

Groton Daily Independent

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Church Services

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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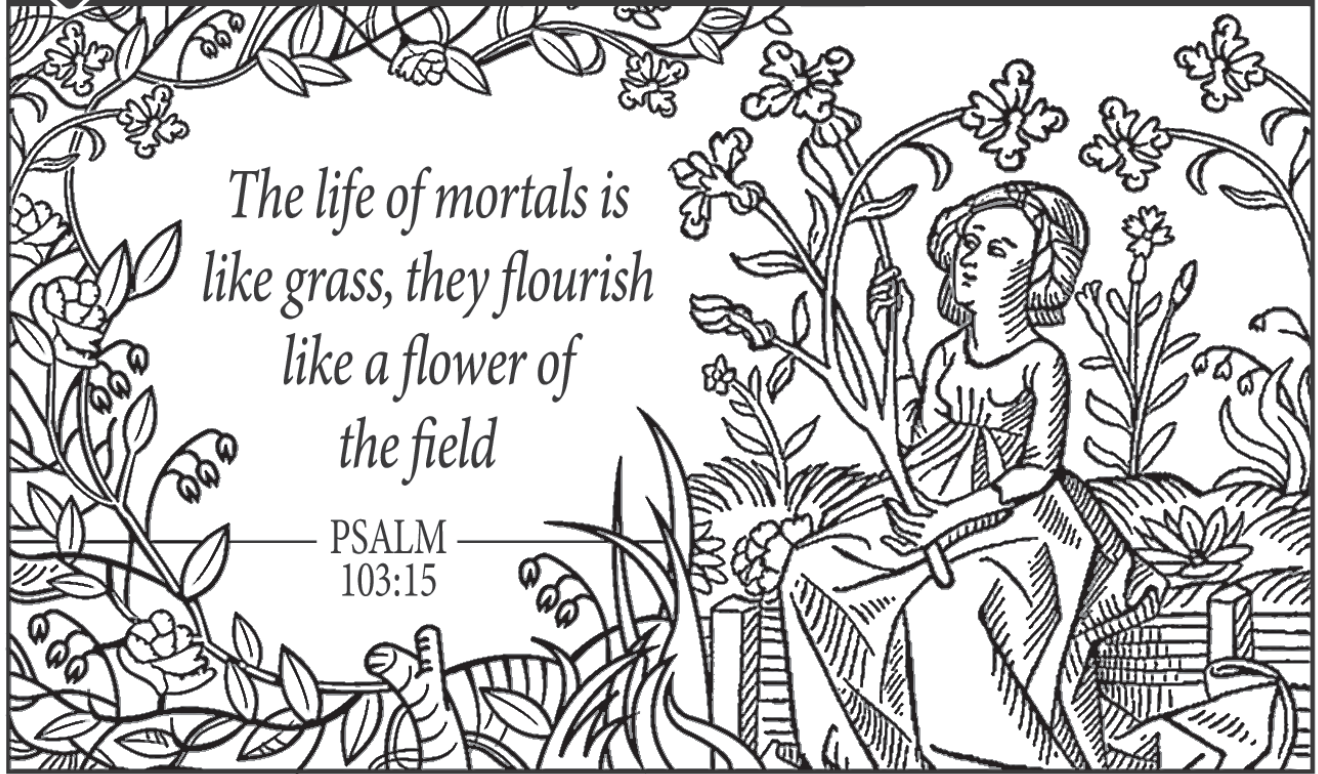
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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*The life of mortals is
like grass, they flourish
like a flower of
the field*

PSALM
103:15



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BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Obadiah in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. From Matthew 9, after Jesus healed a paralyzed man, what did the man pick up and carry home? *Brother, Bed, Mother, Cart*

3. What is the largest number phrase specifically mentioned (described) in the Bible? *Scores upon scores, One hundred thousand, Thousand thousand, Thousands of millions*

4. Which book begins, "And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai"? *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*

5. From Psalms 5:9, on referring to enemies, their throat is an open ...? *Wound, Door, Sepulchre, Cave*

6. In Exodus 7 what river was turned into blood? *Red, Galilee, Marah, Nile*

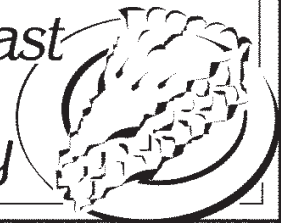
ANSWERS: 1) Old; 2) Bed; 3) Thousands of millions (Genesis 24:60); 4) Numbers; 5) Sepulchre; 6) Nile

Hardcore trivia fan? Visit Wilson Casey's subscriber site at www.patreon.com/triviaguy.

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Comfort foods

Made fast
and
healthy



by Healthy Exchanges

Leftover Turkey and Pear Salad

After all the dishes are washed and the leftovers are put away, you're probably wondering how you'll use up the leftover turkey. Well, wonder no more! Here's a wonderful "winter" main-dish salad just waiting for you to stir up for lunch.

- 3 cups shredded romaine lettuce
- 1½ cups diced cooked turkey breast
- ¼ cup chopped walnuts
- 1 cup unpeeled and diced Bartlett pears
- ⅓ cup fat-free blue cheese salad dressing
- 3 tablespoons fat-free mayonnaise

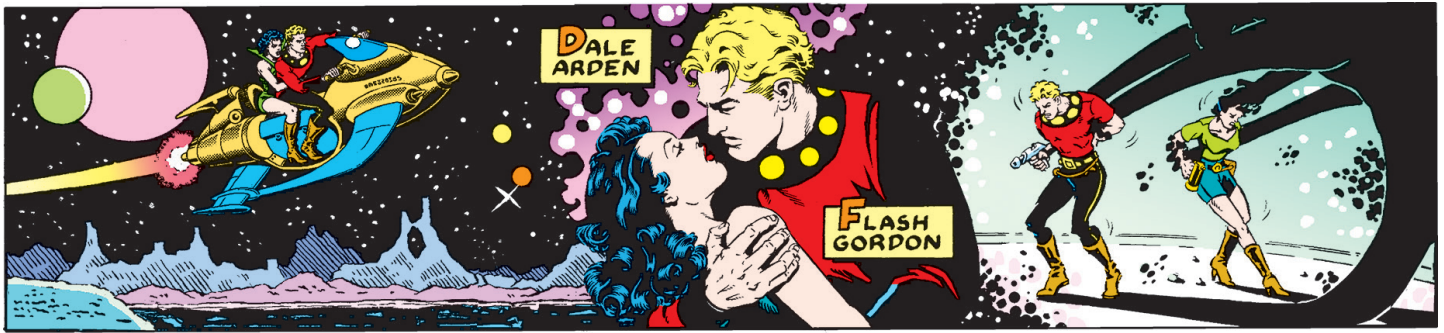
In a large bowl, combine romaine lettuce, turkey, walnuts and pears. In a small bowl, combine blue cheese dressing and mayonnaise. Drizzle dressing mixture evenly over salad mixture. Toss gently to combine. Serve at once. Makes 4 (1 full cup) servings.

• Each serving equals: 231 calories, 7g fat, 20g protein, 22g carb., 267mg sodium, 3g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 2 Meat, 1 Fat, ½ Vegetable, ½ Fruit.

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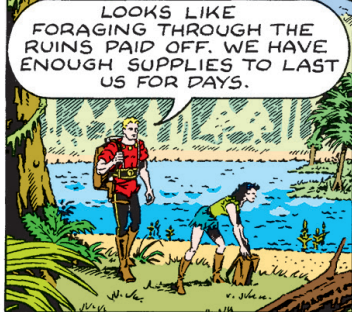
FLASH GORDON

By JIM KEEFE

11-15

WITH MING'S FORTRESS DESTROYED, FLASH AND DALE FIND THEMSELVES STRANDED IN AN UNCHARTED REGION ON THE PLANET MONGO.

LOOKS LIKE FORAGING THROUGH THE RUINS PAID OFF. WE HAVE ENOUGH SUPPLIES TO LAST US FOR DAYS.



I HAVE GOT TO GET CLEANED UP. I'M GOING TO TAKE A DIP AND THEN GET CHANGED.

TRY TO MAKE IT QUICK. I'LL STAND WATCH.

BY ALL MEANS. STAND... WATCH.

REUNITED AFTER MONTHS OF SEPARATION, FLASH AND DALE MOMENTARILY BECOME LOST IN ONE ANOTHER...

...DISTRACTING THEM FROM THE ALL TOO REAL DANGERS AROUND THEM!

TO BE CONT'D ~

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

BE PATIENT WHEN YOU RETURN TO GOLF AFTER A LAYOFF. SPEND SOME TIME ON THE PRACTICE TEE AND PUTTING GREEN BEFORE RUSHING TO THE COURSE.

ONCE YOU'RE THERE, MAKE YOUR SWING GOALS JUST MEETING THE BALL SOLIDLY AND KEEPING IT ON THE SHORT GRASS. WORKING MORE ON TEMPO THAN MECHANICS WILL HELP YOU DO THAT.

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Can They Give Gift to Their Doctor?

DEAR DR. ROACH: We are very fond of our family doctor. I was in to see him the other day, and it came up in conversation that he was going to be getting married. We would like to acknowledge this event in his life with either a lovely card or a small gift. I know the old-school way of thinking is to never do things that are so personal when it comes to your physician. Do you think that still holds true today? — N.W.

ANSWER: Physicians are human beings, and a thoughtful card is always appreciated. Gifts can sometimes be OK, but the American Medical Association has some guidelines for physicians on accepting gifts. I agree with them and you might find them helpful:

— Be sensitive to the size of the gift: Inappropriately large gifts should not be accepted.

— Do not let a gift influence patient care.

— Decline a gift that would present an emotional or financial hardship to the patient's family.

— Consider suggesting a charitable contribution in lieu of a gift.

I would add that sometimes rejecting a gift can be hurtful, and if accepting a gift conforms to the guidelines, I generally accept it with thanks.

DEAR DR. ROACH: Hi. I'm a very healthy, 68-year-old male. My only issue is almost nonexistent testosterone. What type of doctor

should I see? It seems to be a problem for many senior men. — A.

ANSWER: Low testosterone is a concern for many men as they get older. In some cases, the concern is justified. Some men may have a problem making testosterone due to a condition in the brain (the hypothalamus and pituitary gland both need to be working properly for testosterone production) or in the testes, where testosterone is actually made. In these cases, testosterone replacement therapy is clearly indicated.

What is still controversial is whether to treat healthy older men who have a low testosterone level and no symptoms. It's not clear that treatment of low testosterone will prevent problems in the future. It's possible that's the case, but I am very cautious about prescribing a drug with potential harms for someone without symptoms, when it has not been proven to be of benefit.

However, men with symptoms of low testosterone, such as low sex drive, depressed mood and loss of body hair, and who have clearly low testosterone levels may benefit from treatment, and a trial of testosterone treatment is appropriate. Men should learn about potential risk (prostate cancer remains a concern despite reassuring early studies) and have regular laboratory evaluation.

Low energy by itself is not clearly a symptom of low testosterone and may not improve with testosterone treatment.

DR. ROACH WRITES: A recent column on easy bruising in older adults prompted several readers to recommend specialized makeup products to cover the discolored areas. That is not something I had considered, and I appreciate the recommendation. Another reader recommended dry skin brushing, but I could not find good evidence that this helps with skin discoloration.

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

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1. Name the group that released an album titled "Band on the Run."

2. Which song mentions not playing B-17 on the jukebox, as it would bring back memories?

3. Who released "Midnight Hour" in 1965?

4. Which duo wrote and released "One Toke Over the Line"?

5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "I've got my suitcase in my hand, Now, ain't that a shame, I'm leavin' here today, Yes, I'm goin' back home to stay."

Answers

1. Paul McCartney and Wings, in 1973. It was McCartney's fifth album since leaving the Beatles. The group, recording in Nigeria, were robbed at knifepoint of demo tapes and lyrics.

2. "Please Mr. Please," by Olivia Newton-John in 1975.

3. Wilson Pickett. It was later covered by The Young Rascals, country artist Razy Bailey and bands in Australia, England and Canada.

4. Brewer & Shipley, in 1970. Lawrence Welk considered the song a "spiritual" and had it performed on his show by two of his singers.

5. "Walking to New Orleans," by Fats Domino in 1960. After the song was recorded, producer Dave Bartholomew added a strings section by the New Orleans Symphony, unusual for pop music of the era. The song went to No. 2 on the R&B charts.

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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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GRIN and BEAR IT

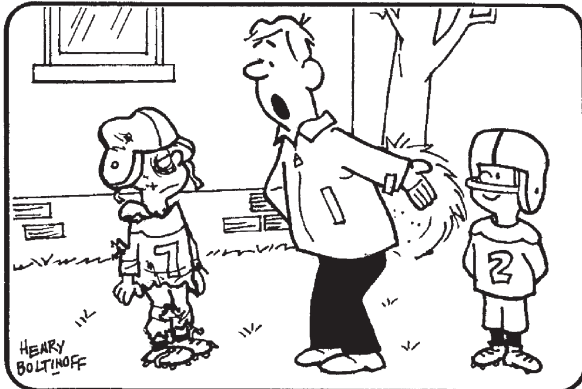
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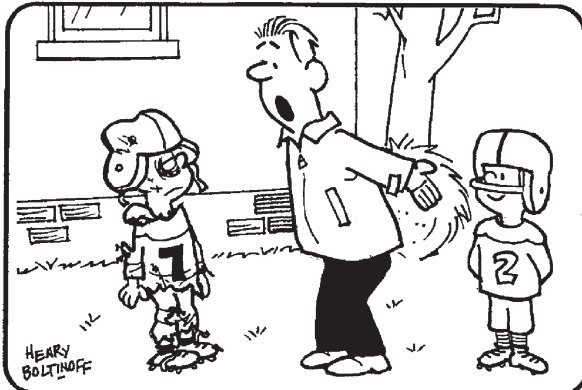
"Bring us a box of your finest wine."

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Man's hair is different. 2. No. 7 on jersey is now black. 3. Window is shorter. 4. Man's right arm is hidden. 5. Socks are striped. 6. More bricks on house.

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- Five ways to keep yourself from turning up the thermostat this winter: Put on a sweater; have a nice bowl of soup or stew; wear slippers or thick nonskid socks, grab a comfy blanket; snuggle up with someone special.

- “If you bathe in a tub, try rubbing on bath oil before getting in the tub. You will get greater coverage and more moisturizing power from your bath oil. And at this time of year, who doesn’t need that?” — *M.E. in Washington*

- “Here’s a great way to use Christmas cards from last year: Trace a child’s hand on the back of the pictures. Cut them out and use them to make a wreath for the front door. Or, make small jigsaw puzzles for young children to play with. Any good, detailed artwork on a card front will do. Make squiggly lines in the fashion of a jigsaw puzzle, then cut out. It helps if the cardstock is good and thick.” — *M.M. in Utah*

- “To keep light bulbs from sticking in the socket, apply petroleum jelly to the base of the bulb before screwing it into the fixture.” — *B.D. in Virginia*

- Here’s an oldie but a goodie: Add a few drops of water to votive cups before adding a candle. The wax will float on the water, and when the candle burns down, it won’t get stuck in the votive glass.

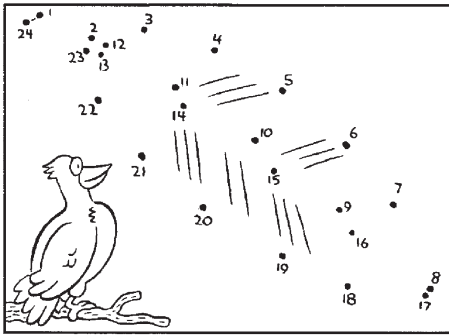
- “Burned rice? No problem. While it’s still hot, carefully remove to a new pot any rice not browned or blackened. Then top it with a single slice of white bread. Allow it to sit for several minutes under a tightly fitted lid. The burned smell is absorbed by the bread, and the rice is fit to eat.” — *M.U. in Michigan*

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

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"WHAT ALWAYS REMAINS DOWN, even when it flies up in the air?" Connect the dots and find out.

Answer: A feather (look up the word "down").

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

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

Illustrated by David Coulson

TODAY'S TOP SEVEN CD'S... WORDS, THAT IS!

Using the definitions and anagrams below, you must find the seven eight-letter words that fit into the framework pictured on the left. For each definition, the letters in the two anagram words must be unscrambled and used to form the word asked for.

AN ODD CHALLENGE! Problem: You must place 6 coins into 3 cups so that each cup contains an odd number of coins. Solution: The cup containing 1 coin is placed inside the cup with 2 coins. Each cup will now contain an odd number of coins.



KNOW YOUR AREA CODE! Pictured below are two puzzle grids for you to fill in. Hints are given for each word. The words in Grid B contain the same letters as the words in Grid A.

1. A unit of area.
2. The big dance.
3. A college student.
4. A flat-topped hill.

A			
	R		
		E	
			A

GRID A

C			
	O		
		D	
			E

GRID B

1. To be concerned.
2. To frolic boisterously.
3. Secret writing.
4. Conforming in every detail.

Answers: 1. Acre-care. 2. Prom-romp. 3. Coed-code. 4. Mesa-same.

DEFINITIONS:

1. What Michelangelo did.
2. Expression of approval.
3. Kept apart from.
4. Short, amusing story.
5. Used to secure doors.
6. Enough to meet needs.
7. A household servant.

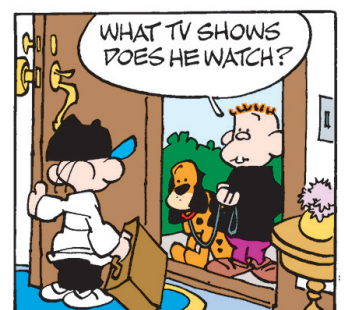
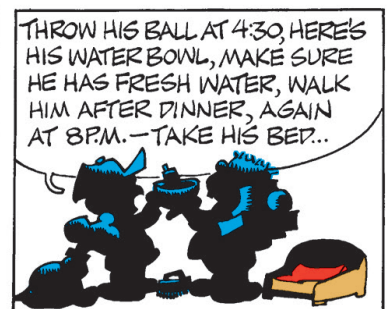
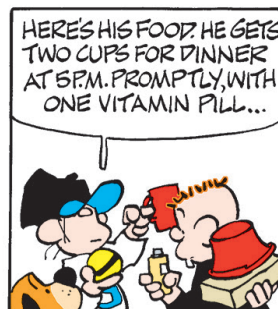
ANAGRAM:

- lice + shed
aced + cola
sled + cued
coda + teen
sold + pack
quay + aced
cost + dime

Answers: 1. Chiseled. 2. Accolade. 3. Secluded. 4. Anecdote. 5. Padlocks. 6. Adequacy. 7. Domestic.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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BUD BLAKE

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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Secondhand
- 5 Sphere
- 8 Halt
- 12 DVR alternative
- 13 Greek X
- 14 Authentic
- 15 Sheltered, at sea
- 16 Hare's defeater
- 18 Japan's main island
- 20 Comic Phyllis
- 21 California wine valley
- 23 Zero
- 24 Enchilada holder
- 28 Plate
- 31 — jiffy

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16			17				
18				19			20					
			21			22		23				
24	25	26					27		28		29	30
31				32				33		34		
35			36		37				38			
		39		40		41						
42	43				44		45			46	47	48
49						50			51			
52					53				54			
55					56				57			

- 32 Fix a stubborn shoe-lace
- 34 Rowing need
- 35 Sulk
- 37 Harasses
- 39 Male cat
- 41 Tater
- 42 Wall plaster
- 45 Warren Commission subject
- 49 Bullring VIP
- 51 Lotion additive
- 52 Yemeni city
- 53 Scrap
- 54 Anger

- 55 Got up power
- 56 They're between dos and mis
- 57 Let fall
- 10 English river
- 11 Equal
- 17 Can metal
- 19 Locks
- 22 Chorus members
- 33 Ostriches' kin
- 36 Dawn-of-mammals epoch
- 38 Name of many English kings

DOWN

- 1 Hexagonal state
- 2 Missile house
- 3 Divisible by two
- 4 Fails to
- 5 One of eight
- 6 Pi neighbor
- 7 Avian creature
- 8 Unemotional
- 9 10 to the 12th
- 24 Quarterback Tebow
- 25 Yoko of music
- 26 States of ecstasy
- 27 LaGuardia and Logan, e.g.
- 29 Perched
- 30 Day fractions (Abbr.)
- 40 Longtime record label
- 42 Celebrity
- 43 Big fuss
- 44 Smell
- 46 Winged
- 47 Corporate symbol
- 48 Profound
- 50 Raw rock

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 21 mins.

U	S	E	D		O	R	B		S	T	O	P
T	I	V	O		C	H	I		T	R	U	E
A	L	E	E		T	O	R	T	O	I	S	E
H	O	N	S	H	U		D	I	L	L	E	R
			N	A	P	A		N	I	L		
T	O	R	T	I	L	L	A		D	I	S	H
I	N	A		R	E	T	I	E		O	A	R
M	O	P	E		T	O	R	M	E	N	T	S
			T	O	M		S	P	U	D		
S	T	U	C	C	O		O	S	W	A	L	D
T	O	R	E	A	D	O	R		A	L	O	E
A	D	E	N		O	R	T		R	A	G	E
R	O	S	E		R	E	S		D	R	O	P

LAFF - A - DAY



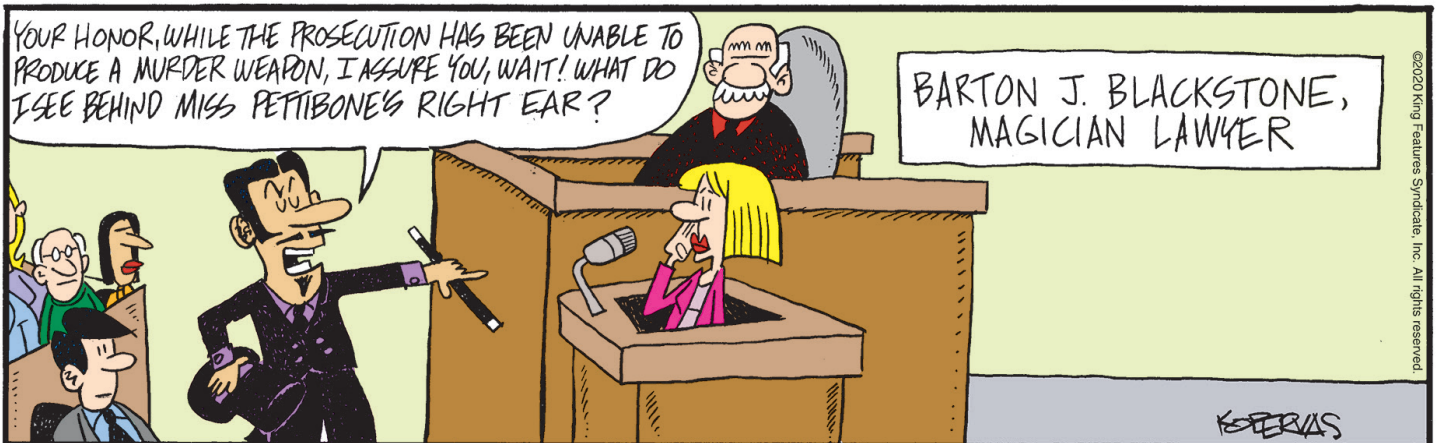
"He's an Eskimo dog."

