

Groton Daily Independent

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GDILIVE.COM

Snow Queen Contest

7:30 p.m., Nov. 20

GHS Gym



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Groton Clinic to Close Temporarily, Ellendale Moving to Limited Hours

As the region continues to see an increase in patients with COVID-19, Avera St. Luke's is taking additional measures in its surge plan. This includes temporarily closing the Avera Medical Group Groton and having limited hours at Avera Clinic of Ellendale as of Monday, November 23.

Temporarily closing the Groton clinic and moving to limited hours in Ellendale allows Avera to redeploy the clinics' staff to areas of greater need, which includes Avera St. Luke's in Aberdeen.

"We believe having access to rural health care is incredibly important, and we are committed to continuing to serve these towns in the future," said Todd Forkel, President and CEO of Avera St. Luke's Hospital.

Patients of these facilities and community residents should still seek medical care when necessary. Our clinics in Aberdeen are open and safe to visit. Avera also continues to offer virtual care.

The public can help slow the spread of COVID-19 and lessen the surge of patients by practicing good hygiene, social distancing and wearing masks. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has affirmed that wearing masks can help communities slow the spread of COVID-19 when worn consistently and correctly by a majority of people in public settings. Masks are most effective when used along with other preventive measures, including social distancing, frequent handwashing, and cleaning and disinfecting.

It should be noted that telemedic services are still available through the Groton Clinic by calling 397-4242. According to the information on the clinic's answering machine, you can call the Groton Clinic, leave a message and someone will call you back between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Thursday. It is anticipated that the Groton Clinic will be closed through December.

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American Standard

Walk-In Tubs

WALK-IN BATHTUB SALE! SAVE \$1,500



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Finance Options Available*

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Ultra low easy entry and exit design, wide door, built-in safety bar and textured floor provides a safer bathing experience.

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The **ONLY** Lifetime Warranty on the bath **AND** installation, **INCLUDING** labor backed by American Standard.

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More than any other tub we've seen.



FREE!

Savings Include an American Standard Right Height Toilet **FREE!** (\$500 Value)



FREE!

An In-Home Evaluation Will Be Scheduled At Your Earliest Convenience

Discount applied at time of purchase. Terms and Conditions Apply. * Subject to 3rd party credit approval. Minimum monthly payments required. Receive a free American Standard Cadet Toilet with full installation of a Liberation Walk-In Bath, Liberation Shower, or Deluxe Shower. Offer valid only while supplies last. Limit one per household. Must be first time purchaser. All offers subject to change prior to purchase. See www.AmericanStandardBathtubs.com for other restrictions and for licensing, warranty, and company information. * CSLB B982796; Suffolk NY:5543IH; NYC:HIC#2022748-DCA. Safety Tubs Co. LLC does not sell in Nassau NY, Westchester NY, Putnam NY, Rockland NY.



50th Anniversary

Bill and Jana Duncan will be celebrating their 50th Wedding Anniversary on November 28th.

We won't be able to host a gathering due to the pandemic, but we would love for you to send Mom and Dad a card wishing them a Happy 50th!!

**The Duncans
PO Box 564, Groton, SD 57445**

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Awesome Oranges!

Grove
Navels

Petite Red
Navels

Tangerines

Petite Navel

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Only \$19.99* (reg. \$34.99), plus \$5.99 shipping & handling. Satisfaction completely guaranteed. This gift ships in December at the peak of freshness. Order by Dec. 18, 2020 for GUARANTEED Christmas delivery. AZ, CA, TX & LA order by Dec. 15, 2020.

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*Plus \$5.99 handling per pack to the 48 contiguous states. Limited time offer, good while supplies last. Not valid with any other offer. Limit 5 boxes per customer.

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The roof to the water tower was lifted up and attached to the top of the tank yesterday.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

#270 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

More records: 183,100 new cases today. Second day in a row for a record number. This is a 1.6% increase in total cases to 11,786,900. No way we won't get to 12 million this weekend, likely Saturday.

We also hit a record for hospitalizations for the ninth straight day: 79,410, a 49% increase in seven-day average from two weeks ago. Hospitals are straining at the seams across the country. They're converting every sort of space—waiting rooms, hallways, parking garages—into in-patient areas. They're calling around looking for open beds at other hospitals, but unlike the crisis in the spring or the one in the summer, this time the whole country's in trouble, so there isn't much available. Workers are exhausted, frustrated, burnt out. They're also calling around looking for workers, but those are in short supply too. Turns out beds are the easy part. Conditions are deteriorating every day.

Alison Johnson, director of critical care at Johnson City Medical Center in Tennessee, said, "We are depressed, disheartened and tired to the bone." The hospital where she works says, if things don't change, they might have to turn away patients.

Dr. Ron Cook, the Lubbock (TX) County health authority says they have people sitting in the emergency room waiting for beds to open up. "We're in trouble."

Idaho doctors warn they are nearly to the point of rationing care because there aren't enough beds or staffers to manage. Dr. Jim Souza, chief medical officer for St. Luke's Health system said, "Never in my career did I think we would even contemplate the idea of rationing care in the United States of America." Yet here we are. It has taken so long in some cases to find a hospital that can accept a patient who needs to be transferred that, by the time the place is found, the patient has deteriorated significantly, decreasing the odds for recovery.

I've been talking with hospital workers and those who care for vulnerable patients outside of hospitals, and the recurring theme of those conversations has been the same: "We can't keep doing this much longer." And in every case, the workers express impatience, frustration, and anger at the lack of precautions contributing to the problem in rural areas: refusal to wear masks, refusal to stay home, gatherings—official ones like sporting events and concerts and small ones like weddings and family dinners. Cheyanne Seematter, a registered nurse at Stormont Vail in Kansas, is typical: "It kind of feels like we're just, you know, yelling into the abyss. We keep telling everybody to stay home, wear a mask, that it is actually bad here." A worker in our area told me she spent a work day garbed to the gills in PPE—mask, face shield, gloves, gown, the whole nine yards, only to be taunted by a maskless customer in a store she stopped in on her way home—taunted for wearing a mask into the store.

The CDC made a new statement today urging Americans to celebrate Thanksgiving at home with the people in your household, no one else. This is the strongest recommendation yet against travel over the upcoming holiday—and with good reason: Cases are surging, breaking records, rising unchecked. Dr. Henry Walke, incident manager at the CDC, said, "Amid the critical phase, the CDC is recommending against travel during the Thanksgiving period. We're alarmed. What we're concerned about is not only the actual mode of travel—whether it's an airplane or bus or car. . . . The tragedy that could happen is one of your family members, from coming together in a family gathering, could wind up hospitalized and severely ill and could die. We don't want to see that happen." Every expert expects the holiday to accelerate the spread of the virus, and frankly, we can't afford any further acceleration: We can't afford the rate of transmission we have now. This is not about freedom, and it's not about personal responsibility: It's about death. Mostly for others. Caused by you.

Another concern is college and university campuses. More than 65 colleges have each reported at least 1000 cases, and more than 540 colleges have reported at least 100 cases. They're managing to stay open, but they've never managed to contain the virus. As a result, we're up to 320,000 cases on more than 1900 campuses. More than 68,000 of these—over one-fifth—were identified this month, which is, I will point out, less than two-thirds over. That is a worry as students prepare to go home for the holiday. Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York, said, "With the holidays approaching, we are fighting 'living room

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spread' from small gatherings in private homes—and adding college students' interstate travel will be like pouring gasoline on a fire." Cuomo is no epidemiologist, but he's clearly been talking to them because he's not wrong.

There were 1975 deaths reported today, a 0.8% increase and the highest number since May 6. If you have a good memory, you will remember I said the same thing yesterday. Yes, I did. Sigh. We've now lost 252,294 lives to this virus in the US.

We have another entry in the wedding sweepstakes, this one in Ohio. The happy couple had pared their guest list down from over 200 to 85 in deference to the pandemic; 83 guests showed up. That, apparently, was enough. While they put out baskets of masks and hand sanitizer, most guests did not avail themselves of these accommodations, chairs were placed close together, and the dance floor was filled with revelers, maskless and close together. And so 32 of these 83 guests have tested positive, including three grandparents. The couple was ill on their honeymoon as well. The bride later said they had noticed pretty much no one had picked up a mask, but "I didn't think that almost half of our wedding guess were gonna get sick. You're in the moment. You're having fun. You don't think about covid anymore." To their credit, they are sharing their story as a cautionary tale to others about holding large weddings. "Every single day we're getting a call. Oh here's another person. Here's another person. Here's another person. And it starts to take a toll on you." I cannot imagine.

To be clear, this couple did not violate any rules; weddings and funerals in Ohio are excepted from the 10-person limit on gatherings in effect at the time. Which, to be honest, strikes me as a very bad plan. The virus is not terribly interested in the purpose for your gathering. I am not being a jerk about weddings or funerals; I'm just a big fan of folks staying alive.

The FDA has authorized the first at-home Covid-19 test. There have been tests for which specimen collection is done at home, but then that specimen would need to be sent off to a laboratory for processing. This test can be completed and the result read at home by the patient. The new test does require a prescription, so you can't just go to the pharmacy and pick one up because you're curious; it is restricted to use by those 14 years and older. The specimen collected is a nasal swab, not those uncomfortable nasopharyngeal swabs we've all heard about. It takes about a half-hour to get results and costs \$50 or so. It is somewhat less accurate than the RT-PCR lab test that is considered the gold standard diagnostic test. In symptomatic individuals, the company says the test will accurately detect 94.1 percent of the infections identified by PCR testing and correctly identifies 98 percent of uninfected people; but the sample size used to establish accuracy was small and did not include people who were not having symptoms. That could be something of a problem; but these relatively inexpensive, quick, at-home tests likely have a role to play in putting us on a path to better disease monitoring in this country, particularly since our shortage of laboratory testing capacity continues to bedevil us all these months in.

You may remember we've discussed coronavirus infections in mink, both here and in Europe, particularly that unsettling story about the mutation seen in Denmark which produced a variant that seems to hinder the effectiveness of a vaccine. If so, you will recall the Danish government decided to have several million mink in the country slaughtered, essentially wiping out the mink-farming industry. If you missed that story and want to look at it, see my Update #255 posted November 4 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4141305369219171>.

There was some legal wrangling about authorization and such, and the final decision was to euthanize something like three million animals. In a follow-up today, the Health Ministry announced the viral variant in question has probably been wiped out. "No further clusters of mink variant with cluster 5 have been detected since Sept. 15, which is why the State Serum Institute assesses that this variant has most likely become extinct." That is good news.

Another piece of encouraging news comes from Oxford University and drug-maker AstraZeneca, who have teamed up to develop a vaccine. They have published a paper in the Lancet, including data from clinical trials which shows participants over 70, who are at increased risk for severe disease and also less likely to respond well immunologically, are producing a robust response to their vaccine. In 650 participants, 400

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of whom are over the age of 56, in a phases 2 trial, a team member reports, "We are getting very good immune responses—even in the over 70s, which look very similar to those in younger adults." They do not yet have data on whether older adults will sustain those responses over time; however they report the vaccine is stimulating production of neutralizing antibodies (the kind that disable the virus) and T cells which activate a second kind of response. Investigators said, "We hope this means our vaccine will help to protect some of the most vulnerable people in society, but further research will be needed before we can be sure." It looks as though they will hit their target number of infections among trial participants by Christmas and can then quite rapidly seek regulatory approval. This vaccine has the added advantage that it can be stored under normal refrigeration temperatures, so the logistics of distribution are substantially less complex than for the two mRNA vaccines nearing application for approval in the US so far. This is good: More vaccines is better than fewer.

Chris Waba is a sixth-grade math teacher in Madison, South Dakota. Back last spring after schools closed down, he missed his students, and he knew there are times you just can't connect online. So when one of his more able students was struggling with a graphing problem and after she'd tried and tried, he decided to take matters into his own hands. She had messaged, "Can you help?" and he replied, "You bet."

While she waited patiently at her computer for him to email her some tips, the doorbell rang. There Waba was, standing on her front porch with a whiteboard and a marker. He proceeded to stay at a safe distance on the porch, talking her through the problem while she listened through the front door. Three equations later, she was getting it, and Waba was on his way to becoming Internet-famous: Mom had snapped a photo of him, bundled against the cold, working through math problems on his whiteboard while her daughter listened intently and shared it online.

When her parents posted the photo on social media, Dad said, "I was so appreciative of Chris that I wanted people to know about [what he did] since teachers across the country are taking extra steps right now to help their students. . . . We need as much positivity as we can get these days, and this was something people could smile about. All of us are having to find new ways to do things and adapt to the situation we're in." We do, this is, we are, and life is good.

Stay safe. We'll talk again.

Groton Area School District															
Active COVID-19 Cases															
Updated November 19, 2020; 1:04 PM															
JK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Staff	Total
0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	8

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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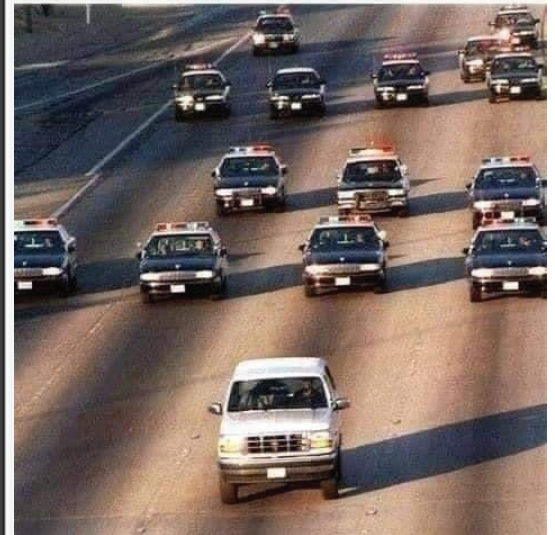
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Comparing Hospitalizations by State -
2020 vs 2016-2018
(How bad is November with COVID-19 vs
previous years without?)

State	3y Ave (2016-18)	Nov. 1-9 Average (2..	Inc./Dec.	Current Utilization ..
US TOTAL	476,547	498,851	4.7%	70.2%
MO	10,697	11,095	3.7%	63.0%
MS	5,284	4,960	-6.1%	62.5%
MT	1,398	1,892	35.3%	70.7%
NC	14,194	15,756	11.0%	73.8%
ND	1,441	1,510	4.8%	76.5%
NE	3,280	3,425	4.4%	68.8%
NH	1,749	1,869	6.9%	64.2%
NJ	13,357	13,423	0.5%	70.3%
NM	2,409	2,125	-11.8%	66.3%
NV	4,518	5,458	20.8%	74.7%
NY	36,600	38,779	6.0%	71.7%
OH	19,298	18,969	-1.7%	67.4%
OK	6,095	6,793	11.5%	65.6%
OR	4,279	4,614	7.8%	70.4%
PA	18,546	23,311	25.7%	73.3%
RI	1,524	1,639	7.6%	84.4%
SC	7,404	7,293	-1.5%	78.2%
SD	1,565	1,563	-0.2%	66.5%
TN	11,969	12,061	0.8%	71.8%
TX	39,579	44,219	11.7%	75.5%
UT	3,023	2,945	-2.6%	56.3%
VA	10,970	10,841	-1.2%	63.8%
VT*	704	854	21.4%	72.3%
WA	8,043	8,173	1.6%	76.6%
WI	6,540	8,395	28.4%	68.4%
WV	3,656	3,727	1.9%	72.3%
WY	588	601	2.2%	42.1%

Data taken from the American Hospital Association Data Hub and the
HHS Protect System

**Me coming home with a
turkey that serves 25**



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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Nov. 18	Nov. 19	Nov. 20
Minnesota	236,949	242,043	249,906
Nebraska	103,805	106,617	109,280
Montana	49,398	50,582	51,818
Colorado	172,044	176,694	182,801
Wyoming	21,047	21,750	22,489
North Dakota	65,967	67,230	68,612
South Dakota	67,284	68,671	69,742
United States	11,360,125	11,530,345	11,718,867
US Deaths	248,707	250,548	252,564

Minnesota	+5,931	+5,094	+7,863
Nebraska	+2,204	+2,812	+2,663
Montana	+1,371	+1,184	+1,236
Colorado	+4,331	+4,650	+6,107
Wyoming	+1,162	+703	+739
North Dakota	+1,082	1,263	+1,382
South Dakota	+1,006	+1,387	+1,071
United States	+154,640	+170,220	+188,522
US Deaths	+1,487	+1,841	+2,016

	Nov. 11	Nov. 12	Nov. 13	Nov. 14	Nov. 15	Nov. 16	Nov. 17
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 19 COVID-19 UPDATE

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from State Health Lab Reports

South Dakota recorded 31 deaths today: 15 in the 80+ age group, 7 in their 70s, 6 in their 60s and 3 in their 50s. There were 15 females and 16 males.

Deaths by county: Beadle-2, Bon Homme-2, Brown-2, Clay-1, Codington-3, Faulk-2, Gregory-2, Hughes-4, Lincoln-1, McCook-1, Meade-1, Minnehaha-6, Roberts-2, Sully-1, Ziebach-1.

Glacial Lakes hospital beds being occupied by COVID-19 patients as well as Minnehaha and Pennington counties: Walworth: 4 (+1) Occupied Beds.; Potter: 2 (-0) Occupied Beds; Hughes: 14 (+0) Occupied Beds, 5 (+2) ICU Beds, 1 (+0) Ventilation; Hand: 5 (-2) Occupied Beds; Faulk: 5 (+1) Occupied Beds; Edmunds: 2 (+0) Occupied Bed; Brown: 36 (-2) Occupied Beds, 2 (-3) ICU, 0 (-0) Ventilation; Spink: 3 (-0) Occupied Beds; Day: 0 (-0) Occupied Beds; Marshall: 0 (-0) Occupied Beds; Grant: 5 (+1) Occupied Beds; Codington: 23 (+4) Occupied Beds, 6 (+1) ICU, 2 (+0) Ventilation; None (some counties have no hospitals): Clark,

Hyde, Stanley, Sully, Campbell, McPherson, Roberts; Minnehaha: 277 (+0) Occupied Beds, 58 (-0) ICU, 40 (+0) Ventilation; Pennington: 69 (-8) Occupied Beds, 10 (-2) ICU, 8 (-1) Ventilation

Brown County:
Total Positive: +48 (3075) Positivity Rate: 10.1%
Total Tests: +477 (24,271)
Total Individuals Tested: +139 (12,690)
Recovered: +104 (2,408)
Active Cases: -58 (655)
Ever Hospitalized: +2 (176)
Deaths: +2 (12)
Percent Recovered: 78.3%
Hospital Reports:
Avera St. Luke's: Covid-19 Occupied 26 (+0); ICU 0 (-1), Ventilation 0 (0).
Sanford Aberdeen: Covid-19 Occupied 10 (-2); ICU 2 (-2), Ventilation 0 (-0)
Sanford Webster: Covid-19 Occupied 0 (-0).
Marshall County Healthcare: Covid-19 Occupied: 0 (-0).

South Dakota:
Positive: +1071 (69,742 total) Positivity Rate: 17.0%
Total Tests: 6292 (543,777 total)
Total Individuals Tested: 2296 (303,269)
Hospitalized: +58 (3922 total). 578 currently hospitalized -15)
Deaths: +31 (705 total)
Recovered: +2396 (51,153 total)
Active Cases: -1,356 (17,884)

Percent Recovered: 73.3%
Total COVID-19 Occupied Beds: 578 (-15), Black Hills Region 100 (-15), Glacial Lakes Region 99 (+3) Sioux Empire Region 300 (+0), South Central Plains 79 (-3).
ICU Units: Total 95 (-2), BH 11 (-2), GL 13 (+0), SE 59 (-0), SCP 12 (-0).
Ventilation: Total 51 (+0), BH 8 (-1), GL 3 (+1), SE 40 (+0), SCP 0 (-0).
Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 21% Covid, 46% Non-Covid, 32% Available
ICU Bed Capacity: 48% Covid, 37% Non-Covid, 15% Available
Staffed Adult + Pediatric ICU Bed Capacity: 68% Occupied, 32% Available
Ventilator Capacity: 12% Covid, 16% Non-Covid, 72% Available

Beadle (24) +42 positive, +61 recovered (592 active cases)
Brookings (14) +31 positive, +69 recovered (491 active cases)
Brown (12): +48 positive, +104 recovered (655 active cases)
Clark (1): +9 positive, +11 recovered (54 active cases)
Clay (9): +8 positive, +34 recovered (242 active cases)
Codington (34): +29 positive, +57 recovered (515 active cases)
Davison (17): +31 positive, +99 recovered (814

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active cases)

Day (5): +5 positive, +9 recovered (84 active cases)

Edmunds (1): +0 positive, +6 recovered (48 active cases)

Faulk (8): +3 positive, +5 recovered (35 active cases)

Grant (5): +10 positive, +9 recovered (135 active cases)

Hanson (1): +3 positive, +9 recovered (64 active cases)

Hughes (13): +12 positive, +57 recovered (380 active cases)

Lawrence (13): +32 positive, +74 recovered (473 active cases)

Lincoln (43): +86 positive, +194 recovered (1307 active cases)

Marshall (3): +2 positive, +3 recovered (40 active cases)

McCook (10): +13 positive, +24 recovered (186 active cases)

McPherson (1): +5 positive, +2 recovery (45 active case)

Minnehaha (149): +262 positive, +595 recovered (4390 active cases)

Potter: +2 positive, +10 recovered (61 active cases)

Roberts (15): +8 positive, +31 recovered (147 active cases)

Spink (8): +12 positive, +20 recovered (132 active cases)

Walworth (10): +12 positive, +11 recovered (104 active cases)

NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Nov. 19:

- 15.7% rolling 14-day positivity
- 1,386 new positives
- 9,498 susceptible test encounters
- 276 currently hospitalized (21)
- 10,131 active cases (154)
- 795 total deaths (10)

Yesterday

Today

Global Cases

56,358,603

Global Cases

57,011,978

11,530,345 US

8,958,483 India

5,945,849 Brazil

2,115,717 France

1,998,966 Russia

1,525,341 Spain

1,434,004 United Kingdom

1,339,337 Argentina

1,272,352 Italy

1,218,003 Colombia

1,015,071 Mexico

11,718,867 US

9,004,365 India

5,981,767 Brazil

2,137,096 France

2,023,025 Russia

1,541,574 Spain

1,456,946 United Kingdom

1,349,434 Argentina

1,308,528 Italy

1,225,490 Colombia

1,019,543 Mexico

939,931 Peru

Global Deaths

1,351,381

Global Deaths

1,362,424

250,548 deaths
US

167,455 deaths
Brazil

131,578 deaths
India

99,528 deaths
Mexico

53,368 deaths
United Kingdom

47,217 deaths
Italy

252,564 deaths
US

168,061 deaths
Brazil

132,162 deaths
India

100,104 deaths
Mexico

53,870 deaths
United Kingdom

47,870 deaths
Italy

47,201 deaths
France

43,417 deaths
Iran

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	317	211	757	2	Substantial	52.13%
Beadle	2066	1450	4441	24	Substantial	32.61%
Bennett	289	217	1013	5	Substantial	10.92%
Bon Homme	1263	1104	1688	10	Substantial	41.51%
Brookings	2167	1662	7587	14	Substantial	23.64%
Brown	3075	2408	9615	12	Substantial	26.90%
Brule	491	364	1489	5	Substantial	41.57%
Buffalo	347	302	802	5	Substantial	29.69%
Butte	638	476	2381	9	Substantial	31.06%
Campbell	96	82	179	1	Moderate	31.82%
Charles Mix	690	476	3210	1	Substantial	22.72%
Clark	208	153	735	1	Substantial	11.56%
Clay	1167	916	3755	9	Substantial	29.44%
Codington	2347	1798	7005	34	Substantial	31.54%
Corson	331	274	820	3	Substantial	55.26%
Custer	468	358	1937	5	Substantial	25.52%
Davison	2076	1245	4999	17	Substantial	37.69%
Day	290	191	1315	5	Substantial	47.20%
Deuel	267	211	857	2	Substantial	34.88%
Dewey	714	385	3411	2	Substantial	30.02%
Douglas	267	193	731	5	Substantial	23.02%
Edmunds	213	164	804	1	Substantial	19.31%
Fall River	336	242	1982	7	Substantial	21.03%
Faulk	267	224	543	8	Substantial	31.25%
Grant	505	365	1660	5	Substantial	32.61%
Gregory	387	277	924	17	Substantial	32.00%
Haakon	131	102	443	3	Moderate	7.77%
Hamlin	383	244	1317	0	Substantial	18.53%
Hand	256	175	632	1	Substantial	41.30%
Hanson	201	136	514	1	Substantial	41.56%
Harding	64	59	124	0	Minimal	30.77%
Hughes	1420	1027	4651	13	Substantial	32.26%
Hutchinson	465	295	1751	3	Substantial	24.50%

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Hyde	108	63	324	0	Substantial	51.11%
Jackson	183	139	797	5	Substantial	30.30%
Jerauld	227	160	419	13	Substantial	29.55%
Jones	51	40	145	0	Moderate	40.00%
Kingsbury	388	246	1165	7	Substantial	22.60%
Lake	745	523	2106	9	Substantial	43.88%
Lawrence	1757	1271	6341	13	Substantial	24.00%
Lincoln	4775	3455	14718	43	Substantial	36.03%
Lyman	397	315	1490	8	Substantial	24.82%
Marshall	129	86	837	3	Substantial	38.04%
McCook	538	342	1192	10	Substantial	36.01%
McPherson	117	71	439	1	Substantial	17.83%
Meade	1516	1155	5726	12	Substantial	22.83%
Mellette	146	105	587	1	Substantial	50.00%
Miner	178	138	446	3	Substantial	35.14%
Minnehaha	18013	13474	58229	149	Substantial	30.61%
Moody	366	250	1430	6	Substantial	40.00%
Oglala Lakota	1477	1095	5805	17	Substantial	29.01%
Pennington	7469	5430	28069	61	Substantial	27.42%
Perkins	137	84	519	0	Substantial	27.91%
Potter	223	163	638	0	Substantial	16.39%
Roberts	604	442	3476	15	Substantial	23.10%
Sanborn	220	125	501	1	Substantial	42.86%
Spink	487	347	1709	8	Substantial	16.22%
Stanley	195	124	655	0	Substantial	28.33%
Sully	78	50	194	2	Substantial	43.48%
Todd	776	603	3507	10	Substantial	38.46%
Tripp	425	316	1197	2	Substantial	44.81%
Turner	733	527	2035	35	Substantial	25.00%
Union	1109	837	4545	19	Substantial	21.21%
Walworth	405	291	1415	10	Substantial	31.33%
Yankton	1415	1004	6781	8	Substantial	30.93%
Ziebach	153	96	597	4	Substantial	24.00%
Unassigned	0	0	1421	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	2289	0
10-19 years	7495	0
20-29 years	13530	2
30-39 years	11771	9
40-49 years	9995	15
50-59 years	9862	45
60-69 years	7728	93
70-79 years	3977	147
80+ years	3095	394

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	36422	343
Male	33320	362

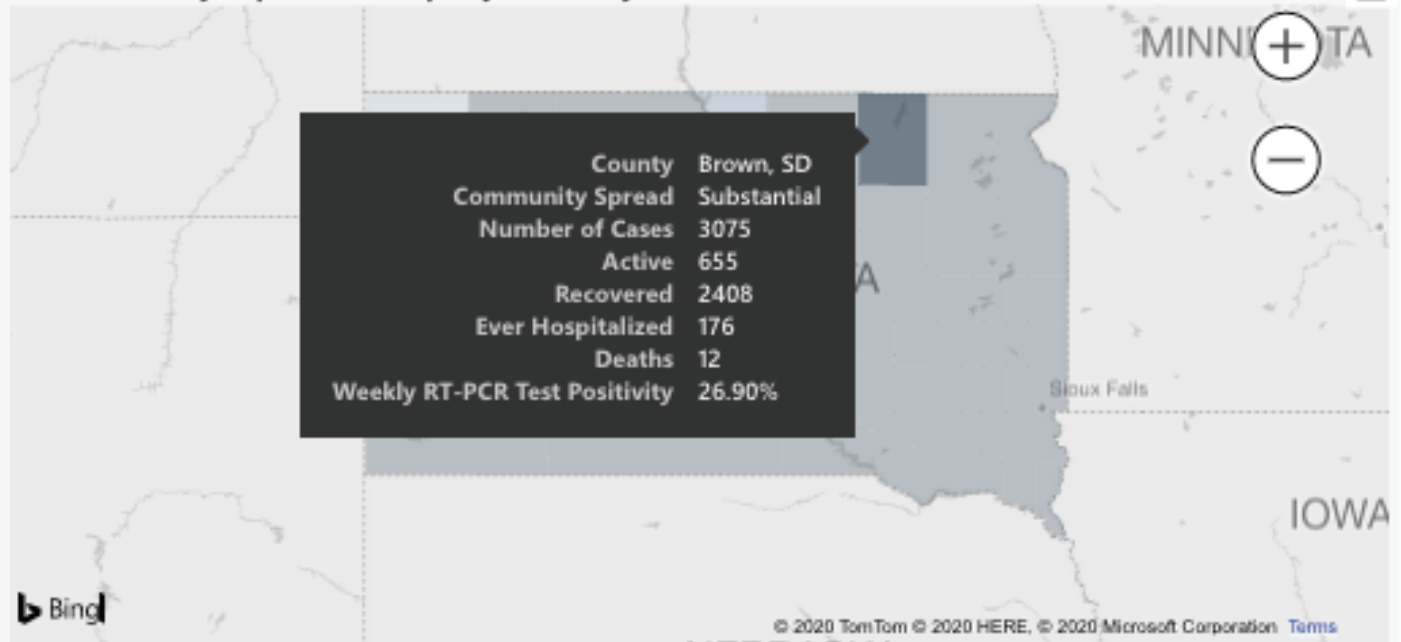
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Brown County

