

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Groton's Angel Tree is now available at Lori's Pharmacy and Next Level Nutrition



### **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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## From Governor Noem's Office

Maggie Seidel

Senior Advisor & Policy Director

Office of Governor Kristi Noem

Folks - Over the weekend, we were all privy to more unbelievably bad journalism.

"The Dakotas are 'as bad as it gets anywhere in the world' for Covid-19" Joel Shannon of USA Today wrote.

The facts tell a very different story, but Joel Shannon wouldn't let the facts get in the way of his fictional storytelling.

Let's start with the profoundly untrue headline. No, the Dakotas aren't as bad as it gets anywhere in the world. In fact, the entire United States doesn't break the top 10 list for deaths (per 100,000) globally. Then, inside the US, if we look at the death rate (per 100,000) as of November 16th:

New Jersey – 187

New York – 175

Massachusetts – 150

Connecticut – 133

Louisiana – 132

North Dakota is 8th on the list at 97.

South Dakota is 17th on the list at 73 – lower than the overall US death rate per 100,000.

Some more facts...

The world is seeing a rise in cases. The Midwest – not only North and South Dakota, but also Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and many others – is also seeing cases rise. It is inaccurate to suggest that the virus is primarily hitting North Dakota and South Dakota. And there's zero science – yes, zero – to support the claim that South Dakota is seeing a rise in cases because Governor Noem won't issue a mask mandate or other harsh restrictions.

Illinois health officials reported 10,631 new cases, and 72 deaths on Sunday. Illinois has had a mask mandate for everyone over the age of 2 since May 1.

Minnesota health officials reported a record 8,703 new cases and 35 new deaths on Saturday. Minnesota's mask mandate has been in place since July 25.

Wisconsin health officials reported more than 5,100 new cases and 52 more deaths on Saturday. Wisconsin's mask mandate has been in place since August 1.

In addition to mask mandates, these states also have very restrictive "regulations," which Joel Shannon and his source laud. Joel Shannon suggests to the reader that if only the Dakotas had been smarter and more proactive, a case spike could have been avoided. Joel Shannon makes no mention of all the other states and countries – with said restrictions – spiking. Instead, we are left with the obviously, intentional misimpression that the Dakotas have failed while the rest of the world, per the headline, has succeeded in stemming the pandemic.

This reporting from the USA Today is grossly irresponsible and totally dishonest.

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South Dakota health officials reported 1,100 new cases and 23 new deaths on Sunday. Every death is tragic, but to imply that South Dakota is somehow unique is totally false.

The facts are simple: mask mandates, harsh lockdowns, massive testing and contact tracing haven't worked – in the United States or abroad.

By September, we knew lockdowns didn't contain the virus' spread and reopening didn't drive a second wave of infections. Germany was supposed to have the best testing and contact tracing in the world, but their strategies did not stop this next wave, either.

Since so few will present all the raw data, here's where things stand in South Dakota. We've had roughly 63k positives tests since March. Today, there are about 18k active cases. And 644 have died. We have 560 in the hospital – about 20% of our hospital capacity is Covid-related, 43% is non-Covid-related, and 36% of our beds are available. It's important to note that this data says nothing about who is in the hospital with Covid versus from Covid.

Instead of telling a story about the Dakotas also battling the pandemic, what we got this weekend from the USA Today was yet another perfect example of media manipulation. They present carefully selected facts without context and assemble an argument that would fall apart completely if the whole truth was offered. They confidently declare science "settled" that is still open to interpretation and has been under constant revision all year. Then, they use that argument to make wild accusations against public officials and principles of governance that they obviously disagree with.

Here's what we know today. No place is doing better or worse with the virus in a way that quantifiably relates to restrictions – a one-size-fits-all approach remains elusive. But the media continues to push the narrative that you're crazy if you don't lock down your state. Those lockdowns cause untold suffering. And never mind that we cannot prove any real benefit in terms of public health.

Some in the media continue to suggest the public cannot be trusted to make rational decisions based on the available information. So, we must do what "expert" public officials say and rely on their modeling as if it were gospel, even as they constantly change their minds and as the results fail to match their predictions. Again, manipulation.

States that have had much harsher restrictions than South Dakota are suffering spikes and greater fatality rates at the same time. South Dakota's case-fatality rate is the 7th lowest in the country. Moreover, there are negative side effects for public health, mental health, education, and the economy associated with strict measures like mandates and lockdowns. Public officials have a duty to provide information to the people, and private individuals must weigh the costs and benefits on both sides of the equation. South Dakota's Governor Kristi Noem has done this better than any Governor in America.

Remember, there's public debate and then there's media manipulation and the enforcement of quasi-religious dogma that has little basis in reality. USA Today engaged in the latter.

Stay well.

-Maggie Seidel

Senior Advisor & Policy Director

Office of Governor Kristi Noem

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Editor's Note: I normally don't run something like this; however, I want South Dakotas to see what the Democratic Party has become. This type of response on such a negative scale does not belong in South Dakota. It's bad enough that the main stream media has blown figures out of proportion for their own propaganda. The last sentence by Seiler is totally unnecessary and shows the insensitive nature of the article.

I responded to the author of this article, Pam Cole with the following:

Your negative and false information has a lot to be desired. You accuse Ian of being an out-of-stater. Perhaps you don't know that he lives in Pierre and will be closing on a house next month. AND - you too came from out of state going to college in Colorado so you can be classified as an out-of-stater as well! And as far as USA and CNN are concerned- it's nothing but a bunch of skewing the data. I go by the DOH data which goes by the CDC guidelines.

Paul Kosel  
Publisher  
Groton Independent

Here is their article....

## **Under Governor Noem – South Dakota Leads the World In Death Rate From COVID-19** World Expert Says Noem's Lack of Leadership is "Equivalent to manslaughter"

Sioux Falls, South Dakota (November 16, 2020)— South Dakota's Governor is sure making a name for herself and for South Dakota in a bad way – for her malfeasant response in doing nothing as South Dakota now leads the world in the death rate from COVID-19.

According to USA Today, Dr. William Haseltine said South Dakota's COVID situation today is, "as bad as it gets anywhere in the world."

Haseltine who is president of Access Health International and a former Harvard professor, blamed Noem according to USA Today for, "ignoring public health measures that would have been successfully used to curb the spread of the virus elsewhere in the world. Haseltine said Noem's lack of leadership and response to the pandemic "is equivalent to manslaughter."

According to USA Today, Haseltine was not alone in his scathing assessment of Noem's ignorance and malfeasance. The newspaper quoted Dr. Ali Mokdad a professor at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington in Seattle saying Noem's response to the pandemic "is unacceptable by any standards."

What was Noem's response?

Her lapdog spokesperson, an out of stater named Ian Fury, told USA Today "It's a good day for freedom" that South Dakota's government is not taking the lead in mandating CDC protocols to fight COVID.

The CDC now projects that with Noem's lack of response to COVID more than 1,500 South Dakotans will die of COVID by March 1, 2021.

South Dakota Democratic Party Chairman Randy Seiler responded to Fury's offensive quote in USA Today saying, "Someone should tell Noem and her mouthpieces that dead South Dakotans have no freedom."

Pam Cole | Executive Director  
South Dakota Democratic Party



## Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

November 17, 2020 – 7:00pm

Groton Community Center

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1  
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
2. Minutes
3. Bills
4. October Finance Report
5. Appoint Doug Hamilton – Planning and Zoning Board member  
Term expires 2025
6. Council committee representative designations
7. Brownfield letter of support
8. Water Tower Replacement – Schedule C – AB Contracting Application for Payment Number 1 for \$15,736.57
9. 1<sup>st</sup> Reading of Ordinance #738 – 2020 Supplemental Appropriation Ordinance
10. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
11. Deputy Finance Officer resignation
12. Hire Deputy Finance Officer and set wage
13. Hire skating rink employees and set wage
14. Employee group health plan
15. 1<sup>st</sup> Reading of Ordinance #739 – 2021 Salary Ordinance
16. Adjournment





## More pieces going together

Three pieces of the main tube were assembled on Monday as the main pieces of the new tower are getting close to being completed. Once completed, a big crane will be brought to town to lift the pieces and assemble the water tower. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



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Groton Snow Queen Contest, Friday, Nov. 20, 7:30 p.m., GHS Gym



## Senior queen candidates

Back - Kenzie McInernie, Hailey Monson, Tiara DeHoet. Front - Tessa Erdmann, Erin Unzen and Alexis Hanten. (Courtesy Photo)



## Junior queen candidates

Faith Flihs, Lydia Meier and LeeLee Volk. Front - Cadence Feist and Camryn Kurtz. Missing Anna Bisbee. (Courtesy Photo)

## #267 in a series

### Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

It's Monday; Mondays typically run low. If that pattern is holding, then I have bad news for you about tomorrow. We will harbor hope the pattern is what broke because, if not, we're in a world of hurt. Today is our third-worst day ever. We're up to 11,266,100 cases since the pandemic began. Please note that, one day after hitting 11 million cases, we are more than a quarter of the way to our next million. This is terrifying. There were 157,500 new cases reported today, a 1.4% increase from yesterday. We're six weeks past the last time we saw 40,000 new cases in a day and almost two weeks since we were below 100,000. Things are grim.

There were 73,014 people hospitalized with Covid-19 today in the US. This is a record for the sixth consecutive day with us now at 73,014. We've more than 10,000 over our spring and summer peaks, averaging more than 3500 new hospitalizations per day. These numbers are not surprising; this kind of a surge in cases is going to feed an increase in hospitalizations and deaths.

We had 776 new deaths today, a 0.3% increase. And now 246,789 people in the US have died from Covid-19.

The day's big news is big indeed: Preliminary data says another vaccine candidate is remarkably effective. This would be the Moderna candidate, another mRNA vaccine, similar to the Pfizer vaccine we learned last week is returning excellent results as well. If you need a brush-up on how these vaccines work, have a look back at my Update #37 posted March 31 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3474297942586587>

for the basics or Update #124 posted June 26 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3717649208251458> for more details.

This trial involves 300,000 volunteers, half of whom received the vaccine and half of whom received a saline placebo. Two doses were given 28 days apart. They're citing 94.5% effectiveness. In this study, 95 people became infected, five who were vaccinated and 90 who received placebos. Better yet, we have severity data too: Of the 95 cases 11 were severe, and all of these were in the placebo group. The Data Safety and Monitoring Board (DSMB) noted they did not observe any significant safety concerns with the candidate vaccine. The main side effects were fatigue, muscle aches, and injection site pain after the second dose. The FDA will evaluate the safety data and reach an independent conclusion on the subject.

According to the New York Times, "Researchers said the results were better than they had dared to imagine. If approved, the vaccine will not be widely available for months, probably not until spring." Moderna says it expects to ship 20 million doses by the end of the year; this would be enough for 10 million people (at two doses per person). The logistics of distributing this vaccine would be considerably less challenging than the Pfizer vaccine because it can be stored at a higher temperature; while it still must be kept frozen for long-term storage, 25o F is sufficient for this one, and it can be held at refrigerator temperatures for up to a month.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said, "I had been saying I would be satisfied with a 75% effective vaccine. Aspirational, you would like to see 90, 95 percent, but I wasn't expecting it. I thought we'd be good, but 94.5 percent is very impressive." I know I'm impressed. And the really good news is that we now appear to have two different vaccines from two different companies showing this kind of efficacy. That means two sets of production facilities ramped up to their max and potentially twice the supply. This is very good news indeed. I hope it holds through the approval process.

According to CNN, Fauci said, "The cavalry is coming, but the cavalry is not here yet." If you needed encouragement to hang in there, exercise precautions, go without some stuff right now in the interest of holding out for a vaccine, then this should provide some strong motivation to do so. We can outlast this virus if we don't go all stupid. Be a damned shame to stop off on the way to your vaccination appointment for a quick intubation in the ICU of the local hospital, wouldn't it?

For the record, vaccine efficacy refers to the likelihood the vaccine will prevent disease in recipients. Both of the vaccine candidates that have reported out interim results, the efficacy is north of 90%. These numbers are likely to change as the trial progresses to its end point; but the early results are very, very promising. What we'll wait to see is how they both work in various age groups and demographic categories. We'll also wait to see whether they prevent subclinical, or asymptomatic, infections, which is a factor in



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transmission. Ideally, they won't prevent only actual sickness, but also transmission. We'll also wait—longer—to see how long the protection lasts and whether boosters are required; but we're on our way. We have much more than we have any right to expect just ten months into a pandemic.

A small study of 26 patients who died from coronavirus infection in the Netherlands found the virus in the diaphragms of four of them. The diaphragm is a broad muscle that separates the chest cavity from the abdominal cavity in the body and is critical in breathing. This muscle, which has cells rich in angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE-2), the cellular doorway for the virus to enter cells, gives the virus a route in, and showed evidence of fibrosis, a stiffening that occurs in response to injury. It is possible weakened or damaged diaphragms may be leading to the difficulty breathing and fatigue seen in at least some Covid-19 patients; 24 of those studied required mechanical ventilation. More work is needed to confirm these impressions.

Pam Fowler is a paraprofessional working at the school in Hill City, South Dakota. She's built real relationships with students who call her Sheriff Shorty and count on seeing her each day at school. Thing is, school paraprofessional persons don't make a bunch of money, and Fowler was having vehicle problems she couldn't afford to repair. She needed her car to get to school, but over time, it rusted out, the doors stopped working smoothly, and then finally it just stopped running altogether. She was in a fix.

Good thing the freshman class had noticed the problem. They decided to help out, and as the car deteriorated, they were earning money doing odd jobs, asking for donations, doing anything creative they could think of to make money. The only help these kids received from adults was to hold the money for them and to work out purchase details once the money was gathered. And the kids of Hill City School raised enough money to replace the car with a minivan, pay the tax and title, and have money left over for gas. Just over a week ago, they kids got together and presented her with their gift. A Facebook post by the city's mayor about the event said, "She was presented with this completely unselfish and amazing act of kindness on Friday. I don't think there was a dry eye in the house. These are the youth in Hill City."

That's the kind of thing that gives me hope even with the problems we're facing. There are two elements here. One is noticing there's a problem, and the other is setting out to do something to fix it. Both matter. Good for these kids; our future is safe in their hands.

Be well. We'll talk again.

Groton Area School District															
Active COVID-19 Cases															
Updated November 16, 2020; 12:02 PM															
JK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Staff	Total
0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	7

*A positive case is considered active for a minimum of ten days after onset of symptoms. It is important to note that not all reported cases have been in school or school activities during their infectious periods (48 hours prior to onset of symptoms).*

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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
Minnesota	189,681	194,570	201,795	207,339	213,582	223,581	231,018
Nebraska	87,733	89,942	92,553	94,922	96,834	98,161	101,601
Montana	41,151	42,070	43,031	44,244	45,886	47,158	48,027
Colorado	138,427	142,042	147,599	154,038	159,234	163,417	167,713
Wyoming	16,442	16,518	17,442	18,243	18,726	19,298	19,885
North Dakota	56,342	57,373	59,173	60,602	62,872	63,796	64,885
South Dakota	57,334	58,696	60,716	62,327	64,182	65,381	66,278
United States	10,258,090	10,402,273	10,557,451	10,746,996	10,905,597	11,038,312	11,205,485
US Deaths	239,695	241,808	242,436	244,366	245,614	246,224	247,220
Minnesota	+4,893	+4,889	+7,225	+5,554	+6,243	+9,999	+7,437
Nebraska	+2,182	+2,209	+2,611	+2,369	+1,912	+1,327	+3,440
Montana	+1,098	+919	+961	+1,213	+1,642	+1,272	+869
Colorado	+3,890	+3,615	+5,557	+6,439	+5,196	+4,183	+4,296
Wyoming	+1,131	+76	+924	+801	+483	+572	+587
North Dakota	+894	+1,031	+1,801	+1,429	+2,270	+924	1,089
South Dakota	+1,024	+1,362	+2,019	+1,611	+1,855	+1,199	+897
United States	+147,538	+144,183	+155,178	+189,545	+158,601	+132,715	+167,173
US Deaths	+1,444	+2,113	+628	+1,930	+1,248	+610	+996



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## November 16th COVID-19 UPDATE

### Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Today is an easy report to put together. No deaths. Recoveries outpace positive cases today, 2118-897. and our positivity rate for today is 20.9 percent (CNN uses a different model for reporting positivity rate - we go by the South Dakota Department of Health who uses the guidance of the CDC for calculating positivity rate). Bottom line is you can take any set of numbers and skew them the way you want. We have been consistent with this reporting and will not make any changes unless the CDC makes a change.

Glacial Lakes hospital beds being occupied by COVID-19 patients as well as Minnehaha and Pennington counties: Walworth: 4 (-1) Occupied Beds.; Potter: 4 (-1) Occupied Beds; Hughes: 11 (+1) Occupied Beds, 3 (-1) ICU Beds, 0 (-1) Ventilation; Hand: 4 (-0) Occupied Beds (-1); Faulk: 3 (+1) Occupied Beds; Edmunds: 1 (-0) Occupied Bed; Brown: 31 (-3) Occupied Beds, 2 (+1) ICU, 1 (+1) Ventilation; Spink: 3 (-0) Occupied Beds; Day: 2 (+2) Occupied Beds; Marshall: 2 (-2) Occupied Beds; Grant: 2 (+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: 280 (+6) Occupied Beds, 59 (-5) ICU, 34 (-1) Ventilation; Pennington: 76 (+6) Occupied Beds, 12 (-0) ICU, 11 (-1) Ventilation

#### **Brown County:**

Total Positive: +34 (2,938) Positivity Rate: 19.3%  
Total Tests: +176 (22,817)  
Total Individuals Tested: +70 (12,233)  
Recovered: +63 (2,238)  
Active Cases: -31 (690)  
Ever Hospitalized: +2 (165)  
Deaths: +0 (10)  
Percent Recovered: 76.1%  
Hospital Reports:  
Avera St. Luke's: Covid-19 Occupied 21 (-2); ICU 1 (-0), Ventilation 0 (0).  
Sanford Aberdeen: Covid-19 Occupied 10 (-1); ICU 1 (+1), Ventilation 1 (+1)  
Sanford Webster: Covid-19 Occupied 2 (+2).  
Marshall County Healthcare: Covid-19 Occupied: 2 (-2).

#### **South Dakota:**

Positive: +897 (66,278 total) Positivity Rate: 20.9%  
Total Tests: 4285 (522,443 total)  
Total Individuals Tested: 2033 (296,147)  
Hospitalized: +54 (3,698 total). 560 currently hospitalized +7)  
Deaths: +0 (644 total)  
Recovered: +2118 (47,495 total)  
Active Cases: -1221 (18,139)  
Percent Recovered: 71.7%  
Total COVID-19 Occupied Beds: 560 (+7), Black Hills Region 108 (+8), Glacial Lakes Region 84 (-3) Sioux Empire Region 298 (+5), South Central Plains 70 (-3).

ICU Units: Total 97 (-3), BH 16 (+0), GL 8 (-0), SE 60 (-5), SCP 13 (+2).

Ventilation: Total 48 (-1), BH 11 (-1), GL 3 (+1), SE 34 (-1), SCP 0 (-0).

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 21% Covid, 43% Non-Covid, 37% Available

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

Ventilator Capacity: 12% Covid, 14% Non-Covid, 74% Available

Beadle (22) +19 positive, +47 recovered (565 active cases)

Brown (10): +32 positive, +63 recovered (690 active cases)

Clark (1): +2 positive, +14 recovered (52 active cases)

Clay (8): +19 positive, +39 recovered (257 active cases)

Codington (30): +19 positive, +57 recovered (514 active cases)

Davison (15): +47 positive, +59 recovered (821 active cases)

Day (5): +10 positive, +7 recovered (93 active cases)

Edmunds (1): +1 positive, +11 recovered (53 active cases)

Faulk (6): +0 positive, +8 recovered (35 active cases)

Grant (5): +7 positive, +21 recovered (131 active cases)

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Hanson (1): +2 positive, +8 recovered (72 active cases)

Hughes (8): +11 positive, +32 recovered (358 active cases)

Lawrence (9): +24 positive, +74 recovered (507 active cases)

Lincoln (40): +70 positive, +174 recovered (1319 active cases)

Marshall (3): +5 positive, +1 recovered (39 active cases)

McCook (9): +9 positive, +19 recovered (187 active cases)

McPherson (1): +7 positive, +3 recovery (39 active case)

Minnehaha (139): +205 positive, +530 recovered (4534 active cases)

Potter: +5 positive, +5 recovered (63 active cases)

Roberts (13): +10 positive, +25 recovered (166 active cases)

Spink (8): +3 positive, +15 recovered (135 active cases)

Walworth (10): +8 positive, +6 recovered (95 active cases)

## NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Nov. 16:

- 15.9% rolling 14-day positivity
- 1,089 new positives
- 7,678 susceptible test encounters
- 332 currently hospitalized (+10)
- 10,900 active cases (-224)
- 743 total deaths (+7)

## Yesterday

Global Cases
<b>54,482,449</b>
11,038,312 US
8,845,127 India
5,863,093 Brazil
1,932,711 Russia
1,915,713 France
1,458,591 Spain
1,372,884 United Kingdom
1,310,491 Argentina
1,198,746 Colombia
1,178,529 Italy
1,006,522 Mexico
934,899 Peru

## Today

Global Cases
<b>55,079,810</b>
11,205,485 US
8,874,290 India
5,876,464 Brazil
2,041,293 France
1,954,912 Russia
1,496,864 Spain
1,394,299 United Kingdom
1,318,384 Argentina
1,205,881 Italy
1,205,217 Colombia
1,009,396 Mexico
937,011 Peru

## Global Deaths

**1,318,613**

246,224 deaths US
165,798 deaths Brazil
130,070 deaths India
98,542 deaths Mexico
52,026 deaths United Kingdom
45,229 deaths Italy
42,601 deaths France

## Global Deaths

**1,328,167**

247,220 deaths US
166,014 deaths Brazil
130,519 deaths India
98,861 deaths Mexico
52,240 deaths United Kingdom
45,733 deaths Italy
45,122 deaths France



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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity
Aurora	303	195	751	2	Substantial	52.13%
Beadle	1943	1356	4385	22	Substantial	32.61%
Bennett	273	200	1011	5	Substantial	10.92%
Bon Homme	1229	1059	1691	7	Substantial	41.51%
Brookings	2086	1566	7425	13	Substantial	23.64%
Brown	2938	2238	9295	10	Substantial	26.90%
Brule	474	326	1478	5	Substantial	41.57%
Buffalo	332	296	801	5	Substantial	29.69%
Butte	613	426	2306	8	Substantial	31.06%
Campbell	95	78	175	1	Moderate	31.82%
Charles Mix	640	442	3189	1	Substantial	22.72%
Clark	188	135	724	1	Substantial	11.56%
Clay	1136	871	3720	8	Substantial	29.44%
Codington	2246	1702	6960	30	Substantial	31.54%
Corson	319	253	814	3	Substantial	55.26%
Custer	438	342	1906	4	Substantial	25.52%
Davison	1912	1076	4965	15	Substantial	37.69%
Day	277	179	1280	5	Substantial	47.20%
Deuel	258	202	847	2	Substantial	34.88%
Dewey	707	321	3408	2	Substantial	30.02%
Douglas	258	180	729	5	Substantial	23.02%
Edmunds	209	155	789	1	Substantial	19.31%
Fall River	318	227	1937	7	Substantial	21.03%
Faulk	260	219	542	6	Substantial	31.25%
Grant	482	346	1631	5	Substantial	32.61%
Gregory	369	258	913	13	Substantial	32.00%
Haakon	118	95	436	3	Moderate	7.77%
Hamlin	337	224	1314	0	Substantial	18.53%
Hand	243	154	617	1	Substantial	41.30%
Hanson	191	118	505	1	Substantial	41.56%
Harding	65	58	120	0	Minimal	30.77%
Hughes	1309	943	4367	8	Substantial	32.26%
Hutchinson	432	254	1718	3	Substantial	24.50%