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HOIFIELD

Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas

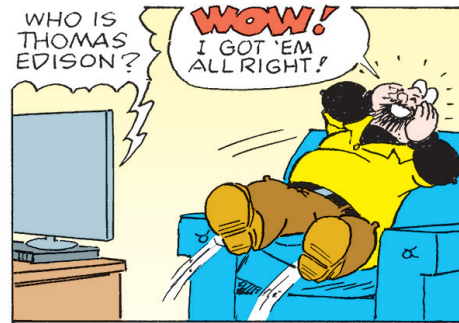
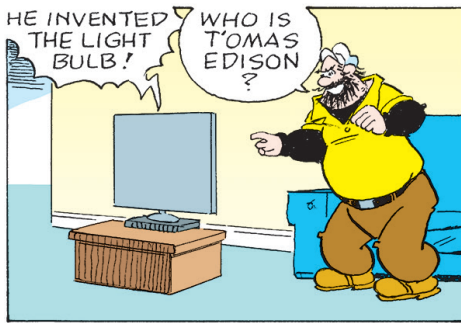
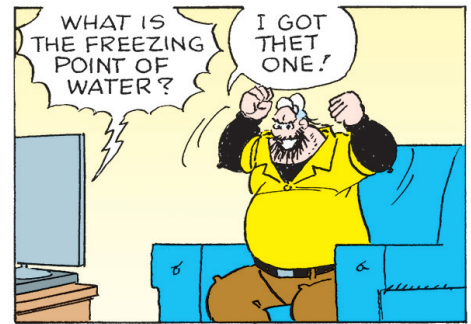
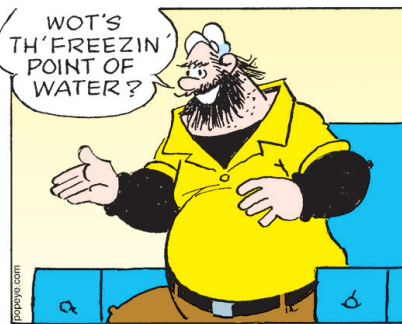
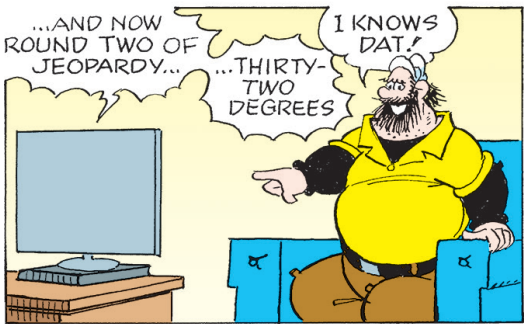
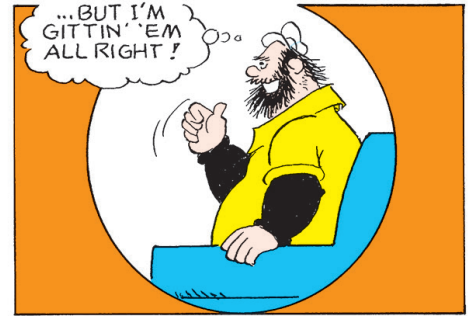
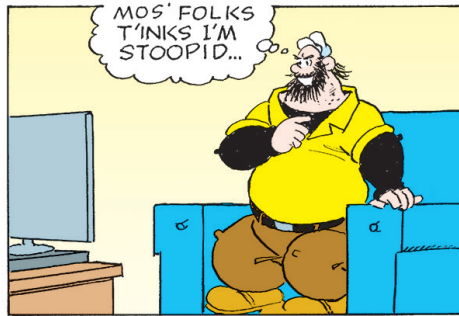
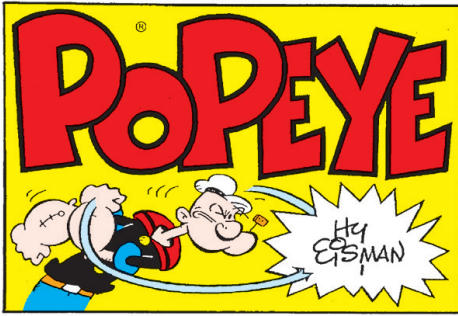


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KOPERVAS

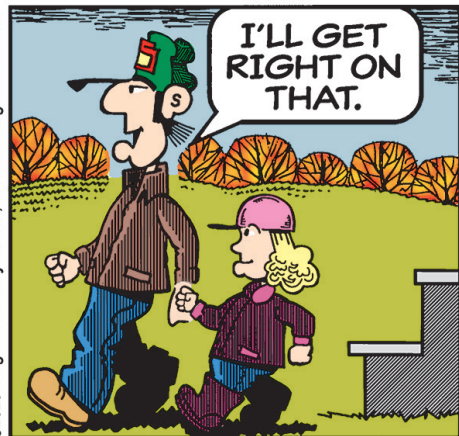
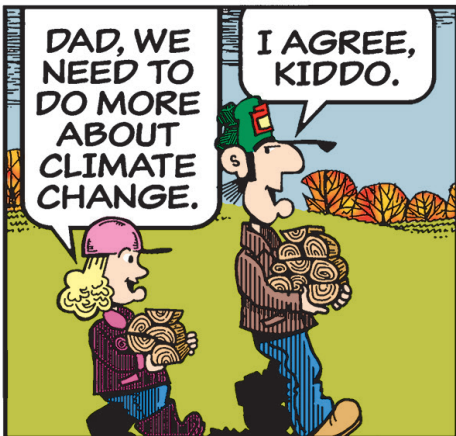
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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HAL FOSTER'S
Prince Valiant
BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ

Our Story:
ARTHUR, UNEXPECTEDLY PULLED FROM RETIREMENT, LETS VAL AND ALETA KNOW HOW DISAPPOINTING HAS BEEN THEIR STEWARDSHIP OF CAMELOT.

"YOU BOTH ABANDONED THE REGENCY, ENDANGERING MANY OTHERS FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR MARITAL RELATIONS. FEH!"

"GAWAIN IS AN OVERGROWN BOY - I CAN ACCEPT HIS FOOLISHNESS, BUT YOU TWO? ALETA, I HAD ASSUMED YOUR SENSE OF DUTY WOULD SNUFF VALIANT'S WANDERLUST - NOT THE REVERSE!"

"YOU DID DO ONE THING RIGHT - YOU MADE ARN REGENT IN YOUR STEAD. WOULD THAT I HAD SEEN THE POTENTIAL IN THE FATHER OF CAMELOT'S FUTURE QUEEN!"

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"NOW OUT WITH YOU REPROBATES! REMAIN CLOSE, HOWEVER, AS I SHALL DECIDE YOUR FATES QUICKLY!" ALETA, BORN TO ROYAL OBLIGATION...

... IS DEVASTATED. VAL IS MERELY RELIEVED: "THAT WASN'T TOO BAD, WAS IT? ARE YOU HUNGRY?"

NEXT:
Judgment day

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering

I'M A SELF MADE MAN.

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THAT WOULD EXPLAIN WHY YOU KEEP FALLING APART.

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Using the Internet to Enrich Our Lives

With most of us spending most of our days at home, it's time for us to take advantage of the internet. Here are some resources that can enrich our lives.

Inquire at the local senior center about any exercise classes online. Some classes will be live on Zoom and others will be videos that the instructors record and post on the center's website. If they're not hosting any classes, search online for "seniors exercise at home" and look for some that are produced by other senior centers.

Virtual art classes can open up new areas of interest and reveal talents you didn't know you had. Better yet, if you're a beginner or are exploring a new art medium, look for videos that you can review over and over. Look online for free art classes online for seniors.

Exercise and art aren't the only free classes you'll find online. Yoga and tai

chi, sewing, baking and cake decorating, creative writing, a new language — if it can be done online, there's a class for it somewhere.

And don't forget Class Central (www.classcentral.com). Check the website for a list of MOOCS (massive open online courses). There 15,000 different free and low-cost classes in its searchable database from colleges and universities around the world. Imagine taking a philosophy course from the University of Edinburgh or Introduction to Classical Music via Yale University. (I put art history into its search box and got back 165 results.) Read the details for any class you're considering. It will tell you if the class is self-paced, whether it's free to audit, the class level and how much time per week you can expect to spend on the work, as well as reviews from other students.

If you're unsure of your internet skills, search for "internet basics for seniors" on Google.

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1. What NFL linebacker, then with the New York Giants, suffered a serious hand injury in a 2015 fireworks accident?

2. The centuries-old game of battledore and shuttlecock evolved into what modern Olympic sport?

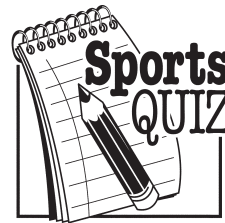
3. Harry Caray had a one-season stint in 1970 as a broadcaster for what Major League Baseball team?

4. Name the Japanese soccer great who was the leading scorer and MVP of the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup tournament?

5. At the 2000 Sydney Summer Olympics, Tara Nott became the first American female to win a gold medal in what sport?

6. What Major League Baseball manager retired in 2010 with a career-record 161 ejections (including three postseason ejections)?

7. What previously unbeaten boxer



by Ryan A. Berenz

did Felix Trinidad defeat in a majority decision to unify the WBC and IBF welterweight championship in 1999?

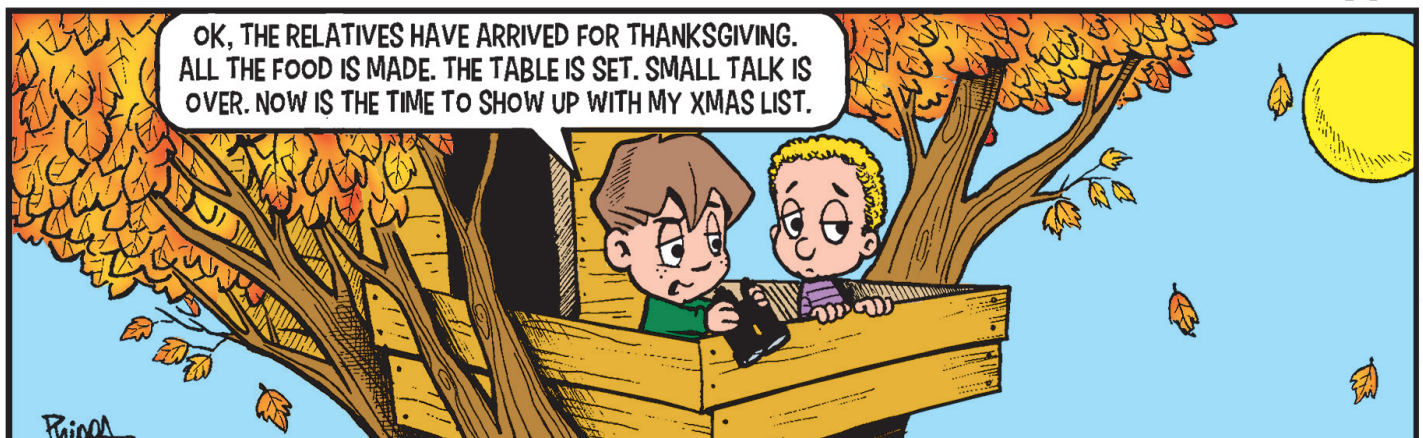
Answers

1. Jason Pierre-Paul.
2. Badminton.
3. The Oakland Athletics.
4. Homare Sawa.
5. Weightlifting.
6. Bobby Cox.
7. Oscar De La Hoya.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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Pets Must Adapt to Winter Weather

Q. My springy little mutt, “Sandy,” just loves winter! Whenever it snows, she runs right outside to play. We had an early snowstorm just before Halloween, and I let her out to play. When she came back in after about an hour, she was whimpering and limping. I didn’t see any cuts on her paws, but she was shivering quite a bit. I wrapped her in a towel and held her on my lap for a while. I guessing she got cold and scared, but that has never happened to her before. She usually stays outside for at least an hour and I have to call her back in. — *Daryl J., Leominster, Massachusetts*

A. You did the right thing by checking Sandy as she came inside and warming her up. If she doesn’t display any unusual behavior going forward, then your first guess is

correct, that she got mild hypothermia from being out in the snow.

Pets need to acclimate to changing temperatures in the fall and winter. A cold snap in the fall can feel more bitter than colder but steady winter temperatures.

Other factors can also put a dog at risk for hypothermia. Make sure that Sandy always has water in her bowl, and that water is available during her outside romps, as hydration helps to maintain body temperature. Excessively wet or snowy conditions can speed heat loss. Providing a sheltered spot outdoors will give Sandy a place to take breaks and dry out.

A cold injury can take longer to recover from than we realize. For now, limit Sandy’s time outside in the cold to about 30 minutes, and check on her every 10 minutes. If she is shivering or whimpering, bring her inside. And if you have continuing concerns, don’t hesitate to contact the veterinarian.

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

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- Tigers, jaguars and leopards love the smell of Calvin Klein's "Obsession For Men"! Photographers who used the fragrance to lure the big cats to their cameras in the wild said the cats "would start drooling, their eyes would half-close, almost like they were going into a trance."

- The human body gives off enough heat in 30 minutes to bring a gallon of water to a boil.

- Between 1970 and 1973, four Israeli fighter pilots held as POWs in an Egyptian prison passed their time by translating J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Hobbit" from English into Hebrew. The book was sent to them by their family members via the Red Cross. The pilots' version was published commercially in 1977 and is still considered by many to be one of the best Hebrew translations available.

- Until 1953, New York City had a pneumatic tube mail network that spanned 27 miles and connected 23 post offices. At its peak, the system moved 95,000 letters a day at speeds of 30-35 mph.

- Halloween is more Irish than St. Patrick's Day.

- Ever wonder how the dice game Yahtzee got its curious moniker? A wealthy Canadian couple invented the game as a way of entertaining friends on board their yacht. After it proved a hit, the couple consulted a toy maker who loved it, bought the rights, and changed the original name from the generic "Yacht game" to "Yahtzee."

- Homer Simpson's famous "D'oh!" is a real word in the Oxford English Dictionary, though in "The Simpsons" scripts, it's rendered merely as an "annoyed grunt."

- Barbie has been outfitted by over 70 well-known designers, including Yves Saint Laurent and Christian Dior.

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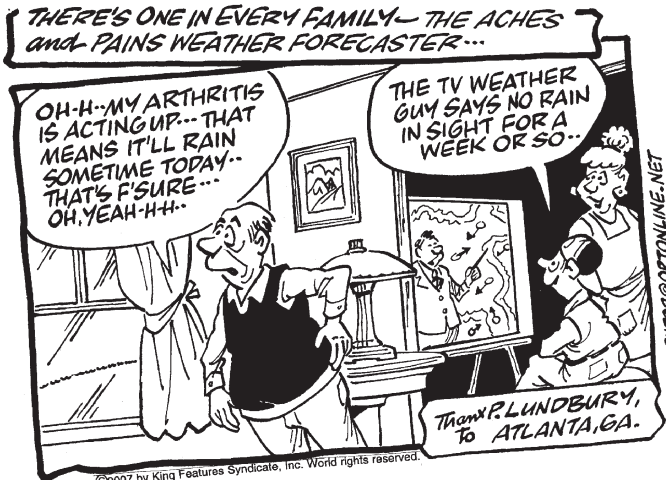
Thought for the Day: "Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love." —*Lao Tzu*

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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

BY AL SCADUTO





Scotch heather

In the coldest winter months, the foliage of *calluna vulgaris* (known as scotch heather) changes its appearance from its paler summer colors of orange, gold, silver and green to more vivid shades of red, orange, purple or golden yellow. These brilliant colors look wonderful against the snow! This perennial ground cover plant grows well in cool, moist climates; it will not do well if the air and soil is very dry.

Brenda Weaver

Sources: www.gardenia.net, www.sunset.com



VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

Purple Heart Phony

With snow expected that afternoon, I suspected the veteran crew might not have shown up outside the coffee shop, but there they were, socially distanced around the sidewalk. And they were in the middle of a hot conversation when I stepped up.

The topic was a guy who had potentially faked his military history and worse, had claimed he was a Purple Heart recipient, this time right here at home.

“He’s in our VFW. We took him in.”

“He needs to be brought down, if he’s a liar.”

“So, do I make the call? I’ll be calling in a favor if I do.”

The group took a vote, going around the circle. It was 100% to find out once and for all if their fellow veteran was indeed a liar and a thief.

The main guy slid a phone out of his pocket, stabbed in a number, said a few words, listened and then hung up.

I can’t repeat here his exact angry words, but the summary was: Their friend and fellow veteran had lied. He hadn’t served where he’d claimed he had, hadn’t had the MOS he’d claimed he had, and he certainly had not earned a Purple Heart.

MOS is a code that identifies the job someone has in the military. This particular veteran had worked in supply at a small CONUS base. Unless he’d gotten a paper cut while stocking shelves, he’d never been wounded. Somewhere there was a faked DD-214.

I tossed my coffee cup in the trash and walked away, leaving the group to their collective misery while they explored just how they’d been taken in. I’d heard the story too many times. Veterans and those who’d never served claiming benefits, medals and admiration they never earned, enjoying a higher-level Priority Group at a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center, telling tall tales.

Eventually they get caught, like this phony just did, by people who pay attention to their gut feelings. The Stolen Valor Act would take it from there.

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



Keeping Our Economy and Schools Open

Like most South Dakotans, I want to keep our schools open and our economy strong. If we don't get COVID-19 under control, that's going to be increasingly difficult.

On Monday, Rapid City Schools announced schools would be closing and students would be moving to virtual learning. More than 10% of Rapid City teachers and administrators are unable to work because they have tested positive for COVID-19 or have been exposed. As of Monday, the Harrisburg School District had 50 positive COVID-19 cases between students and staff – 33 staff members are currently quarantining. Over 1,665 South Dakota teachers have had COVID since August. Our school systems can't afford more cases.

Avera, one of the state's largest health systems, has said community spread of COVID-19 has forced hundreds of their employees to remain at home in recent weeks. Maintaining adequate staffing is the largest concern for our hospitals. Avera has been at or above patient capacity every single day in recent weeks. In October, 52.5% of nursing homes in South Dakota had a shortage of nurses. Our state can't afford a health care worker shortage.

In North Dakota, nurses with COVID-19 are now permitted to work on other COVID patients. South Dakota hospitals are considering following suit. Let's hope it doesn't come to that.

It's getting colder and that's presenting new challenges. More than seven hundred of our neighbors have passed away. I'm not saying these things to invoke fear, but these are the facts, this is the data. This virus is very real, and sometimes it's deadly. I'm reminded of this almost weekly as I receive news of friends and colleagues who have passed from the virus.

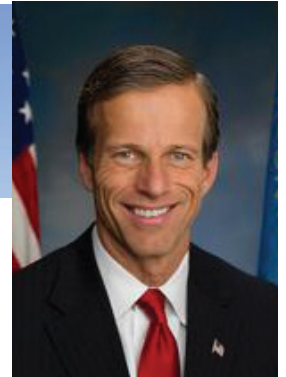
So, what can we do?

I feel a sense of duty to protect those around me who are more susceptible to the worst outcomes of this virus. That's why I wear a mask – that's why I've stepped up my social distancing.

We all need to step it up and do what we can to slow the spread. In the meantime, I'll be fighting for better testing and PPE for our schools, hospitals, and businesses.

I have faith in South Dakotans – but we can't win this fight without your help. As we fight this together keep in mind the three W's: Wash your hands, watch your distance, and wear a mask.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Tough Times Highlight Blessings

It's been a tough year for pretty much everybody. The global pandemic has changed our lives in ways we could not have imagined last Thanksgiving, and our celebrations may look a little different this year.

Tough times can be, well, tough. We have strains and worries this Thanksgiving that we did not have in years past. But tough times can also highlight blessings. They can throw into sharp relief the things that we do have, some of which we might not ordinarily remember to be grateful for.

In America we're used to abundance, and sometimes it can be easy to take that abundance for granted. Things like full grocery store shelves. An endless choice of paper towel brands and toilet paper. Whole aisles full of cereal.

But during the early days of the pandemic, as supply chains were disrupted and store shelves emptied, we started to be grateful for what we could find at the grocery store ... even if it wasn't our preferred brand. We also gained a new appreciation for grocery store workers, truck drivers, food supply workers, and farmers and ranchers – the individuals who are responsible for all that food making it onto store shelves.

Then there were all the other essential workers whose jobs we don't always think about, but whose contributions have been brought into focus by the pandemic. The delivery drivers who make sure we get our packages of essential items. The people who clean our hospitals and office buildings. The medical researchers who work year in and year out to deliver new treatments and cures for diseases, and who are working right now to find ways to treat and cure COVID – with two promising vaccines on the horizon. And of course, the heroic doctors and nurses who are directly confronting this pandemic and who are doing their jobs under conditions of extreme stress.

This year and every year, we have cause to be grateful for our country, and the people who defend it. The police officers who protect our streets 365 days a year, pandemic or no pandemic, no matter what the challenges. And the men and women of the United States military, who stand watch around the world so that we can live in peace and freedom.

Our nation is not perfect of course, and we haven't always gotten it right. But we never stop trying. We enjoy tremendous blessings in this country – blessings that we should not take for granted. And I'm grateful every day to be a citizen of this great country.

Of course, I can't mention Thanksgiving without thinking about how blessed I am to call South Dakota home. I am thankful for the beauty of our state – for our wide-open spaces, rolling prairies, soaring hills – and I am thankful for the kindness, graciousness, and resilience that characterize South Dakota communities. It is an honor to represent South Dakotans in the United States Senate.

As we remember our abundance this year despite the challenges we've faced, let's remember those whose lives have been truly overturned by this pandemic – who have lost loved ones or income or their livelihoods. And let's remember to give out of our blessings. Food banks around the country are in need of donations, and there's no better way to have a happy Thanksgiving than to share what we've been given with those who have less.

In his first letter to the Thessalonians the Apostle Paul says, "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." In all circumstances, even pandemics, there is reason to give thanks. I pray that every American has a happy Thanksgiving filled with blessings. And I thank God for the privilege of living in the United States of America.

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Chicken on Turkey Day

Should we do this? It's the question on everyone's mind right now. Thanksgiving is just around the corner, and we are all attempting to determine how best to celebrate the holidays in the age of a deadly pandemic. Everyone's situation is a little different. Some of us have big families, some of us have small families. But there's one thing we have in common: COVID-19 has impacted all of us in one way or another.

At the time I'm writing this, there have been 741 deaths from COVID-19 in South Dakota. Let that sink in – 741 deaths. That's more than the population of some towns in this state. In South Dakota, our communities are so tightly knit together that it feels like we're part of one big family. That's what makes this so difficult. This virus has taken from us our moms, our dads, our grandpas and grandmas, our sons and daughters. Our hearts grieve together.

This message isn't about Thanksgiving 2020. It's much bigger than that. This is about how we get through Thanksgiving 2020 so we can all enjoy Thanksgivings together for years to come. The good Lord blessed us in South Dakota with common sense. Now is the time to use it.

First things first - wear your mask. If you're going to the grocery store to get your turkey, wear your mask. If you're going out to do Christmas shopping, wear your mask. Are there instances where wearing a mask isn't common sense? Certainly. But here's a good rule of thumb - if you're out in public and cannot socially distance, wear your mask. Wearing a mask isn't just about protecting you, it's about protecting others around you. Leaders wear masks.

