking of going to the hospital was not an option, we were terrified that there he would surely be infected," said Salas.

Instead, she sped down to the resort city of Acapulco, where her father lived, and when she arrived, she found him thin, sweating and confused.

"At that moment the delivery service arrived with the oxygen meter, and his oxygen saturation was 77," she recalled. (A normal reading is 93 to 98). "At that moment I felt like a bucket of cold water had fallen on me. We just looked at each other. I said 'Dad, do you have COVID?'"

Salas drove him to Mexico City; he didn't want to be intubated, but doctors explained they had to. He underwent two operations, two intubations and struggled for 13 days before he died on Oct. 20.

To its credit, that is one of the few areas where the government's public message has changed: where officials once urged people with the disease to stay home as long as possible, they now advise those over 60 or with risk factors like diabetes or obesity to seek treatment immediately.

But on most other points, the insistence that the rest of the world is wrong and Mexico's approach is right appears to have taken a toll in lives.

Late Saturday, Mexican Director General of Health Promotion Ricardo Cortés Alcalá announced that the number of confirmed coronavirus cases had reached 1,003,253, with at least 98,259 deaths from COVID-19.

Since the pandemic began, Mexico has managed to administer only about 2.5 million tests to its citizens; only seriously ill people get tested in Mexico. Testing only 1.9% of the population since the pandemic began has made it hard, if not impossible, to effectively trace contacts, catch outbreaks early or identify asymptomatic cases.

Even in Mexico City, one of the few places that has paid lip-service to trying to identify cases before they get to a hospital, the efforts have been incredibly weak.

To be fair, few countries have managed to do contact tracing well; Mexico, with fewer financial resources and where half the population is poor, self-employed or working off the books, there was little chance of strict control or surveillance.

Mexico City has tried an alternative approach, which is to identify neighborhoods where clusters of cases

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have occurred, and give them special attention. Lurid yellow warning posters reading "Caution! You are entering an area of high infection" now dot the city. Special kiosks are set up in such neighborhoods to provide some tests, and a few health workers have gone door-to-door looking for cases. But that is rare.

For doctors on the front lines, the official response has been at times frustrating.

Dr. Arturo Galindo, head of the infectious disease program at the National Medical Sciences and Nutrition Institute, one of Mexico's leading public hospitals, has seen his intensive care unit fill up to 100% capacity in recent weeks as Mexicans relaxed and began holding more get-togethers. The hospital is now sending critical COVID-19 cases to other treatment centers.

"I have had arguments on the street when I say "hey, put your face mask on," and people argue with me, citing the argument 'well, the president doesn't,' and that is their only argument," Galindo said. "It wouldn't be bad if he (López Obrador) set an example."

Speaking for himself, not his hospital, Galindo also voices support for more testing, and senses there are signs of a new-found willingness to consider the idea — not the least because of the advent of rapid, cheap new antigen tests.

But while he says some things are improving — people are now getting to hospitals sooner, thus improving their chances — some recent developments make him worry.

Except for a few states, nobody in Mexico has even attempted to enforce a lockdown, or mask-wearing. The closest thing most local authorities have done has been to force some workplaces to shut down, and fine or close businesses that allow too many customers inside at once. Beyond that — travel, mask wearing, parties, weddings — there is very little enforcement. And as the pandemic stretched into its tenth month, people began to let their guard down.

That has led to super-spreader events like an Oct. 3 wedding of a soap opera actor and the daughter of a local businessman in the northern border city of Mexicali. Authorities in Mexico say more than 100 people are believed to have been infected by the coronavirus at the wedding, which about 300 people attended.

There have been instances of outright rebellion. On Oct. 25, a couple of hundred young people gathered for an illegal concert in an empty lot on the outskirts of the city of Toluca, just west of Mexico City. On videos of the event, the lead singer of one band can be heard telling asking the crowd, "Honestly, who doesn't give a damn about the pandemic? Whoever doesn't give a damn about coronavirus, raise your beer!" Dozens raised their cups.

Salas, whose father died and who herself was infected, said people have to abandon conspiracy theories and the strange belief it won't happen to them.

"I see a lot of apathy, a lot of people being irresponsible, not giving a damn or not believing the disease is real. People still think it is something invented by the government." Salas said. "It is something that people have to realize does exist, it is real."

Galindo said those on the front lines are shocked when they look at social media. "They have this sense of frustration seeing photos of parties, meetings," Galindo said. "They have been locked up for six months, fighting, going without sleep or without eating, and then they see that, and it's shocking."

Judge: DHS head didn't have authority to suspend DACA

By DAVID PORTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal judge in New York ruled Saturday that Acting Department of Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf assumed his position unlawfully, a determination that invalidated Wolf's suspension of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which shields young people from deportation.

"DHS failed to follow the order of succession as it was lawfully designated," U.S. District Judge Nicholas Garaufis wrote. "Therefore, the actions taken by purported Acting Secretaries, who were not properly in their roles according to the lawful order of succession, were taken without legal authority."

Wolf issued a memorandum in July effectively suspending DACA, pending review by DHS. A month earlier, the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled that President Donald Trump failed to follow rule-making procedures when he tried to end the program, but the justices kept a window open for him to try again.

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About 650,000 people are part of DACA, which allows young immigrants who were brought to the country as children to legally work and shields them from deportation.

Karen Tumlin, an attorney who represented a plaintiff in one of the lawsuits that challenged Wolf's authority, called the ruling "another win for DACA recipients and those who have been waiting years to apply for the program for the first time."

In August, the Government Accountability Office, a bipartisan congressional watchdog, said Wolf and his acting deputy, Ken Cuccinelli, were improperly serving and ineligible to run the agency under the Vacancies Reform Act. The two have been at the forefront of administration initiatives on immigration and law enforcement.

In Garaufis' ruling Saturday, the judge wrote that DHS didn't follow an order of succession established when then-Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen resigned in April 2019. Kevin McAleenan, who succeeded Nielsen until he resigned in October 2019, also didn't have statutory authority to hold the position, Garaufis wrote.

DHS did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the ruling. The department has maintained that Wolf's appointment was legal even without Senate confirmation, which is still pending in the final weeks of the Trump administration.

President-elect Joe Biden plans to reinstate DACA and is expected to use executive orders to reverse some of Trump's other immigration actions.

Johnson plays like No. 1 and seizes control at the Masters

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Dustin Johnson began his assault on Augusta National with a 5-iron for a tap-in eagle, and he never relented until he matched the 54-hole record at the Masters and built a four-shot lead to put himself in prime position for another major.

Johnson has been in this position before, and he plans to lean on his experience.

Not from the 82 he shot at Pebble Beach in the 2010 U.S. Open. Not the three-putt from 12 feet on a bumpy 18th green that cost him at Chambers Bay. Not even the one-shot lead he lost three months ago at Harding Park. They were among four times he had at least a share of the 54-hole lead in a major without converting.

He's talking about the last three days at Augusta National. It's been a masterful performance.

"If I can play like I did today, I think it will break that streak," Johnson said Saturday. "Tomorrow, it's just 18 holes of golf. I need to go out and play solid. I feel like I'm swinging really well. If I can just continue to give myself a lot of looks at birdie, I think I'll have a good day."

A third round that began with 10 players separated by one shot turned into a one-man show.

The No. 1 player in the world looked every bit the part with a 7-under 65, pulling away with the eagle and two birdies in the opening four holes, nearly holing a wedge from the seventh fairway, handling the par 5s on the back nine with two-putt birdies and going the last 30 holes without a bogey.

He was at 16-under 200, matching the 54-hole record Jordan Spieth set in 2015 when he won the Masters by four shots over Phil Mickelson and Justin Rose.

The cast of challengers are not nearly as experienced.

Two of them are Masters rookies. Sungjae Im, the supreme ball-striker from South Korea who won his first PGA Tour title two weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic shut down golf in the spring, birdied the last hole for 68. Abraham Ancer of Mexico saved par on the 18th for a 69.

Joining them at 12-under 204 was Cameron Smith of Australia, who had 12 straight pars before running off three straight birdies and then closing with three scrambling pars for a 69.

"He's been there before multiple times, and No. 1 in the world," Ancer said. "I think he's right where he wants to be. We know that we have to go low, and that's it. It's very simple. If DJ goes out there and plays really solid like today, it's going to be pretty much impossible to catch him. Whatever has to be done out there has to be pretty special."

Still, there is enormous pressure on Johnson because of his history. He has not converted two 54-hole

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leads, nor has he won at two majors where he shared the 54-hole lead. His only major was the 2016 U.S. Open when he rallied from four shots behind at Oakmont.

"Anyone with a four-shot lead is expected to win," Smith said. "There's going to be plenty of boys firing tomorrow."

Attacking flags is what Augusta National has allowed in November, with rain earlier in the week and warm, calm conditions that have kept the turf soft and vulnerable.

Johnson, who had to sit out two tournaments after testing positive for the coronavirus a month ago, still came into the Masters having won twice, finishing runner-up three times and tying for sixth in the U.S. Open.