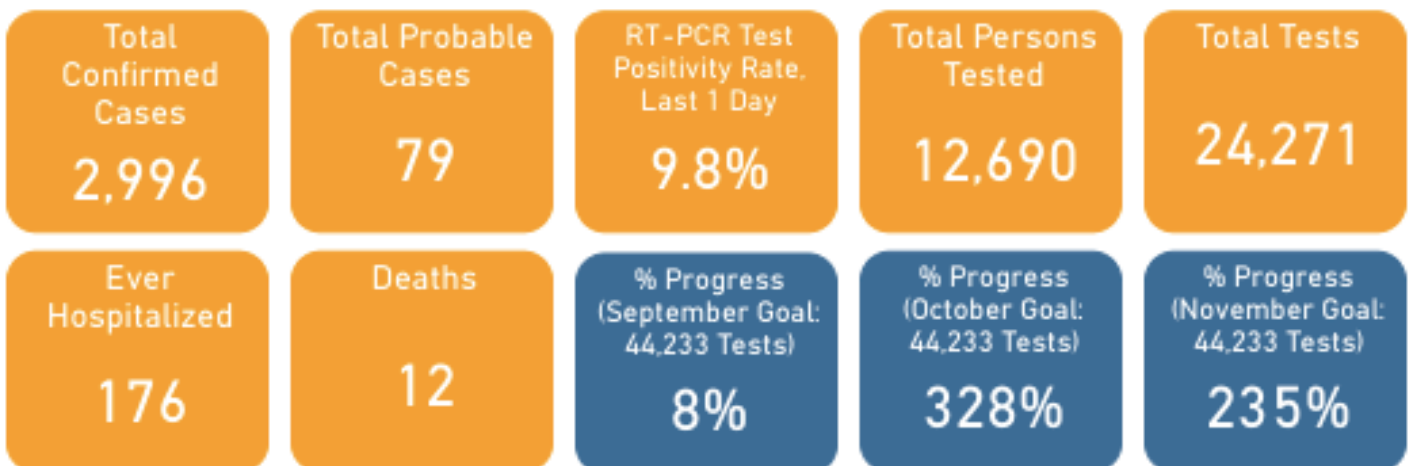


Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Minimal ● Moderate ● Substantial

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



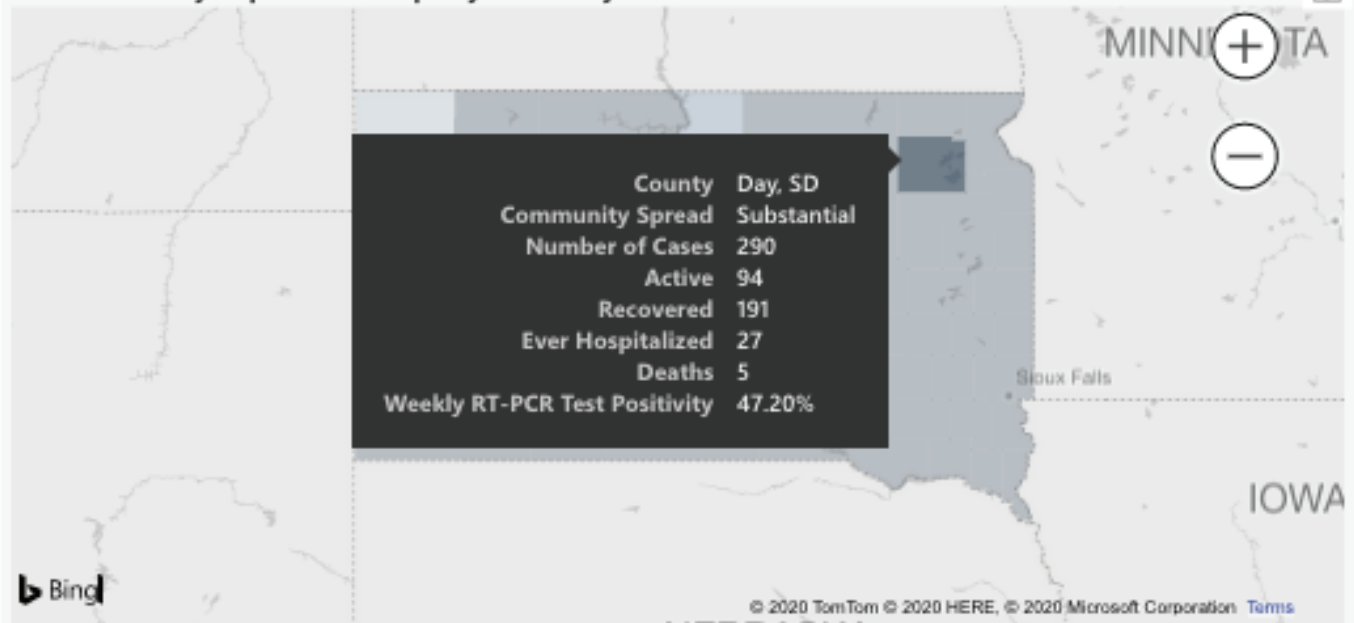
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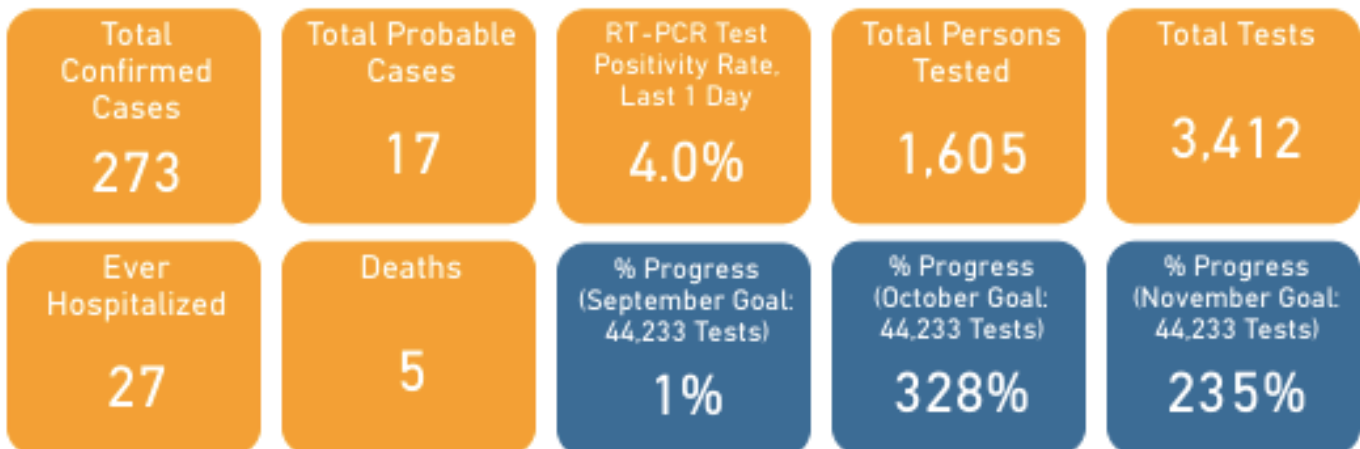
Day County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



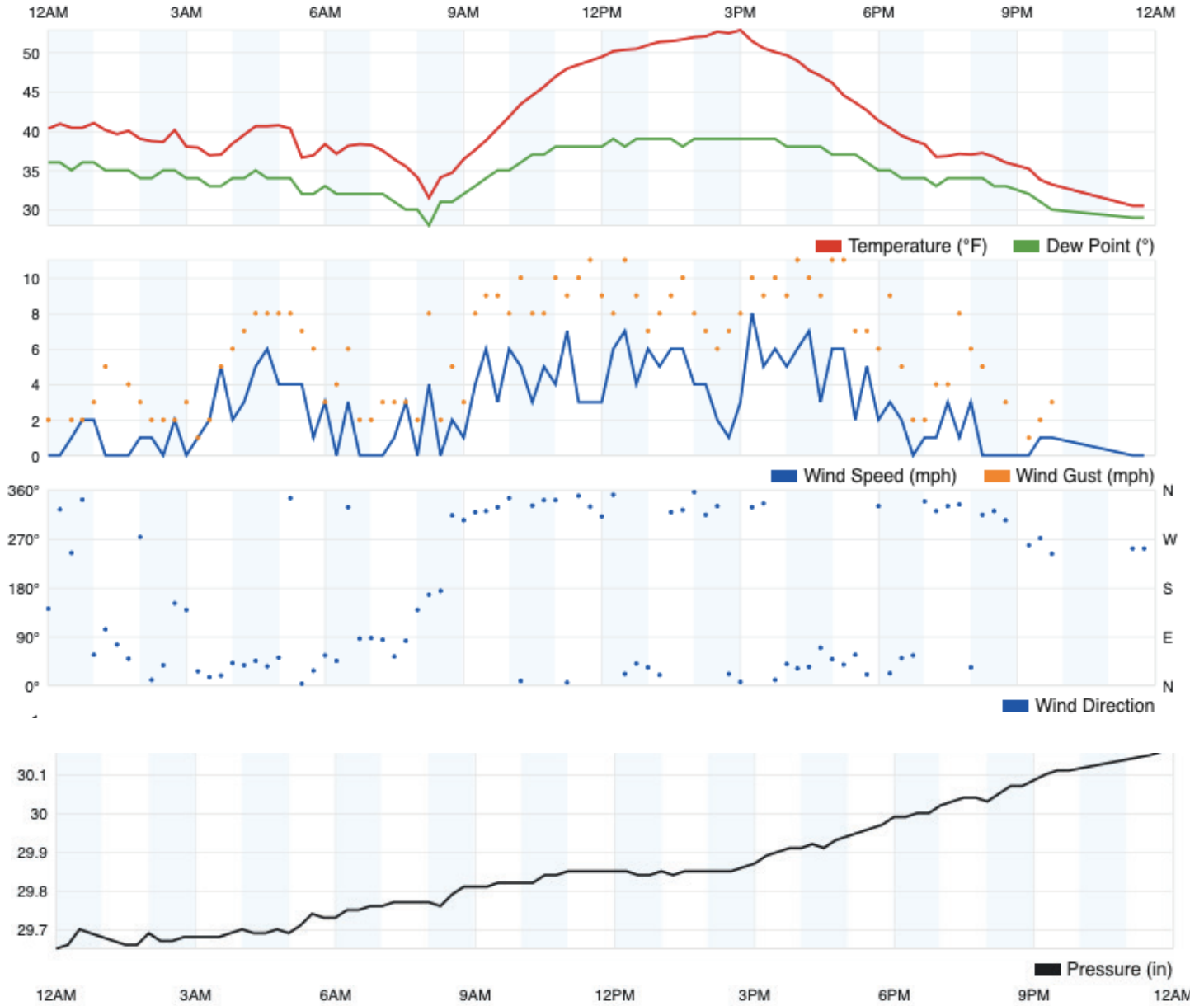
Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Patchy Fog
then Sunny

High: 39 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 18 °F

Saturday



Sunny then
Chance Rain

High: 47 °F

Saturday
Night



Chance
Rain/Snow
then Partly
Cloudy

Low: 26 °F

Sunday



Sunny

High: 42 °F

5 Day Outlook

Slightly Above Average Temperatures

Friday



HI: 34 to 50°

Saturday



HI: 44 to 50°

Low: 18 to 27°

Sunday



HI: 37 to 46°

Low: 22 to 30°

Monday



HI: 40 to 53°

Low: 18 to 28°

Tuesday



HI: 39 to 48°

Low: 24 to 32°

Light Rain Saturday changes to light snow Saturday night. Light Accumulations possible in far eastern South Dakota/western Minnesota



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

www.weather.gov/abr

Updated: 11/20/2020 3:35 AM Central

General theme will be for slightly above average temperatures through the next few days. There will be some precipitation late in the day Saturday in the form of light rain, which will change to light snow overnight as it moves into Minnesota.

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Today in Weather History

November 20, 1975: A storm center located in Oklahoma on Tuesday, November 18th, moved northeastward across Kansas into Iowa and Wisconsin on Wednesday the 19th and Thursday the 20th. Light rain began in the eastern half South Dakota on the morning of the 19th. The rain changed to snow during the afternoon and continued through the evening of the 20th. The winds increased, and blizzard conditions were reached by 6 pm CST on Wednesday the 19th. The snow was driven by sustained winds 40 to 50 miles per hour, gusting to 75 mph on some occasions, which reduced visibility to less than one-half mile. Heavy snow ranging from six to fifteen inches fell over an area southeast of a line from Todd to Aurora to Grant County. Traffic came to a standstill by Wednesday evening the 19th. The snow abruptly ended on the night of the 20th, but winds diminished rather slowly that night. Storm total snowfalls included 9 inches at Clear Lake and 7 inches at Watertown.

November 20, 1977: The second blizzard of the month began very early on Saturday, November 19th and continued through most of Sunday, November 20th. Wind speeds exceeding 50 mph caused much blowing and drifting snow. Visibility was reduced to near zero. Most of the roads in the northern and western parts of the state were blocked. Snowfall amounts north of Milbank and Pierre to Ardmore exceeded five inches. Most of the counties in the northwest and a significant portion of those in the north-central parts of the state reported snowfall amounts exceeding ten inches. Some drifts reached 4 to 5 feet. The highest reported snowfall was 20 inches in Eagle Butte. An eastbound train from Milbank had six freight cars derailed near Albee, in Grant County as a result of the storm. Snowfall totals from this blizzard included; 20 inches at Eagle Butte; 14 inches at Leola; 12 inches at Timber Lake and Britton; 11 inches 4NNE Victor and at Mobridge; 10 inches at 6SE McIntosh, 4W Mellette, Sand Lake, and Ipswich; 9.3 inches in Aberdeen; 9 inches 4NW Onida, at Sisseton, and 2N Onaka; 8 inches at Selby; 7 inches at McLaughlin and Waubay; 6 inches at Conde and Faulkton; 5 inches at Summit and Webster; 4 inches at Pierre, Wilmot and Highmore; and 3 inches at Watertown, Clear Lake, Miller, 3NE Raymond, Redfield, and Wheaton. The 9 inches at Sisseton helped to contribute to the snowiest November on record for Sisseton, which recorded 27.5 inches for November 1977.

1900: An unusual tornado outbreak in the Lower Mississippi Valley resulted in 73 deaths and extensive damage across Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

1985: Kate intensified to a major Category 3 Hurricane and as she moved west of Key West, Florida with top winds of 115 mph and a minimum central pressure of 954 millibars or 28.17 inches of mercury. The next day Kate made landfall between Panama City and Apalachicola, Florida. Tides ran 8 to 10 feet above normal. Many power poles and lines were downed. Several roads were washed out.

2014: From the NWS Office in Buffalo, New York, "the epic November 17-19th 2014 lake effect event will be remembered as one of the most significant winter events in Buffalo's snowy history. Over 5 feet of snow fell over areas just east of Buffalo, with mere inches a few miles away to the north. There were 13 fatalities with this storm, hundreds of major roof collapses and structural failures, 1000s of stranded motorists, and scattered food and gas shortages due to impassable roads. Numerous trees also gave way due to the weight of the snow, causing isolated power outages. While this storm was impressive on its own, a second lake effect event on Nov-19-20 dropped another 1-4 foot of snow over nearly the same area and compounded rescue and recovery efforts. Storm totals from the two storms peaked at almost 7 feet, with many areas buried under 3-4 feet of dense snowpack by the end of the event."

2015: Season's first snow is Chicago's largest November snowfall in 120 years starting on November 20 and ending on the 21st. The season's first snowfall dropped as much as 17 inches across Chicago's northern suburbs, and the total of 11.2 inches at O'Hare International Airport made it the largest November snowfall in 120 years.

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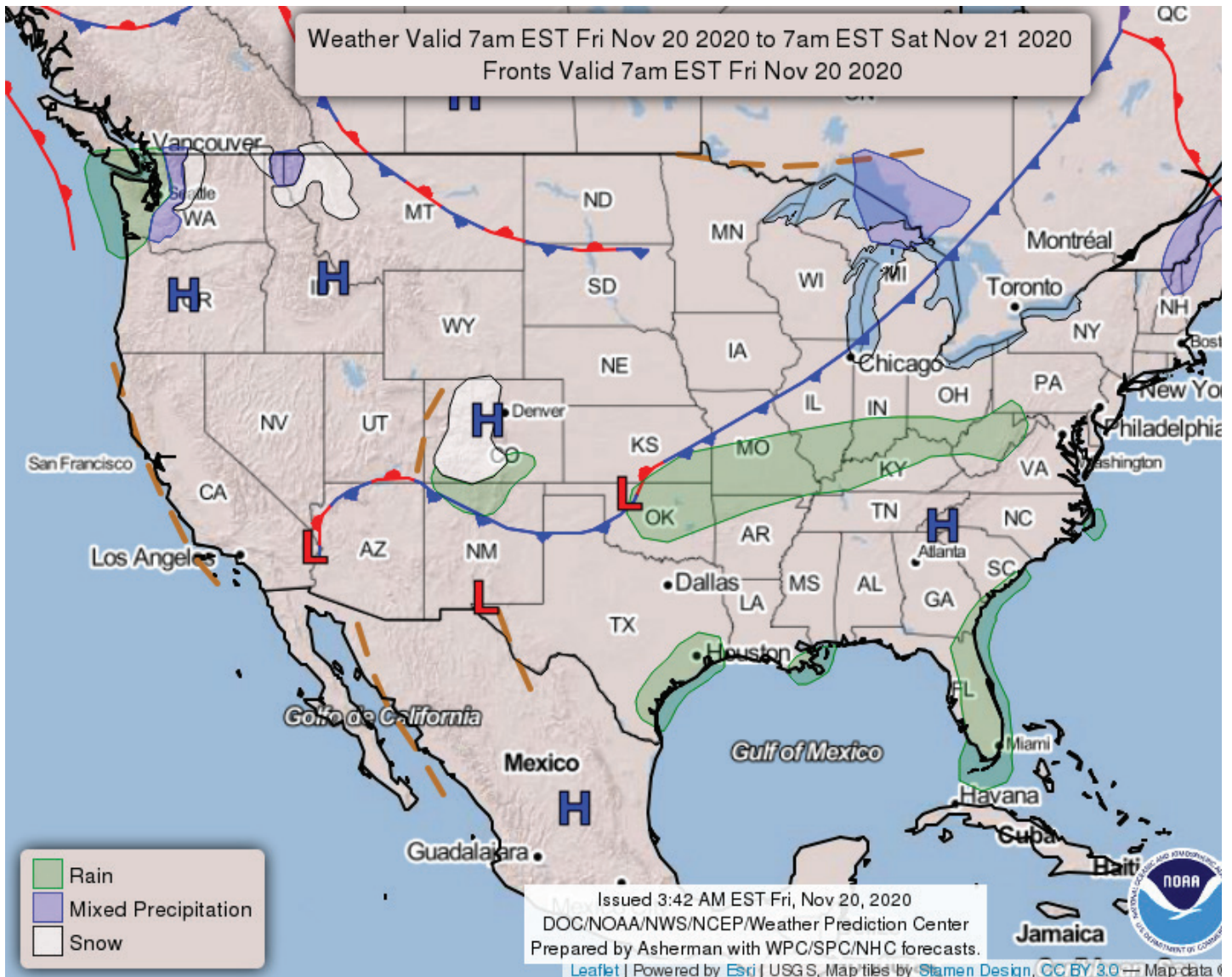
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 53 °F at 2:59 PM
Low Temp: 30 °F at 11:56 PM
Wind: 13 mph at 4:50 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 69° in 1962
Record Low: -12° in 1978, 1985
Average High: 37°F
Average Low: 17°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.50
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.06
Average Precip to date: 20.97
Precip Year to Date: 16.40
Sunset Tonight: 4:58 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:41 a.m.



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QUIET CHRISTIANS

For many years two neighbors rode the same train to work in downtown Chicago. George went to church regularly, and if pressed, would admit to being a Christian. But he never allowed being a Christian to interfere with his life. On the other hand, Will never went to church and had no use for godly things. As they rode the train each day, they discussed business strategies, sports, politics, religion, and current events. They rarely, if ever, mentioned God.

One morning Will became violently ill and was rushed to the hospital. After a series of tests, his physician informed his wife that he could not live longer than a few days - if that long. Frightened, his wife said, "Perhaps we'd better call George and talk about God."

"George? Talk about God? Why George? He rarely mentioned God to me or that he knew Him. So I doubt that he would be the right person to call," said Will. Without saying another word, he passed into eternity - lost.

When George heard the news, he was stunned and filled with guilt. There was nothing he could do for Will now but go to God and ask for forgiveness for not being a witness and promise to become a faithful witness to others. The words of the Psalmist echoed loudly in his ears: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!"

Unfortunately, the Kingdom of God is filled with too many citizens like George. They know the Lord from a distance but are unwilling to speak as one of His ambassadors. They believe that they have "theirs" and that's all that matters. But there is no denying that if indeed God has redeemed us, we will present Him faithfully to others!

Prayer: Thank you Lord for redeeming us! Forgive us for our silence and refusal to be faithful in presenting Your message to the lost around us! May we speak Your truth in love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Let the redeemed of the Lord say so! Psalm 107:2a

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

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

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News from the  Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Class AA=

First Round State Quarterfinal=

Huron def. Brandon Valley, 25-19, 25-19, 25-21

Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Harrisburg, 25-17, 19-25, 25-14, 25-27, 15-12

Sioux Falls Roosevelt def. Watertown, 14-25, 26-24, 25-17, 20-25, 15-11

Sioux Falls Washington def. Aberdeen Central, 25-22, 18-25, 25-20, 25-23

Class A=

First Round State Quarterfinal=

Dakota Valley def. Rapid City Christian, 21-25, 25-17, 25-23, 25-9

Hamlin def. Winner, 14-25, 25-17, 15-25, 25-18, 15-11

Parker def. Hill City, 25-21, 25-18, 18-25, 26-24

Sioux Falls Christian def. Madison, 25-10, 25-15, 25-21

Class B=

First Round State Quarterfinal=

Chester def. Faulkton, 25-21, 26-24, 24-26, 25-16

Colman-Egan def. Bridgewater-Emery, 20-25, 25-17, 25-17, 25-15

Corsica/Stickney def. Northwestern, 25-12, 25-8, 25-13

Warner def. Hitchcock-Tulare, 25-23, 25-18, 23-25, 23-25, 15-7

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

Noem says Education Secretary moving to Historical Society

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem announced Thursday that her Secretary of Education will be stepping down from that role to serve as State Historian and director of the state's historical society.

Ben Jones was appointed by Noem to oversee the Department of Education in January of 2019. He will make the move to the South Dakota State Historical Society in December, replacing Jay Vogt, who is retiring since overseeing the society since 2003.

Jones had worked as the Dean of Arts and Sciences at Dakota State University and a faculty member at the US Air Force Academy before taking the position in Noem's Cabinet.

"I look forward to being South Dakota's Historian and working with the Society's Trustees and members, universities, researchers, authors, archeologists, preservationists, and the public in preserving, promoting, and explaining our state's history," Jones said in a statement.

Jones' move will create the fourth vacancy on Noem's Cabinet this year. Secretary of Game, Fish and Parks Kelly Hepler, Secretary of Transportation Darin Bergquist and Secretary of Agriculture Kim Vanneman have all announced retirements.

Native American votes helped secure Biden's win in Arizona

By FELICIA FONSECA and ANGELIKI KASTANIS Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — Voting rights advocates had long argued that if Native Americans and other minority groups were mobilized, they could be decisive in a tight race.

This year proved that.

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Voter turnout on swaths of tribal land in Arizona surged compared with the 2016 presidential election, helping Joe Biden to victory in a state that hadn't supported a Democratic in a White House contest since 1996. Native Americans were among the difference-makers who swung the race to Biden in Arizona.

"It truly takes a village," said Clara Pratte, a political operative and Navajo woman who led national tribal engagements for the Biden campaign. "Could it have been done without a tribal vote? No."

That show of force is now translating into leverage for Native Americans seeking more representation in top levels of the federal government.

Biden is under pressure to appoint at least one Native American to his Cabinet. Among the contenders to oversee the Interior Department, which works with tribes, are New Mexico Rep. Deb Haaland, a member of the Laguna Pueblo, and Kevin Washburn, a former head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs who is a member of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma. Retiring Sen. Tom Udall of New Mexico, vice chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, also is on the list.

While it's difficult to determine exactly how many Native Americans voted because many live off reservations, a look at the turnout in key areas reveals a sharp rise in engagement.

Voters in precincts on the Navajo and Hopi reservations in northeastern Arizona cast nearly 60,000 ballots in the Nov. 3 election, compared with just under 42,500 in 2016, according to an Associated Press analysis of election data. Biden won Arizona by about 10,500 votes, according to unofficial results.

Turnout in two of the larger precincts on the reservations, for example, rose by 12% and 13% — and Biden won there handily — compared with a 4% increase among all Arizona voters.

Twice as many voters cast ballots in 2020 than in 2016 on the much smaller Havasupai reservation deep in a gorge off the Grand Canyon, overwhelmingly in support of Biden. More people from the Hualapai reservation also voted this year, with Biden outpacing Trump by a nearly 5-1 ratio.

Native voters say they were motivated by many of the same things as other voters.

"I was so disgusted with Trump," said Tommy Suetopka, a Hopi tribal member who lives in Tuba City. "Anybody who would want to run (against him) was going to get my vote."

Willis Daychild, who is Hualapai and lives in Phoenix, was critical of Trump's relationship with international leaders, his handling of the coronavirus pandemic and his immigration and health care policies.

Daychild said he saw Biden as a more decent candidate. "He might not be perfect, yet he has a foundation," said the 57-year-old budget analyst.

That anti-Trump sentiment was translated into votes by a widespread Democratic turnout effort.

Pratte, whose childhood home in Lupton on the Navajo Nation didn't always have electricity or running water, reached out before the election to the leadership of all 22 tribes in Arizona, a move that she said is indicative of the relationship federally recognized tribes have with the United States as sovereign nations.

The Biden campaign made a point of not treating Native voters as a monolith, Pratte said, and targeted specific groups, including Native women, youth, veterans and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Closer to Election Day, the campaign pushed tribal communities to voting sites with events that encouraged safe socialization — riding horses to the polls, driving in caravans and a parade to the polls with dancers on the street.

President Donald Trump also made a play for Native American voters. A slate of Republican Native Americans well-known in Arizona political circles joined in rallies for Trump, drawing comparisons between rural values and those in tribal communities.

Republican groups put up billboards across the Navajo Nation that said "Navajos for Trump," ran advertisements in newspapers and denounced what they misleadingly described as Biden's "socialist" agenda in a video filmed on the reservation.

Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer was among Trump's biggest supporters in Indian Country. Already, he said he has reached out to the Republican Party, saying it needs to start building relationships with Indian Country before the 2022 election and bring people on board who understand tribal communities.

"We need that strong, strong voice, someone who speaks Navajo eloquently, knows the tradition, knows the language, and they are out there," he said. "I'm kind of remorseful that maybe I didn't do as much as I could have done."

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Native American voting rights advocates knew they had to campaign differently this year because of the pandemic. Instead of the usual door-knocking, they did phone-banking, mass texting and radio advertisements in Navajo, English and Apache, creating family trees to reach out to broader groups of people.

Carol Davis, who is Navajo, received at least four handwritten postcards at her house asking if anyone needed a ride to the polls and ensuring she knew where to vote. She also was part of a group helping to boost voting among Native Americans.

She and others set up an information table at the junction of rural roads in northeastern Arizona and answered questions, mostly from Navajo speakers.

"In all these areas, there's always been some form of voter suppression, even if it's not outright voter suppression, and it's always created this idea that 'I'm not going to even bother to vote,'" said Davis, executive director of the environmental advocacy group Diné CARE. "There's been a lot of missed voters because of that."

The Native Vote Election Protection Project sent 60 observers to polling sites in Arizona on or around tribal land on Election Day and set up a hotline for voters to call in with any questions about voting or problems at polling sites.

Patty Ferguson-Bohnee, who oversees the project, said voters weren't always issued provisional ballots when they should have. People from the same household weren't allowed to vote in the same place, an issue tied to the widespread use of post office boxes on reservations.

Across the country, Arizona, Alaska, Oklahoma, New Mexico, South Dakota and Montana have the highest percentages of Native Americans eligible to vote, according to the National Congress of American Indians. In Arizona, that was about 310,000 potential presidential votes.

"People need to start paying attention to not only Navajo votes but across the board nationally, Native votes," Davis said. "Even though we're less than 2% of the population, we can come out in full force."

Kastanis reported from Los Angeles. Felicia Fonseca is a member of The Associated Press' race and ethnicity team. Follow her on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/FonsecaAP>

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

South Dakota surpasses 700 virus deaths

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota surpassed 700 virus deaths on Thursday as the state suffers through one of the worst virus surges in the nation.

Health officials reported 31 deaths from COVID-19, marking the second-highest daily tally of deaths since the pandemic began. The state currently has the country's 17th highest number of deaths per capita, according to Johns Hopkins researchers. But in the past 30 days, South Dakota has reported the nation's second-worst rate of deaths per capita. A total of 705 people have died.

The Department of Health also reported 1,071 new coronavirus cases. The state has the nation's second-highest rate of new cases per capita over the last two weeks, with 2,140 new cases per 100,000 people, according to Johns Hopkins researchers. Roughly one out of every 47 people has tested positive in the last two weeks.

Health officials reported that nearly 2,400 people are no longer infectious, bringing the state's active case count to 17,884.

Gov. Kristi Noem has emphasized the state's economy during the pandemic, refusing to order business shutdowns. She touted the state's October unemployment rate of 3.6% on social media.

The number of new unemployment claims declined during the most recent reporting week, according to the Department of Labor and Regulation.

Bankers survey projects drop in holiday retail sales

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Rural parts of 10 Plains and Western states are expected to see a not-as-jolly

holiday retail season this year, according to a new monthly survey of bankers in the region.