We also need to remember the importance of washing our hands and using hand sanitizer. That's not only good advice to combat COVID-19, but also other more common ailments we face every year like the cold and flu.

What we know about COVID-19 is that it disproportionately impacts those who are older. If you contract this virus and you're over the age of 70, the numbers show that you have a 7 percent chance of dying. If you're over 80, your risk rises to 13.4 percent. Those numbers are getting close to the odds you'd have when playing Russian roulette with a loaded revolver.

Those numbers are one reason that gathering this Thanksgiving is difficult for families. From experience, I know that you can't keep grandkids off grandparents. And it's pretty tough to keep grandparents away from grandkids, too. While grandkids might not display symptoms, they can still carry the virus and that can be dangerous.

If you are worried about getting sick, stay home. If you are worried that you are sick and might infect someone else, stay home. If you have a "cold" you might actually have COVID-19. Stay home. If you're worried about your kids getting your parents or grandparents sick, stay home. We live in the 21st century. Whether it's FaceTime, Skype or another platform, there are methods for us to be together while apart. It's okay to be a chicken this Turkey Day.

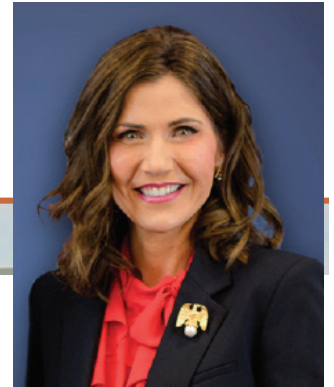
Here's the point – the government isn't going to mandate how you should celebrate Thanksgiving. You have the power to decide what's best for your family. Vaccines are on the way, but in the meantime we must use our common sense to fight this virus and live to see another Thanksgiving. We'll get through this together.

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SOUTH DAKOTA GOVERNOR
KRISTI NOEM



Thanksgiving and Personal Responsibility

Thanksgiving is around the corner, and across the country families are planning how to celebrate with their loved-ones in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some states across the country are imposing restrictions on Thanksgiving celebrations. Some in the media are even looking ahead and planning to cancel Christmas. In South Dakota, we won't stop or discourage you from thanking God and spending time together this Thanksgiving.

I'll continue to encourage each and every one of you to exercise personal responsibility and make smart choices for yourselves and your loved-ones. As you dig in to enjoy that delicious turkey and stuffing, make sure that everyone in your household is practicing good hygiene. Wash your hands. If someone in your family is in the vulnerable population, take extra precautions to keep them safe.

Smaller gatherings may be smarter this year. Let's make sure to use common sense when we're planning our celebrations. If you or someone in your family is sick or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, it may be best to stay home and join your loved-ones over FaceTime, Skype, or another app. As we learn more about COVID symptoms, it can be hard to keep track of them all, so visit the CDC website to refresh your memory.

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind you why we haven't taken certain actions here in South Dakota. Your friends and family in other states might be living through renewed lockdowns or shelter-in-place orders. They may be mandated to wear masks. Here in South Dakota, we took a different path.

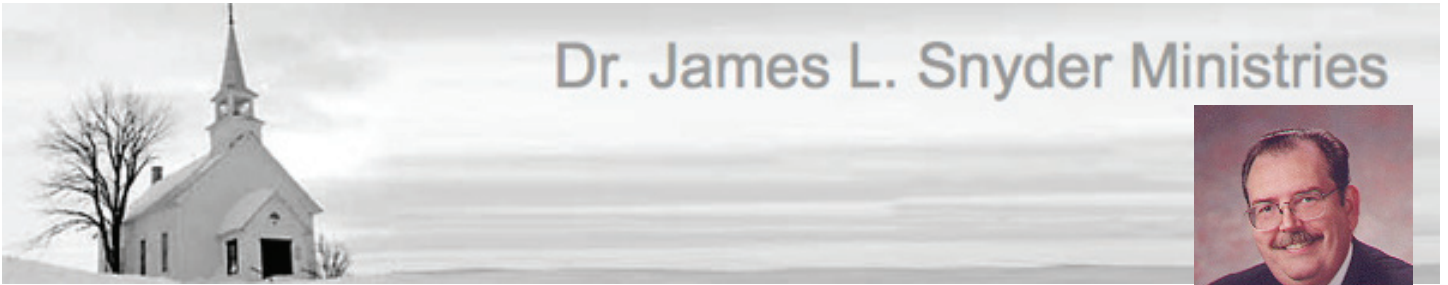
The truth is, there is no science to support the claim that lockdowns stop the spread of the virus. The virus will spread – we cannot stop it until there is a cure – but we can slow it down with mitigation measures. Not even mask mandates have stopped cases from rising in communities. On the other hand, such actions can devastate our livelihoods and our ability to provide for our families. In South Dakota, we've fought the virus while still allowing you to put food on the table and keep a roof over your head.

Let's all take the time to remember what Thanksgiving is all about – thanking God for everything that he has blessed us with in our lives. During difficult times, it's important to be extra thankful for what we have, for time with family, for the tremendous blessings that we have as citizens of the United States of America. Even on our worst day, we are still better off than the vast majority of the people in the world because we woke up in America.

This year, my family will send up thanks for the years we've spent with each other and the years to come. We'll also thank God that we get to live in the greatest nation in human history, one founded on the key principles of freedom, equality, and opportunity. I'll be thankful for the tremendous opportunity to serve the people of South Dakota and for the trust that you've shown me throughout this pandemic. Thank you, and may God richly bless your Thanksgiving.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



Being Nice Does Have Its Rewards

It was one of those weeks. It seems that every week of mine is "one of those weeks." Just when I think everything was looking fine, I discovered I was looking in the wrong direction. I should know better than thinking.

Several problems developed with my vehicle, and I had to take it to the garage. Fortunately, when I took it in, it wasn't as serious as I thought it would be. Of course, I was happy about that, and as I drove my vehicle home, I sang one of my happy songs.

The next day, the vehicle had the issue again. I guess he heard me sing that happy song and was going to try to prove me wrong. I should've worn a mask while singing so he wouldn't understand what I was singing. When am I going to learn?

Oh well, it's one of those weeks.

I took the vehicle back to the garage, and they solved the problem very quickly, which made me happy. Remembering the last time I brought the vehicle home, I did not sing my happy song, at least out loud.

When everything goes wrong, it is tough to be nice. Having a nice attitude takes a lot of work, and I must say it is beyond my pay grade.

It's not that I don't try to be nice, because I do. I guess one person's nice is another person's naughty. Why is it naughty seems much better than nice?

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage always reminds me when I'm going somewhere, "You better be nice today!"

I remembered years ago, I asked her to define for me what nice really means. I won't do that again because she told me her view of being nice. I suppose I should have taken notes, but I didn't.

After everything that went wrong this week, I was very much tempted just to give up. I'm not sure what I would give up, but I was tempted to go in that direction.

Then things changed.

First off, I got a check from my publisher, which I was not expecting. As I drove to the bank to deposit the check, I kept from singing my happy song just in case my vehicle was listening. But I was happy.

When I got back from the bank, my wife saw that I was smiling and asked what I was happy about.

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So, being the "nice" person that I am, I told her. And she was happy for me.

It was just the beginning of the "nice" attitude in my week.

My wife was away for lunch the other day, and so I had to get my lunch. I stopped at Wendy's and got my lunch, and I have one of those coupons for a free Frosty. I used my coupon, and when I picked up my food, there were two Frostys.

"Excuse me," I said to the waiter, "I only ordered one frosty, but you gave me two."

The person at the window looked at me, smiled, and said, "I just wanted to do something nice for you. Go ahead, keep it." I smiled back at him and thanked him.

When you get something free, and you're not expecting it, it really is nice.

Driving home, I was thinking to myself, "How can my week get any better?"

It started out bad, but was beginning to change course.

As I was thinking about how nice the week was going, I decided to celebrate it by getting an Apple Fritter. What better way to celebrate a nice week? After all, an Apple Fritter eaten without my wife's knowledge is a pretty nice deal.

Driving over to where I get my Apple Fritters, I had a thought in my mind. What if I could get a discount on my Apple Fritter?

The gray cells upstairs started bouncing around, and I came up with a plan.

I went in, got my Apple Fritter, and took it to the cashier. When I got there, I looked at the cashier and said, "If I mention how nice you look today, could you give me a discount on my Apple Fritter?"

For all practical purposes, I never expected a discount. I just thought I would make the cashier feel a little happy with a customer like me.

I could see quite a bit of strain in the lady at the cash register, and I'm sure she's had one of those days like I have every once in a while.

She looked at me, smiled (probably the first time that day), and said, "That's the nicest thing anybody has said to me all day. Sure I can give you a discount. In fact, this Apple Fritter is on the house. Go ahead and take it." Then she smiled as I walked out the door.

Driving home, I thought about it and that being nice sometimes has nice results. Nothing could be nicer for me than a free Apple Fritter.

I thought about the words of Jesus, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

After this little incident, I will take more time practicing to be nice to the people I meet each day.

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#272 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Saturdays run low, and this one did too. It's something of a relief not to be setting more records for everything; although, never fear, we're setting records for some things. There were 173,100 new cases reported today, a 1.4% increase from yesterday's total, putting us, as predicted, well over 12 million at 12,163,900. That is our fifth-worst day ever, so it's not great, but it's not a record either. The 12th million, also as predicted, was added in record time, just six days. I still don't like the look of that. I do expect tomorrow to be lower still if the past is any indication. For the record, we've added nearly three million cases since the beginning of the month, and we're only three weeks in. No one really wants to be averaging a million new cases per week. Per month either, truth be told, but we passed that point a long time ago. We've added two million in 13 days. California has reported a record number of new cases for the second straight day; the old record is from July. Other states are on fire too, some much worse.

Hospitalizations also set another record today—eleventh day straight—at 82,178. More than 1000 hospitals in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia say they are "critically short" on staff. This will likely get worse over the upcoming winter holidays. Dr. Abraar Karan, internal medicine physician at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, says, "At this point, it's going to depend on more than just the availability of drugs, but the availability of staff. A lot of us are exhausted."

There were 1439 deaths reported today, a 0.6% increase. We have lost 255,678 Americans to this disease so far.

I know! How about you have everyone get tested before the big holiday dinner? Then you'll know everyone's safe, and you can have a family celebration, right? Right??

Nope. Here's why.

There are two kinds of tests—fast and slow. The fast ones, antigen tests, give results in minutes. They're not very accurate. The slow ones, molecular tests (RT-PCR), take at least a couple of days to come back, often more when things are busy (like now); they're more accurate, but not perfect either.

So here's what we have: You could have everyone get an antigen test the day before—or the day of—the big party, but you have no assurance all those negative results are really negative. Early in infection, you don't have a lot of virus to detect, and it is this which the antigen tests aren't so great at picking up. Someone who is infected, but not detectable, may or may not be shedding enough virus to pose a risk to those around them; the longer the time lag between test and event, the higher the risk there will be a person shedding virus while eating turkey. A negative antigen test a day or two before the dinner would be most problematic; the closer to the event the test is run, the less likely transmission is; but there is no perfectly safe situation here.

The PCR is more likely to pick up small amounts of virus, but because of the time lag between specimen collection and test report, there is a greater chance the infection has progressed to a really dangerous stage in the interim. And there is the additional risk the person has become infected in the interval between test and dinner; of course, this risk applies to both kinds of tests.

If you insist on being stupid and having a big old Thanksgiving dinner with all of your friends and family (for which I, for one, will judge you harshly), at least do this: Require everyone who will attend to get the more accurate RT-PCR test (if you can even get these in your locality) and then quarantine themselves entirely between the date of the specimen collection and the dinner. No exceptions, not even for a seriously-needed item from the store; have a friend pick it up and leave it on your doorstep. But keep this in mind: Dr. Esther Choo, emergency medicine physician and professor at Oregon Health and Science University, says, "Testing negative basically changes nothing about behavior. It still means wear a mask, distance, avoid indoors if you can." Which means, if it's cold, you can't eat dinner together. So just stay home and play safe this one time. Really. And get used to it: I don't expect Christmas to be different.

As winter comes on, people are asking questions about indoor activities—workouts, racquetball, other sports. If you run, ice and snow can limit what you can do outdoors; cold air is tough on the lungs when you're exerting yourself outdoors; and when you live where I do and the combination of subzero temperatures and wind can create dangerous wind chills, being outside for extended periods is hazardous. Many fitness centers and other facilities are rolling out upgraded air filtration systems and cleaning protocols.

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So is indoor exercise safe now?

Not so much, according to many experts. You still must practice social distancing and wear a mask. There is simply no doubt that the heavy breathing which accompanies vigorous activity expels more virus and increases your chances of inhaling virus lingering in the air deep into your lungs, no matter the distance and even if you're masked. Sweat can dampen a mask, and a wet mask is far less effective than a dry one. There have been infection clusters associated with fitness studios: a notable one in Ontario where 60 cases were linked to one location and a series of 30 different clusters in Massachusetts associated with youth hockey.

There is a number of factors that play into the risk calculation here: the facility, your community, and your health status. The facility should have a no-excuses mask policy and enforce social distancing; if they do not, stay away. Screenings and disinfection are not foolproof, but they should be employed. Indoor airflow is critical; if air exchanges are frequent and filtration is at a high level, the risk lessens considerably. Large spaces with fewer people are safer; smaller spaces with more people are less so. Sports that put people close together—basketball and hockey, for example—are risky irrespective of the size of the space.

And a huge factor is the current status of community spread. The higher that is, the higher-risk any indoor activity becomes. Honestly, at this moment, I don't know of too many indoor spaces in any part of the country I'm comfortable frequenting, especially if I'm breathing hard and breathing deeply. I would rather be a little less fit and still breathing than in top-notch shape when they put me on the vent. If you have risk factors for severe disease, then you will do well to avoid any unnecessary risk. And it should also be noted that plenty of folks with no particular risk factors have died in this pandemic. People like you.

It is recommended, if you're exercising indoors, you will want to observe more than the standard six-foot distance. (Actually, that is recommended when you're not exercising too, just more so if you're exerting yourself.) While objects are not a primary means for transmission, it seems reasonable when in a place open to the public to carry disinfectant wipes and clean up frequently-touched surfaces you're likely to encounter. Better yet, exercise outdoors or by yourself. If you go to a gym, go at quiet times and keep the workout short to reduce your exposure time. And ask yourself how important this is and what alternatives might be available to you. Many people maintain excellent fitness at home; it might be a good plan to do that for at least the next six weeks or so.

The antiviral drug remdesivir has turned out to be surprisingly controversial. Thursday, the WHO issued new guidelines recommending against the use of the drug for Covid-19. These guidelines are based on their Solidarity Trial, which is examining treatments on more than 11,000 patients in 30 countries. From this trial, the panel has concluded there is "no meaningful effect on mortality or on other important outcomes for patients." Even though it is possible there may be some benefit, the WHO panel factored in its high cost (\$3000 and up for a course of treatment) and the risks of administering the drug intravenously, a procedure which is particularly complicated for this drug (and requires a high degree of training and staff attention) and came up with a recommendation against use.

A NIH study from April showed the drug cuts recovery time for severe cases by five days; but other studies have put the reduction at maybe one day, which isn't much. The WHO needs to consider the ways health care is thought of in various countries across the world; while in the US we're often willing to spend a great deal of money and use a great many resources for a small improvement in one patient, that is not the model everywhere. When resources tighten here in the US as this pandemic rages on, we may have to come to a different calculation too. Time will tell.

Sandra Nathan volunteered for the Peace Corps right out of the University of Chicago back in the mid-'60s. She spent her two-year stint teaching English to high school students in South Korea. Back then, South Korea was a third-world country afflicted with disease, dictatorship, poverty, and the devastation wrought by war. Conditions were dire. Nathan said, "An ongoing debate among volunteers was whether Time or Newsweek was more absorbent. Toilet paper was unavailable." Her classroom was heated by a charcoal stove, and it didn't get very warm. The students didn't wear coats, likely because they didn't own them; but they were eager to learn what she was teaching.

She developed strong relationships with her students, and at one point, she took a sick girl to an American military doctor to be treated for intestinal parasites. The girl's mother was so grateful, she came to the

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school with some eggs still warm from the hen as a gift. Nathan knew these eggs came from the family's need, not their abundance, and she was close to tears as she received them.

Now, the tables are turned. Korea Foundation's president, Lee Geun, said, "Thanks in no small part to the help received from the Peace Corps, Korea has since achieved an economic breakthrough." Nowadays, South Korea is keeping the coronavirus mostly under control, and the United States is a disaster, as to a lesser degree is Nathan's home state of New York. So because they remembered her contribution to them in their time of need, in August, the Korean Foundation sent Nathan an offer of help; they wanted to send her and other Peace Corps volunteers a Covid-19 Survival Box in order to pay back some of their debts from the past "as a token of our gratitude for your dedication to Korea" (and, sadly, in recognition of our new status as a recipient state rather than a donor state).

Nathan said, "I did not think much about it until the box arrived on Saturday, November 7." Nathan, 75, had been feeling isolated while she was stuck at home through the exploding case numbers in this country, and she left the box unopened for a few days while she relished what it represented, the gratitude for her long-ago service. The box contained 100 masks, gloves, skin-care products, ginseng candies, a fan, and two sets of silver chopsticks and spoons. She added, "It was as if this box had been traveling to me since 1968. There was something magical about the box. Some people, Korean people, very far away wanted to make sure that I was OK; that I had what I needed to fight a bad disease. They behaved as though they cared and were responsible for me. . . . I am a practical person, not usually given to ideas unfounded by fact; but there was definitely something magical about the box." Caring is always magical. Do some of that, OK?

Stay healthy. We'll talk again

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Nov. 18	Nov. 19	Nov. 20	Nov. 21	Nov. 22
Minnesota	236,949	242,043	249,906	256,700	262,952
Nebraska	103,805	106,617	109,280	111,661	113,029
Montana	49,398	50,582	51,818	53,293	54,542
Colorado	172,044	176,694	182,801	188,566	194,679
Wyoming	21,047	21,750	22,489	23,347	23,567
North Dakota	65,967	67,230	68,612	70,016	71,540
South Dakota	67,284	68,671	69,742	71,070	72,214
United States	11,360,125	11,530,345	11,718,867	11,913,945	12,090,469
US Deaths	248,707	250,548	252,564	254,424	255,905

Minnesota	+5,931	+5,094	+7,863	+6,794	+6,252
Nebraska	+2,204	+2,812	+2,663	+2,381	+1,368
Montana	+1,371	+1,184	+1,236	+1,475	+1,249
Colorado	+4,331	+4,650	+6,107	+5,765	+6,113
Wyoming	+1,162	+703	+739	+858	+220
North Dakota	+1,082	1,263	+1,382	+1,404	+1,524
South Dakota	+1,006	+1,387	+1,071	+1,328	+1,144
United States	+154,640	+170,220	+188,522	+195,078	+176,524
US Deaths	+1,487	+1,841	+2,016	+1,860	+1,481

	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 21st COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

South Dakota had 2,648 that recovered today with just 1,144 positive cases, but there were also 36 deaths. Now here is an interesting trend - last week South Dakota had 18,747 active cases. This week we have 16,867, a decrease of 1,880. Those currently hospitalized increased from 549 to 580, an increase of 31 in a week's time.

Deaths by county: Brookings-1, Brown-2, Charles Mix-3, Custer-2, Davison-5, Fall River-1, Hamlin had its first death, Hughes-3, Lincoln-1, Minnehaha-4, Pennington-5, Perkins recorded its first two deaths, Potter recorded its first death, Roberts-1, Union-3 and Ziebach-1. There were 2 in their 50s, 5 in their 60s, 8 in their 70s and 21 in the 80+ age group. It was evenly split on gender with 18 each.

Glacial Lakes hospital beds being occupied by COVID-19 patients as well as Minnehaha and Pennington counties: Walworth: 1 (-3) Occupied Beds.; Potter: 2 (-0) Occupied Beds; Hughes: 20 (+2) Occupied Beds, 5 (+0) ICU Beds, 2 (+0) Ventilation; Hand: 5 (+1) Occupied Beds; Faulk: 2 (-1) Occupied Beds; Edmunds: 1 (-0) Occupied Bed; Brown: 36 (+3) Occupied Beds, 5 (+3) ICU, 1 (+1) Ventilation; Spink: 2 (-0) Occupied Beds; Day: 0 (-0) Occupied Beds; Marshall: 1 (+0) Occupied Beds; Grant: 3 (-1) Occupied Beds; Codington: 18 (-3) Occupied Beds, 4 (-1) ICU, 2 (-2) Ventilation; None (some counties have no hospitals): Clark, Hyde,

Stanley, Sully, Campbell, McPherson, Roberts; Minnehaha: 280 (+2) Occupied Beds, 55 (-14) ICU, 38 (-5) Ventilation; Pennington: 65 (-4) Occupied Beds, 10 (-0) ICU, 6 (-1) Ventilation.

Active Cases: -1,540 (16,867)

Percent Recovered: 75.6%

Total COVID-19 Occupied Beds: 580 (+6), Black Hills Region 103 (+0), Glacial Lakes Region 91 (-2) Sioux Empire Region 298 (-0), South Central Plains 88 (+8).

ICU Units: Total 94 (-13), BH 11 (-0), GL 14 (+2), SE 55 (-15), SCP 14 (+0).

Ventilation: Total 49 (-7), BH 6 (-1), GL 5 (-1), SE 38 (-5), SCP 0 (-0).

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 21% Covid, 47% Non-Covid, 32% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 43% Covid, 41% Non-Covid, 16% Available

Staffed Adult + Pediatric ICU Bed Capacity: 70% Occupied, 30% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 12% Covid, 18% Non-Covid, 71% Available

Beadle (25) +36 positive, +86 recovered (556 active cases)

Brookings (16) +18 positive, +77 recovered (445 active cases)

Brown (14): +71 positive, +101 recovered (659 active cases)

Clark (1): +6 positive, +6 recovered (62 active cases)

Clay (9): +16 positive, +45 recovered (234 active cases)

Codington (37): +47 positive, +81 recovered (519 active cases)

Brown County:

Total Positive: +71 (3213) Positivity Rate: 27.0%

Total Tests: +263 (25,198)

Total Individuals Tested: +119 (13,081)

Recovered: +101 (2,540)

Active Cases: -32 (659)

Ever Hospitalized: +3 (182)

Deaths: +2 (14)

Percent Recovered: 79.0%

Hospital Reports:

Avera St. Luke's: Covid-19 Occupied 26 (+4); ICU 4 (+4), Ventilation 0 (0).

Sanford Aberdeen: Covid-19 Occupied 10 (-1); ICU 1 (-1), Ventilation 1 (+1)

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

Marshall County Healthcare: Covid-19 Occupied: 1 (+0).