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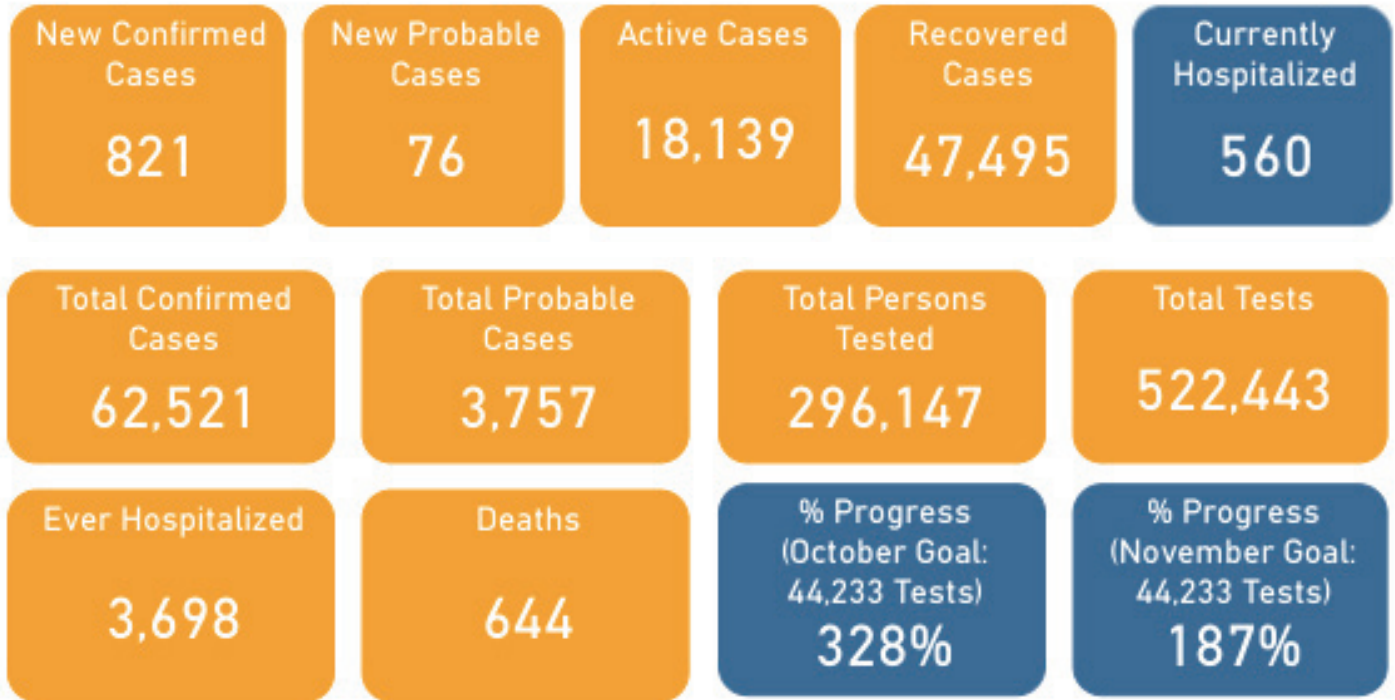
Hyde	99	53	318	0	Substantial	51.11%
Jackson	180	130	789	5	Substantial	30.30%
Jerauld	219	155	414	13	Substantial	29.55%
Jones	46	38	144	0	Moderate	40.00%
Kingsbury	352	216	1162	5	Substantial	22.60%
Lake	711	477	2082	9	Substantial	43.88%
Lawrence	1668	1152	6205	9	Substantial	24.00%
Lincoln	4536	3177	14487	40	Substantial	36.03%
Lyman	373	305	1484	7	Substantial	24.82%
Marshall	118	76	827	3	Substantial	38.04%
McCook	499	303	1182	9	Substantial	36.01%
McPherson	108	68	430	1	Substantial	17.83%
Meade	1441	1091	5606	11	Substantial	22.83%
Mellette	136	102	582	1	Substantial	50.00%
Miner	176	136	442	3	Substantial	35.14%
Minnehaha	17222	12549	57461	139	Substantial	30.61%
Moody	338	235	1429	6	Substantial	40.00%
Oglala Lakota	1407	1036	5803	13	Substantial	29.01%
Pennington	7077	5032	27553	60	Substantial	27.42%
Perkins	113	79	511	0	Substantial	27.91%
Potter	215	152	628	0	Substantial	16.39%
Roberts	571	392	3438	13	Substantial	23.10%
Sanborn	207	111	500	1	Substantial	42.86%
Spink	464	321	1698	8	Substantial	16.22%
Stanley	167	109	615	0	Substantial	28.33%
Sully	75	49	184	1	Substantial	43.48%
Todd	711	562	3521	10	Substantial	38.46%
Tripp	417	300	1195	2	Substantial	44.81%
Turner	712	496	1999	34	Substantial	25.00%
Union	1051	800	4492	18	Substantial	21.21%
Walworth	382	277	1375	10	Substantial	31.33%
Yankton	1340	933	6722	8	Substantial	30.93%
Ziebach	149	89	594	3	Substantial	24.00%
Unassigned	0	0	1248	0		



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## South Dakota



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

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	2147	0
10-19 years	7103	0
20-29 years	13005	2
30-39 years	11218	9
40-49 years	9480	15
50-59 years	9358	42
60-69 years	7340	85
70-79 years	3755	129
80+ years	2872	362

### SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	34489	314
Male	31789	330

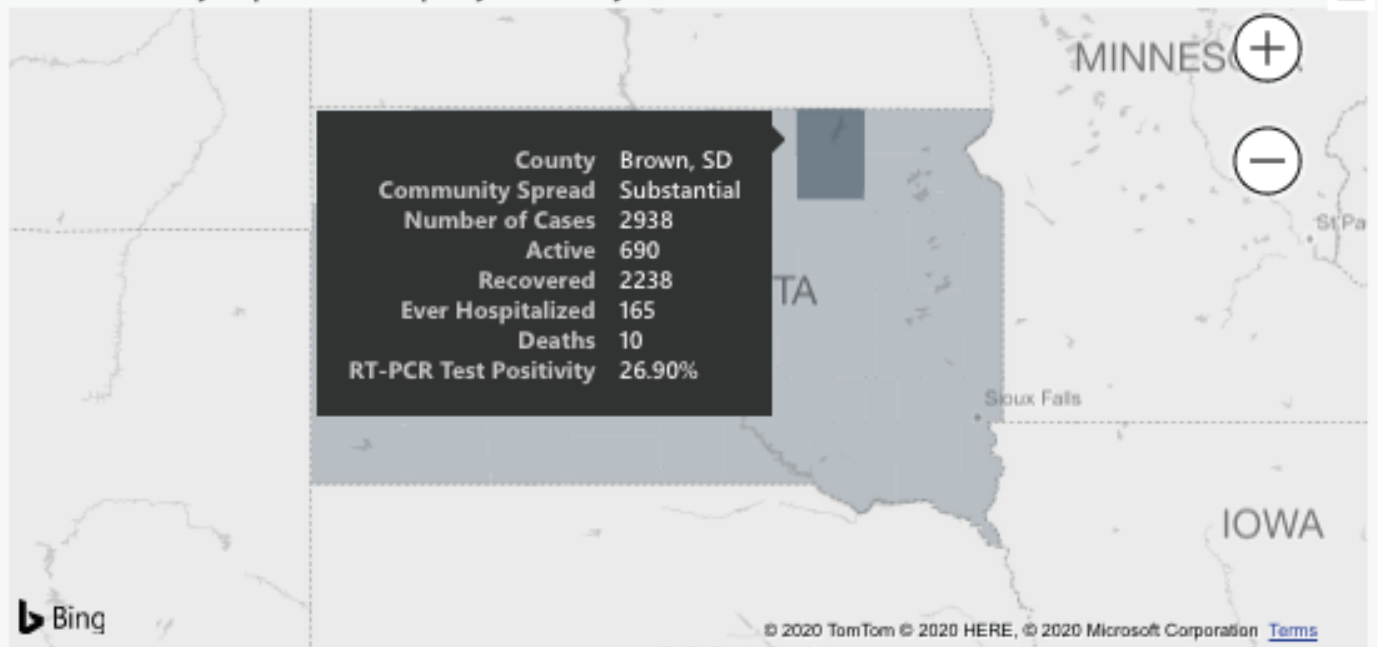
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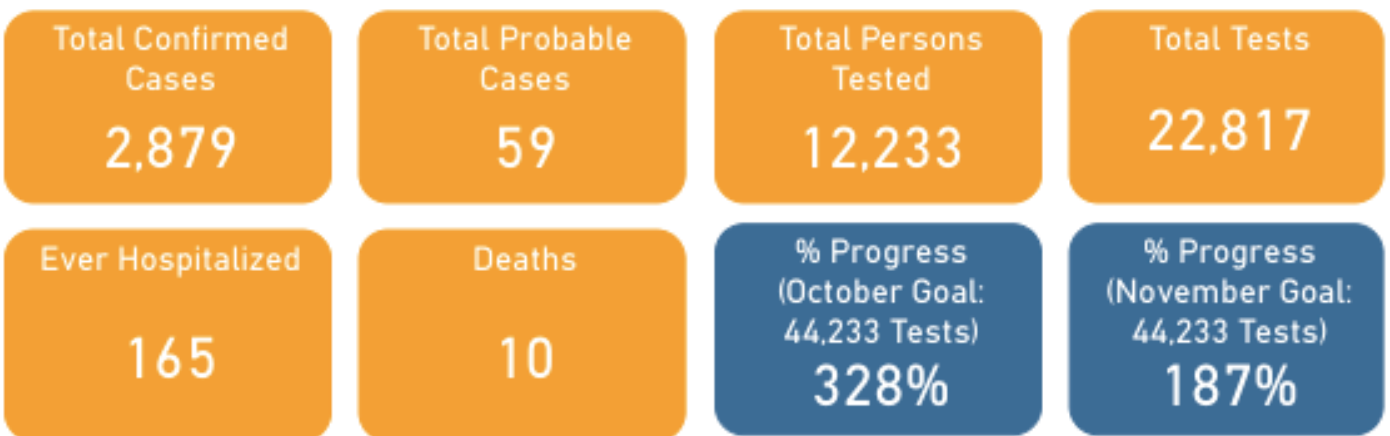
## Brown County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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



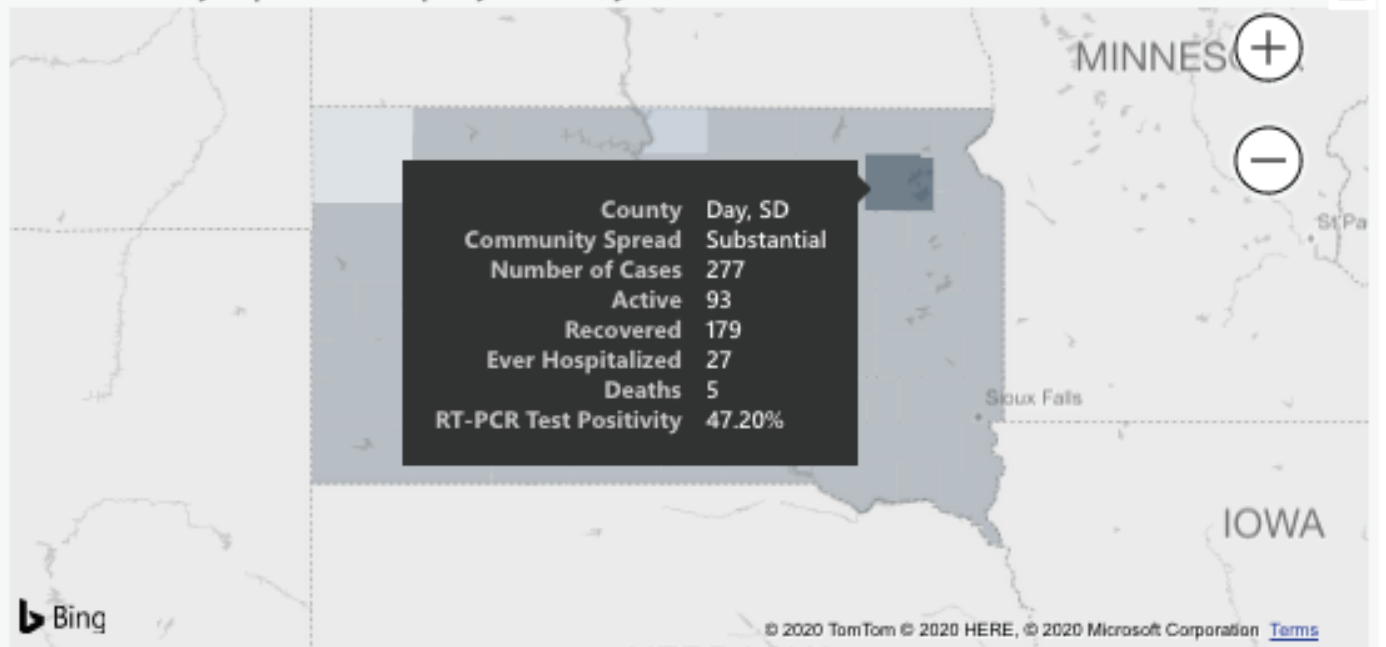
# Groton Daily Independent

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## Day County

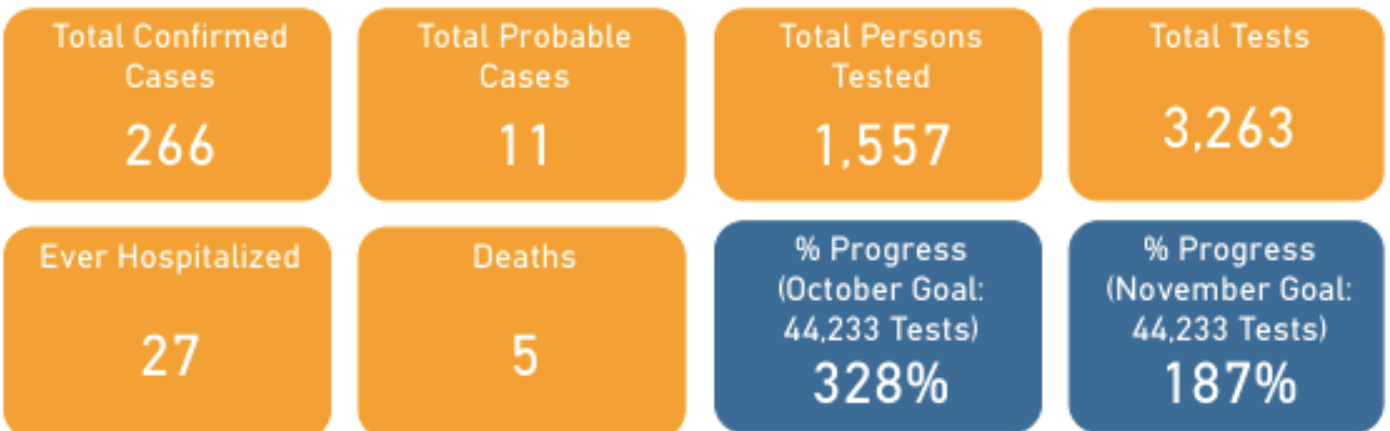


### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Minimal ● Moderate ● Substantial

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

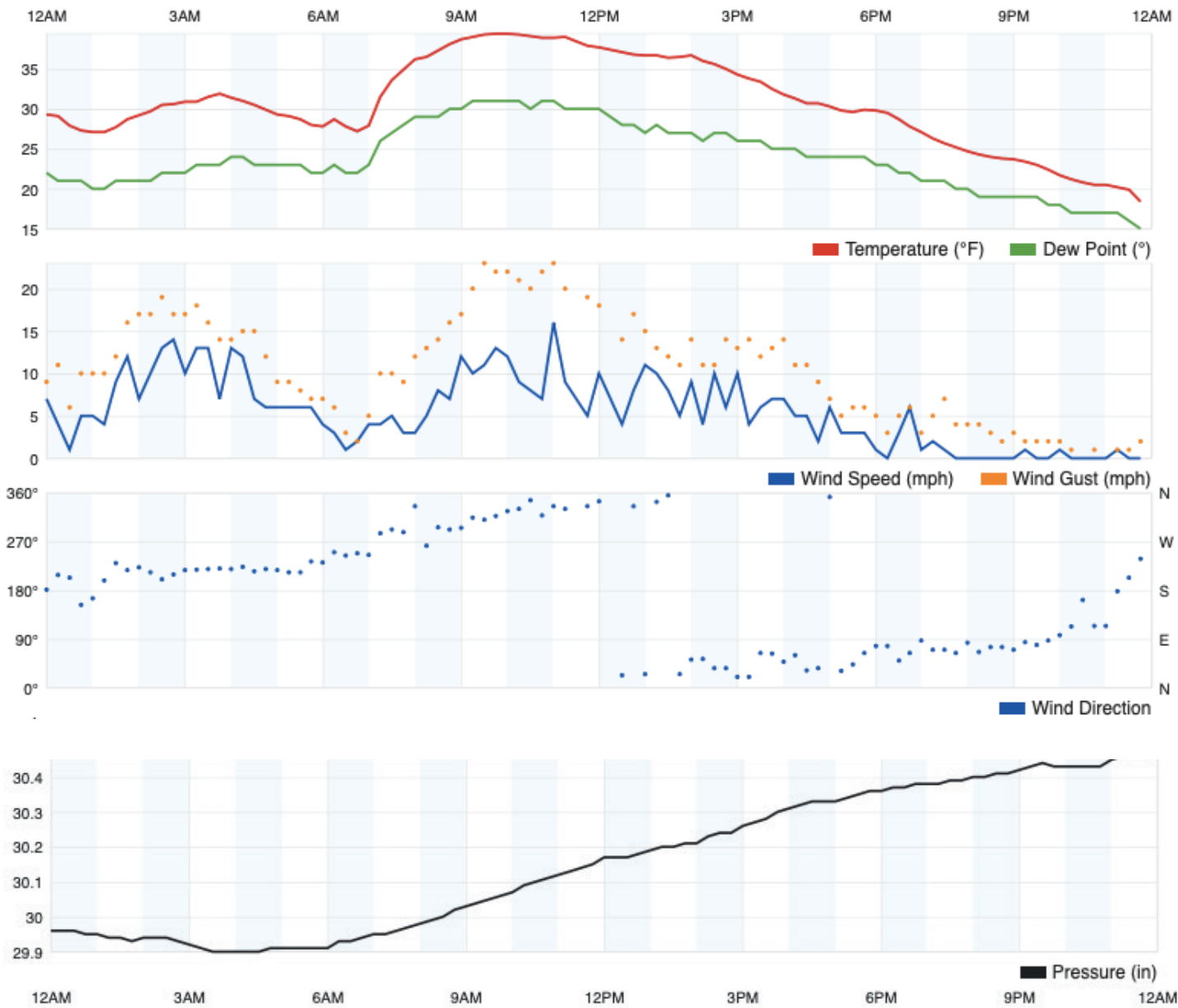




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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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**Today**



Becoming  
Sunny

**High: 48 °F**

**Tonight**



Mostly Clear

**Low: 28 °F**

**Wednesday**



Mostly Sunny

**High: 59 °F**

**Wednesday  
Night**



Partly Cloudy

**Low: 30 °F**

**Thursday**



Sunny

**High: 55 °F**

**Local Weather Map N/A**

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## Today in Weather History

November 17, 1971: Snow fell off and on from the 16th through the 18th from west central Minnesota to north central Minnesota. A series of weak low-pressure waves moving northeast generally along a Sioux City to Rochester line caused heavy snow of more than 4 inches in a narrow band from Morris to Alexandria; then the snow band widened to 100 miles from Park Rapids northeast into Canada. Milbank, South Dakota received 3 inches of snow, while Wheaton, Minnesota went from no snow on the 15th to reporting eight inches on the morning of the 17th.

November 17, 1986: Three to six inches of snow fell across eastern South Dakota on the 17th and 18th with the heaviest amount reported in Sisseton. Numerous accidents occurred in the southeast part of the state. The slick roads were a factor in the vehicle death of a woman on Interstate 29, near Beresford in Lincoln County. Browns Valley reported four inches of snow, and Milbank received 7 inches.

1869 - Southwest winds of hurricane force swept the Berkshire and Green Mountains of New England causing extensive forest and structural damage. (David Ludlum)

1927 - A tornado cut a seventeen mile path across Alexandria and southeastern Washington, DC, injuring 31 persons. The tornado struck the Naval Air Station where a wind gust of 93 mph was recorded. A waterspout was seen over the Potomac River ninety minutes later. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1953 - The temperature at Minneapolis, MN, reached 71 degrees, their warmest reading of record for so late in the autumn. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm in the Rockies produced 21 inches of snow at the Monarch ski resort in Colorado, with 14 inches reported at Steamboat Springs CO. Early morning thunderstorms in the southeastern U.S. drenched Mary Esther FL with 4.43 inches of rain. Gale force winds over the Great Lakes Region gusted to 49 mph at Johnstown PA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Another in a series of storms brought heavy snow to the mountains of the western U.S. Totals ranged up to 17 inches at Bob Scott Summit in Nevada. Winds around Reno NV gusted to 80 mph. The Alta and Sundance ski resorts in Utah received 14 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Freezing temperatures overspread the southeastern U.S. in the wake of the severe weather outbreak of the previous two days. Eight cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Gilbert AR with a reading of 8 degrees. A fast moving storm blanketed the Great Lakes Region and Upper Ohio Valley with snow during the night. Totals ranged up to 12 inches at Pellston MI and Little Valley NY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2013: An unusually powerful storm system spun up five dozen tornadoes from the Great Lakes to the Tennessee Valley. Two EF4 twisters struck Illinois, hitting the communities of Washington and New Minden.



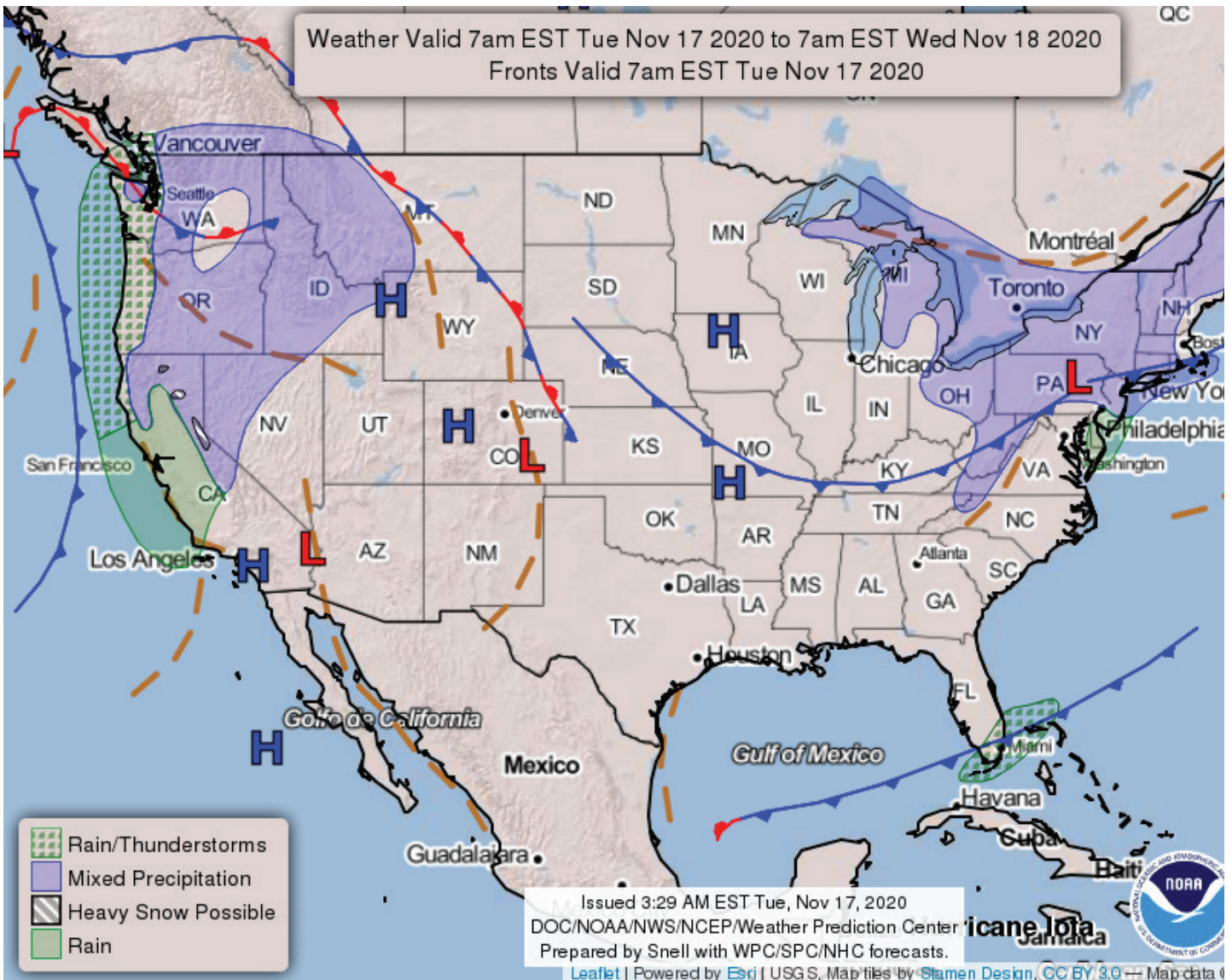
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather      Today's Info

**High Temp: 40 °F at 9:36 AM**  
**Low Temp: 18 °F at 11:53 PM**  
**Wind: 25 mph at 9:32 AM**  
**Precip: .00**

**Record High: 72° in 1953**  
**Record Low: -8° in 1959**  
**Average High: 39°F**  
**Average Low: 18°F**  
**Average Precip in Nov.: 0.43**  
**Precip to date in Nov.: 0.06**  
**Average Precip to date: 20.90**  
**Precip Year to Date: 16.40**  
**Sunset Tonight: 5:01 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:37 a.m.**



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## **AWARE OF GOD'S PRESENCE**

When days are good and times are trouble-free, we often forget that God is present in our lives and protecting us from possible tragedies. This seems to be a very real fact of history - for individuals and nations.

The children of Israel believed in God. They were aware of His goodness and grace, presence and power, and had experienced them on many occasions. But, they often left Him out of their plans - as we often do. Then, when times became difficult, or when situations became uncontrollable, or beyond their - or our - ability to manage, they - just like us - called on God to deliver them - as we do.

As they became absorbed in the physical, they would forget the spiritual - like we do. They would major on temporal and ignore the eternal - as we do. God was not at the center of their lives or uppermost in their thoughts. How like us!

So, the Psalmist reminded them that "They soon forgot what He had done" - as we do!

The word forgot is an interesting word. It signifies something that has been "misplaced." In other words, they put God aside. That left a space in their hearts that had to be filled. They needed a god. So, what did they do? They made a golden calf, and instead of praising the God who called them His children, they worshiped an idol made of metal.

We were created to worship and have fellowship with the living God. If we forget that and put Him aside, we "create" other gods and put them in place of the living God. Whoever is or whatever is the priority in or of our life is our God or our god.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for always being with us in good times and bad. Help us, Lord, to recognize who or what we worship. May we never forget that who or what we worship is, in truth, who we will become. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Yet how quickly they forgot what he had done! They wouldn't wait for his counsel! In the wilderness their desires ran wild, testing God's patience in that dry wasteland. So he gave them what they asked for, but he sent a plague along with it. Psalm 106:13-15

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## 2020 Groton SD Community Events

- **CANCELLED** Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- **CANCELLED** Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
- **CANCELLED** Fireman's Fun Night (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- **POSTPONED** Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
- **CANCELLED** Father/Daughter dance.
- **CANCELLED** Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
- **CANCELLED** Girls High School Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services
- 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
- 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
- 07/24/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ferney Open Golf Tourney
- 07/25/2020 City-Wide Rummage Sales
- **CANCELLED** State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
- 08/07/2020 Wine on Nine Event at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/12-13/2020 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In at the Groton Airport north of Groton
- 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
- 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
- 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/30/2020 Downtown Trick or Treat
- 10/30/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat
- **CANCELLED** Groton Legion Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 11/26/2020 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center
- 12/05/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/05/2020 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
- 01/--/2021 83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates



## News from the Associated Press

### The Latest: Austria starts tough lockdown to slow virus

By The Associated Press undefined

VIENNA — Austria has started a new tough lockdown meant to slow the surging spread of the coronavirus in the Alpine nation.

As of Tuesday, people are only allowed to leave their homes to purchase groceries, to go to jobs deemed essential, to exercise or to help people who need assistance.

All restaurants, shops, hair salons and other services have been ordered closed, and the nation's schools have been moved to remote learning programs.

Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said Monday ahead of the lockdown, which is to run through Dec. 6, that "all of social and public life will be brought down to a minimum."