More than half of bankers surveyed this month for the Rural Mainstreet Survey projected 2020 holiday retail sales to be down from 2019 as the coronavirus pandemic worsens across the country. The survey suggests those sales to be down 3.1% from last year.

The survey's overall index fell to 46.8 in November from October's 53.2 — the first time since April that the index has fallen. It still remains well ahead of the 35.5 reading in March, when the index bottomed out as the outbreak began.

Any score below 50 suggests a shrinking economy, while a score above 50 suggests a growing economy.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss, who oversees the survey, said recent improvements in agriculture commodity prices, as well as federal farm support and the Federal Reserve's record low interest, have underpinned the region's economy.

"Still, only 6.5% of bankers reported economic improvements from October, while 12.9% detailed economic pullbacks for the month," Goss said.

Bankers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming were surveyed.

Person of interest detained in Rapid City shooting

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A person of interest has been detained in a shooting at a Rapid City apartment building, according to police.

Someone called 911 about 4:30 p.m. Wednesday and said a man had been shot in the leg, according to police spokesman Brendyn Medina. The man was taken to the hospital with serious but non-life threatening injuries.

At least one person witnessed the shooting, but the circumstances, motive and exact location of the shooting are still under investigation, Medina said.

He said the person of interest was detained in an alley one block south of the apartment building after a witness provided a name and description of the clothing the shooter was wearing, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Officers also found a gun between the route one would take to walk from the apartment to the alley, police said.

Detectives said they need to conduct more interviews to determine if the man detained is the suspect.

OmegaQuant Launches Vitamin D Test

SIOUX FALLS, S.D., Nov. 19, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- OmegaQuant, the leader in omega-3 testing, has launched a Vitamin D Test with a sample collection kit that allows you to test from home. The simple, safe, convenient test requires just a finger stick and a couple drops of blood for analysis — just like its range of omega-3 blood tests.

Vitamin D has played a major role in bone health for decades. During the last several years, however, new research has brought to light the crucial role it likely plays in a wide range of other health issues, from cardiovascular disease to immune function to obesity.

Similar to omega-3s, vitamin D has received a lot of attention over the last couple of decades from individuals who are looking for ways to add more to their diets or modify their lifestyle. But how much more? Most people don't know unless they test their blood level.

Similar to the way the Omega-3 Index Test assesses the dietary intake of omega-3s EPA and DHA, OmegaQuant's Vitamin D test can track someone's nutritional status. Vitamin D, like omega-3s, can be an elusive nutrient for many people depending on their diet and where they live, which makes measuring blood levels especially important.

While the issue of protective levels of vitamin D has been hotly debated over the years, many experts believe that having a level of at least 30 ng/mL is the sweet spot for most people. It is easy to correct your vitamin D level in as little as a few months by increasing sun exposure or increasing dietary intake

whether through food or supplements.

"Our new vitamin D test works the same way our omega-3 tests do – with a simple finger stick. No blood draw needed. No doctor necessary. No hidden lab fees. And you can collect your sample safely, in the privacy of your own home," said Jason Polreis, CEO, OmegaQuant.

"We think that vitamin D holds just as much importance as a nutrient as omega-3s. And it suffers from the same issues in terms of intake in that the majority of individuals are falling short. But how short? The only way to know is to test."

About OmegaQuant OmegaQuant is an independent, CLIA-certified lab that offers Omega-3 Index testing to researchers, clinicians and the public and sets the standard for fatty acid testing. OmegaQuant performs fatty acid analysis in Sioux Falls, SD, for commercial and academic research collaborators, and for consumers interested in monitoring their nutritional status in both blood and breast milk. Its goal is to offer the highest quality fatty acid analytical services to researchers and to provide simple tests of nutritional status to consumers, with the ultimate purpose of advancing the science and use of Omega-3 fatty acids to improve health. Most recently, OmegaQuant formed a partnership with CSIRO to help process lab samples coming from Australia and the APAC region, with a lab based in Adelaide, Australia. OmegaQuant also has a lab partnership with the University of Stirling, based in the Scotland, to help process blood samples from Europe.

View original content to download multimedia: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/omegaquant-launches-vitamin-d-test-301175994.html>

SOURCE OmegaQuant

Death toll at 37 in Uganda unrest after Bobi Wine's arrest

By RISDEL KASASIRA Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — The death toll from protests over the arrest of Ugandan opposition presidential hopeful and musician Bobi Wine has risen to 37, police said Friday. This is the country's worst unrest in a decade, and more is expected ahead of the election early next year.

A weary-looking Wine was granted bail in the eastern town of Iganga after being arrested on Wednesday and accused of flouting COVID-19 guidelines that require presidential candidates to address less than 200 people.

"Let (President Yoweri) Museveni know that we are not slaves and we shall not accept to be slaves," Wine said. "We shall be free."

The 38-year-old opposition figure, who has been arrested many times in recent years, has captured the imagination of many Ugandans with his persistent calls for Museveni to retire after 36 years in power.

His lawyers brought the torn clothes the singer wore the day of his arrest on Wednesday, when protests erupted in the capital, Kampala.

Police have said 350 people were arrested and detained throughout Kampala. Tension remained in the capital Thursday, with a heavy military and police presence.

The Uganda police pathologist and the head of police health services told journalists they had counted 37 bodies by Thursday morning.

Speaking to reporters, Security Minister Gen. Elly Tumwine warned protesters that they will be dealt with if they continue.

"This was a deliberate and pre-planned move to cause chaos, because we have evidence," Tumwine asserted. "But I want to warn those inciting violence that they will reap what they sow."

Museveni while campaigning on Thursday said the protesters "have entered an area of fighting that we know very well. Whoever started it, will regret it. Some of these groups are being used by outsiders who don't like stability."

Museveni is expected to address the nation on Sunday, his spokesman said.

Pfizer seeking emergency use of its COVID-19 vaccine in US

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

Pfizer said Friday it is asking U.S. regulators to allow emergency use of its COVID-19 vaccine, starting the clock on a process that could bring limited first shots as early as next month and eventually an end to the pandemic -- but not until after a long, hard winter.

The action comes days after Pfizer Inc. and its German partner BioNTech announced that its vaccine appears 95% effective at preventing mild to severe COVID-19 disease in a large, ongoing study.

The companies said that protection plus a good safety record means the vaccine should qualify for emergency use authorization, something the Food and Drug Administration can grant before the final testing is fully complete. In addition to Friday's FDA submission, they have already started "rolling" applications in Europe and the U.K. and intend to submit similar information soon.

"Our work to deliver a safe and effective vaccine has never been more urgent," Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said in a statement.

With the coronavirus surging around the U.S. and the world, the pressure is on for regulators to make a speedy decision.

"Help is on the way," Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious disease expert said on the eve of Pfizer's announcement, adding that it's too early to abandon masks and other protective measures. "We need to actually double down on the public health measures as we're waiting for that help to come."

Friday's filing would set off a chain of events as the FDA and its independent advisers debate if the shots are ready. If so, still another government group will have to decide how the initial limited supplies are rationed out to anxiously awaiting Americans.

How much vaccine is available and when is a moving target, but initial supplies will be scarce and rationed. Globally, Pfizer has estimated it could have 50 million doses available by year's end.

About 25 million may become available for U.S. use in December, 30 million in January and 35 million more in February and March, according to information presented to the National Academy of Medicine this week. Recipients will need two doses, three weeks apart.

Not far behind is competitor Moderna Inc.'s COVID-19 vaccine. Its early data suggests the shots are as strong as Pfizer's, and that company expects to also seek emergency authorization within weeks.

Here's what happens next:

MAKING THE DATA PUBLIC

The public's first chance to see how strong the evidence really is will come in early December at a public meeting of the FDA's scientific advisers.

So far, what's known is based only on statements from Pfizer and BioNTech. Of 170 infections detected to date, only eight were among people who'd received the actual vaccine and the rest had gotten a dummy shot. On the safety side, the companies cite results from 38,000 study participants who've been tracked for two months after their second dose. That's a milestone FDA set because historically, vaccine side effects don't crop up later than that.

"We'll drill down on these data," said FDA adviser Dr. Paul Offit of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Think of it like science on trial. A few days before the meeting, the FDA will release its own internal analysis. That sets the stage for the advisers' daylong debate about any signs of safety concerns and how the new vaccine technology works before rendering a verdict.

They'll recommend not just whether FDA should allow broader use of the vaccine generally but if so, for whom. For example, is there enough proof the vaccine works as well for older, sicker adults as for younger, healthier people?

There's still no guarantee. "We don't know what that vote's going to be," said former FDA vaccine chief Norman Baylor.

EMERGENCY USE ISN'T THE SAME AS FULL APPROVAL

If there's an emergency green light, "that vaccine is still deemed investigational. It's not approved yet," Dr. Marion Gruber, chief of FDA's vaccine office, told the National Academy of Medicine this week.

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That means anyone offered an emergency vaccination must get a "fact sheet" describing potential benefits and risks before going through with the shot, she said.

There will be a lot of unknowns. For example, the 95% protection rate is based on people who developed symptoms and then were tested for the virus. Can the vaccinated get infected but have no symptoms, able to spread the virus? How long does protection last?

That's why the 44,000-person study needs to keep running -- something difficult considering ethically, participants given dummy shots at some point must be offered real vaccine, complicating the search for answers.

And at least for now, pregnant women won't qualify because they weren't studied. Pfizer only recently began testing the vaccine in children as young as 12.

A decision on Pfizer's vaccine won't affect other COVID-19 vaccine candidates in the pipeline, which will be judged separately.

MANUFACTURING

Brewing vaccine is more complex than typical drug manufacturing, yet the millionth dose to roll out of Pfizer's Kalamazoo, Michigan, factory must be the same purity and potency as every dose before and after.

That means the FDA decision isn't just based on study data, but on its determination that the vaccine is being made correctly.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine -- and Moderna's shots -- are made with brand-new technology. They don't contain the actual coronavirus. Instead, they're made with a piece of genetic code for the "spike" protein that studs the virus.

That messenger RNA, or mRNA, instructs the body to make some harmless spike protein, training immune cells to recognize it if the real virus eventually comes along.

GETTING INTO PEOPLE'S ARMS

Another government group -- advisers to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention -- decides who is first in line for scarce doses. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said he hopes that decision can be made at the same time as FDA's.

The Trump administration's Operation Warp Speed has worked with states to line up how many doses they'd need to cover the populations offered vaccine first.

Pfizer will ship those supplies as ordered by the states -- only after FDA gives the OK.

Company projections of how much it will ship each month are just predictions, Baylor warned.

"It's not like a pizza," he said. Manufacturing is so complex that "you don't necessarily end up with what you thought."

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.

India virus cases pass 9M; capital's hospitals under strain

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Intensive care wards in New Delhi's hospitals are nearly at capacity, and the city's main crematorium is packed, as the coronavirus has surged in the Indian capital and the country hit a grim milestone Friday, recording 9 million infections.

While the pace of recorded new cases overall in the country of 1.3 billion appears to be slowing, experts have cautioned that official figures may be offering false hope since many infections may be going undetected. In New Delhi, meanwhile, the disease is on the rise, and health officials found this week that the prevalence of infections in markets was much higher than expected, and the city has added an average of 6,700 new cases each day in recent weeks.

Despite that, markets are still full there and in other major cities, as fatigue with wearing masks and maintaining a safe distance from others set in during the recent festival season, including celebrations for the Diwali holiday. Experts worry that get-togethers for the festival of light will yield yet another surge in

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cases in the coming weeks.

"The next four weeks are crucial. The road is very bumpy," said Dr. S.K. Sarin, director of New Delhi's Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences.

The capital's health system is under tremendous strain: Government figures showed 90% of the critical care beds with ventilators designated for virus patients and 86% of critical care beds without ventilators were full as of Thursday.

At Aakash Healthcare, a private hospital in New Delhi, all the critical care beds there were full, and many patients were waiting outside the hospital, said Dr. Akshay Budhraj, a pulmonologist. In a particularly worrying sign, young people were increasingly coming in with severe infections, he said.

Budhraj expressed frustration with the lack of understanding about the severity of the disease and the measures needed to slow its spread — not just in markets, but even within the hospital.

Family members of patients who are likely infected with COVID-19 but asymptomatic were roaming around the hospital. "They don't understand," he said.

State Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the health system would manage to keep up with the demand. He said New Delhi is hoping to add 1,400 more critical care beds and that all private hospitals have been asked to reserve 80% of their critical care beds, and over 60% of their other beds for virus patients.

"Our doctors, medical superintendents, medical directors and the entire medical fraternity made such tremendous arrangements to manage COVID-19 that Delhi is not witnessing a crisis," he said.

But at the city's main crematorium, nearly all the pyres burn simultaneously. Families would usually come in huge groups to chant prayers and carry the body to the pyre. Now, each funeral is small, and loved ones in hazmat suits hurry through the process.

The government is considering increasing restrictions in markets. But, so far, officials have held off because they are wary of inflicting any more damage to the economy. In the meantime, the fine for not wearing a mask was increased fourfold to 2,000 rupees (\$27) — a massive sum for the millions of Indians who live on less than \$2 per day.

In Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat, authorities announced a weekend curfew beginning Friday in the city of Ahmedabad to curb infections.

India is No. 3 in the world for reported deaths, behind the United States and Brazil, and No. 2 in terms of recorded infections, though there are some signs the pace of new cases is slowing. It took India 12 days to go from 5 million cases to 6 million but 22 days to go from 8 million to 9 million.

Experts warn that the official numbers, as elsewhere, are significant undercounts. India is not classifying many deaths as being from the virus, and, increasingly, people aren't getting tested. Some experts also worry that the increased use of rapid tests, which are less accurate, is resulting in a high number of cases being missed.

Mobile testing vans are also going through vulnerable neighborhoods in New Delhi to test people for the virus — but some hoped for more.

"They should do this (testing) by going door-to-door," said Ajay Kumar Jha, whose brother is being treated for COVID-19. "This will help because many people fear going and getting tested."

Associated Press journalists Ashok Sharma and Rishabh Jain contributed to this report.

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Azerbaijani leader hails handover of region ceded by Armenia

By DARIA LITVINOVA and JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Azerbaijan's president declared Friday that his forces have taken control of the Aghdam region, a territory ceded by Armenia in a cease-fire agreement that ended the fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh.

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The truce, brokered by Russia last week, stipulated that Armenia hand over control of some areas it holds outside Nagorno-Karabakh's borders to Azerbaijan. Aghdam is the first one to be turned over.

"Today, with a feeling of endless pride, I am informing my people about the liberation of Aghdam," Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said in an address to the nation. "Aghdam is ours!"

Crowds of people carrying national flags gathered in the Azerbaijani capital, Baku, to celebrate the handover of the Aghdam region.

Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war there ended in 1994. That war left not only Nagorno-Karabakh itself but substantial surrounding territory in Armenian hands.

Heavy fighting that flared up Sept. 27 marked the biggest escalation of the decades-old conflict between the two ex-Soviet nations in over a quarter-century, killing hundreds and possibly thousands of people.

The truce last week halted the violence after several failed attempts to establish a lasting cease-fire. It came two days after Azerbaijan, which had made significant advances, announced it had seized the strategically important city of Shusha.

Aliyev on Friday noted that Azerbaijan is taking over the Aghdam region "without a single shot (fired) or losses (suffered)," and called it a "great political success" that wouldn't have been possible without military gains.

"Azerbaijan was able to achieve what it wanted on the political arena after having won a brilliant victory on the battlefield," the president said.

The agreement, celebrated as a victory in Azerbaijan, has left many Armenians bitter. Mass protests erupted in the Armenian capital, Yerevan, immediately after the peace deal was announced last week, and many ethnic Armenians have been leaving the territories that are to be handed over to Azerbaijan, setting their houses on fire in a bitter farewell gesture.

Although regaining the region is a triumph for Azerbaijan, the joy of returning is shot through with grief and anger. The region's main city, Aghdam, was once home to 50,000, known for its white homes and an elaborate three-story teahouse, but it is so ruined that it's sometimes called the "Hiroshima of the Caucasus."

After the population was driven out in 1993 by fighting, they were followed by Armenian pillagers who stripped the city bare, seeking both booty and construction materials. One of the city's happier eccentricities, the bread museum, is in ruins. The cognac factory is gone.

Today, the only structurally whole building is the mosque; from the top of the elaborately patterned minarets, the view is of a vast expanse of jagged concrete and houses reduced to shells, all encroached upon by a quarter-century's growth of vegetation.

Associated Press writer Aida Sultanova in London contributed to this report.

Trump, allies make frantic steps to overturn Biden's victory

By COLLEEN LONG, ZEKE MILLER, JILL COLVIN and DAVID EGGERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump and his allies are taking increasingly frantic steps to subvert the results of the 2020 election, including summoning state legislators to the White House as part of a longshot bid to overturn Joe Biden's victory.

Among other last-ditch tactics: personally calling local election officials who are trying to rescind their certification votes in Michigan, suggesting in a legal challenge that Pennsylvania set aside the popular vote there and pressuring county officials in Arizona to delay certifying vote tallies.

Election law experts see it as the last, dying gasps of the Trump campaign and say Biden is certain to walk into the Oval Office come January. But there is great concern that Trump's effort is doing real damage to public faith in the integrity of U.S. elections.

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, one of Trump's most vocal GOP critics, accused Trump of resorting to "overt pressure on state and local officials to subvert the will of the people and overturn the election." Romney

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added, "It is difficult to imagine a worse, more undemocratic action by a sitting American President."

Trump's own election security agency has declared the 2020 presidential election to have been the most secure in history. Days after that statement was issued, Trump fired the agency's leader.

The increasingly desperate and erratic moves have no reasonable chance of changing the outcome of the 2020 election, in which Biden has now received more votes than any other presidential candidate in history and has clinched the 270 Electoral College votes needed to win.

But the Republican president's constant barrage of baseless claims, his work to personally sway local officials who certify votes and his allies' refusal to admit he lost is likely to have a lasting negative impact on the country. Legions of his supporters don't believe he lost.

"It's about trying to set up the conditions where half of the country believes that there are only two possibilities, either they win or the election was stolen," said Justin Levitt, a constitutional law scholar and professor at Loyola Law School. "And that's not a democracy."

The two GOP canvassers in Michigan's Wayne County said in a statement late Wednesday they lacked confidence that the election was fair and impartial. "There has been a distinct lack of transparency throughout the process," they said. But there has been no evidence of impropriety or fraud in Michigan, election officials have said.

Trump's allies have homed in on the way that the president's early lead in Michigan and some other states on election night slipped away as later votes came, casting it as evidence of something nefarious.

But a massive influx of mail-in ballots because of the coronavirus pandemic leaned largely to Biden, who encouraged his supporters to vote by mail, and those votes were the last to be counted. So it appeared Trump had an edge when he really didn't.

In fact, Biden crushed Trump in Wayne County, a Democratic stronghold that includes Detroit, by a more than 2-1 ratio on his way to winning Michigan by 154,000 votes, according to unofficial results.

Earlier this week, the county's two Republicans canvassers blocked the certification of votes there. They later relented and the results were certified. But a person familiar with the matter said Trump reached out to the canvassers, Monica Palmer and William Hartmann, on Tuesday evening after the revised vote to express gratitude for their support. Then, on Wednesday, Palmer and Hartmann signed affidavits saying they believed the county vote "should not be certified."

They cannot rescind their votes, according to the Michigan secretary of state. The four-member state canvassing board is expected to meet Monday and also is split with two Democrats and two Republicans.

Trump appears intent on pushing the issue. He has invited Michigan's Republican legislative leaders, Senate Majority Mike Shirkey and House Speaker Lee Chatfield, to the White House, according to two officials familiar with the matter who were not authorized to speak publicly. The two have agreed to go, according to one official, but they haven't commented publicly, and it's not clear what the purpose of the meeting is.

The Michigan Legislature would be called on to select electors if Trump succeeded in convincing the state's board of canvassers not to certify Biden's 154,000-vote victory in the state. But both legislative leaders have indicated they will not try to overturn Biden's win.

"Michigan law does not include a provision for the Legislature to directly select electors or to award electors to anyone other than the person who received the most votes," Shirkey's spokeswoman said last week.

During a press conference in Wilmington, Delaware, on Thursday, Biden said Americans are "witnessing incredible irresponsibility, incredibly damaging messages are being sent to the rest of the world about how democracy functions."

He added, "I just think it's totally irresponsible."

Earlier, Trump personal attorney Rudy Giuliani and others had held a press conference to allege a widespread Democratic election conspiracy involving multiple states and suspect voting machines. But election officials across the country have said repeatedly there was no widespread fraud.

Many of the allegations of fraud stem from poll watchers who filed affidavits included with lawsuits in battleground states aimed at delaying vote certification. Those affidavits lean into innuendo and unsupported suggestions of fraud.

For example, they refer to suitcases in a polling place but make no suggestion that ballots were being

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secretly counted. There are allegations of ballots being duplicated — something routinely done when a ballot is physically damaged. There are claims that partisan poll watchers were too far away to observe well and therefore something fishy was probably going on. But they don't have proof. Poll watchers have no auditing role in elections; they are volunteer observers.

Giuliani cited a few sworn affidavits that he said showed a vast Democratic conspiracy, but he added that he could not reveal much of the evidence. One he cited was from Jessy Jacob, identified as a city employee in Detroit who said she saw other workers coaching voters to cast ballots for Biden and the Democrats.

A judge who refused to block certification of Detroit-area results noted that Jacob's claims included no "date, location, frequency or names of employees" and that she only came forward after unofficial results indicated Biden had won Michigan.

Trump legal adviser Jenna Ellis, who joined Giuliani, said more evidence would be forthcoming and that Trump's allies would have more success in courts going forward. But so far, most of their legal actions have been dismissed.

Chris Krebs, the Trump administration election official fired last week over the comments about the security of 2020, tweeted: "That press conference was the most dangerous 1hr 45 minutes of television in American history. And possibly the craziest."

Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., tweeted: "Rudy and his buddies should not pressure electors to ignore their certification obligations under the statute. We are a nation of laws, not tweets."

In Pennsylvania, where the Trump campaign is challenging the election results in federal court, a legal team led by Giuliani suggested in a filing Wednesday that the judge order the Republican-led state legislature to pick delegates to the Electoral College, potentially throwing the state's 20 electoral votes to Trump. A judge canceled an evidentiary hearing in the case.

In Arizona, the Republican Party is pressuring county officials to delay certifying results. The GOP lost a bid on Thursday to postpone certification in Maricopa County, the state's most populous. In northwestern Arizona, Mohave County officials postponed their certification until next week.

Judge John Hannah ruled without explanation, except to bar the party from refileing the case. The judge promised a full explanation in the future.

Maricopa County officials are expected to certify elections results on Friday.

Biden won Arizona by more than 10,000 votes, and Maricopa County put him over the top. The county performed a hand count of some ballots the weekend after the election, which showed its machine counts were 100% accurate. The same was found Wednesday during routine post-election accuracy tests.

In Georgia, where officials have been auditing the results of the presidential race, Trump has repeatedly attacked the process and called it "a joke."

He has also made repeated incorrect assertions that Georgia election officials are unable to verify signatures on absentee ballot envelopes. In fact, Georgia requires that they be checked.

The Associated Press called Biden the winner of Georgia and its 16 electoral votes on Thursday night.

A top Georgia election official said earlier Thursday that a hand tally of ballots cast in the presidential race had been completed, and that the results affirmed Biden's narrow lead over Trump. The secretary of state's office planned to release results of the audit later Thursday.

During the hand tally, several counties found previously uncounted ballots that the secretary of state's office has said would reduce Biden's lead to just under 13,000 votes, with roughly 5 million total votes cast. Georgia law allows a candidate to request a recount within two business days of certification if the margin is less than 0.5 percentage points. That recount would be done using machines.

Eggert reported from Lansing. Associated Press writers Alanna Durkin Richer in Boston, Kate Brumback and Christina A. Cassidy in Atlanta, Alexandra Jaffe in Wilmington and Jacques Billeaud in Phoenix contributed to this report.

Election 2020 Today: Biden turns 78, Trump's legal ploy

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By The Associated Press undefined

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

TODAY'S TOP STORIES:

BIRTHDAY TIME: President-elect Joe Biden turned 78 on Friday. In two months, he'll take the reins of a politically fractured nation facing the worst public health crisis in a century, high unemployment and a reckoning on racial injustice. As Biden wrestles with those issues, he will be attempting to accomplish another feat: demonstrating to Americans that age is but a number. Biden will enter office as the oldest president in the nation's history.

LEGAL PLOY: President Donald Trump and his allies are taking increasingly frantic steps to subvert the results of the 2020 election, including summoning state legislators to the White House as part of a long-shot bid to overturn Biden's victory. Trump also has called local election officials who are trying to rescind their certification votes in Michigan. His legal team has suggested that a judge order Pennsylvania to set aside the popular vote there. And his allies are pressuring county officials in Arizona to delay certifying vote tallies. Election law experts see this as the last, dying gasp of the Trump campaign and say there is no question Biden will walk into the Oval Office come January.

PROGRESSIVE PLAY: Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, leaders of the Democratic Party's left wing, are at risk of being excluded from the senior ranks of Biden's administration as the incoming president balances the demands of his party's progressive base against the political realities of a narrowly divided Senate. The liberal New England senators remain interested in serving in Biden's Cabinet, but even some of their allies recognize they face major political hurdles getting there.

WISCONSIN RECOUNT: Wisconsin's election recount gets underway with scores of workers and high-speed ballot processing machines. The recount, requested and paid for by Trump, is aimed at undoing Biden's victory in the key state by more than 20,600 votes. It'll be held in Milwaukee and Dane counties, the state's two biggest and most liberal counties that helped fuel Biden's win. The recounts in two big convention centers are open to the public and will be livestreamed.

GEORGIA RECOUNT: A hand tally of ballots cast in Georgia for the presidential race has been completed, and it affirms Biden's narrow lead over Trump, according to results released by the secretary of state's office. The AP declared Biden the winner of Georgia and its 16 Electoral College votes after the hand count confirmed he leads Trump by roughly 12,000 votes out of nearly 5 million counted. The complete hand recount stemmed from an audit required by a new state law and wasn't in response to any suspected problems with the state's results or an official recount request.

QUOTABLE: "It is difficult to imagine a worse, more undemocratic action by a sitting American President."
— Republican Sen. Mitt Romney of Utah on Trump's legal attempts to overturn the election.

ICYMI:

Trump summons Michigan GOP leaders for extraordinary meeting

Biden says he's decided on treasury secretary nomination

Biden chides Trump for lack of cooperation on vaccine

Native American votes helped secure Biden's win in Arizona

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

Sanders, Warren under scrutiny as Biden weighs Cabinet picks

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, leaders of the Democratic Party's left wing, are at risk of being excluded from the senior ranks of President-elect Joe Biden's administration as the incoming president balances the demands of his party's progressive base against the political realities of a narrowly divided Senate.

The liberal New England senators remain interested in serving in Biden's Cabinet, but even some of their allies recognize they face major political hurdles getting there. Sensing disappointment, progressive

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leaders have reluctantly begun to express support for less-controversial alternatives.

Warren, whose political career has been defined by efforts to diminish the power of big banks, is the progressive movement's top choice for Treasury secretary. Sanders, a self-described democratic socialist, reiterated his desire to serve as Biden's Labor secretary on Thursday, describing himself as particularly well-suited "to focus on the many crises facing working families in this country."

Whether he is included in Biden's cabinet or not, Sanders warned Biden not to freeze out progressives as he shapes his government.

"It seems to me pretty clear that progressive views need to be expressed within a Biden administration," Sanders told The Associated Press. "It would be, for example, enormously insulting if Biden put together a 'team of rivals' — and there's some discussion that that's what he intends to do — which might include Republicans and conservative Democrats — but which ignored the progressive community. I think that would be very, very unfortunate."

The scrutiny on Biden's staffing decisions reflects the tremendous pressure the president-elect faces as he cobbles together a senior team to execute his policy priorities drawing from his party's disparate factions. He will almost certainly face criticism no matter whom he picks for the most powerful positions, but he can perhaps least afford to lose the support of his vocal progressive base.

In a nod to the left wing, Biden's transition team has hired Analilia Mejia, a Sanders adviser who served as his presidential campaign's political director, to work on progressive outreach. It's unlikely, however, that mid-level hires during the transition will be enough to satisfy progressives.

Biden told reporters Thursday that he had finalized his choice for Treasury secretary and said the pick would be "someone who will be accepted by all elements of the Democratic party, moderates and progressives." He sidestepped a specific question about Sanders joining his Cabinet as he walked off stage.

Likely facing a divided Congress that could push back against the vast majority of his agenda, Biden is eyeing a series of executive actions to be implemented by his Cabinet that would force significant changes in health care, banking, environmental regulation, immigration and foreign policy, among other major issues.

Biden's transition team declined to comment publicly about Sanders or Warren.

And while progressives have not given up hope that one or both might still be nominated, they acknowledged the possibility — even the likelihood — that the high-profile liberal senators would remain in the Senate.

"It's safe to say that Elizabeth Warren has definitely earned the trust and the ear of Joe Biden, and will surely have an influential role in agenda setting going forward whether it's being a very powerful senator or a more formal role in his administration," said Adam Green, co-founder of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, among Warren's most vocal supporters in Washington. "No matter what, she'll be powerful when it comes to agenda setting for the Democratic Party."

Waleed Shahid, a spokesman for the Sanders-aligned Justice Democrats, said his group and others recognize that "not every single member of the administration is going to be progressive — that's not who Joe Biden is." He said progressives simply want "adequate representation" in the Cabinet.

"We are advocating for them to be included, but we also have backup choices," he said of Warren and Sanders.

Indeed, liberal groups have tried to rally behind lesser-known progressive leaders such as Michigan Rep. Andy Levin for Labor secretary and former Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen to lead the Department of Treasury.