South Dakota:

Positive: +1,144 (72,214 total) Positivity Rate: 19.5%

Total Tests: 5840 (557,990 total)

Total Individuals Tested: 2301 (309,170)

Hospitalized: +59 (4052 total). 580 currently hospitalized +6)

Deaths: +36 (777 total)

Recovered: +2,648 (54,570 total)

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Davison (24): +41 positive, +138 recovered (766 active cases)

Day (5): +13 positive, +18 recovered (91 active cases)

Edmunds (1): +5 positive, +12 recovered (44 active cases)

Faulk (8): +3 positive, +5 recovered (32 active cases)

Grant (5): +17 positive, +18 recovered (145 active cases)

Hanson (1): +4 positive, +8 recovered (64 active cases)

Hughes (17): +30 positive, +52 recovered (396 active cases)

Lawrence (18): +11 positive, +80 recovered (383 active cases)

Lincoln (44): +87 positive, +179 recovered (1180 active cases)

Marshall (3): +5 positive, +5 recovered (44 active cases)

McCook (11): +5 positive, +33 recovered (159 active cases)

McPherson (1): +7 positive, +10 recovery (40 active case)

Minnehaha (155): +286 positive, +684 recovered (4030 active cases)

Potter (1): +3 positive, +7 recovered (58 active cases)

Roberts (17): +10 positive, +20 recovered (150 active cases)

Spink (11): +2 positive, +19 recovered (126 active cases)

Walworth (10): +11 positive, +12 recovered (112 active cases)

NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Nov. 21:

- 15.3% rolling 14-day positivity
- 1,526 new positives
- 11,745 susceptible test encounters
- 296 currently hospitalized (+7)
- 10,066 active cases (+151)
- 834 total deaths (+16)

Yesterday

Today

Global Cases
57,626,994

Global Cases
58,228,713

11,913,945 US

12,090,469 US

9,050,597 India

9,095,806 India

6,020,164 Brazil

6,052,786 Brazil

2,160,345 France

2,178,023 France

2,047,563 Russia

2,071,858 Russia

1,556,730 Spain

1,556,730 Spain

1,477,230 United Kingdom

1,497,135 United Kingdom

1,359,042 Argentina

1,380,531 Italy

1,345,767 Italy

1,366,182 Argentina

1,233,444 Colombia

1,240,493 Colombia

1,025,969 Mexico

1,025,969 Mexico

943,917 Peru

948,081 Peru

Global Deaths
1,373,258

Global Deaths
1,381,822

254,424 deaths
US

255,905 deaths
US

168,613 deaths
Brazil

168,989 deaths
Brazil

132,726 deaths
India

133,227 deaths
India

100,823 deaths
Mexico

100,823 deaths
Mexico

54,381 deaths
United Kingdom

54,721 deaths
United Kingdom

48,569 deaths
Italy

49,261 deaths
Italy

48,341 deaths
France

48,593 deaths
France

43,896 deaths
Iran

44,327 deaths
Iran

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	325	226	764	3	Substantial	52.13%
Beadle	2129	1548	4492	25	Substantial	32.61%
Bennett	299	238	1015	5	Substantial	10.92%
Bon Homme	1301	1131	1686	13	Substantial	41.51%
Brookings	2222	1761	7747	16	Substantial	23.64%
Brown	3213	2540	9868	14	Substantial	26.90%
Brule	517	402	1554	5	Substantial	41.57%
Buffalo	359	306	795	6	Substantial	29.69%
Butte	646	522	2450	12	Substantial	31.06%
Campbell	97	88	180	1	Moderate	31.82%
Charles Mix	744	514	3257	4	Substantial	22.72%
Clark	224	161	753	1	Substantial	11.56%
Clay	1214	971	3790	9	Substantial	29.44%
Codington	2450	1894	7322	37	Substantial	31.54%
Corson	343	284	821	3	Substantial	55.26%
Custer	484	378	1960	7	Substantial	25.52%
Davison	2197	1407	5056	24	Substantial	37.69%
Day	310	214	1342	5	Substantial	47.20%
Deuel	277	218	872	2	Substantial	34.88%
Dewey	730	420	3406	2	Substantial	30.02%
Douglas	272	202	730	5	Substantial	23.02%
Edmunds	226	181	819	1	Substantial	19.31%
Fall River	343	259	2005	8	Substantial	21.03%
Faulk	271	231	546	8	Substantial	31.25%
Grant	539	389	1693	5	Substantial	32.61%
Gregory	402	296	930	17	Substantial	32.00%
Haakon	131	107	452	3	Moderate	7.77%
Hamlin	427	262	1328	1	Substantial	18.53%
Hand	264	186	634	1	Substantial	41.30%
Hanson	211	146	519	1	Substantial	41.56%
Harding	64	60	128	0	Minimal	30.77%
Hughes	1513	1100	4748	17	Substantial	32.26%
Hutchinson	499	319	1783	3	Substantial	24.50%

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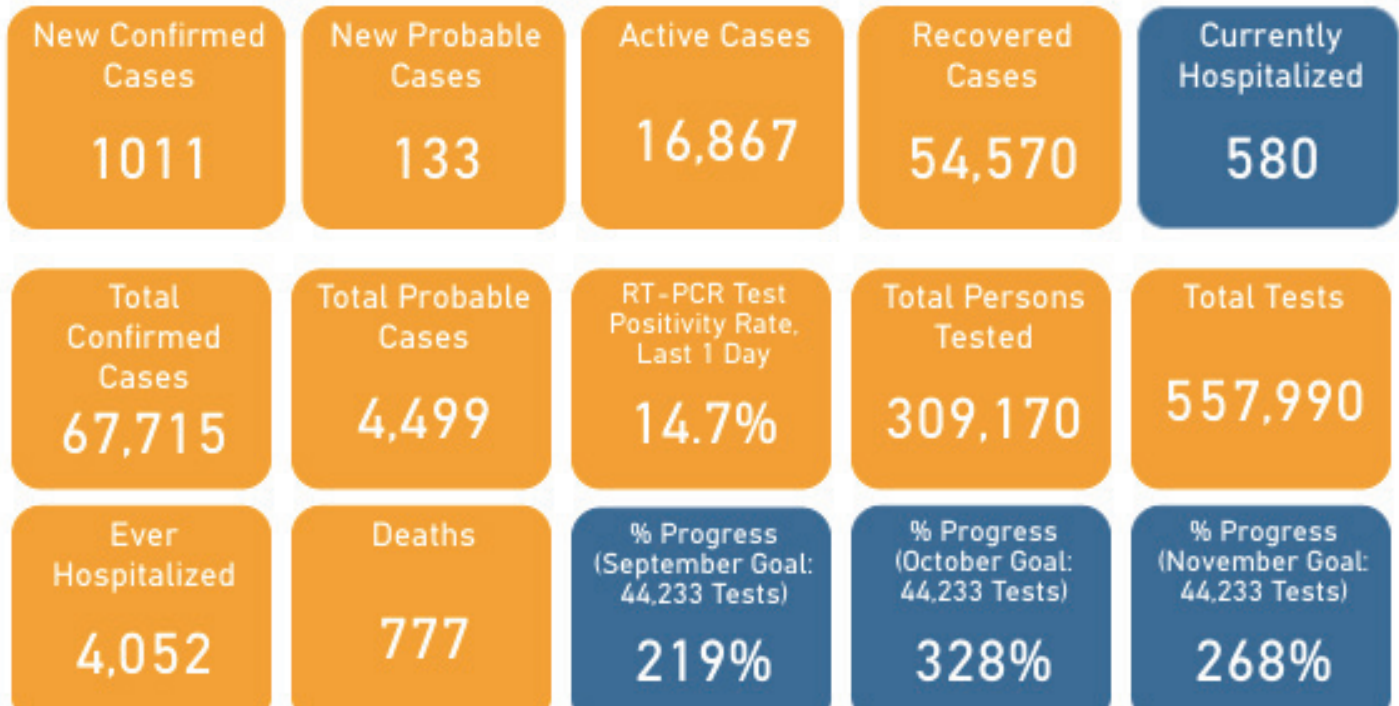
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Hyde	112	70	334	0	Substantial	51.11%
Jackson	185	143	795	6	Substantial	30.30%
Jerauld	229	171	423	13	Substantial	29.55%
Jones	55	41	149	0	Moderate	40.00%
Kingsbury	397	266	1194	8	Substantial	22.60%
Lake	760	555	2127	9	Substantial	43.88%
Lawrence	1790	1389	6457	18	Substantial	24.00%
Lincoln	4921	3697	14922	44	Substantial	36.03%
Lyman	422	323	1516	8	Substantial	24.82%
Marshall	143	96	859	3	Substantial	38.04%
McCook	551	381	1229	11	Substantial	36.01%
McPherson	129	88	444	1	Substantial	17.83%
Meade	1553	1219	5818	12	Substantial	22.83%
Mellette	152	113	594	1	Substantial	50.00%
Miner	181	144	445	4	Substantial	35.14%
Minnehaha	18533	14348	58873	155	Substantial	30.61%
Moody	378	271	1433	10	Substantial	40.00%
Oglala Lakota	1518	1182	5829	17	Substantial	29.01%
Pennington	7679	5781	28491	66	Substantial	27.42%
Perkins	153	94	535	2	Substantial	27.91%
Potter	236	177	645	1	Substantial	16.39%
Roberts	634	467	3506	17	Substantial	23.10%
Sanborn	238	140	512	1	Substantial	42.86%
Spink	506	369	1732	11	Substantial	16.22%
Stanley	212	130	666	0	Substantial	28.33%
Sully	84	55	196	2	Substantial	43.48%
Todd	816	629	3496	10	Substantial	38.46%
Tripp	441	334	1205	2	Substantial	44.81%
Turner	751	570	2054	35	Substantial	25.00%
Union	1148	871	4614	23	Substantial	21.21%
Walworth	431	309	1425	10	Substantial	31.33%
Yankton	1474	1081	6850	8	Substantial	30.93%
Ziebach	159	105	598	5	Substantial	24.00%
Unassigned	0	0	1545	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	2395	0
10-19 years	7794	0
20-29 years	13941	2
30-39 years	12159	9
40-49 years	10350	15
50-59 years	10192	48
60-69 years	8023	102
70-79 years	4134	163
80+ years	3226	438

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	37718	382
Male	34496	395

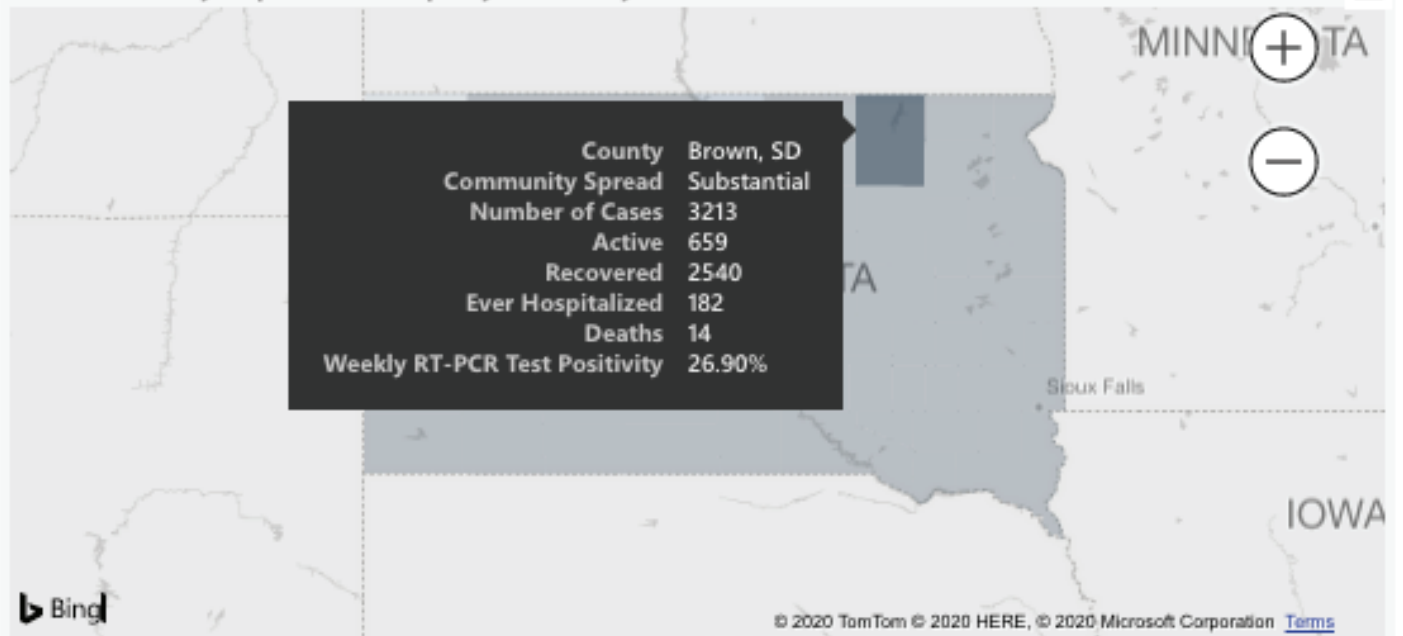
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Brown County

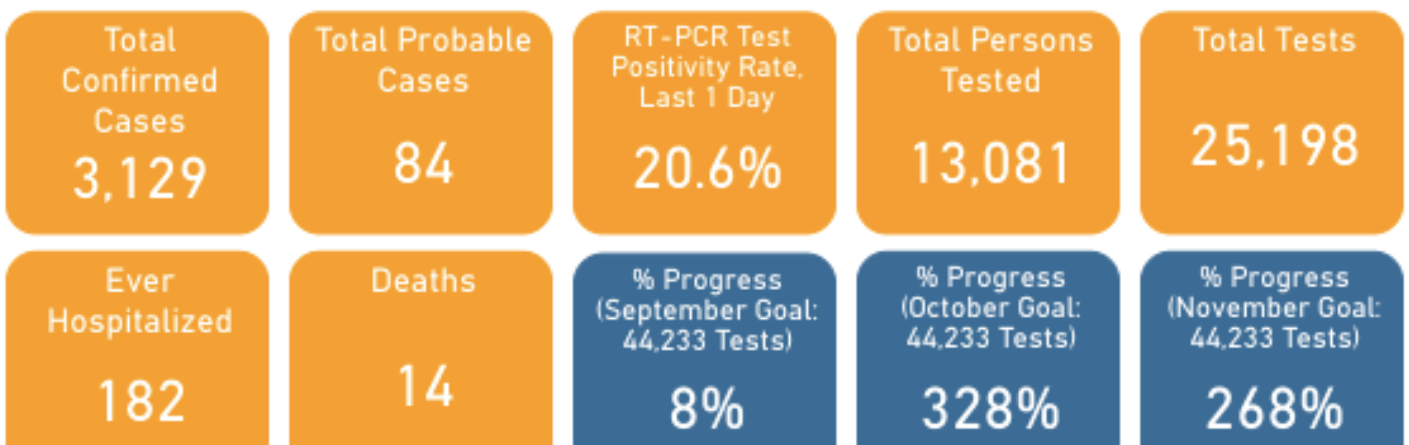


Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Minimal ● Moderate ● Substantial

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



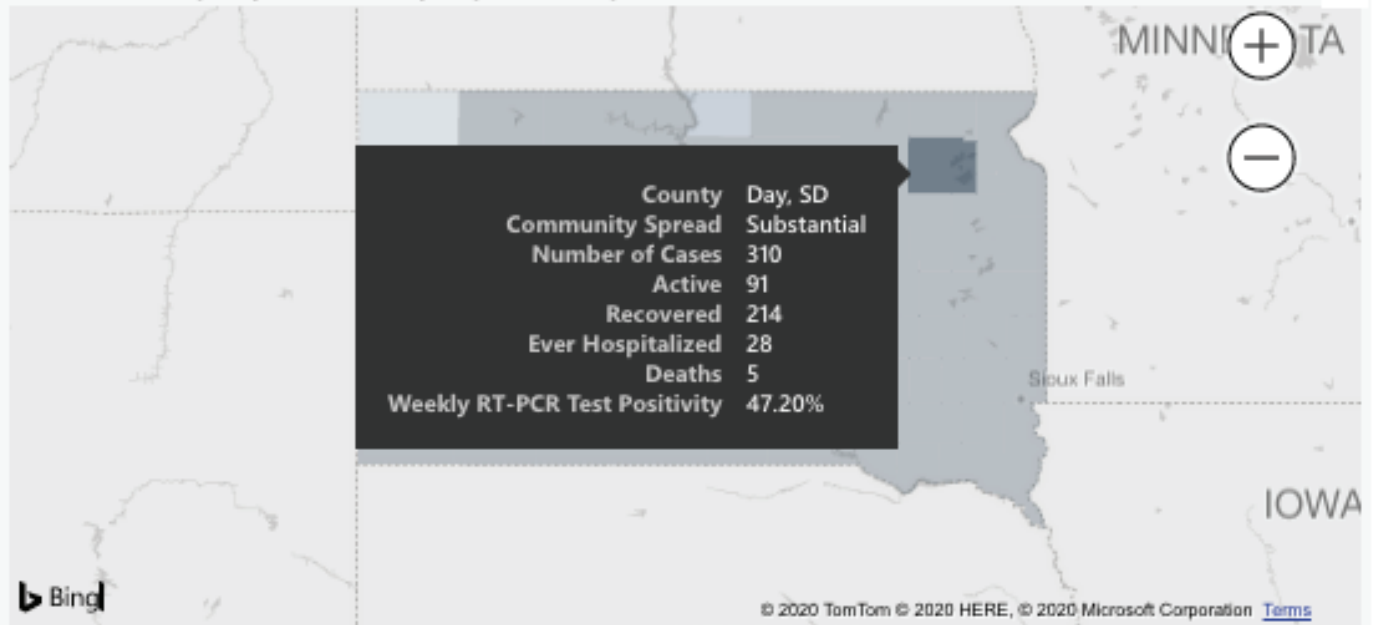
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Day County

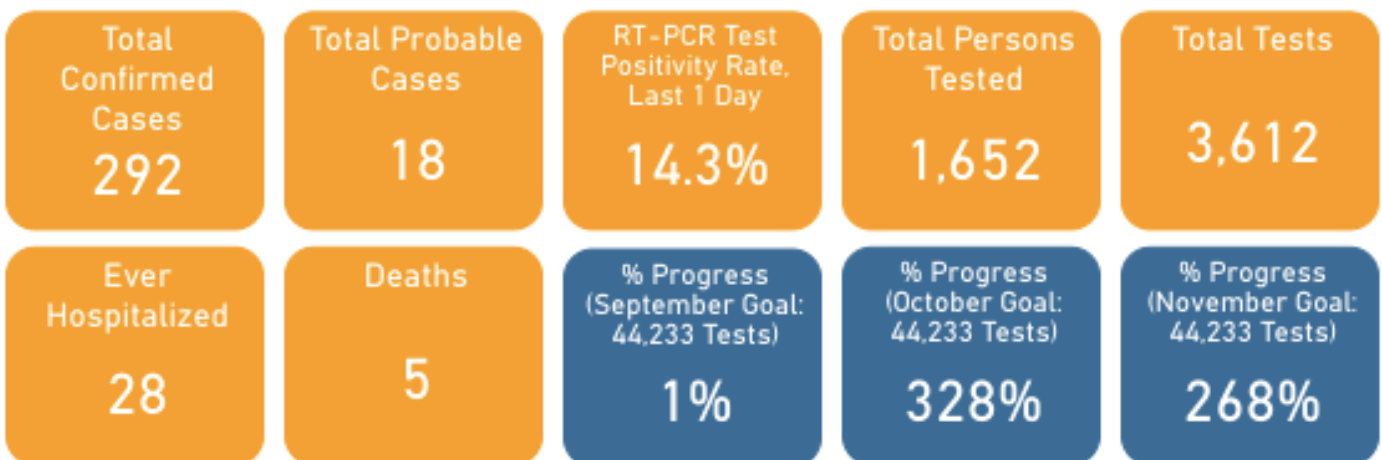


Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Minimal ● Moderate ● Substantial

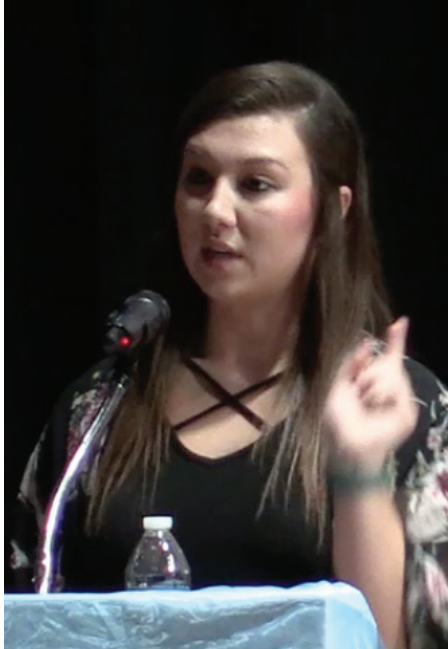
Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



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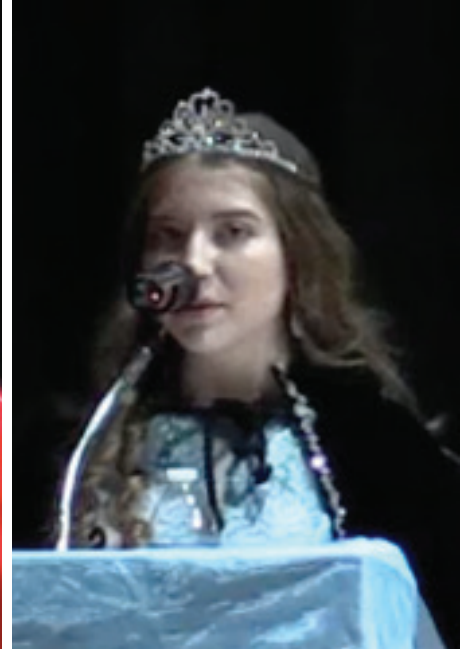
Groton Area Snow Queen Contest



Emily Grabowska was the master of ceremonies. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



Ashley Flihs, 2020 Groton Senior Snow Queen, gave a short talk. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



Shaylee Peterson, 2020 Groton Junior Snow Queen, gave a short talk. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



Cadance Tullis sang, "Wondering." (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



Camryn Kurtz sang, "Just Breathe." (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



Kyrie Yeigh sang, "A Million Dreams." (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)

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Anna Bisbee sang, "On Eagles Wings." (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



Trinity Smith sang, "Control." (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



Ellie Weismantel revealed Patti Woods as Frosty. The clues were: Graduated as a Tiger, Wolves Graduate, 3 children, 6 grandchildren, 3 siblings, homebody, September baby, Binges "Grace & Frankie", Catholic, Frequents Slim Chickens, Devoted Grotonite, Quilter and Sewer and Sung National Anthem at sporting events. Dion Bahr was the only person to correctly guess that it was Patti. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM Video)

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The entire Groton Area Snow Queen Court is pictured above. The four on the left are the senior candidates - In back are Hailey Monson and Kenzie McInerney and in front are Alexis Hanten and Tessa Erdmann. The three on the right are the junior candidates - in back are Faith Flieths and Anna Bisbee and in front is Cadence Feist. The Prince in front is Keenan Moody and the Princesses is Railey Mulder. In back middle are the runner-ups - Erin Unzen for Senior Snow Queen AND Camryn Kurtz for Junior Snow Queen. In the chairs are Senior Snow Queen Tiara DeHoet (who was also selected as Miss Congeniality and Junior Snow Queen Lydia Meier. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Steven Paulson and Isaac Smith were the pages. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