"I'm very comfortable with having the lead going into tomorrow. I've been in this situation a lot of times," Johnson said. "I'm looking forward to the challenge. It's still going to be a tough day. I'm going to have to play well if I want to get it done."

Justin Thomas and Jon Rahm had their chances only to make untimely mistakes. Rahm nearly topped his second shot on the par-5 eighth, which he attributed to mud on his golf ball, and hit his next one off a tree and into the bushes on his way to a double bogey.

Thomas sailed his second shot over the 15th green and into the water, making bogey on a par 5 where he was hoping to make up ground. Both bogeyed the 18th hole. Thomas shot 71, Rahm had a 72.

Asked to describe his day, Rahm didn't mince words.

"Seriously? How would I describe? Pretty awful," he said.

Starting times for the final round have been moved up to finish by 3 p.m. so CBS can honor its NFL contract, and it will be threesomes off both tees. And just like all week, and all year, there will be no roars to add to the pressure.

"Unfortunately for all of us chasing DJ is there's no fans or nothing to make that moment even harder, to have the buzz, to have the adrenaline, to have a little bit more pressure put on him that won't be there this year," Thomas said.

Defending champion Tiger Woods will stick around Sunday to present the green jacket, and he'll have to leave his at Augusta National until he returns.

Woods was 4 under through 10 holes to start the Masters, and he picked up only one more shot over the next 44 holes. He finished off a 71 in the second round Saturday morning, had a 72 in the third round and was 11 shots behind.

U.S. Open champion Bryson DeChambeau was more dizzy than sore. He felt so odd on Thursday night that he had another COVID-19 test to be sure — it came back negative — and the betting favorite of this Masters was in the middle of the pack, 13 shots behind.

The scoring has been low all week. The 36-hole cut Saturday morning was at even-par 144, the lowest in Masters history, another update to the club's record book.

Still in front of Johnson is a chance to set the 72-hole record. All he cares about is a green jacket, and given his past experience, he knows better than to look ahead.

Romania: Fire in COVID-19 intensive care unit kills 10

By VADIM GHIRDA and SABINA NIKSIC Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — A fire at a hospital treating COVID-19 patients in northeastern Romania killed 10 people Saturday and injured 10 others, seven of them critically, officials said. Prosecutors quickly opened a criminal investigation.

The blaze spread through the intensive care ward designated for COVID-19 patients at the public hospital in the city of Piatra Neamt, local Emergency Situations Inspectorate spokesperson Irina Popa said. Most of the people who died or were injured in the blaze. were hospital patients, .

Health Minister Nelu Tataru told Romanian media the fire at Piatra Neamt Regional Emergency Hospital was "most likely triggered by a short circuit."

Romania's national prosecutor's office said it would investigate the blaze as a possible case of criminal

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manslaughter. The prosecutor who led the probe into a 2015 blaze that killed 64 people at an underground nightclub in Romania's capital, Bucharest, was assigned to lead the new investigation, the office said.

The fire at the Colective nightclub sparked massive protests that forced the Romanian government to relinquish office. The government was led at the time by the left-leaning Social Democrat Party, known as PSD.

The PSD hopes to reclaim power in the next general election, set for Dec. 6. It is almost certain to use the Saturday fire in Piatra Neamt in its attacks against the center-right National Liberal party, or NLP, which has controlled Romania's minority government since last October.

The minority government has been struggling to contain the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic by curbing social spending, and the tragic death of patients in a public COVID-19 hospital is likely to add to the ruling party's woes ahead of the election.

News outlets reported that Piatra Neamt Regional Emergency Hospital has long been poorly managed, with eight government-appointed managers overseeing the facility in the last year.

The hospital's current manager, Lucian Micu, was appointed just three weeks ago after his predecessor resigned over the poor treatment of patients. The resignation followed media reports of patients, including many suspected to have COVID-19, being forced to wait outside in the cold to see a doctor.

Micu said Saturday that a doctor on duty tried to save the patients from the flames and was in critical condition with first- and second-degree burns covering 80% of his body. Another doctor and two nurses also were being treated for burns.

Piatra Neamt is about 353 kilometers (219 miles) north of Romania's capital, Bucharest.

Niksic reported from Sarajevo, Bosnia.

Diplomats: Rockets fired at Eritrea amid Ethiopian conflict

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Rockets were fired at Eritrea's capital on Saturday, diplomats said, as the deadly fighting in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region appeared to spill across an international border and bring some of observers' worst fears to life.

At least three rockets appeared to be aimed at the airport in Eritrea's capital, Asmara, hours after the Tigray regional government warned it might attack. It has accused Eritrea of attacking it at the invitation of Ethiopia's federal government since the conflict in northern Ethiopia erupted on Nov. 4.

Eritrea is one of the world's most reclusive countries, and no one on the ground, including the information ministry, could immediately be reached. Details on any deaths or damage were not known. Tigray regional officials did not respond to requests for comment.

Experts have warned that Eritrea, long at bitter odds with the Tigray regional government, or Tigray People's Liberation Front, could be pulled into Ethiopia's growing conflict that has killed untold hundreds of people on each side and sent some 25,000 refugees fleeing into Sudan.

Earlier Saturday, the TPLF said it fired rockets at two airports in the neighboring Amhara region of Ethiopia, as the conflict spreads into other parts of Africa's second-most populous country and threatens civil war at the heart of the Horn of Africa.

The TPLF said in a statement on Tigray TV that such strikes would continue "unless the attacks against us stop."

Ethiopia's federal government said the airports in Gondar and Bahir Dar were damaged in the strikes late Friday, asserting that Tigray regional forces were "repairing and utilizing the last of the weaponry within its arsenals."

Each side in the fighting regards the other as illegal, the result of a monthslong falling out amid dramatic shifts in power after Nobel Peace Prize-winning Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took office two years ago.

The Tigray regional government, which once dominated the country's ruling coalition, broke away last year, and the federal government says members of the region's ruling "clique" now must be arrested and

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their well-stocked arsenal destroyed.

Fears of ethnic targeting are rising. The Tigray People's Liberation Front, which governs the region, in a statement denied allegations that scores or even hundreds of civilians were "hacked to death" Monday in the town of Mai-Kadra. The massacre was confirmed by Amnesty International, which cited a man helping to clear away bodies as saying many of the dead were ethnic Amharas.

The statement by Tigray regional president Debretsion Gebremichael asserted that the allegations against the TPLF forces, repeated by Abiy, are "being proliferated with the intent to incite hatred toward (ethnic) Tigrayans in Ethiopia."

"A justified risk/threat of fear of ethnic profiling and discrimination has arisen," the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission said in a statement Saturday. It has visited 43 people in police custody in the capital, Addis Ababa, and said "some of the detained have reported that they have been arrested only because of their ethnicity."

The international community is warning against deadly ethnic tensions. The U.N. office on genocide prevention has said the rhetoric sets a "dangerous trajectory that heightens the risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity."

Communications and transport links with the Tigray region remain severed, making it difficult to verify claims on both sides. Desperate families cannot reach relatives, and the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations warn of disaster as food, fuel and other supplies run short for millions of people.

"The military escalation in Ethiopia is risking the stability of the whole country and wider region," the European Union's commissioner for crisis management, Janez Lenarcic, tweeted. "Should this endure, a full-blown humanitarian crisis is imminent. I am calling for unimpeded humanitarian access to Tigray."

Meanwhile, a top TPLF official appeared to confirm the federal government's claim that TPLF forces sparked the conflict by attacking a military base. Sekoutoure Getachew in a video discussion said preemptive strikes were carried out in self-defense against the Ethiopian army's Northern Command, calling it an "internationally known practice."

There is no sign of any easing in the fighting. Abiy has rejected growing calls by the United States and others for an immediate de-escalation.

Armenians torch their homes on land ceded to Azerbaijan

KALBAJAR, Azerbaijan (AP) — In a bitter farewell to his home of 21 years, Garo Dadevusyan wrenched off its metal roof and prepared to set the stone house on fire. Thick smoke poured from houses that his neighbors had already torched before fleeing this ethnic Armenian village about to come under Azerbaijani control.

The village is to be turned over to Azerbaijan on Sunday as part of territorial concessions in an agreement to end six weeks of intense fighting with Armenian forces. The move gripped its 600 people with fear and anger so deep that they destroyed the homes they once loved.

The settlement — called Karvachar in Armenian — is legally part of Azerbaijan, but it has been under the control of ethnic Armenians since the 1994 end of a war over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. That war left not only Nagorno-Karabakh itself but substantial surrounding territory in Armenian hands.

After years in which sporadic clashes broke out between Azerbaijani and Armenian forces, full-scale fighting began in late September this year. Azerbaijan made relentless military advances, culminating in the seizure of the city of Shusha, a strategically key city and one of strong emotional significance as a longtime center of Azeri culture.

Two days after Azerbaijan announced it had taken Shusha, Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a Russia-brokered cease-fire under which territory that Armenia occupies outside the formal borders of Nagorno-Karabakh will be gradually ceded.

Muslim Azeris and Christian Armenians once lived together in these regions, however uneasily. Although the cease-fire ends the fighting, it aggravates ethnic animosity.