Austria currently is registering more than 527 new cases per 100,000 residents over seven days — more than 10 times the rate that authorities say is sustainable. Over the last seven days it has reported 46,946 new coronavirus infections.

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

- 24 hours in a French ICU reveals a world of pain amid a resurgence of the virus
- Second virus vaccine shows striking success in U.S. tests
- California businesses hit with new virus restrictions
- 'More people may die': Biden urges Trump to aid transition
- Governors ratchet up restrictions ahead of Thanksgiving
- Pandemic politics leave Washington in gridlock as virus surges

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

#### HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

ROME — Italian authorities have inspected more than 230 nursing homes as part of the health ministry's anti-coronavirus controls, identifying 37 with violations and flagging 11 people to law enforcement for possible prosecution.

The violations included lack of protective equipment and training for health care workers, insufficient hygiene and missing anti-COVID protocols. In addition, inspectors found other underlying violations of health norms, including overcrowding, abusive treatment of the elderly, expired medicine, poor food safety and unqualified staff.

The violations reported Tuesday by the carabinieri's health care inspectors were so grave in four cases that the homes were closed outright and the guests transferred back to their families or other structures.

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed the lack of adequate oversight in some of Italy's eldercare homes, particularly smaller, private ones. As in other countries, thousands of elderly died in Italy's nursing homes during the first wave of the outbreak, many without having ever been tested for the virus.

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea says it will tighten social distancing rules in the greater Seoul area and some parts of eastern Gangwon province to try to suppress a coronavirus resurgence there.

Tuesday's announcement came as South Korea's daily virus tally stayed above 200 for a fourth straight day. The country has been experiencing a steady increase in virus infections since it relaxed its social distancing guidelines last month.

Health Minister Park Neung-hoo said it was necessary to adjust the distancing rules for two weeks.

Under the new rules starting Thursday in those areas, authorities are banning gatherings of more than

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100 people during rallies, festivals, concerts and academic events. Customers at theaters, concerts and libraries are required to sit at least one seat apart from each other, while audiences at sporting events will be limited to 30% of the stadium's capacity.

The new rules also ban dancing and moving to others' seats at nightclubs and other high-risk entertainment facilities, and drinking and eating at karaoke rooms and concert halls.

South Korea added 230 more virus cases on Tuesday, raising the country's total to 28,998, including 494 deaths.

**NEW DELHI** — India's coronavirus caseload has dropped to 29,164 new infections in the last 24 hours, continuing a downturn.

The Health Ministry on Tuesday also reported 449 new fatalities, raising the overall death toll to 130,519.

With nearly 8.9 million cases in all, India is the second worst-hit country behind the U.S., but it has been witnessing a steady fall in daily cases despite no substantial drop in overall testing numbers. In the last 10 days, there have been fewer than 50,000 new cases every day.

In the capital, New Delhi, however, the latest surge in new infections continues. The city reported 3,797 new coronavirus cases and 99 fatalities in the past 24 hours, fewer than last week's daily average of nearly 7,000 cases. But health experts say the numbers in the capital have come down because fewer tests were conducted over the weekend.

More than 600 people have died in the capital due to the coronavirus in the past week.

**IOWA CITY, Iowa** — With Iowa hospitals filling up, Gov. Kim Reynolds has dropped her opposition to a statewide mandate for mask use to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

Reynolds signed a proclamation Monday requiring that everyone over 2 years old wear masks when in indoor public spaces. The mandate applies only when people are within six feet of others for 15 minutes and they aren't members of their households.

Reynolds also is limiting gatherings for social, community, business and leisure purposes to no more than 15 people indoors and 30 outdoors, including family events. Routine office and factory work and spiritual gatherings are exempted.

The governor rejected calls to close bars and restaurants for in-person service but is ordering that they close by 10 p.m. She also has suspended sports and recreational activities, except for high school, college and professional sports.

**MONROE, La.** — Louisiana landlords have filed a federal lawsuit seeking to overturn a moratorium on evictions ordered by the CDC to avoid spreading the novel coronavirus.

The suit says that "the CDC's eviction moratorium represents a sweeping assumption of power by an administrative agency that it simply does not possess."

Figures provided by the Seattle-based Housing Justice Project says landlords in Georgia, Ohio and Tennessee have filed similar lawsuits against the CDC moratorium. Those in 13 other states and the District of Columbia are trying to overturn state or city eviction moratoriums.

The CDC's Sept. 1 order came about three weeks after President Donald Trump issued an executive order telling federal health officials to consider measures to temporarily halt evictions.

**NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J.** — Johnson & Johnson has begun a new late-stage trial of its experimental COVID-19 vaccine, this time on a two-dose regimen.

J&J plans to give up to 30,000 people two doses of the vaccine. It's been testing a one-dose regimen in a 60,000-person trial that began in late September and has enrolled nearly 10,000 volunteers so far.

In the new trial, volunteers will get either the vaccine or a dummy shot, then a second dose 57 days later, a company spokesman said Monday. That study is being conducted in the U.S., plus Belgium, Colombia, France, Germany, the Philippines, South Africa, Spain and the UK — locations chosen because they have a high incidence of COVID-19 and can start testing quickly.

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The company said it's being "extremely thorough" by testing multiple doses and dosing regimens to evaluate long-term effectiveness.

A small, early-stage study of the vaccine found it triggered a strong immune response and was well tolerated.

HARTFORD, Conn. — The Yale professor who co-chairs President-elect Joe Biden's coronavirus advisory board said her group has not been able to speak with President Trump's coronavirus advisors, but is optimistic the two groups will work together during the transition.

Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith said there is a long "wish list" of information that the incoming administration would like to know about the Trump administration's COVID-19 strategy, with plans for the storage and distribution of a vaccine at or near the top.

She said it was in everyone's best interest for the two teams to sync during the transition.

Nunez-Smith also reiterated that Biden plans to work with governors, mayors and other elected leaders to reach "national agreement and unification" on mask-wearing standards.

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem is showing no sign of budging from her hands-off approach to the pandemic, despite her state having the nation's highest death rate this month.

South Dakota has reported 219 deaths in November — about a third of all its deaths over the course of the pandemic. The COVID-19 deaths have sent the state to the top of the nation in deaths per capita this month, with nearly 25 deaths per 100,000 people.

Still, Noem, a Republican, has no plans to issue mask requirements. The governor's spokeswoman Maggie Seidel pushed back against arguments by public health experts, pointing to states like Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin that have also experienced significant virus waves in spite of having mask rules.

SACRAMENTO — California Gov. Gavin Newsom said he was pulling the "emergency brake" on the state's efforts to reopen its economy as coronavirus cases surge more dramatically than during a summer spike.

Newsom will impose more restrictions on businesses across most of the state. He said masks would now be required outside homes with limited exceptions.

Newsom's action, which takes effect Tuesday, will put most of the state's 58 counties in the strictest of the four-tier system for reopening that is based on virus case rates. That tier closes many non-essential indoor businesses.

Counties with lower rates have had more freedom for businesses to operate, schools to open for classroom instruction and for formal gatherings like religious services.

## The Latest: Iowa's governor orders statewide mask mandate

By The Associated Press undefined

IOWA CITY, Iowa — With Iowa hospitals filling up, Gov. Kim Reynolds has dropped her opposition to a statewide mandate for mask use to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

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



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- More good news about a second COVID-19 candidate vaccine as Moderna says its shots appear to be 94.5% effective, according to preliminary data
- President-elect Joe Biden seeks information on US vaccine plans as Trump stalls handoff
- The European Commission says it has agreed to buy up to 405 million doses of an experimental coronavirus vaccine developed by the German bio-tech company CureVac
- Amnesty International says Belgium violated the human rights of nursing home patients by not taking infected elderly patients to the hospital for treatment
- Many African students are missing out on the new term in school as the pandemic impoverishes families
- British PM Boris Johnson is self-quarantining at the start of a crucial week for his government that includes discussions over a post-Brexit trade deal with the European Union

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SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem on Monday showed no sign of budging from her hands-off approach to the pandemic, despite finding herself among a dwindling number of Midwest governors holding out against mask mandates and facing a death rate in her state that has risen to the nation's highest this month.

South Dakota has reported 219 deaths in November — about a third of all its deaths over the course of the pandemic. The COVID-19 deaths have sent the state to the top of the nation in deaths per capita this month, with nearly 25 deaths per 100,000 people, according to data from The COVID Tracking Project.

Still, Noem, a Republican, has no plans to issue mask requirements. The governor's spokeswoman Maggie Seidel pushed back against arguments by public health experts, pointing to states like Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin that have also experienced significant virus waves in spite of having implemented mask rules.

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The action that Newsom called the "emergency brake in the Blueprint for a Safer Economy" will impose more restrictions on businesses across most of the state. He said masks would now be required outside homes with limited exceptions.

Newsom's action, which takes effect Tuesday, will put most of the state's 58 counties in the strictest of the four-tier system for reopening that is based on virus case rates. That tier closes many non-essential indoor businesses.

Counties with lower rates have had more freedom for businesses to operate, schools to open for classroom instruction and for formal gatherings like religious services.

WASHINGTON — Vice President Mike Pence is urging governors to tell constituents that the country has never been more prepared to deal with COVID-19 amid a record-breaking nationwide resurgence of the virus.

Pence told governors on a private call that they should share the good news that the country has an abundant supply of personal protective equipment and two experimental vaccines have shown strong early results. The audio of the call was obtained by The Associated Press.

Pence said there are some estimates that enough vaccines will be able to vaccinate every American that wants to be vaccinated by April or May and that he was "more convinced than ever that we're going to get through this."

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards, a Democrat, asked on the call that the White House stress the importance of mask-wearing and social distancing.

SACRAMENTO — California Gov. Gavin Newsom on Monday apologized for what he called "a bad mistake" in attending a birthday party that broke the very rules that he has been preaching to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

He has suffered severe political backlash since it surfaced Friday that he and his wife attended the party Nov. 6 with a dozen friends at the pricey French Laundry restaurant in wine country north of San Francisco.

Newsom says he recognizes that he must practice what he preaches and set a proper example. He says there were more guests than he expected celebrating the 50th birthday of a longtime political adviser.

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — West Virginia's largest teacher organization called on the governor Monday to take public schools online-only through year's end due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The plea comes after the state recorded a high of 4,404 confirmed virus cases over the past week from Nov. 9 through Sunday, a 63% increase from the previous week. The state health department reported 632 new cases and three more deaths on Monday, bringing West Virginia's total confirmed cases to more than 30,000 and the death toll to at least 562.

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Gov. Jim Justice has barred in-person instruction from Thanksgiving through Dec. 3 with the aim of stemming possible outbreaks in schools amid holiday travel.

But the West Virginia Education Association said in a statement that officials should go further and end classroom instruction for the remainder of the year.

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma's Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt announced Monday new restrictions on bars and restaurants amid surging coronavirus infections by imposing the first statewide restrictions since reopening the economy six months ago.

Effective Thursday, bars and restaurants statewide must have all tables spaced six feet apart and close in-person service at 11 p.m., he announced.

Stitt also plans to require all state employees and visitors to state buildings wear masks indoors, although the state Legislature will have to impose that restriction for the Capitol, he said. Many state lawmakers, security personnel and visitors to the Capitol do not wear masks inside the building.

The governor implored Oklahomans to wear masks in public, practice social distancing and good hand hygiene, with hopes that all Oklahoma school districts can reopen for in-person learning after the Christmas break.

The number of U.S. infants, children and teens diagnosed with COVID-19 has surpassed 1 million, according to data released Monday by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children's Hospital Association.

The total hit nearly 1.04 million kids on Nov. 12, including nearly 112,000 new cases in that week. That was the highest weekly total of any previous week in the pandemic, the academy said.

AAP President Sally Goza called the data "staggering and tragic." Children generally are much more likely than adults to have mild cases but hospitalizations and deaths do occur.

The data, based on reports from state health departments, show at least 6,330 pediatric hospitalizations and 133 deaths since May. Those numbers are incomplete as they do not include data from every state.

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — A central New York county has paused counting absentee ballots until Nov. 30 as a third of election workers have tested positive for COVID-19.

Onondaga County elections commissioner Dustin Czarny said Monday that eight of 26 staffers have tested positive. All staffers are in quarantine for two weeks, and the elections office is closed for a week.

Czarny said it's unclear how election workers contracted the virus. He said the plan is to allow some essential personnel who test negative to return to the office next week to start preparing to count the remaining 30,000 ballots.

He hopes to provide the state with a partial certification for presidential ballot results by Nov. 28 and finish counting the remaining ballots by early December, when New York is set to certify its election results.

MADRID — The spread of the coronavirus in Spain continues to slow down, although pressure on the health system remains high and authorities warn against complacency.

On Monday, Spain's pandemic czar Fernando Simón said that a long holiday weekend in early December could derail the progress.

The 14-day cumulative incidence, a variable monitored by epidemiologists, has dropped to 470 per 100,000 people on Monday from a Nov. 4 peak of 528.

The Health Ministry recorded 38,273 new infections since Friday and nearly 1.5 million since the beginning of the year.

Restrictions against the spread of the virus vary on a regional basis.

Hospital bed occupancy rates from COVID-19 remained stable at 16% nationally but in at least 7 of Spain's 19 regions and autonomous cities, 40% of intensive care unit beds are filled with coronavirus patients.

BERLIN — German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Monday the number of new coronavirus cases is



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flattening following two weeks of new restrictions, but it's too early to tell whether more will be necessary.

Merkel said Germany is a long way from tamping down the number of new cases to 50 per 100,000 residents over seven days -- a level above which experts say it's impossible to trace outbreaks.

Germany's disease control center on Monday reported the case rate as 143.3 per 100,000 people. Germany's states reported 10,824 daily confirmed cases on Monday but the seven-day daily average has stayed above 17,000.

The country initiated the four-week partial shutdown on Nov. 2. Restaurants, bars, sports and leisure facilities have closed, but schools and nonessential shops remain open.

Merkel said she and the governors will reevaluate the situation again on Nov. 25.

## As deaths spiral, South Dakota governor opposes mask rules

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem on Monday showed no sign of budging from her hands-off approach to the pandemic, despite finding herself among a dwindling number of Midwest governors holding out against mask mandates and facing a death rate in her state that has risen to the highest in the nation this month.

As the virus has steadily grown into a full-scale health crisis across the Midwest, the Republican governor has remained resolute — sticking to the limited-government ideals that have made her a rising star in the conservative movement and arguing that government mandates don't work. But she finds herself the subject of increased scrutiny for the approach, especially after neighboring Iowa and North Dakota last week moved to require face masks in some settings.

South Dakota has reported 219 deaths in November — about a third of all its deaths over the course of the entire pandemic. The COVID-19 deaths have sent the state to the top of the nation in deaths per capita during November, with nearly 25 deaths per 100,000 people, according to data from The COVID Tracking Project.

But Noem has no plans to issue mask requirements. The governor's spokeswoman Maggie Seidel pushed back against arguments by public health experts that a mask mandate would dramatically reduce the spread of the virus, pointing out that states like Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin have also experienced significant virus waves despite having strict mandates to wear face coverings.

"The facts are simple: mask mandates, harsh lockdowns, massive testing and contact tracing haven't worked — in the United States or abroad," Seidel wrote in an email.

But South Dakota currently has the nation's second-worst rate of new cases per capita, according to Johns Hopkins researchers. There were 2,047 new cases per 100,000 people, meaning that roughly one out of every 49 people has tested positive in the last two weeks.

The only state where new cases per capita are worse, North Dakota, moved to require masks and limit the size of gatherings on Friday. The situation there has grown so desperate that hospitals are preparing to ask medical workers with coronavirus infections but no symptoms to staff COVID wards.

"Our situation has changed, and we must change with it," said Republican Gov. Doug Burgum in a somber video message.

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, a Republican, also moved last week to require that people wear masks if they join indoor gatherings of 25 or more people.

However, Noem has been willing to take more extreme stances than those governors. While in recent months they have encouraged — but not required — masks, Noem has repeatedly raised doubts on whether wearing a mask in public helps prevent infections and said she will let people decide if they should wear masks. She also welcomed massive events this summer like the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally and the state fair.

The approach has given her significant influence within the Republican Party. She spoke to incoming GOP members of Congress this weekend in Washington, D.C., and posted photos of Monday meetings with members of President Donald Trump's Cabinet. She was not wearing a mask in any of the photos.

Meanwhile, the deaths in South Dakota continue to mount. But people in the state who believe a mask

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requirement would prevent deaths have given up on hoping the governor will act.

"She's dug her heels in," said Shannon Emry, a Sioux Falls pediatrician who joined a small rally on Monday calling for the City Council to pass a face-covering mandate. "That's why I feel the last resort is down to the cities."

Last week a proposed ordinance to require masks in the state's largest city failed after the mayor issued a tie-breaking vote against it. Several city council members plan to give it another try this week, the Argus Leader reported.

Emry said that many in the medical community are worried they will only see more cases and more deaths. She called the governor's stance "reckless."

"Our numbers are awful. We have some of the highest numbers in the world," she said. "If we don't take some action, it's only going to get worse."

## US casinos recovering from virus, but challenges remain

By WAYNE PARRY Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) — America's casinos are recovering from months of closures necessitated by the coronavirus outbreak, having regained 81% of the gambling revenue they saw in the third quarter of last year, the casinos' trade association said Monday.

But that recovery is threatened in places as the virus continues to surge throughout the country. Sunday night, Michigan's governor ordered numerous businesses including casinos to shut down for three weeks, and Atlantic City's top casino last week laid off or cut the hours of 422 workers in response to restrictions imposed by New Jersey's governor.

Also on Sunday, Washington's governor also banned indoor service at restaurants and bars.

The American Gaming Association released a report on gambling revenue at the nation's casinos during the third quarter of this year — the time when most casinos reopened after four months or more of being shuttered during the first wave of the virus outbreak.

It found that the industry won over \$9 billion in the third quarter of this year, which is 81% of the amount it won during the same period a year earlier, when there was no virus and casinos were operating normally. Virtually all casinos in the U.S. are operating with some restrictions on the amount of people they can accommodate and the type of operations they can conduct amid the pandemic.

The report found that nationwide gambling revenue is down 36.5% in the first nine months of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019.

"Our industry continues to prioritize the health and safety of our employees, customers, and communities above all else," said Bill Miller, the association's president and CEO. "While these quarterly results are promising, the reality is a full recovery is dependent on continued public health measures to control prevalence rates" of the virus.

Jacqueline Grace, president of Atlantic City's Tropicana casino, said she is not surprised the industry regained as much of its previous revenue as it did in the third quarter.

"People are looking for opportunities to escape what is happening around us," she said. "Coming to a casino is entertainment, and people still want to be entertained."

Grace said one of the biggest challenges the industry is facing is "the continued uncertainty."

"You have to ensure compliance, whether it's your team members or your customers," she said. "That's a new aspect of the job."

In a recent conference call to discuss third-quarter earnings, Bill Hornbuckle, president and CEO of MGM Resorts International, said the industry continues to deal with the pandemic, and has been forced to abide by restrictions.

But he also said September "was an exceptional booking month for the future. It's the best booking months we've had in seven. And so I think the tell is that people are still booking into the future."

The report said more than 100 casinos reopened between July and September with 902 commercial and tribal casinos operational by the end of the third quarter.

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Five states actually won more in the third quarter this year than they did in the same period last year: Arkansas, up 3%; Mississippi, up 2.8%; Ohio, up 7.5%; Pennsylvania, up 3.8%; and South Dakota, up 6.1%.

Revenue from slot machines was \$5.87 billion for the quarter, down 19.3%, and table games revenue was \$1.57 billion, down 31.2%.

Follow Wayne Parry at <http://twitter.com/WayneParryAC>

## Americans across party lines, regions embrace marijuana

By AMY BETH HANSON Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — Bill Stocker could be considered the archetype of a conservative voter: He's a retired Marine and former police officer who voted for President Donald Trump. But he's also among the majority of South Dakota voters who broadly legalized marijuana this month.

Stocker, 61, said enforcing marijuana laws gets in the way of pursuing other drug crimes and called warnings about the ills of marijuana "a bunch of baloney" that even people in a Republican stronghold like South Dakota no longer believe.

South Dakota's values of "personal responsibility and freedom" won out, said Stocker, who lives in Sioux Falls.

The 2020 election helped prove how broadly accepted marijuana has become throughout the United States, with measures to legalize recreational pot also breezing to victory in progressive New Jersey, moderate Arizona and conservative Montana. Fifteen states have now broadly legalized it, while 36 states allow medical marijuana.

Voters in Mississippi overwhelmingly approved medical marijuana this month, giving the drug another foothold in the South.

A Gallup Poll released Nov. 9 indicated that 68% of Americans favor legalizing marijuana — double the approval rate in 2003. That wide margin was evident in the election, with marijuana measures passing with strong bipartisan support.

In South Dakota and Montana — where Republicans swept to victory in the key races — recreational marijuana passed with at least 16 percentage points more support than Democratic President-elect Joe Biden received. South Dakota also approved medical pot, which outpolled Biden by 34 percentage points.

"We've waged a war against this plant for a century and by any reasonable metric, that war has been an abject failure," said Matthew Schweich, deputy director of the Marijuana Policy Project, which favors legalization. "All it's done is incarcerate millions of Americans, it has perpetuated racism in this country, and perhaps the worst injustice of all is that it's deprived us of medical marijuana research."

Marijuana is still illegal at the federal level, hurting veterans who can't be prescribed medical pot at Veterans Affairs clinics, he said.

They "come home with chronic pain and we're pushing them to opioids," Schweich said. "That's crazy. That's unpatriotic and it's a disgrace."

Support for legalization was around 25% in 1992 when then-presidential candidate Bill Clinton tried to avoid answering questions about whether he had used marijuana before finally saying in a television interview that he had experimented with the drug, didn't like it and "didn't inhale."

In early 2019, Kamala Harris — now the vice president-elect — was asked about her prior marijuana use during a radio interview and acknowledged: "I did inhale."

Brendan Johnson, a former U.S. attorney in South Dakota who supported the state's marijuana initiatives, said the campaign focused on the fact that in recent years 10% of arrests in the state were for marijuana, and most were small amounts.

"We have a real problem here where we have criminalized an entire generation of South Dakotans, and we're paying a price," Johnson said.



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The owner of a chain of medical marijuana dispensaries in Billings, Montana, credited passage of the recreational marijuana initiative to a yearslong campaign by medical marijuana supporters to educate the public about the benefits of cannabis.

"There has been a considerable change in the political demographic because people are educated, because they know Aunt Margaret tried it for her cancer and she can eat," said Richard Abromeit, owner of Montana Advanced Caregivers.

Advocates' next goal is to get marijuana removed from a federal list of illegal drugs with no accepted medical use and high potential for abuse. The listing prevents labs from researching potential medical remedies using marijuana.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer told lawmakers last week that he would hold a vote in December on a bill that would decriminalize cannabis, create a process to expunge nonviolent pot convictions and remove the drug from the Controlled Substances Act. It's not clear if the bill could pass both chambers.

The outcome of two runoff elections in Georgia could determine how the issue might fare in the Senate, where Republican Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has impeded its progress.

Other states are expected to consider marijuana legislation next year, which could put more pressure on Congress to act.

Supporters argue that the industry creates jobs and raises tax money to help prop up governments that are hurting because of business closures tied to the COVID-19 pandemic.

But some oppose broad legalization.

Republican Gov. Kristi Noem of South Dakota argued that marijuana leads people to use other, more-addictive drugs, while law enforcement officers and prosecutors in Montana asserted that legal pot would lead to more drugged driving and other crimes, while exacerbating mental health issues.

The Gallup Poll says just under half of Republicans, people who identify as politically conservative and those who attend church on a weekly basis say they think marijuana should be legal.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, widely known as the Mormon church, strongly opposed Arizona's broad legalization measure despite supporting medical marijuana in Utah.

Chris Nylen, 50, of Flagstaff, Arizona, is a Trump supporter who voted to legalize recreational marijuana. She said her feelings evolved after a CBD pill, made from hemp and prescribed by a veterinarian, eased her dog's anxiety and arthritis.

"I'm so old school," she said. "I personally don't have a desire for it, but (I'm) seeing the benefits for my dog."

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Associated Press reporters Matthew Brown in Billings, Montana; Steven Groves in Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Felicia Fonseca in Flagstaff, Arizona; and video journalist Haven Daley in San Francisco contributed to this report.

## NATO chief warns of high price if troops leave Afghanistan

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg warned Tuesday that the military organization could pay a heavy price for leaving Afghanistan too early, after a U.S. official said President Donald Trump is expected to withdraw a significant number of American troops from the conflict-ravaged country in coming weeks.

NATO has fewer than 12,000 troops from dozens of nations in Afghanistan helping to train and advise the national security forces. U.S. troops frequently make up about half that number, and the 30-nation alliance relies heavily on the United States armed forces for transport, logistics and other support.

"We now face a difficult decision. We have been in Afghanistan for almost 20 years, and no NATO ally wants to stay any longer than necessary. But at the same time, the price for leaving too soon or in an uncoordinated way could be very high," Stoltenberg said in a statement.

He said the country still "risks becoming once again a platform for international terrorists to plan and

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organize attacks on our homelands. And ISIS (Islamic State) could rebuild in Afghanistan the terror caliphate it lost in Syria and Iraq.”

The U.S. decision comes just days after Trump installed a new slate of loyalists in top Pentagon positions who share his frustration with the continued troop presence in the war zones. The expected plans would cut U.S. troop numbers almost in half by Jan. 15, leaving 2,500 troops in Afghanistan.

U.S. officials said military leaders were told over the weekend about the planned withdrawal and that an executive order is in the works but has not yet been delivered to commanders.

NATO took charge of the international security effort in Afghanistan in 2003, two years after a U.S.-led coalition ousted the Taliban for harboring former al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. In 2014, it began to train and advise Afghan security forces, but has gradually pulled troops out in line with a U.S.-brokered peace deal.

Stoltenberg said that “even with further U.S. reductions, NATO will continue its mission to train, advise and assist the Afghan security forces. We are also committed to funding them through 2024.”

NATO’s security operation in the country is its biggest and most ambitious undertaking ever. It was launched after the military alliance activated its mutual defense clause — known as Article 5 — for the first time, mobilizing all the allies in support of the United States in the wake of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington.

“Hundreds of thousands of troops from Europe and beyond have stood shoulder to shoulder with American troops in Afghanistan, and over one thousand of them have paid the ultimate price,” Stoltenberg said.