Like their party's establishment leaders, progressives understand the political challenge Democrats would face should either Sanders or Warren leave the Senate. In both cases, Republican governors would have the ability to nominate their replacements, at least in the short-term.

Sanders noted that Vermont Gov. Phil Scott has promised to fill a prospective vacancy with an independent who caucuses with Democrats, just as Sanders does.

"Gov. Scott is a moderate Republican. He is not a right-wing Republican," Sanders said. "He understands that this is a progressive state and the wise and appropriate thing to do would be, as an interim appoint-

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ment before the special election took place -- would be to appoint somebody whose views were consistent with mine."

In a best-case scenario for Democrats, the Senate would be divided 50-50 in January when the new Congress is sworn in, with Vice President-elect Kamala Harris in position to break the tie. But that's only if Democrats win both of Georgia's special elections on Jan. 5.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell holds great sway over Biden's Cabinet nominees regardless of which party ends up in control.

The Senate's top Republican has yet to tip his hand about how he'll navigate the confirmation process, preferring to wait for Trump to accept the election results and Georgia's Senate elections to play out. But Senate Democrats expect McConnell to impose a full-scale blockade on Cabinet picks he doesn't like.

Biden will be the first Democrat president in modern times trying to set up a first-term administration without his party controlling the Senate, a rare dynamic that will play out before a bitterly divided nation and a hyper-partisan Senate.

The more controversial potential nominees, Warren and Sanders among them, would likely struggle to win confirmation. Some are already running into partisan opposition.

Previewing the intense battles ahead, Texas GOP Sen. Ted Cruz has been producing a series of campaign-style videos opposing both Warren and Sanders.

Yet there is also evidence of resistance from Biden's own coalition, which includes moderate Democrats, independents and even some Republicans.

"Choosing Elizabeth Warren or Bernie Sanders, who represent the far left -- and in Bernie's case an openly socialist view of the world -- is not the leadership that the American people just voted for," said Jennifer Horn, a co-founder of the anti-Trump Lincoln Project that spent millions to support Biden's presidential bid. "I think Joe Biden understands that."

AP writers Lisa Mascaro and Chris Rugaber in Washington contributed.

Birthday time: Biden turns 78, will be oldest U.S. president

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden turned 78 on Friday. In two months, he'll take the reins of a politically fractured nation facing the worst public health crisis in a century, high unemployment and a reckoning on racial injustice.

As he wrestles with those issues, Biden will be attempting to accomplish another feat: demonstrate to Americans that age is but a number and he's up to the job.

Biden will be sworn in as the oldest president in the nation's history, displacing Ronald Reagan, who left the White House in 1989 when he was 77 years and 349 days old.

The age and health of both Biden and President Donald Trump -- less than four years Biden's junior — loomed throughout a race that was decided by a younger and more diverse electorate and at a moment when the nation is facing no shortage of issues of consequence.

Out of the gate, Biden will be keen to demonstrate he's got the vigor to serve.

"It's crucial that he and his staff put himself in the position early in his presidency where he can express what he wants with a crispness that's not always been his strength," said Ross Baker, a political scientist at Rutgers University who has advised legislators from both parties. "He has got to build up credibility with the American people that he's physically and mentally up to the job."

Throughout the campaign, Trump, 74, didn't miss a chance to highlight Biden's gaffes and argue that the Democrat lacked the mental acuity to lead the nation. Both critics and some backers of Biden worried that he was sending the wrong message about his stamina by keeping a relatively light public schedule while Trump barnstormed battleground states. Biden attributed his light schedule to being cautious during the coronavirus pandemic.

Some of Biden's rivals in the Democratic primary also made a case on age -- while skipping Trump's vitriol

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-- by raising the question of whether someone of Biden's and Trump's generation was the right person to lead a nation dealing with issues like climate change and racial inequality.

Brian Ott, a Missouri State University communications professor who studies presidential rhetoric, said Biden was hardly impressive as a campaigner, but has proven far more effective with his public remarks since Election Day.

Ott said Biden's victory speech was poignant, and his empathy showed in a virtual discussion that he held earlier this week with frontline healthcare workers. The president-elect's experience -- a combination of age and nearly 50 years in politics -- conveys more clearly through the prism of governing than the chaos of campaigning, he said.

"The rhetoric of governing, unlike the rhetoric of campaigning, is collaborative rather than adversarial," Ott said.

Biden's relatively advanced age also puts a greater premium on the quality of his staff, Baker said. His choice of Sen. Kamala Harris, nearly 20 years younger than him, as his running mate effectively acknowledged his age issue. Biden has described himself as a transitional president but hasn't ruled out running for a second term.

"He's well served in making it known from Day One that she's ready to go," Baker said of Harris. "She's got to be in the images coming out of the White House. They also need to, in terms of their messaging, highlight her inclusion in whatever the important issue or debate is going on in the White House."

Biden, in a September interview with CNN, promised to be "totally transparent" about all facets of his health if elected but he hasn't said how he'll do that.

The campaign has made the case that Biden isn't your average septuagenarian.

His physician, Dr. Kevin O'Connor, in a medical report released by the campaign in December, described Biden as "healthy, vigorous ... fit to successfully execute the duties of the Presidency, to include those as Chief Executive, Head of State and Commander in Chief."

O'Connor reported that Biden works out five days a week. The president-elect told supporters that during the pandemic he has relied on home workouts involving a Peloton bike, treadmill and weights.

In 1988, Biden suffered two life-threatening brain aneurysms, an experience that he wrote in his memoir shaped him into the "kind of man I want to be." O'Connor also noted in his report that Biden has an irregular heartbeat, but it has not required any medication or other treatment. He also had his gall bladder removed in 2003.

A September article by a group of researchers in the Journal on Active Aging concluded that both Biden and Trump are "super-agers" and are likely to outlive their American contemporaries and maintain their health beyond the end of the next presidential term.

Some of Biden's White House predecessors left behind breadcrumbs about the dos and don'ts of demonstrating presidential vigor, said Edward Frantz, a presidential historian at the University of Indianapolis.

Reagan made sure the public saw him chopping wood and riding horses. Trump, after being diagnosed with the coronavirus, quickly returned to a busy campaign schedule -- holding dozens of crowded rallies in battleground states in the final weeks of the campaign. Those events flouted coronavirus guidelines on social distancing, wearing masks and avoiding large gatherings.

In 1841, William Harrison, 68, attempted to show off his vigor by delivering a lengthy inaugural address without a coat or hat. Weeks later, Harrison, then the oldest president elected in U.S. history, developed a cold that turned into pneumonia that would kill him just a month into his presidency. It's disputed whether Harrison's illness was related to his inaugural address.

US government executes man convicted of killing Texas teen

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

TERRE HAUTE, Ind. (AP) — Orlando Hall got stiffed on a drug deal and went to a Texas apartment looking for the two brothers who took his money. They weren't home, but their 16-year-old sister was.

Late Thursday, Hall was put to death for abducting and killing the teenager, Lisa Rene. His was the

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eighth federal execution this year since the Trump administration revived a process that had been used just three times in the past 56 years. A judge's stay over concerns about the execution drug gave Hall a reprieve, but for less than six hours. After the Supreme Court overturned the stay, he was put to death just before midnight.

Hall, a changed man in prison according to his lawyers and a church volunteer who had grown close to him, was consoling his family and supporters at the end. "I'm OK," he said in a final statement, then adding, "Take care of yourselves. Tell my kids I love them."

As the drug was administered, Hall, 49, lifted his head, appeared to wince briefly and twitched his feet. He appeared to mumble to himself and twice he opened his mouth wide, as if he was yawning. Each time that was followed by short, seemingly labored, breaths. He then stopped breathing. Soon after, an official with a stethoscope came into the execution chamber to check for a heartbeat before Hall was officially declared dead.

Hall's attorneys also had sought to halt the execution over concerns that Hall, who was Black, was sentenced on the recommendation of an all-white jury. The Congressional Black Caucus asked Attorney General William Barr to stop it because the coronavirus "will make any scheduled execution a tinderbox for further outbreaks and exacerbate concerns over the possibility of miscarriage of justice," according to a letter to Barr.

Meanwhile, another judge ruled Thursday that the U.S. government must delay until next year the first execution of a female federal inmate in almost six decades after her attorneys contracted the coronavirus visiting her in prison. Lisa Montgomery had been scheduled to be put to death on Dec. 8.

Hall was among five men convicted in the abduction and death of Lisa Rene in 1994.

According to federal court documents, Hall was a marijuana trafficker in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, who would sometimes buy drugs in the Dallas area. On Sept. 24, 1994, he met two men at a Dallas-area car wash and gave them \$4,700 with the expectation they would return later with the marijuana. The two men were Rene's brothers.

Instead, the men claimed their car and money were stolen. Hall and others figured they were lying and were able to track down the address of the brothers' apartment in Arlington, Texas.

When Hall and three other men arrived, the brothers weren't there. Lisa Rene was home, alone.

Court records offer a chilling account of the terror she faced.

"They're trying to break down my door! Hurry up!" she told a 911 dispatcher. A muffled scream is heard seconds later, with a man saying, "Who you on the phone with?" The line then goes dead.

"She was studying for a test and had her textbooks on the couch when these guys came knocking on the front door," retired Arlington detective John Stanton Sr. recalled. Police arrived within minutes of the 911 call, but the men were gone, with Rene. Stanton still winces at the near-miss of thwarting the crime in its early stages.

"It was one that I won't ever forget," Stanton said. "This one was particularly heinous."

The men drove to a motel in Pine Bluff. Rene was repeatedly sexually assaulted during the drive and at the motel over the next two days.

On Sept. 26, Hall and two other men drove Rene to Byrd Lake Natural Area in Pine Bluff, her eyes covered by a mask. They led her to a grave site they had dug a day earlier. Hall placed a sheet over Rene's head then hit her in the head with a shovel. When she ran another man and Hall took turns hitting her with the shovel before she was gagged and dragged into the grave, where she was doused in gasoline before dirt was shoveled over her.

A coroner determined that Rene was still alive when she was buried and died of asphyxiation in the grave, where she was found eight days later.

Rene's older sister, Pearl Rene, said in a statement that she and her family "are very relieved that this is over. We have been dealing with this for 26 years and now we're having to relive the tragic nightmare that our beloved Lisa went through."

Crossing the Texas-Arkansas line made the case a federal crime. One of Hall's accomplices, Bruce Web-

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ster, also was sentenced to death, though a court last year vacated the sentence because Webster is intellectually disabled. Three other men, including Hall's brother, received lesser sentences in exchange for their cooperation at trial.

Hall's lawyers contend that jurors who recommended the death penalty weren't told of the severe trauma he faced as a child or that he once saved a 3-year-old nephew from drowning by leaping into a motel pool from a balcony.

Donna Keogh, 67, first met Hall 16 years ago when she and other volunteers from her Catholic church set up a program to provide Christmas presents for children of inmates at the federal prison. They have corresponded ever since.

She doesn't understand what executing Hall accomplishes.

"My faith tells me that all life is precious and that includes the lives on death row," Keogh said. "I just don't see any purpose."

Five of the first six federal executions this year involved white men; the other was Navajo. Christopher Vialva, who was Black, was put to death Sept. 24.

Critics have argued that executing white inmates first was a political calculation in a nation embroiled in racial bias concerns involving the criminal justice system, especially in the aftermath of George Floyd's death in Minneapolis in May.

In multiple countries, alarm over hunger crisis rings louder

By EISSA AHMED, TAMEEM AKHGAR AND SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

ABS, Yemen (AP) — The twin baby boys lay on a bed of woven palm leaves in a remote camp for displaced people in Yemen's north, their collar bones and ribs visible. They cried loudly, twisting as if in pain, not from disease but from the hunger gnawing away at them.

Here, U.N. officials' increasingly dire warnings that a hunger crisis is growing around the world are becoming reality.

U.N. agencies have warned that some 250 million people in 20 countries are threatened with sharply spiking malnutrition or even famine in coming months.

The United Nations humanitarian office this week released \$100 million in emergency funding to seven countries most at risk of famine — Yemen, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Congo, and Burkina Faso.

But David Beasley, head of the World Food Program, says billions in new aid are needed. Without it, "we are going to have famines of biblical proportions in 2021," he said in an Associated Press interview last week.

In multiple countries, the coronavirus pandemic has added a new burden on top of the impact of ongoing wars, pushing more people into poverty, unable to afford food. At the same time, international aid funding has fallen short, weakening a safety net that keeps people alive.

In Afghanistan's capital Kabul, Zemaray Hakimi said he can only give his children one meal a day, usually hard, black bread dunked in tea. He lost his work as a taxi driver after contracting COVID-19 and now waits daily on the street for day laborer work that rarely comes.

When his children complain of hunger, he said, "I tell them to bear it. One day maybe we can get something better."

South Sudan may be closer than any other country to famine, as crisis after crisis wears on a population depleted by five years of civil war. The U.N. projected earlier this year that a quarter of the population of Jonglei State, home to more than 1.2 million, would reach the brink of famine.

Now cut off from much of the world by flooding that has affected some 1 million people, many South Sudanese have seen farming and other food routines ripped apart. The challenges are so numerous that "plastic sheets are not available, as they had largely been used for the previous flood response," the U.N. humanitarian agency said this week.

COVID-19 has restricted trade and travel. Food prices rose. Post-war unrest remains deadly; gunmen recently fired on WFP boats carrying supplies.

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"The convergence of conflict, macroeconomic crisis, recurrent flooding as well as the indirect impacts of COVID create a 'perfect storm,'" the country director for the CARE aid group, Rosalind Crowther, said in an email. "Flooding and violence have led to massive displacement, low crop production and loss of livelihoods and livestock."

In the Arabian peninsula, Yemen is on a "countdown to catastrophe," Beasley, of the WFP, warned the Security Council last week.

"Famine is truly a real and dangerous possibility and the warning lights are ... flashing red — as red can be," he said.

For years, Yemen has been the center of the world's worst food crisis, driven by the destructive civil war between Iranian-backed Houthi rebels who took over the north and the capital, Sanaa, in 2014 and a Saudi-led coalition backing the government in the south.

International aid pulled it from the edge of famine two years ago. But the threat has surged back this year, fueled by increasing violence and a currency collapse that put food out of reach for growing numbers of people.

Donors have been wary of new funding because of corruption and restrictions that Houthis have put on humanitarian workers. The U.N. had to cut in half the rations it gives to 9 million people — and faces possible cuts to another 6 million in January.

The 18-month-old twins, Mohammed and Ali, weigh only about 3 kilograms, or 6.6 pounds, less than a third of the weight they should be, according to their doctor.

Their father, Hassan al-Jamai, was a farmer in northern Hajjah province near the border with Saudi Arabia. Soon after their birth, the family had to flee fighting to a displaced camp in the district of Abs.

"We are struggling to treat them," said Mariam Hassam, the twins' grandmother. "Their father took them everywhere."

Two-thirds of Yemen's population of about 28 million people are hungry. In the south, U.N. data from recent surveys show cases of severe acute malnutrition rose 15.5% this year, and at least 98,000 children under five could die of it.

By the end of the year, 41% of the south's 8 million people are expected to have significant gaps in food consumption, up from 25%.

The situation could be worse in Sanaa and the north, home to more than 20 million people. The U.N. is currently conducting a similar survey there.

Sanaa's main hospital, al-Sabeen, received over 180 cases of malnutrition and acute malnutrition the past three months, well over its capacities, according to Amin al-Eizari, a nurse.

At least five children died at the hospital during that period, with more dying outside, he said.

In Afghanistan — like Yemen, crippled by war — the pandemic has meant further losses of jobs and mounting food prices. The poverty rate is expected to leap this year from 54% of the population of some 36 million to as high as 72%, according to World Bank projections.

Some 700,000 Afghan workers returned from Iran and Pakistan this year, fleeing coronavirus outbreaks. That halted millions of dollars in remittances, a key income for families in Afghanistan, and returnees flooded the ranks of those needing work.

Markets in Kabul seem full of food items. But shop owners say fewer customers can afford anything. More people are experiencing major gaps in their food — expected to rise to 42% of the population by the end of the year, from 25%, according to U.N. figures.

In the Bagrami displaced camp in the mountains surrounding Kabul, Gul Makai sat beside her mud-brick hut. She had spent the night shoveling out water and mud after the roof leaked in a recent snow. With early snows this year, temperatures have dropped below freezing.

Her 12 children, all 10 or younger, sat with her, hungry and shivering in the cold breeze. They were all thin. One daughter, Neamat, around 4, had the withered look that suggests malnutrition.

Makai fled seven months ago from her home in southern Helmand province after husband was killed in a crossfire between government forces and the Taliban. By begging, she scrounges up enough rice or hard bread to give her kids one meal a day. She eats every other day.

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"The weather in winter will get colder," she said. "If I don't get help, my children may get sick, or God forbid I may lose any of them. We are in a bad condition."

AP correspondent Cara Anna in Nairobi, Kenya contributed to this report. Akhgar reported from Kabul. Magdy reported from Cairo.

Wilson throws for 2 TDs, Seahawks hold off Cardinals 28-21

By TIM BOOTH AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE (AP) — It was a flashback performance for the Seattle Seahawks, and coach Pete Carroll enjoyed the show.

A bruising running game. Russell Wilson making plays without being asked to do everything. And the Seahawks defense coming through in key moments to shut down Kyler Murray and the Arizona Cardinals for a 28-21 win Thursday night.

Wilson still did his part, throwing for two touchdowns and rebounding from his worst performance of the season just a few days ago. But he had help in the form of Carlos Hyde rushing for 79 yards and a touchdown, and a defense that sacked Murray three times, including Carlos Dunlap's clinching play inside the final minute.

"Our guys really wanted to turn things and get back on track," Carroll said. "And even with all of the situations, with all the guys in and out in the lineup and all that, it just didn't matter. Guys played really well across the board."

Wilson was flawless, erasing the mistakes from the past four weeks when Seattle dropped three of four, including losses in the past two weeks to Buffalo and the Los Angeles Rams. The skid left Seattle in a tie atop the NFC West with the Rams and Cardinals.

For a few days at least, Seattle (7-3) will be back on top alone until the Rams play on Monday night against Tampa Bay. It was an important victory for the Seahawks heading into the softest part of their schedule, with four upcoming games against teams with a combined 8-28-1 record.

Wilson was 23 of 28 for 197 yards and TD passes of 25 yards to DK Metcalf and 11 yards to Tyler Lockett in the first half. Wilson had committed 10 turnovers in the previous four games combined, a stretch that started with Seattle's 37-34 overtime loss to Arizona in Week 7.

Lockett, who had 15 catches for 200 yards and three TDs in the first meeting with Arizona, had another nine catches for 67 yards.

But the biggest boost for Seattle was the return of its run game. Hyde had a 2-yard TD run in the third quarter, and Seattle finished with 165 yards rushing.

"It helped balance our offense out today," Hyde said. "We was able to hit passes, run the ball, move down the field. You know, how we play."

Murray and DeAndre Hopkins couldn't rekindle the magic from their last-second touchdown to beat Buffalo last Sunday. Murray was 29 of 42 for 269 yards and two TDs, but Seattle was able to get the kind of pressure on the QB that was missing from the first meeting.

"They definitely played for me in certain situations but like I said, we put up 21, had a chance to win the game at the end, but throughout the game, we started slow and kept shooting ourselves in the foot," Murray said.

And that pressure came through in the closing seconds. On fourth-and-10 at the Seattle 27 with 38 seconds left, Dunlap got around the edge and tackled Murray for his second sack of the night. Seattle finished with three sacks and seven QB hits after not touching Murray in the first meeting.

"(Pete) was fired up. He almost tackled me on the sideline. That was crazy to see a head coach that involved," Dunlap said.

Arizona (6-4) closed to 23-21 with 13:19 left when Murray capped a 15-play, 90-yard drive with a 3-yard TD pass to Chase Edmonds. The Cardinals defense held, but backed up near their goal line, J.R. Sweezy was called for holding on L.J. Collier in the end zone, giving Seattle a safety with 9:12 left.

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Arizona almost didn't get the ball back. Seattle ran nearly seven minutes off the clock and Jason Myers' 41-yard field goal gave the Seahawks a 28-21 lead with 2:19 to go.

INJURIES

Arizona lost starting safety Jalen Thompson in the closing seconds of the first half with a right leg injury. Thompson had to be helped off the field and onto a cart, putting no weight on the leg.

Seattle TE Greg Olsen tumbled to the ground early in the fourth quarter with a left foot injury. Olsen went down before contact and was helped off the field without putting weight on the leg. Carroll said the team believes Olsen tore the fascia in his foot. Seattle also lost right tackle Brandon Shell in the fourth quarter to a sprained ankle.

700 CLUB

Hopkins became the youngest player in league history to reach 700 career receptions with his lone catch in the first half. Hopkins, 28, bettered the previous record held by his teammate, Larry Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald was just past his 29th birthday when he reached 700 catches.

But Hopkins was limited to five catches for 51 yards. Fitzgerald led Arizona with eight receptions.

RUSSELL RECORDS

Wilson is the fifth QB since the merger in 1970 to post 30 or more TD passes and a passer rating of 110 or higher over the first 10 games of a season. The previous four all went on to win the MVP award — Patrick Mahomes (2018), Peyton Manning (2013), Aaron Rodgers (2011) and Tom Brady (2007).

UP NEXT

Cardinals: At New England on Sunday, Nov. 29.

Seahawks: At Philadelphia on Monday, Nov. 30.

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

Ladies' night at Latin Grammys: Lafourcade, Rosalía win big

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A year after Rosalía made history by becoming the first solo female performer in 13 years to win the top prize at the Latin Grammys, Natalia Lafourcade followed in her footsteps with a big win at the 2020 show.

The Mexican singer won album of the year — a category dominated by male acts — on Thursday night with "Un Canto Por México, Vol. 1." Lafourcade won three awards at the show, tying Rosalía and Carlos Vives for most wins.

Lafourcade didn't attend the Latin Grammys, which aired live on Univision and featured a number of performances, most of them pre-taped due to the coronavirus pandemic. The show did not have a live audience or a red carpet, and some of the performances featured band members and dancers sporting masks as they entertained onstage.

Lafourcade's wins included best alternative song for "En Cantos," her collaboration with iLe, and best regional song for "Mi Religión." Rosalía won her awards during the pre-telecast, including best urban song and best urban fusion performance for the hit "Yo X Ti, Tu X Mi," sharing both wins with her song's co-star, Ozuna. She also won best short form music video for "TKN," which features Travis Scott and helped the rapper win a Latin Grammy before winning a traditional Grammy.

Before Rosalía's win for album of the year, Shakira was the last solo female to win the prize in 2006 with "Fijación Oral Vol. 1."

Residente — the most decorated act in the history of the Latin Grammys — continued his winning streak by taking home song of the year for "René" and best rap/hip-hop song for "Antes Que El Mundo Se Acabe." Fito Páez was also a double winner Thursday.

But the acts poised to make history after receiving 13 and nine nominations each — J Balvin and Bad Bunny — both walked away with just one win. Bad Bunny won best reggaeton performance for "Yo Perreo Sola" and Balvin picked up best urban music album for "Colores."

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Despite his 13 nominations, Balvin only had a chance of winning eight honors since he competed against himself in multiple categories. Bad Bunny had a similar issue at the show.

Balvin was a winner onstage, though.

Before his performance, footage of current events such as the Black Lives Matter protests — including an image of George Floyd — and more appeared onscreen. Balvin began performing his song “Rojo” (“Red”) under two large praying hands in a white suit, ending the song with fake blood running down his hands and clothes.

Pitbull also moved the needle with his performance, where he was joined by frontline workers onstage — some playing guitar, some singing background, one on drums. Together, they performed “I Believe That We Will Win” (World Anthem),” an upbeat song Pitbull released earlier this year during the pandemic to inspire others.

“They dreamed of being rock stars playing full stadiums, they represent a large group of individuals all around the world who day after day sacrifice their lives for a safer world,” Pitbull said. “We gonna live it tonight.”

“WE WILL WIN” appeared onscreen behind the performers at the end of the song as Pitbull saluted the musicians.

Karol G — who was nominated for four awards but walked away empty handed — performed alongside classical musicians to give a new edge to her global hit “Tusa,” which features Nicki Minaj rapping in Spanish and English. Karol G shout-outed the rapper during the performance.

Karol G’s fiancé, Puerto Rican rapper-singer Anuel AA, had seven nominations but didn’t win a single award. He lost best new artist to Colombian singer Mike Bahía.

Grammy, Emmy and Tony winner Lin-Manuel Miranda kicked off the Latin Grammys with a strong message about Latin music. Speaking in Spanish and English, he said Latin music “unites all of us and makes us human.”

“This is our night,” he added.

That was followed by an all-star performance featuring Ricardo Montaner, Victor Manuelle, Jesús Navarro, Ivy Queen, Rauw Alejandro and Sergio George.

Other winners Thursday included Alejandro Sanz, who won record of the year for a second consecutive time thanks to “Contigo,” his tribute song to Joaquín Sabina; Ricky Martin won best pop vocal album for “Pausa”; and Chiquis — the daughter of late singer Jenni Rivera — won best banda album with “Playlist.”

The Latin Grammys was hosted by Oscar-nominated actor Yalitza Aparicio, actor-singer Ana Brenda Contreras and salsa singer Victor Manuelle, who replaced singer Carlos Rivera after he said he was exposed to the coronavirus.

Associated Press Writer Sigal Ratner-Arias contributed to this report.

NY probes Trump consulting payments that reduced his taxes

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and DAVID B. CARUSO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York’s attorney general has sent a subpoena to the Trump Organization for records related to consulting fees paid to Ivanka Trump as part of a broad civil investigation into the president’s business dealings, a law enforcement official said Thursday.

The New York Times, citing anonymous sources, reported that a similar subpoena was sent to President Donald Trump’s company by the Manhattan district attorney, which is conducting a parallel criminal probe.

The Associated Press could not immediately independently confirm the district attorney’s subpoena but the one sent by Attorney General Letitia James was described by an official briefed on the investigation who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The records requests followed recent reporting in The Times, based partly on two decades’ worth of Trump’s tax filings, that the president had reduced his company’s income tax liability over several years by deducting \$26 million in consulting fees as a business expense.

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Records strongly suggested, The Times reported, that \$747,622 of those fees had been paid to Ivanka Trump, the president's daughter, through a company she owned at a time when she was also a Trump Organization executive.

If true, that wouldn't necessarily pose a problem for Ivanka Trump herself, as long as she paid income tax on the consulting payments, which she reported publicly.

It could, however, raise questions about whether the Trump Organization's related tax deductions were allowable. The Internal Revenue Service has, in the past, pursued civil penalties over large consulting fee write-offs it found were made to dodge tax liability.

The Times wrote that there was no indication Ivanka Trump is a target of either the state's or the city's investigation.

"This is harassment pure and simple," she said on Twitter late Thursday. "This 'inquiry' by NYC democrats is 100% motivated by politics, publicity and rage. They know very well that there's nothing here and that there was no tax benefit whatsoever. These politicians are simply ruthless."

The Trump Organization's lawyer, Alan Garten, and its media relations office didn't immediately return messages Thursday.

James and Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr., both Democrats, are both conducting wide-ranging inquiries into Trump's business affairs.

Both investigations are at least partly related to allegations, made in news reports and by President Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, that Trump had a history of inflating the value of some assets to impress banks and business partners, but lowering that value when seeking tax benefits.

Vance has been involved in a long court battle seeking access to Trump's tax filings as part of the investigation.

Health experts clash over use of certain drugs for COVID-19

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer

Health officials around the world are clashing over the use of certain drugs for COVID-19, leading to different treatment options for patients depending on where they live.

On Friday, a World Health Organization guidelines panel advised against using the antiviral remdesivir for hospitalized patients, saying there's no evidence it improves survival or avoids the need for breathing machines.

But in the U.S. and many other countries, the drug has been the standard of care since a major, government-led study found other benefits — it shortened recovery time for hospitalized patients by five days on average, from 15 days to 10.

Within the U.S., a federal guidelines panel and some leading medical groups have not endorsed two other therapies the Food and Drug Administration authorized for emergency use -- Eli Lilly's experimental antibody drug and convalescent plasma, the blood of COVID-19 survivors. The groups say there isn't enough evidence to recommend for or against them.

Doctors also remain uncertain about when and when not to use the only drugs known to improve survival for the sickest COVID-19 patients: dexamethasone or similar steroids.

And things got murkier with Thursday's news that the anti-inflammatory drug tocilizumab may help. Like the key WHO study on remdesivir, the preliminary results on tocilizumab have not yet been published or fully reviewed by independent scientists, leaving doctors unclear about what to do.

"It's a genuine quandary," said the University of Pittsburgh's Dr. Derek Angus, who is involved in a study testing many of these treatments. "We need to see the details."

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, infectious disease chief at Massachusetts General Hospital, agreed.

"It's really hard to practice medicine by press release," she said on a podcast Thursday with a medical journal editor. Until the National Institutes of Health's guidelines endorse a treatment, "I'm really reluctant ... to call that standard of care."

Angus said there are legitimate questions about all of the drug studies.

"It's not unusual for professional guidelines to disagree with each other, it's just that it's all under the microscope with COVID-19," he said.

The rift over remdesivir, sold as Veklury, by Gilead Sciences Inc., is the most serious. The WHO guidelines stress that the drug does not save lives, based heavily on a WHO-sponsored study that was larger but much less rigorous than the U.S.-led one that found it had other benefits.

The drug is given through an IV for around five days, and its high cost and lack of "meaningful effect" on mortality make it a poor choice, the WHO panel concluded.

Gilead charges \$3,120 for a typical treatment course for patients with private insurance and \$2,340 for people covered by government health programs in the U.S. and other developed countries. In poor or middle-income countries, much cheaper versions are sold by generic makers.