"In the end, we will blow it up or set it on fire, in order not to leave anything to Muslims," Dadevusyan said of his house.

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He spoke while taking a rest from salvaging what he could from the home, including metal roof panels, and piling it onto an old flatbed truck.

The truck's final destination was unclear.

"We are homeless now, do not know where to go and where to live. Do not know where to live. It is very hard," Dadevusyan's wife, Lusine, said, choked by tears the couple gave the interior of the house a last look.

Dadevusyan's dismay extended to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Armenia and Russia keep close relations and Russia has a sizeable military base in Armenia, so many Armenians had hoped for support from Moscow. Instead, Russia facilitated the cease-fire and territorial concessions and is sending in nearly 2,000 peacekeepers to enforce it.

"Why has Putin abandoned us?" Dadevusyan said.

On Saturday, kilometers-long (miles-long) columns of cars and trucks carrying fleeing residents jammed the road to Armenia.

Scores of local people flocked to Dadivank, an Armenian Apostolic Church monastery dating to the 9th century, as priests removed sacred items to be taken away. Many of the visitors took photos of themselves at the site nestled in the mountains near Karvachar, suggesting they did not expect to see it again.

A small group of Russian peacekeepers watched from across the road, some sitting on their armored vehicles.

The monastery's abbot, the Rev. Hovhannes Ter-Hovhannisyan, walked over to greet them.

"It's very important to us that the Russian peacekeepers came today in order to preserve peace, because not all the questions of our future have been resolved," he said. "But I am sure that justice will triumph."

Hundreds of thousands of Azeris were displaced by the war that ended in 1994. It is unclear when any civilians might try to settle in Karvachar — which will now be known by its Azeri name Kalbajar — or elsewhere.

Any returns could be wrenching. Settlers will confront the burned, empty shells of houses — or worse. Agdam, which is to be turned over next week, once was a city of about 40,000, but now is an empty sprawl of buildings that were destroyed in the first war or later ruined by pillagers grabbing building materials.

Returning also is potentially dangerous because of the remnants of war. The Azerbaijani general prosecutor's office said one man was killed and another injured Saturday when they triggered a mine left over from the fighting in Fizuli, an area now under Azerbaijani control.

For the Dadevusyans, their sudden relocation is overwhelming beyond words.

"When you spent 21 years here and now need to leave it...," Garo Dadevusyan said, trailing off, as smoke from nearby burning houses choked the air. Soon, he knew, his house would be one of them.

Jim Heintz in Moscow and Aida Sultanova in London contributed to this story.

Nobel UN food agency warns 2021 will be worse than 2020

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The head of the World Food Program says the Nobel Peace Prize has given the U.N. agency a spotlight and megaphone to warn world leaders that next year is going to be worse than this year, and without billions of dollars "we are going to have famines of biblical proportions in 2021."

David Beasley said in an interview with The Associated Press that the Norwegian Nobel Committee was looking at the work the agency does every day in conflicts, disasters and refugee camps, often putting staffers' lives at risk to feed millions of hungry people -- but also to send "a message to the world that it's getting worse out there ... (and) that our hardest work is yet to come."

"It was so timely because we've been fighting to get above the choir," Beasley said of last month's award, pointing to the news being dominated by the U.S. elections and the COVID-19 pandemic, and the difficulty of getting global attention focused on "the travesty that we're facing around the world."

"So this was really a gift from above," Beasley said, recalling the surprise and delight of WFP's 20,000

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staffers worldwide, and his own shock at being interrupted during a meeting in Niger in Africa's Sahel region with the news.

Beasley recalled his warning to the U.N. Security Council in April that as the world was dealing with the coronavirus pandemic, it was also "on the brink of a hunger pandemic" that could lead to "multiple famines of biblical proportions" within a few months if immediate action wasn't taken.

"We were able to avert it in 2020 ... because the world leaders responded with money, stimulus packages, deferral of debt," he said.

Now, Beasley said, COVID-19 is surging again, economies are continuing to deteriorate particularly in low- and middle-income countries, and there is another wave of lockdowns and shutdowns.

But he said the money that was available in 2020 isn't going to be available in 2021, so he has been using the Nobel to meet leaders virtually and in person, talk to parliaments, and give speeches to sensitize those with power to "this tragedy that we are facing -- crises that really are going to be extraordinary over the next, who knows, 12 to 18 months."

"Everybody now wants to meet with the Nobel Peace Prize winner," Beasley said, explaining he now gets 45 minutes instead of 15 minutes with leaders and is able to go into depth and explain how bad things are going to be next year and how leaders are going to have to prioritize programs. "And the response has really been good," he said.

"I'm telling them you're not going to have enough money to fund all the projects you historically fund," he said.

"Those are important things," Beasley said, but he likened the upcoming crisis to the Titanic saying "right now, we really need to focus on icebergs, and icebergs are famine, starvation, destabilization and migration."

Beasley said WFP needs \$15 billion next year -- \$5 billion just to avert famine and \$10 billion to carry out the agency's global programs including for malnourished children and school lunches which are often the only meal youngsters get.

"If I could get that coupled with our normal money, then we avert famine around the world" and minimize destabilization as well as migration. he said.

In addition to raising extra money from governments, Beasley said, his other "great hope" is that billionaires that have made billions during the COVID-19 pandemic will step up on a one-time basis. He plans to start pushing this message probably in December or January.

In April, Beasley said 135 million people faced "crisis levels of hunger or worse." A WFP analysis then showed that COVID-19 could push an additional 130 million people "to the brink of starvation by the end of 2020."

He said in Wednesday's virtual interview from Rome, where WFP is based, that while famine was averted this year, the number of people facing crisis levels of hunger is increasing toward 270 million.

"There's about three dozen countries that could possibly enter the famine conditions if we don't have the money we need," Beasley said.

According to a joint analysis by WFP and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization in October, 20 countries "are likely to face potential spikes in high acute food insecurity" in the next three to six months, "and require urgent attention."

Of those, Yemen, South Sudan, northeastern Nigeria and Burkina Faso have some areas that "have reached a critical hunger situation following years of conflict or other shocks," the U.N. agencies said, and any further deterioration in coming months "could lead to a risk of famine."

Other countries requiring "urgent attention" are Afghanistan, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Lebanon, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Sierra Leone, Somali, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, they said.

Beasley said a COVID-19 vaccine "will create some optimism that hopefully will help jump the economies around the world, particularly the Western economies. But the WFP executive director said there's already been \$17 billion of economic stimulus this year "and we're not going to have that globally."

"We're very, very, very concerned" that with deferred debt payments for low- and middle-income coun-

tries resuming in January, new lockdowns and the rippling economic impact, "2021's going to be a very bad year," Beasley said.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump falsehoods on Biden win, vaccine myths

By HOPE YEN, COLLEEN LONG and LAURAN NEERGAARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump rebelled this past week against Democrat Joe Biden's victory in the presidential election with denial, delay and outright misrepresentation. Trump raged about widespread cases of fake ballots that aren't so and undertook legal challenges that even state GOP election officials say can't overcome Biden's lead.

As the coronavirus surged nationwide, Trump said little about public safety measures. Instead he tried to take full credit for drugmaker Pfizer Inc.'s news that its COVID-19 vaccine may be 90% effective and suggested the mission was basically done.

His assertions on both matters are untrue.

A review:

VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

TRUMP, on Pfizer's announcement: "As soon as April, the vaccine will be available to the entire general population with the exception of places like New York state where for political reasons the governor decided to say — and I don't think it's good politically, I think it's very bad from a health standpoint — but he wants to take his time with a vaccine. ... We can't be delivering it to a state that won't be giving it to its people immediately." — remarks Friday.

TRUMP: "I LOVE NEW YORK! ... The problem is, @NYGovCuomo said that he will delay using it, and other states WANT IT NOW... We cannot waste time and can only give to those states that will use the Vaccine immediately. Therefore the New York delay." — tweet Saturday.

THE FACTS: That's a misrepresentation. New York's separate review doesn't guarantee a protracted delay.

Trump is referring to a state panel of experts that Gov. Andrew Cuomo, D-N.Y., announced in September to review any coronavirus vaccine authorized by the Food and Drug Administration before it is to be distributed in the state.

That additional review doesn't necessarily mean weeks of delay before New York residents can get a federally approved vaccine. As a practical matter, the FDA will have a public meeting where its independent advisers debate the data. That's an opportunity for any interested group to get an early look.

Cuomo said Saturday that as soon as the FDA acts, the state review group would, too.

"It's not that these panels are going to do tests; they are just going to review what FDA did, so it's just a review on the FDA process," Cuomo told reporters Saturday. "We are ready now to receive the vaccine and then, simultaneous with the FDA approval, our panel will be looking at it. So, there's no delay."

"Send me a vaccine today; I will distribute it this afternoon," he said.

There is some uncertainty around how the state-level reviews will ultimately work. Cuomo explained one purpose of the panel is to "develop confidence in people" to take the vaccine, also telling CNN on Friday the only issue could be if the review group in New York finds a problem. But he notes that: "I don't think the FDA is going to play any games at this point."