“We went into Afghanistan together. And when the time is right, we should leave together in a coordinated and orderly way. I count on all NATO allies to live up to this commitment, for our own security,” he said.

## Ethiopia’s PM vows ‘final and crucial’ offensive in Tigray

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Ethiopia’s prime minister on Tuesday declared “the final and crucial” military operation will launch in the coming days against the government of the country’s rebellious northern Tigray region.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in a social media post said a three-day deadline given to the Tigray region’s leaders and special forces “has expired today.”

Abiy, last year’s Nobel Peace Prize winner, continues to reject international pleas for dialogue and de-escalation in the two-week conflict in the Horn of Africa that has spilled into neighboring Eritrea and sent more than 27,000 frightened Ethiopian refugees pouring into Sudan.

Some 4,000 refugees keep arriving every day, a “very rapid” rate, U.N. refugee agency spokesman Babar Baloch told reporters in Geneva. “It’s a huge number in a matter of days ... It overwhelms the whole system,” he said, warning of a “full-scale humanitarian crisis.” That remote part of Sudan hasn’t seen such an influx in two decades, he said.

Alarmed African neighbors including Uganda and Kenya are calling for a peaceful resolution, but Abiy’s government regards the Tigray regional government as illegal after it defiantly held a local election in September. The Tigray regional government objects to the postponement of national elections until next year because of the COVID-19 pandemic and considers Abiy’s federal government illegal, saying its mandate has expired.

Ethiopia’s federal government on Tuesday also confirmed carrying out new airstrikes outside the Tigray capital of Mekele, calling them “precision-led and surgical” and denying the Tigray government’s assertion that civilians had been killed.

Tigray TV showed what appeared to be a bombed-out residential area, with damaged roofs and craters in the ground.

“I heard a sound of some explosions. Boom, boom, boom, as I entered the house,” the station quoted a resident as saying. “When I got out later, I saw all this destruction. Two people have been injured. One of the injured is the landlord, and the other is a tenant just like us.”

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Communications and transport links with the Tigray region remain almost completely cut off, making it difficult to verify either side's claims.

Hungry, exhausted and scared, refugees from the Tigray region continue to flow into Sudan with terrifying accounts of war.

"These people are coming with knives and sticks, wanting to attack citizens. And behind them is the Ethiopian army with tanks. The knives and the sticks aren't the problem, it's the tanks," said one refugee, Thimon Abrah. "They struck and burned the entire place."

"When a man, or even a child is slaughtered, this is revenge," said another, Tedy Benjamin. "This is a tribal war."

Ethiopia's prime minister on Monday night said his government is ready to "receive and reintegrate" the refugees and that federal forces would protect them.

But many refugees say those same forces sent them fleeing.

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Associated Press video journalist Mohamed Awad in al-Qadarif, Sudan, and writer Jamey Keaten in Geneva contributed.

## Head of govt agency under pressure to let transition proceed

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The head of an obscure federal agency that is holding up the presidential transition knew well before Election Day that she might soon have a messy situation on her hands.

Prior to Nov. 3, Emily Murphy, the head of the General Services Administration, held a Zoom call with Dave Barram, the man who was in her shoes 20 years earlier.

The conversation, set up by mutual friends, was a chance for Barram, 77, to tell Murphy a little about his torturous experience with "ascertainment" — the task of determining the expected winner of the presidential election, which launches the official transition process.

Barram led the GSA during the 2000 White House race between Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore, which was decided by a few hundred votes in Florida after the U.S. Supreme Court weighed in more than a month after Election Day.

"I told her, 'I'm looking at you and I can tell you want to do the right thing,'" recalled Barram, who declined to reveal any details of what Murphy told him. "I'll tell you what my mother told me: 'If you do the right thing, then all you have to do is live with the consequences of it.'"

It's been 10 days since President-elect Joe Biden crossed the 270 electoral vote mark to defeat President Donald Trump and win the presidency. Unlike the 2000 election, when the winner of the election was truly unknown for weeks, this time it is clear that Biden won, although Trump is refusing to concede.

But Murphy has yet to certify Biden as the winner, stalling the launch of the official transition process. When she does ascertain that Biden won, it will free up money for the transition and clear the way for Biden's team to begin placing transition personnel at federal agencies.

Trump administration officials also say they will not give Biden the classified presidential daily briefing on intelligence matters until the GSA makes the ascertainment official.

Murphy declined to be interviewed for this article. A GSA spokesperson, who refused to be identified by name because of the sensitivity of the matter, confirmed that Murphy and Barram spoke prior to the election about his experience in the close 2000 election.

The White House has not said whether there have been conversations about ascertainment between officials there and at GSA.

On social media and cable, Murphy is being castigated by those on the left who say she is thwarting the democratic transfer of power. Some Trump backers, for their part, say she's doing right by the Republican president, who has filed a barrage of lawsuits making baseless claims of widespread voter fraud.

Murphy, 47, leads a 12,000-person agency tasked with managing the government's real estate portfolio and serving as its global supply chain manager. Before last week, she was hardly a household name in



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politics.

The University of Virginia-trained lawyer and self-described “wonk” had spent most of the last 20 years honing a specialized knowledge of government procurement through a series of jobs as a Republican congressional staffer and in senior roles at the GSA and the Small Business Administration. She did shorter stints in the private sector and volunteered for Trump’s transition team in 2016.

She worked her way up through partisan politics to a position that isn’t in the spotlight, but is undeniably a powerful cog of governance.

“I am not here to garner headlines or make a name for myself,” Murphy said at her Senate confirmation hearing in October 2017. “My goal is to do my part in making the federal government more efficient, effective and responsive to the American people.”

Yet, during her time in government, Murphy has also found controversy.

Murphy took the reins of GSA in late 2017 and soon found herself entangled in a congressional battle over the future of the FBI’s crumbling headquarters in downtown Washington. Trump scrapped a decade-old plan to raze the building and move the agency outside the capital.

Some House Democrats believed that Trump, who operates a hotel on federally leased property nearby, was worried about competition moving into the FBI site should it be torn down and that he nixed the plan out of personal interest. Murphy seemed to give a less than precise answer to a lawmaker who asked about conversations with Trump and his team about the FBI headquarters.

The GSA inspector general found that Murphy in a 2018 congressional hearing gave answers that were “incomplete and may have left the misleading impression that she had no discussions with the President or senior White House officials in the decision-making process about the project.”

In an earlier stint at GSA during the George W. Bush administration, Murphy butted heads with GSA Administrator Lurita Doan.

Murphy, who then held the title of chief acquisitions officer, was one of several political appointees who spoke up in 2007 after a deputy to Karl Rove, then Bush’s chief political adviser, gave a briefing to GSA political appointees in which he identified Democrats in Congress whom the Republican Party hoped to unseat in 2008.

Murphy was among attendees who later told a special counsel that Doan had asked how the GSA could be used “to help our candidates.” Murphy left the agency soon after the episode. Bush forced Doan to resign the following year.

Danielle Brian, executive director of the nonprofit Project on Government Oversight, said the episode had given her hope that Murphy, upon taking over at GSA, would be able to resist pressure from Trump.

“She was essentially a whistleblower,” Brian said. “I really thought she had the potential to stand up to a president. It doesn’t appear to be the case.”

Barram, the Bush-Gore-era GSA administrator, said he felt sympathy for Murphy.

“Republican lawmakers are asking her to be more courageous than they are,” Barram said. “Sure, it’s her decision to make, and she’s going to have to make it one of these days. But they could make it easier if five or 10 of them come out and say: ‘Biden’s won. Let’s congratulate our old Senate colleague.’”

## Public health programs see surge in students amid pandemic

By MICHELLE R. SMITH and KATHY YOUNG Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — As the novel coronavirus emerged in the news in January, Sarah Keeley was working as a medical scribe and considering what to do with her biology degree.

By February, as the disease crept across the U.S., Keeley found her calling: a career in public health. “This is something that’s going to be necessary,” Keeley remembered thinking. “This is something I can do. This is something I’m interested in.”

In August, Keeley began studying at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to become an epidemiologist.

Public health programs in the United States have seen a surge in enrollment as the coronavirus has

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swept through the country, killing more than 247,000 people. As state and local public health departments struggle with unprecedented challenges — slashed budgets, surging demand, staff departures and even threats to workers' safety — a new generation is entering the field.

Among the more than 100 schools and public health programs that use the common application — a single admissions application form that students can send to multiple schools — there was a 20% increase in applications to master's in public health programs for the current academic year, to nearly 40,000, according to the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health.

Some programs are seeing even bigger jumps. Applications to Brown University's small master's in public health program rose 75%, according to Annie Gjelsvik, a professor and director of the program.

Demand was so high as the pandemic hit full force in the spring that Brown extended its application deadline by over a month. Seventy students ultimately matriculated this fall, up from 41 last year.

"People interested in public health are interested in solving complex problems," Gjelsvik said. "The COVID pandemic is a complex issue that's in the forefront every day."

It's too early to say whether the jump in interest in public health programs is specific to that field or reflects a broader surge of interest in graduate programs in general, according to those who track graduate school admissions. Factors such as pandemic-related deferrals and disruptions in international student admissions make it difficult to compare programs across the board.

Magnolia E. Hernández, an assistant dean at Florida International University's Robert Stempel College of Public Health and Social Work, said new student enrollments in its master's in public health program grew 63% from last year. The school has especially seen an uptick in interest among Black students, from 21% of newly admitted students last fall to 26.8% this year.

Kelsie Campbell is one of them. She's part Jamaican and part British. When she heard in both the British and American media that Black and ethnic minorities were being disproportionately hurt by the pandemic, she wanted to focus on why.

"Why is the Black community being impacted disproportionately by the pandemic? Why is that happening?" Campbell asked. "I want to be able to come to you and say, 'This is happening. These are the numbers and this is what we're going to do.'"

The biochemistry major at Florida International said she plans to explore that when she begins her MPH program at Stempel College in the spring. She said she hopes to eventually put her public health degree to work helping her own community.

"There's power in having people from your community in high places, somebody to fight for you, somebody to be your voice," she said.

Public health students are already working on the front lines of the nation's pandemic response in many locations. Students at Brown's public health program, for example, are crunching infection data and tracing the spread of the disease for the Rhode Island Department of Health.

Some students who had planned to work in public health shifted their focus as they watched the devastation of COVID-19 in their communities. In college, Emilie Saksvig, 23, double-majored in civil engineering and public health. She was supposed to start working this year as a Peace Corps volunteer to help with water infrastructure in Kenya. She had dreamed of working overseas on global public health.

The pandemic forced her to cancel those plans, and she decided instead to pursue a master's degree in public health at Emory University.

"The pandemic has made it so that it is apparent that the United States needs a lot of help, too," she said. "It changed the direction of where I wanted to go."

These students are entering a field that faced serious challenges even before the pandemic exposed the strains on the underfunded patchwork of state and local public health departments. An analysis by The Associated Press and Kaiser Health News found that since 2010, per capita spending for state public health departments has dropped by 16%, and for local health departments by 18%. At least 38,000 state and local public health jobs have disappeared since the 2008 recession.

And the workforce is aging: Forty-two percent of governmental public health workers are over 50, according to the de Beaumont Foundation, and the field has high turnover. Before the pandemic, nearly

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half of public health workers said they planned to retire or leave their organizations for other reasons in the next five years. Poor pay topped the list of reasons. Some public health workers are paid so little that they qualify for public aid.

Brian Castrucci, CEO of the de Beaumont Foundation, which advocates for public health, said government public health jobs need to be a "destination job" for top graduates of public health schools.

"If we aren't going after the best and the brightest, it means that the best and the brightest aren't protecting our nation from those threats that can, clearly, not only devastate from a human perspective, but from an economic perspective," Castrucci said.

The pandemic put that already stressed public health workforce in the middle of what became a pitched political battle over how to contain the disease. As public health officials recommended closing businesses and requiring people to wear masks, many, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's top virus expert, faced threats and political reprisals, AP and KHN found. Many were pushed out of their jobs. An ongoing count by AP/KHN has found that more than 100 public health leaders in dozens of states have retired, quit or been fired since April.

Those threats have had the effect of crystallizing for students the importance of their work, said Patricia Pittman, a professor of health policy and management at George Washington University's Milken Institute School of Public Health.

"Our students have been both indignant and also energized by what it means to become a public health professional," Pittman said. "Indignant because many of the local and the national leaders who are trying to make recommendations around public health practices were being mistreated. And proud because they know that they are going to be part of that frontline public health workforce that has not always gotten the respect that it deserves."

Saksvig compared public health workers to law enforcement in the way they both have responsibility for enforcing rules that can alter people's lives.

"I feel like before the coronavirus, a lot of people didn't really pay attention to public health," she said. "Especially now when something like a pandemic is happening, public health people are just on the forefront of everything."

KHN Midwest correspondent Lauren Weber and KHN senior correspondent Anna Maria Barry-Jester contributed to this report.

This story is a collaboration between The Associated Press and Kaiser Health News, which is a non-profit news service covering health issues. It is an editorially independent program of the Kaiser Family Foundation. KHN is not affiliated with Kaiser Permanente.

## Facebook, Twitter CEOs facing questions on election measures

By MARCY GORDON AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Senate panel is calling on the CEOs of Facebook and Twitter to defend their handling of disinformation in the contest between President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden. But the senators are deeply divided by party over the integrity and results of the election itself.

The Senate Judiciary Committee is holding a hearing Tuesday to question Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg and Twitter's Jack Dorsey on their companies' actions around the closely contested election. The two social media CEOs are expected to testify via video.

Prominent Republican senators — including the Judiciary Committee chairman, Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina — have refused to knock down Trump's unfounded claims of voting irregularities and fraud, even as misinformation disputing Biden's victory has flourished online.

Graham, a close Trump ally, has publicly urged: "Do not concede, Mr. President. Fight hard."

Zuckerberg and Dorsey promised lawmakers last month that they would aggressively guard their platforms from being manipulated by foreign governments or used to incite violence around the election



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results — and they followed through with high-profile steps that angered Trump and his supporters.

Twitter and Facebook have both slapped a misinformation label on some content from Trump, most notably his assertions linking voting by mail to fraud. On Monday, Twitter flagged Trump's tweet proclaiming "I won the Election!" with this note: "Official sources called this election differently."

Facebook also moved two days after the election to ban a large group called "Stop the Steal" that Trump supporters were using to organize protests against the vote count. The 350,000-member group echoed Trump's baseless allegations of a rigged election rendering the results invalid.

For days after the election as the vote counting went on, copycat "Stop the Steal" groups were easily found on Facebook. As of Monday, Facebook appeared to have made them harder to find, though it was still possible to locate them, including some groups with thousands of members.

Warily eyeing how the companies wield their power to filter speech and ideas, Trump and the Republicans accuse the social media companies of anti-conservative bias. Democrats also criticize them, though for different reasons. The result is that both parties are interested in stripping away some of the protections that have shielded tech companies from legal responsibility for what people post on their platforms. Biden has heartily endorsed such an action.

But it's the actions that companies have taken around the election that are likely to be a dominant focus at Tuesday's hearing.

The GOP majority on the Judiciary panel threatened Zuckerberg and Dorsey with subpoenas last month if they didn't agree to voluntarily testify for Tuesday's hearing. Republicans on the Senate Commerce Committee lambasted the two CEOs and Sundar Pichai, Google's chief executive, at a hearing last month for what they said was a pattern of silencing conservative viewpoints while giving free rein to political actors from countries like China and Iran.

Despite fears over security in the run-up to Nov. 3 and social media companies bracing for the worst, the election turned out to be the most secure in U.S. history, federal and state officials from both parties say — repudiating Trump's unsubstantiated claims of fraud.

Facebook insists it has learned its lesson from the 2016 election and is no longer a conduit for misinformation, voter suppression and election disruption. This fall Facebook said it removed a small network of accounts and pages linked to Russia's Internet Research Agency, the "troll factory" that has used social media accounts to sow political discord in the U.S. since the 2016 election. Twitter suspended five related accounts.

But critical outsiders, as well as some of Facebook's own employees, say the company's efforts to tighten its safeguards remain insufficient, despite it having spent billions.

"Facebook only acts if they feel there's a threat to their reputation or their bottom line," says Imran Ahmed, CEO of the Center for Countering Digital Hate. The organization had pressed Facebook to take down the "Stop the Steal" group.

There's no evidence that the social media giants are biased against conservative news, posts or other material, or that they favor one side of political debate over another, researchers have found. But criticism of the companies' policies, and their handling of disinformation tied to the election, has come from Democrats as well as Republicans.

Democrats have focused their criticism mainly on hate speech, misinformation and other content that can incite violence, keep people from voting or spread falsehoods about the coronavirus. They criticize the tech CEOs for failing to police content, blaming the platforms for playing a role in hate crimes and the rise of white nationalism in the U.S. And that criticism has extended to their efforts to stamp out false information related to the election.

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AP Technology Writer Barbara Ortutay in Oakland, California, contributed to this report.

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Follow Gordon at <https://twitter.com/mgordonap>.

## German court: McCann suspect injured while in custody

BERLIN (AP) — A suspect in the disappearance of Madeleine McCann, the British toddler who vanished from a Portuguese resort 13 years ago, suffered two broken ribs in an incident at a German court, authorities said Tuesday.

The incident occurred after Christian Brueckner, who is serving time on a drug conviction, was taken to Braunschweig state court on Monday for a routine hearing on that case.

Court spokeswoman Jessica Knab-Henrichs told The Associated Press that he was briefly treated in a hospital for two broken ribs, and was then returned to the court where the hearing was carried out.

The incident is under investigation and further details on what happened at the court were expected to be released later in the day, she said.

Although Brueckner is a suspect in the McCann case, prosecutors have said they do not yet have enough evidence to hold him on the McCann case alone.

In addition to the drug trafficking sentence, which Brueckner will have finished serving in January, he was convicted in 2019 of the 2005 rape of a 72-year-old American woman in Portugal and sentenced to another seven years. That conviction is under appeal.

McCann was 3 at the time of her 2007 disappearance from an apartment while her family vacationed in the seaside town of Praia da Luz in Portugal's Algarve region.

German authorities in June said they had identified the 43-year-old German citizen as a suspect in the case and were investigating him on suspicion of murder.

## A lifetime of pain in 24 hours: A French ICU in the pandemic

By LORI HINNANT Associated Press

MARSEILLE, France (AP) — Four more calls to go, each with careful words, painful silences.

It's 2 p.m. in the intensive care ward of Marseille's La Timone hospital, and Dr. Julien Carvelli is phoning families hit by the latest coronavirus surge with news about their children, husbands, wives. With intensive care wards at over 95% capacity in France for over 10 days, Carvelli makes at least eight of these difficult calls a day.

In Marseille, this wave is bringing even more people to the ICU than the first one in the spring, many in more severe condition. Carvelli warns one father that his son may need to be put into a coma.

"For the moment, he's holding on. But it's true that — I don't know what you've been told already — his respiratory state is worrying," Carvelli acknowledges. There's a long pause on the other end.

"Listen, do your best," comes the strained reply.

France is two weeks into its second coronavirus lockdown, known as "le confinement." Associated Press journalists spent 24 hours with the intensive care team at La Timone, southern France's largest hospital, as they struggled to keep even one bed open for the influx of patients to come.

The doctors and nurses tell themselves and each other that they just have to hold on a little longer. Government tallies show infections may have reached their autumn high point, and hospitalizations dropped last weekend for the first time since September.

But the medical workers are also frustrated that France did not prepare more in the months after the first wave. And while doctors and nurses were seen as heroes back then, this time is different.

"Before, they applauded every night. Now they tell us it's just doing our job," says Chloe Gascon, a 23-year-old nurse who has spent half her 18-month career amid the coronavirus. Her voice carries more than a trace of bitterness.

Marseille has been submerged with coronavirus cases since September. The port city, on France's Mediterranean coast, was spared the worst of the virus last spring only to be hit with a vengeance as summer vacations wound down. Bars and restaurants closed across the city on Sept. 27, more than a month before they shut down nationwide. It wasn't enough.

A decade of budget cuts left France with half the number of intensive care beds this year, when it needed them most. By the time the first lockdown ended on May 11, more than 26,000 people had died in France.

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The government pledged to take advantage of the summer lull to add beds and train reinforcements.

That was the time to act, when new infections were at their low point, said Stephen Griffin, a virologist at the University of Leeds.

"It was always bubbling away under the surface," he said.

But it was only in early fall that work started on refashioning an acute care wing at La Timone, which opened less than two weeks ago and still has exposed wiring and a fiberboard barricade with duct tape. The promised reinforcements have been slow in coming as well, and any training they get is in the moment, as Pauline Reynier is learning during her first week as an ICU nurse.

Compared to the emergency room, the ICU is a relatively calm place, with moments of urgency when a patient needs more oxygen or an intervention. The quiet is punctuated by the constant soundtrack of machines beeping. There is no good news here; the best news is that a patient is stable enough to be moved elsewhere.

When the 12-hour nursing shift starts at 7 a.m., all 16 beds are filled with COVID-19 patients, and five are conscious. For those in artificial comas, it takes about an hour and at least two people to wash and then carefully rotate each one in their beds, keeping the wires and plastic tubing in place.

This is Reynier's first task.

She helped in a regular coronavirus ward during the first wave and offered to retrain over the summer for intensive care. Instead, the 26-year-old was sent back to cardiology, which was filling with patients who had postponed heart surgeries. It was just a week into the second lockdown that the call came to report to the ICU on Nov. 11, a national holiday.

It is only Reynier's second shift as an ICU reinforcement. Her new colleagues barely know her name and have little time to teach. The daughter of a nurse who also works at La Timone, she largely learns by watching.

It takes months to train as an intensive care nurse, years to become experienced in the grueling specialty of holding death at bay.

This virus is even more demanding than the usual urgent challenges. Caregivers risk nearly as much as the patient, and dress accordingly, each time they enter a room. And so going to the bedside means planning multiple tasks at once: washing, toothbrushing, checking vitals, changing IV drips and, finally, turning the patient over to help improve breathing.

Reynier pulls on a long-sleeved apron over the scrubs with a quick twist of the wrist to knot the neck. Then a pair of gloves. Punches a thumbhole through the bottom of the sleeve to secure the gloves, then pulls on a second pair of gloves. Head covering, goggles and, finally, a second apron in plastic. X-ray technicians wear a third set of gloves to handle the plates. Doctors performing an intubation or other major procedure wear a plastic face shield over the goggles.

For every person inside the room, someone stands on the outside to hand over anything needed and help strip off and discard the protective gear at the end. Every gesture takes on outsized importance.

Mid-morning, the man in Room 6 improves enough to go to acute care. At the same time, doctors realize that Room 11 in the makeshift ward isn't equipped for the dialysis machine that the unconscious patient inside now urgently needs. He has to be moved across the hall to the main ICU.

Doctors and nurses snatch aprons, gloves and goggles off the cart outside to swaddle themselves.

It's about 25 meters (yards) away — a quick left, through two sets of double doors, past the break room and the workstation. Moving the 60-year-old man ultimately requires 14 medical workers and 45 minutes of preparation — including hooking him up to a portable oxygen generator that later must be disinfected.

They start moving the bed at 10:40 a.m. It takes 15 minutes to maneuver him into position in Room 6. Sweat darkens the back of Reynier's pale blue scrubs.

A cleaning crew storms Room 12, filling it with the smell of bleach: One bed is now free.

It is 1:30 p.m. and many of the nurses are in the windowless breakroom. The doctors have converged on Room 9, just outside. The 54-year-old man was conscious in the morning, but his oxygen levels are dropping and it's time to sedate and intubate him.

Again, doctors and nurses converge, three people inside and three outside Room 9 to fetch tubing, scis-



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sors, bandages. The doctors replace an IV in the man's right arm and gently cover his torso with the sheet when they're done, an hour later. Now, all but four of the 16 coronavirus patients are in artificial comas.

"We just have to help them to hold on until their bodies can heal," Carvelli says. "But intensive care is a terrible thing in itself. Not everyone can survive it."

This is not what he tells families during the half-hour or so he spends calling them each day. Each call is over in minutes.

"We have to be reassuring and at the same time tell the truth. It's a balance that is sometimes hard to find," Carvelli says quietly.

There's a silver lining to a very dark cloud: This time around, doctors have learned enough about the disease that they know when a patient is about to die and can summon families to the ICU. That's what happened at La Timone last week.

During the daily calls, families ask about the most recent coronavirus test — patients are tested three times each week — about oxygen levels, sedatives.

"You know, even if he tests negative, it doesn't mean he will heal more quickly," Carvelli gently tells the daughter of a man in the ICU for four days.

"No, it's just that if he doesn't have COVID, it's one less thing," she replies.

The man is still positive, but Carvelli tells her he is conscious.

"Can you tell him we are here and we support him?" she asks.

"Of course."

Her voice breaks as she says goodbye.

The disease is taking its toll on the staff as well. No doctors and only a few nurses have been infected at La Timone, but they are exhausted.

At 4:30 p.m., two hospital managers come down, in part to gauge morale. Marie-Laure Satta, at 37 one of the senior nurses, confronts them testily, with Reynier looking a little lost at her side. The younger woman has just learned that she'll be returning to the ICU for at least the next few weeks, and she is both relieved and worried.

The reinforcements need checklists, written instructions, something tangible to guide them so they're a help to the regular staff, not a burden, Satta says, her entire body tense with emotion.

"I'm talking about well-meaning people who are here to aid, who just need a little reminder," she snaps. "We need some rest."

The managers understand, but it's not clear how much control they have over the situation. The conversation ends cordially even so, and they make their way out of the ICU.

"Good luck to you too, because you're not in any better position than we are," Satta calls after them.

Like all the caregivers at La Timone, Satta is completely dedicated during the greatest medical crisis of her generation. But she yearns for something less stressful once this is over, maybe helping to arrange organ transplants.

Her husband works the night shift at the ICU and they have two children in preschool. Neighbors help out with the childcare gaps, which tend to be in the morning and late afternoon. She believes the promises of the government are empty.

"They serve other interests than the comings and goings of a hospital. I've never seen that, either for the patients or the caregivers," she says when the mood has calmed. "With all of France's capacity, all of France's money ... they talk to us about savings — where does all that money go?"

Marseille was once one of the world's richest cities, its natural harbor an international hub dating back to 600 B.C. and its founding by Greeks of Phocaea. The city is in a waterfront depression ringed by limestone hills, with La Timone almost straddling its central axis.