This week, the Institute for Clinical and Economic Review, a nonprofit group that analyzes drug prices, said remdesivir should be priced around \$2,470 for hospitalized patients with moderate to severe disease because of the cost savings from fewer days of care. However, it's worth only \$70 for patients hospitalized with milder disease, the group concluded.

Price also may be driving lower demand. In October, U.S. health officials said that hospitals had bought only about one-third of the doses of remdesivir that they were offered over the previous few months, when the drug was in short supply. Between July and September, 500,000 treatment courses were made available to state and local health departments but only about 161,000 were bought.

In a separate development, the FDA on Thursday gave emergency authorization to use of another anti-inflammatory drug, baricitinib, to be used with remdesivir. Adding baricitinib shaved an additional day off the average time to recovery for severely ill hospitalized patients in one study.

Lilly sells baricitinib now as Olumiant to treat rheumatoid arthritis, the less common form of arthritis that occurs when a mistaken or overreacting immune system attacks joints, causing inflammation. An overactive immune system also can lead to serious problems in coronavirus patients.

Marilynn Marchione can be followed on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/MMarchioneAP>

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Mexico tops 100,000 COVID-19 deaths, 4th country to do so

By DIEGO DELGADO Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico passed the 100,000 mark in COVID-19 deaths, becoming only the fourth country to do so amid concerns about the lingering physical and psychological scars on survivors.

José Luis Alomía Zegarra, Mexico's director of epidemiology, announced late Thursday that Mexico had 100,104 confirmed COVID-19 deaths, behind only the United States, Brazil and India.

The milestone comes less than a week after Mexico topped 1 million registered coronavirus cases, though officials agree the number is probably much higher because of low levels of testing.

The coverage of the back-to-back milestones has raised the hackles of some government officials.

Mexico's pointman on the pandemic, Assistant Health Secretary Hugo López-Gatell, bristled when asked about Mexico reaching the 100,000 deaths point, criticizing the media for "being alarmist," in the same way he has criticized those who suggest the government is undercounting COVID-19 deaths or providing contradictory and weak advice on using face masks.

"The epidemic is terrible in itself, you don't have to add drama to it," said López-Gatell, suggesting some media outlets were focusing on the number of deaths to sell newspapers or spark "political confrontation."

"Putting statistics on the front page doesn't, in my view, help much," he said.

Mexico resembles a divided country, where some people are so unconcerned by the pandemic they won't wear masks, while others are so scared they descend into abject terror at the first sign of shortness of breath.

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Besides the trauma of the deaths, many coronavirus survivors say the psychosis caused by the pandemic is one of the most lasting effects.

With little testing being done — Mexico tests only people with severe symptoms and has performed only around 2.5 million tests in a country of 130 million — and a general fear of hospitals, many in Mexico are left to home remedies and relatives' care.

Such is the case in the poverty-stricken Ampliación Magdalena neighborhood on Mexico City's rough east side, where most people work off-the-books as day laborers at the city's sprawling produce market.

The busy market was the scene of one of the first big outbreaks in the greater metropolitan area, home to 21 million people, and so early on in the pandemic local undertakers were swamped with corpses.

The local funeral home "looked like a bakery, with people lined up, with hearses lined up," said community leader Daniel Alfredo López González. The owner of the funeral home told him some people waited to get bodies embalmed for burial while others were in the line to get their relatives' remains cremated.

The lack of hospitals in some areas and fears of the ones that do exist, along with low levels of testing, has created a fertile breeding ground for ignorance, suspicion and fear.

López González described getting the disease himself. Even though he recovered, the fear was crushing.

"It is a tremendous psychosis. In the end, sometimes the disease itself may not be so serious, but it is for a person's psyche," López González said. "That is, knowing that you have a disease like this can kill you as bad as the disease itself."

Public health outreach worker Dulce María López González - Daniel Alfredo's sister - nursed four members of her family through COVID-19, relying on phone-in advice and medications from a doctor who was nursing his own relatives.

Her first brush with the pandemic's psychological effects were her own fears that her job as a health worker might have exposed her to it.

"I can't breath," she remembers thinking. "And I said to myself, no, it is a psychological question."

She forced herself to calm down, noting: "If I get worked up thinking I have the disease, that I am going to die, then I am going to have a heart attack."

Her second brush with its effects involved her relatives' decision to ride out the disease at home. She had to desperately search for ways to get scarce and expensive medical equipment.

"There came a point when I said no, I can't do it," López González said.

The final straw was when her husband, spared in the first round of infections, had what appeared to be a panic attack in a taxi, thinking he had been infected and couldn't breath.

"He started to enter a sort of state of psychosis in which he thought he had the disease," she said.

Still, they were terrified of government hospitals.

"It is really like a cycle of terror," she noted. "We were afraid to go to a hospital after everything you hear on social media. It was an enormous psychosis."

But López Gonzalez, whose job involves handing out free surgical masks to residents, has also seen the other side of the psychological maelstrom: those who don't care.

"I saw this person who I had given a mask to, and I told her she shouldn't be outside without it," she recalled. "She told me that no, nothing was going to happen to her. Two weeks later we found out she had died of COVID."

Ladies' night at Latin Grammys: Lafourcade, Rosalía win big

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A year after Rosalía made history by becoming the first solo female performer in 13 years to win the top prize at the Latin Grammys, Natalia Lafourcade followed in her footsteps with a big win at the 2020 show.

The Mexican singer won album of the year — a category dominated by male acts — on Thursday night with "Un Canto Por México, Vol. 1." Lafourcade won three awards at the show, tying Rosalía and Carlos Vives for most wins.

Lafourcade didn't attend the Latin Grammys, which aired live on Univision and featured a number of

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performances, most of them pre-taped due to the coronavirus pandemic. The show did not have a live audience or a red carpet, and some of the performances featured band members and dancers sporting masks as they entertained onstage.

Lafourcade's wins included best alternative song for "En Cantos" and best regional song for "Mi Religión." Rosalía won her awards during the pre-telecast, including best urban song and best urban fusion performance for the hit "Yo X Ti, Tu X Mi," sharing both wins with her song's co-star, Ozuna. She also won best short form music video for "TKN," which features Travis Scott and helped the rapper win a Latin Grammy before winning a traditional Grammy.

Residente — the most decorated act in the history of the Latin Grammys — continued his winning streak by taking home song of the year for "René" and best rap/hip-hop song for "Antes Que El Mundo Se Acabe." Fito Páez was also a double winner Thursday.

But the acts poised to make history after receiving 13 and nine nominations each — J Balvin and Bad Bunny — both walked away with just one win. Bad Bunny won best reggaeton performance for "Yo Perreo Sola" and Balvin picked up best urban music album for "Colores."

Despite his 13 nominations, Balvin only had a chance of winning eight honors since he competed against himself in multiple categories. Bad Bunny had a similar issue at the show.

Balvin was a winner onstage, though.

Before his performance, footage of current events such as the Black Lives Matters protests — including an image of George Floyd — and more appeared onscreen. Balvin began performing his song "Rojo" ("Red") under two large praying hands in a white suit, ending the song with fake blood running down his hands and clothes.

Pitbull also moved the needle with his performance, where he was joined by frontline workers onstage — some playing guitar, some singing background, one on drums. Together, they performed "I Believe That We Will Win" (World Anthem), an upbeat song Pitbull released earlier this year during the pandemic to inspire others.

"They dreamed of being rock stars playing full stadiums, they represent a large group of individuals all around the world who day after day sacrifice their lives for a safer world," Pitbull said. "We gonna live it tonight."

"WE WILL WIN" appeared onscreen behind the performers at the end of the song as Pitbull saluted the musicians.

Karol G — who was nominated for four awards but walked away empty handed — performed alongside classical musicians to give a new edge to her global hit "Tusa," which features Nicki Minaj rapping in Spanish and English. Karol G shout-outed the rapper during the performance.

Karol G's fiancé, Puerto Rican rapper-singer Anuel AA, had seven nominations but didn't win a single award. He lost best new artist to Colombian singer Mike Bahía.

Grammy, Emmy and Tony winner Lin-Manuel Miranda kicked off the Latin Grammys with a strong message about Latin music. Speaking in Spanish and English, he said Latin music "unites all of us and makes us human."

"This is our night," he added.

That was followed by an all-star performance featuring Ricardo Montaner, Victor Manuelle, Jesús Navarro, Ivy Queen, Rauw Alejandro and Sergio George.

Other winners Thursday included Alejandro Sanz, who won record of the year for a second consecutive time thanks to "Contigo," his tribute song to Joaquín Sabina; Ricky Martin won best pop vocal album for "Pausa"; and Chiquis — the daughter of late singer Jenni Rivera — won best banda album with "Playlist."

The Latin Grammys was hosted by Oscar-nominated actor Yalitza Aparicio, actor-singer Ana Brenda Contreras and salsa singer Victor Manuelle, who replaced singer Carlos Rivera after he said he was exposed to the coronavirus.

Trump, allies make frantic steps to overturn Biden victory

By COLLEEN LONG, ZEKE MILLER, JILL COLVIN and DAVID EGGERT Associated Press

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WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump and his allies are taking increasingly frantic steps to subvert the results of the 2020 election, including summoning state legislators to the White House as part of a longshot bid to overturn Joe Biden's victory.

Among other last-ditch tactics: personally calling local election officials who are trying to rescind their certification votes in Michigan, suggesting in a legal challenge that Pennsylvania set aside the popular vote there and pressuring county officials in Arizona to delay certifying vote tallies.

Election law experts see it as the last, dying gasps of the Trump campaign and say Biden is certain to walk into the Oval Office come January. But there is great concern that Trump's effort is doing real damage to public faith in the integrity of U.S. elections.

"It's very concerning that some Republicans apparently can't fathom the possibility that they legitimately lost this election," said Joshua Douglas, a law professor at the University of Kentucky who researches and teaches election law.

"We depend on democratic norms, including that the losers graciously accept defeat," he said. "That seems to be breaking down."

Trump's own election security agency has declared the 2020 presidential election to have been the most secure in history. Days after that statement was issued, Trump fired the agency's leader.

The increasingly desperate and erratic moves have no reasonable chance of changing the outcome of the 2020 election, where Biden has now received more votes than any other presidential candidate in history and has clinched the 270 Electoral College votes needed to win.

But the president's constant barrage of baseless claims, his work to personally sway local officials who certify votes and his allies' refusal to admit he lost is likely to have a lasting negative impact on the country. Legions of his supporters don't believe he lost.

"It's about trying to set up the conditions where half of the country believes that there are only two possibilities, either they win or the election was stolen," said Justin Levitt, a constitutional law scholar and professor at Loyola Law School. "And that's not a democracy."

The two GOP canvassers in Michigan's Wayne County said in a statement late Wednesday they lacked confidence that the election was fair and impartial. "There has been a distinct lack of transparency throughout the process," they said. But there has been no evidence of impropriety or fraud in Michigan, election officials have said.

Trump's allies have homed in on the way that the president's early lead in Michigan and some other states on Election Night slipped away as later votes came, casting it as evidence of something nefarious.

But a massive influx of mail-in ballots because of the coronavirus pandemic leaned largely to Biden, who encouraged his supporters to vote by mail, and those votes were the last to be counted. So it appeared Trump had an edge when he really didn't.

In fact, Biden crushed Trump in Wayne County, a Democratic stronghold that includes Detroit, by a more than 2-1 margin on his way to winning Michigan by 154,000 votes, according to unofficial results.

Earlier this week, the county's two Republicans canvassers blocked the certification of votes there. They later relented and the results were certified. But a person familiar with the matter said Trump reached out to the canvassers, Monica Palmer and William Hartmann, on Tuesday evening after the revised vote to express gratitude for their support. Then, on Wednesday, Palmer and Hartmann signed affidavits saying they believed the county vote "should not be certified."

They cannot rescind their votes, according to the Michigan secretary of state. The four-member state canvassing board is expected to meet Monday and also is split with two Democrats and two Republicans.

Trump appears intent on pushing the issue. He has invited Michigan's Republican legislative leaders, Senate Majority Mike Shirkey and House Speaker Lee Chatfield, to the White House, according to two officials familiar with the matter who were not authorized to speak publicly. The two have agreed to go, according to one official, but they haven't commented publicly, and it's not clear what the purpose of the meeting is.

The Michigan Legislature would be called on to select electors if Trump succeeded in convincing the state's board of canvassers not to certify Biden's 154,000-vote victory in the state. But both legislative

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leaders have indicated they will not try to overturn Biden's win.

"Michigan law does not include a provision for the Legislature to directly select electors or to award electors to anyone other than the person who received the most votes," Shirkey's spokeswoman said last week.

During a press conference in Wilmington, Delaware, on Thursday, Biden said Americans are "witnessing incredible irresponsibility, incredibly damaging messages are being sent to the rest of the world about how democracy functions."

He added, "I just think it's totally irresponsible."

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, one of Trump's most vocal GOP critics, accused Trump of resorting to "overt pressure on state and local officials to subvert the will of the people and overturn the election." Romney added, "It is difficult to imagine a worse, more undemocratic action by a sitting American President."

A few hours earlier, Trump personal attorney Rudy Giuliani and others had held a press conference to allege a widespread Democratic election conspiracy involving multiple states and suspect voting machines. But election officials across the country have said repeatedly there was no widespread fraud.

Many of the allegations of fraud stem from poll watchers who filed affidavits included with lawsuits in battleground states aimed at delaying vote certification. Those affidavits lean into innuendo and unsupported suggestions of fraud.

For example, they refer to suitcases in a polling place, but make no suggestion that ballots were being secretly counted. There are allegations of ballots being duplicated — something routinely done when a ballot is physically damaged. There are claims that partisan poll watchers were too far away to observe well and therefore something fishy was probably going on. But they don't have proof. Poll watchers have no auditing role in elections; they are volunteer observers.

Giuliani cited a few sworn affidavits that he said showed a vast Democratic conspiracy, but added that he could not reveal much of the evidence. One he cited was from Jessy Jacob, identified as a city employee in Detroit who said she saw other workers coaching voters to cast ballots for Biden and the Democrats.

A judge who refused to block certification of Detroit-area results noted that Jacob's claims included no "date, location, frequency or names of employees" and that she only came forward after unofficial results indicated Biden had won Michigan.

Trump legal adviser Jenna Ellis, who joined Giuliani, said more evidence would be forthcoming and that Trump's allies would have more success in courts going forward. But so far, most of their legal actions have been dismissed.

Chris Krebs, the Trump administration election official fired last week over the comments about the security of 2020, tweeted: "That press conference was the most dangerous 1hr 45 minutes of television in American history. And possibly the craziest."

Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., tweeted: "Rudy and his buddies should not pressure electors to ignore their certification obligations under the statute. We are a nation of laws, not tweets."

In Pennsylvania, where the Trump campaign is challenging the election results in federal court, a legal team led by Giuliani suggested in a filing Wednesday that the judge order the Republican-led state legislature to pick delegates to the Electoral College, potentially throwing the state's 20 electoral votes to Trump. A judge canceled an evidentiary hearing in the case.

In Arizona, the Republican Party is pressuring county officials to delay certifying results. The GOP lost a bid on Thursday to postpone certification in Maricopa County, the state's most populous. In northwestern Arizona, Mohave County officials postponed their certification until next week.

Judge John Hannah ruled without explanation, except to bar the party from refileing the case. The judge promised a full explanation in the future.

Maricopa County officials are expected to certify elections results on Friday.

Biden won Arizona by more than 10,000 votes, and Maricopa County put him over the top. The county performed a hand count of some ballots the weekend after the election, which showed its machine counts were 100% accurate. The same was found Wednesday during routine post-election accuracy tests.

In Georgia, where officials have been auditing the results of the presidential race, Trump has repeatedly

attacked the process and called it “a joke.”

He has also made repeated incorrect assertions that Georgia election officials are unable to verify signatures on absentee ballot envelopes. In fact, Georgia requires that they be checked.

The Associated Press called Biden the winner of Georgia and its 16 electoral votes on Thursday night. A top Georgia election official said earlier Thursday that a hand tally of ballots cast in the presidential race had been completed, and that the results affirmed Biden’s narrow lead over Trump. The secretary of state’s office planned to release results of the audit later Thursday.

During the hand tally, several counties found previously uncounted ballots that the secretary of state’s office has said would reduce Biden’s lead to just under 13,000 votes, with roughly 5 million total votes cast. Georgia law allows a candidate to request a recount within two business days of certification if the margin is less than 0.5 percentage points. That recount would be done using machines.

Eggert reported from Lansing. Associated Press writers Alanna Durkin Richer in Boston, Kate Brumback and Christina A. Cassidy in Atlanta, Alexandra Jaffe in Wilmington and Jacques Billeaud in Phoenix contributed to this report.

Mexico becomes 4th country to hit 100,000 COVID-19 deaths

By DIEGO DELGADO Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico passed the 100,000 mark in COVID-19 deaths Thursday, becoming only the fourth country — behind the United States, Brazil and India — to do so.

José Luis Alomía Zegarra, Mexico’s director of epidemiology, said there were 100,104 confirmed COVID-19 deaths as of Thursday. The milestone comes less than a week after Mexico said it had topped 1 million registered coronavirus cases, though officials agree the number is probably much higher because of low levels of testing.

Mexico’s living are bearing the scars of the pandemic along with their lost friends and loved ones. Many surviving coronavirus victims say the psychosis caused by the pandemic is one of the most lasting effects.

Mexico resembles a divided country, where some people are so unconcerned they won’t wear masks, while others are so scared they descend into abject terror at the first sign of shortness of breath.

With little testing being done and a general fear of hospitals, many in Mexico are left to home remedies and relatives’ care. Such is the case in the poverty-stricken Ampliación Magdalena neighborhood on Mexico City’s rough east side, where most people work off-the-books as day laborers at the city’s sprawling produce market.

The busy market was the scene of one of the first big outbreaks in the greater metropolitan area, home to 21 million people, and so early on in the pandemic local undertakers were swamped with corpses.

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The lack of testing — Mexico tests only people with severe symptoms and has performed only around 2.5 million tests in a country of 130 million — the lack of hospitals in many areas and the fear of the ones that do exist, has created a fertile breeding ground for ignorance, suspicion and fear.

López González described getting the disease himself. Even though he recovered, the fear was crushing. “It is a tremendous psychosis. In the end, sometimes the disease itself may not be so serious, but it is for a person’s psyche,” López González said. “That is, knowing that you have a disease like this can kill you as bad as the disease itself.”

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Her first brush with the pandemic’s psychological effects were her own fears that her job as a health worker might have exposed her to it.

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The final straw was when her husband, spared in the first round of infections, had what appeared to be a panic attack in a taxi, thinking he had been infected and couldn't breath.

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But López Gonzalez, whose job involves handing out free surgical masks to residents, has also seen the other side of the psychological maelstrom: those who don't care.

"I saw this person who I had given a mask to, and I told her she shouldn't be outside without it," she recalled. "She told me that no, nothing was going to happen to her. Two weeks later we found out she had died of COVID."

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He criticized the media for "being alarmist" in focusing on the figure, in the same way he has criticized those who suggest the government is undercounting the deaths, those who have questioned the country's low testing rate or the government's contradictory and weak advice on using face masks.

"The epidemic is terrible in itself, you don't have to add drama to it," said López-Gatell, suggesting some media outlets were focusing on the number of deaths to sell newspapers or spark "political confrontation."

CDC pleads with Americans to avoid Thanksgiving travel

By MIKE STOBBE and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — With the coronavirus surging out of control, the nation's top public health agency pleaded with Americans on Thursday not to travel for Thanksgiving and not to spend the holiday with people from outside their household.

The Thanksgiving warning from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention came as the White House coronavirus task force held a briefing for the first time in months and Vice President Mike Pence concluded it without responding to questions by reporters or urging Americans not to travel.

Other members of the task force — whose media briefings were a daily fixture during the early days of the outbreak — talked about the progress being made in the development of a vaccine.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said pharmaceutical companies Pfizer and BioNTech will seek emergency government approval for their coronavirus vaccine on Friday. And infection disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci sought to reassure the public that the vaccine is safe while still encouraging Americans to wear masks.

The CDC's Thanksgiving warning was some of the firmest guidance yet from the government on curtailing traditional gatherings to fight the outbreak.

The CDC issued the recommendations just one week before Thanksgiving, at a time when diagnosed infections, hospitalizations and deaths are skyrocketing across the country. In many areas, the health care system is being squeezed by a combination of sick patients filling up beds and medical workers falling ill themselves.

The CDC's Dr. Erin Sauber-Schatz cited more than 1 million new cases in the U.S. over the past week as the reason for the new guidance.

"The safest way to celebrate Thanksgiving this year is at home with the people in your household," she

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said.

If families do decide to include returning college students, military members or others for turkey and stuffing, the CDC is recommending that the hosts take added precautions: Gatherings should be outdoors if possible, with people keeping 6 feet apart and wearing masks and just one person serving the food.

Whether Americans heed the warning is another matter. The deadly comeback by the virus has been blamed in part on pandemic fatigue, or people getting tired of masks and other precautions. And surges were seen last summer after Memorial Day and July Fourth, despite blunt warnings from health authorities.

The United States has had more than 11 million diagnosed infections and over 250,000 deaths from the coronavirus. CDC scientists believe that somewhere around 40% of people who are infected do not have obvious symptoms but can still spread the virus.

CALIFORNIA CURFEW

Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom on Thursday announced the imposition of an overnight curfew on most residents as the most populous state tries to head off a virus case surge that officials fears could tax the state's health care system.

What officials called a limited stay-at-home order requires nonessential residents to stay home from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. starting Saturday. It lasts until Dec. 21 but could be extended. It covers 94% of the state's nearly 40 million residents.

"The virus is spreading at a pace we haven't seen since the start of this pandemic and the next several days and weeks will be critical to stop the surge. We are sounding the alarm," Newsom said in a statement.

Also Thursday, Rhode Island Democratic Gov. Gina Raimondo announced a "two-week pause" with some businesses closures and capacity reduced for restaurants and houses of worship starting Nov. 30. Officials will reevaluate COVID-19 caseloads on Dec. 13 and if they have not eased, she said "a full state lockdown" will follow.

In New Hampshire, Republican Gov. Chris Sununu previously resisted calls for a statewide mask mandate but issued an order requiring face coverings to be worn in public spaces indoors and outdoors.

KEEPING UP WITH NON-COVID-19 CASES

Hospitals are struggling to keep up with non-coronavirus cases ranging from broken bones to heart attacks in states where COVID-19 cases are tying up resources.

In Kansas, rural hospitals are running into difficulty trying to transfer patients to larger hospitals for more advanced care.

"Whether it is regular pneumonia or appendicitis or fractures that need surgery, they have a limited amount of beds in their facilities and they are not taking a lot of these routine cases," said Perry Desbien, a nurse practitioner who works in Smith Center and other rural communities. "They are saying, 'Send them home. Have them follow up in the office. Unless it is life-threatening, we don't want to see them either.'"

Earlier this month, the Mayo Clinic Health System in Wisconsin announced it was suspending elective medical procedures.

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker noted that with COVID-19 patients claiming a quarter of the state's hospital beds, there are fewer resources for heart attack patients, expectant mothers or cancer patients.

"When we let our hospitals get overrun or even close to it, it is all of us suffering," Pritzker said.

SICK HOSPITAL WORKERS

The Mayo Clinic Health System, a Midwest network of hospitals and clinics run by the world-renowned Mayo Clinic, reported that 905 staff members have been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past two weeks.

Dr. Amy Williams, executive dean of Mayo Clinic Practice, said the vast majority were exposed in the community and not at work.

"It shows how widely spread this is in our communities and how easy it is to get COVID-19 in the communities here in the Midwest," she said.

In Kansas, 178 employees and doctors at a Topeka hospital had active coronavirus cases or were iso-

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lated and on leave because of contact with someone who had coronavirus. And the University of Kansas Hospital in Kansas City and nearby clinics had 206 employees, including physicians, nurses and support staff, out as of Tuesday after testing positive. An additional 260 were not at work and quarantining while they awaited test results.

POSITIVITY RATE

The positivity rate — the percentage of tests coming back positive for the virus — has taken on a more prominent role in the nation's response to the crisis in recent days.

New York City shut down in-person classes in the nation's largest school system this week after the positivity rate surpassed 3%. That angered families who believe it is too stringent a standard and question why bars and restaurants can remain open.

The positivity rate has soared to record levels all around the nation. South Dakota, Iowa and Wyoming's rate are all averaging above 50%, and the national average is now 10%.

Health experts caution that there are weaknesses in the positivity data because states calculate the rate differently. But they say the overall trend is not in dispute, and it indicates severe spread and, in many places, insufficient testing.

Hollingsworth reported from Mission, Kansas. Associated Press reporters from around the country contributed.

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.

EXPLAINER: Why AP called Georgia for Biden

By BRIAN SLODYSKO undefined

WHY THE AP CALLED GEORGIA FOR BIDEN:

More than two weeks after Election Day, The Associated Press has declared Joe Biden the winner of the presidential contest in Georgia, a longtime Republican state that the Democratic president-elect narrowly won by making major inroads in suburban areas that formerly favored the GOP.

Biden won the presidency on Nov. 7, after capturing Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, which had swung for President Donald Trump in 2016. But his 0.3 percentage point lead over Trump in Georgia was so narrow that the state could not be called — until now.

It is AP's practice not to call a race that is — or is likely to become — subject to a recount. While there is no mandatory recount law in Georgia, state law provides that option to a trailing candidate if the margin is less than 0.5 percentage points.

The AP called the race for Biden on Thursday after state election officials there said hand-tallied audit of ballots cast in the presidential race confirmed the former vice president leads President Donald Trump by roughly 12,000 votes out of nearly 5 million counted.

The audit's review of ballots cast confirmed Biden's lead, and no available evidence suggests a machine recount of ballots already reviewed by hand will result in a different outcome. Therefore, AP declared Biden the winner in Georgia.

The hand tally completed this week is not legally a recount under Georgia law. Rather, it was the race selected by Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger for review under a new state law that says one race in the general election must be audited by hand to check that machines counted ballots accurately. Raffensperger said the tight margin of the presidential race meant a full hand count of ballots was necessary to complete the audit.

Gabriel Sterling, who oversaw the implementation of the state's new voting system, said the result of the hand audit found Biden leading Trump by a little more than 12,000 votes. Going into the hand tally, Biden led Trump by a margin of about 14,000 votes. Previously uncounted ballots discovered in several counties during the hand count reduced that margin, while other counties found slight differences in results

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as they did their hand counts. State election officials had consistently said that was to be expected, and stressed the audit was not a response to any suspected problems with the state's results or an official recount request.

While not formally a recount under the letter of state law, the hand tally conducted to complete the audit was, in practice, a recount.

"Every single vote was touched by a human audit team and counted," Sterling said.

The state has until Friday to certify results that have been submitted by the counties. At that point, Trump's campaign has two business days to request a recount. That recount would be done using scanners that read and tally the votes and would be paid for by the state's counties.

On Election Day, Trump had initially jumped out to an early lead in the state. But Biden did well with voters who cast ballots by mail. And as those ballots continued to be counted in the days after the Nov. 3. election, he overtook Trump.

Georgia has long been a Republican stronghold, dominated at most levels of government by the GOP. Voters there hadn't swung for a Democratic presidential candidate since Bill Clinton in 1992. Trump beat Hillary Clinton there by 5 percentage points in 2016.

But the party's grip has loosened. As older, white, Republican-leaning voters die, they've been replaced by a younger and more racially diverse cast of people, many of whom moved to the booming Atlanta area from other states — and took their politics with them.

Overall, demographic trends show that the state's electorate is becoming younger and more diverse each year. Like other metro areas, Atlanta's suburbs have also moved away from Republicans. In 2016, Hillary Clinton flipped both Cobb and Gwinnett counties, which Biden won.

In 2018, Democrat Stacey Abrams galvanized Black voters in her bid to become the country's first African American woman to lead a state, a campaign she narrowly lost.

Many political analysts say it's not a question of if, rather when, Georgia becomes a swing state. That much was clear in the closing weeks of the campaign as Biden; his running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris; and former President Barack Obama barnstormed the state. Trump, too, visited the state to play defense.

The question that remains is whether Biden's win marks a major shift, or a temporary revolt by suburban voters who disliked Trump and who will return to the Republican fold after he's gone.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump legal team's batch of false vote claims

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

Despite a lack of evidence of widespread irregularities or fraud, President Donald Trump's legal team used a Thursday press conference to go through a laundry list of far-fetched, thoroughly debunked claims on the 2020 election.

Trump attorney Sidney Powell spun fictional tales of election systems flipping votes, German servers storing U.S. voting information and election software created in Venezuela "at the direction of Hugo Chavez" — the late Venezuelan president who died in 2013. She also said Trump beat Democrat Joe Biden "by a landslide," which he decidedly didn't — Biden was the clear winner.

A look at the claims and reality:

POWELL: "The Dominion Voting Systems, the Smartmatic technology software, and the software that goes in other computerized voting systems here as well, not just Dominion, were created in Venezuela at the direction of Hugo Chavez to make sure he never lost an election after one constitutional referendum came out the way he did not want it to come out."

THE FACTS: No, Dominion does not have any ties to Venezuela, nor does it have a partnership with Smartmatic, according to Eddie Perez, a voting technology expert at the OSET Institute, a nonpartisan election technology research and development nonprofit.

Smartmatic is an international company incorporated in Florida by Venezuelan founders. The company states on its website that it's not associated with governments or political parties of any country.

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POWELL: "One of (the software's) most characteristic features is its ability to flip votes. It can set and run an algorithm that probably ran all over the country to take a certain percentage of votes from President Trump and flip them to President Biden."

THE FACTS: That didn't happen. There's no evidence that any of Dominion's systems switched votes for Trump to count as votes for Biden. A statement released by the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, a federal agency that oversees U.S. election security, says there's no truth to claims that votes cast for Trump were switched to count for Biden or deleted.

POWELL, on reports that a U.S. voting server is in Germany: "That is true, it's somehow related to this but I do not know whether good guys got it or bad guys got it."