A handful of other states, including California, have also said they would conduct separate safety reviews.

California's plan is to review data quickly so there is no delay in distribution, said Dr. Arthur Reingold, the group's chair. He said the state's review group — which has been joined by Nevada, Oregon and Washington — has trust in the federal review process, but that its work is intended to provide additional reassurance to people.

"Any assertion that our citizens will be delayed in receiving a safe and effective COVID vaccine is simply not borne out by the plans we have in place," said Reingold, a professor of epidemiology at the University of California, Berkeley.

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GEORGIA

TRUMP: "Georgia will be a big presidential win, as it was the night of the Election!" — tweet Monday.

THE FACTS: Georgia wasn't a win for Trump on election night. It still isn't. He's falsely suggesting that any ballot counted after Nov. 3 in Georgia and other states must be illegitimate and illegal. In fact, such counting is explicitly allowed in about 20 states, and the Supreme Court did not stand in the way of it.

Trump refused to concede and said he will press his legal challenges, despite seeing several lawsuits dismissed by courts.

Studies have repeatedly shown that voter fraud is exceptionally rare. Currently Biden leads Trump in Georgia by 14,000 votes.

The state's top election official, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, a Republican, has repeatedly assured the public there were no widespread problems.

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

Raffensperger has rejected the demands of Republican Sens. David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler — who face January runoffs that will decide control of the Senate — that he resign over what they say are "too many failures in Georgia elections this year." He announced an audit of presidential election results that will trigger a full hand tally in the state.

His assurances of a smoothly run election were broadly affirmed Thursday by a coalition of federal and state officials, who described the voting nationwide as the "most secure in U.S. history."

"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," said the Homeland Security Department's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, which spearheaded federal election protection efforts. "When you have questions, turn to elections officials as trusted voices as they administer elections."

PENNSYLVANIA

TRUMP: "Pennsylvania ... wouldn't let our Poll Watchers & Observers into counting rooms. Illegal!" — tweet Thursday.

TRUMP: "Pennsylvania prevented us from watching much of the Ballot count. Unthinkable and illegal in this country." — tweet Monday.

THE FACTS: His assertion is false.

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

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

The counting in Philadelphia was being livestreamed and Trump's lawyers admitted in court that their campaign had observers in the room — "a nonzero" number of them, as they put it.

It was well-known that huge numbers of mailed-in ballots as well as in-person ballots were to be counted after Election Day and that many would be from Democratic-leaning areas. Poll watchers have no role in counting votes.

CALIFORNIA

TRUMP, tweeting a video widely shared on social media pointing to alleged voter fraud in California: "You are looking at BALLOTS! Is this what our Country has come to?" — tweet Wednesday.

THE FACTS: Trump's suggestion of voting fraud or impropriety is a gross distortion. The video, which shows two men collecting ballots from collection boxes the day after the election, does not show evidence

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of anything nefarious.

Mike Sanchez, speaking for the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder County Clerk's office, which oversees elections for the county, told The Associated Press that the two men were staff from his office carrying out a scheduled pickup.

"All vote by mail ballot drop boxes were closed and locked at 8 p.m. on Election Day," Sanchez said. "Ballots from all boxes throughout the county were picked up the following day." He said: "The ballots are valid ballots and will be processed and counted."

The video was shared on various social media sites, including on TikTok with the caption, "The cheating is unreal!!!" A post on Instagram with over 500,000 views shared the video with the caption, "The lies, the cheating, the hypocrisy must be exposed."

Under California law, voters can submit vote-by-mail ballots as late as Election Day. Election officials must count those ballots as long as they have a Nov. 3 postmark and arrive within 17 days of the election.

TRUMP: "WATCH FOR MASSIVE BALLOT COUNTING ABUSE." — tweet Tuesday.

TRUMP: "WE WILL WIN!" — tweet Tuesday.

THE FACTS: He's making unsubstantiated claims. There is no evidence of widespread fraud in the 2020 election. In fact, election officials from both political parties have stated publicly that the election went well and international observers confirmed there were no serious irregularities.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, which led federal election protection efforts, said Thursday it had no evidence that any voting system had deleted or lost votes, had changed votes, or was in any way compromised. The officials 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."

"America, we have confidence in the security of your vote, you should, too," tweeted Chris Krebs, the agency's director.

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 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 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 none of the complaints shows any evidence that the outcome of the election was affected.

MORE ON VACCINE

TRUMP: "As a result of Operation Warp Speed, Pfizer announced on Monday that its 'China virus' vaccine was more than 90% effective." — remarks Friday.

TRUMP, quoting his former White House physician: "'Only because of President Trump, we are going to have a Vaccine by the end of the year.' Ronny Jackson, Texas Congressman-Elect." — tweet Tuesday.

VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE: "HUGE NEWS: Thanks to the public-private partnership forged by President @realDonaldTrump, @pfizer announced its Coronavirus Vaccine trial is EFFECTIVE, preventing infection in 90% of its volunteers." — tweet Monday.

THE FACTS: Pfizer notably did not accept government money to develop, test or expand manufacturing capacity under Trump's Operation Warp Speed initiative to quickly find a vaccine and treatments for the disease sweeping the country.

In fact, Pfizer partnered with the vaccine's original developer, Germany's BioNTech, in March and the following month announced the first human study in Germany. The White House announced Operation Warp Speed in May.

Pfizer opted not to join Operation Warp Speed initially but is following the same general requirements for

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the vaccine's development as competitors who received government research money. The company says it has risked \$2 billion of its own money on vaccine development and won't get anything from Washington unless the effort is successful.

"Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine development and manufacturing costs have been entirely self-funded," Pfizer spokeswoman Jerica Pitts said this week. "We decided to self-fund our efforts so we could move as fast as possible."

Pfizer did sign an agreement with the U.S. government in July worth \$1.95 billion — if the vaccine pans out and is cleared by the FDA — to supply 100 million doses. That guarantees Pfizer a U.S. market, an important incentive.

The supply side of Operation Warp Speed also allows Pfizer logistical help, although the company will directly ship its own vaccine, while the government will control shipping of other COVID-19 vaccines.

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

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

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious diseases expert, had previously said that he was "cautiously optimistic" that a vaccine will be ready by late 2020 or early 2021. On Monday, he called Pfizer's news "extraordinary" but reiterated that it did not mean the U.S. had its immediate cure-all for the coronavirus.

The first step for Pfizer would be to apply for "emergency use authorization" by the FDA, probably later this month, which would allow for limited distribution before it seeks full FDA approval for wider use. Neither step is guaranteed to happen.

"There's still some questions about, you know, the durability of the effect about whether how effective it is in the elderly versus younger people," Fauci told CNN. "We know this is light at the end of the tunnel, but that doesn't mean that we're going to give up the important public health measures that we continually still have to do every single day."

Pfizer's interim analysis, from an independent data monitoring board, looked at 94 infections recorded so far in a study that has enrolled nearly 44,000 people in the U.S. and five other countries.

Some participants got the vaccine, while others got dummy shots. Pfizer says only the data and safety monitoring board knows the breakdowns, not Pfizer researchers or executives. For the vaccine to be 90% effective, nearly all the infections must have occurred in placebo recipients. The study is continuing, and Pfizer cautioned that the protection rate might change as more COVID-19 cases are added to the calculations.

During the presidential campaign, Trump frequently suggested a vaccine might arrive before the Nov. 3 election.

"What I said is by the end of the year, but I think it could even be sooner than that," Trump said in September about a vaccine. "It could be during the month of October, actually could be before November."

TRUMP: "As I have long said, @Pfizer and the others would only announce a Vaccine after the Election, because they didn't have the courage to do it before. Likewise, the @US_FDA should have announced it earlier, not for political purposes, but for saving lives!" — tweet Monday.

TRUMP: "The @US_FDA and the Democrats didn't want to have me get a Vaccine WIN, prior to the election, so instead it came out five days later — As I've said all along!" — tweet Monday.

THE FACTS: His claim that Pfizer and the FDA withheld vaccine information until after the election is false. The company itself learned of the interim results a week ago, and the FDA was not involved in Pfizer's

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decision to announce its early results.

Every vaccine study such as the one done on Pfizer's is overseen by an independent data and safety monitoring board.

These boards include scientists and statisticians who have no ties to the vaccine makers.

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

Those boards take sneak peeks at predetermined times agreed to by the manufacturer and the FDA. It provided the first interim analysis for Pfizer on Nov. 8.

John Burkhardt, senior vice president of drug safety research and development at Pfizer, said Monday that the timing of the company's vaccine announcement was not related in any way to the presidential election and was made as soon as the efficacy data was ready.

Pfizer and the maker of the other leading U.S. vaccine candidate, Moderna Inc., have been cautioning for weeks that the earliest they could seek regulatory approval for wider use of their shots would be late November.

Associated Press writers Candice Choi, Michelle R. Smith, Jennifer Peltz, Linda A. Johnson, Calvin Woodward, Jude Joffe-Block and Marcos Martinez Chacon contributed to this report.