Many historians believe the first wave of the Black Plague in Europe originated in Marseille's port. The continent's last major Plague outbreak, in 1720, killed half the city's population. Local schoolchildren visit the Frioul archipelago, 4 kilometers off the coast, and the Hôpital Caroline, which cared for sailors with the Plague.

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"What we're going through now will be studied in history, because it's exceptional," Reynier tells her new colleagues.

By now, the day shift is nearly over. The bed in Room 12 is still free, and the physician overseeing the night shift hopes to keep it in reserve, to keep just a little slack in the overloaded health system.

"I want to keep a bullet in my chamber," Dr. Fouad Bouzana says, between phone calls from other hospitals asking about open beds. La Timone's emergency room calls, asking for space for a man who is COVID-19 positive. Bouzana asks them to run more tests and call back.

The ICU doesn't accept everyone. Doctors learned in the first wave that coronavirus patients need a certain base level of strength and health to make it through the recovery.

That night, Bouzana turns two coronavirus patients away, deeming them too elderly and frail to submit to intensive care. They'll stay in the acute care ward next door in hopes their condition improves, and he'll review the decision with the dayside doctors later. But he harbors little doubt.

"We discuss it together. If one of us wants to take a patient and the others don't, we always take the patient," he says. "We usually agree."

At 2 a.m., the man from the emergency room is admitted to the last remaining bed.

La Timone is full again.

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

## Trump campaign lawsuit over Pennsylvania vote heads to court

By MARK SCOLFORO Associated Press

A hearing on the Trump campaign's federal lawsuit seeking to prevent Pennsylvania officials from certifying the vote results remains on track for Tuesday after a judge quickly denied the campaign's new lawyer's request for a delay.

U.S. Middle District Judge Matthew Brann told lawyers for Donald J. Trump for President Inc. and the counties and state election official it has sued that they must show up and "be prepared for argument and questioning" at the Williamsport federal courthouse.

The Trump campaign wants to prevent certification of results that give President-elect Joe Biden the state's 20 electoral votes, suing over election procedures that were not uniform across the state.

Pennsylvania Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar has asked to have the lawsuit thrown out, calling its allegations in court filings "at best, garden-variety irregularities."

Brann scheduled the hearing to discuss the campaign's request for a temporary restraining order as well as the defendants' request to have the case dismissed.

After Pittsburgh lawyers dropped out of representing Trump's campaign on Friday, Philadelphia election lawyer Linda Kerns and two Texas lawyers also withdrew Monday.

Camp Hill lawyer Mark Scaringi, a losing candidate in the 2012 Republican U.S. Senate primary, notified the judge he was stepping in, but did not get the delay he sought.

The Associated Press has declared Biden the winner of the presidential contest, but Trump has refused to concede and is blocking Biden's efforts toward a smoother transition of power. With Georgia the only uncalled state, Biden has collected at least 290 electoral votes — just enough that overturning Pennsylvania's result would not open an avenue for a second term for Trump.

Biden's margin in the state is now nearly 70,000 votes.

The Trump legal challenge centers on how some counties let voters fix, or "cure," mail-in ballots that lacked secrecy envelopes or had other problems. The president's campaign's lawsuit claims counties' inconsistent practices violated constitutional rights of due process and equal protection under the law and resulted in the "unlawful dilution or debasement" of properly cast votes.

"Democratic heavy counties," the lawsuit alleges, notified voters about the lack of secrecy envelopes or other problems in time for some to fix them, but counties in Republican regions "followed the law and

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did not provide a notice and cure process, disenfranchising many.”

The lawsuit seeks to stop Boockvar and election boards in seven Biden-majority counties that are co-defendants from counting absentee and mail-in ballots that the Republican president’s campaign claims were “improperly permitted to be cured.”

Boockvar’s lawyers described Trump’s claims as generalized grievances and speculative injuries that would not warrant throwing out the election results.

They told Brann that other counties could have permitted their voters to fix problem mail-in ballots, but chose not to.

“Election practices need not cater to the lowest common denominator, and Plaintiffs’ arguments would improperly penalize those counties that are enfranchising voters by helping them avoid ballot disqualification,” they wrote.

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

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

Trump’s campaign has also launched legal challenges complaining that its poll watchers were unable to scrutinize the voting process. Many of those challenges have been tossed out by judges, some within hours of their filing; and again, none of the complaints show any evidence that the outcome of the election was impacted.

In a court filing last week, a group represented by the ACLU of Pennsylvania argued that giving the Trump campaign what he is seeking would create its own constitutional problems.

“That would mean not only that Pennsylvania does not participate in the Electoral College, but that Pennsylvania would send no Representatives to the U.S. House in January, and as of December 1 the Commonwealth would have only 25 state senators and zero state representatives” they told Brann.

## Hurricane Iota roars onto Nicaragua as 2nd blow in 2 weeks

By GABRIELA SELSER Associated Press

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (AP) — In a one-two punch, Hurricane Iota roared ashore as a dangerous Category 4 storm along almost exactly the same stretch of Nicaragua’s Caribbean coast that was devastated by an equally powerful Hurricane Eta 13 days earlier.

Iota had intensified into an extremely dangerous Category 5 storm during the day Monday, but the U.S. National Hurricane Center said it weakened slightly as it neared the coast late Monday and made landfall with maximum sustained winds of 155 mph (250 kph). It hit the coast about 30 miles (45 kilometers) south of the Nicaraguan city of Puerto Cabezas, also known as Bilwi.

People hunkered down in Bilwi even before the hurricane arrived, already battered by screeching winds and torrential rains.

Business owner Adán Artola Schultz braced himself in the doorway of his house as strong gusts of wind and rain drove water in torrents down the street. He watched in amazement as wind ripped away the metal roof structure from a substantial two-story home and blew it away like paper.

“It is like bullets,” he said of the sound of metal structures banging and buckling in the wind. “This is double destruction,” he said, referring to the damages wrought by Eta just 12 days earlier. “This is coming in with fury,” said Artola Schultz.

Iota came ashore just 15 miles (25 kilometers) south of where Hurricane Eta made landfall Nov. 3, also as a Category 4 storm. Eta’s torrential rains saturated the soil in the region, leaving it prone to new deadly landslides and floods, forecasters warned.

“The situation is exacerbated by the fact that Iota is making landfall in almost the exact same location that

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category 4 Hurricane Eta did a little less than two weeks ago," the Hurricane Center said in a statement. Eta killed more than 130 people in the region as torrential rains caused flash floods and mudslides in parts of Central America and Mexico.

"This hurricane is definitely worse" than Eta, Jason Bermúdez, a university student from Bilwi, said as winds roared before Iota came ashore. "There are already a lot of houses that lost their roofs, fences and fruit trees that got knocked down," said Bermúdez. "We will never forget this year."

Forecasters warned that Iota's storm surge could reach 15 to 20 feet (4.5 to 6 meters) above normal tides, and as the storm approached that threat weighed heavily on Yasmina Wriedt in Bilwi's seaside El Muelle neighborhood.

"The situation doesn't look good at all," Wriedt said. "We woke up without electricity, with rain and the surf is getting really high."

Wriedt said Eta pushed the surf up to just behind her house, where she lives with eight other members of her family. "Today I'm afraid again about losing my house and I'm frightened for all of us who live in this neighborhood," she said.

She said some neighbors went to stay with relatives elsewhere, but most had stayed. "We're almost all here," she said. "Neither the army nor the government came to move us."

Cairo Jarquin, Nicaragua emergency response project manager for Catholic Relief Services, had just visited Bilwi and smaller coastal communities Friday.

In Wawa Bar, Jarquin said he found "total destruction" from Eta. People had been working furiously to put roofs back over their families' heads, but Iota threatened to take what was left.

"The little that remained standing could be razed," Jarquin said. There were other communities farther inland that he was not even able to reach due to the condition of roads.

Evacuations were conducted from low-lying areas in Nicaragua and Honduras near their shared border through the weekend.

Nicaraguan Vice President Rosario Murillo, who is also the first lady, said that the government had done everything necessary to protect lives, including the evacuation of thousands. She added that Taiwan had donated 800 tons of rice to help those affected by the storms.

Limborth Bucardo, of the Miskito Indigenous ethnic group, said many people had moved to churches in Bilwi. He rode out Eta with his wife and two children at home, but this time decided to move in with relatives in a safer neighborhood.

"We hadn't finished repairing our houses and settling in when another hurricane comes," Bucardo said. "The shelters in Bilwi are already full, packed with people from (surrounding) communities."

Iota is the record 30th named storm of this year's extraordinarily busy Atlantic hurricane season. It's also the ninth storm to rapidly intensify this season, a dangerous phenomenon that is happening increasingly more often. Such activity has focused attention on climate change, which scientists say is causing wetter, stronger and more destructive storms.

Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach said Iota is the latest Category 5 hurricane on record, beating the Nov. 8, 1932, Cuba Hurricane.

The official end of the hurricane season is Nov. 30.

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Associated Press writers Marlon González in Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Seth Borenstein in Bethesda, Md.; and Christopher Sherman in Mexico City contributed to this report.

## Who will be the first to get COVID-19 vaccines?

By The Associated Press undefined

Who will be the first to get COVID-19 vaccines?

No decision has been made, but the consensus among many experts in the U.S. and globally is that health care workers should be first, said Sema Sgaier of the Surgo Foundation, a nonprofit group working on vaccine allocation issues.



An expert panel advising the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is also considering giving high priority to workers in essential industries, people with certain medical conditions and people age 65 and older.

Once a vaccine gets a green light from the Food and Drug Administration, the panel will look at clinical trial data on side effects and how people of various ages, ethnicities and health statuses responded. That will determine the panel's recommendations to the CDC on how to prioritize shots.

State officials are expected to follow the CDC's guidance as they distribute the first vaccines.

Vaccine supplies will be limited at first. There won't be enough to protect everyone, yet getting the shots to the right people could change the course of the pandemic.

Many other questions about distribution remain unanswered, Sgaier noted, such as whether to distribute shots equally across the country, or to focus on areas that are hot spots.

The AP is answering your questions about the coronavirus in this series. Submit them at: [FactCheck@AP.org](mailto:FactCheck@AP.org).

Read previous Viral Questions:

How does the coronavirus affect the heart?

Do I need to wear a mask if I'm 6 feet away from others?

What are the treatment options for COVID-19?

## SpaceX capsule with 4 astronauts reaches space station

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — SpaceX's newly launched capsule with four astronauts arrived Monday at the International Space Station, their new home until spring.

The Dragon capsule pulled up and docked late Monday night, following a 27-hour, completely automated flight from NASA's Kennedy Space Center. The linkup occurred 262 miles (422 kilometers) above Idaho.

"Oh, what a good voice to hear," space station astronaut Kate Rubins called out when the Dragon's commander, Mike Hopkins, first made radio contact.

"We can't wait to have you on board," she added after the two spacecraft were latched together.

This is the second astronaut mission for SpaceX. But it's the first time Elon Musk's company delivered a crew for a full half-year station stay. The two-pilot test flight earlier this year lasted two months.

The three Americans and one Japanese astronaut will remain at the orbiting lab until their replacements arrive on another Dragon in April. And so it will go, with SpaceX — and eventually Boeing — transporting astronauts to and from the station for NASA.

This regular taxi service got underway with Sunday night's launch.

Hopkins and his crew — Victor Glover, Shannon Walker and Japan's Soichi Noguchi — join two Russians and one American who flew to the space station last month from Kazakhstan. Glover is the first African-American to move in for a long haul. A space newcomer, Glover was presented his gold astronaut pin Monday.

The four named their capsule Resilience to provide hope and inspiration during an especially difficult year for the whole world. They broadcast a tour of their capsule Monday, showing off the touchscreen controls, storage areas and their zero gravity indicator: a small plush Baby Yoda.

Walker said it was a little tighter for them than for the two astronauts on the test flight.

"We sort of dance around each other to stay out of each other's way," she said.

For Sunday's launch, NASA kept guests to a minimum because of coronavirus, and even Musk had to stay away after tweeting that he "most likely" had an infection. He was replaced in his official launch duties by SpaceX President Gwynne Shotwell, who assured reporters he was still very much involved with Sunday night's action, although remotely.

As they prepared for the space station linkup, the Dragon crew beamed down live window views of New Zealand and a brilliant blue, cloud-streaked Pacific 250 miles below.

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"Looks amazing," Mission Control radioed from SpaceX headquarters in Hawthorne, California.  
"It looks amazing from up here, too," Hopkins replied.

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

## 'More people may die': Biden urges Trump to aid transition

By STEVE PEOPLES AND ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden warned of dire consequences if President Donald Trump and his administration continue to refuse to coordinate with his transition team on the coronavirus pandemic and block briefings on national security, policy issues and vaccine plans.

The remarks marked Biden's toughest to date on Trump's failure to acknowledge his election loss and cooperate with the incoming administration for a peaceful transfer of power.

"More people may die if we don't coordinate," Biden told reporters during a news conference Monday in Wilmington, Delaware.

Biden and his aides — and a small but growing group of Republicans — have emphasized the importance of being briefed on White House efforts to control the pandemic and distribute prospective vaccines. The Trump administration is working on its own distribution plan, while Biden's chief of staff indicated his transition team will proceed with their own planning separately because of the obstruction.

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, said it's "absolutely crucial that the apparent president-elect and his team have full access to the planning that has gone on" for vaccine distribution.

"It is no easy matter" to distribute a vaccine, Collins said, so "it's absolutely imperative for public health, that all of the planning that's gone on for which the current administration deserves credit, be shared with the new administration."

Collins' remarks were echoed Monday by Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska. Last week, a larger group of Republicans in Congress called on the Trump administration to allow Biden to begin receiving national security briefings.

The outgoing president has refused so far to bend to pressure from Democrats or Republicans as he continues to dispute his loss to Biden, who has surpassed the 270 electoral vote threshold to become president and is leading Trump by more than 5.5 million votes nationally.

Cooperation between the outgoing and incoming administrations, traditionally a key component to the peaceful transfer of power in the United States, takes on heightened significance this year because of the coronavirus pandemic, which is escalating dramatically heading into the holiday season.

Biden called the vaccine distribution a "huge, huge undertaking," and said that if his team has to wait until he takes office to dig into the government's distribution plan, they'll be "behind, over a month, month and a half."

Before taking questions, Biden outlined his plans to alleviate inequality and boost the U.S. economy but said that any structural reforms depended first on reining in the pandemic and delivering more immediate relief.

"Once we shut down the virus and deliver economic relief to workers and businesses, then we can start to build back better than before," he said.

Biden has vowed to spend trillions of dollars to reinvigorate U.S. manufacturing, expand health care coverage and combat climate change, among other priorities. But his chief priority remains controlling the pandemic, which is surging to record levels and forcing state and local leaders to implement new rounds of restrictions on local businesses.

The president-elect has so far tried to sidestep difficult questions about whether he might support a short-term national lockdown to arrest the surge of coronavirus cases. Since defeating Trump, Biden has devoted most of his public remarks to encouraging Americans to wear masks and embrace social distancing measures.

But members of his coronavirus advisory board have been more specific. One member, Michael Oster-

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holm, recently suggested a four- to six-week national lockdown with financial aid for Americans whose livelihoods would be affected. He later walked back the remarks and was rebutted by two other members of the panel who said a widespread lockdown shouldn't be under consideration.

Speaking Monday on "CBS This Morning," Osterholm was not asked about a potential lockdown, but he said the nation needs "a standard set of principles."

"Right now, we don't have a standardized set so you're hearing all these governors and mayors are scrambling to try to find what is the right answer for us, and it would surely help all of them, and that's what I'm hearing from them, that we have a standardized set of recommendations and protocols," he said.

Biden was asked Monday whether he would encourage leaders to look at potentially reinstating stay-at-home orders now that the pandemic is surging nationwide. He avoided answering directly and instead called on officials to embrace mask-wearing and criticized those who haven't.

Before his Monday address, Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris held virtual meetings with AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, General Motors CEO Mary Barra and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, among others.

The U.S. economy has recovered from the pandemic-induced shutdowns this spring more quickly than most economists expected. The unemployment rate dropped a full percentage point last month to 6.9% and those who still have jobs — many of them working from home — have stepped up their spending on cars, electronics and home renovations.

But much of the rebound was fueled by \$2 trillion in stimulus money that has largely run its course. And there are signs that the ongoing increases in confirmed virus cases are making Americans more cautious about traveling and shopping.

Consumers cut back on spending in early November, according to JPMorgan Chase, which tracks spending on 30 million of its debit and credit cards. Spending declines have been larger in some states with severe outbreaks, such as Iowa and North Dakota.

Most economists support another round of stimulus funding, including loans to small businesses, extended unemployment benefits and support for states and cities. Congressional Democrats have previously backed another \$2 trillion in aid.

Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Republican majority leader, has pointed to the falling unemployment rate as evidence that much less stimulus is needed.

But on whether Biden should receive coronavirus briefings, many of Trump's allies on Capitol Hill remained dug in.

"We've been working for the past year to make sure the vaccine will be delivered and it will be starting to be delivered probably in December, so he won't even be president of the United States when the vaccine starts," Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said in pushing back against Biden's comments.

"He can be privy, but he won't have anything to do with it," Cornyn said. "I mean, I hope by the time he's inaugurated that we're going to be well underway."

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Associated Press writers Christopher Rugaber and Lisa Mascaro in Washington contributed to this report.

## **Pandemic politics leave DC in gridlock as virus surges**

By ZEKE MILLER and ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the nation gripped by a resurgent coronavirus and looking to Washington for help, President Donald Trump and lawmakers in Congress have a message for struggling Americans: Just keep waiting.

The urgency of the nationwide surge in virus cases, spiking hospitalizations and increasing death tolls has hardly resonated in the nation's capital as its leaders are vexed by transition politics and trying to capitalize on the promise of a coming vaccine. The virus has killed more than 247,000 Americans this year and infected at least 11.1 million — some 1 million of them in just the past week.

Yet in Congress, where talks over economic relief bills stalled out months ago, lame-duck approval of aid is hardly front-of-mind. Across town at the White House, Trump is more focused on getting credit for the

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vaccine development push and blocking President-elect Joe Biden from getting the information needed to ensure the new administration can smoothly take over the fight against the pandemic.

"Another Vaccine just announced," Trump tweeted Monday morning after Moderna announced that its candidate appeared in early testing to be 95% effective against the virus. "For those great 'historians', please remember that these great discoveries, which will end the China Plague, all took place on my watch!"

On a call Monday with governors, Vice President Mike Pence, who heads the White House coronavirus task force, struck a rosy tone and asked states to give their residents comfort that vaccines are coming and that "America and your state has never been more prepared."

That didn't stop Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards from appealing to Pence and Trump for a more unified message on the importance of social distancing and wearing masks. And Dr. Deborah Birx, the task force coordinator, reported that 27 states were in the "red zone" for widespread transmission of the virus — more widespread and worrisome than spikes seen earlier this year.

Biden, who has warned of a "dark winter" ahead on the virus, called for the Trump administration to share its vaccine distribution plans with his own incoming administration, warning that "more people may die if you don't coordinate."

Saying vaccine plans are vital to repairing the nation's economy, Biden said, "If we have to wait until Jan. 20 to start that planning, it puts us behind."

Biden said he was hopeful that Trump "will be mildly more enlightened before we get to Jan. 20." He said he understood Trump's "reluctance" to admit defeat and share his administration's plans but called it "a shame."

There's no progress in Congress yet, either. The split-decision election — in which Democrats absorbed sizable losses in House races despite defeating Trump — hasn't sparked any progress or prodded House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., or Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., to move from their pre-election postures.

Pelosi wants to go big, say \$2 trillion; McConnell wants a smaller package in the \$500 billion range that his rightward-tilting colleagues can live with. Moving toward somewhere in the middle would be difficult for both camps.

Trump is a disruptive factor on Capitol Hill and no deal is possible without his buy-in, or at least his signature. Without a better and more reliable signal of Trump's intentions, both McConnell and Pelosi could be wary of navigating the turbulence required to forge an agreement.

The results of the election have also weakened the negotiating position of Pelosi, who played hardball during the weeks leading up to the election, only to come away empty-handed. But she is not — yet — wavering from her insistence on a sweeping and comprehensive relief bill rather than the more targeted approach favored by Republicans.

And for now, Pelosi is devoting her energies to soothing her unhappy Democratic caucus in advance of leadership elections this week. It seems like the wrong moment to telegraph concessions to McConnell and the Republicans.

The two longstanding adversaries are formidable when their interests align, but their offices say they have not spoken since the election and don't know when they will. The sole must-pass legislation for the lame-duck session is a temporary spending bill to avert a government shutdown — or a broader governmentwide omnibus funding bill if negotiations go well. COVID relief could be an add-on to either bill.

"Frankly, our best chance to get some COVID relief might be to get a regular funding bill and put the most critical pieces of COVID relief on that," said Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo. "There seems to be more interest in trying to move an omnibus package and more serious discussion about that than I've heard so far about a COVID package."

The Biden team would like a down payment of COVID relief now and is standing by Pelosi's handling of the matter.

"We have her back in handling this," incoming Biden chief of staff Ron Klain said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press." "Our message to Speaker Pelosi is: 'Keep doing what you're doing to the Republicans. Let's



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get this done.' I mean, this could be a first example of bipartisan action post the election."

Meanwhile, Trump's preferred science adviser, Dr. Scott Atlas, stepped up his criticism of governors for moving to reimpose restrictions meant to slow the spread of the virus. On Sunday night, Atlas urged people to "rise up" after Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced closures to some schools and businesses in the face of the latest wave of cases.

Atlas, who is not an infectious disease expert, earned himself a White House appointment by echoing Trump's skepticism of mask-wearing and support for "reopening" the economy. Trump has urged supporters to push Whitmer to reopen the state following virus restrictions, though many rules had been lifted previously. And 14 men have been charged in connection with an alleged plot to kidnap the governor.

"It's just incredibly reckless considering everything that has happened, everything that is going on," Whitmer said. "We really all need to be focused on the public health crisis that is ravaging our country and that poses a very real threat to every one of us."

Associated Press writers Alan Suderman in Richmond, Va., David Eggert in Lansing, Mich., and Steve Peoples in Wilmington, Del., contributed to this report.

## Dangerous Hurricane Iota makes landfall on Nicaragua coast

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (AP) — Powerful Hurricane Iota made landfall on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast late Monday, threatening catastrophic damage to the same part of Central America already battered by equally strong Hurricane Eta less than two weeks ago.

Iota had intensified into an extremely dangerous Category 5 storm early in the day, but the U.S. National Hurricane Center said it weakened slightly to Category 4, with maximum sustained winds of 155 mph (250 kph). Its center made landfall about 30 miles (45 kilometers) south of the Nicaraguan city of Puerto Cabezas, also known as Bilwi.

Iota already had been hitting the Caribbean coasts of Nicaragua and Honduras with torrential rains and strong winds.

Iota came ashore just 15 miles (25 kilometers) south of where Hurricane Eta made landfall Nov. 3, also as a Category 4 storm. Eta's torrential rains saturated the soil in the region, leaving it prone to new landslides and floods, and that the storm surge could reach 15 to 20 feet (4.5 to 6 meters) above normal tides.

In Bilwi, business owner Adán Artola Schultz braced himself in the doorway of his house as strong gusts of wind and rain drove water in torrents down the street. He watched in amazement as wind ripped away the metal roof structure from a substantial two-story home and blew it away like paper.

"It is like bullets," he said of the sound of metal structures banging and buckling in the wind. "This is double destruction," he said, referring to the damages wrought by Eta just 12 days earlier.

"This is coming in with fury," said Artola Schultz.

Storm surge was on the mind of Yasmina Wriedt in Bilwi's seaside El Muelle neighborhood.

"The situation doesn't look good at all," Wriedt said earlier in the day. "We woke up without electricity, with rain and the surf is getting really high."

Wriedt, who works for a small-scale fishing organization called Piquinera, said the roof of her house was blown off in Eta less than two weeks ago.

"We repaired it as best we could. Now I think the wind will take it again because they say (Iota) is even stronger," she said, the sound of hammering echoing around her as neighbors boarded windows and reinforced roofs.

During Eta, the surf came up to just behind her house, where she lives with eight other members of her family. "Today I'm afraid again about losing my house and I'm frightened for all of us who live in this neighborhood," she said.

Wriedt said some neighbors went to stay with relatives elsewhere, but most have stayed. "We're almost all here," she said. "Neither the army nor the government came to move us."

Cairo Jarquin, Nicaragua emergency response project manager for Catholic Relief Services, had just

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visited Bilwi and smaller coastal communities Friday.

In Wawa Bar, Jarquin said he found "total destruction" from Eta. People had been working furiously to put roofs back over their families' heads, but now Iota threatened to take what was left.

"The little that remained standing could be razed," Jarquin said. There were other communities farther inland that he was not even able to reach due to the condition of roads. He said he heard that Wawa bar was evacuated again Saturday.

Evacuations were conducted from low-lying areas in Nicaragua and Honduras near their shared border through the weekend.

Nicaraguan Vice President Rosario Murillo, who is also the first lady, said that the government had done everything necessary to protect lives, including the evacuation of thousands. She added that Taiwan had donated 800 tons of rice to help those affected by the storms.

Limborth Bucardo, of the Miskito Indigenous ethnic group, said many people had moved to churches in Bilwi. He rode out Eta with his wife and two children at home, but this time decided to move in with relatives in a safer neighborhood.

"We hadn't finished repairing our houses and settling in when another hurricane comes," Bucardo said. "The shelters in Bilwi are already full, packed with people from (surrounding) communities."

Iota is the record 30th named storm of this year's extraordinarily busy Atlantic hurricane season. It's also the ninth storm to rapidly intensify this season, a dangerous phenomenon that is happening increasingly more often. Such activity has focused attention on climate change, which scientists say is causing wetter, stronger and more destructive storms.

Iota is stronger, based on central pressure, than 2005's Hurricane Katrina and is the first storm with a Greek alphabet name to hit Category 5, Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach said. It also sets the record for the latest Category 5 hurricane on record, beating the record set by the Nov. 8, 1932, Cuba Hurricane.

Eta had hit Nicaragua as a Category 4 hurricane, killing more than 130 people as torrential rains caused flash floods and mudslides in 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.

Iota was forecast to drop 10 to 20 inches (250-500 millimeters) of rain in northern Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and southern Belize, with as much as 30 inches (750 millimeters) in isolated spots. Costa Rica and Panama could also experience heavy rain and possible flooding, the hurricane center said.