THE FACTS: No, it's not true. Powell is referencing a fictitious story that a server hosting evidence of voting irregularities in the Nov. 3 U.S. election was in Germany.

Republican Rep. Louie Gohmert of Texas claimed last week that "U.S. Army forces" seized a server from a Frankfurt office. An Army spokesman described allegations that the Army had recovered servers in Germany as false.

Two voting software companies that conspiracy theorists said were linked to the German server — Scytll and Dominion — have both released statements denying those claims.

POWELL: "President Trump won by a landslide."

THE FACTS: That's false. Biden has an Electoral College lead of 306 to 232 after The Associated Press on Thursday declared him the winner in Georgia. That's the same margin Trump had in 2016. Back then, Trump described it as a "landslide." Biden also leads the popular vote by nearly 6 million votes.

Associated Press writers Jude Joffe-Block in Phoenix and Amanda Seitz in Chicago contributed to this report.

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

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Joe Biden wins Georgia, flipping the state for Democrats

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden has won Georgia and its 16 electoral votes, an extraordinary victory for Democrats who pushed to expand their electoral map through the Sun Belt.

The win by Biden pads his Electoral College margin of victory over President Donald Trump. Biden was declared the winner of the presidential election on Nov. 7 after flipping Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin to the Democrats' column.

Biden now has 306 electoral votes to Trump's 232.

Trump won Georgia by 5 percentage points in 2016 over Democrat Hillary Clinton.

In 2020, Democrats had focused heavily on the state, seeing it in play two years after Democrat Stacey Abrams narrowly lost the governor's race. Both of Georgia's Senate seats were on the ballot this year, further boosting the state's political profile as well as spending by outside groups seeking to influence voters. Those two races are headed to a January runoff.

Georgia hadn't voted for a Democratic presidential candidate since Bill Clinton in 1992.

Mossimo Giannulli reports to prison in college bribery case

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Fashion designer Mossimo Giannulli reported to prison on Thursday to begin serving his five-month sentence for bribing his daughters' way into college, officials said.

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Giannulli's wife, "Full House" actor Lori Loughlin, is already behind bars for her role in the college admissions bribery scheme involving prominent parents and elite schools across the country. She began her two-month prison term late last month.

Giannulli, 57, whose Mossimo clothing had long been a Target brand until recently, is in custody at a federal prison in Lompoc near Santa Barbara, California, a Bureau of Prisons spokesperson said. Loughlin, 56, is at the federal lockup in Dublin, California.

The couple was among the most high-profile parents charged in the scheme, which involved hefty bribes to get undeserving teens into schools with rigged test scores or bogus athletic credentials, authorities say.

Giannulli and Loughlin admitted in May to paying half a million dollars to get their two daughters into the University of Southern California as crew recruits even though neither girl was a rower. Their guilty plea was a stunning reversal for the couple, whose lawyers had insisted for a year were innocent and accused investigators of fabricating evidence against them.

Loughlin and Giannulli were initially both ordered to report to prison on Nov. 19 but prosecutors and the defense agreed Loughlin could begin her sentence on Oct. 30. Loughlin agreed that she would not seek early release from prison on grounds related to the coronavirus pandemic.

Loughlin was also ordered to pay a \$150,000 fine and perform 100 hours of community service, and Giannulli has to pay a \$250,000 fine and perform 250 hours of community service.

Prosecutors had recorded phone calls and emails showing the couple worked with the mastermind of the scheme, admissions consultant Rick Singer, to get their daughters into USC with fake athletic profiles depicting them as star rowers. "Fantastic. Will get all," Giannulli responded and sent Singer the photo, according to the court filings.

Nearly sixty people have been charged in the scheme led by Singer, who secretly worked with investigators and recorded his conversations with parents and coaches to help build the case against them. Singer, who is expected to testify against any defendants who go to trial, has not yet been sentenced. More than 40 people have already pleaded guilty.

Prison terms for the parents ensnared in the scheme range from nine months to a couple weeks. Other parents who've served time behind bars in the case include "Desperate Housewives" star Felicity Huffman, who was sentenced to 14 days for paying \$15,000 to rig her daughter's SAT score.

Mnuchin rejects renewal of some Fed emergency loan programs

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Thursday he will not extend several emergency loan programs set up with the Federal Reserve, an action that could hamper the ability of the incoming Biden administration to gain important economic support from the central bank to deal with the ongoing pandemic.

The decision drew a terse rebuke from the Fed.

The central bank said it "would prefer that the full suite of emergency facilities established during the coronavirus pandemic continue to serve their important role as a backstop for our still-strained and vulnerable economy."

But in a letter to Fed Chairman Jerome Powell, Mnuchin said that the Fed's corporate credit, municipal lending and Main Street Lending programs would not be renewed when they expire on Dec. 31.

Under law, the loan facilities required the support of the Treasury Department, which serves as a backstop for the initial losses the programs might incur.

Mnuchin said that he is requesting that the Fed return to Treasury the unused funds appropriated by Congress for operation of the programs.

He said this would allow Congress to re-appropriate \$455 billion to other coronavirus programs. Republicans and Democrats have been deadlocked for months on approval of another round of coronavirus support measures.

In public remarks Tuesday, Powell made clear that he hoped that the loan programs would remain in

effect for the foreseeable future.

"When the right time comes, and I don't think that time is yet, or very soon, we'll put those tools away," he said in an online discussion with a San Francisco-based business group.

The future of the Main Street and Municipal Lending programs has taken on greater importance with President-elect Joe Biden's victory. Many progressive economists have argued that a Democratic-led Treasury could support the Fed taking on more risk and making more loans to small and mid-sized businesses and cash-strapped cities under these programs. That would provide at least one avenue for the Biden administration to provide stimulus without going through Congress.

Neither program has lived up to its potential so far, with the Municipal Lending program making just one loan, while the Main Street program has made loans totaling around \$4 billion to about 400 companies.

Mnuchin's move comes as the resurgent virus and slowing consumer spending, as well as colder weather that will shut down outdoor dining, will cause more small and mid-sized businesses to struggle with lower revenue and potentially close.

However, Republican Sen. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania said in a statement that he approved of Mnuchin's decision.

"Congress' intent was clear: These facilities were to be temporary, to provide liquidity and to cease operations by the end of 2020," Toomey, a member of the Senate Finance Committee, said. "With liquidity restored, they should expire, as Congress intended and the law requires, by Dec. 31, 2020."

Biden chides Trump for lack of cooperation on vaccine

By STEVE PEOPLES and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden met Thursday with governors from both parties and criticized President Donald Trump's unprecedented attempt to block the peaceful transition of power, saying it was hindering the flow of information about programs to develop a vitally important coronavirus vaccine.

"Unfortunately, my administration hasn't been able to get everything we need," Biden said during a video conference with the National Governors Association's leadership team, which consists of five Republicans and four Democrats.

His remarks highlighted the stakes of the Trump administration's refusal to begin a formal transfer of power to Biden's team. Besides being a pillar of American democracy, it is especially important this year since Biden will be inheriting responsibility for managing the worst public health crisis in a century. The president-elect also has been denied access to other critical information, including security briefings.

Participating from a theater in Wilmington, Delaware, with Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, Biden specifically cited Operation Warp Speed, the federal government's partnership with private pharmaceutical companies to develop a COVID-19 vaccine.

"We haven't been able to get into Operation Warp Speed, but we will take what we learned today and build it into our plan," Biden said in remarks after the meeting, which included Republicans Larry Hogan of Maryland, Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas, Kay Ivey of Alabama, Charlie Baker of Massachusetts and Gary Herbert of Utah.

Afterward, Biden spoke about distribution of a vaccine once one is ready, saying, "There has to be a prioritization."

"That's why I'd like to know exactly what this administration has in mind in terms of their Operation Warp Speed and how they plan it," he said of the Trump White House. "And that's what we talked about with the governors today. They all mentioned the need to focus on the communities that have been left behind."

Even as he warned of the gravity of the situation, however, Biden reiterated his previous pledges not to institute a nationwide shutdown to curb the virus's spread, and repeated that more states instituting mask-wearing mandates could save tens of thousands of lives.

An hourlong briefing by the White House coronavirus task force that also took place Thursday made no mention of the incoming administration or Trump's refusal to coordinate with Biden on plans to distribute

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upcoming vaccines.

But it did reinforce Biden's tough-love message to the American people, including warnings that a "dark winter" is coming as virus cases spike across the country. Task force coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx sounded the alarm over the rate of new infections — sharper than the surge this summer or even the initial outbreak last spring.

While there have been improvements in treatment protocols and new therapeutics, tens of thousands of people — or more — will die before vaccines are widely available, she said.

After the virtual meeting with the governors, Biden took questions from reporters and revealed he'd decided on a treasury secretary nomination for his new administration. He refused to provide more details, except to say it was a choice that would satisfy Democrats from across the political spectrum — presumably including outspoken progressives who worried Biden might go for a safer, more moderate selection.

Among the Democrats on the videoconference was Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, which is among the states Trump has targeted for unfounded claims of voter fraud. Biden nonetheless vowed to rise above politics in a unified front against the virus.

"There's a real desire for real partnership between the states and the federal government," Biden said.

He said he'd forgo a national shutdown "because every region, every area, every community can be different."

Instead, Biden noted that 10 governors have imposed statewide mask mandates to combat the virus, calling wearing face coverings a "patriotic duty." He's previously vowed to ask all governors to impose such rules and go around holdouts to local and county officials to cover as much of the U.S. as possible.

Ivey told videoconference participants that both parties in Congress need to come together to provide more coronavirus response funding, according to a readout provided by her office. It made no mention of the Alabama governor recognizing Biden as president-elect.

Hutchison of Arkansas, by contrast, said over the weekend that Biden would be the next president. He's also called on the Trump administration to give Biden access to the intelligence briefings he needs to be fully prepared to lead the country on Jan. 20, Inauguration Day.

Hogan told The Associated Press recently that Trump's wild and unsupported claims of widespread voter fraud were "dangerous" and "embarrassing."

"As I said on the day that the president-elect was declared the winner, his election has provided a mandate for cooperation," the Maryland governor said after the virtual meeting with Biden. "We look forward to working closely with the Biden-Harris administration as we continue to face this unprecedented global pandemic."

Still, some in his party considering the election settled didn't stop Trump on Thursday from coming out with a new round of false claims of voter fraud in key states.

With Trump dug in and Republicans on Capitol Hill largely unwilling to challenge him, Biden has been forced to turn to a diverse collection of outside allies to ratchet up the pressure on the president to concede.

The CEOs of America's largest companies have released a statement recognizing Biden and Harris as the clear winners. The heads of the American Hospital Association, the American Medical Association and the American Nurses Association issued a joint statement on Tuesday urging the Trump administration to share "all critical information related to COVID-19" with Biden. Not doing so, they warned, would jeopardize American lives.

Trump, meanwhile, has been getting nowhere in the courts, and his scattershot effort to overturn Biden's victory is shifting toward obscure election boards that certify the vote. The battle is centered in the states that sealed Biden's win. Two Republican election officials in Michigan's largest county initially refused to certify results despite no evidence of fraud.

The officials then backtracked and voted to certify before flipping again and saying they "remain opposed to certification."

Biden said that Trump's refusal to accept the election results has left Americans "witnessing incredible irresponsibility" and that the president's actions in Michigan were particularly troubling.

"What the president's doing now is going to be another incident where he will go down in history as

being one of the most irresponsible presidents," Biden said.

Weissert reported from Washington. Associated Press writer Zeke Miller contributed to this report from Washington.

Tyson suspends Iowa plant managers amid virus betting claim

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — Tyson Foods suspended top officials at its largest pork plant on Thursday and launched an investigation into allegations that they bet on how many workers would get infected during a widespread coronavirus outbreak.

The company's president and CEO, Dean Banks, said he was "extremely upset" about the allegations against managers at its plant in Waterloo, Iowa, saying they do not represent the company's values. He said Tyson has retained the law firm Covington & Burling LLP to conduct an investigation, which will be led by former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.

"If these claims are confirmed, we'll take all measures necessary to root out and remove this disturbing behavior from our company," Banks said in a statement.

Banks said the accused managers have been suspended without pay. He traveled to Waterloo on Thursday to explain the company's response to workers, who were dismissed early from the first shift, Tyson spokesman Gary Mickelson said.

Mickelson said the Arkansas-based company would not release the names of those suspended during the investigation by Holder, who served as attorney general for six years under President Barack Obama.

Tyson has faced a backlash over recently amended wrongful death lawsuits in which plaintiffs' lawyers allege that Waterloo plant manager Tom Hart "organized a cash buy-in, winner-take-all betting pool for supervisors and managers to wager on how many employees would test positive for COVID-19."

Hart allegedly organized the pool last spring as the virus spread through the Waterloo plant, ultimately infecting more than 1,000 of its 2,800 workers, killing at least six and sending many others to the hospital. The outbreak eventually tore through the broader Waterloo community.

Plaintiffs' attorney Mel Orchard said he was "happily surprised" by Tyson's moves and that he hopes Holder will conduct a broad investigation into the company's virus safety efforts.

"It's not going to change what happened. These people are gone, but can we prevent future deaths?" Orchard said. "I hope so. Because there is a reckoning coming."

Orchard represents the estates of Sedika Buljic, 58; Reberiano Garcia, 60; Jose Ayala Jr., 44; and Isidro Fernandez, age unknown. Buljic, Garcia and Fernandez died in April, and Ayala died May 25 after a six-week hospitalization.

Orchard said the legal team uncovered the betting allegations during interviews with former Tyson officials.

The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, which represents workers at the plant, condemned what it called "stunning safety failures."

"This shocking report of supervisors allegedly taking bets on how many workers would get infected, pressuring sick workers to stay on the job, and failing to enforce basic safety standards, should outrage every American," union president Marc Perrone said.

Hart didn't respond to an email seeking comment.

Democratic State Rep. Ras Smith, whose district includes the plant, said Hart should be fired if the allegation is founded and that workplace safety officials should investigate.

"They were knowingly allowing this virus to spread rampantly in the plant and the community. The more we hear, the more we find out how insidious and intentional it was," Smith said.

At the time of the alleged betting, Tyson was resisting pressure from local officials to shut down the plant as a safety precaution. The company argued the plant, which can process nearly 20,000 hogs per day, was a vital market for farmers and critical to the meat supply.

Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds, who allowed Tyson to keep the plant open and praised its executives for taking voluntary safety measures, did not answer directly Thursday when asked whether her trust in the

company was misplaced. Reynolds, who signed a law in June shielding companies from liability for some COVID-19 related injuries, instead praised her administration for inspecting the plant and helping organize mass testing of workers.

A sheriff helping lead Black Hawk County's pandemic response said that during an April tour of the plant, he was "shaken to the core" after seeing workers not social distancing or wearing adequate personal protective equipment.

Managers told workers they had a responsibility to stay on the job to ensure that Americans didn't go hungry, even while they started avoiding the plant floor themselves because they were afraid of contracting the virus, the lawsuits allege. They increasingly delegated responsibilities to low-level supervisors with no management training or experience.

One upper-level manager, John Casey, ordered a sick supervisor who was leaving to get tested to get back to work, and told others they and their subordinates had to keep working even if they had symptoms, the lawsuits allege. Casey allegedly told workers the virus was the "glorified flu" and "not a big deal" because everyone would get it.

On a tour of the plant with Hart, Iowa Occupational Safety and Health Administration inspectors on April 20 saw four workers within six feet of each other in one part of the plant, records show. Tyson said it was still in the process of installing barriers at the time.

The plant soon suspended operations to allow for the mass-testing of employees and it reopened about two weeks later with new safety protocols. Iowa OSHA said in June that it found no violations of its standards during the April 20 inspection.

Tyson has asked a federal judge to dismiss the lawsuits, arguing that the exclusive remedy for workplace injuries under Iowa law is through the workers' compensation system. Its lawyers also argue that the plaintiffs have failed to show that the deceased workers contracted the virus at the plant and not elsewhere.

Follow Ryan J. Foley on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/rjfoley>

Minor discrepancies at heart of GOP effort to overturn vote

By COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

Poll book problems, unbalanced precincts and false reads are at the heart of the Republican Party's long shot efforts to toss out thousands of votes in Detroit and other largely Black cities that contributed to Joe Biden's victory in Michigan.

Experts say those issues are present in all elections and almost never indicate any serious threat to the integrity of the results.

There has been no evidence of widespread voting fraud in Michigan or any other state. And federal and state officials from both parties have declared the 2020 election safe and secure. But President Donald Trump and his allies have spent two weeks raising false claims of fraud, pressuring Republican officials and refusing to concede to Biden.

A state canvassing board is expected to begin certifying election results Monday from each of Michigan's 83 counties, including Wayne County, where two Republican county canvassers this week grudgingly certified the election after noting what they called ballot "discrepancies" in Detroit precincts.

Some answers to basic questions about the canvassing and certification process:

Q: WHAT HAPPENED TO HOLD UP THE CERTIFICATION?

A: Republicans Monica Palmer and William Hartmann, who sit on a Wayne County election board, initially tried to block routine certification of the vote and then reversed themselves, only to try again to revert to their original position — something the Michigan secretary of state says cannot be done.

Palmer and Hartmann were appointed in May by the county clerk, a Democrat. They were recommended by the Republican Party to fill spots after two other Republicans on the board resigned, according to the county.

Palmer cited claims that certain Detroit precincts were out of balance, meaning that absentee ballot

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books did not match the number of ballots cast. Hartmann said he changed his vote to certify the election because canvassers agreed to seek an audit of Detroit's election performance.

Q: WHAT ARE POLL BOOKS?

A: Electronic poll books are computer software used in polling places on Election Day. The software allows poll workers to look up a voter's registration record, confirm the registration and assign a ballot to that voter. This automates the typical paper process. After the election, the software generates reports to complete the official precinct record, which is a paper poll book, and a voter history file.

Q: WHAT ARE OUT-OF-BALANCE PRECINCTS?

A: A precinct is said to be out of balance when the total number of ballots tabulated and the total number of voters who were issued a ballot do not agree. Fixes include verifying that all absentee ballots have been processed and tabulated by going through return envelopes and verifying that every absentee voter is included in the poll book total.

"Somebody opened the ballots and counted them," said Michael Traugott, a research professor in the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan. "They know how many ballots there were. Then they counted the votes for the candidates, and they don't match exactly."

The Republican canvassers "got hung up about the city of Detroit," Traugott said.

Q: WHAT ARE FALSE READS IN ABSENTEE BALLOTS?

A: False reads is a term used to describe any situation where the tabulator rejects a ballot due to a correction such as an erasure, a stray mark or an invalid write-in vote. Ballots rejected as blank may also be the result of a false read if a voter has made an improper mark or used an improper marking tool.

Q: WHAT ARE OTHER EXAMPLES OF VOTING DISCREPANCIES?

A: Traugott says if a voter gets handed a ballot and then has to wait in line and leaves, that throws off the total vote count. Other potential problems include ballot scanners that get jammed or ballots that cannot be read because voters filled them out improperly.

Q: WHAT ARE POST-ELECTION AUDITS?

A: The audits are reviews of procedures performed before, during and after an election. They include a review of voted ballots with a hand tally of select contests. The review of voted ballots will verify that the equipment used to count votes worked properly and yielded an accurate result.

Q: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

A: Palmer's and Hartmann's concerns are sure to be brought up next week during the statewide canvassing. There are two Republicans and two Democrats on the state Board of Canvassers, meaning another 2-2 deadlock could occur.

The issue would then go before the Michigan Court of Claims, according to former Michigan Elections Director Chris Thomas.

Thomas, who served as an advisor to the Detroit city clerk for the general election, said the 172,000 absentee ballots received and processed by the city likely caused some problems in Detroit.

"I think there's a volume issue in Detroit that no other jurisdiction deals with," Thomas said.

To handle the massive amount of ballots, the city clerk's office also brought on a "lot of new people who have never" done that kind of election work before, Thomas added.

"We've seen nothing nefarious going on," he said.

Mexico says it wants its ex-officials tried in Mexico

By MARIA VERZA and MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's foreign secretary said Thursday the country no longer wants officials accused of corruption to be put on trial in the United States, a move that could scale back a tradition that saw most of Mexico's corruption cases tried north of the border.

However, a spokesman for Mexico's President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said the country was still willing to extradite officials or drug traffickers, walking back an earlier statement by Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard.

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The flurry of exchanges came a day after the U.S. agreed to drop a high-profile drug trafficking and money laundering case against a former Mexican defense secretary, whose arrest in Los Angeles last month enraged Mexico.

Presidential spokesman Jesús Ramírez told The Associated Press extradition and other cooperation treaties between the U.S. and Mexico would be maintained, but the country wants formal information sharing and extradition processes.

"What we don't want are surprise actions," Ramírez said, in an apparent reference to retired Gen. Salvador Cienfuegos and other former officials who have been arrested while travelling to the United States.

Regarding drug traffickers and others whose crimes affect the United States, Ramírez said, "that justifies them being tried in the United States."

Ramírez's comments clarified a blanket declaration by Ebrard earlier Thursday saying that "whoever is culpable according to our laws will be tried, judged and if applicable sentenced in Mexico, and not in other countries."

Ebrard also suggested that the agreement that led to the release of Cienfuegos was broader than previously known.

In response to Ebrard's comments, a U.S. Justice Department official said no new agreements had been reached between the two countries. The official could not publicly discuss the details of private diplomatic conversations and spoke to the Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Roberto Velasco, Mexico's director general of North American Affairs, said generally, crimes in Mexico would be investigated and prosecuted in Mexico. "As far as transnational crimes that involve both countries or third parties, both governments will continue to share information and available evidence, to determine how to proceed in specific cases," he said.

The dramatic developments come at an uncertain time in the United States following the recent presidential election. Former Vice President Joe Biden garnered enough electoral votes to win, but President Donald Trump is contesting the outcome and has not allowed his administration to cooperate with a transition or provide briefings to Biden about foreign matters.

Cienfuegos, 72, was secretly indicted by a federal grand jury in New York in 2019. He was accused of conspiring with the H-2 cartel in Mexico to smuggle thousands of kilos of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and marijuana while he was defense secretary from 2012 to 2018.

Prosecutors said intercepted messages showed that Cienfuegos accepted bribes in exchange for ensuring the military did not take action against the cartel and that operations were initiated against its rivals. He was also accused of introducing cartel leaders to other corrupt Mexican officials.

On Tuesday, the U.S. Department of Justice requested that the drug trafficking and money laundering charges against Cienfuegos be dismissed and that he be returned to Mexico in the interest of maintaining cross-border cooperation. That decision came after reports that Mexico had threatened to expel the Drug Enforcement Administration's regional director and agents.

López Obrador denied that Thursday, saying, "We didn't threaten anybody. All we did was express our disagreement."

"We did not threaten to expel the agents. We said we want to be informed and for the cooperation agreements to be respected," López Obrador said, adding, "I think it is an injustice for innocent people to be put on trial."

"You cannot allow foreign agencies to try Mexicans if there is no proof," said López Obrador, who depicted it as a national sovereignty issue. "Just because they are other countries' legal institutions, does that make them the owners of justice and rectitude?"

Cienfuegos was returned to Mexico Wednesday and promptly released.

Ebrard vowed that the investigation into Cienfuegos would be "worthy of Mexico's prestige and dignity." But the entire process of notifying Cienfuegos of the investigation and letting him back into the country took only about a half hour, far less time than the average traveler spends in customs and immigration.

Ebrard appeared to be aware of the damage to Mexico's reputation if Mexican prosecutors, as many expect, fail to bring their own charges against Cienfuegos.

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"It would be very costly for Mexico, to have decided to have this conversation with the United States, to achieve the dropping of charges against a former cabinet secretary for the first time in history, ... for him to be returned to Mexico, and then later do nothing," Ebrard said. "That would be almost suicidal."

The full scope of Mexico's pressure was not clear and U.S. officials were vague about what led them to drop charges in a case they had celebrated as a major breakthrough just last month.

Two officials, one Mexican and one American, said Mexico's tactics involved threatening to expel the Drug Enforcement Administration's regional director and agents unless the U.S. dropped the case. But they said that was only part of the negotiation. The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't allowed to speak publicly about the case, would not elaborate.

A judge in New York City approved the dismissal of charges Wednesday, capping a lightning-fast turnaround in a case that drew loud protests from top Mexican officials and threatened to damage the delicate relationship that enables investigators in both countries to pursue drug kingpins together.

Mexican officials complained that the U.S. failed to share evidence against Cienfuegos and that his arrest came as a surprise. It also caused alarm within Mexico's military, which has played a crucial role in operations against drug cartels.

Associated Press writers Michael Balsamo and Deb Reichman in Washington contributed.

Analysis: Trump's bid to spread misinformation and sow doubt

By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is trying to turn America's free and fair election into a muddled mess of misinformation, specious legal claims and baseless attacks on the underpinnings of the nation's democracy.

The resulting chaos and confusion that has created isn't the byproduct of Trump's strategy following his defeat to Democrat Joe Biden. The chaos and confusion is the strategy.

Trump's blizzard of attacks on the election are allowing him to sow discontent and doubt among his most loyal supporters, leaving many with the false impression that he is the victim of fraudulent voting. That won't keep Trump in office — Biden will be sworn in on Jan. 20 — but it could both undermine the new president's efforts to unify a fractured nation and fuel Trump in his next endeavor, whether that's another White House run in 2024 or a high-profile media venture.

"This is all about maintaining his ego and visibility," said Judd Gregg, the former Republican governor and U.S. senator from New Hampshire. "He's raising a lot of money and he intends to use it."

The effects of Trump's strategy are already starting to emerge. A Monmouth University poll out Wednesday showed that 77% of Trump supporters said Biden's victory was due to fraud, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

More than two weeks after Election Day, Trump's approach remains both stunning and unsurprising. It amounts to an unprecedented attack on a democratic election by a sitting American president — one the Republican Party has been largely silent in condemning. But it is also precisely the scenario Trump spent much of 2020 laying the groundwork for, particularly with his unfounded claims that mail-in ballots would be subject to systemic fraud. That wasn't true before 2020 or in this election.

"His response should surprise no one. He foreshadowed it well before the election and it continues his pattern of declaring victory, regardless of the actual facts," said Tim Pawlenty, the former Republican governor of Minnesota.

The facts in this instance are not in dispute.

Biden eclipsed Trump by comfortable margins in key battleground states, including Michigan and Pennsylvania, exceeding the 270 Electoral College votes needed to win the White House and nearing 80 million votes nationwide, a record. Federal and state election officials have declared the contest free of widespread fraud, with some going so far as to call the 2020 race the most secure in U.S. history.

Trump responded by firing the messenger, Chris Krebs, the nation's top election security official, who

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has repeatedly vouched for the integrity of the 2020 vote.

The credible statements from Krebs and state officials across the country have done nothing to deter Trump from insisting without evidence that Democratic forces conspired to rig the election against him. He's refused to formally concede to Biden, holding up the president-elect's access to everything from pressing national security information to blueprints for the government's rollout of a COVID-19 vaccine that will largely occur on Biden's watch.

All the while the president and his allies have tried to push his claims in court. And prominent Republican lawmakers, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, have said Trump should be given space to pursue all available legal pathways. Those pathways, however, are quickly closing, with judges across the country dismissing one lawsuit after another.

That hasn't stopped Trump and his allies from taking increasingly frantic steps to keep up the appearance of a president fighting on. Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani held a press conference in Washington on Thursday that amounted to a 90-minute misinformation campaign against a democratically held election.

Some Trump allies acknowledge privately that using the courts to actually reverse Biden's victory isn't the point of their efforts. And they also see no real path to persuading GOP-controlled state legislatures to appoint electors that would overturn the will of the voters, though some Trump advisers were buoyed this week when a pair of Michigan Republicans voted against certifying Biden's overwhelming victory in Wayne County. They reversed course following a public outcry, then tried to reverse again — a move that came after they received personal calls from the president.

Rather than actually overturn the election results, Trump allies say the goal is to help keep the president's most loyal supporters engaged and energized for whatever he might pursue after he leaves office — even if that means leaving them ill-informed about the reality of what has unfolded in the election.

Trump has long relished blurring the lines between truth and fiction and taking advantage of the confusion that creates. If anything, his presidency has only emboldened those tendencies, given the ways in which the Republican Party and friendly media outlets have helped propel his versions of events, even when they are indisputably false.

Those same dynamics have continued to help prop up Trump through this post-election stretch. Some small conservative media outlets have refused to accept Biden's victory and have seen their audiences grow as a result. And most GOP leaders have helped give Trump cover by also stopping short of publicly acknowledging Biden's victory, despite the fact that many do so privately.

GOP lawmakers have their own strategy in play. The party's Senate majority hangs in the balance in a pair of runoff elections in Georgia in January, and some Republican strategists see an aggrieved Trump base as key to the party's success there. They're casting the Senate votes as a way to exact revenge for Trump's defeat in a "rigged" election and saddle Biden with a GOP majority in the chamber.

Others see the party's response as a signal that they're simply trying to get through the final weeks of his presidency without rocking the boat, even if that means allowing misinformation about the nation's electoral process to flourish.

"It's hard, cynical politics," said Mike Murphy, a veteran Republican strategist who backed Biden in the election. "They don't think the noise is an immediate threat so they're waiting him out."

In a stinging condemnation of his party, Murphy continued: "The elephant is out as the GOP symbol and the chicken is in."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Washington Bureau Chief Julie Pace has covered the White House and politics for The Associated Press since 2007. Follow her at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>.

US adult smoking rate looks unchanged, vaping rate higher

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. decline in cigarette smoking could be stalling while the adult vaping rate appears to be rising, according to a government report released Thursday.

About 14% of U.S adults were cigarette smokers last year, the third year in a row the annual survey found that rate. But health officials said a change in the methodology make it hard to compare that to the same 14% reported for 2017 and 2018.