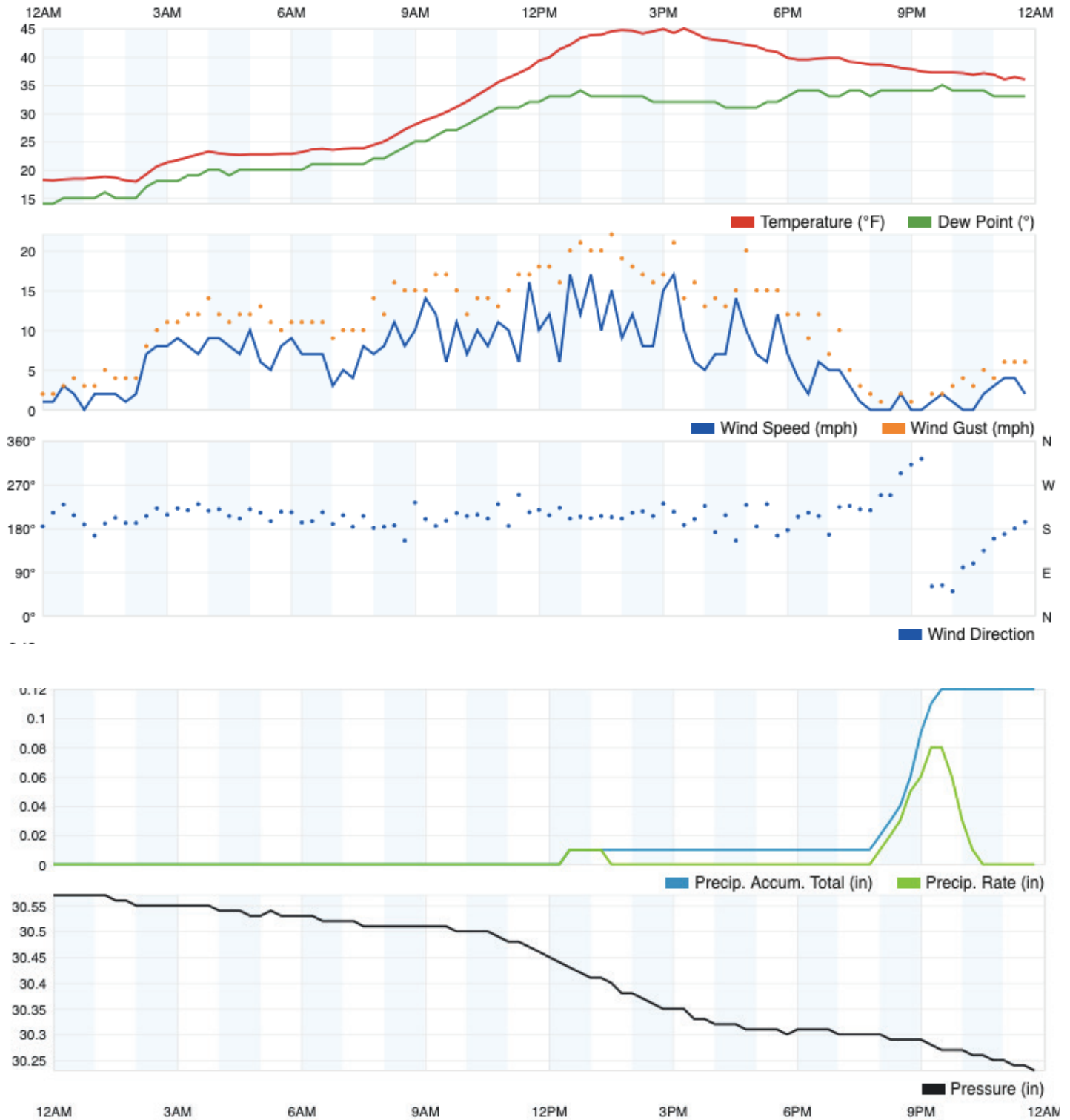


Senior Snow Queen Tiara DeHoet and Junior Snow Queen Lydia Meier. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Patchy Fog
then Sunny

High: 43 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 17 °F

Monday



Mostly Sunny
and Breezy

High: 45 °F

Monday
Night



Mostly Cloudy
and Breezy
then Slight
Chance Wintry
Mix

Low: 30 °F

Tuesday

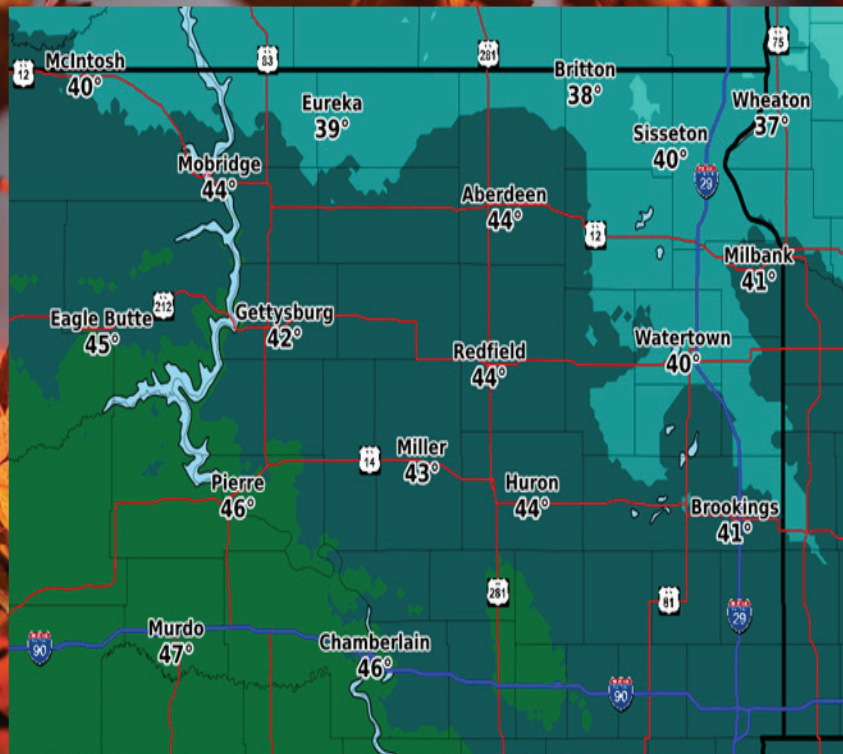


Chance Wintry
Mix then
Partly Sunny

High: 39 °F

High Temperatures Sunday

- Sunny Skies
- Breezy Northwest Winds
- Gusty South Winds Monday
- Next System Tuesday w/ Wintry Mix



A northwest breeze will result in a little cooler temperatures today, but with ample sunshine. Winds shift to southerly Monday ahead of the next system which will potentially bring a wintry mix of precipitation to eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota early Tuesday.

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Today in Weather History

November 22, 1979: Snow began falling during the morning hours on the 21st and continued until the evening hours on the 22nd. Snowfall totals were in the 6 to 13-inch range with thirteen inches at Sioux Falls being the largest amount reported. Moderate winds of 20 to 35 mph made travel tough. Approximately 50 percent of the corn remained in the fields. The snow did not harm the corn, so most of it was still harvested.

November 22, 1985: Extreme cold temperatures occurred over South Dakota from November 22nd through the 28th, with low temperatures dropping well below zero. Record low temperatures were set in most areas, and Aberdeen set a record low for five of the seven days. Three of those five record lows still stand today: -17 on the 23rd, -18 on the 27th, and -21 on the 28th. The other records set at the time (-16 on both the 24th and 26th), were both broken in November 1996.

November 22, 2003: Heavy snow of 6 to 10 inches fell across Big Stone and Traverse counties in Minnesota, as well as northeastern South Dakota, from the evening of the 22nd to the afternoon of the 23rd. Dumont received 6 inches of snow, with 10 inches reported in Ortonville. Six inches of snow was also reported in Wilmot, White Rock, Estelline, and near Stone Bridge; 7 inches was reported Toronto; 8 inches in Big Stone City; and 9 inches at Clear Lake. Heavy snow of 6 to 9 inches also fell in Corson and Lyman counties in South Dakota. Some other snowfall amounts included 8 inches northwest of Presho, Kennebec, and near Iona; and 9 inches southwest of Keldron.

1992: 45 tornadoes touched down in the Tennessee and Ohio Valleys. Georgia was hard hit with two F4, one F3 and three F2 tornadoes that killed six people and injured 144. Indiana had a total of 15 tornadoes on this day to set a record for an outbreak in November and for the month of November. One, an F4 multiple-vortex type, cut a 22-mile path through extreme southeastern Indiana and northern Kentucky. This tornado debunked the myth that twisters don't cross rivers, as this devastating tornado crossed the Ohio River twice. Indiana had a total of 15 tornadoes on this day to set two state records, the largest November tornado outbreak, and the most tornadoes in November. This tornado outbreak made a significant contribution to what was to become the biggest November ever for the U.S. concerning the number of tornadoes.

2010: A strong cold front sweeping through the Midwest brought severe storms, including tornadoes to northern Illinois and southwest Wisconsin. Caledonia, Illinois was hit hard by an EF2 tornado.

2010: A rare November ice storm prompts Fairbanks officials to advised residents to stay off the roads. Ice storm advisories are hoisted across a 950 mile stretch of the state that extends from Anchorage to Nome. The 0.39 inches of rain which fall at Fairbanks rates as that city's greatest November rainfall since November 1936.

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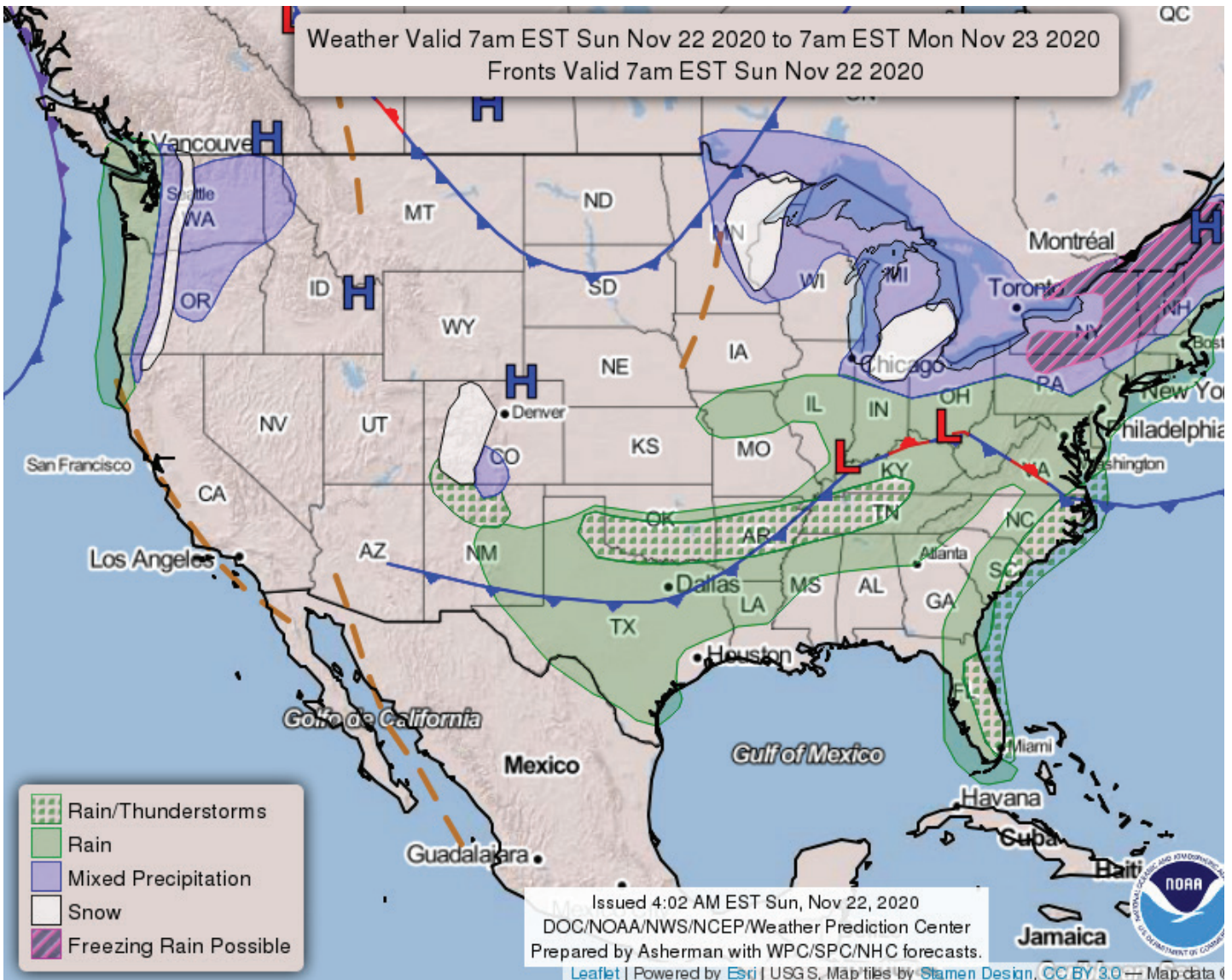
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 45 °F at 3:30 PM
Low Temp: 18 °F at 12:18 AM
Wind: 22 mph at 1:45 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 66° in 1904
Record Low: -14° in 1895
Average High: 35°F
Average Low: 16°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.55
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.06
Average Precip to date: 21.02
Precip Year to Date: 16.40
Sunset Tonight: 4:57 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:44 a.m.



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GRACE FOR OUR GRIEF

God's grace is greater than any grief we may ever have to endure. Psalm 107 describes the greatness of His grace with the Israelites.

First, like them, we are pilgrims: "They wandered in desert wastelands..." We are all "wandering" as pilgrims most of the time. We struggle to determine right from wrong and often make improper decisions because we have left God out of our thoughts. We have a great example of what to do when this happens: When the children of Israel realized that they were wandering, they returned to the Lord and asked for His directions. He would always welcome them back and point them, once again, in the right direction. Remember, too, the words of Jesus: "I am the way." Wherever or whenever we wander, His grace is always available to welcome us back.

Second, we are all prisoners: "Some of them (were) prisoners, suffering in chains." Sin fascinates for a while, but it soon fastens us in chains that keep us from enjoying God's best. Habits are easy to form but difficult to forsake. But when the Israelites called upon God to free them, He always "snapped" their chains, and released them from their bondage. Whomever God saves, His grace sets free.

Third, we are often overwhelmed with grief when persons we thought loved us turn on us and hurt and harm us. "...give thanks to the Lord for His unfailing love." We have all suffered unbearable pain when someone whom we thought cared deeply for us turned against us and tried to destroy us. Being abandoned is difficult to survive alone. Thank God Jesus said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you!" We have His promise of His never-ending peace and presence, care and compassion, healing and hope.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, that You love us, care for us, and will always be there for us. Thank You for Your much-needed, always available love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Some wandered in the wilderness, lost and homeless. Psalm 107:4

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

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

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

02-10-13-23-26

(two, ten, thirteen, twenty-three, twenty-six)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

02-05-36-45-52, Star Ball: 9, ASB: 4

(two, five, thirty-six, forty-five, fifty-two; Star Ball: nine; ASB: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$3.3 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$200 million

Powerball

51-54-57-60-69, Powerball: 11, Power Play: 2

(fifty-one, fifty-four, fifty-seven, sixty, sixty-nine; Powerball: eleven; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$192 million

Saturday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Class A=

Championship=

Sioux Falls Christian def. Dakota Valley, 25-18, 25-12, 25-12

Fifth Place=

Madison def. Rapid City Christian, 25-23, 25-21, 25-13

Seventh Place=

Winner def. Hill City, 20-25, 26-24, 22-25, 25-12, 15-10

Third Place=

Parker def. Hamlin, 25-16, 25-17, 25-23

Class AA=

Championship=

Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Huron, 25-15, 25-17, 20-25, 25-18

Fifth Place=

Watertown def. Aberdeen Central, 25-22, 25-23, 25-17

Seventh Place=

Brandon Valley def. Harrisburg, 20-25, 25-23, 25-20, 21-25, 15-11

Third Place=

Sioux Falls Washington def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-10, 25-19, 23-25, 22-25, 15-10

Class B=

Championship=

Northwestern def. Warner, 24-14, 22-25, 25-19, 25-18

Fifth Place=

Faulkton def. Bridgewater-Emery, 25-19, 25-16, 25-18

Seventh Place=

Hitchcock-Tulare def. Corsica/Stickney, 25-13, 25-15, 24-26, 28-26

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Third Place=

Chester def. Colman-Egan, 13-25, 25-22, 23-25, 25-15, 15-12

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

South Dakota's coronavirus death count soars to 777

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota added 36 virus deaths on Saturday, marking one of the highest daily tallies of deaths since the pandemic began.

The state has recorded 777 deaths from the virus since the pandemic began. The state currently has the country's 15th highest number of deaths per capita, according to Johns Hopkins researchers.

Health officials also reported 1,011 new infections of the virus. One in every 101 people in South Dakota have tested positive for the virus in the past week.

The state has the nation's second-highest rate of new cases per capita over the last two weeks, with 2,089 new cases per 100,000 people, according to researchers.

The health department said 580 people were hospitalized on Saturday.

Health officials said the state's active case count was 16,867 on Saturday, and that more than 54,700 people have recovered from the virus since the pandemic began.

Former Rapid City priest faces child pornography charges

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A former priest convicted of stealing \$260,000 in cash donations from the Diocese of Rapid City is now accused of having sexual contact with a minor and possessing child pornography.

The Rapid City Journal reports Marcin Garbacz, 42, was indicted in February but the case was only unsealed on Friday.

Garbacz is charged with "engaging in illicit sexual conduct in a foreign place" between June 21 and July 7, 2011, by traveling to another country and having sexual conduct with a boy under the age of 18.

The Diocese of Rapid City said in a statement that it is cooperating with the investigation.

Garbacz is scheduled for a sentencing hearing on Monday after a jury convicted him in March of 65 financial crimes. He faces up to 20 years in prison on each of the 59 wire fraud and money laundering counts, up to 10 years for transporting stolen money and up to three years for each of the five tax crime charges.

The new charges stem from an FBI agent coming across child pornography on one of Garbacz's thumb drives during the financial crimes investigation, according to court records.

Prosecutors said Garbacz spent the stolen money on expensive artwork and religious objects, a diamond ring, a grand piano, a Cadillac and other items.

Garbacz served as a chaplain and teacher for the Rapid City Catholic Schools System during that time, a prosecutor said during his trial.

South Dakota law officers sue over pot legalization

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Two South Dakota law enforcement officials want the courts to overturn a citizen-approved constitutional amendment legalizing marijuana in the state.

The Argus Leader reports Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom and South Dakota Highway Patrol Superintendent Rick Miller filed a lawsuit Friday challenging the constitutionality of the amendment, which legalized the cultivation, transport, possession and sale of marijuana in the state.

Voters approved the amendment in the Nov. 3 election.

South Dakota became the first state to legalize recreational and medical pot on the same ballot, after supporters of the two measures joined forces and promoted them as a package deal.

The lawsuit argues that because the amendment inserts a new section into the constitution, it should be considered a revision to the constitution, which can only be done placed on the ballot through a state

convention, something that hasn't been done since statehood.

Organizers behind the amendment said earlier this month they were prepared for a court battle should it be challenged. Drey Samuelson, political director for South Dakotans for Better Marijuana Laws, said he's confident the amendment is sound and the lawsuit seeks to stand in the way of the wishes of South Dakota voters.

Asia Today: Cases in Japan hit record amid holiday travel

TOKYO (AP) — The daily tally of confirmed coronavirus cases in Japan hit a record for the fourth straight day at 2,508, the Health Ministry said Sunday.

Japan has had fewer than 2,000 coronavirus-related deaths so far, avoiding the toll of harder hit nations. But fears are growing about another surge. A flurry of criticism from opposition legislators and the public has slammed the government for being too slow in halting its "GoTo" tourism campaign, which encouraged travel and dining out with discounts.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga on Saturday scrapped the campaign, but only after many people had already made travel reservations for a three-day Thanksgiving weekend in Japan.

Airports and restaurants have been packed. Some say the government should have offered to pay for cancellations, or stepped up PCR testing instead, if the goal is to keep the economy going amid a pandemic. Tutorials are circulating online on the proper way to eat and drink at restaurants while wearing masks.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— South Korea says it will impose stricter social distancing rules in the greater Seoul area to fight a coronavirus resurgence, as the country registered more than 300 new cases for the fifth straight day. Health Minister Park Neung-hoo said Sunday that authorities have found 62 virus clusters in the past two weeks. He said the toughened distancing guidelines in the Seoul area will be enforced for two weeks starting Tuesday. Under the rules, nightclubs and other high-risk entertainment facilities must shut down and late-night dining at restaurants will be banned. Customers aren't allowed to drink or eat inside coffee shops, internet cafes and fitness centers, while audiences at sports events will be limited to 10% of the stadium's capacity. Earlier Sunday, South Korea added 330 new coronavirus cases, bringing the national tally to 30,733, including 505 deaths.

— India registered 45,209 new cases amid a festival season surge in the capital and many other parts of the country. At least three states — Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat — have imposed night curfews in many cities. The Health Ministry on Sunday also registered 501 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking total fatalities up to 133,227.

— Authorities in Sri Lanka said more than 600 coronavirus cases have been detected from the country's highly congested prisons as infections surge in the capital and its suburbs. A total of 652 cases have been detected at five prisons in the island nation, including 609 inmates and 43 prison officers. Sri Lankan prisons are highly congested, with more than 26,000 inmates crowded in facilities with a total capacity of 10,000. Sri Lanka has seen a fresh outbreak of the virus since last month, when two clusters — one centered at a garment factory and the other at a fish market — emerged in the capital, Colombo, and its suburbs. There have been 16,251 confirmed cases from the two clusters. Sri Lanka has had a total of 19,771 cases, including 83 fatalities.

— South Australia and Victoria states eased COVID-19 restrictions Sunday as Australia heads into summer in a better position to fight the virus. Victoria, which was hardest hit, has gone 23 days without a new infection. In response, Premier Daniel Andrews announced a number of changes to restrictions. Mask-wearing outdoors, which until now has been mandatory, is no longer required where social distancing is possible. Masks will still have to be worn indoors and carried at all times. Home gatherings of up to 15 people will be allowed and up to 50 people can gather outdoors. Up to 150 people will be allowed at weddings, funerals or indoor religious services. Residents of South Australia emerged from a state-wide lockdown at midnight Saturday, and are now able to visit bars and restaurants in groups of up to 10 and host gatherings up to 50 people with social distancing.

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— Authorities are conducting mass testing and shutting down schools after China reported three new domestically transmitted cases in the past 24 hours — two in northern Inner Mongolia province and one in Shanghai. The city of Manzhouli, in Inner Mongolia, will start testing all its residents on Sunday, a day after the two cases were discovered. The city has suspended classes and shut public venues, telling residents to not gather for dinner banquets. Local authorities in Shanghai found one more case Saturday after testing 15,416 people following recent locally transmitted cases. The city is testing all residents in the Pudong New Area district. China is already conducting mass testing for up to 3 million residents in the northern city of Tianjin after five cases were found there last week. The total number of confirmed cases in China is 86,431.