The prospect of more rain was raising the anxiety of those still homeless after Eta.

On Monday, Carmen Isabel Rodríguez Ortez was still living inside a government shelter with more than 250 people in La Lima, Honduras, just outside San Pedro Sula. Devastated by Eta's destruction, she quickly broke into sobs as she contemplated the torrential rains of another storm.

"We're living a real nightmare," Rodríguez said. The Chamelecon river flooded her Reformada neighborhood as Eta passed, submerging their homes. "Now they announce more rain and we don't know what's going to happen, because our homes are completely flooded."

Eta was this year's 28th named storm, tying the 2005 record.

Over the past couple of decades, meteorologists have been more worried about storms like Iota that power up much faster than normal. They created an official threshold for this rapid intensification — a storm gaining 35 mph (56 kph) in wind speed in just 24 hours. Iota doubled it.

Earlier this year, Hannah, Laura, Sally, Teddy, Gamma, Delta, Zeta and Iota all rapidly intensified. Laura and Delta tied or set records for rapid intensification.

The official end of the hurricane season is Nov. 30.

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Associated Press writers Marlon González in Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Seth Borenstein in Bethesda, Md.; and Christopher Sherman in Mexico City contributed to this report.

## Peru's Congress selects centrist lawmaker to be new leader

By FRANKLIN BRICENO and CHRISTINE ARMARIO Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Peru's political crisis appeared on the verge of resolution Monday as Congress cleared the way for an elder statesman and consensus candidate to become the country's third president in a week. People waved the nation's red-and-white flag and blared horns outside the gates of Congress as Francisco Sagasti of the centrist Purple Party was selected the legislature's new president.

The 76-year-old engineer has not yet been sworn into office, but as head of Congress becomes the nation's chief of state by default. Peru currently has no president or vice president, making him next in line. It will now fall on Sagasti to heal a nation bruised by a week of upheaval.

"What's at stake is taking a first step toward rebuilding confidence between the people and the state," said Samuel Rotta, president of the Peruvian chapter of Transparency International.

Applause erupted in the legislative palace as Sagasti clinched the required majority vote. A respected academic, he has also spent decades consulting government institutions and held a post at the World Bank. Shortly after the vote, he took an oath to become Congress' president.

"We will do everything possible to return hope to the people and show them they can trust in us," he said in his first remarks.

Many in the Latin American nation are hopeful Sagasti's appointment will mark the end of a tumultuous week in which thousands took to the streets outraged by Congress' decision to oust popular ex-President Martín Vizcarra. During the upheaval, two young men died and dozens were injured. Peru also spent more than 24 hours with no designated chief of state.

Sagasti could steer the country back toward stability because he is in a stronger position than his predecessor to potentially win the support of both Congress and demonstrators. He and his Purple Party bloc were among just 19 of 130 lawmakers to vote against Vizcarra's removal. That will earn him credibility among protesters who condemned the ouster as a power grab. Unlike Vizcarra, he also has a party in Congress representing him.

"Sagasti is someone who inspired confidence among a lot of people," said Jo-Marie Burt, a senior fellow with the Washington Office on Latin America. "He's an accidental president — but I wouldn't say he's someone without a plan."

Peru has much on the line: The country is in the throes of one of the world's most lethal coronavirus outbreaks and political analysts say the constitutional crisis cast the country's democracy into jeopardy.

The protests that rocked Peru were unlike any seen in recent years, fueled largely by young people typically apathetic to the country's notoriously erratic politics. They came a year after a wave of anti-government demonstrations around Latin America demanding better conditions for the poor and working class.

Human rights groups accused police of mounting an excessive response to the protests, lashing out at demonstrators with batons, rubber bullets and tear gas. The two protesters who died suffered multiple wounds — Jack Pintado, 22, was shot 10 times, including in the head, and Jordan Sotelo, 24, was hit four times in the chest near his heart, according to authorities.

"People on the streets, in their homes, on their balconies and on social media are very, very upset," Rotta said. "Peru is a country with high levels of mistrust. Politicians profoundly aggravated that."

At the crux of the unrest are long-simmering tensions over corruption in Peru. Every living former president has been accused or charged — most in the massive Odebrecht graft scandal in which the Brazilian construction giant admitted to doling out millions to politicians in exchange for lucrative public works contracts. Meanwhile, half of Congress is also under investigation for crimes ranging from money laundering to homicide.

Vizcarra attracted legions of supporters for his efforts to change that. He dissolved Congress last year, reformed how judges are chosen and tried to get rid of the prosecutorial immunity granted to lawmakers. But he had no party backing him in Congress and sparred with legislators constantly.

Lawmakers ousted him using a 19th-century-era clause claiming he showed "permanent moral incapacity."

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ity." They accused him of taking over \$630,000 in bribes in exchange for two construction contracts while governor of a small province years ago. Prosecutors are investigating the accusations, but Vizcarra has not been charged. He vehemently denies any wrongdoing.

The country's highest court is currently evaluating whether Congress broke the law in removing him from office — a decision that experts said would not be retroactive, but could have implications going forward. Some analysts said the ordeal shows Peru's political system needs reform so that no one branch of government has outsized power.

"There's a serious question of checks and balances," Rotta said.

After Vizcarra was removed, then-Congress president Manuel Merino became president. The little known politician and rice farmer faced daily protests. He promised to keep in place a scheduled presidential election in April. But his conservative Cabinet appointments irked many. He resigned on Sunday, just five days after being sworn into office.

The unrest comes as Peru grapples with the world's highest per-capita COVID-19 mortality rate and one of Latin America's worst economic contractions. The International Monetary Fund projects a 14% decline in GDP this year.

Sagasti has been a mainstay in Peruvian politics. He was among those taken hostage by Tupac Amaru rebels at the Japanese ambassador's residence in 1996. He has a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania and has written numerous books, including one titled, "Democracy and Good Governance."

To be sure, Congress is likely to stymie any efforts to pass anti-corruption reform. And many Peruvians will still be clamoring for change. But the reaction to Sagasti's appointment was decidedly different.

Unlike Merino, Sagasti was immediately welcomed by international leaders including Organization of American States Secretary General Luis Almagro.

"We trust in his capacity to guide the country through this crisis until the next presidential election," Almagro wrote on Twitter.

In his speech before Congress, Sagasti recognized the deep wounds the legislature must work to repair before the election. Wearing a black face mask and a purple tie, he called on lawmakers to work together to ensure that Peruvians feel recognized by an institution few trust. He also paid homage to the two young men who died during the protests.

Protesters gathered Monday evening in cities around the country to light candles and leave flowers at vigils in their honor.

"We can't bring them back to life," Sagasti said. "But we can through Congress, and the executive, take action so this doesn't happen again."

Moments later Sagasti walked out of Congress, approaching a crowd of people who cheered his appointment. He shook hands and waved. Some chanted, "Sagasti, the president!"

"It couldn't have been anyone else," Sandra Ramirez said as she watched the new leader move among the crowd. "We are going to hope for the best from him."

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Associated Press writer Franklin Briceño reported this story in Lima and AP writer Christine Armario reported from Bogota, Colombia.

## Governors ratchet up restrictions ahead of Thanksgiving

By DAVID EGGERT and RACHEL LA CORTE Associated Press

From California to Pennsylvania, governors and mayors across the U.S. are ratcheting up COVID-19 restrictions amid the record-shattering resurgence of the virus that is all but certain to get worse because of holiday travel and family gatherings over Thanksgiving.

Leaders are closing businesses or curtailing hours and other operations, and they are ordering or imploring people to stay home and keep their distance from others to help stem a rising tide of infections that threatens to overwhelm the health care system.

"I must again pull back the reins," New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy said Monday as he restricted indoor



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gatherings to 10 people, down from 25. "It gives me no joy."

California Gov. Gavin Newsom announced he is pulling the "emergency brake" on efforts to reopen the economy, saying the state is experiencing the fastest growth in cases yet, and if left unchecked, it will lead to "catastrophic outcomes." The move closes many nonessential indoor businesses and requires the wearing of masks outside homes, with limited exceptions.

The tightening came as Moderna Inc. announced that its experimental coronavirus vaccine appears to be over 94% effective, based on early results. A week ago Pfizer disclosed similar findings with its own formula.

The news raised hopes that at least two vaccines against the scourge could win emergency authorization and become available in the U.S. before the end of 2020.

A record-breaking nearly 70,000 people were hospitalized with the coronavirus in the U.S. as of Sunday, 13,000 more than a week earlier, according to the COVID Tracking Project. Deaths in the U.S. are running at more than 1,100 per day on average, an increase of over 50% from early October.

The virus is blamed for more than 246,000 deaths and over 11 million confirmed infections in the the U.S.

Thanksgiving was on the minds of leaders nationwide as they enacted tougher restrictions amid fears that the holiday will lead to more infections.

"We don't really want to see mamaw at Thanksgiving and bury her by Christmas," said Dr. Mark Horne, president of the Mississippi State Medical Association. "It's going to happen. You're going to say 'Hi' at Thanksgiving, 'It was so great to see you,' and you're going to either be visiting by FaceTime in the ICU or planning a small funeral before Christmas."

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's stay-at-home order went into effect Monday. Only essential businesses, including grocery stores and pharmacies, will be open.

Washington's Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee ordered gyms, bowling alleys, movie theaters, museums and zoos to shut down indoor operations. Stores must limit capacity to 25%.

People from different households will be barred in Washington from gathering indoors unless they have quarantined. There is no enforcement mechanism. Inslee said he hopes people obey anyway.

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot called on residents in the nation's third-largest city to restrict social gatherings to 10 people starting Monday. In instructions that were advisory, not mandatory, she urged residents to stay home except for essential activities, like going to work or grocery shopping.

Philadelphia banned all indoor dining at restaurants and indoor gatherings of any size, public or private, of people from different households, starting this Friday.

In Michigan, Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer warned she has the authority to issue a second stay-at-home order to curb the spiking coronavirus if necessary and said it was "incredibly reckless" for President Donald Trump's science adviser Scott Atlas to urge people to "rise up" against Michigan's latest restrictions.

Over the weekend, Whitmer announced that Michigan high schools and colleges must halt in-person classes, restaurants must stop indoor dining and entertainment businesses must close for three weeks. Gathering sizes also will be tightened.

Fourteen men were charged earlier this fall in an alleged plot to kidnap the governor in anger over her COVID-19 restrictions.

Atlas later tweeted that he "NEVER" would endorse or incite violence.

Even North Dakota Republican Gov. Doug Burgum, who has resisted a mask mandate for months, put one in place over the weekend, amid a severe outbreak in the state. Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds took a similar action and enacted a limited version of a mask mandate Monday.

Still, several other GOP governors were taking incremental steps, or resisting even those — continuing to emphasize "personal responsibility" rather than government edicts. Oklahoma's Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt announced bars and restaurants must space tables 6 feet apart and end in-person service at 11 p.m.

In hard-hit South Dakota, Gov. Kristi Noem continued her hands-off approach and resisted a mask mandate or other restrictions.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott in recent days has been emphasizing that new treatments and vaccines are

expected to become available soon.

Vice President Mike Pence sounded an upbeat tone Monday on a call with governors, saying that the government is ready to help states where hospitals are nearing capacity and emphasizing that vaccines are coming.

"America has never been more prepared to combat this virus," he said.

## 2nd virus vaccine shows striking success in US tests

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

A second experimental COVID-19 vaccine — this one from Moderna Inc. — yielded extraordinarily strong early results Monday, another badly needed dose of hope as the pandemic enters a terrible new phase.

Moderna said its vaccine appears to be 94.5% effective, according to preliminary data from an ongoing study. A week ago, competitor Pfizer Inc. announced its own vaccine looked 90% effective — news that puts both companies on track to seek permission within weeks for emergency use in the U.S.

The results are "truly striking," said Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's top infectious-diseases expert. "The vaccines that we're talking about, and vaccines to come, are really the light at the end of the tunnel."

A vaccine can't come fast enough, as virus cases topped 11 million in the U.S. over the weekend — 1 million of them recorded in just the past week — and governors and mayors are ratcheting up restrictions ahead of Thanksgiving. The outbreak has killed more than 1.3 million people worldwide, over 246,000 of them in the U.S.

Stocks rallied on Wall Street and around the world on rising hopes that the global economy could start returning to normal in the coming months. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained more than 470 points, or 1.6%, to close at a record high of over 29,950. Moderna stock was up almost 10%.

Both vaccines require two shots, given several weeks apart. U.S. officials said they hope to have about 20 million Moderna doses and another 20 million of the vaccine made by Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech to use in late December.

Dr. Stephen Hoge, Moderna's president, welcomed the "really important milestone" but said having similar results from two different companies is what's most reassuring.

"That should give us all hope that actually a vaccine is going to be able to stop this pandemic and hopefully get us back to our lives," Hoge told The Associated Press. He added: "It won't be Moderna alone that solves this problem. It's going to require many vaccines" to meet the global demand.

If the Food and Drug Administration allows emergency use of Moderna's or Pfizer's candidate, there will be limited, rationed supplies before the end of the year.

Exactly who is first in line has yet to be decided. But Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said the hope is that enough doses are available by the end of January to vaccinate adults over 65, who are at the highest risk from the coronavirus, and health care workers. Fauci said it may take until spring or summer before anyone who is not high risk and wants a shot can get one.

Neal Browning of Bothell, Washington, who rolled up his sleeve back in March for the first testing of Moderna's vaccine in humans, said he is excited about Monday's "excellent news" but is still carefully wearing a mask and taking other precautions.

"I'm super happy to be a part of this and to try and help bring some kind of peace back to the world," Browning said. "I have a lot of hope."

The National Institutes of Health helped create the vaccine Moderna is manufacturing, and NIH's director, Dr. Francis Collins, said the two companies' parallel results give scientists "a lot of confidence that we're on the path towards having effective vaccines."

But "we're also at this really dark time," he warned, saying people can't let down their guard during the months it will take for doses of any vaccines cleared by the FDA to start reaching a large share of the population.

Moderna's vaccine is being studied in 30,000 volunteers who received either the real thing or a dummy

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shot. On Sunday, an independent monitoring board examined 95 infections that were recorded after volunteers' second shot. Only five of the illnesses were in people given the vaccine.

Earlier this year, Fauci said he would be happy with a COVID-19 vaccine that was 60% effective.

The study is continuing, and Moderna acknowledged the protection rate might change as more COVID-19 infections are detected. Also, it's too soon to know how long protection lasts. Both cautions apply to Pfizer's vaccine as well.

But Moderna's independent monitors reported some additional, promising tidbits: All 11 severe COVID-19 cases were among placebo recipients, and there were no significant safety concerns. The main side effects were fatigue, muscle aches and injection-site pain after the second dose.

Scientists not involved with the testing were encouraged but cautioned that the FDA still must scrutinize the safety data and decide whether to allow vaccinations outside of a research study.

"We're not to the finish line yet," said Dr. James Cutrell, an infectious-disease expert at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. "If there's an impression or perception that there's just a rubber stamp, or due diligence wasn't done to look at the data, that could weaken public confidence."

States already are gearing up for what is expected to be the biggest vaccination campaign in U.S. history. First the shots have to arrive where they're needed, and Pfizer's must be kept at ultra-cold temperatures — around minus 94 degrees Fahrenheit. Moderna's vaccine also starts off frozen, but the company said Monday it can be thawed and kept in a regular refrigerator for 30 days, easing that concern.

Beyond the U.S., other governments and the World Health Organization, which aims to buy doses for poor countries, will have to separately decide if and when vaccines should be rolled out broadly.

"There are many, many questions still remaining," including how long protection lasts and if the first vaccines to emerge work as well in older people as in the young, said WHO chief scientist Dr. Soumya Swaminathan. "We also hope the clinical trials will continue to collect data, because it's really going to be important for us to know in the long term."

The vaccine from Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Moderna is among 11 candidates in late-stage testing around the world, four of them in huge studies in the United States. Collins stressed that more U.S. volunteers are needed for those studies.

Elsewhere around the world, China and Russia have been offering different experimental vaccines to people before completing final-stage testing.

Both Moderna's shots and the Pfizer-BioNTech candidate are so-called mRNA vaccines, a brand-new technology. They aren't made with the coronavirus itself, meaning there's no chance anyone could catch it from the shots. Instead, the vaccine contains a piece of genetic code that trains the immune system to recognize the spiked protein on the surface of the virus.

Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla tweeted that he was thrilled at Moderna's news, saying, "Our companies share a common goal — defeating this dreaded disease."

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AP Photographer Ted Warren contributed to this report.

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

## **AP FACT CHECK: Trump conclusively lost, denies the evidence**

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the face of conclusive evidence that he lost, President Donald Trump is claiming "I won."

His tweet Monday sought to perpetuate the mathematically impossible and thoroughly debunked myth that he pulled out a victory from the election that definitively chose Democrat Joe Biden as the next president.

Trump's refusal to acknowledge the outcome nearly two weeks after Election Day is denying Biden access to the money, information sharing and machinery of presidential transitions as the coronavirus

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pandemic rages in the U.S. and as the incoming president's team is left in the dark about any national security threats that Trump's departing team might know about.

TRUMP: "I won the Election!" — tweet.

THE FACTS: No, Biden won the election.

Biden achieved victory in key states such as Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Arizona, topping the 270 electoral vote threshold to clinch the presidency, with room to spare.

If Biden's advantage holds in Georgia after a recount, he would end up with 306 electoral votes, a total that Trump called a "landslide" when states delivered him that number in 2016 despite his loss of the popular vote. (Trump ended up with 304 electoral votes because two electors defected.)

Biden leads Georgia by 14,122 votes, or 0.28 percentage points. There is no precedent of a recount erasing a lead of that size. But Biden already has enough electoral votes without Georgia.

Trump's allegations of massive voting fraud have been refuted by a variety of judges, state election officials and an arm of his own administration's Homeland Security Department. Many of his campaign's lawsuits across the country have been thrown out of court.

No case has established irregularities of a scale that would change the outcome. Lawsuits that remain do not contain evidence that would flip the result.

Indeed, a coalition of state election officials and the Trump administration's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency has declared that the election was the most secure in history, with "no evidence that any voting system deleted or lost votes, changed votes or was in any way compromised."

On Monday, 59 leading U.S. election security experts released a letter saying they have reviewed all claims that the 2020 election was somehow rigged by exploiting technical vulnerabilities and found them to be "unsubstantiated" or "technically incoherent." They said they found nothing to support a conclusion that the outcome in any state was altered through technical compromise.

A small but growing number of Republican officeholders are asking Trump to face the reality of his defeat so that the Biden administration will have a better chance of getting off to an effective start in a time of crisis.

Even Republican lawmakers who are refusing to buck Trump on the election's outcome say he should not be denying intelligence briefings to Biden.

They are mindful of the 9/11 Commission Report on the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, which warned of the risk of delaying presidential transitions. That transition was rushed because of the delay in discerning the 2000 election's winner, leaving critical high-level positions vacant for months and perhaps helping terrorists advance their plot without the U.S. being sufficiently on guard.

But with Trump holding out and attempting to sow confusion, his appointee at the General Services Administration has yet to make a formal designation of Biden as the president-elect. Doing so puts the Presidential Transition Act in unfettered operation.

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Associated Press writers Stephen Ohlemacher and Frank Bajak contributed to this report.

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

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## 'More people may die': Biden urges Trump to aid transition

By STEVE PEOPLES AND ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden on Monday warned of dire consequences if President Donald Trump and his administration continue to refuse to coordinate with his transition team on the coronavirus pandemic and block briefings on national security, policy issues and vaccine plans.

The remarks marked Biden's toughest comments to date on Trump's failure to acknowledge his election



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loss and cooperate with the incoming administration for a peaceful transfer of power.

"More people may die if we don't coordinate," Biden told reporters during a news conference in Wilmington, Delaware.

Biden and his aides — and a small but growing group of Republicans — have emphasized the importance of being briefed on White House efforts to control the pandemic and distribute prospective vaccines. The Trump administration is working on its own distribution plan, while Biden's chief of staff indicated his transition team will proceed with their own planning separately because of the obstruction.

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, said it's "absolutely crucial that the apparent president-elect and his team have full access to the planning that has gone on" for vaccine distribution.

"It is no easy matter" to distribute a vaccine, Collins said, so "it's absolutely imperative for public health, that all of the planning that's gone on for which the current administration deserves credit, be shared with the new administration."

Collins' remarks were echoed Monday by Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska. Last week, a larger group of Republicans in Congress called on the Trump administration to allow Biden to begin receiving national security briefings.

The outgoing president has refused so far to bend to pressure from Democrats or Republicans as he continues to dispute his loss to Biden, who has surpassed the 270 electoral vote threshold to become president and is leading Trump by more than 5.5 million votes nationally.

Cooperation between the outgoing and incoming administrations, traditionally a key component to the peaceful transfer of power in the United States, takes on heightened significance this year because of the coronavirus pandemic, which is escalating dramatically heading into the holiday season.

Biden called the vaccine distribution a "huge, huge undertaking," and said that if his team has to wait until he takes office to dig into the government's distribution plan, they'll be "behind, over a month, month and a half."

Before taking questions, Biden outlined his plans to alleviate inequality and boost the U.S. economy but said that any structural reforms depended first on reining in the pandemic and delivering more immediate relief.

"Once we shut down the virus and deliver economic relief to workers and businesses, then we can start to build back better than before," he said.

Biden has vowed to spend trillions of dollars to reinvigorate U.S. manufacturing, expand health care coverage and combat climate change, among other priorities. But his chief priority remains controlling the pandemic, which is surging to record levels and forcing state and local leaders to implement new rounds of restrictions on local businesses.

The president-elect has so far tried to sidestep difficult questions about whether he might support a short-term national lockdown to arrest the surge of coronavirus cases. Since defeating Trump, Biden has devoted most of his public remarks to encouraging Americans to wear masks and embrace social distancing measures.

But members of his coronavirus advisory board have been more specific. One member, Michael Osterholm, recently suggested a four- to six-week national lockdown with financial aid for Americans whose livelihoods would be affected. He later walked back the remarks and was rebutted by two other members of the panel who said a widespread lockdown shouldn't be under consideration.

Speaking Monday on "CBS This Morning," Osterholm was not asked about a potential lockdown, but he said the nation needs "a standard set of principles."

"Right now, we don't have a standardized set so you're hearing all these governors and mayors are scrambling to try to find what is the right answer for us, and it would surely help all of them, and that's what I'm hearing from them, that we have a standardized set of recommendations and protocols," he said.

Biden was asked Monday whether he would encourage leaders to look at potentially reinstating stay-at-home orders now that the pandemic is surging nationwide. He avoided answering directly and instead called on officials to embrace mask-wearing and criticized those who haven't.

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Before his Monday address, Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris held virtual meetings with AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, General Motors CEO Mary Barra and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, among others.

The U.S. economy has recovered from the pandemic-induced shutdowns this spring more quickly than most economists expected. The unemployment rate dropped a full percentage point last month to 6.9% and those who still have jobs — many of them working from home — have stepped up their spending on cars, electronics and home renovations.

But much of the rebound was fueled by \$2 trillion in stimulus money that has largely run its course. And there are signs that the ongoing increases in confirmed virus cases are making Americans more cautious about traveling and shopping.

Consumers cut back on spending in early November, according to JPMorgan Chase, which tracks spending on 30 million of its debit and credit cards. Spending declines have been larger in some states with severe outbreaks, such as Iowa and North Dakota.

Most economists support another round of stimulus funding, including loans to small businesses, extended unemployment benefits and support for states and cities. Congressional Democrats have previously backed another \$2 trillion in aid.

Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Republican majority leader, has pointed to the falling unemployment rate as evidence that much less stimulus is needed.

But on whether Biden should receive coronavirus briefings, many of Trump's allies on Capitol Hill remained dug in.

"We've been working for the past year to make sure the vaccine will be delivered and it will be starting to be delivered probably in December, so he won't even be president of the United States when the vaccine starts," Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said in pushing back against Biden's comments.

"He can be privy, but he won't have anything to do with it," Cornyn said. "I mean, I hope by the time he's inaugurated that we're going to be well underway."

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Associated Press writers Christopher Rugaber and Lisa Mascaro in Washington contributed to this report.

## **AP sources: Trump to order troop cuts in Afghanistan, Iraq**

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

President Donald Trump is expected to cut a significant number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan and a smaller number in Iraq by the final days of his presidency, U.S. officials said Monday. The plan would run counter to military commanders' advice over the past year, while still falling short of Trump's much-touted goal to end America's long wars.

The decision comes just days after Trump installed a new slate of loyalists in top Pentagon positions who share his frustration with the continued troop presence in the war zones. But the expected plans would leave 2,500 troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan, meaning that President-elect Joe Biden would be the fourth president to grapple with the still-smoldering conflicts launched in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

U.S. officials said military leaders were told over the weekend about the planned withdrawals and that an executive order is in the works but has not yet been delivered to commanders. Officials cautioned that there could always be changes, and Trump is known to make snap decisions based on media reports and online chatter. Officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

There are 4,500 to 5,000 troops in Afghanistan and more than 3,000 in Iraq.

As news broke about the plan, Republican leaders on Capitol Hill issued stark warnings about making any hasty exit from Afghanistan that could jeopardize the peace process and undermine counterterrorism efforts.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said the Trump administration has made tremendous headway against terrorist threats, but warned against a potentially "humiliating" pullout from Afghanistan that he

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said would be worse than President Barack Obama's 2011 withdrawal from Iraq and reminiscent of the U.S. departure from Saigon in 1975.

Rep. Michael McCaul, Republican leader on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said of the plans for Afghanistan, "We need to ensure a residual force is maintained for the foreseeable future to protect U.S. national and homeland security interests and to help secure peace for Afghanistan."

Under the planned order, the troop cuts would be completed just five days before Biden takes office on Jan. 20. Military commanders have expressed less concern about the reduction in Iraq, where the Iraqi forces are better able to maintain their nation's security.

Trump's new Pentagon chief, Christopher Miller, hinted at the troop withdrawals over the weekend in a carefully worded message to the force.

"We remain committed to finishing the war that al-Qaida brought to our shores in 2001," he said, and warned that "we must avoid our past strategic error of failing to see the fight through to the finish."

But Miller also made it clear that "all wars must end."

"This fight has been long, our sacrifices have been enormous. and many are weary of war — I'm one of them," he said. "Ending wars requires compromise and partnership. We met the challenge; we gave it our all. Now, it's time to come home."