The adult smoking rate last saw a substantial drop in 2017, when it fell from 16% the year before.

The new figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention mean there are more than 34 million adult smokers in the U.S.

Meanwhile, about 4.5% of adults were counted as current e-cigarette users last year — about 11 million people.

That rate appears to be up from 3.2% in 2018 and 2.8% in 2017. But again, officials said that comparing 2019 with earlier years is difficult because of the survey change.

The CDC figures are based on responses from about 32,000 people.

Health officials have long called tobacco use the nation's leading cause of preventable disease and death.

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Isolated for months, island crew sees pandemic for 1st time

By CALEB JONES Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Just as the coronavirus pandemic began to take hold, in February, four people set sail for one of the most remote places on Earth — a small camp on Kure Atoll, at the edge of the uninhabited Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

There, more than 1,400 miles from Honolulu, they lived in isolation for eight months while working to restore the island's environment. Cut off from the rest of the planet, their world was limited to a tiny patch of sand halfway between the U.S. mainland and Asia. With no television or internet access, their only information came from satellite text messages and occasional emails.

Now they are back, re-emerging into a changed society that might feel as foreign today as island isolation did in March. They must adjust to wearing face masks, staying indoors and seeing friends without giving hugs or hearty handshakes.

"I've never seen anything like this, but I started reading the book "The Stand" by Stephen King, which is about a disease outbreak, and I was thinking, 'Oh my goodness, is this what it's going to be like to go home?'" said Charlie Thomas, one of the four island workers. "All these ... precautions, these things, people sick everywhere. It was very strange to think about."

The group was part of an effort by the state of Hawaii to maintain the fragile island ecosystem on Kure, which is part of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, the nation's largest contiguous protected environment. The public is not allowed to land anywhere in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

Kure is the only island in the northern part of the archipelago that is managed by the state, with the rest under the jurisdiction of the federal government. A former Coast Guard station, the atoll is home to seabirds, endangered Hawaiian monk seals and coral reefs that are teeming with sea turtles, tiger sharks and other marine life.

Two field teams go there each year, one for summer and another for winter. Their primary job is removing invasive plants and replacing them with native species and cleaning up debris such as fishing nets and plastic that washes ashore.

Before they leave, team members are often asked if they want to receive bad news while away, said Cynthia Vanderlip, the supervisor for the Kure program.

"A few times a day, we upload and download email so people stay in touch with their family and friends. That's a huge morale booster, and I don't take it lightly," Vanderlip said. "People who are in remote places ... rely on your communication."

Thomas, the youngest member of the team at 18, grew up in a beach town in New Zealand and spent much of her free time with seabirds and other wildlife. She finished school a year early to start her first

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job as a deckhand for an organization dedicated to cleaning up coastlines before volunteering for the summer season on Kure Atoll.

The expedition was her first time being away from home for so long, but she was ready to disconnect. "I was sick of social media, I was sick of everything that was sort of going on," she said. "And I thought, you know, I am so excited to get rid of my phone, to lose contact with everything ... I don't need to see all the horrible things that are going on right now."

When Thomas left New Zealand for Hawaii, there were no virus cases nearby that she can recall. By the time she left Honolulu for Kure, the virus was starting to "creep a little closer" to the islands.

"We were just seeing stories on the television and that sort of thing," she said. "But, you know, we're off. We're leaving. It wasn't really a big concern for us."

Once on Kure, getting a full picture of what was happening in the world was difficult.

"I guess I didn't really know what to think because we were getting so many different answers to questions that we were asking," she said.

Thomas is now in a hotel in quarantine in Auckland, where she lives with her parents, sister and a dog named Benny. She will miss hugs and "squishing five people on a bench to have dinner," she said.

Joining her on the island was Matthew Butschek II, who said he felt most alone when he received news about two deaths.

His mother emailed to tell him that her brother had died. Butschek said his uncle was ill before the pandemic, and he was not sure if COVID played a role in his death. He could not grieve with his family.

Then Butschek, 26, who lives near Dallas, received word that one of his best friends had been killed in a car accident.

"I remember reading that, thinking it was a joke and then realizing it wasn't, so my heart started pounding and I was breathing heavily," he said.

The isolation of Kure "felt strong" at that moment, but he said he tends to like his space when emotional.

"I drank a beer for him and just kind of thought about memories," he said, describing sitting in his bunk house alone after a long day of fieldwork.

While in quarantine last week, Butschek looked out the window of his cabin in Honolulu and saw school-aged children playing on rocks and climbing trees — all wearing face masks. It reminded him of apocalyptic movies.

"It's not normal for me. But everyone is like, yeah, this is what we do now. This is how we live," he said.

Leading the camp on Kure was wildlife biologist Naomi Worcester, 43, and her partner, Matthew Saunter, who live together in Honolulu.

Worcester first visited the island in 2010 and has returned every year since. She's a veteran of remote fieldwork in Alaska, Washington, Wyoming and the Sierra Nevada mountains.

Working on the atoll means getting information about the world slowly, and often not at all, Worcester said.

A few weeks ago, she departed Kure and arrived on Midway Atoll, where she and the rest of the crew stayed for several days before flying back to Honolulu. Midway has limited internet access and basic cable television. During a moment alone, she turned on a TV.

"I think I turned it on during the middle of the World Series," she recalled. "And it's like some people are wearing face masks and some people aren't. And there is the thing about the guy that tested positive in the middle of the game or something. I was just like, click click, I don't know, this is too much!"

Her focus for the coming months will be to start arranging the Kure trip for next summer. She also fears for the health and safety of her friends and family.

"If there was anything serious that happened when I was gone, they would have told me, but then again, maybe not," she said.

She also worries about the pandemic's cost in a larger sense.

"With so much uncertainty and so many emotions running high and, you know, our country is divided on so many things ... there is kind of an underlying fear as far as what the future could hold and how people could respond."

Saunter, 35, has worked on Kure since 2010, the same year he met and began dating Worcester. They have been partners in life and on the island for a decade.

In 2012, they began leading teams at the field camp.

After so many years at the camp, Saunter said, isolation isn't much of a factor for him. He believes the leadership skills he's learned in the wilderness will translate well to life in the pandemic.

To be successful on Kure, you have to tackle problems head-on and control your emotions, he said.

"You know people's emotions are getting the better of them, and it's kind of at the cost of everybody, so it seems very irresponsible," he said. "If we had taken it more seriously and practiced more precautions, we could have squashed this thing."

He remembers being on Kure when his sister called the outbreak a "pandemic."

"I got an email from my sister and she used the word 'pandemic,'" he said. "I thought to myself, huh, maybe we need to look that up, because what's the difference between a pandemic and an epidemic?"

Now "it's a word that's in everybody's vocabulary."

Trump's election lawsuits plagued by elementary errors

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

When President Donald Trump sends lawyers to court, it seems he's not sending his best.

Fighting to challenge an election he lost to President-elect Joe Biden, Trump has launched a barrage of lawsuits across the country. Top Republicans have stood behind him and said they will wait for those cases to be resolved before officially recognizing the winner, a standard that has no modern precedent.

But his attorneys have repeatedly made elementary errors in those high-profile cases: misspelling "poll watcher" as "pole watcher," forgetting the name of the presiding judge during a hearing, inadvertently filing a Michigan lawsuit before an obscure court in Washington and having to refile complaints after erasing entire arguments they're using to challenge results.

"The sloppiness just serves to underscore the lack of seriousness with which these claims are being brought," said Rick Hasen, a law professor at the University of California, Irvine.

Trump's legal team has lost repeatedly in court and failed to uncover the kind of widespread fraud that might challenge Biden's leads in several key battleground states. His lawyers and allies have still pressed forward with asking judges and certification authorities to block the results.

Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani and other Trump lawyers held a press conference Thursday in which they berated reporters for questioning their claims and cited a Michigan affidavit already dismissed by a judge. They also argued a debunked conspiracy theory that Venezuela could have hacked election results through machines used by local authorities.

"I know crimes. I can smell them," Giuliani said as streaks of sweat and what appeared to be hair dye ran down the sides of his face. "You don't have to smell this one. I can prove it to you 18 different ways."

Experts have noted that Trump is not employing the Republican Party's top election lawyers, including those who represented the GOP in the Florida recount two decades ago. Law firms have faced public pressure from Trump opponents not to fight the election on his behalf. Legal giant Porter Wright Morris & Arthur withdrew from a case in Pennsylvania last week.

Attorneys at the larger, more established firms that had been representing Trump have expressed concern privately about pushing a legal strategy without a body of evidence, and worry that it's wrongly furthering a false narrative that the election was fraudulent, according to two people familiar with the litigation. The people were not authorized to speak about litigation and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The day before a major argument in Pennsylvania, three lawyers for Trump withdrew and were replaced in part by Marc Scaringi, an attorney and talk show host who wrote a blog post after the election referring to "President-elect Joe Biden." Scaringi himself had told listeners on his radio show days after the election that "there are really no bombshells" about to drop "that will derail a Biden presidency," and noting that several of the lawsuits "don't seem to have much evidence to substantiate their claims."

Much of the derision has focused on Giuliani, who appeared in court on Tuesday in the Pennsylvania

case. It was the first time he had represented a client in federal court in almost three decades.

During the hearing, Giuliani forgot the name of an opposing lawyer, misstated the name of the presiding judge and mistook the meaning of the word "opacity."

Hasen pointed to Giuliani's apparent lack of knowledge of the meaning of "strict scrutiny," the highest of three standards used by judges to evaluate how a law or action taken by the government affects someone's constitutional rights. The Trump campaign has claimed without providing evidence that Pennsylvania violated voters' rights by allegedly allowing election fraud.

Strict scrutiny is a basic concept taught to aspiring lawyers and constitutional law classes.

"I've never seen an election lawyer handle a case as poorly as Giuliani has," Hasen said. "The idea that the lawyer arguing the most important case in Pennsylvania would not understand what it means to apply the standard of strict scrutiny in a constitutional case is mind-boggling."

On Wednesday, the Trump campaign asked to file a new complaint in Pennsylvania partly to "restore claims which were inadvertently deleted," according to their filing. An attachment to the filing, in citing state election law, references "only one pole watcher" instead of "poll watcher."

Experts say Trump has almost no chance of reversing his loss.

"It's kind of a fallacy to say, well, Trump might be doing better if he had better lawyers," Hasen said. "Part of the reason he doesn't have good lawyers is he doesn't have good claims to bring."

Associated Press writers Colleen Long and Jill Colvin in Washington and Alanna Durkin Richer in Boston contributed to this report.

Microsoft-led housing effort cuts rents in Seattle suburbs

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — A master's degree and a full-time job as a middle-school counselor weren't enough to help Sam Baker land an apartment she could afford in Seattle's east-side suburbs. But a \$750 million commitment by a local tech giant helped do the trick.

In August, Baker moved into her new apartment in one of three complexes recently purchased by Urban Housing Ventures, a partnership backed in part by Microsoft's affordable housing initiative. The group is cutting rents at 40% of the units in the three buildings, including Baker's fourth-floor one-bedroom overlooking Lake Washington, as part of an effort to make sure teachers, nurses and other middle-income professionals can live in the communities where they work.

The rent cuts are being accomplished without local public subsidies, but with a model designed to remain attractive to investors — an approach that could and should be replicated nationwide, its supporters say.

"Having this program has made it so I can afford to live here," said Baker, 51, a counselor at Eastside Catholic School in Sammamish. "I don't want to commute too far. I like being in an area where I can walk a lot — there's restaurants and banks and dentists and hair salons and bars. It makes it very convenient."

Microsoft launched the initiative two years ago to address a problem its own success helped create: As the region's tech industry has boomed and well-paid tech workers have driven up the cost of housing, even people with decent middle-income jobs have been priced out. Jane Broom, the company's senior director of philanthropies, noted in a blog post Thursday that from 2011 to 2019, jobs grew 24% while housing only grew 12%; median household income rose by 34% while housing prices soared 78%.

Other tech giants, including Google and Apple, have also invested hundreds of millions of dollars recently to boost affordable housing, following years of complaints that they had worsened the problem.

Microsoft initially committed \$500 million, saying that much of the money would provide market-rate or below-market-rate loans to developers who want to build affordable housing. Some was targeted for grants to address homelessness, such as by providing legal help to those facing eviction. Early this year, Microsoft upped the ante by \$250 million, committing to providing credit to help the Washington State Finance Commission finance about 3,000 additional units of affordable housing.

But building new affordable housing takes time. So on Thursday, the company announced that it had

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invested \$40 million to help Urban Housing Ventures buy three existing market-rate complexes — two in Bellevue and one in Kirkland — that together have 335 units. Urban Housing Ventures is immediately cutting rents for residents who earn 60% to 80% of the area's median income. The partnership is also benefitting from a \$325 million financing commitment from the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp., better known as Freddie Mac.

For Baker, who has four grown children and lives on her own, that means a discount of about \$600 a month — \$1,623 instead of more than \$2,200. It's not enough that she's saving much, she said. But she can make ends meet without having to take a seasonal department store job over the holidays, as she did when she lived at her old apartment.

And it's a nice place — across the street from a beach, with covered parking and a gym, she said.

"The Puget Sound region hasn't built enough housing for the people who live here, including many who are on the front lines of our community's response to COVID-19," Microsoft President Brad Smith said in a written statement. "We need fresh, creative approaches like this one to quickly bring new private sector financing and funding to address the affordable housing crisis — in our home state of Washington and nationwide."

Part of the reason that buildings remain attractive to investors is that the below-market-rate units are in such high demand that they're expected to have less turnover, and fewer vacancies in an economic slump, said Tim Cavanaugh, a managing member at Stream Real Estate Development, which oversees operations at Urban Housing Ventures.

In addition to the \$40 million toward its \$750 million commitment, Microsoft on Thursday announced it was providing \$25 million to the Washington State Housing Finance Commission to offer financing to affordable housing developers.

Not just COVID: Nursing home neglect deaths surge in shadows

By MATT SEDENSKY and BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

When COVID-19 tore through Donald Wallace's nursing home, he was one of the lucky few to avoid infection.

He died a horrible death anyway.

Hale and happy before the pandemic, the 75-year-old retired Alabama truck driver became so malnourished and dehydrated that he dropped to 98 pounds and looked to his son like he'd been in a concentration camp. Septic shock suggested an untreated urinary infection, E. coli in his body from his own feces hinted at poor hygiene, and aspiration pneumonia indicated Wallace, who needed help with meals, had likely choked on his food.

"He couldn't even hold his head up straight because he had gotten so weak," said his son, Kevin Ameron. "They stopped taking care of him. They abandoned him."

As more than 90,000 of the nation's long-term care residents have died in a pandemic that has pushed staffs to the limit, advocates for the elderly say a tandem wave of death separate from the virus has quietly claimed tens of thousands more, often because overburdened workers haven't been able to give them the care they need.

Nursing home watchdogs are being flooded with reports of residents kept in soiled diapers so long their skin peeled off, left with bedsores that cut to the bone, and allowed to wither away in starvation or thirst.

Beyond that, interviews with dozens of people across the country reveal swelling numbers of less clear-cut deaths that doctors believe have been fueled not by neglect but by a mental state plunged into despair by prolonged isolation—listed on some death certificates as "failure to thrive."

A nursing home expert who analyzed data from the country's 15,000 facilities for The Associated Press estimates that for every two COVID-19 victims in long-term care, there is another who died prematurely of other causes. Those "excess deaths" beyond the normal rate of fatalities in nursing homes could total more than 40,000 since March.

These extra deaths are roughly 15% more than you'd expect at nursing homes already facing tens of thousands of deaths each month in a normal year.

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"The healthcare system operates kind of on the edge, just on the margin, so that if there's a crisis, we can't cope," said Stephen Kaye, a professor at the Institute on Health and Aging at the University of California, San Francisco, who conducted the analysis. "There are not enough people to look after the nursing home residents."

Comparing mortality rates at homes struck by COVID-19 with ones that were spared, Kaye also found that the more the virus spread through a home, the greater the number of deaths recorded for other reasons. In homes where at least 3 in 10 residents had the virus, for example, the rate of death for reasons besides the virus was double what would be expected without a pandemic.

That suggests the care of those who didn't contract the virus may have been impacted as healthcare workers were consumed attending to residents ill from COVID-19 or were left short-handed as the pandemic infected employees themselves.

Chronic understaffing at nursing homes has been one of the hallmarks of the pandemic, with a few homes even forced to evacuate because so many workers either tested positive or called in sick. In 20 states where virus cases are now surging, federal data shows nearly 1 in 4 nursing homes report staff shortages.

On New York's Long Island, Dawn Best saw that firsthand. Before COVID-19 arrived at Gurwin Jewish Nursing Home, she was pleased with the care her 83-year-old mother Carolyn Best received. She enjoyed activities, from tai-chi classes to visits from a pony, and was doted on by staff.

But when the lockdown started and the virus began to spread in the home, Best sensed the staff couldn't handle what they had been dealt. The second time her mother, a retired switchboard operator, appeared on screen for a scheduled FaceTime call, she looked awful, her eyes closed as she moaned, flailed her arms above her head and just kept repeating "no." Best insisted a doctor check her out.

A few hours later, the doctor called, seemingly frantic, saying she only had a moment to talk.

"The COVID is everywhere," Best remembered her saying. "It's in every unit. The doctors have it, the nurses have it and your mother may have it."

In the end, 59 residents at Gurwin would be killed by the virus, but Best's mother never contracted it. She died instead of dehydration, her daughter said, because the staff was so consumed with caring for COVID-19 patients that no one made sure she was drinking.

"My mom went from being unbelievably cared for to dead in three weeks," said Best, who provided medical documents noting her mother's dehydration. "They were in over their head more than anyone could imagine."

Representatives for Gurwin said they could not comment on Best's case. The home's administrator, Joanne Parisi, said "COVID-19 has affected us all" but that "our staff at Gurwin has been doing heroic work."

West Hill Health and Rehab in Birmingham, Alabama, where Wallace lived prior to his Aug. 29 death, said he was "cared for with the utmost compassion, dedication and respect." Wallace's son provided medical documents outlining the conditions he described.

The nursing home trade group American Health Care Association disputed that there has been a widespread inability of staff to care for residents and dismissed estimates of tens-of-thousands of non-COVID-19 deaths as "speculation."

Dr. David Gifford, the group's chief medical officer, said the pandemic created "challenges" in staffing, particularly in states like New York and New Jersey hit hard by COVID-19, but added that, if anything, staffing levels have improved because of a drop in new admissions that has lightened the patient load.

"There have been some really sad and disturbing stories that have come out," Gifford said, "but we've not seen that widespread."

Another industry group, LeadingAge, which represents not-for-profit long-term care facilities, said staffing challenges are real, and that care homes are struggling in the face of federal inaction to provide additional stimulus money to help pay for more workers.

"These incidents, stemming from the challenges being faced by too many committed and caring nursing home providers during this pandemic, are horrific and heartbreaking," said Katie Smith Sloan, LeadingAge's president. "I hope that these tragedies will wake up politicians and the public."

When facilities sealed off across the country in March, advocates and inspectors were routinely kept out

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too, all while concerning reports trickled in, not only of serious injuries from falls or major medical declines, but of seemingly banal problems that posed serious health issues for the vulnerable.

Mairead Painter, Connecticut's long-term care ombudsman, said with dentists shut out, ill-fitting dentures went unfixed, a factor in mounting accounts of malnutrition, and with podiatrists gone, toenails went untrimmed, posing the possibility of painful conditions in diabetes patients.

Even more widespread, as loved ones lost access to homes, was critical help with residents' feeding, bathing, dressing and other tasks. The burden fell on aides already working tough shifts for little pay.

"I don't think anyone really understood how much time friends and family, volunteers and other people spent in the nursing home and supplemented that hands-on care," Painter said.

Strict rules barring in-person visitation persist in many homes, but as families and advocates have inched back inside, they've frequently been stunned by what they found.

When June Linnertz returned to her father's room at Cherrywood Pointe in Plymouth, Minnesota, in June for the first time in three months, she was struck by a blast of heat and a wall thermometer that hit 85 degrees. His sheets were soaked in sweat, his hair was plastered to his head and he was covered in bruises Linnertz would learn came from at least a half-dozen falls. His nails had been uncut so long, they curled over his fingertips and his eyes crusted over so badly he couldn't get them open.

The father, 78-year-old James Gill, screamed, thinking he had gone blind, and Linnertz grabbed an aide in a panic. She snipped off his diaper, revealing genitals that were deep red and skin sloughing off.

Two days later, Gill was dead from Lewy Body Dementia, according to a copy of his death certificate provided to the AP. Linnertz always expected her father to die of the condition, which causes a progressive loss of memory and movement, but never thought he would end his days in so much needless pain.

"What the pandemic did was uncover what was really going on in these facilities. It was bad before, but it got exponentially worse because you had the squeeze of the pandemic," Linnertz said. "If we weren't in a pandemic, I would have been in there ... This wouldn't have happened."

The assisted living facility's parent company, Ebenezer, said: "We strongly deny the allegations made about the care of this resident," adding that it follows "strict regulatory staffing levels" required by law.

Cheryl Hennen, Minnesota's long-term care ombudsman, said dozens of complaints have poured in of bedsores, dehydration and weight loss, and other examples of neglect at various facilities, such as a man who choked to death while he went unsupervised during mealtime. She fears many more stories of abuse and neglect will emerge as her staff and families are able to return to homes.

"If we can't get in there, how do we know what's really happening?" she said. "We don't know what we can't see."

The nagging guilt of unnecessary death is one Barbara Leak-Watkins understands. It was just in February that her 87-year-old father, Alex Leak, went for a check-up and got lab work that made Leak-Watkins think the Army veteran, contractor and farmer would be with her for a long time to come.

"You're going to outlive all of us," Leak-Watkins remembered the doctor saying.

As nursing home outbreaks of COVID-19 proliferated, Leak-Watkins prayed that he be spared. The prayer was answered, but Leak was nonetheless found unresponsive on the floor at Brookdale Northwest in Greensboro, North Carolina, his eyes rolled back and his tongue sticking out.

After he arrived at the hospital, a doctor there called Leak-Watkins with word: Her father had gone so long without water his potassium levels rocketed and his kidneys started failing. He'd be dead two weeks later of lactic acidosis, according to his death certificate, a fatal buildup of acid in the body when the kidneys stop working. For a man whose military service so drilled the need for hydration into him that he always had a bottle of water at hand, his daughter had never considered he could go thirsty.

"The facility is short-staffed ... underpaid and overworked," Leak-Watkins said. If they "can't provide you with liquids and fluids to hydrate yourself, there's something wrong."

The daughter is considering filing a lawsuit but a North Carolina law granting long-term care facilities broad immunity from suits claiming negligence in injuries or death during the pandemic could stymie her efforts. Similar laws and executive orders have been enacted in more than two dozen states.

The owner of the father's facility, Brookdale Senior Living, said it couldn't comment on individual cases

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but that “the health, happiness and wellbeing of each of our residents will always be our priority.”

Around the country, the heartache repeats, not only among families who have already buried a member, but also those who feel they are watching a slow-moving disaster.

In Hendersonville, Tennessee, Tara Thompson was able to see her mother for the first time in more than six months when she was hospitalized in October. The 79-year-old had dropped about 20 pounds, her eyes sunken and her legs looking more like forearms. Doctors at the hospital said she was malnourished and wasting muscle. There were bedsores on her backside and a gash on her forehead from a fall at the home. Her vocabulary had shrunk to nearly nothing and she’d taken to pulling the blankets over her head.

The facility Thompson’s mother lived in had been engulfed in virus outbreaks, with more than half its residents testing positive and dozens of employees infected, too. She never caught it, but shaken by the lack of care, Thompson transferred her mother to a new home.

“It has nothing to do with the virus. She’s declined because she’s had absolutely no contact with anybody who cares about her,” she said. “The only thing they have to live for are their families and, at the end of their life, you’re taking away the only thing that matters to them.”

“Failure to thrive” was among the causes listed for Maxine Schwartz, a 92-year-old former cake decorator whose family had been encouraged prior to the lockdown by how well she’d adjusted to her nursing home, Absolut Care of Aurora Park, in upstate New York. Her daughter, Dorothy Ann Carlone, would coax her to eat in the dining room each day and they’d sing songs and have brownies back in her room. Several times a week, Schwartz walked the length of the hallway for exercise.

When the lockdown began March 13, Carlone feared what would happen without her there. She pleaded to staff: “If you don’t let me in to feed her, she won’t eat, she will starve.”

On March 25, when a staffer at the home sent a photo of Schwartz, Carlone was shocked how thin she was. Carlone was told her mother hadn’t been eating, even passing up her favorite brownies.

Two days later, Carlone got an urgent call and when she arrived at the home, her mother’s skin was mottled, she was gasping for breath and her face was so drawn she was nearly unrecognizable. An hour later, she died.

Dawn Harsch, a spokeswoman for the company that owns Absolut Care, noted a state investigation found no wrongdoing and that “the natural progression of a patient like Mrs. Schwartz experiencing advanced dementia is a refusal to eat.”

Carlone is unconvinced.

“She was doing so good before they locked us out,” Carlone said. “What did she think when I wasn’t showing up? That I didn’t love her anymore? That I abandoned her? That I was dead?”

Before the lockdown, Carlone’s mother would wait by an elevator for her to arrive each day. She thinks of her mother waiting there when her visits stopped and knows the pain of the isolation must have played a role in her death.

“I think she gave up,” she said.

Sedensky and Condon reported from New York. AP data journalist Larry Fenn and investigative researcher Randy Herschaft contributed to this report.

Heading into holidays, US COVID-19 testing strained again

By MATTHEW PERRONE and MARION RENAULT Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — With coronavirus cases surging and families hoping to gather safely for Thanksgiving, long lines to get tested have reappeared across the U.S. — a reminder that the nation’s testing system remains unable to keep pace with the virus.

The delays are happening as the country braces for winter weather, flu season and holiday travel, all of which are expected to amplify a U.S. outbreak that has already swelled past 11.5 million cases and 250,000 deaths.

Laboratories warned that continuing shortages of key supplies are likely to create more bottlenecks

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and delays, especially as cases rise across the nation and people rush to get tested before reuniting with relatives.

"As those cases increase, demand increases and turnaround times may increase," said Scott Becker, CEO of the Association of Public Health Laboratories. "So it's like a dog chasing its tail."

Lines spanned multiple city blocks at testing sites across New York City this week, leaving people waiting three or more hours before they could even enter health clinics. In Los Angeles, thousands lined up outside Dodger Stadium for drive-thru testing.

"This is insane," said 39-year-old Chaunta Renaud as she entered her fourth hour waiting to enter a so-called rapid testing site in Brooklyn on Tuesday. Renaud and her husband planned to get tested before Thanksgiving, when they will drive to pick up her mother for the holiday. "We got tested before and it wasn't anything like this," she said.

On the one hand, the fact that testing problems are only now emerging — more than a month into the latest virus surge — is a testament to the country's increased capacity. The U.S. is testing over 1.5 million people per day on average, more than double the rate in July, when many Americans last faced long lines.

But experts like Johns Hopkins University researcher Gigi Gronvall said the U.S. is still falling far short of what's needed to control the virus.

Gronvall said the current testing rate "is on its way, but it's nowhere close to what's needed to shift the course of this epidemic." Many experts have called for anywhere between 4 million and 15 million daily tests to suppress the virus.

Trump administration officials estimate the U.S. has enough tests this month to screen between 4 million and 5 million people a day. But that doesn't fully reflect real-world conditions. The tests used at most testing sites rely on specialized chemicals and equipment that have been subject to chronic shortages for months.

Adm. Brett Giroir, the U.S. official overseeing testing, downplayed reports of lines and delays earlier this week. In some cases, he said, lines are caused by a lack of scheduling by testing locations, which should stagger appointments.

"I'm sure that is going to happen from time to time, but we're aggressively helping states in any way that we can if there are those kinds of issues," Giroir said Monday.

Marguerite Wynter, 28, stood in line for more than two hours to get a test Monday at a Chicago site. She plans on flying to see her mother in Massachusetts for Thanksgiving and staying through Christmas. Massachusetts requires visitors to quarantine for two weeks or show proof of a negative test.

"It's just more to be safe being around my family," Wynter said. "It's just to have peace of mind to know that I'm OK."

In California, health officials have given mixed messages about whether residents should get tested before the holiday.

San Francisco's Department of Emergency Management warned that people should not use a test to determine if they can travel. But Contra Costa County, across the bay, suggested anyone insistent on gathering with friends or relatives should get tested.

On Tuesday, federal regulators authorized the first rapid coronavirus test that can be done at home. It delivers results in 30 minutes and will cost roughly \$50. But the test kit from Lucira Health will be available by prescription only, and it won't be rolled out nationally until the spring.

As bad as the wait for testing has become, it is still better than in July, when the U.S. was almost entirely dependent on tests that often take two or more days for labs to process, even under ideal conditions. As cases surged past 70,000 per day, many people had to wait a week or more to learn their results, rendering the information almost worthless for isolating and tracking cases.

In recent months, federal health officials have distributed roughly 60 million rapid, point-of-care tests that deliver results in 15 minutes. Those have helped ease some of the pressure on large labs. But not enough.

Since Sept. 15, the daily count of U.S. tests has increased nearly 100%, based on a seven-day rolling average. However, the daily average of new COVID-19 cases has increased over 300%, to more than 161,000 as of Wednesday, according to an AP analysis.

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This week, Quest Diagnostics warned that mushrooming demand for testing has increased its turnaround time to slightly more than two days.

The lab company said operations are being squeezed by shortages of testing chemicals, pipettes — the slender tubes used to measure and dispense chemicals — and other supplies. Those items are produced by a small number of manufacturers worldwide.

Facing supply constraints and spiking demand, many hospitals have been forced to send some COVID-19 tests out to large labs like Quest for processing, delaying results for patients.