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

UK leader to end England's coronavirus lockdown on Dec. 2

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson plans to end an England-wide lockdown as scheduled on Dec. 2 and will announce a return to regional restrictions as statistics show that coronavirus infections have stabilized.

Johnson's office also confirmed plans to begin a nationwide COVID-19 vaccination program next month, assuming regulators approve a vaccine against the virus. The government also will increase mass testing in an effort to suppress the virus until vaccines can be rolled out.

Johnson's office said late Saturday that the government plans to return to using a three-tiered system of localized restrictions in England, with areas facing different lockdown measures based on the severity of their outbreaks. More communities are expected to be placed in the two highest virus alert categories, it said.

The government put England under a four-week lockdown that started Nov. 5. The Cabinet is to discuss the plans Sunday, and the prime minister aims to give Parliament the details on Monday, according to the statement.

The U.K. as a whole has the worst virus death toll in Europe, at over 54,700 deaths.

Johnson announced the lockdown in England on Oct. 31 after public health officials warned that an exponential rise in new daily coronavirus infections was threatening to overwhelm the National Health Service as the winter flu season approached. The lockdown closed non-essential business like many shops, gyms, bars, restaurants — although takeout was permitted. It also banned most social gatherings but schools remain open.

New known cases of COVID-19 have started to drop across the U.K., with the number of positive tests during the past seven days falling 13.8% from the week before. Some 2,861 COVID-related deaths were reported over the last 7-day period, 17 fewer than a week earlier. Still, the infection rate remains high, at 244 cases for every 100,000 people.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock told reporters Friday that the lockdown has been successful in slowing the spread of the virus, though he stressed that people needed to keep following the rules to keep cases down.

Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, the government's deputy chief medical officer, warned that any gains from the November lockdown could be quickly lost to a virus that takes "just seconds" to spread.

People should "keep up the pressure on this virus and push down on it as much as we can right to the end of the period (of lockdown)," he said.

The government's scientific advisory group, known as SAGE, is expected to publish reports on Monday showing that Johnson's earlier three-tiered strategy wasn't strong enough and recommending tougher restrictions when it returns.

Under that system, a "medium" alert level requires restaurants and pubs to close at 10 p.m. and prohibits

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residents from mixing in groups larger than six. The "high" level prevents people from gathering indoors with anyone not in their household or extended "support bubble."

In areas under a "very high" alert, pubs and bars only can remain open and serve alcohol only if it comes with a hearty meal. People are advised not to travel in or out of those areas.

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

The Weeknd, Kenny G to join forces at American Music Awards

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Get ready to listen to the smooth sounds of Kenny G and ... the Weeknd.

The saxophonist will join the pop star for a live rendition of his hit song "In Your Eyes" on Sunday at the 2020 American Music Awards. The Weeknd — who scored eight nominations and ties rapper Roddy Ricch for most nominations — will also perform "Save Your Tears."

The show, airing live from the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles, will also include performances by Billie Eilish, Justin Bieber, BTS, Megan Thee Stallion, Shawn Mendes, Bad Bunny, Jennifer Lopez and Maluma, Dua Lipa, Katy Perry, Bebe Rexha with Doja Cat, Dan + Shay, Lewis Capaldi, Machine Gun Kelly, Lil Baby, Nelly and Bell Biv DeVoe.

Some of the performances have been pre-taped because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Weeknd and Ricch will compete for the show's top honor, artist of the year, along with Bieber, Taylor Swift and Post Malone.

Megan Thee Stallion, who released her highly anticipated debut album Friday, scored five nominations including a bid for new artist of the year. Six artists earned four nominations each, including Bieber, Swift, Lady Gaga, Bad Bunny, DaBaby and Doja Cat.

Oscar-nominated actor Taraji P. Henson will host the fan-voted show, airing on ABC at 8 p.m. EST. Nominees are based on streaming, album and digital sales, radio airplay and social activity, and reflect the time period of Sept. 27, 2019, through Sept. 24, 2020.

Azerbaijanis who fled war look to return home, if it exists

BAKU, Azerbaijan (AP) — As Azerbaijan regains control of land it lost to Armenian forces a quarter-century ago, civilians who fled the fighting decades ago wonder if they can go back home now — and if there's still a home to go back to.

An estimated 600,000 Azerbaijanis were displaced in the 1990s war that left the Nagorno-Karabakh region under the control of ethnic Armenian separatists and large adjacent territories in Armenia's hands. During six weeks of renewed fighting this fall that ended Nov. 10, Azerbaijan took back parts of Nagorno-Karabakh itself and sizeable swaths of the outlying areas.

More territory is being returned as part of the ceasefire agreement that stopped the latest fighting. But as Azerbaijani forces discovered when the first area, Aghdam, was turned over on Friday, much of the recovered land is uninhabitable. The city of Aghdam, where 50,000 people once lived, is now a shattered ruin.

Adil Sharifov, 62, who left his hometown in 1992 during the first war and lives in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, knows he will find similar devastation if he returns to the city of Jabrayil, which he longs to do.

Jabrayil is one of the outlying areas regained by Azerbaijani troops before the recent fighting ended. Soon after it was taken, one of Sharifov's cousins went there and told him the city was destroyed, including the large house with an orchard where Sharifov's family once lived.

Nonetheless, "the day when I return there will be the greatest happiness for me," he said.

For years, he said, his family had followed reports about Jabrayil on the internet. They knew the destruction was terrible, but Sharifov's late mother retained a desperate hope that their house had been spared and held on to the keys.

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"I will build an even better house," he vowed.

Ulviya Jumayeva, 50, can go back to better, though not ideal circumstances in her native Shusha, a city that Azerbaijani forces took in the key offensive of the six-week war.

Her younger brother, Nasimi, took part in the battle and phoned to tell her the apartment their family fled in 1992 was intact, though mostly stripped of the family's possessions.

"According to him, it is clear that Armenians lived there after us, and then they took everything away. But our large mirror in the hallway, which we loved to look at as children, remains," Jumayeva said, adding: "Maybe my grandchildren will look in this mirror."

"We all have houses in Baku, but everyone considered them to be not permanent, because all these years we lived in the hope that we would return to Shusha," she said. "Our hearts, our thoughts have always been in our hometown."

But she acknowledged that her feelings toward Armenians have become more bitter.

"My school friends were mostly Armenian. I never treated ordinary Armenians badly, believing that their criminal leaders who unleashed the war were to blame for the massacre, war, and grief that they brought to their people as well," Jumayeva said.

"But after the current events, after the shelling of peaceful cities ... after the Armenians who are now leaving our territories, which are even outside of Karabakh, burn down the houses of Azerbaijanis in which they lived illegally ... something fractured in me. I changed my attitude toward them," she said. "I understood that we, Azerbaijanis, will not be able to live peacefully next to the Armenians."

While Sharifov has less to go back to, he has a more moderate view, saying the two ethnic groups with different religious traditions still have the potential to live together amicably.

"If the Armenians observe the laws of Azerbaijan, and do not behave like bearded men who came to kill, then we will live in peace," he said. "The time to shoot is over. Enough casualties. We want peace, we do not want war."

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

Russia's health system under strain as the virus surges back

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — When Yekaterina Kobzeva, a nurse at a preschool in Russia's Ural Mountains, began having trouble breathing, she called an ambulance. It was four days before she managed to find a free hospital bed.

The ambulance first took her to get a scan — which showed damage from pneumonia to 50% of her lungs, an indication she had coronavirus. The paramedics then drove her around the city of Perm and its surroundings for hours as seven hospitals, one by one, turned her down, saying they didn't have any beds available. At dawn, she went home.

The journey took her through "circles of hell," Kobzeva, 60, recalled in an interview with The Associated Press by phone from a hospital, where doctors confirmed she had the virus. She was only admitted there days after her first attempt — and after her story made local headlines.

Russia's health care system, vast yet underfunded, has been under significant strains in recent weeks, as the pandemic surges again and daily infections and virus death regularly break records.

Across the country, 81% of hospital beds that have been set aside for coronavirus patients were full as of Wednesday. Three times last week, the Russian government reported a record number of daily deaths, and the number of daily new infections per 100,000 people has more than doubled since Oct. 1, from 6 to over 15. Overall, Russia has recorded over 2 million cases and over 35,000 deaths, but experts say all numbers worldwide understate the true toll of the pandemic.

Reports in Russian media have painted a bleak picture in recent weeks. Hospital corridors are filled with patients on gurneys and even the floor. Bodies in black plastic bags were seen piling up on the floors of a morgue. Long lines of ambulances wait at hospitals while pharmacies put up signs listing the drugs they

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no longer have in stock.

Russian authorities have acknowledged problems in the health system. President Vladimir Putin even urged regional officials not to paper over the situation, saying that "feigning the impression that everything is perfectly normal is absolutely unacceptable."

Yet Russian authorities continue to insist there's no need for a nationwide lockdown or widespread closures of businesses, instead urging people to observe the measures ordered by regional governments.

But in most regions, those measures don't go beyond mask mandates, limiting the hours of bars and restaurants, ordering the elderly to self-isolate, forbidding mass public events and requiring employers to have some staff work from home. Health experts say the moves are clearly not enough.

Paramedic Dmitry Seryogin says Kobzeva's experience is not unusual. In the southwestern Oryol region where he works, patients can wait for up to 12 hours for an ambulance and then might spend five more in it, looking for a hospital bed. Those who happen to arrive when others are being discharged get lucky, he told the AP, but the rest are sent home.

While the Perm region, where Kobzeva sought treatment, was among the top 20 of more than 80 Russian regions in terms of daily new infections last week, Oryol ranked somewhere in the middle. Still, 95% of hospital beds slated for coronavirus patients there were full last week, reflecting the pressure on a system crippled by widely criticized reforms that sought to cut state spending.

"We're witnessing simply a collapse of the health care system in the region," Seryogin said. "It is absolutely not coping."

A partial six-week coronavirus lockdown in March only added to long-brewing public frustrations over Russia's already weakened economy. Soon after that, Putin delegated the powers to impose virus-related restrictions to regional governors. Critics saw the move as an effort to inoculate himself from any more fallout over the pandemic.

During the fall resurgence of the virus, the Kremlin has consistently pointed fingers at regional governors.

"Colleagues, you have received broad powers for implementing anti-pandemic measures. And nobody has relieved you of personal responsibility for the adopted measures — I really do hope that they were adopted on time," Putin reminded the governors last week.

But just like the Kremlin, governments in the vast majority of Russian regions have been loath to shut businesses or impose lockdowns. The only exception has been the Siberian republic of Buryatia, where last week the region's governor ordered cafes, restaurants, bars, malls, cinemas, beauty parlors and saunas to shut down for two weeks.

Regional governors find themselves in an impossible position, explained political analyst Abbas Gallyamov. They face public frustration if they don't impose tough restrictions and the outbreak continues to rage, and they face it if they do because they don't have the funds to ease the pain of closures.

"All the finances have been long centralized, and the regions don't have spare money," Gallyamov said. "So de jure, a governor's hands are untied, but de facto they're still tied because they don't have the money to impose a lockdown and compensate people for their financial losses."

In addition, Putin has so thoroughly centralized power that regional governors are not used to acting independently, noted Judy Twigg, a professor of political science at Virginia Commonwealth University, specializing in global health.

In the meantime, many Russian regions are buckling under the growing tide of patients.

In Buryatia, the Siberian republic that has imposed the country's strictest measures, Dr. Tatyana Symbelova told the AP that as the number of patients rose, her hospital kept adding beds — "in the corridor, in the outpatient ward next door" — but "the situation, still, grew worse and worse."

Symbelova, the chief doctor at Republican Infectious Disease Hospital in Ulan-Ude, and her colleagues are now taking patients whose condition was "severe or of moderate severity" and turning down those with milder cases. A new coronavirus ward with 180 beds opened last week in the city, and she hopes that and the shutdown will help.

But in the meantime, she is worried.

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"Such risks we're taking! Telling patients (with milder cases) they can go and treat themselves at home, when they may come in three days later with their lips blue," Symbelova said. "We're very seriously choking."

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

In Lebanon, army courts target anti-government protesters

By AMIR-HUSSEIN RADJY Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Khaldoun Jaber was taking part in an anti-government protest near the presidential palace outside Beirut last November when several Lebanese intelligence officers in plainclothes approached and forcibly took him away.

The demonstration was part of a wave of protests sweeping Lebanon against corruption and misrule by a group of politicians who have monopolized power since the country's civil war ended three decades ago.

Jaber didn't know it then, but Lebanese security forces targeted him because of his social media posts criticizing President Michel Aoun. What followed were 48 harrowing hours of detention during which security officers interrogated him and subjected him to physical abuse, before letting him go.

"I was beaten, harmed psychologically and morally," Jaber said. "Three of my teeth were broken and I lost 70% of my hearing in my left ear."

"I am still traumatized," he added.

A year after mass protests roiled Lebanon, dozens of protesters are being tried before military courts, proceedings that human rights lawyers say grossly violate due process and fail to investigate allegations of torture and abuse. Defendants tried before the military tribunal say the system is used to intimidate protesters and prop up Lebanon's sectarian rulers.

Around 90 civilians have been referred to the military justice system so far, according to Legal Agenda, a human rights group based in Beirut.

"We expect many more people to be prosecuted," said Ghida Frangieh, a lawyer with the group.

The trials underscore the growing perils of activism in Lebanon, where a string of court cases and judicial investigations against journalists and critics has eroded the country's reputation for free speech and tolerance in a largely autocratic Arab world.

Justice Minister Marie-Claude Najm did not respond to a request for comment. Lebanese officials typically do not address the question of why civilian cases are being tried in the military court system. Security forces have denied beating and torturing protesters and activists in detention.

Frangieh said that security forces arrested around 1,200 people from the beginning of the anti-government uprising in October 2019 through the end of June. Lebanese authorities have prosecuted around 200 of them, including those referred to the military judiciary, the monitoring group has found.

Two months after his arrest, Jaber received an official notice saying military prosecutors were charging him with assaulting security forces at the Baabda Palace when the plainclothes agents detained him.

"I was shocked when I was called to the military tribunal," Jaber said.

The trial did not take place until Oct. 7, when the military court declared Jaber innocent of assaulting security officers, which is a military crime under Lebanese law, but said it lacked jurisdiction over a second charge, that of insulting the president.

Like Jaber, many detained protesters only find out a month or more after their release that authorities have referred them to military courts. Many of these cases were scheduled for hearings this November and December, Frangieh said, before a two-week nationwide lockdown over the coronavirus pandemic temporarily closed the courts.

Jaber's case is an example of how military prosecutors try to claim jurisdiction over civilian cases by usually filing more than one charge, including one that is a military crime, said Frangieh, who represents protesters before the military tribunal and is also part of the Lawyers' Committee for Defense of Protesters.

"There was no evidence," Frangieh said about Jaber's charge of assaulting security officers. "He was

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kidnapped during a protest, but he was actually targeted because of his social media posts that criticized the president.”

The military prosecutor’s office closed, without investigation, a torture complaint that Jaber had submitted, she added.

According to Legal Agenda, the military courts usually issue summary decisions on the same day of the trial, without issuing an explanation.

“There’s really a lot of doubt about the fairness and arbitrariness of the decisions issued by the court,” she said, adding that when defendants are sentenced, the legal basis of the conviction is not immediately shared with their lawyers.

Military prosecutors often neglect to read the full case files prepared from military intelligence reports, or abruptly drop or change charges during trials, according to Frangieh and another lawyer with the committee representing protesters, Ayman Raad.

“Military courts have no business trying civilians,” said Aya Majzoub, a researcher with Human Rights Watch. The international rights group has called on Lebanon’s parliament to end the troubling practice by passing a law to entirely remove civilians from the military court’s jurisdiction.

Georges Abou Fadel was summoned for a military trial on Oct. 30, after he was detained during a protest a year ago in the town of Beit Mery, east of Beirut. During his trial, the military prosecutor asked the judge for time to read the case report, then asked to change the charge against Abou Fadel from assaulting security forces to the lesser charge of nonviolently resisting arrest.

The court found him innocent but Abou Fadel said he wasn’t relieved, knowing there’ll be more trials “for my friends, for the people protesting, for anyone who is trying to call for his rights.”

Lawyers, rights activists and defendants describe the military tribunals’ prosecution of protesters and other civilians as another node in the web of Lebanon’s sectarian system that protects the power of its top politicians rather than the rights of citizens.

“This is one of the tools used by the sectarian parties,” said Abou Fadel — keeping their people loyal through fear of the military courts.

Many of the judges at the military tribunal are appointed by the defense ministry, which undermines the tribunal’s judicial independence, according to rights activists. The head of the military tribunal is customarily Shiite, while the chief military prosecutor is Maronite Christian.

Reforming the Lebanese judicial system is “one of the most important demands” of the anti-government protesters, Raad said, including ending military trials for civilians.

On Nov. 13, Jad Al Rayess was fined 200,000 Lebanese Pounds (\$132) by a military court, 11 months after security forces detained him at a protest on Beirut’s Ring Road. The court has not yet released a statement with the charge for which he was convicted.

The 32-year-old said that he plans to emigrate from Lebanon.

“We are not going to get any progress without blood, and that’s nothing I want to be involved in,” he said.

Associated Press writer Zeina Karam in Beirut contributed to this report.

FDA allows emergency use of antibody drug Trump received

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer

U.S. health officials Saturday agreed to allow emergency use of a second antibody drug to help the immune system fight COVID-19, an experimental medicine that President Donald Trump was given when he was sickened last month.

The Food and Drug Administration authorized use of the Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc. drug to try to prevent hospitalization and worsening disease from developing in patients with mild-to-moderate symptoms.

The drug is given as a one-time treatment through an IV. The FDA allowed its use in adults and children 12 and over who weigh at least 88 pounds (40 kilograms) and who are at high risk of severe illness from

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COVID-19 because of age or certain other medical conditions.

Emergency authorization allows use of the drug to start while studies are continuing to establish safety and effectiveness. Early results suggest the drug may reduce COVID-19-related hospitalization or emergency room visits in patients at high risk for disease progression, the FDA said.

Regeneron said that initial doses will be made available to roughly 300,000 patients through a federal government allocation program. Those patients will not be charged for the drug but may have to pay part of the cost of giving the IV.

Initial supplies will likely be vastly outstripped by demand as the U.S. has surged past 12 million reported cases, with the country facing what health experts say will be a dark winter due to uncontrolled spread of the virus.

Antibodies are proteins the body makes to target and help eliminate viruses, but it can take weeks for the best ones to form after an infection occurs. The drugs are concentrated versions of ones that proved best able to do this in lab and animal tests, and in theory help the body start to fight the virus right away.

The Regeneron drug is a combo of two antibodies to enhance the chances it will prove effective. Earlier this month, the FDA gave emergency authorization to a single-antibody drug from Eli Lilly that also is still being studied.

There's no way to know whether the Regeneron drug helped Trump recover; he received a host of treatments and most COVID-19 patients recover on their own.

FDA regulators authorized the Regeneron drug using their emergency powers to quickly speed the availability of experimental drugs and other medical products during public health crises.

In normal times the FDA requires "substantial evidence" to show that a drug is safe and effective, usually through one or more large, rigorously controlled patient studies. But during public health emergencies the agency can lower those standards and require only that an experimental treatment's potential benefits outweigh its risks.

The emergency authorization functions like a temporary approval for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. To win full approval, Regeneron will have to submit additional research to fully define the drug's safety and benefit for patients.

The White House cast the decision as a victory for Trump's efforts "to deliver cutting-edge treatments with highly promising results to protect the health and safety of the most vulnerable Americans," according to a statement from spokesman Michael Bars.

AP health writer Matthew Perrone contributed to this report.

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Protesters torch Guatemala's Congress building amid unrest

By SONIA PÉREZ D. Associated Press

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) — Hundreds of protesters broke into Guatemala's Congress and burned part of the building Saturday amid growing demonstrations against President Alejandro Giammattei and the legislature for approving a controversial budget that cut educational and health spending.

The incident came as about 10,000 people were protesting in front of the National Palace in Guatemala City against corruption and the budget, which protesters say was negotiated and passed by legislators in secret while the Central American country was distracted by the fallout of back-to-back hurricanes and the COVID-19 pandemic.

About 1,000 protesters were demonstrating outside the Congress building.

Video on social media showed flames shooting out a window in the legislative building. Police fired tear gas at protestors, and about a dozen people were reported injured.

"We are outraged by poverty, injustice, the way they have stolen the public's money," said psychology

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professor Rosa de Chavarría.

"I feel like the future is being stolen from us. We don't see any changes, this cannot continue like this," said Mauricio Ramírez, a 20-year-old university student.

The amount of damage to the building was unclear, but the flames initially appear to have affected legislative offices, rather than the main hall of congress. Protesters also set some bus stations on fire.

Giammattei condemned the fires in his Twitter account Saturday.

"Anyone who is proven to have participated in the criminal acts will be punished with the full force of the law." He wrote that he defended people's right to protest, "but neither can we allow people to vandalize public or private property."

The president said he had been meeting with various groups to present changes to the controversial budget.

Discontent had been building over the 2021 budget on social media and clashes erupted during demonstrations on Friday. Guatemalans were angered because lawmakers approved \$65,000 to pay for meals for themselves, but cut funding for coronavirus patients and human rights agencies, among other things.

Protesters were also upset by recent moves by the Supreme Court and Attorney General they saw as attempts to undermine the fight against corruption.

Vice President Guillermo Castillo has offered to resign, telling Giammattei that both men should resign their positions "for the good of the country." He also suggested vetoing the approved budget, firing government officials and attempting more outreach to various sectors around the country.

Giammattei had not responded publicly to that proposal and Castillo did not share the president's reaction to his proposal. Castillo said he would not resign alone.

The spending plan was negotiated in secret and approved by the congress before dawn Wednesday. It also passed while the country was distracted by the fallout of hurricanes Eta and Iota, which brought torrential rains to much of Central America.

The Roman Catholic Church leadership in Guatemala also called on Giammattei to veto the budget Friday.

"It was a devious blow to the people because Guatemala was between natural disasters, there are signs of government corruption, clientelism in the humanitarian aid," said Jordan Rodas, the country's human rights prosecutor.

He said the budget appeared to favor ministries that have historically been hotspots of corruption.

In 2015, mass streets protests against corruption led to the resignation of President Otto Pérez Molina, his vice president Roxana Baldetti, and members of his Cabinet. Both the former president and Baldetti are in jail awaiting trials in various corruption cases.

Analysis: With silence, GOP enables Trump's risky endgame

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans in Congress are engaged in a risky but calculated bet that once President Donald Trump has exhausted his legal challenges to the election, he will come to grips with his loss to President-elect Joe Biden.

But the opposite is happening.

As one Trump court case after another falls by the wayside, Trump is doubling down on efforts to disrupt the election outcome. Rather than accept the reality of the vote, the president is using the weight of his office to try to squash it. He summoned Michigan state lawmakers to the White House on Friday after personally reaching out to GOP officials ahead of next week's deadline to certify election results. Others from Pennsylvania may similarly be invited in.

Republicans are standing by as it all unfolds. What started as a GOP strategy to give the president the time and space he needed to process his defeat is now spiraling into an unprecedented challenge to the election outcome like nothing since the Civil War.

"It's hit the point where the Republican Party's letting Trump's pout go on too long," said presidential historian Douglas Brinkley, a professor at Rice University in Texas.