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

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Rudolph, Santa figures soar to sale of \$368,000 at auction

LOS ANGELES (AP) — And how the bidders loved him!

A buyer shouted out with glee that they would pay \$368,000 for the Rudolph and Santa Claus figures used in the perennially beloved Christmas special "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer."

Bidding for the figures soared past the projected sale price of between \$150,000 and \$200,000 on Friday at the Icons & Legends of Hollywood Auction held in Los Angeles by Profiles in History.

The buyer was not identified. The seller was Peter Lutrario, 65, of New York, who told The Associated Press before the auction that he thought he would never part with the dolls but wanted to be able to take care of his children and grandchildren with the money.

The figures were among several used to make the 1964 stop-motion animation television special.

The 6-inch-tall Rudolph and 11-inch-tall Santa were made in Tokyo of wood, wire, cloth and leather, and are still malleable. Rudolph's nose still lights up. Santa's beard is made from yak hair.

Other highlights from the two-day auction include Marilyn Monroe's tiger-striped gown from "The Seven Year Itch," which sold for a whopping \$593,750. Another Monroe gown that she wore when she met Queen Elizabeth II at a London film premiere went for \$294,400.

A Scarlett O'Hara dress that Vivien Leigh wore in "Gone With the Wind" and Gene Kelly's rain suit from "Singin' in the Rain" sold for \$150,000 apiece.

Rockefeller Center Christmas tree goes up; lighting Dec. 2

NEW YORK (AP) — A 75-foot (23-meter) Norway spruce arrived Saturday at New York City's Rockefeller Center to serve as one of the world's most famous Christmas trees.

The tree was trucked in early Saturday morning and later lifted into its spot by a crane.

The tree will be decorated over the coming weeks, and its more than 5 miles (8 km) of lights will be illuminated at a ceremony at 7 p.m. Dec. 2, according to NBC, which is broadcasting the event.

No in-person spectators will be allowed this year because of the coronavirus pandemic, the network said on the "Today" show Saturday.

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The tree was donated by Al Dick of Daddy Al's General Store in Oneonta, in central New York. Tishman Speyer, the company that owns Rockefeller Center, has said it's especially proud to keep up the tree tradition this year. The pandemic has spurred the cancellation of some other New York holiday customs, such as the Radio City Christmas Spectacular.

GOP leaders in 4 states quash dubious Trump bid on electors

By BOB CHRISTIE and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

Republican leaders in four critical states won by President-elect Joe Biden say they won't participate in a legally dubious scheme to flip their state's electors to vote for President Donald Trump. Their comments effectively shut down a half-baked plot some Republicans floated as a last chance to keep Trump in the White House.

State GOP lawmakers in Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin have all said they would not intervene in the selection of electors, who ultimately cast the votes that secure a candidate's victory. Such a move would violate state law and a vote of the people, several noted.

"I do not see, short of finding some type of fraud — which I haven't heard of anything — I don't see us in any serious way addressing a change in electors," said Rusty Bowers, Arizona's Republican House speaker, who says he's been inundated with emails pleading for the legislature to intervene. "They are mandated by statute to choose according to the vote of the people."

The idea loosely involves GOP-controlled legislatures dismissing Biden's popular vote wins in their states and opting to select Trump electors. While the endgame was unclear, it appeared to hinge on the expectation that a conservative-leaning Supreme Court would settle any dispute over the move.

Still, it has been promoted by Trump allies, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, and is an example of misleading information and false claims fueling skepticism among Trump supporters about the integrity of the vote.

The theory is rooted in the fact that the U.S. Constitution grants state legislatures the power to decide how electors are chosen. Each state already has passed laws that delegate this power to voters and appoint electors for whichever candidate wins the state on Election Day. The only opportunity for a state legislature to then get involved with electors is a provision in federal law allowing it if the actual election "fails."

If the result of the election was unclear in mid-December, at the deadline for naming electors, Republican-controlled legislatures in those states could declare that Trump won and appoint electors supporting him. Or so the theory goes.

The problem, legal experts note, is that the result of the election is not in any way unclear. Biden won all the states at issue. It's hard to argue the election "failed" when Trump's own Department of Homeland Security reported it was not tampered with and was "the most secure in American history." There has been no finding of widespread fraud or problems in the vote count, which shows Biden leading Trump by more than 5 million votes nationally.

Trump's campaign and its allies have filed lawsuits that aim to delay the certification and potentially provide evidence for a failed election. But so far, Trump and Republicans have had meager success — at least 10 of the lawsuits have been rejected by the courts in the 10 days since the election. The most significant that remain ask courts to prevent Michigan and Pennsylvania from certifying Biden as the winner of their elections.

But legal experts say it's impossible for courts to ultimately stop those states from appointing electors by the December deadline.

"It would take the most unjustified and bizarre intervention by courts that this country has ever seen," said Danielle Lang of the Campaign Legal Center. "I haven't seen anything in any of those lawsuits that has any kind of merit — let alone enough to delay appointing electors."

Even if Trump won a single court fight, there's another potential roadblock: Congress could be the final arbiter of whether to accept disputed slates of electors, according to the Electoral Count Act of 1887, the law outlining the process. In the end, if the Democratic-controlled House and GOP-controlled Senate could

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not agree on which electors to accept, and there is no vote and no winner, the presidency would pass to the next person in the line of succession at the end of Trump and Vice President Mike Pence's term on Jan. 20. That would be House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat.

"If this is a strategy, I don't think it will be successful," said Edward Foley, a constitutional law professor at Ohio State University. "I think we're in the realm of fantasy here."

But unfounded claims about fraud and corruption have been circulating widely in conservative circles since Biden won the election. Asked this week if state lawmakers should invalidate the official results, GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham said, "Everything should be on the table."

DeSantis urged Pennsylvania and Michigan residents to call state lawmakers and urge them to intervene. "Under Article 2 of the Constitution, presidential electors are done by the legislatures and the schemes they create and the framework. And if there's departure from that, if they're not following the law, if they're ignoring law, then they can provide remedies as well," he said.

Republican lawmakers, however, appear to be holding steady. "The Pennsylvania General Assembly does not have and will not have a hand in choosing the state's presidential electors or in deciding the outcome of the presidential election," top Republican legislative leaders, state Sen. Jake Corman and Rep. Kerry Benninghoff, wrote in an October op-ed. Their offices said Friday they stand by the statement.

The Republican leader of Wisconsin's Assembly, Robin Vos, has long dismissed the idea, and his spokesperson, Kit Beyer, said he stood by that position on Thursday.

In Michigan, legislative leaders say any intervention would be against state law. Even though the GOP-controlled legislature is investigating the election, state Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey told radio station WJR on Friday, "It is not the expectation that our analysis will result in any change in the outcome."

Associated Press writers Scott Bauer in Madison, Wisconsin, David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan, Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Alanna Durkin Richer in Boston and Deb Riechmann in Washington contributed to this report.

US sec'y of state begins difficult 7-nation tour in France

ELAINE GANLEY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo discussed "global challenges" with a handful of members of a Paris think tank Saturday at the start of a seven-country tour of Europe and the Middle East, travels that were certain to be awkward since all the nations on his schedule have congratulated President-elect Joe Biden for winning the White House.

Pompeo was an all but invisible U.S. envoy on what may be his last official trip to France, tweeting out news of his arrival and from his private meeting with members of the Institut Montaigne, accompanied by photos.

The trip is aimed at shoring up the priorities of the outgoing administration of President Donald Trump. It will include visits to Israeli settlements in the West Bank that have been avoided by previous secretaries of state.

The United States' top diplomat — as well as its president and much of his Republican Party — have not accepted the results of the American election, and the unusual circumstances will likely overshadow the issues.

In his latest tweet, Pompeo said he addressed "the global challenges we are facing today, from terrorism to the COVID-19 pandemic" with Institut Montaigne representatives. The independent think tank says it promotes "a balanced vision of society, in which open and competitive markets go hand in hand with equality of opportunity and social cohesion."

Pompeo arrived to a France in lockdown to fight a second wave of the coronavirus. In contrast to the few people seated around him, he did not wear a mask.

Pompeo may find himself doing heavy-lifting on Monday, when he is scheduled to meet French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian and President Emmanuel Macron. According to Macron's office, the French

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president spoke with Biden by phone four days ago and conveyed his desire to work together in areas such as climate change, terrorism and health.

For the outgoing secretary of state and the French officials, Monday's meetings will be a delicate demarche on tough issues.

"For the moment, my counterpart is Mike Pompeo, until Jan. 20..." Le Drian said Friday on French network BFMTV, referring to the date when Trump's term ends. "He's coming to Paris. I receive him."

Le Drian noted the "difficult subjects" on the table, from the situation in Iraq and Iran to the Middle East and China.

He said he plans to speak out on any accelerated withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, clearly concerned that Trump could end his presidency with such a move.

"What he should not do, in our opinion," Le Drian said of a full withdrawal from Afghanistan. "What should not be done either in Iraq, (we) will tell him."