"If I can do the COVID test in-house, we're talking a small numbers of hours. If I have to send it to a reference lab, we're talking about days," said Dr. Patrick Godbey, laboratory director at Southeast Georgia Regional Medical Center.

Godbey emphasized a stark point that health officials have been making for months: The U.S. outbreak is too large to be contained by testing alone. Americans must follow basic measures such as wearing masks, social distancing and frequent hand-washing.

"You can't test yourself out of a pandemic," said Godbey, who is also president of the College of American Pathologists.

On Tuesday, in line outside a Brooklyn urgent care clinic — her second attempt to get tested that day — Monica Solis, 28, echoed that sentiment. "The lines are a reminder we're still going through this and we don't have a perfect response yet," she said.

Perrone reported from Washington. Associated Press data journalist Nicky Forster in New York contributed to this report, as did AP writers Stefanie Dazio and Brian Melley in Los Angeles; Sophia Tareen in Chicago; and Janie Har in San Francisco.

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Ethiopia's multiple crises: War, COVID-19, even locusts

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Ethiopia could hardly bear another emergency, even before a deadly conflict exploded in its northern Tigray region this month. Now, tens of thousands of refugees are fleeing into Sudan, and food and fuel are running desperately low in the sealed-off Tigray region, along with medical supplies and even resources to combat a major locust outbreak.

The United Nations warns of a "full-scale humanitarian crisis." Here's why:

WAR

No one knows how many people have been killed, including civilians, since the fighting began Nov. 4. Hundreds have been wounded. Ethiopia's federal government and the heavily armed Tigray regional government regard each other as illegal after a falling-out when Nobel Peace Prize-winning Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sidelined the once-dominant Tigray leaders amid sweeping political reforms. Thousands of Ethiopian refugees are streaming into Sudan daily, and the U.N. says authorities are overwhelmed.

COVID-19

Ethiopia this month surpassed 100,000 confirmed coronavirus infections, while health officials warn that Africa's second surge in cases has begun. The Tigray conflict threatens a swifter spread of COVID-19 in the region as people flee their homes. Meanwhile, the U.N. says trucks laden with medical and other supplies are stuck at heavily defended borders. Hospitals say even basic items such as blankets are needed. There is no electricity in the Tigray capital, Mekele, a city of about a half-million people, and water is running low.

LOCUSTS

The worst locust outbreak in decades has descended on Ethiopia and its neighbors, bearing billions of the voracious insects. They were destroying crops and threatening food insecurity well before the fighting. Researchers say some 80% of the Tigray region's residents are subsistence farmers, and this time of

year was already the lean season, with last year's harvest eaten.

HUNGER

Food can't get into the Tigray region of some 6 million people because of transport restrictions imposed after the fighting began. Humanitarian officials say long lines have appeared outside bread shops, prices have soared, and banks dispense only small amounts of cash. "At this stage there is simply very little left, even if you have money," according to the internal assessment by one humanitarian group seen by The Associated Press. The U.N. has now set aside \$20 million for "anticipatory action to fight hunger in Ethiopia."

Germany marks 75th anniversary of landmark Nuremberg trials

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Seventy-five years ago, the dock of Courtroom 600 of the Nuremberg Palace of Justice was packed with some of the most nefarious figures of the 20th Century: Hermann Goering, Rudolf Hess, Joachim von Ribbentrop and 18 other high-ranking Nazis.

They weren't yet known as war criminals — it was a charge that didn't exist until the Nuremberg trials began on Nov. 20, 1945, in what is now seen as the birthplace of a new era of international law.

The proceedings broke new ground in holding government leaders individually responsible for their aggression and slaughter of millions of innocents. In addition to establishing the offense of war crimes, it also produced the charges of crimes against peace, waging a war of aggression, and crimes against humanity, whose legacies live on in the International Criminal Court of today.

Nuremberg was the city where Adolf Hitler reviewed torchlight Nazi party rallies and promulgated the race laws of 1935 that paved the way for the Holocaust.

Filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl's famous propaganda movie "Triumph of the Will," with its sweeping aerial photography and other pioneering techniques, brought the 1934 Nuremberg Nazi Party Congress to the world, with footage of top officials speaking to massive crowds of followers at the Bavarian city's Luitpold Arena and the sweeping Zeppelin Field. The Congress Hall begun by the Nazis near the parade grounds was never finished, and today houses a documentation center about Nuremberg's history during the Nazi era.

The choice to use the city's Palace of Justice for the trials was less symbolic than pragmatic, as it was one of the few large buildings left undamaged by Allied bombing during the war.

The testimony of hundreds of witnesses was heard over 218 trial days. One of them was Rudolf Hoess, the Auschwitz death camp commandant, who "reacted to the order to slaughter human beings as he would have to an order to fell trees," wrote U.S. prosecutor Whitney R. Harris.

Chief U.S. prosecutor Robert Jackson and his colleagues also had the Nazis' own meticulous records to work from, quoting document after document in "laying bare the workings of the German conspiracy," Associated Press correspondent Daniel De Luce reported from the courtroom at the time.

On Oct. 1, 1946, Goering, Hitler's air force chief and right-hand man, was sentenced to death along with 11 others, including Martin Bormann, Hitler's deputy, who was tried in absentia. Bormann is now known to have died in Berlin in 1945 as he tried to flee the Soviets. Seven drew long prison sentences and three were acquitted.

Fifteen days later, the condemned men were hanged in the courthouse's adjacent prison. Goering committed suicide by swallowing a poison pill in his cell the night before.

One of the last surviving witnesses to the trial, Emilio DiPalma, died earlier this year after contracting the coronavirus in the care home where he lived in Massachusetts.

After fighting the Germans on the front lines during the war, DiPalma found himself at age 19 being tasked to serve as a guard in the courtroom, where he stood at the witness box with his arms clasped behind his back while Hitler's deputies were grilled about their atrocities.

"To this day, I can hardly believe that any human being could do such cruel things to another," DiPalma wrote in his memoirs.

The city of Nuremberg is marking the anniversary in Courtroom 600 with a ceremony Friday that will include German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier as the guest of honor. Due to coronavirus restrictions

it will be closed to the public, but will be broadcast live on the internet including an English translation.

UN climate chief: Pledges by big polluters boost Paris hopes

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — The U.N.'s climate chief says deadlines set by some of the world's top polluters to end greenhouse gas emissions, along with U.S. President-elect Joe Biden's pledge to take Washington back into the Paris accord, have boosted hopes of meeting the pact's ambitious goals.

The agreement signed in the French capital five years ago aims to keep global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) — ideally no more than 1.5 C (2.7 Fahrenheit) — compared to pre-industrial times by the end of the century. Experts say the world is far off track and that, with average temperatures already up by about 1 C (2 Fahrenheit), drastic action is needed in the next 30 years.

But the recent announcement by China, the world's top polluter, that it will phase out emissions by 2060, and pledges by Japan and South Korea to do the same a decade earlier, have drawn cautious optimism from climate campaigners. Their hopes were further boosted by Biden's election win earlier this month and his pledge to undo President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the Paris agreement.

"These announcements are really extraordinary," Patricia Espinosa, head of the U.N. climate office, told The Associated Press. "Just a few months ago, I don't think anybody would have really predicted that we would see these kinds of announcements at this time. And especially in the middle of the pandemic."

Espinosa said countries' willingness to commit to tougher emissions limits shows that curbing global warming remains a political priority — and that the target set in Paris is a possibility.

"Science has told us that we still have a chance to achieve it," she said. "Looking at these announcements, I think that we should be also having even more hope."

But Espinosa cautioned against complacency. "I don't want to sound like it's a done deal," she said. "We are still far from there."

The pandemic brought a sudden halt to the U.N.'s carousel of climate meetings, disrupting complex negotiations on a wide range of environmental issues and forcing the cancellation of the global body's annual climate summit for the first time in a quarter century.

"It has been challenging," Espinosa said by video from her agency's headquarters in Bonn, Germany, noting how carefully forged relationships were suddenly confined to virtual conversations. "It does not substitute the in-person contacts, but it works."

In some ways, however, the coronavirus crisis has proved to be an opportunity to change old habits, she added.

"Everybody is clear that we will not go back to the normal that we had before the pandemic," Espinosa said, recalling her globe-trotting days as Mexico's top diplomat from 2006 to 2012 that sometimes included two long-distance flights a day. "You cannot continue to travel like you used to travel."

The 62-year-old praised young people in particular for being willing to adapt, forgoing some of the planet-warming habits of older generations such as owning cars and indulging in meat-heavy diets that scientists say need to change.

"This deep transformation is very much going to be driven by the youth," Espinosa said.

Still, political leadership remains key to weaning economies off fossil fuels, especially in countries where large numbers of jobs are tied to extraction of oil, natural gas and coal, she said, adding that governments will also have to look beyond national interests when it comes to investing in low-carbon solutions.

That will mean denying COVID-19 economic recovery funds to polluting industries while putting up the \$100 billion each year world leaders pledged in Paris to help poor countries tackle climate change by 2020, she said.

"It is absolutely indispensable that we align those recovery packages to the goals of the Paris agreement," Espinosa said. "We should not go back to the past. We cannot continue to invest in a gray future."

Her comments were echoed Thursday by U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who called on the European Union to ramp up its emissions target for 2030, from 40% cuts to at least 55%.

"I urge you to continue to lead with concrete and ambitious near-term commitments," Guterres said in a speech to the European Council on Foreign Relations, a think tank.

The 27-nation bloc, which has also tentatively committed to reaching "net zero" emissions by 2050, is in talks to earmark parts of a vast stimulus package for 'green recovery' projects.

"The proposed 1.85 trillion euro (\$2.1 trillion) investment package is an opportunity to invest in measures and technologies needed to achieve climate neutrality by 2050," Guterres said.

Follow the AP's climate coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate>

African continent hits 2 million confirmed coronavirus cases

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Africa has surpassed 2 million confirmed coronavirus cases as the continent's top public health official warned Thursday that "we are inevitably edging toward a second wave" of infections.

The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the 54-nation continent has seen more than 48,000 deaths from COVID-19. Its infections and deaths make up less than 4% of the global total.

The African continent of 1.3 billion people is being warned against "prevention fatigue" as countries loosen pandemic restrictions to ease their economies' suffering and more people travel.

"We cannot relent. If we relent, then all the sacrifices we put into efforts over the past 10 months will be wiped away," Africa CDC director John Nkengasong told reporters. He expressed concern that "many countries are not enforcing public health measures, including masking, which is extremely important."

While the world takes hope from promising COVID-19 vaccines, African health officials also worry the continent will suffer as richer countries buy up supplies.

"Let's celebrate the good news" first, Nkengasong said. But he warned that the Pfizer vaccine requires storage at minus -70 C (-94 F), and such a requirement "already creates an imbalance in the fair distribution or access to those vaccines" as richer countries will be better equipped to move quickly.

A storage network at -70 C (-94 F) was put in place for West Africa's devastating Ebola outbreak a few years ago, but that was localized, Nkengasong said.

"If we were to deploy across the whole continent, it would be extremely challenging to scale it," he said.

The Moderna vaccine requires storage at -20 C (-4 F), which Nkengasong called promising. But the price of any COVID-19 vaccine is another factor in their fair distribution, he said. "So if a vaccine is \$40 it becomes almost exclusive to parts of the world" that can afford it.

But he offered an optimistic early look at attitudes across Africa toward any COVID-19 vaccine. Early data from a vaccine perception survey in 11 countries show 81% of respondents would accept a vaccine, he said. "So that's very, very encouraging news."

In a separate briefing, the World Health Organization's Africa chief Matshidiso Moeti acknowledged "very hot competition at the global level to reserve doses" but expressed her hope that "as time goes on, other countries are willing to, if you like, concede that you don't need to try to cover all the population at once."

Salim Abdool Karim, chairman of South Africa's COVID-19 advisory committee, said there was no sign that the vaccines now showing promise won't be just as effective in Africa as in their clinical trials elsewhere in the world.

Nearly 20 countries in Africa are now seeing a more than 20% increase in cases over the past four weeks, WHO said. This time the surge is driven not by South Africa, but by North African nations as temperatures fall there.

Several African countries have confirmed virus cases in the six figures. South Africa leads with more than 750,000, while Morocco has more than 300,000, Egypt more than 110,000 and Ethiopia more than 100,000.

Kenya is the latest concern as it now sees a fresh surge in cases. At least four doctors died on Saturday alone, leading a powerful health union in the country to threaten a nationwide strike starting next month.

"Absolutely no doubt you'll see COVID spread into more rural areas" of Kenya and other countries, Nkengasong said, as more people move around.

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The approaching holidays and inter-generational gatherings bring the risk of super-spreader events and new virus clusters in yet-untouched areas, WHO said.

The African continent has conducted 20 million coronavirus tests since the pandemic began, but shortages mean the true number of infections is unknown.

Moeti worried that in some of Africa's low-income countries, much of the limited testing capacity has been used on people who want to travel abroad instead of controlling the virus at home.

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

Adviser to Iran's leader: US attack risks 'full-fledged war'

By NASSER KARIMI and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — An adviser to Iran's supreme leader who is a possible 2021 presidential candidate is warning that any American attack on the Islamic Republic could set off a "full-fledged war" in the Middle East in the waning days of the Trump administration.

Speaking to The Associated Press, Hossein Dehghan struck a hard-line tone familiar to those in Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, a force he long served in before becoming a defense minister under President Hassan Rouhani.

A soldier has yet to serve as Iran's top civilian leader since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, in part over the initial suspicion that its conventional military forces remained loyal to the toppled shah. But hard-liners in recent years have openly suggested Iran move toward a military dictatorship given its economic problems and threats from abroad, particularly after President Donald Trump pulled America out of Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

"We don't welcome a crisis. We don't welcome war. We are not after starting a war," Dehghan said Wednesday. "But we are not after negotiations for the sake of negotiations either."

Dehghan, 63, described himself as a "nationalist" with "no conventional political tendency" during an interview in his wood-paneled office in downtown Tehran. He's one of many likely to register to run in the June 18 election as Rouhani is term-limited from running again. Others likely include a young technocrat with ties to Iranian intelligence and former hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Dehghan's military service came under presidencies representative of the groups that largely compose Iran's tightly controlled political arena — reformists who seek to slowly change Iran's theocracy from within, hard-liners who want to strengthen the theocracy and the relative moderates between. Those calling for radical change are barred from running for office by Iran's powerful constitutional watchdog known as the Guardian Council, which serves under Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

While discussing the world Iran finds itself in, Dehghan's points mirrored many of Khamenei's. The former head of the Guard's air force who achieved the rank of brigadier general said any negotiations with the West could not include Iran's ballistic missiles, which he described as a "deterrent" to Tehran's adversaries.

Propaganda involving Iran's missile program has surged in recent weeks. The front page of the English-language Tehran Times on Wednesday showed a map of Iran's missile ranges with red stars marking American bases across the region under the words "Back off!" printed in big, bold letters. A headline above warned Iran would respond to "any melancholy adventure by Trump."

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will not negotiate its defensive power ... with anybody under any circumstances," Dehghan said. "Missiles are a symbol of the massive potential that is in our experts, young people and industrial centers."

Dehghan, who has been sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury since November 2019, warned against any American military escalation in Trump's final weeks in office.

"A limited, tactical conflict can turn into a full-fledged war," he said. "Definitely, the United States, the region and the world cannot stand such a comprehensive crisis."

President-elect Joe Biden has said he's willing to return to the nuclear deal, which saw sanctions on Iran

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lifted in exchange for Tehran limiting its uranium enrichment, if Iran first complies with its limits. Since Trump's withdrawal, Iran has gone beyond all the deal's restrictions while still allowing United Nations nuclear inspectors to work in the country. Dehghan said those U.N. checks should continue so long as an inspector is not a "spy."

In the time since, an advanced centrifuge assembly plant at Iran's Natanz nuclear site exploded and caught fire in July. Dehghan said that reconstruction at Natanz was ongoing after satellite photos showed new construction at the site. He described the incident as "industrial sabotage."

"Those who were in charge of installing some devices possibly made some changes there that led to the explosion," Dehghan said, without elaborating.

A Dehghan presidency likely would be looked upon with suspicion in Washington and Paris. As a young commander in the Guard, Dehghan oversaw its operations in Lebanon and Syria between 1982 and 1984, according to an official biography given to Iran's parliament in 2013. Israel, Iran's archenemy in the Middle East, had just invaded Lebanon amid that country's civil war.

In 1983, a suicide bomber in a truck loaded with military-grade explosives attacked U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, killing 241 American troops and 58 French soldiers. While Iran long has denied being involved, a U.S. District Court judge found Tehran responsible in 2003. That ruling said Iran's ambassador to Syria at the time called "a member of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and instructed him to instigate the Marine barracks bombing."

Dehghan vehemently denied he was involved in the bombing, though he was the Guard's top commander there at the time.

"The U.S. tries to link anything happening in the world to someone in Iran," he said. "Do they really have evidence? Why do they link it to me?"

While stressing he wanted to avoid conflict, Dehghan warned that Israel's expanding presence in the Mideast could turn into a "strategic mistake." Israel just reached normalization deals with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

"It is opening an extensive front," he said. "Just imagine every Israeli in any military base can be a target for groups who are opposed to Israel."

Dehghan also said Iran continues to seek the expulsion of all American forces from the region as revenge for the U.S. drone strike in Baghdad that killed Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of its expeditionary Quds Force in January. That strike saw Iran launch a retaliatory ballistic missile attack on U.S. troops in Iraq that injured dozens and nearly sparked a war.

Iran's retaliatory strikes were a mere "initial slap," Dehghan said. And there would be no easy return to negotiations with the U.S. in part due to that, he added.

"We do not seek a situation in which (the other party) buys time to weaken our nation," he said.

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

US jobless claims rise to 742,000; millions to lose aid

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans seeking unemployment aid rose last week to 742,000, the first increase in five weeks and a sign that the resurgent viral outbreak is likely slowing the economy and forcing more companies to cut jobs.

The worsening pandemic and the arrival of cold weather could accelerate layoffs in the weeks ahead. Of the roughly 20 million Americans now receiving some form of unemployment benefits, about half will lose those benefits when two federal programs expire at the end of the year.

"The risk of further job and income loss is high now from business operations being curtailed," said Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics, a forecasting firm. "Also, expiration of federal benefits later this year will put renewed strain on household incomes. Overall, the labor market

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remains under stress.”

The Labor Department’s report Thursday showed that applications for jobless aid rose from 711,000 in the previous week. In March, when the pandemic first intensified, the number had soared to 6.9 million. Before then, applications typically hovered about 225,000 a week.

The surge in confirmed viral infections, and worry about its effect on the economy, are putting pressure on financial markets. The Dow Jones Industrial Average declined in early trading Thursday for a third day.

The economy’s modest recovery is increasingly at risk, with newly confirmed daily infections in the United States having exploded 80% over the past two weeks to the highest levels on record. More states and cities are issuing mask mandates, limiting the size of gatherings, restricting restaurant dining, closing gyms or reducing the hours and capacity of bars, stores and other businesses. At least 15 states have tightened curbs on businesses to try to slow infections.

Evidence is emerging that consumers are losing confidence in the economic outlook and pulling back on shopping, eating out and other activities. Spending on 30 million credit and debit cards tracked by JPMorgan Chase fell 7.4% earlier this month compared with a year ago. That marked a sharp drop from two weeks earlier. Consumer sentiment also declined in early November and is down nearly 21% from a year ago, according to a University of Michigan survey.

And retail sales rose just 0.3% in October, the smallest gain since stores reopened in April after a nationwide shutdown in March. The weak gain suggests that consumers began pulling back on spending even before many new restrictions on businesses were imposed.

The number of people who are continuing to receive traditional unemployment benefits fell to 6.4 million, the government said Thursday, from 6.8 million. Some of that decline reflects more hiring. But it also indicates that many jobless people have used up their state unemployment aid — which typically expires after six months — and have transitioned to a federal extended benefits program that lasts 13 more weeks.

Yet that extended benefit program is one of two federal supports that are set to expire at year’s end, eliminating benefits for 9.1 million people, according to a report Wednesday from The Century Foundation. Congress has so far failed to agree on any new stimulus package for jobless individuals and struggling businesses. The cutoff of aid will sharply reduce income for the unemployed, force a further reduction in their spending and perhaps weaken the economy.

One of those programs is Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, which made self-employed and contract workers eligible for unemployment aid for the first time. PUA was established by a multi-trillion-dollar aid package that Congress enacted in the spring.

The second measure in the stimulus package provided the additional 13 weeks of benefits for unemployed people who have used up their state benefits.

When those two programs expire on Dec. 26, the Century Foundation estimates that 12 million people will lose their benefits. About 2.9 million will probably transition to a state extended benefit program that can last from six to 20 weeks, the report said. The rest will lose benefits that average about \$320 a week nationally.

The expiration of benefits will make it harder for the unemployed to make rent payments, afford food or keep up with utility bills. Most economists agree that because unemployed people tend to quickly spend their benefits, such aid is effective in boosting the economy.

Cutting off benefits with so many people still receiving them would be unusually early compared with previous recessions. In the Great Recession of 2008-2009, the government extended unemployment benefits to 99 weeks, and the additional aid lasted through 2013. When that program ended, about 1.3 million people lost benefits -- a fraction of the number who would lose their aid at the end of this year.

“We’re still down 10 million jobs since the pandemic began,” said Elizabeth Pancotti, co-author of the Century Foundation report and a policy advisor at Employ America, a left-leaning think tank. “We’re heading into the winter, we’re seeing additional business closures, consumer demand is already falling....Cutting off benefits seems inhumane to me.”

In March and April, when the pandemic erupted in the United States, tens of millions of people applied for jobless aid. Though many of them have been rehired or have landed new jobs, those who haven’t

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found work began exhausting their six months of state aid as early as September.

Most of them would then shift to the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation program, which provides 13 additional weeks. Yet the Century Foundation estimates that 3.5 million people will have used up all of those 13 weeks before the year ends. An additional 950,000 people will have run out of the 39 weeks provided by the PUA program by then, too.

WHO warns of deadly second wave of virus across Middle East

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — As winter nears and coronavirus cases surge across the Middle East, the regional director for the World Health Organization said Thursday that the only way to avoid mass deaths is for countries to quickly tighten restrictions and enforce preventative measures.

In a press briefing from Cairo, Ahmed al-Mandhari, director of WHO's eastern Mediterranean region, which comprises most of the Middle East, expressed concern that countries in the area were lowering their guard after tough lockdowns imposed earlier this year.

The fundamentals of pandemic response, from social-distancing to mask wearing, "are still not being fully practiced in our region," he said, adding that the result is apparent throughout the region's crowded hospitals.

Noting that the virus had sickened over 3.6 million people and killed more than 76,000 in the region over the past nine months, al-Mandhari warned "the lives of as many people — if not more — are at stake," urging action to "prevent this tragic premonition from becoming a reality."

More than 60% of all new infections in the past week were reported from Iran, Jordan and Morocco, he said. Cases are also up in Pakistan and Lebanon, which went under lockdown earlier this week. Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon have reported the biggest single-day death spikes from the region.

Worst off in the region has been Iran, where infections have soared in recent months, filling up hospitals and driving up the death toll. Iran shattered its single-day death toll six times in the last two weeks, bringing the total count of fatalities past 43,400 — the highest in the Middle East.

Surging deaths have pushed the Iranian government, long reluctant to impose a lockdown for fear of cratering its sanctions-hit economy, to tighten restrictions in the capital of Tehran and other major cities. But with little enforcement, the outbreak shows no sign of abating.

From Pakistan, Faisal Sultan, special assistant to the prime minister for national health services, told reporters the winter surge had arrived. Although Pakistan managed to control the outbreak with targeted restrictions earlier this year, the forecast turned more alarming as the country unlocked, he said.

"The second wave is just as risky if not more than the first," Sultan said, adding that winter in Pakistan brings an increase in social interaction, with schools, events and wedding parties in full swing. "There is a sense of complacency and fatigue in compliance."

Tunisia is another country that thought its worst virus days were in the past, only to see cases soar in recent weeks. It loosened restrictions in a bid "to cautiously coexist" with the virus, said Faycal Ben Salah, director general of health, after officials decided the lockdown was killing the economy and creating "catastrophic social consequences."

While al-Mandhari cautiously welcomed news of viable vaccine candidates, he said the pandemic was far from over.

"We cannot — and should not — wait until a safe and effective vaccine becomes readily available for all," he said. "We simply do not know when this will be."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Nov. 20, the 325th day of 2020. There are 41 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 20, 2000, lawyers for Al Gore and George W. Bush battled before the Florida Supreme Court

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over whether the presidential election recount should be allowed to continue.

On this date:

In 1620, Peregrine White was born aboard the Mayflower in Massachusetts Bay; he was the first child born of English parents in present-day New England.

In 1945, 22 former Nazi officials went on trial before an international war crimes tribunal in Nuremberg, Germany. (Almost a year later, the International Military Tribunal sentenced 12 of the defendants to death; seven received prison sentences ranging from 10 years to life; three were acquitted.)

In 1947, Britain's future queen, Princess Elizabeth, married Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, at Westminster Abbey.

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy held a news conference in which he announced the end of the naval quarantine of Cuba imposed during the missile crisis, and the signing of an executive order prohibiting discrimination in federal housing facilities.

In 1967, the U.S. Census Bureau's Population Clock at the Commerce Department ticked past 200 million.

In 1969, the Nixon administration announced a halt to residential use of the pesticide DDT as part of a total phaseout. A group of American Indian activists began a 19-month occupation of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay.

In 1975, after nearly four decades of absolute rule, Spain's Generalissimo Francisco Franco died, two weeks before his 83rd birthday.

In 1984, pop star Michael Jackson was inducted into the Hollywood Walk of Fame with the unveiling of his star in front of a horde of screaming fans.

In 1985, the first version of Microsoft's Windows operating system, Windows 1.0, was officially released.

In 2003, Michael Jackson was booked on suspicion of child molestation in Santa Barbara, Calif. (Jackson was later acquitted at trial.) Record producer Phil Spector was charged with murder in the shooting death of an actor, Lana Clarkson, at his home in Alhambra (al-HAM'-bruh), California. (Spector's first trial ended with a hung jury in 2007; he was convicted of second-degree murder in 2009 and sentenced to 19 years to life in prison.)

In 2009, holding back tears, Oprah Winfrey told her studio audience that she would end her talk show in 2011 after a quarter-century on the air.

In 2012, former boxing champion Hector "Macho" Camacho was shot while sitting in a car in his hometown of Bayamon, Puerto Rico. (Camacho died four days later after doctors removed him from life support.)

Ten years ago: In comments released by the Vatican, Pope Benedict XVI opened the door on the previously taboo subject of condoms as a way to fight HIV, saying male prostitutes who used condoms might be beginning to assume moral responsibility. Notre Dame returned to the Bronx for the first time in 41 years and sent the subway alumni home happy as the Irish beat Army 27-3 in the first football game at the new Yankee Stadium. Former Milwaukee police officer and onetime Playboy Club bunny Laurie "Bambi" Bembenek, who escaped from prison after she was convicted of murder, died at a hospice in Portland, Oregon, at age 52.

Five years ago: Islamic extremists shot up a luxury hotel in Mali's capital frequented by diplomats and businessman, killing 20 people in an attack blamed on Islamic extremists. A week after the deadliest attacks on France in decades, shell-shocked Parisians honored the 130 victims with candles and songs. Jonathan Pollard, a former U.S. Navy intelligence analyst, was released from prison after 30 years behind bars for spying for Israel. Actor Keith Michell, remembered for his portrayals of England's King Henry VIII, died in London at age 88.

One year ago: Gordon Sondland, the U.S. ambassador to the European Union, told House impeachment investigators that President Donald Trump and his lawyer Rudy Giuliani explicitly sought a "quid pro quo" with Ukraine, leveraging an Oval Office visit for political investigations of Democrats; he said it was his understanding that the president was holding up nearly \$400 million in military aid. Former Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh was charged with fraud and tax evasion involving sales of her self-published children's books to groups that did business with the government. (Pugh pleaded guilty to federal conspiracy and

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tax evasion charges and was sentenced to three years in prison.) Singer-rapper Lizzo scored eight Grammy nominations; other new artists, including Billie Eilish and Lil Nas X, also dominated the list of nominees. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made history by becoming Japan's longest-serving political leader; he marked his 2,887th day in office.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Estelle Parsons is 93. Comedian Dick Smothers is 82. President-elect Joe Biden is 78. Singer Norman Greenbaum is 78. Actor Veronica Hamel is 77. Broadcast journalist Judy Woodruff is 74. Actor Samuel E. Wright is 74. Singer Joe Walsh is 73. Actor Richard Masur is 72. Opera singer Barbara Hendricks is 72. Former national security adviser John Bolton is 72. Actor Bo Derek is 64. Former NFL player Mark Gastineau is 64. Reggae musician Jimmy Brown (UB40) is 63. Actor Sean Young is 61. Pianist Jim Brickman is 59. Actor Ming-Na is 57. Actor Ned Vaughn is 56. Rapper Mike D (The Beastie Boys) is 55. Rapper Sen Dog (Cypress Hill) is 55. Actor Callie Thorne is 51. Actor Sabrina Lloyd is 50. Actor Joel McHale is 49. Actor Marisa Ryan is 46. Country singer Dierks (duhkrz) Bentley is 45. Actor Joshua Gomez is 45. Actor Laura Harris is 44. Olympic gold medal gymnast Dominique Dawes is 44. Country singer Josh Turner is 43. Actor Nadine Velazquez (veh-LAHZ'-kehz) is 42. Actor Jacob Pitts is 41. Actor Andrea Riseborough is 39. Actor Jeremy Jordan is 36. Actor Dan Byrd is 35. Actor Ashley Fink is 34. Rock musician Jared Followill (Kings of Leon) is 34. Actor Jaina Lee Ortiz is 34. Actor Cody Linley is 31. Pop musician Michael Clifford (5 Seconds to Summer) is 25.