The accelerated withdrawal, however, goes against the longstanding advice of Trump's military leadership, including Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, top U.S. commander for the Middle East. But officials suggested that commanders will be able to live with the partial pullout, which allows them to keep counterterrorism troops in Afghanistan and gives them time to remove critical equipment from the country.

McKenzie and others have repeatedly argued that a hasty withdrawal could undercut negotiations to finalize ongoing peace negotiations between the Taliban and representatives of Afghan society, including the Afghan government. And they also warn that U.S. forces should remain in the country to keep Islamic State militants in check.

Biden has sounded less absolute about troop withdrawal. He has said some troops could stay in Afghanistan to focus on the counterterrorism mission. In response to a questionnaire before the election, he said: "Americans are rightly weary of our longest war; I am, too. But we must end the war responsibly, in a manner that ensures we both guard against threats to our homeland and never have to go back."

The expected order, first reported by CNN, adds to what has been a litany of muddled White House and Pentagon messages on troops withdrawals from both Afghanistan and Iraq, only exacerbating what has been an emotional roller coaster for the troops and their families. Adding to the confusion: The Pentagon has historically failed to count up to hundreds of troops actually on the ground, including some special operations forces and personnel on temporary duty for only a few months. Often that is due to political sensitivities in those countries and in the U.S.

The Pentagon was already on track to cut troops levels in Afghanistan to about 4,500 by mid-November. U.S. military leaders have consistently said that going below that number must be based on conditions on the ground, including a measurable reduction in attacks by the Taliban on Afghan troops. And they insist they have not seen that yet.

America's exit from Afghanistan after 19 years was laid out in a February agreement Washington reached with the Taliban. That agreement said U.S. troops would be out of Afghanistan in 18 months, provided the Taliban honored a commitment to fight terrorist groups, with most attention seemingly focused on the Islamic State group's affiliate in the country.

Military officials also have warned that there is a large amount of critical, classified equipment in Afghanistan that must be removed, but it will take time. They also say that any full U.S. withdrawal needs to be coordinated with other coalition allies that have troops in the country.

The White House, however, issued a confusing series of statements about Afghanistan over the past month. Trump on Oct. 7 tweeted that "we should have the small remaining number of our BRAVE Men and Women serving in Afghanistan home by Christmas." When asked about those comments, Robert O'Brien, his national security adviser, said Trump was just expressing a hope.

O'Brien, meanwhile, has said the number of troops in Afghanistan would drop to 2,500 by early next year. At the time, defense officials said they had not received orders to cut troops to 2,500. And they

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warned that withdrawing troops quickly could remove some incentive for the struggling peace talks.

According to the February agreement, the U.S. troop withdrawal next year is tied to the Taliban's commitment to fight militant groups — such as the Islamic State group — in the county, and is not linked to successful negotiations between the Taliban and government. The Islamic State group is seen as extremely dangerous and intent on targeting America and other Western interests.

The Taliban and Afghan government negotiators have been meeting for over a month in the Middle Eastern state of Qatar with little sign of progress. The Taliban, meanwhile, have staged near daily deadly attacks against Afghan forces.

Associated Press writers Kathy Gannon in Islamabad, Pakistan, and Lisa Mascaro in Washington contributed to this report.

## **Pandemic politics leave DC in gridlock as virus surges**

By ZEKE MILLER and ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the nation gripped by a resurgent coronavirus and looking to Washington for help, President Donald Trump and lawmakers in Congress have a message for struggling Americans: Just keep waiting.

The urgency of the nationwide surge in virus cases, spiking hospitalizations and increasing death tolls has hardly resonated in the nation's capital as its leaders are vexed by transition politics and trying to capitalize on the promise of a coming vaccine. The virus has killed more than 247,000 Americans this year and infected at least 11.1 million — some 1 million of them in just the past week.

Yet in Congress, where talks over economic relief bills stalled out months ago, lame-duck approval of aid is hardly front-of-mind. Across town at the White House, Trump is more focused on getting credit for the vaccine development push and blocking President-elect Joe Biden from getting the information needed to ensure the new administration can smoothly take over the fight against the pandemic.

"Another Vaccine just announced," Trump tweeted Monday morning after Moderna announced that its candidate appeared in early testing to be 95% effective against the virus. "For those great 'historians', please remember that these great discoveries, which will end the China Plague, all took place on my watch!"

On a call Monday with governors, Vice President Mike Pence, who heads the White House coronavirus task force, struck a rosy tone and asked states to give their residents comfort that vaccines are coming and that "America and your state has never been more prepared."

That didn't stop Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards from appealing to Pence and Trump for a more unified message on the importance of social distancing and wearing masks. And Dr. Deborah Birx, the task force coordinator, reported that 27 states were in the "red zone" for widespread transmission of the virus — more widespread and worrisome than spikes seen earlier this year.

Biden, who has warned of a "dark winter" ahead on the virus, called for the Trump administration to share its vaccine distribution plans with his own incoming administration, warning that "more people may die if you don't coordinate."

Saying vaccine plans are vital to repairing the nation's economy, Biden said, "If we have to wait until Jan. 20 to start that planning, it puts us behind."

Biden said he was hopeful that Trump "will be mildly more enlightened before we get to Jan. 20." He said he understood Trump's "reluctance" to admit defeat and share his administration's plans but called it "a shame."

There's no progress in Congress yet, either. The split-decision election — in which Democrats absorbed sizable losses in House races despite defeating Trump — hasn't sparked any progress or prodded House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., or Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., to move from their pre-election postures.

Pelosi wants to go big, say \$2 trillion; McConnell wants a smaller package in the \$500 billion range that his rightward-tilting colleagues can live with. Moving toward somewhere in the middle would be difficult



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for both camps.

Trump is a disruptive factor on Capitol Hill and no deal is possible without his buy-in, or at least his signature. Without a better and more reliable signal of Trump's intentions, both McConnell and Pelosi could be wary of navigating the turbulence required to forge an agreement.

The results of the election have also weakened the negotiating position of Pelosi, who played hardball during the weeks leading up to the election, only to come away empty-handed. But she is not — yet — wavering from her insistence on a sweeping and comprehensive relief bill rather than the more targeted approach favored by Republicans.

And for now, Pelosi is devoting her energies to soothing her unhappy Democratic caucus in advance of leadership elections this week. It seems like the wrong moment to telegraph concessions to McConnell and the Republicans.

The two longstanding adversaries are formidable when their interests align, but their offices say they have not spoken since the election and don't know when they will. The sole must-pass legislation for the lame-duck session is a temporary spending bill to avert a government shutdown — or a broader governmentwide omnibus funding bill if negotiations go well. COVID relief could be an add-on to either bill.

"Frankly, our best chance to get some COVID relief might be to get a regular funding bill and put the most critical pieces of COVID relief on that," said Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo. "There seems to be more interest in trying to move an omnibus package and more serious discussion about that than I've heard so far about a COVID package."

The Biden team would like a down payment of COVID relief now and is standing by Pelosi's handling of the matter.

"We have her back in handling this," incoming Biden chief of staff Ron Klain said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press." "Our message to Speaker Pelosi is: 'Keep doing what you're doing to the Republicans. Let's get this done.' I mean, this could be a first example of bipartisan action post the election."

Meanwhile, Trump's preferred science adviser, Dr. Scott Atlas, stepped up his criticism of governors for moving to reimpose restrictions meant to slow the spread of the virus. On Sunday night, Atlas urged people to "rise up" after Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced closures to some schools and businesses in the face of the latest wave of cases.

Atlas, who is not an infectious disease expert, earned himself a White House appointment by echoing Trump's skepticism of mask-wearing and support for "reopening" the economy. Trump has urged supporters to push Whitmer to reopen the state following virus restrictions, though many rules had been lifted previously. And 14 men have been charged in connection with an alleged plot to kidnap the governor.

"It's just incredibly reckless considering everything that has happened, everything that is going on," Whitmer said. "We really all need to be focused on the public health crisis that is ravaging our country and that poses a very real threat to every one of us."

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Associated Press writers Alan Suderman in Richmond, Va., David Eggert in Lansing, Mich., and Steve Peoples in Wilmington, Del., contributed.

## What does COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness mean?

By The Associated Press undefined

What does COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness mean?

It refers to the likelihood that a coronavirus shot will work in people.

Two vaccine makers have said that preliminary results from their late-stage studies suggest their experimental vaccines are strongly protective. Moderna this week said its vaccine appears nearly 95% effective. This comes on the heels of Pfizer's announcement that its shot appeared similarly effective.

Those numbers raised hopes around the world that vaccines could help put an end to the pandemic sometime next year if they continue to show that they prevent disease and are safe.

Effectiveness numbers will change as the vaccine studies continue since the early calculations were

based on fewer than 100 COVID-19 cases in each study. But early results provide strong signals that the vaccine could prevent a majority of disease when large groups of people are vaccinated.

U.S. health officials said a coronavirus vaccine would need to be at least 50% effective before they would consider approving it for use. There was concern that coronavirus vaccines might be only as effective as flu vaccines, which have ranged from 20% to 60% effective in recent years.

The broad, early effectiveness figures don't tell the whole story. Scientists also need to understand how well the vaccine protects people in different age groups and demographic categories.

For both vaccines, the interim results were based on people who had COVID-19 symptoms that prompted a virus test. That means we don't know yet whether someone who's vaccinated might still get infected -- even if they show no symptoms -- and spread the virus.

Also unknown is whether the shots will give lasting protection, or whether boosters will be required.

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The AP is answering your questions about the coronavirus in this series. Submit them at: [FactCheck@AP.org](mailto:FactCheck@AP.org).

Read previous Viral Questions:

How does the coronavirus affect the heart?

Does the flu vaccine affect my chances of getting COVID-19?

Am I immune to the coronavirus if I've already had it?

## **The Latest: Biden says his family following holiday guidance**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on President-elect Joe Biden (all times local):

4 p.m.

As Americans face the complications of holding holiday celebrations amid the ongoing pandemic, President-elect Joe Biden says he and his family are trying to navigate the same issues, with safety measures.

Biden said Monday that he and his wife are planning to follow the advice of medical officials who recommend no more than 10 people at a gathering, masked and socially distanced. Biden also says anyone at their Thanksgiving gathering would be tested for the virus 24 hours before getting together.

The restrictions may be difficult, but Biden says, "I just want to make sure we're able to be together next Thanksgiving, next Christmas."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is urging people to celebrate virtually or with members of their household, noting that in-person gatherings with people from different households "pose varying levels of risk." Guidance also notes that a gathering's size "should be determined based on the ability of attendees from different households" to socially distance and follow hygiene recommendations.

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HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PRESIDENT-ELECT JOE BIDEN'S TRANSITION TO THE WHITE HOUSE:

President-elect Joe Biden met with several business and labor leaders ahead of an economic address on Monday. He is optimistic about the economy despite the surging coronavirus pandemic.

Read more:

— Biden seeks window on vaccine plans as Trump stalls handoff

— AP FACT CHECK: Trump conclusively lost, denies the evidence

— Hand tally of Georgia presidential race continues

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HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON:

3:55 p.m.

President-elect Joe Biden says that more coronavirus deaths will be the consequence of the Trump administration refusing to share its vaccine distribution plans with his incoming administration.

Asked about the importance of obtaining such plans, Biden said Monday after a speech in Wilmington, Delaware, that "more people may die if you don't coordinate."

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Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris have spoken about the dangers of the Trump administration's refusal to provide them with information and resources needed to ensure a smooth transition. President Donald Trump has continued to falsely claim he won the Nov. 3 election, citing unsubstantiated claims of widespread voter fraud.

Biden says a vaccine is vital to repairing nation's economy, Biden says, "If we have to wait until Jan. 20 to start that planning, it puts us behind."

Biden says he understands Trump's "reluctance" to admit defeat and share plans but calls it "a shame."

3:50 p.m.

President-elect Joe Biden is urging Congress to pass another round of coronavirus relief.

Biden on Monday referenced the coronavirus relief bill passed by the Democratic-controlled House earlier this year. It would provide \$3 trillion in relief for state and local governments, direct cash payments to individuals, assistance for renters and more.

It was not taken up in the Republican-controlled Senate. Negotiations on a relief package between Congress and the White House stalled before the election.

Biden says both tackling the virus and delivering economic relief are keys to start rebuilding the nation's economy.

His remarks came after a Monday meeting with business and labor leaders. He says the two groups were "singing from the same hymnal."

3:35 p.m.

President-elect Joe Biden says the outgoing Trump administration's failure to share specific plans on combating the coronavirus pandemic is stymying American businesses' abilities to find ways to grow and survive in challenging circumstances.

Biden said during a speech Monday in Wilmington, Delaware, that "the sooner we have access to the administration's distribution plan, the sooner this transition will smoothly move forward." Specifics that the administration has withheld, Biden said, like vaccine distribution, could help "small businesses and entrepreneurs that are the backbone of our communities but are teetering on the edge."

Biden says he and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris had an "encouraging" virtual meeting with nine leaders of some of the country's largest labor unions like the AFL-CIO and corporations, including Microsoft and Target. Biden says the leaders "all agree that means rallying the country behind a national strategy with robust public health measures."

In her remarks, Harris pledged to shore up the economy by "creating millions of good-paying union jobs."

3:25 p.m.

Vice President-elect Kamala Harris says she and President-elect Joe Biden "don't have a moment to waste" when it comes to tackling the coronavirus pandemic.

Harris made brief remarks Monday after the two met with business and labor leaders about the coronavirus and its economic impact.

Her comments demonstrate that she and Biden are moving forward despite President Donald Trump's refusal to concede the election and formally allow the transition process to begin.

Harris says the road ahead "will not be easy." She says she and Biden witnessed the economic devastation of the pandemic firsthand on the campaign trail.

## About 90K sex abuse claims filed in Boy Scouts bankruptcy

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Close to 90,000 sexual abuse claims have been filed against the Boy Scouts of America as the Monday deadline arrived for submitting claims in the organization's bankruptcy case.

The number far exceeds the initial projections of lawyers across the United States who have been sign-

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ing up clients since the Boy Scouts filed for bankruptcy protection in February in the face of hundreds of lawsuits alleging decades-old sex abuse by Scout leaders.

"We are devastated by the number of lives impacted by past abuse in Scouting and moved by the bravery of those who have come forward," the Boy Scouts said in a statement. "We are heartbroken that we cannot undo their pain."

A few hours before the 5 p.m. EST deadline, the number of claims totaled 88,500, lawyers said.

Eventually, the proceedings in federal bankruptcy court will lead to the creation of a compensation fund to pay out settlements to abuse survivors whose claims are upheld.

The potential size of the fund is not yet known and will be the subject of complex negotiations. The national organization is expected to contribute a substantial portion of its assets, which include financial investments and real estate. The Boy Scouts' insurers also will be contributing, as will the Boy Scouts' roughly 260 local councils and companies that insured them in the past.

Andrew Van Arsdale, a lawyer with a network called Abused in Scouting, said it has signed up about 16,000 claimants. He said that number doubled after the Boy Scouts, under the supervision of a bankruptcy judge, launched a nationwide advertising campaign on Aug. 31 to notify victims that they had until Nov. 16 to seek compensation.

"They spent millions trying to encourage people to come forward," Van Arsdale said. "Now, the question is whether they can make good on their commitment."

The Boy Scouts said it "intentionally developed an open, accessible process to reach survivors and help them take an essential step toward receiving compensation."

"The response we have seen from survivors has been gut-wrenching," the organization added. "We are deeply sorry."

The bankruptcy has been painful for the 110-year-old Boy Scouts, which has been a pillar of American civic life for generations. Its finances were already strained by sex abuse settlements and declining membership — now below 2 million from a peak of over 4 million in the 1970s.

Most of the pending sex abuse claims date to the 1960s, '70s and '80s, before the Boy Scouts adopted criminal background checks, abuse prevention training for all staff and volunteers, and a rule that two or more adult leaders must be present during activities.

Among the contentious issues still to be addressed in the bankruptcy case is the extent to which the Boy Scouts' local councils contribute to the compensation fund.

In its bankruptcy filing, the national organization said the councils, which have extensive property holdings and other assets, are separate legal entities and should not be included as debtors in the case. An ad hoc committee representing the councils has been negotiating what they will pay in.

Under the terms of the case, no additional sex abuse claims can be filed against the Boy Scouts after Monday. However, attorney Jason Amala, part of a legal team representing more than 1,000 claimants, said new claims still could be filed against local councils in some states that have victim-friendly statute-of-limitations laws, such as New York, New Jersey and California.

Lawyer Paul Mones, who won a \$19.9 million sex abuse verdict against the Boy Scouts in Oregon in 2010, said painstaking work lies ahead to determine which insurers were responsible for coverage of the national organization and the local councils over the decades in which abuse occurred.

He said the eventual payments are likely to vary, depending on the severity and duration of the abuse. "The number of claims is mind-boggling," Mones said, noting that many abuse victims likely have not come forward. "It's chilling in terms of the amount of horror that was experienced."

Some of the claims may be hard to verify, if they involve abuse allegations against volunteer Scout leaders whose names don't appear in official rosters from long ago, Mones said.

One of the official parties in the case, a group of nine sex abuse survivors representing all the victims, called the case "the largest and most tragic bankruptcy ever resulting from sexual abuse liability."

"More sexual abuse claims will be filed in the Boy Scouts bankruptcy than all claims filed against the Catholic Church throughout the nation," the Torts Claimants Committee said.

"Sexual abuse in scouting is unprecedented and the remedies for victims must, likewise, be unprec-



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edented," said the committee's chairman, John Humphrey.

## After Trump, will the presidency recede a bit for Americans?

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Calvin Coolidge, known by some as "Silent Cal" during his time in the White House, used his autobiography to live up to his nickname. "The words of a president," he wrote in 1929 after leaving office, "have an enormous weight and ought not to be used indiscriminately."

The world is very different now. Communication is instantaneous. Americans — even a president — are often measured by the quantity and volume of what is now called their "content." Since he took office in 2017 (and for many years before that), Donald Trump has been a different kind of president when it comes to communication — a more-is-better kind of guy.

You can adore Trump or despise him. But from late-night tweet storms to oft-repeated untruths to provocative statements about everything from the kneeling of pro football players to canned beans to buying Greenland, there's one thing it has been almost impossible to do with the president of the United States these past four years: ignore him.

"No one can get away from it. It's never happened before. I've always cared about the president, but it's never been like this," says Syd Straw, an entertainer and artist who lives in the Vermont woods. "Even people who like him feel that way, I think."

Now, as another administration prepares to take the reins of American power, have the Trump years forever changed the place that the presidency occupies in American life and Americans' lives? Has Calvin Coolidge's statement become woefully outdated in the era of the ever-present presidency, or is it an idea whose time has returned, as voiced by a sign on the fence at Lafayette Square near the White House last week: "Enough!"

The presidency was devised as a combination of two things — a big-time leader and a regular person from our ranks. And the American people have always wanted to interact with it, or at least feel they are. In the 1800s, they actually were: Andrew Jackson's inauguration featured an open house in which people wandered in and out of the White House at will. Access in varying degrees continued for a half century until security concerns ended it.

The TV-friendly Kennedy administration elevated personality to a height nearly on par with competence. And the stature of the office — perched high upon a metaphorical hill, of the people but distant from them — has competed ever since with the desire to bring it down to Earth. Thus did Bill Clinton answer the famous 1994 question on MTV — "Boxers or briefs?" — and George W. Bush gain stature as the candidate you'd "want to sit down and have a beer with."

But none of those leaders was communicating with the American public directly and injecting fresh material on multiple topics into the national conversation multiple times a day. There is simply no precedent for Donald Trump, who — like so many among us — has holed up in his bedroom late at night with his phone and tweeted about things that irritated him. Never before have 280 characters from the planet's most powerful person seemed nearer. Perhaps they never will again.

Former President Barack Obama even deployed the Trump omnipresence as a talking point while stumping for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

"Joe and Kamala, when they are in office ... you're not going to have to think about them every single day," Obama told a drive-in rally in Orlando, Florida, in late October. "It just won't be so exhausting. You'll be able to go about your lives."

Many Trump supporters, who beg to differ, have loved this ubiquity. To them, it's transparency: He has brought to the presidency a combination of accessibility and pugnaciousness that floods multiple channels — and is useful even when it's draining, which it sometimes is even for them. "Even Trump's supporters are getting tired of his daily drama," the conservative National Review said in a headline last year.

Put simply, it's another data point in a saga of national exhaustion and media overload — particularly in the can't-get-away-from-it era of the coronavirus pandemic.

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"If we are burned out with the presidency, how do we go forward in terms of how we consume media?" wonders Apryl Alexander, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Denver who studies how people and communities meet challenges. "I have a text message from friends the minute I wake up about something (Trump) said. I think Biden and his camp are going to have to navigate this."

In many ways, it transcends Trump. The primacy of the presidency is so deeply embedded in American culture that it's often hard to look away when the occupant is saying, "Look at me."

Though the U.S. government has three branches, the chief executive has come to embody the national psyche, the national mood, the national character. It's hard to imbue a legislative body or a court with the personality of a nation. The president, though, is expected to channel all of that — and so, in a society weaned on heroes and outsized figures, commandeers the attention.

"We don't look at the office; we look at the person. And Donald Trump has been the ultimate personality," says Anthony DiMaggio, a political scientist at Lehigh University who teaches media politics and propaganda. "It's not the greatest way to have a nuanced understanding of our political system. But it's easy."

Who knows how a President Joe Biden will communicate? It's probably safe to say that his lack of history as a reality-show staple and a frequently provocative tweeter may limit how much national, moment-to-moment bandwidth he will pursue.

And Trump? When he and the presidency become separate entities, he'll continue to occupy what sociologists call "the attention space." He'll still have a lot to say, and many places to say it, and many people who want to hear it. But unlike now, when he holds the highest office in the land, more Americans will feel they can shut it off.

"What he says may continue to be newsworthy for quite a long time," says Caroline Lee, an associate professor at Lafayette College in Pennsylvania who specializes in the sociology of politics and culture. "But the question is, at some point he will die, and who takes over his attention space at that point? Could anybody command that style of attention or that amount of attention? It's hard to imagine somebody stepping into that role."

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Ted Anthony, director of digital innovation for The Associated Press, has been writing about American culture since 1990. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/anthonyted>

## Internal email reveals 65 virus cases among WHO Geneva staff

By MARIA CHENG and JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The World Health Organization has recorded 65 cases of the coronavirus among staff based at its headquarters, including five people who worked on the premises and were in contact with one another, an internal email obtained by The Associated Press shows.

The U.N. health agency said it is investigating how and where the five people became infected — and that it has not determined whether transmission happened at its offices. WHO's confirmation Monday of the figures in the email was the first time it has publicly provided such a count.

"To my knowledge, the cluster being investigated is the first evidence of potential transmission on the site of WHO," Dr. Michael Ryan, the agency's chief of emergencies, told reporters Monday after the AP reported on the internal email.

The email said about half of the infections recorded so far were in people who had been working from home. But 32 were in staff who had been working on premises at the headquarters building, where more than 2,000 people usually work and the agency says it has put in place strict hygiene, screening and other prevention measures.

In the email, which was sent to staff on Friday, Raul Thomas, who heads business operations at WHO, noted that five people — four on the same team and one who had contact with them — had tested positive for COVID-19. That could indicate that basic infection control and social distancing procedures in place may have been broken.

"We have had some cases that have been associated with the premises. We do have some cases in the

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last week that are linked together," Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's technical lead on COVID-19, confirmed Monday.

Of the linked cases, she added: "There are possible ways in which they were infected outside of the premises. So we're still doing the epidemiologic investigation with that."

Two weeks ago, Van Kerkhove had said there had been no transmission at headquarters to that point but added that the agency was monitoring it. WHO, which is coordinating the global response to the pandemic, had previously said that staffers had been infected but never provided a number or details.

"As per standard protocols, these colleagues are receiving the necessary medical attention and are recovering at home," the email Friday said. "These last five cases bring the total reported number of affected members of the Geneva based workforce to 65 since the beginning of the pandemic."

According to the email, 49 of the overall cases had occurred in the last eight weeks, "thus very much in line with the situation being reported in Geneva and the surrounding areas." He added that "a higher number of cases among those who telework might have gone unreported." The timing of the other 16 cases was not clear.

The revelation comes amid a surge of cases in Europe, host country Switzerland, and the city of Geneva, in particular.

The email did not specify who was infected, but a WHO staffer with direct knowledge of the situation who spoke on condition of anonymity because she was not authorized to speak to the press said the five linked cases included a member of the WHO director-general's leadership team who is also an infection control specialist.

Thomas' email was sent after other WHO officials raised concerns that people who had been in contact with the group were still working in the Geneva building and potentially exposing others to COVID-19, the staffer said.

The senior manager reportedly held several in-person meetings at WHO in early November before testing positive last week. The person, contacted by the AP, referred all comments to the WHO media office.

"We have not yet established whether transmission occurred on campus, but are looking into the matter," Farah Dakhilallah, a WHO spokeswoman, said in an email to the AP.

WHO has faced repeated criticism of its handling of the pandemic. U.S. President Donald Trump accused the U.N. agency of "colluding" with China to hide the extent of the initial outbreak. In June, the AP found WHO publicly lauded China for its speed and transparency, even though private meetings showed WHO officials frustrated that the country sat on releasing critical outbreak information.

The email obtained by the AP said enhanced measures to "reduce our risk profile" were being considered.

"Finally, members of the workforce are reminded that physical meetings, including gatherings in common areas or in the cafeteria, are strongly discouraged and should only take place where absolutely necessary," it added.

Elsewhere in Geneva, restaurants are among many public venues that have been closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Last month, Thomas told WHO staffers the agency was restricting access to its Geneva headquarters to critical staffers, including senior directors, their assistants and management officers. "All members for the workforce are reminded to always keep proper hand hygiene, respect physical distancing standards (at least one meter) and wear masks, when distancing is not possible," he wrote.

In normal times, an estimated 2,400 people regularly work at WHO's seven-story headquarters overlooking Geneva. As the pandemic has swelled in the area, staffers have been encouraged to work from home when possible. Non-staff visitors have been required to wear masks, and access to the building has been curtailed.

And ahead of WHO's weeklong meeting of its member states last week — which was mostly virtual — staffers were told in an internal email to take extra precautions, including mask-wearing in public places.

On Monday, from a vast meeting room at the headquarters, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and other officials were participating in a session of the agency's latest executive board meeting, which was largely conducted by video conference. He was returning from a two-week self-quarantine

at home after coming into contact with a person who tested positive. Because Tedros did not show any symptoms himself, he was not tested for COVID-19 but stayed at home out of an abundance of caution.