Macron has had a tense relationship with Trump. Both leaders initially worked to woo each other with gestures of extravagance, such as Macron making Trump the guest of honor at a Bastille Day military parade. Trump later pulled out of the Paris global climate accord, a blow to Macron.

The United States also left the hard-won Iran nuclear accord, and Pompeo said in a tweet before departing on his trip that "Iran's destabilizing behavior" would be among topics of discussion.

In an arrival tweet Saturday in France, Pompeo laid out the standard diplomatic groundwork for his Paris talks, noting that France is the "oldest friend and Ally" of the United States. "The strong relationship between our countries cannot be overestimated," he tweeted.

Promoting religious freedom and countering terrorism were also among topics on the table during his trip, he tweeted. Both issues are keenly relevant to France. There have been three terror attacks in recent weeks in France that have killed four people, linked to recently republished caricatures of the prophet of Islam. Anti-France protests rolled through some Muslim countries after Macron insisted on his nation's respect for freedom of expression, including the right to draw caricatures.

After France, Pompeo's tour takes him to Turkey, Georgia, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The leaders of all of those countries have offered public congratulations to Biden.

Beside France, Turkey, Georgia and Qatar have had fractious relationships with the Trump administration, and it was not clear whether Pompeo planned public engagements with their leaders — or whether he would take questions from the press, with whom he has had a frosty relationship.

The administration's relations with Turkey have been particularly strained after the NATO ally's purchase of a Russian missile defense system, and Pompeo's stop in Istanbul next week will not include meetings with Turkish officials. Instead, Pompeo will meet with religious leaders to highlight his promotion of religious freedom.

Palestinian officials, who have been snubbed by the Trump administration, have denounced Pompeo's plans to visit the West Bank settlement of Psagot. Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh tweeted on Friday that this was a "dangerous precedent" that legalizes settlements.

In keeping with Trump's refusal to concede, and orders for Cabinet agencies not to cooperate with the Biden transition team, the State Department has not been involved with facilitating Biden's calls to foreign leaders, according to officials familiar with the process.

At a news conference Tuesday, Pompeo said he would carry on as if there was no change.

"I'm the secretary of state," he said. "I'm getting calls from all across the world. These people are watching our election. They understand that we have a legal process. They understand that this takes time."

Yet his French counterpart Le Drian has been looking toward the future, saying last Sunday in Cairo that "we will work with the new president of the United States and his team in the framework of new trans-Atlantic relations, we will need to re-found this."

Matthew Lee in Washington contributed to this report.

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Biden faces tough choice of whether to back virus lockdowns

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden faces a decision unlike any other incoming president: whether to back a short-term national lockdown to finally arrest a raging pandemic.

For now, it's a question the president-elect would prefer to avoid. In the week since he defeated President Donald Trump, Biden has devoted most of his public remarks to encouraging Americans to wear a mask and view the coronavirus as a threat that has no regard for political ideology.

But the debate has been livelier among members of the coronavirus advisory board Biden announced this week. One member, Dr. Michael Osterholm, suggested a four- to six-week lockdown with financial aid for Americans whose livelihoods would be affected. He later walked back his remarks and was rebutted by two other members of the panel who said a widespread lockdown shouldn't be under consideration.

That's a sign of the tough dynamic Biden will face when he is inaugurated in January. He campaigned as a more responsible steward of America's public health than President Donald Trump is and has been blunt about the challenges that lie ahead for the country, warning of a "dark winter" as cases spike.

But talk of lockdowns are especially sensitive. For one, they're nearly impossible for a president to enact on his own, requiring bipartisan support from state and local officials. But more broadly, they're a political flashpoint that could undermine Biden's efforts to unify a deeply divided country.

"It would create a backlash," said Dr. Amesh Adalja, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security who added that such a move could make the situation worse if people don't comply with restrictions. "Lockdowns can have consequences that diminish the value of such an approach."

During his first public appearance since losing the election, Trump noted on Friday that he wouldn't support a lockdown. The president, who has yet to publicly acknowledge Biden's victory, would likely reinforce that message to his loyal supporters once he's left office.

Still, the pandemic's toll continues to escalate.

The coronavirus is blamed for 10.6 million confirmed infections and almost a quarter-million deaths in the U.S., with the closely watched University of Washington model projecting nearly 439,000 dead by March 1. Deaths have climbed to about 1,000 a day on average.

New cases per day are soaring, shattering records. The latest came Friday, when more than 184,000 people tested positive, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

Several states are beginning to bring back some of the restrictions first imposed during the spring. But leaders in much of the country are proceeding with caution, aware that Americans are already fatigued by virus-related disruptions.

Indeed, after Osterholm made his comments, a number of Biden's task force members went out to publicly disavow lockdown possibilities. Dr. Vivek Murthy, the former U.S. surgeon general who's serving as one of the co-chairs on Biden's coronavirus advisory board, said the group is looking at a "series of restrictions that we dial up or down" based on the severity of the virus in a given region.

"We're not in a place where we're saying shut the whole country down. We've got to be more targeted," Murthy said on ABC's "Good Morning America." "If we don't do that, what you're going to find is that people will become even more fatigued. Schools won't be open to children and the economy will be hit harder, so we've got to follow science, but we've also got to be more precise."

Speaking on CNBC, Dr. Celine Gounder, an infectious-disease specialist at the NYU Grossman School of Medicine and another task force member, said that, "as a group, really the consensus is that we need a more nuanced approach."

"We can be much more targeted geographically. We can also be more targeted in terms of what we close," she said.

During the campaign, Biden pledged to make testing free and widely available; to hire thousands of health workers to help implement contact tracing programs; and to instruct the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide clear, expert-informed guidelines to businesses, schools and local officials on reopening in regions where they've closed.

To prepare for possible surges in cases, he'd prepare Department of Defense resources to provide medi-

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cal facility capacity, logistical support and doctors and other medical personnel if necessary. Biden would also use the Defense Production Act to ramp up production of masks, face shields and other personal protective equipment to help alleviate shortages at hospitals.

But Biden himself fueled some of the confusion about his stance on lockdowns during the campaign. He initially told ABC he would "listen to the scientists" if they advised him to shut down the country, and then took a more nuanced position.

"There's going to be no need, in my view, to be able to shut down the whole economy," he said at a town hall in September.

Even if a nationwide lockdown made sense, polling shows that Americans' appetite for a closure waning. Gallup found that only 49% of Americans said they'd be "very likely" to comply with a monthlong stay-at-home order because of an outbreak of the virus. A full third said they'd be very or somewhat unlikely to comply with such an order.

Kathleen Sebelius, who was the health and human services secretary during the Obama administration, said Biden would be wise to keep his options open for now, especially as Trump criticizes lockdowns.

"It's a very dicey topic" politically, she said. "I think wisely, the president-elect doesn't want to get into a debate with the sitting president about some kind of mandate that he has no authority to implement."

Biden likely to break barriers, pick woman to lead Pentagon

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and ROBERT BURNS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden is expected to take a historic step and select a woman to head the Pentagon for the first time, shattering one of the few remaining barriers to women in the department and the presidential Cabinet.

Michele Flournoy, a politically moderate Pentagon veteran, is regarded by U.S. officials and political insiders as a top choice for the position.

Her selection would come on the heels of a tumultuous Pentagon period that has seen five men hold the top job under President Donald Trump. The most recent defense secretary to go was Mark Esper, who was fired by Trump on Monday after pushing back on issues including troop withdrawals and the use of the military to quell civilian unrest.

If confirmed, Flournoy would face a future that is expected to involve shrinking Pentagon budgets and potential military involvement in the distribution of a coronavirus vaccine.

Democrats have long sought to name a woman to the top post in a department that didn't open all combat jobs to female service members until about five years ago. Flournoy had been the expected choice of Hillary Clinton if she had won the 2016 election. Her name surfaced early as a front-runner for Biden's Cabinet, said officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss personnel matters.

Seen as a steady hand who favors strong military cooperation abroad, Flournoy, 59, has served multiple times in the Pentagon, starting in the 1990s and most recently as the undersecretary of defense for policy from 2009 to 2012. She serves on the board of Booz Allen Hamilton, a defense contractor, which could raise concerns from some lawmakers. But her moderate views would likely ensure wide bipartisan support in a position that requires Senate confirmation.

Few other names have been mentioned, though former Department of Homeland Security chief Jeh Johnson was listed as a possible choice at one point. Choosing a woman would be consistent with Biden's pledge to have a diverse Cabinet.

She has been outspoken on American foreign and defense policy, particularly over the past year. She favors closer international cooperation after four years of a Trump White House that touted an "America First" policy and was more distrustful and critical of allies.

"Whoever the next president is," she said in March, "whether it's a second Trump term or Vice President Biden or whoever it is, one of the top agenda items is going to try to, I think, repair some of that perception" that America may no longer be a reliable partner. "But I don't think it's going to be easy or happen overnight. I think it's going to take a lot of work over a number of years to recover that trust and that standing."

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She has also cautioned against drastic, immediate changes.