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With their silence, the Republican lawmakers are falling in one step deeper with the president they have spent four years trying to appease. A few have spoken up. But mostly the Republicans are enabling Trump as he wages an unsubstantiated attack on the election that threatens to erode civic trust and impede Biden's transition to the White House. It could define careers for years to come.

"It's making future stars of the Republican Party look tiny and small," Brinkley said. "All of these senators are going to carry a dark mark on their legacy for coddling Trump after he lost."

Republicans started with a simple premise: If Trump had concerns about fraudulent voting, as he widely claimed, go to court and make the case.

It was a way to buy time, give Trump a chance to bring evidence, and perhaps convince some of his most ardent supporters of the outcome. Biden now has won 80 million votes to Trump's 74 million.

But in one state after another, from Arizona to Georgia, the Trump cases are failing. Trump forced re-counts Friday in two counties in Wisconsin. More legal action is expected there and cases are pending elsewhere. Nowhere has evidence been presented of widespread voter fraud on a scale that could alter the outcome.

The Republican lawmakers will soon be forced into a moment of truth with key upcoming deadlines.

States are expected to certify election results by Dec. 8, and Republican lawmakers have been eyeing the Dec. 14 Electoral College deadline as their own offramp from Trump's presidency.

That's when GOP lawmakers believe they can start saying publicly what many of them already suggest in private — that Biden, in fact, won the election.

But there's no guarantee their gamble will work. Rather than glide toward that outcome, Trump is digging in — moving beyond the GOP argument that it's about counting legal votes and halting illegal ones to more broadly trying to overturn results.

Trump has talked openly about stacking the Electoral College, where electors are typically determined by the outcome in the states, with his backers.

"I won, by the way," Trump said Friday at the White House. "We'll find that out."

Almost none of the top Republican leaders in the House or Senate responded directly Friday when asked by The Associated Press if they believe the states have any reason not to certify their election results.

Only Rep. Liz Cheney, the No. 3 Republican in the House, and the daughter of the former vice president, said if Trump is unsatisfied with the outcome of the legal battles, he can appeal.

"If the president cannot prove these claims or demonstrate that they would change the election result," Cheney said in a statement to the AP, "he should fulfill his oath to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States by respecting the sanctity of our electoral process."

Trump rejected Cheney's view in a tweet Saturday night that also took aim at her past opposition to withdrawing troops from Afghanistan and Iraq: "Sorry Liz, can't accept the results of an election with hundreds of thousands of fraudulent votes cast, enough to easily flip the Election. You're just unhappy that I'm bringing the troops back home where they belong!"

One key lawmaker, Sen. Pat Toomey, from battleground Pennsylvania, took Saturday's ruling throwing out Trump's lawsuit over the state's vote as an opportunity to assert that Trump had exhausted "all plausible legal options" to challenge the result in Pennsylvania and to declare that Biden's election had been confirmed.

"I congratulate President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris on their victory. They are both dedicated public servants and I will be praying for them and for our country," Toomey said in a statement. He encouraged Trump to "accept the outcome" and facilitate the transition.

With the Capitol still partly shuttered due to the COVID-19 crisis and emptying out for the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday, lawmakers are able to deflect many questions about their positions.

Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., said Friday he wasn't really familiar with what Trump was doing inviting the Michigan lawmakers to the White House.

"I don't really have concerns with him talking about the situation with elected officials," Hawley said at the Capitol as he opened the Senate for a perfunctory session.

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Asked if Trump could overturn the election, Hawley was noncommittal: "Anything's possible." Republicans are calculating that it's better not to provoke the president — he may do something more severe — but let time take its course.

It's a strategy they have used throughout the Trump presidency, keeping him close so as not to alienate his supporters — whom they need for their own reelections — and not getting too involved when he strains the nation's civic norms.

With the upcoming Senate runoff elections in Georgia that will decide which party controls the Senate in January, Republicans are beholden to Trump's supporters to turn out the vote.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell tried to portray the extraordinary week as ordinary.

"In all the presidential elections we go through this process," he said. "What we all say about it is irrelevant."

McConnell said once the state certifications occur, "if they occur," the elections will wrap up.

"One of the beauties of the American electoral system is that we have 50 separate ways to conduct them," he said. "The decisions as to how elections end happen in 50 different places."

The office of Rep. Kevin McCarthy, the House GOP leader, referred to his comments earlier this week when he said, "the states should finish their work."

Meanwhile, the state tallies continue to roll in.

Georgia certified its results Friday after a hand recount found that Biden won by a margin of 12,670 votes, the first Democratic presidential candidate to win the state since 1992. Michigan is scheduled to certify its results Monday. Pennsylvania will soon follow.

The electors are set to present their votes Jan. 6, two weeks before the Jan. 20 inauguration.

EDITOR'S NOTE — AP Congressional Correspondent Lisa Mascaro has covered Congress since 2010. Follow her at <https://twitter.com/LisaMascaro>

This story has been corrected to show that the deadline to certify election results is Dec. 8, not Dec. 6.

COVID-19 deaths of Serbian clerics highlight virus worries

By DON BABWIN Associated Press

As coronavirus cases surge globally, the COVID-19 deaths of two senior Serbian Orthodox Church clerics — one who died weeks after presiding over the funeral of the other — are raising questions about whether some religious institutions are doing enough to slow the spread of the virus.

More reports are emerging about people who attended religious services and contract the virus — some after parishioners seemed to ignore the pleas of church and health officials officials to wear masks, practice social distancing and other steps to combat the virus that's killed nearly 1.4 million people worldwide.

In Belgrade, many mourners paying their respects Saturday to Serbian Orthodox Church Patriarch Irinej ignored precautions and some kissed the glass shield covering the patriarch's body, despite warnings not to do so from Serbia's epidemiologists.

That scene unfolded three weeks after the 90-year-old Irinej led prayers at the funeral of Bishop Amfilohije in nearby Montenegro, an event attended by thousands where many kissed the bishop's remains in an open casket.

The highly publicized episodes happened as Serbia reported thousands of newly confirmed infections daily in the country of 7 million and as the government in recent days has tightened measures to hold off the virus. As the country's health system strains to treat more and more people for the virus, some patients in Belgrade hospitals with less serious conditions are being transferred to hospitals elsewhere.

Those same kinds of tough decisions and terrible predicaments are playing out all across the United States.

California was set to enact a curfew starting Saturday night in an attempt to keep people away from parties, social mixing and drinking — the kinds of activities blamed for causing infections to soar. The state's curfew will run from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew for most of the state's residents and last through at

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least Dec. 21.

"Large numbers of people getting together oblivious of controls — no masks, no social distancing, often indoors — a lot of those things are in fact occurring at night," said Dr. Mark Cullen, an infectious disease expert who recently retired from Stanford University.

President Donald Trump tweeted on Saturday that his eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., is doing "very well" in quarantine after being infected with the virus. Trump Jr. is among more than 12 million Americans who have been infected — and that total also includes the president himself, his wife and his youngest son.

In Texas, overflowing morgues prompted the state's National Guard to send 36-member team to El Paso to help morgue workers handle the increasing number of COVID-19 deaths

"The Texas Military will provide us with the critical personnel to carry out our fatality management plan and we are very grateful to them for their ongoing support," El Paso Mayor Dee Margo said late Friday.

In North Carolina, the Charlotte Observer reported that three more people who attended large events at the United House of Prayer for All People in Charlotte last month died — boosting the total deaths linked to the church's events to 12.

Public health contact tracers and other officials have connected more than 200 COVID-19 cases to the church's events, including people who attended the events and those who came in contact with them, the newspaper reported.

And in Michigan, 61 pastors at Grand Rapids-area churches decided to stop holding in-person worship services, weddings and other big gatherings, largely in response to the pleas of the state's health care workers, who have been overwhelmed by the surge in new cases

In Illinois, as the state tightened restrictions to combat an alarming surge in cases, the Archdiocese of Chicago announced that clergy and bereavement ministers won't be required to attend graveside services if they are worried that more than 10 people could show up.

In Delaware, President-elect Joe Biden said all Americans should be able to attend religious services during the pandemic — as long as they do so safely.

Biden — the second Catholic elected U.S. president — made the statement in response to a reporter's shouted question as he walked out of church Saturday evening.

Biden was asked whether all Americans should be able to attend religious services during the pandemic and responded: "Yes, safely."

He did not answer a follow up question about whether indoor services should be allowed.

The troubling developments linked to church gatherings came as officials across the U.S. in cities and towns brace for an event synonymous with large gatherings: Thanksgiving Day.

Health officials are begging people not to travel for Thanksgiving and asking families to resist inviting anyone over to the house who does not already live there.

"Don't let down your guard, even around close friends and relatives who aren't members of your household," Arizona's health department said on Twitter.

In other coronavirus developments:

— A university in Arizona cracked down on students who hadn't received mandatory COVID-19 testing by locking them out of online classes, a move that prompted most to get into compliance. Northern Arizona University spokeswoman Kimberly Ott said about 25 students were notified early in the past week they wouldn't have continued access to the online instruction system because they didn't get tests or seek an exemption even after three email notifications and a phone call, the Arizona Daily Sun reported.

— Vermont, which has had among the lowest U.S. infection rates but is experiencing a surge, announced it will add more contact tracers and testing capacity. "The contact tracing team has been stressed as you might imagine at this point," Gov. Phil Scott, a Republican, said.

— Iran shuttered businesses and curtailed travel between its major cities, including the capital of Tehran, as it grapples with the worst outbreak of the coronavirus in the Mideast region. The Iranian Health Ministry said on Saturday that the death toll from the virus has surged past 44,000. The new restrictions include Iran's major cities and will last two weeks but can be automatically extended.

— Turkey recorded its highest number of daily coronavirus patients on Saturday, according to the Health

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Ministry, as the country went into its first weekend curfew since June. The ministry said 5,532 new patients with symptoms were diagnosed, some 400 more than were recorded on the previous record day in April.

Many GOP lawmakers shrug off Statehouse mask-wearing rules

By ANDREW DeMILLO Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Many Republican lawmakers in states where coronavirus cases and hospitalizations have surged are not only rejecting statewide mask mandates. They're also resisting rules requiring them in their own capitols.

Efforts to require lawmakers and staff to wear masks have received a cool reception even in statehouses that have seen outbreaks of the virus or where Republican governors have issued statewide mandates. It's echoing a partisan divide nationwide over a simple step that health experts say is proven to help keep others safe.

"We're supposed to be modeling for our constituents and for our residents in our state," said Arkansas state Sen. Stephanie Flowers, a Democrat in the majority-Republican Legislature who proposed a rule requiring senators to wear a mask or risk losing their per diem payments. "You've got the governor asking everyone to wear a mask and socially distance. It's not like I'm asking for something nobody has heard of."

Many legislatures are still planning and drafting rules for their 2021 legislative sessions, while four chambers approved rules requiring masks for sessions this year, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Nearly 200 legislators nationwide have tested positive for the virus and four have died from COVID-19 since the pandemic began, according to figures compiled by The Associated Press. After at least four dozen Mississippi lawmakers tested positive in the largest outbreak in a legislature, where masks were encouraged but not required for lawmakers.

Missouri's Legislature postponed a special session focused on virus relief after a COVID-19 outbreak among lawmakers, and a Tennessee lawmaker said she won't be able to spend Thanksgiving with her mother after attending a hearing where legislators weren't wearing masks.

Health experts warn the public is taking their cue from elected officials at a time those officials are trying to restrict or discourage indoor gatherings that are fueling a rapid rise in cases.

"We know it works, but if political leaders don't stand behind their public health officials and say we need to do this, a significant portion of the public may not follow," said Dr. Jeffrey Levi, professor of health policy at George Washington University.

Legislatures have taken steps to try to limit the virus, with some allowing remote voting and others meeting in larger venues to allow more spacing. Arkansas' House, for example, met in a basketball arena for two sessions last spring but will return to the Capitol next year.

Twelve Arkansas lawmakers have tested positive for the virus over the past month, the second largest known outbreak in a state legislature.

The latest outbreak began after lawmakers convened at the Capitol for budget hearings last month. The budget panel had adopted a mask rule that didn't require lawmakers to wear them when speaking into a microphone, drinking or if they were at least six feet away from other people.

Flowers has diabetes, which puts her at a higher risk of complications from the virus. She pulled down her proposal for a stricter rule in the Senate to make changes based on concerns raised about the measure and plans to bring a reworked version back when lawmakers convene in January. House Speaker Matthew Shepherd said he expected that chamber to take up a version similar to the Joint Budget Committee's rule.

Republican Sen. Trent Garner called Flowers' proposal and its penalties "draconian" and said the Legislature should be held to the same standard as the statewide mask mandate GOP Gov. Asa Hutchinson signed earlier this year.

"We don't need to create a 'tell on each other' rule when it comes to public safety," Garner said.

Tennessee Democratic state Rep. Gloria Johnson tweeted Tuesday she would no longer have Thanksgiving dinner with her mother after attending a legislative meeting with Republican members who weren't

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wearing masks.

"We aren't having a big family Thanksgiving dinner (with) mom due to COVID, but I was going to eat with her at a distance," Johnson wrote, adding that being around her legislative colleague for the past two days will now mean she'll "leave her food on the steps."

House and Senate leaders in Oklahoma announced plans to impose a mask mandate for employees who work inside the Capitol after two lawmakers tested positive last week. But legislative leaders acknowledged that individual legislators couldn't be forced to wear masks.

An outbreak among Missouri state senators that postponed a special session focused on federal coronavirus aid hasn't spurred a requirement for lawmakers there to wear masks either. Republican senators were photographed not wearing masks during a caucus retreat with GOP Gov. Mike Parsons.

"Senators have been encouraged to wear masks and many have done so as they move around through public spaces," Senate President Pro Tem Dave Schatz said. "It is, however, ultimately up to each individual to make that decision."

The fight among lawmakers in some states goes beyond mask rules to whether information is being withheld about outbreaks in their capitols. In Minnesota last week, Democrats in the state Senate demanded that the chamber's majority leader resign from his leadership post after he and other Senate Republicans failed to notify their Democratic colleagues and others of a potential COVID-19 outbreak among the GOP ranks.

Pennsylvania's House has had a mask rule for its members in place since June, but a couple dozen of the chamber's most conservative Republicans have routinely ignored the mandate, and their party's leaders have not enforced it. A Democratic lawmaker on Friday tweeted she had filed a complaint with the state Health Department for unsafe working conditions over the issue.

House Republicans in Ohio have also rejected efforts to require that lawmakers wear masks at the Statehouse, and a statewide mask mandate issued by GOP Gov. Mike DeWine hasn't been enforced on them either.

The debate in state capitols is mirroring that among lawmakers in Washington. Masks are required in the U.S. House, but not in the U.S. Senate. Senators of both parties regularly take off their masks to speak on the Senate floor, a practice that's received some pushback from Democrats.

Sen. Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat, interrupted a floor speech Monday afternoon to ask Sen. Dan Sullivan, an Alaska Republican, to put on his mask as he presided over the Senate, noting that he could be exposing staff nearby.

"I don't wear a mask when I am speaking, like most senators," Sullivan responded, snapping that he would put the mask on but that "I don't need your instruction."

Associated Press writers Sean Murphy in Oklahoma City, Summer Ballentine in Columbia, Missouri, Emily Wagster Pettus in Jackson, Mississippi, Farnoush Amiri in Columbus, Ohio, Mark Scolforo in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Mary Clare Jalonick in Washington, D.C., and Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville, Tennessee, contributed to this report.

Wisconsin officials: Trump observers obstructing recount

By MICHAEL TARM Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Election officials in Wisconsin's largest county accused observers for President Donald Trump on Saturday of seeking to obstruct a recount of the presidential results, in some instances by objecting to every ballot tabulators pulled to count.

Trump requested the recount in Milwaukee and Dane counties, both heavily liberal, in hopes of undoing Democrat Joe Biden's victory by about 20,600 votes. With no precedent for a recount reversing such a large margin, Trump's strategy is widely seen as aimed at an eventual court challenge, part of a push in key states to undo his election loss.

A steady stream of Republican complaints in Milwaukee was putting the recount far behind schedule,

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county clerk George Christenson said. He said many Trump observers were breaking rules by constantly interrupting vote counters with questions and comments.

"That's unacceptable," he said. He said some of the Trump observers "clearly don't know what they are doing."

Tim Posnanski, a county election commissioner, told his fellow commissioners there appeared to be two Trump representatives at some tables where tabulators were counting ballots, violating rules that call for one observer from each campaign per table. Posnanski said some Trump representatives seemed to be posing as independents.

At one recount table, a Trump observer objected to every ballot that tabulators pulled from a bag simply because they were folded, election officials told the panel.

Posnanski called it "prima facie evidence of bad faith by the Trump campaign." He added later: "I want to know what is going on and why there continues to be obstruction."

Joe Voiland, a lawyer speaking to commission members on behalf of the Trump campaign, denied his side was acting in bad faith.

"I want to get to the point of dialing everything down ... and not yelling at each other," Voiland said.

At least one Trump observer was escorted out of the building by sheriff's deputies Saturday after pushing an election official who had lifted her coat from an observer chair. Another Trump observer was removed Friday for not wearing a face mask properly as required.

Trump paid \$3 million, as required by state law, for the partial recount that began Friday and must conclude by Dec. 1.

His team is seeking to disqualify ballots where election clerks filled in missing address information on the certification envelope where the ballot is inserted, even though the practice has long been accepted in Wisconsin.

The campaign also alleges thousands of absentee ballots don't have proper written paperwork, and that some absentee voters improperly declared themselves "indefinitely confined," a status that allows them to receive a ballot without photo ID. Those challenges were being rejected.

There have been at least 31 recounts in statewide elections in the U.S. since the most famous one in Florida's presidential election in 2000. The recounts changed the outcome of three races. All three were decided by hundreds of votes, not thousands.

Nevada facing double-bind of rising cases, limping economy

By SAM METZ and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — As the coronavirus surges to record levels in Nevada, the governor has implored residents to stay home. But Democrat Steve Sisolak has also encouraged out-of-state visitors, the lifeblood of Nevada's limping economy, to come to his state and spend money in Las Vegas.

The pandemic has put officials in this tourism-dependent place in a double-bind: trying to protect the economy while keeping people safe.

With the state seeing a record number of new cases, Sisolak said he's on the brink of imposing new restrictions, but he's walking a tightrope.

"I don't want to shut down the entire economy if I can at all avoid it," Sisolak told reporters on a phone call Wednesday. "We can keep everybody safe and accomplish both ends."

Nevada's tourism and hospitality industry has an estimated \$67.6 billion economic impact, employing more workers and bringing in more state tax revenue than any other sector. Right now, it's hurting and Nevada is facing a nearly 13% unemployment rate — the second highest in the U.S. behind Hawaii.

While the governor has urged Nevadans to try to get their groceries delivered, forgo in-person dining and stay home, he's said he welcomes out-of-state tourists to Nevada. And though he implored residents to consider curbside pick-up, he said tourists were welcome to patronize restaurants as long as they followed protocols, such as abiding by the statewide mask mandate.

But with cases surging, the current measures aren't working, officials acknowledge.

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On Thursday, Nevada reported 2,416 new confirmed COVID-19 cases — a record of daily new cases for the state.

The Nevada Hospital Association reports 80% of hospital beds in the state are occupied and said in a bulletin this week that “current strategies are not successfully minimizing the spread of serious disease.”

In Reno, where one hospital has begun moving some coronavirus patients into its parking garage, the county health officer recommended that the governor limit statewide gatherings to 10 people.

Meanwhile, the governor is facing political pushback against more restrictions, along with workers, businesses and industry groups who have taken a big financial hit and are pushing for stability and some way to hang on.

Sisolak, who is grappling with his own COVID-19 diagnosis, has not offered any details about what measures he’s planning to announce next week to curb the spread of the virus, which has so far infected more than 131,000 Nevadans and caused 2,011 deaths.

While he hasn’t ruled out temporary closures of casinos and restaurants, he has defended the current health and safety practices in place as extensive and said he’d be hard-pressed to make any decision that hurts the ability to welcome visitors.

But the governor and his staff have offered little indication as to what other mitigation options they might pursue.

“I don’t have a strong or definitive idea of what that looks like,” Nevada COVID-19 Director Caleb Cage said Friday.

“We’ve done a stay-at-home order before and we’ve seen the impact on the virus and we’ve seen the impact on the economy that comes from that. And we’ve tried to do a more targeted approach and seen the impacts on both through that as well,” he said.

Republicans in the state Legislature urged the governor this week not to impose blanket restrictions.

In a publicly released letter, members of the Assembly Republican Caucus this week told Sisolak that, while they “appreciate the severity of the situation” they warned that “stricter restrictions will once again lead to declining sales and revenue for local businesses and an increase in unemployment – our state simply cannot afford this.”

After Nevada’s casinos, restaurants and many other businesses were closed in mid-March, the state set a record unemployment rate in April at 30.1%, the highest of any U.S. state ever. Though most businesses have been allowed to reopen, albeit with restrictions, the state’s unemployment rate has for months been among the highest in the country.

The economic hit of an 11-week shutdown of the state’s casinos and tourism businesses this spring was compounded in the months that followed as the pandemic stunted demand.

Visitor numbers and room occupancy rates in Las Vegas in September were roughly half what they were the same month in 2019. At least five casino resorts have some weekday closures, announcing they would not take some mid-week reservations due to lack of demand.

Countless restaurants have closed. Entertainment acts haven’t been spared either. Several acrobatic spectacles have been among the shuttered shows, including the Cirque du Soleil show “Zumanity” that ran for 17 years at the New York-New York Hotel.

Concert, convention and trade show venues have been capped at 250 socially distant people and were hoping they’d be able to expand and hold large events again. Sisolak in late October said he hoped large event venues would be able to begin filling their venues to 50% capacity in January, but it’s unclear if that target is still under consideration.

The Nevada Resort Association, which represents the gambling and hospitality industry, has been pressing for some kind of roadmap to once again holding large live events.

“The people who plan and book these events — both on our side and on the people who are bringing events here — they need some predictability,” Nevada Resort Association President Virginia Valentine said.

Metz reported from Carson City, Nevada. He is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places

journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

Judge rules against Trump global media chief after firings

By LYNN BERRY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge has ruled against the head of the agency that runs the Voice of America and other U.S.-funded news outlets who was accused of trying to turn it into a propaganda vehicle to promote President Donald Trump's agenda.

The ruling effectively bars U.S. Agency for Global Media CEO Michael Pack from making personnel decisions and interfering in editorial operations.

Pack, a conservative filmmaker, Trump ally and onetime associate of former Trump political adviser Steve Bannon, made no secret of his intent to shake up the agency after taking over in June.

He proceeded to purge the leadership at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Middle East Broadcasting Networks and the Open Technology Fund, which works to provide secure internet access to people around the world. The director and deputy director of VOA resigned just days before the firings. Pack also dismissed their governing boards.

His moves were criticized by both Democrats and Republicans in Congress who control the agency's budget.

The lawsuit was filed last month in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia by five executives who had been fired or suspended. They accused Pack and his senior advisers of violating the "statutory firewall" intended to protect the news organizations from political interference.

After the suit was filed, Pack announced he had rescinded the "firewall rule" issued by the Broadcasting Board of Governors. In a statement posted on his agency's website, he said the rule wrongly prohibited him from directing broadcast operations and "made the agency difficult to manage."