Cheng reported from London.

This story has been corrected to clarify that it's not clear where the five people were infected.

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

## Hate crimes in US reach highest level in more than a decade

By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hate crimes in the U.S. rose to the highest level in more than a decade as federal officials also recorded the highest number of hate-motivated killings since the FBI began collecting that data in the early 1990s, according to an FBI report released Monday.

There were 51 hate crime murders in 2019, which includes 22 people who were killed in a shooting that targeted Mexicans at a Walmart in the border city of El Paso, Texas, the report said. The suspect in that August 2019 shooting, which left two dozen other people injured, was charged with both state and federal crimes in what authorities said was an attempt to scare Hispanics into leaving the United States.

There were 7,314 hate crimes last year, up from 7,120 the year before — and approaching the 7,783 of 2008. The FBI's annual report defines hate crimes as those motivated by bias based on a person's race, religion or sexual orientation, among other categories.

Some of the 2019 increases may be the result of better reporting by police departments, but law enforcement officials and advocacy groups don't doubt that hate crimes are on the rise. The Justice Department has for years been specifically prioritizing hate crime prosecutions.

The data also shows there was a nearly 7% increase in religion-based hate crimes, with 953 reports of crimes targeting Jews and Jewish institutions last year, up from 835 the year before. The FBI said the number of hate crimes against African Americans dropped slightly to 1,930, from 1,943.

Anti-Hispanic hate crimes, however, rose to 527 in 2019, from 485 in 2018. And the total number of hate crimes based on a person's sexual orientation stayed relatively stable, with one fewer crime reported last year, compared with the year before, though there were 20 more hate crimes against gay men reported.

As the data was made public on Monday, advocacy groups, including the Anti-Defamation League, called on Congress and law enforcement agencies across the U.S. to improve data collection and reporting of hate crimes. Critics have long warned that the data may be incomplete, in part because it is based on voluntary reporting by police agencies across the country.

Last year, only 2,172 law enforcement agencies out of about 15,000 participating agencies across the country reported hate crime data to the FBI, the bureau said. And while the number of agencies reporting hate crimes increased, the number of agencies participating in the program actually dropped from the year before. A large number of police agencies appeared not to submit any hate crime data, which has been a consistent struggle for Justice Department officials.

"The total severity of the impact and damage caused by hate crimes cannot be fully measured without complete participation in the FBI's data collection process," the Anti-Defamation League's president, Jonathan Greenblatt, said in a statement.

An Associated Press investigation in 2016 found that more than 2,700 city police and county sheriff's departments across the country had not submitted a single hate crime report for the FBI's annual crime tally during the previous six years.

Greenblatt also said America must "remove the barriers that too often prevent people in marginalized communities — the individuals most likely to suffer hate crimes — from reporting hate-based incidents," a sentiment shared by other advocates.



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"The FBI's report is another reminder that we have much work to do to address hate in America," said Margaret Huang, the president of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Associated Press writer Michael Kunzelman in College Park, Md., contributed to this report.

## Hardening partisan map steepens Democrats' climb in Senate

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pinned six years in the minority, Democrats have an uphill but real shot at wresting Senate control in January, with more opportunities in 2022. Yet as states increasingly sort themselves along hardening partisan lines, it's complicating Democrats' drive to win the majority and keep it.

Thanks to this month's elections, Democrats will own all four Senate seats from purple Arizona and increasingly blue Colorado next year. If they can win January runoffs for both seats from Georgia, which has recently teetered toward them, they'll command the Senate thanks to Vice President-elect Kamala Harris' tie-breaking vote in what would be a 50-50 chamber.

Yet even as Democrats have made those gains and others since surrendering control in the 2014 elections, they've lost foundations of their old majority that will be hard to recapture. Gone are seats from Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, both Dakotas, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Missouri, North Carolina and West Virginia, all of which tilt Republican in presidential elections.

In addition, three current Senate Democrats are from states that President Donald Trump carried easily this month despite losing to Democrat Joe Biden. Sens. Joe Manchin, 73, of West Virginia, Jon Tester, 64, of Montana and Sherrod Brown, 68, of Ohio are all proven brand names in states that would be hard for Democrats to hold without them.

All this means a constricted playing field for Democrats to add seats in coming election cycles. The same is true for Republicans, but it's on Democrats to gain ground and keep it if they want to control a Senate that, with the Democratic-led House, could make Biden's legislative agenda more ambitious.

"The Democratic caucus for a long time was built on winning races in red states" where they've since lost, said Matt House, a former Senate Democratic leadership aide. "The problem is a Democratic Senate majority runs through red states, and that is an inherent structural difficulty."

Nothing is set in stone in politics, where momentum and issues can shift abruptly. Besides Georgia, Democrats hope to grab Senate seats soon in purple North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, plus Texas as that state's Hispanic population grows. GOP Sens. Richard Burr of North Carolina and Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania have said they won't seek reelection in 2022.

"A few years ago, people would have laughed at the idea of two Democratic senators from Arizona," said Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., former head of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, the party's Senate campaign arm. He said Biden's message of bringing people together will be a "potential strength in some of these states" for Democratic candidates.

Even so, recent elections underscore how states have formed into solid partisan columns as voters' ticket-splitting becomes increasingly rare.

Setting Georgia's January elections aside, in every state but six, both senators will be from the same party next year. A seventh, Vermont, is represented by a Democrat and independent Bernie Sanders, who is aligned with them.

In addition, every state represented by two senators from the same party was carried by that party's presidential candidate this year, Biden or Trump.

That pattern of partisan allegiance largely persists into the future. In the 2022 elections, Democrats will defend Senate 13 seats — all from states Biden won. Trump won 18 of the 21 seats Republicans will protect. Biden won two others, and The Associated Press hasn't yet called the presidential winner in Georgia.

"We can win all across the country" in 2022, said Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., who will lead the National Republican Senatorial Committee beginning next year. He added that without Trump on the ballot to draw GOP voters, "We'll have to really hustle."

Part of Democrats' challenge in Senate elections is their voters tend to concentrate in coastal states.

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Republicans often rely on that as a campaign theme, accusing Democrats of catering to liberal coastal elites.

"Democrats are focused on the coasts and spend a lot of time flying over the bulk of the country and talking right past it," said Scott Reed, a Republican strategist.

In one manifestation of that imbalance, more people voted for Democratic than GOP Senate candidates in 2018 by 51 million to 33 million, according to data compiled by The Associated Press. Republicans still gained two seats.

With votes still being counted in this year's elections, Republican Senate contenders have so far garnered more votes than Democrats, 42 million to 37 million, according to an AP count.

The difference between the two elections: seats from huge Democratic states like California and New York were on ballots in 2018 but not this year. Around one-third of the Senate's seats are at stake each election.

Whatever happens in Georgia in January, Democrats have high hopes for 2022. Besides defending fewer seats than Republicans, only three Democratic seats seem potentially competitive. The 21 seats Republicans must protect include Burr's in North Carolina and Toomey's in Pennsylvania, plus a competitive race in purple Wisconsin.

Yet as Biden prepares to take office, there's a warning sign for Democrats. Since Ronald Reagan's presidency, the party in control of the White House has gained Senate seats in only three midterm elections: 2018, 2002 and 1982.

Things brighten for Republicans in 2024, when they'll defend just 10 seats compared to Democrats' 23. Democratic seats in play that year include those of Manchin in West Virginia, Montana's Tester and Brown's in Ohio.

"If Democrats are going to compete in red states, they're going to have to find candidates as uncomfortable with the Democratic brand as voters in those states are," said Brad Todd, a GOP consultant.

Democrats' prospects could be further complicated after two years in which the moderate Biden pushes an agenda as progressives press him on issues like climate change and health care, dividing the party.

"You can still win red states if you recruit good candidates who are unique fits for their state," said Brian Fallon, a former Senate Democratic aide who runs Demand Justice, a progressive group. He said that requires mobilizing the party's multi-ethnic liberal voters while curbing the loss of less-educated white voters, which he called "a unique challenge."

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AP writer Stephen Ohlemacher contributed to this report.

## Retirees protest Belarus leader on 100th day since vote

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Crowds of retirees marched Monday in the Belarusian capital of Minsk, marking 100 days since mass protests began and became an almost-daily feature of life in the country after authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko won his sixth term in a widely disputed election.

More than 2,000 pensioners were estimated to have taken part in the rally, demanding the resignation of Lukashenko and a halt to the government's violent crackdown on dissent. They carried flowers and red and white flags that have become a symbol of protest.

"Lukashenko, you and my children will remember this disgrace," said one of the banners the retirees carried.

Such protests have roiled Belarus ever since the Aug. 9 election handed Lukashenko a crushing victory over his widely popular opponent Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. She and her supporters refused to recognize the result, saying the vote was riddled with fraud.

Both sides seem to be locked into a continuing cycle of protest and crackdowns, with the opposition turning out thousands in regular marches while the government uses arrests and other intimidation tactics to quash any threats to Lukashenko's 26-year hold on power. A nationwide strike called by the opposition did not catch on, although students boycotted classes for a few days.

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Authorities have cracked down hard on the largely peaceful demonstrations, the largest of which attracted up to 200,000 people. Police used stun grenades, tear gas and truncheons to disperse the rallies and detained thousands, beating many of them brutally.

According to human rights advocates, over 19,000 people have been detained since the election. At least four people are reported to have died as the result of the crackdown.

Retirees at Monday's march in Minsk carried portraits of Raman Bandarenka, a 31-year-old opposition supporter who died last week after reportedly being beaten by security forces.

"Why was (Raman) killed?" they chanted, demanding a criminal investigation into his death.

Police didn't interfere with the march but harshly dispersed a demonstration in Bandarenka's memory on Sunday, using stun grenades, tear gas and clubs and beating up protesters in shops and restaurants where they were hiding from the crackdown.

The Interior Ministry said over 700 people were detained Sunday across the country, while the Viasna human rights center put the figure at 1,291.

The continued clampdown elicited international outrage. The European Union has imposed sanctions on Lukashenko and several dozen officials over their role in it earlier this year and again condemned it following Bandarenka's death.

Steffen Seibert, spokesman for German Chancellor Angela Merkel, accused Belarusian authorities of "brutal police violence."

"This must end," he said. "The German government won't forget how people there are mistreated almost daily on the streets, and we will also not forget those who are kidnapped daily and exposed to even worse abuse behind prison walls."

Tsikhankouskaya, who is in exile in Lithuania after fleeing Belarus for her safety, called on the West to "act faster."

"Belarusians need help right now," she tweeted Monday.

"Expand the sanction list (and) impose economic restrictions. Help those repressed (and) injured. Support media (and) human rights defenders. Stop investing in banks (and) state-owned companies. Start international investigation and tribunal," she wrote.

## Tips for cooking (and saving) a smaller Thanksgiving feast

By KATIE WORKMAN Associated Press

If you're planning a smaller Thanksgiving gathering this year because of social distancing, you don't have to give up the turkey, stuffing, pie and other traditional fare.

Thanksgiving feasts have typically been tailored for a crowd: big birds, large casseroles, and so on. Your favorite recipes might serve 10 or more. But from turkey breasts to muffin-tin pies, there are ways to adapt the classics for a smaller crew, with less expense and potential for waste.

"Strangely, in the past, this time of year seemed challenging because we were trying to feed so many," says Rebecca Miller French, a food writer and founder of the State Table, a culinary studio in Kingston, New York. This year, "we are trying to feed fewer, and it may prove equally difficult, emotionally if not physically."

Many families already branch out to include main dishes other than turkey for Thanksgiving, and this could be a good year to have fun with alternatives. But if tradition beckons, as it does for most, here are some tips.

Let's start with:

### THE TURKEY

Most birds sold for Thanksgiving dinners in U.S. supermarkets have traditionally been in the 16-pound range, with some much larger. That size turkey will serve 12 to 16 people. As a rule, when buying turkey, aim for about 1 pound per person when purchasing a whole bird; when cooking a smaller bird, especially if you want leftovers, aim for about 1 ½ pounds per person.

So a 10-pound turkey might be OK for a group of 8, feeding your gang generously. But if your group is

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much smaller, think about buying just a turkey breast, say, and a couple of drumsticks.

## THE SIDES

First, you might serve fewer of them. Miller Ffrench says one of her favorite things about Thanksgiving has been "all the large variety of dishes, which just seems ridiculously decadent" now.

Instead of a table overflowing with food this year, she will spotlight each family member's favorite dish. And that's all.

"Just one kind of cranberry, not two. Just squash, and not sweet potatoes as well. I hope we will take the time to relish each bite more, really focus on the individual flavors of each food, not the collective mounded plate," she says.

"These past months have taught me to truly savor things more, figuratively and literally."

## HALVING RECIPES

Many recipes can be halved: roasted butternut squash, mashed potatoes and Brussels sprouts are all good examples.

If you have a recipe for stuffing that calls for a 9-by-13-inch pan and feeds 10-12, you can cut it in half and bake it in a 9-inch-square pan. Reduce the cooking time by about 25 percent: When it's browned and crispy on top and hot throughout, it's done. Same thing for sweet potato casserole or green bean casserole.

## PIES

Chef Maya-Camille Broussard, owner of Justice of the Pies bakery in Chicago, has some ideas for that most important category of Thanksgiving desserts: pies.

What if you'd like more than one kind of pie, but multiple 9-inch pies feel excessive?

Broussard suggests making galettes, mini pies in a muffin pan, or even whoopie pies in your favorite flavors. She also has small Le Creuset pots that she uses all the time to make individual pies.

"You may use a biscuit cutter to make small crust circles," she says. Or turn a coffee mug or a glass upside down, dip the lip in flour, and use it to cut out a circle of dough.

If you decide to make one of those smaller pies or muffin-tin pies, remember to reduce the cooking time. You might need to just rely on your eyes and nose for how long to bake them. Look for a browned crust, a slightly bubbling interior (if it's a fruit pie), or a mostly firm filling (if it's a pumpkin custard pie, for instance).

Broussard also believes in freezing pies.

"Pies usually have a high moisture retention and they freeze incredibly well," she says. "Pies are typically good in the fridge for one week and in the freezer for one to two months."

Fruit pies freeze especially well, she suggests. Thaw one on the countertop and then "pop it back in the oven to warm it up and revive the crust."

## LEFTOVERS

Finding creative ways to use Thanksgiving leftovers has always been an issue, this year even more so.

Leftover squash can become a pureed soup; turkey a pot pie and a pozole soup. Mashed potatoes might top a shepherd's pie later in the week. And everyone looks forward to a day-after-Thanksgiving turkey sandwich, maybe topped with extra cranberry sauce and a drizzle of gravy.

Miller Ffrench suggests freezing gravy flat in freezer bags and using it alongside a grilled chicken breast, or to enhance a pot pie base.

Another smart tip: "Slices of pumpkin pie are a delicious addition to any smoothie ... crust and all."

Above all, says Miller Ffrench, remember that it's not the size of the feast or the crowd that matters most: "Big or small, and most importantly, we'll be counting our blessings."

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Katie Workman writes regularly about food for The Associated Press. She has written two cookbooks focused on family-friendly cooking, "Dinner Solved!" and "The Mom 100 Cookbook." She blogs at <http://www.themom100.com/about-katie-workman>. She can be reached at [Katie@themom100.com](mailto:Katie@themom100.com).



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## Virus quarantine complicates a big week for Boris Johnson

By PAN PYLAS and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson insisted Monday he is firmly in control of the government, despite having to self-isolate for two weeks because a contact tested positive for the coronavirus.

The quarantine order came at the start of a crucial week in which Johnson is trying to suppress a new surge in U.K. coronavirus infections, quell turmoil within his Conservative Party and secure a trade deal with the European Union.

Johnson said in a video message on Twitter that he was “fit as a butcher’s dog” and had no COVID-19 symptoms. He said he would continue to govern using “Zoom and other forms of electronic communication.”

Johnson met with some Conservative lawmakers for about 35 minutes Thursday at his 10 Downing St. office in London. One, Lee Anderson, subsequently developed coronavirus symptoms and tested positive.

Johnson was contacted by the national test-and-trace system by email on Sunday. He said he was following its order to self-isolate for 14 days inside his Downing Street apartment even though he said he is “bursting with antibodies” after recovering from the virus earlier this year.

“It doesn’t matter that we were all doing social distancing. It doesn’t matter that I’m fit as a butcher’s dog, feel great — so many people do in my circumstances,” he said.

Johnson said the fact he had been “pinged” by the test-and-trace network was evidence that the much-criticized system was working. The system routinely fails to contact more than a third of infected people’s contacts.

Four other lawmakers who attended the meeting said they were also in quarantine.

Britain has recorded almost 52,000 deaths of people with the virus, the highest toll in Europe, and experts say all such official numbers in the pandemic understate its true toll.

Johnson spent a week in the hospital with the virus in April, including three nights in intensive care. He later thanked medics for saving his life when it “could have gone either way.”

Several other ministers, officials and Downing Street staff also became sick with COVID-19 in the spring, including Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty and Health Secretary Matt Hancock.

Officials say Downing Street is now a “COVID-secure workplace,” with staff observing social distancing and some working from home. But a photo released of Johnson and Anderson shows the two without face masks and standing less than the recommended 2 meters (6 ½ feet) apart.

People who recover from the virus are thought to have some immunity, but it’s unclear how long it lasts.

Danny Altmann, professor of immunology at Imperial College London, said there have been more than 25 confirmed cases of COVID-19 reinfection globally, and the actual reinfection rate is “quite a lot higher than that, but not enormous.”

Johnson had planned a series of meetings and announcements this week to reboot his premiership after losing two top aides in messy circumstances.

Chief adviser Dominic Cummings and communications director Lee Cain quit last week amid reports of power struggles inside Downing Street. Cummings and Cain were key players in the 2016 campaign to take Britain out of the EU and helped Johnson win a decisive election victory in December 2019. But their combative style toward civil servants, lawmakers and the media made many enemies.

Johnson also planned to lead meetings this week to decide the next steps in Britain’s response to the coronavirus. A four-week nationwide lockdown for England is to end Dec. 2, but it’s unclear whether it will have been enough to curb a surge in infections.

Meanwhile, U.K. and EU negotiators are meeting in Brussels try to seal a last-minute trade deal before Britain makes a financial break from the bloc on Dec. 31. The two sides say a deal needs to be sealed within days if it is to be ratified by year’s end, but big differences remain on fishing rights and competition rules.

If there is no deal, businesses on both sides of the English Channel will face tariffs and other barriers to trade starting Jan. 1. That would hurt economies on both sides but mostly the U.K., which does almost half of its trade with the 27-nation bloc.

Johnson had also planned this week to lead a televised news conference, announce new environmental

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policies including a ban on sales of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030 and meet with restive Conservative lawmakers from northern England who want progress on promises to close the north-south economic divide.

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

## **VIRUS DIARY: During upheaval, inauguration prep is a comfort**

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As I chug up Capitol Hill near the end of my morning run, I pass the same bustle I've seen every four years at this time since we first moved to Washington in 1996.

Workers are busy erecting the stage, bleachers and tower for TV cameras for the presidential inaugural. Much of the west side of the Capitol is roped off to keep the public away from the work.

This year, that sight is especially reassuring.

We're in the midst of a pandemic and at the end of a hotly contested presidential election campaign. But the work goes on, as if to say, "We'll get through this."

It's all about continuity in a time of upheaval, which stands in some tension with the daily reality of the pandemic. Many of us are so thoroughly chained to our homes that we revel in any change to our routine. That's not a complaint. I recognize how lucky I am to be essentially untouched by the coronavirus' ravages.

To most Americans, Capitol Hill is a shorthand for Congress, a description of the topography on which Pierre L'Enfant placed the seat of government.

But there is a real neighborhood with the same name. It radiates out from the Capitol's east side, filled mainly with narrow two- and three-story brick row houses a century old and more, their postage stamp-sized front yards filled with an astonishing variety of blooms.

Our neighbors are conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats, young families and older people who themselves raised children here. We still see each other in the street, almost always behind a mask, and exchange the news of family, work and assorted oddities. It's a way of life that neither the intense campaign nor the pandemic has altered.

This will be the seventh inauguration I've experienced as a DC resident. The previous six saw three Democrats and three Republicans take the oath of office. After the disputed election of 2000, protesters marshaled in the park near our house just before George W. Bush's swearing-in.

Barack Obama's first inaugural in 2009 brought with it enormous crowds who streamed past the house for what seemed like hours on their way to catch a glimpse of history.

In 2017, Donald Trump's supporters strolled around the Hill in red baseball caps bearing the Make America Great Again slogan. A day later, a lot of women in pink, pointy-eared "pussyhats" made their way downtown for a march through Washington to protest the new president.

All of these events were generally peaceful and illustrative of the vibrancy of our political system with its deeply held views.

I don't know what the next inauguration will look like. A national Zoom call? A limited audience on the Capitol grounds? It's hard to imagine large crowds gathering amid a pandemic that has killed more than 246,000 Americans and infected more than 11 million.

But an inauguration will take place and a new administration will begin, signs of renewal as welcome as the first buttercups that will pop up in our tiny yard a month or so later.

I'll continue, most mornings, to jog along the green space of the National Mall that runs west from the Capitol. It has rarely looked better, by the way, but that's mainly because it is so sparsely used amid the pandemic.

Usually, I turn around just before reaching the Washington Monument and head back toward the Capitol.

Someone once said that when the sight of the Capitol dome, the sky brightening behind it, no longer takes your breath away, it's time to think about living somewhere else. I'm a longtime reporter, skepti-

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cal and occasionally cynical. But I still look forward to that turn in the early morning hours, and to the promise in the new day's rising sun.

Virus Diary, an occasional feature, showcases the coronavirus pandemic through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world. Follow AP Supreme Court reporter Mark Sherman at <http://twitter.com/shermancourt>

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Nov. 17, the 322nd day of 2020. There are 44 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 17, 1800, Congress held its first session in the partially completed U.S. Capitol building.

On this date:

In 1558, Elizabeth I acceded to the English throne upon the death of her half-sister, Queen Mary, beginning a 44-year reign.

In 1869, the Suez Canal opened in Egypt.

In 1889, the Union Pacific Railroad Co. began direct, daily railroad service between Chicago and Portland, Oregon, as well as Chicago and San Francisco.

In 1911, the historically African-American fraternity Omega Psi Phi was founded at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

In 1917, French sculptor Auguste Rodin (roh-DAN') died in Meudon (meh-DON') at age 77.

In 1969, the first round of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks between the United States and the Soviet Union opened in Helsinki, Finland.

In 1970, the Soviet Union landed an unmanned, remote-controlled vehicle on the moon, the Lunokhod 1.

In 1973, President Richard Nixon told Associated Press managing editors in Orlando, Florida: "People have got to know whether or not their president is a crook. Well, I'm not a crook."

In 1979, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini (ah-yah-TOH'-lah hoh-MAY'-nee) ordered the release of 13 Black and/or female American hostages being held at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.

In 1997, 62 people, most of them foreign tourists, were killed when militants opened fire at the Temple of Hatshepsut (haht-shehp-SOOT') in Luxor, Egypt; the attackers, who also hacked their victims, were killed by police.

In 2003, Arnold Schwarzenegger was sworn in as the 38th governor of California.

In 2018, tribesman on the isolated island of North Sentinel, between India and Southeast Asia, were seen dragging and burying the body of American missionary John Allen Chau, who had reached the island the previous day despite a ban imposed by India's government.

Ten years ago: House Democrats elected Nancy Pelosi to remain as their leader despite massive party losses in midterm elections. Republicans voted to keep John Boehner (BAY'-nur) as their top House leader, making him speaker in the new Congress. A hand-count of votes affirmed the re-election of U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, the first Senate candidate in over 50 years to win a write-in campaign. The first Guantanamo detainee to face civilian trial, Ahmed Ghailani (guh-LAHN'-ee), was convicted by federal jury in New York on one charge of conspiracy, among over 280 counts related to 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Ghailani's native Tanzania. (He was later sentenced to life in prison.)

Five years ago: Republicans urged an immediate closure of America's borders to Syrian refugees, drawing angry denunciations from President Barack Obama and other Democrats and igniting an emotional debate about U.S. values in the wake of the deadly Paris terror attacks. Actor Charlie Sheen issued a statement in which he said he was HIV positive, but that thanks to a rigorous drug regimen, he was in good health. Joe Maddon won his third Manager of the Year award and Jeff Banister his first after each guided his team on a surprising run to the playoffs.

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One year ago: Pushing back against accusations from President Donald Trump that the impeachment process had been stacked against him, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told CBS that Trump was welcome to testify or answer questions in writing. Ahead of a Democratic presidential run, former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg apologized at a Black church for his longstanding support of the controversial "stop and frisk" police strategy, which he had continued to defend despite its disproportionate impact on people of color.

Today's Birthdays: Sen. James Inhofe (IHN'-hahf), R-Okla., is 86. Singer Gordon Lightfoot is 82. Singer-songwriter Bob Gaudio (GOW'-dee-oh) is 79. Movie director Martin Scorsese (skor-SEH'-see) is 78. Actor Lauren Hutton is 77. Actor-director Danny DeVito is 76. "Saturday Night Live" producer Lorne Michaels is 76. Movie director Roland Joffe is 75. Former Democratic National Chairman Howard Dean is 72. Former House Speaker John Boehner (BAY'-nur) is 71. Actor Stephen Root is 69. Rock musician Jim Babjak (The Smithereens) is 63. Actor Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio is 62. Actor William Moses is 61. Entertainer RuPaul is 60. Actor Dylan Walsh is 57. Former National Security Adviser Susan Rice is 56. Actor Sophie Marceau (mahr-SOH') is 54. Actor-model Daisy Fuentes is 54. Blues singer/musician Tab Benoit (behn-WAH') is 53. Rhythm-and-blues singer Ronnie DeVoe (New Edition; Bell Biv DeVoe) is 53. Rock musician Ben Wilson (Blues Traveler) is 53. Actor David Ramsey is 49. Actor Leonard Roberts is 48. Actor Leslie Bibb is 47. Actor Brandon Call is 44. Country singer Aaron Lines is 43. Actor Rachel McAdams is 42. Rock musician Isaac Hanson (Hanson) is 40. MLB outfielder Ryan Braun is 37. Actor Justin Cooper is 32. Musician Reid Perry (The Band Perry) is 32. Actor Raquel Castro is 26.