"One of the most dangerous tendencies is for — after a change of administration, particularly when there's a change of party — for the new team to come in and use the term 'repudiation.' But to come in and assume that everything their predecessors did was wrong, you know, they throw the baby out with the bathwater, basically, and they overcorrect in another direction," she said in a Hudson Institute forum.

Arnold Punaro, a retired Marine two-star general and former staff director of the Senate Armed Services Committee under then-Democratic Sen. Sam Nunn of Georgia, said recently that he regards Flournoy as "incredibly well-qualified" to lead the Pentagon.

The Defense Department is one of three Cabinet agencies — the others being Treasury and Veterans Affairs — that have never been led by a woman. Some of the 28 men who have held the top defense job since it was created in 1947, including three who served in Trump's administration — Jim Mattis, Esper and current acting Secretary Christopher Miller — have been military veterans. Flournoy did not serve in the military.

Like Mattis and Esper, Flournoy views China as the most significant long-term challenge to American predominance on the world stage. In July, she said the United States is losing its military technological advantage over key competitors like China and that reversing this trend must be the Pentagon's top priority.

She has, however, also warned against abandoning the Middle East and instead advocates "more modest levels of continuous presence" there. As an example, she has backed a limited role in Afghanistan that focuses more on countering the terror threat and less on rebuilding the country.

"We want to reduce our commitment, but we want to do it in a way that's smart and that safeguards our interests in the process," she said in March about Afghanistan, adding that she hopes "we don't just cut and run." Trump has pushed for a full troop withdrawal from Afghanistan by the end of the year, but so far the Pentagon has no orders to do that.

On North Korea, she said in an October online forum that while nuclear disarmament should remain the ultimate goal, she finds it "hard to see" Kim Jong Un agreeing to give up all his nuclear weapons, which she said he sees as his regime's "survival card."

On Iran, Flournoy has argued for a revised approach of deterring the Islamic Republic by breaking the familiar pattern of sending more American forces to the Gulf in response to Iranian provocations, as the Trump administration did in May 2019 after what it called credible threats to U.S. interests in the region.

Flournoy is a co-founder of Westexec Advisors, a consulting firm that provides advice and geopolitical risk analysis to corporate clients. She works with a mixture of former senior government officials — including Antony Blinken, a former deputy secretary of state and currently Biden's top foreign policy adviser — and military experts such as retired Army Gen. Vincent Brooks, who led U.S. forces in Korea until 2019.

In 2007, Flournoy helped create a think tank, the Center for a New American Security.

No longer mirror of US, Ohio's electoral bellwether quiets

By DAN SEWELL and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

CINCINNATI (AP) — As Ohio goes, so goes the nation. That's the way it had been in presidential elections for more than half a century, until this year, when Republican Donald Trump won a decisive victory in the state while losing the presidency to Democrat Joe Biden.

Biden becomes the first president elected without carrying Ohio since fellow Democrat John F. Kennedy in 1960. Trump's statewide victory — his second, after carrying Ohio in 2016 — brings an end to Ohio's role as a presidential bellwether and even puts its future as a battleground state in doubt.

"The bellwether has been unrun," Mark Weaver, a veteran Republican strategist, says. "Ohio, like most states, changes over time, and those changes have political impacts."

Ohio's population no longer mirrors the nation. It's whiter, slightly older and less educated than the U.S. on whole.

Roughly two-thirds of the state's voters in this year's election were ages 45 and older, including about a quarter who were 65 and up, according to AP VoteCast, a broad survey of the electorate. A majority of

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those older voters, 56%, supported Trump.

Heather Miller, 49, a registered Democrat who lives near Toledo, agonized over her decision. She liked how the economy was humming along during Trump's first three years and was worried about taxes going up under a Biden administration.

"Part of me was so conflicted I almost didn't come out and vote," she said, later adding she decided at the last moment to vote for Biden.

Mike Master, 64, a Columbus pipefitter, had no such hesitation. He said he would have voted this fall for Trump "twice if I could."

Not only are Ohio's voters getting older, those who stayed home on Election Day were predominantly young voters. Among registered voters who chose not to cast a ballot, 70% were under 45, according to VoteCast.

The survey also showed the vast majority of Ohio voters were white. About two-thirds of white voters without a college degree voted for Trump.

Even Kyle Kondik, the author of a political history titled "The Bellwether: Why Ohio Picks the President," is skeptical about Ohio being either a predictor or even a swing state that Democrats stand a chance of winning back in the 2024 presidential campaign. Trump won Ohio each time by a margin of around 8 percentage points.

"It's definitely moving off of the really competitive presidential playing field," said Kondik, a political analyst at the University of Virginia Center for Politics who had said even before this election that Ohio's demographics were going to make it redder.

Although Biden made a late push into Ohio after polling gave his campaign some hope, he wound up winning only in six counties — those with the state's biggest cities and one with a college. Trump, meanwhile, showed even more strength this time in the working-class Mahoning Valley counties in northeast Ohio.

"The president's a really good salesman," said third-term Democratic U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown. Brown had expected more backlash from workers against Trump, after General Motors last year idled and then sold its Lordstown plant. Trump had visited the region earlier and told people not to sell their homes because jobs were coming.

"He's found really fertile ears in places like the Mahoning Valley, but really all over the state and in many parts of the country," Brown said, nonetheless.

Even within the erstwhile bellwether state, certain counties have been more prescient than others. The three Ohio counties with the longest streaks of voting for the winning presidential candidate all went for Trump this year, including Sandusky County, where the president won by a whopping 2-to-1 margin.

Assuming they seek reelection, Ohio's GOP incumbents, including Gov. Mike DeWine and U.S. Sen. Rob Portman, will likely begin the 2022 election season as strong favorites.

"The Democrats have really had four terrible elections in a row in Ohio," Kondik said. "You can't really sugarcoat it."

Brown, the only Democrat ever to defeat DeWine — when he unseated him as U.S. senator in 2006 — said he's looking ahead to 2024.

"Well, I hope to stay healthy and stay in the Senate," Brown said in an interview. "I don't want any Cabinet position, I don't want an administration job, I don't want to run for governor. I love the Senate. So jump to whatever conclusion."

Kondik said he doesn't see an Ohio-like bellwether on the map currently. He says in upcoming presidential elections, the focus will likely be on the so-called "Blue Wall" states of Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan and the Sun Belt states of Arizona, Georgia and North Carolina.

Ohioans could thus at least take solace in four years from reduced barrages of the negative campaign ads they would normally expect in the weeks before an election.

"The losers from this last election are Ohio radio and television station owners, which will be seeing much less revenue from political ads," Weaver summarized.

But Brown said while Ohio has become a tough challenge for Democrats, he still thinks it should be

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considered a swing state. He himself is a prime example of how Democrats still can win statewide.

"It's a more difficult one than Pennsylvania, it's a more difficult one maybe even than Georgia now, but things change," Brown said.

Sewer reported from Toledo. Associated Press writer Julie Carr Smyth in Columbus contributed to this report.

Trump putting democracy to the test after his loss to Biden

By MICHAEL TACKETT and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Winston Churchill was not known for leaving his thoughts unspoken. One of them was this: "It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried."

President Donald Trump, who has professed admiration for, if not deep knowledge of, the British prime minister, is putting Churchill's observation to one of its greatest tests by refusing to accept the results of an election that delivered victory for Democrat Joe Biden. Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, calls this a "dangerous path" for the United States.

Trump has forced a dusting off of the arcana of the procedures for the Electoral College, which for almost the entirety of the nation's history has been a formality and not an instrument to overturn people's votes.

A sitting American president is, for the first time, trying to convince the people that they should not believe the numbers that clearly demonstrate his rival's win. Rather, Trump is making baseless claims of massive fraud, demanding recounts and calling for audits in an effort to discredit the outcome and, in the process, put democracy itself on trial.

It's possible that the mercurial president is one tweet away from a change of heart, but so far that is not the case. And the sweeping majority of his fellow Republicans are allowing him to play this out.

Obama, who invited Trump to the White House soon after Trump's election four years ago and pledged cooperation in the transfer of power, is not shocked that a man who "never admits loss" is refusing to acknowledge defeat now.

"I'm more troubled by the fact that other Republican officials, who clearly know better, are going along with this, are humoring him in this fashion," Obama told CBS' "60 Minutes." "It is one more step in delegitimizing not just the incoming Biden administration but democracy generally. And that's a dangerous path."

With one eye on Trump, Republicans may have the other fixed on Georgia, where they want his energy to help their candidates win two Senate runoffs in January and ensure at minimum that Biden has to deal with divided government. Republicans have seen how Trump batters dissidents, and few have chosen this consequential moment to cross him.

"Republicans are sticking with him out of fear," said Eric Dezenhall, a crisis management expert who worked in communications in Ronald Reagan's White House. "Fear has always worked for Trump. Tantrums have always paid dividends.

"Republicans fear if they don't stand by him, one midnight tweet will cost them Georgia," he said. More broadly, "they don't want to anger him."

Trump is using not just his sway over the party but also the levers of government to keep Biden at bay at least for a while longer.

An agency little known outside Washington, the General Services Administration, has held off on recognizing Biden as the president-elect, denying him access to the money, offices and machinery routinely afforded to the incoming team. Biden has also been denied the classified briefings that previous presidents shared with presidents-elect so that rising national security threats don't catch the next administration and the country off guard. Trump installed loyalists at the Pentagon and fired his defense secretary after Biden's victory.

In the meantime, a contagion of falsehood has been spread from the losing side, magnified on social media and given brute force by Trump himself.

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In Philadelphia, a beleaguered city commissioner on the panel responsible for conducting and counting the vote said he's been stunned by the traction that wild tales of fraud have gained in the state that clinched victory for Biden. The commissioner, Al Schmidt, is a Republican.

"One thing I can't comprehend is how hungry people are to consume lies," he told CNN. Asked if he held Trump himself responsible for that, Schmidt said: "People should be mindful that there are bad actors who are lying to them."

During a break from even more pressing electoral business, his team checked allegations of dead people voting. "We looked it up," Schmidt said. "Not a single one of them voted in Philadelphia after they died."

Trump is also making unsupported claims of unfairness in five states, repeating allegations even when they've been firmly debunked. This as his supporters hail race calls by the media when those calls go their way and denounce calls as illegitimate when they don't.

Not everyone in officialdom shares the timidity of GOP lawmakers when it comes to standing up to Trump.

The Homeland Security Department's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency has slapped down rumor after unfounded rumor about voting malfeasance and joined with state election officials in a statement declaring the election to have been the "most secure in American history."

By secure, they meant there was no evidence that any voting system deleted or lost votes, changed votes "or was in any way compromised." That was a clear repudiation of Trump's unfounded accusations.

States have until Dec. 14 to finish the counting and certify the results. That's also the day Electoral College delegations are to meet in their respective states to cast and tally electoral votes, with a joint session of Congress set for Jan. 6 to affirm the count and declare the official result. It's a process thick with proforma minutia that Americans rarely need to understand but this time conceivably might.

The U.S. has long promoted the conceit that it is the world's beacon of democracy. Now, the most essential tool of democracy, the vote, is under attack.

The story of presidential elections the night of, the day after or even weeks of indecision later has been one of candidates swallowing the bitterness of defeat and smoothing the path for the winner. Presidential transitions have unfolded as if by muscle memory. The peaceful transfer of power has never been in question in living memory until now.

Perhaps the closest the U.S. has come to today's conflict was the presidential election of 1876, when Samuel Tilden, the Democrat, appeared to win, only to have Rutherford B. Hayes, the Republican, ultimately declared the winner after cutting a deal to secure electoral votes in three Southern states in exchange for effectively ending Reconstruction.

That election, unlike this one, did not involve an incumbent trying to cling to power. Nor did others that loom large in more recent history.

In 1960, Democrat John F. Kennedy defeated Republican Richard Nixon by only about 112,000 votes out of more than 68 million cast, though Kennedy held a decided advantage in the Electoral College. Nixon felt cheated and considered challenging the outcome but declined, conceding the morning after the election.

Al Gore, the Democratic nominee in 2000, won the popular vote by about 540,000 votes out of 100 million cast. But he conceded twice — at first prematurely on election night, then again weeks later when a decision by the Supreme Court handed Florida, and an Electoral College majority, 271-266, to Republican George W. Bush.

Bush had turned to the high court with a legal case based not on fraud but on his claim that voters were denied equal protection because Florida did not have proper standards for recounts.

In 2016, Trump won Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania by a combined 77,000 votes; Democrat Hillary Clinton called him on election night and publicly conceded the next day. Her advantage in the popular vote of nearly 3 million has animated the grievances of her supporters to this day, but the Electoral College arithmetic was inexorable and not to be challenged.

Obama then welcomed Trump to the White House in a display to the world of the rituals of an American democratic transition.

In 2008, Obama had been the beneficiary of similar graciousness. That's when Republican rival John

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McCain conceded before a crowd of supporters, converting their boos at the mention of Obama's name to cheers and applause for the Democrat, for the process and for the historic achievement of the first Black American to win the presidency.

"I wish Godspeed to the man who was my former opponent and will be my president," McCain said.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

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Today is Sunday, Nov. 15, the 320th day of 2020. There are 46 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 15, 1864, during the Civil War, Union forces led by Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh (teh-KUM'-seh) Sherman began their "March to the Sea" from Atlanta; the campaign ended with the capture of Savannah on Dec. 21.

On this date:

In 1777, the Second Continental Congress approved the Articles of Confederation.

In 1806, explorer Zebulon Pike sighted the mountaintop now known as Pikes Peak in present-day Colorado.

In 1935, the Commonwealth of the Philippines was established as its new president, Manuel L. Quezon (KAY'-zahn), took office.

In 1937, at the U.S. Capitol, members of the House and Senate met in air-conditioned chambers for the first time.

In 1942, the naval Battle of Guadalcanal ended during World War II with a decisive U.S. victory over Japanese forces.

In 1958, actor Tyrone Power, 44, died in Madrid, Spain, while filming "Solomon and Sheba." (Power's part was recast with Yul Brynner.)

In 1959, four members of the Clutter family of Holcomb, Kansas, were found murdered in their home. (Ex-convicts Richard Hickock and Perry Smith were later convicted of the killings and hanged in a case made famous by the Truman Capote book "In Cold Blood.")

In 1966, the flight of Gemini 12, the final mission of the Gemini program, ended successfully as astronauts James A. Lovell and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin Jr. splashed down safely in the Atlantic after spending four days in orbit.

In 1969, a quarter of a million protesters staged a peaceful demonstration in Washington against the Vietnam War.

In 1974, the disaster movie "Earthquake" was released by Universal Pictures in "Sensurround," which bombarded the audience with low-frequency sound waves during the quake scenes.

In 1984, Stephanie Fae Beauclair, the infant publicly known as "Baby Fae" who had received a baboon's heart to replace her own congenitally deformed one, died at Loma Linda University Medical Center in California three weeks after the transplant.

In 2007, baseball player Barry Bonds was indicted for perjury and obstruction of justice, charged with lying when he told a federal grand jury that he did not knowingly use performance-enhancing drugs. (Bonds was later convicted on the obstruction of justice count; the conviction was overturned in 2015.)

Ten years ago: A House ethics committee panel began closed-door deliberations on 13 counts of alleged financial and fundraising misconduct by U.S. Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., who walked out of the proceeding after pleading unsuccessfully for more time to raise money for a lawyer. (Rangel was convicted the next day of 11 rules violations.) San Francisco Giants catcher Buster Posey and Texas Rangers closer Neftali Feliz were voted the Rookies of the Year.

Five years ago: World leaders vowed a vigorous response to the Islamic State group's terror rampage in Paris as they opened a two-day meeting in Turkey, with President Barack Obama calling the violence an "attack on the civilized world" and Russian President Vladimir Putin urging "global efforts" to confront the threat. P.F. Sloan, 70, the troubled songwriter behind such classic 1960s tunes as Johnny Rivers' "Secret

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Agent Man" and Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction," died in Los Angeles.

One year ago: The former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, testified to House impeachment investigators about her removal from the post amid criticism from President Donald Trump's allies; as she testified, Trump tweeted fresh attacks on her, saying that things "turned bad" everywhere she served before he fired her. Roger Stone, a longtime Trump friend and ally, was convicted of all seven counts in a federal indictment accusing him of lying to Congress, tampering with a witness and obstructing the House investigation of whether Trump coordinated with Russia during the 2016 campaign. (As Stone was about to begin serving a 40-month prison sentence, Trump commuted the sentence.) Members of the United Auto Workers union voted to approve a new contract with Ford. The NFL suspended Myles Garrett of the Cleveland Browns for at least the rest of the season, after Garrett ripped off the helmet of Pittsburgh quarterback Mason Rudolph and struck him in the head with it.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Ed Asner is 91. Singer Petula Clark is 88. Actor Joanna Barnes is 86. Actor Yaphet Kotto is 81. Actor Sam Waterston is 80. Classical conductor Daniel Barenboim is 78. Pop singer Frida (ABBA) is 75. Actor Bob Gunton is 75. Former New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson is 73. Actor Beverly D'Angelo is 69. Director-actor James Widdoes is 67. Rock singer-producer Mitch Easter is 66. News correspondent John Roberts is 64. Former "Jay Leno Show" bandleader Kevin Eubanks is 63. Comedian Judy Gold is 58. Actor Rachel True is 54. Rapper E-40 is 53. Country singer Jack Ingram is 50. Actor Jay Harrington is 49. Actor Jonny Lee Miller is 48. Actor Sydney Tamiia (tuh-MY'-yuh) Poitier-Heartsong is 47. Rock singer-musician Chad Kroeger is 46. Rock musician Jesse Sandoval is 46. Actor Virginie Ledoyen is 44. Actor Sean Murray is 43. Pop singer Ace Young (TV: "American Idol") is 40. Golfer Lorena Ochoa (loh-AY'-nah oh-CHOH'-uh) is 39. Hip-hop artist B.o.B is 32. Actor Shailene Woodley is 29. Actor-dancer Emma Dumont is 26.