In her ruling late Friday, Judge Beryl Howell imposed preliminary injunctions that prevent Pak from making personnel decisions about journalists employed by the agency, directly communicating with them and conducting any investigations into editorial content or individual journalists.

In July, Pack had ordered an investigation into the posting of a video package featuring now President-elect Joe Biden on a VOA website. He called the segment "pro-Biden" and said his staff was weighing disciplinary action against those responsible.

Fourteen senior VOA journalists sent a letter to management in August protesting Pack's actions, including the dismissal of foreign journalists and his comments denigrating VOA staff, which they said were endangering their colleagues and the international broadcaster's credibility.

"The court confirmed that the First Amendment forbids Mr. Pack and his team from attempting to take control of these journalistic outlets, from investigating their journalists for purported 'bias,' and from attempting to influence or control their reporting content," Lee Crain, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, said in a statement.

The global media agency did not immediately respond to a written request for comment on the ruling.

VOA was founded during World War II and its congressional charter requires it to present independent news and information to international audiences.

Week offers snapshot of how Trump, Biden approach presidency

By JILL COLVIN, STEVE PEOPLES and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — One spent the week at his home in Delaware carefully trying to build a government and preparing to take on a pandemic.

The other largely kept to himself behind closed doors at a mostly empty White House, angrily tweeting and using his office and allies to try to subvert the results of an American election in a dangerous breach of democracy.

If the differences between President-elect Joe Biden and President Donald Trump were not already clear,

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the days since the Nov. 3 election was decided have demonstrated the dramatically divergent ways in which each approaches the job of commander in chief.

Trump has largely abandoned governing, despite a pandemic that has now killed more than 250,000 people in the U.S. and is raging out of control. He has rejected the results of the election, concocted conspiracies that are now believed by his most loyal supporters and refused to allow his government to participate in the peaceful transition of power to the next administration while trying to pressure state legislators and election officials to overturn the will of the voters.

Denied the briefings, access to agencies and funding that are part of a traditional transition, Biden has nonetheless tried to move forward. He has named senior staff, decided on Cabinet members and attempted to glean information about policy and national security from former government officials and others, including governors, who have worked with the Trump administration.

At the White House, the West Wing was largely empty, with few staffers and little of the hustle and bustle typically seen in the tight warren of offices before the election and before yet another COVID-19 outbreak.

The circle around the president has grown smaller in recent weeks. Staffers who normally would leap at the chance to set foot in the Oval Office now try to avoid it for fear of crossing a temperamental president who has been angrily demanding answers from aides as to how to further contest the election.

Even his personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, has been forced to steer clear of the White House after the former New York mayor's son, a White House staffer, announced he had tested positive for the virus. Rudy Giuliani has taken over the president's legal efforts to contest the election, despite a lack of evidence behind those challenges.

Trump snapped at aides when he was told that Giuliani and the rest of his legal team could not meet at the White House on Friday after they, too, had been exposed. And he complained to confidants that Giuliani had embarrassed himself during a Thursday news conference when what appeared to be hair dye dripped down Giuliani's sweating face as he asserted falsehood after conspiratorial falsehood about the results.

The Trump West Wing, never a well-oiled machine, was even less organized than usual.

Staffers in the press office, who control the White House briefing room, found out from reporters on Thursday that the coronavirus task force, led by Vice President Mike Pence, had scheduled a briefing there.

Trump finally made an appearance Friday to discuss prescription drug prices — an event he had demanded, to push back against the storyline that he was in hiding. But he again skirted reporters' questions, as he has for more than two weeks now.

Just beyond the White House gates, construction continues on the stands from which spectators will watch the inauguration parade in honor of President-elect Joe Biden in January.

Just about two hours' drive away, in Delaware, Biden focused on the business of governing rather than social media or baseless claims of voter fraud. It was his second full week as president-elect.

Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris gathered each day at a makeshift transition headquarters at a theater in downtown Wilmington where they held a series of virtual meetings.

They met with business and labor leaders Monday, national security experts Tuesday, front-line health care workers Wednesday, governors Thursday and the two most powerful Democrats in Congress on Friday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer.

"It was more of an information gathering meeting. They didn't put forth any policies or say, 'This is what we want to change,'" said GOP Gov. Larry Hogan of Maryland, who participated in Thursday's call that was focused on the coronavirus. "They were mostly listening mode."

Indeed, the conversations, according to people familiar with their contents, were focused almost exclusively on the pandemic and how the Biden administration might try to stop the exponential spread of the disease immediately after his Jan. 20 inauguration — or even before.

Biden repeatedly called on congressional leaders to end their stalemate and pass a sweeping COVID-19 relief bill by year's end.

While at home, he was in regular contact with a small group of senior aides, including newly appointed chief of staff Ron Klain, to begin the complicated process of filling key administration posts. By Thursday,

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he had finalized his pick for treasury secretary. By Friday, he had announced more than a dozen senior White House hires.

He also made a series of thank-you calls to members of the disparate factions of the Democratic Party who had helped achieve his victory and whose continued support will be critical to rallying Americans behind his agenda.

Biden did not completely ignore Trump.

Biden answered questions during two brief news conferences during the week, and both times, he condemned the Republican president's unprecedented push to block his transition. But even in his criticism, Biden focused on the challenge of governing.

He said Thursday that Trump's intransigence was "another incident where he will go down in history as being one of the most irresponsible presidents in American history."

"Let me choose my words here. I think they're witnessing incredible irresponsibility, incredibly damaging messages being sent to the rest of the world about how democracy functions," he told reporters.

Asked what he would say to people concerned about Trump's push to undermine the election, Biden had a simple message: "Hang on. I'm on my way."

AP Explains: The FBI is investigating Texas AG Ken Paxton

By JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — The FBI recently opened a criminal investigation into claims that Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton abused his office to benefit a wealthy donor.

The probe, which was confirmed to The Associated Press by two people with knowledge of it who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the investigation is ongoing, marks an escalation in the latest controversy to surround the high-profile Republican, who has spent years under indictment on unrelated state securities fraud charges.

The FBI's interest in Texas' top law enforcement official arose from a rebellion by Paxton's top deputies, who accused him of breaking the law by using his office to help a wealthy donor with a troubled real estate empire who also hired a woman with whom the married Paxton allegedly had an affair.

Paxton has broadly denied wrongdoing and refused calls to resign, saying he'll seek a third term in 2022 and that he's prepared to fight it out in court. He has weathered other storms during his rise to becoming one of the country's leading legal crusaders for conservative causes.

With the complex drama likely to continue, here is what you need to know about Paxton's cases:

WHAT IS PAXTON'S BACKGROUND?

Paxton, a 57-year-old lawyer, was a Texas legislator before he became the state attorney general in 2015. His wife was later elected to his former state Senate seat representing Dallas suburbs.

An evangelical conservative, Paxton has positioned himself as a fierce fighter for right-wing causes and close ally of President Donald Trump. He has sued to overturn the Affordable Care Act, to end an Obama-era program that protected young immigrants from deportation, and to limit mail-in voting during the coronavirus pandemic.

He has also been dogged by ethics questions for much of his public life and spent most of his tenure as attorney general maintaining his innocence in the face of securities fraud charges. Paxton pleaded not guilty to three felony counts in 2015 and narrowly won reelection three years later.

His lawyers and allies have successfully stalled the fraud case for years and it remains unclear when or where he might stand trial.

WHY IS THE FBI INVESTIGATING PAXTON?

In the runup to this month's election, Paxton's top deputies riled Texas politics by accusing him of breaking the law to help businessman Nate Paul.

Seven senior lawyers in Paxton's office reported him to the FBI in late September, accusing him of abusing his office, bribery and other crimes. The group included some of Paxton's longtime allies and was later joined by the agency's head of law enforcement. All eight have since resigned, been put on leave or been

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fired, prompting a whistleblower lawsuit.

The full extent of what Paxton's employees told the FBI is unknown and the agency has consistently declined to comment.

Paxton's actions appear to have helped Paul in at least four ways. But the one that led his staff to report him was Paxton's hiring of an outside lawyer to investigate Paul's claims that the FBI, federal judges and others were conspiring against him.

The lawyers in Paxton's office felt Paul's claims were unsupported and outside of their office's jurisdiction. The Houston lawyer Paxton hired had no prosecutorial experience but did have ties to Paul's defense attorney.

Paxton has largely not responded to questions, but he said there's nothing to the claims against him.

WHO IS NATE PAUL?

Paul is an Austin-based developer in his early 30s who owns properties valued at more than a billion dollars. His grip on this empire has come into question because of delinquent debt and spiraling legal problems.

Last year, the FBI raided Paul's offices and palatial home. An FBI document obtained by the AP suggests the investigation is focused on potential securities fraud.

Paul has not been publicly charged with any crime and alleges that FBI agents, a federal judge and others broke the law during the searches. In another request for a criminal investigation that reached Paxton's office, Paul claimed businessmen and another judge were conspiring to steal \$200 million worth of his properties.

WHAT CONNECTS PAXTON AND PAUL?

In Texas, most criminal cases are handled by local prosecutors. Paxton's unusual move to take up Paul's complaints raised red flags for his deputies and questions about the friendly relationship between Paxton and Paul.

Paul gave Paxton \$25,000 during his 2018 reelection campaign, but the full nature of their ties remains unclear.

A significant connection came to light when Paul said in a deposition this month that he'd hired a woman at Paxton's recommendation. Paxton acknowledged having an extramarital affair with her in 2018, when she was a state Senate aide, two people told the AP. They spoke on the condition of anonymity due to fears about retaliation.

Paul said he didn't hire the woman as a favor to Paxton, who hasn't denied the affair happened.

Paxton suggested in a statement that he took on Paul's case because it's what Texans expect.

"I make no apologies for being a fierce investigator and defender of individual rights in the face of potentially unreasonable and authoritarian actions," Paxton said. "Doing so is not favoritism."

Paul's lawyer, Michael Wynne, has lambasted Paxton's office for bungling the investigations and suggested that Paul might sue.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Paxton's office dropped the probe of Paul's complaints in October after the allegations against the attorney general became public and local prosecutors expressed concern.

Since then, information has dribbled out in the press and various lawsuits against Paul. That trickle could turn into a geyser if the former employees suing Paxton are able to take depositions and obtain records through discovery.

But FBI investigations often take months or years and normally become public only if someone is charged.

The controversy hasn't turned Paxton's party against him. Gov. Greg Abbott and other Texas Republicans expressed initial concerns about the allegations but have remained silent for weeks and have exerted no public pressure on him to resign.

During next year's legislative session, lawmakers could move to censure or impeach Paxton. But the latter is rare in Texas and the attorney general has a defender in his wife, state Sen. Angela Paxton.

For now, Paxton is telling "the citizens of Texas" that he'll continue to advocate for them — including in his own court cases.

Follow Jake Bleiberg: <https://twitter.com/jzbleiberg>

Bodies of man and his slave unearthed from ashes at Pompeii

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Skeletal remains of what are believed to have been a rich man and his male slave attempting to escape death from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius nearly 2,000 years ago have been discovered in Pompeii, officials at the archaeological park in Italy said Saturday.

Parts of the skulls and bones of the two men were found during excavation of the ruins from what was once an elegant villa with a panoramic view of the Mediterranean Sea on the outskirts of the ancient Roman city destroyed by the volcano eruption in 79 A.D. It's the same area where a stable with the remains of three harnessed horses were excavated in 2017.

Pompeii officials said the men apparently escaped the initial fall of ash from Mount Vesuvius then succumbed to a powerful volcanic blast that took place the next morning. The later blast "apparently invaded the area from many points, surrounding and burying the victims in ash," Pompeii officials said in a statement.

The remains of the two victims, lying next to each other on their backs, were found in a layer of gray ash at least 2 meters (6.5 feet) deep, they said.

As has been done when other remains have been discovered at the Pompeii site, archaeologists poured liquid chalk into the cavities, or void, left by the decaying bodies in the ash and pumice that rained down from the volcano near modern-day Naples and demolished the upper levels of the villa.

The technique, pioneered in the 1800s, gives the image not only of the shape and position of the victims in the throes of death, but makes the remains "seem like statues," said Massimo Osanna, an archaeologist who is director general of the archaeological park operated under the jurisdiction of the Italian Culture Ministry.

Judging by cranial bones and teeth, one of the men was young, likely aged 18 to 25, with a spinal column with compressed discs. That finding led archaeologists to hypothesize that he was a young man who did manual labor, like that of a slave.

The other man had a robust bone structure, especially in his chest area, and died with his hands on his chest and his legs bent and spread apart. He was estimated to have been 30- to 40-years-old, Pompeii officials said. Fragments of white paint were found near the man's face, probably remnants of a collapsed upper wall, the officials said.

Both skeletons were found in a side room along an underground corridor, or passageway, known in ancient Roman times as a cryptoporticus, which led to the upper level of the villa.

"The victims were probably looking for shelter in the cryptoporticus, in this underground space, where they thought they were better protected," said Osanna.

Instead, on the morning of Oct. 25, 79 A.D., a "blazing cloud (of volcanic material) arrived in Pompeii and...killed anyone it encountered on its way," Osanna said.

Based on the impression of fabric folds left in the ash layer, it appeared the younger man was wearing a short, pleated tunic, possibly of wool. The older victim, in addition to wearing a tunic, appeared to have had a mantle over his left shoulder.

Mount Vesuvius remains an active volcano. While excavations continue at the site near Naples, tourists are currently barred from the archaeological park under national anti-COVID-19 measures.

She fled Ethiopia's fighting. Now she warns of 'catastrophe'

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Shaken by the gunfire erupting around her town in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region, the woman decided to get out. She joined a long line at the local government office for the paperwork needed to travel. But when she reached the official, he told her she had wasted her time.

"This is for people who are volunteering to fight," he said.

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As Ethiopia's government wages war in its Tigray region and seeks to arrest its defiant leaders, who regard the federal government as illegitimate after a falling-out over power, the fighting that could destabilize the Horn of Africa is hidden from outside view. Communications are severed, roads blocked and airports closed.

But as one of the few hundred people who were evacuated this week from Tigray, the woman in an interview with The Associated Press offered rare details of anger, desperation and growing hunger as both sides reject international calls for dialogue, or even a humanitarian corridor for aid, in their third week of deadly fighting. The United Nations says food and other essentials "will soon be exhausted, putting millions at risk."

With supplies blocked at the Tigray borders and frantic aid workers using a dwindling number of satellite phones to reach the world, it is extremely difficult to hear accounts from those suffering on the ground. At least several hundred people have been killed, and the United Nations has condemned "targeted attacks against civilians based on their ethnicity or religion."

The woman, an Ethiopian aid expert who spoke on condition of anonymity out of concern for herself and loved ones, gave one of the most detailed accounts yet of a population of some 6 million short of food, fuel, cash and even water, and without electricity as Ethiopia's army marches closer to the Tigray capital every day.

"I am telling you, people will slowly start to die," she said.

Not all of her account could be verified. But the description of her passage through the Tigray capital, Mekele, to Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, fit with others that have trickled out from aid workers, diplomats, a senior university official and some of the more than 35,000 refugees who have fled into Sudan after the fighting began Nov. 4. She was connected with the AP by a foreign evacuee.

As borders, roads and airports swiftly closed after Ethiopia's prime minister announced that Tigray forces had attacked a military base, the woman felt torn. She had family in Addis Ababa and wanted to be with them.

Banks had closed, but loved ones gave her enough money to travel to Mekele. As she drove, she squeezed her car through makeshift barriers of stones piled up by local youth. She said she did not see fighting.

In Mekele, she met with friends around the university. She was shocked by what she saw. "It was a panic," she said. "Students were sleeping outside the university because they had come from all over." There was little to feed them. Supplies in the markets were running low.

While in Mekele, she said, she heard three "bombardments" against the city. Ethiopia's government has confirmed airstrikes around the city. When Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in televised comments told civilians in Tigray not to congregate for their safety, "that was a big panic," she said. "People said, 'Is he going to completely bomb us?' There was huge anger, people pushing and saying, 'I want to fight.'"

When she visited a loved one at a university hospital, "a doctor said they have no medicine, no insulin. At all!" she said. "They were hoping the (International Committee of the Red Cross) would give them some."

Seeking to travel on to Addis Ababa, she found fuel on the black market but was warned her car could be a target. But the U.N. and other aid groups had managed to arrange a convoy to evacuate non-essential staffers to the Ethiopian capital, and she found a space on one of the buses. "I think I was quite lucky," she said.

But as the buses pulled out of the capital, she was scared.

The convoy of some 20 vehicles made its way through the night to the capital of the arid Afar region east of Tigray, then through the restive Amhara region, going slowly from checkpoint to checkpoint, not all of the security forces manning them briefed on the evacuation.

"It took four days in total," the woman said of the journey, which would have taken a day by the direct route. "I was really afraid." Tigray special forces watched over the convoy in the beginning, she said. Near the end, federal police accompanied it. They were "very disciplined," she said.

Now, after arriving in Addis Ababa earlier this week, she adds her voice to the growing calls for dialogue between the two governments, which now regard each other as illegal after the once-dominant Tigray regional party and its members were marginalized under Abiy's reformist two-year rule.

"I think they should negotiate," she said. "And we really need a corridor so food and medicine can go

in. What about the people?"

The prospect of dialogue appears distant. The U.S. Embassy this week told citizens remaining in Tigray to shelter in place if they could not get out safely.

Like other worried families in Ethiopia and the diaspora, the woman cannot reach her relatives left behind. Many foreigners are still trapped in Tigray too, she said.

"No one knows who is alive, who is dead," she said. "This is a catastrophe for me."

On Thursday, she said, she managed to speak with a university friend in Mekele. The university had been hit by an airstrike. More than 20 students were wounded.

"She was crying," the evacuee said. "She's a strong woman, I know that." Her voice was shaking.

Iran closes businesses, curtails travel amid virus surge

By NASSER KARIMI Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran on Saturday shuttered businesses and curtailed travel between its major cities, including the capital of Tehran, as it grapples with the worst outbreak of the coronavirus in the Mideast region.

Top Iranian officials initially downplayed the risks posed by the virus outbreak, before recently urging the public to follow measures like wearing masks and avoiding unessential travel.

Iran has recorded daily death tolls of above 430 over the past five days. The Iranian Health Ministry said on Saturday that the total number of confirmed cases has risen to above 840,000.

The new lockdown measures, which include shuttering most businesses, shops, malls, and restaurants, include Iran's largest cities of Mashhad, Isfahan, and Shiraz. Iranian authorities have designated the nearly 160 towns and cities affected as hot spots because these urban centers have the highest daily per capita positive coronavirus test results.

On Saturday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in a televised speech urged people to follow the measures to help "lessen the death toll." He added that the government plans to supply cash subsidies to Iran's 30 million poorest people for four months to help them to manage the economic fallout from the new outbreak.

The latest round of restrictions to stem the outbreak came as a spat among top Iranian health officials led to the resignation of at least two officials.

Iranian newspapers said Saturday that the deputy health minister in charge of research, Reza Malekzadeh, resigned from his post in reaction to recent remarks by the Minister of Health Saeed Namaki, who said government-led research projects were not successfully addressing the current needs of the ministry.

In reply, Malekzadeh in his resignation letter criticized government's mismanagement of the virus outbreak as leading to a "large number of human deaths."

Iranian news websites also said that Ali Nobakht, an advisor to the health minister, resigned over similar reasons, without providing further details.

In Tehran, the head of the city's chamber of commerce, Qassem Nodeh, said that the restrictions will lead to the closure of 70% of business in the capital and its surrounding areas.

Manoochehr Nassiri, who runs a lighting shop in Tehran's Grand Bazaar, complained about the closures. "We shop owners don't know what to do, considering the economic situation of the country," he said standing outside his shuttered store.

The closures are set to last two weeks but can be automatically extended.

Beginning on Saturday, government offices that provide essential public services—including banks, post offices, communications and utilities services—will continue their work with half of the regular number of staff. All other government offices will continue working with one third of their staff.

All schools in the capital will also be closed and required to switch to virtual instruction by Internet. Authorities will also close shrines in Tehran and cancel mass prayers in mosques, though it was not immediately clear if the same restrictions would apply in other cities, including the holy city of Mashhad.

Any travel between the affected cities by private car is also suspended. Public transportation will be available but the use of private cars is banned between 9 p.m. to 4 a.m.

People who have tested positive for the virus are required to stay at home and can face a roughly \$8

cash fine if they appear in public.

Media organizations, construction jobs, agriculture, heavy industry, and services for the elderly and assisted living are largely exempt from the closures.

Iran has avoided the full lockdowns seen in other countries as it struggles to keep its faltering economy alive in the face of crushing U.S. sanctions. President Donald Trump re-imposed sweeping sanctions on the country after withdrawing from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018.

Retailers brace as virus bears down on consumers and economy

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — LaTonya Story is every retailer's worst fear.

With the viral pandemic re-surfing through the country and the economy under threat, Story has decided to slash her holiday shopping budget. She'll spend less than \$2,000 this season, down from several thousand dollars in 2019. Worried about entering stores, she's buying gifts online and going out only for groceries.

"I want to be conservative," said Story, a 47-year-old Atlanta resident. "I'm not a scientist, but the best precaution is to stay in place."

The acceleration of coronavirus cases is causing an existential crisis for America's retailers and spooking their customers just as the critically important holiday shopping season nears. It's also raising the risk that the economy could slide into a "double-dip" recession this winter as states and cities re-impose restrictions on businesses and consumers stay at home to avoid contracting the disease.

An anxious consumer is a frightening prospect for retailers as well as for the overall economy. Any sustained recovery from the pandemic recession hinges on consumers, whose spending fuels about 70% of economic growth.

So as the virus rampages across the nation and with holiday sales expected to be weak and heavily dependent on online shopping, retailers are considering extraordinary steps to draw customers.

Some, like Giftery, a small shop in Nashville, Tennessee, are adopting their own safety restrictions. To reduce respiratory particles that could spread the virus, Giftery is asking shoppers to refrain from talking on cellphones.

"It is vital for us to stay open," said William Smithson, the owner of Giftery, which generates about 35% of its annual sales from the holiday season.

At the same time, some high-end retailers are giving customers extra coddling. Neiman Marcus is letting shoppers book appointments to take virtual tours of its holiday trees and other decorations if they're too fearful to enter a store. In doing so, the retailer hopes its customers will also get into the spirit of buying gifts.

"Business restrictions are increasing, and there will be some economic fallout from that," said Jim O'Sullivan, an economist at TD Securities. But "even without authorities announcing new restrictions, individuals are likely to pull back from activity on their own."

O'Sullivan predicts that the economy won't grow at all in the final three months of the year — down from his earlier forecast of a 3% annual growth rate in that quarter — and will shrink 2% in the first three months of 2021. He, like most economists, expects a rebound starting in the second quarter once a vaccine is widely distributed.

O'Sullivan's forecasts assume that Congress will agree on roughly \$1 trillion in new stimulus for the economy by early 2021. Yet so far, there's no sign of progress toward an agreement. More than 9 million people will lose their unemployment aid at year's end, when two jobless aid programs are set to expire, unless Congress extends them. Consumer spending will likely fall further.

New viral cases doubled in just three weeks, O'Sullivan noted, after the previous doubling had taken six weeks. And as a consequence, many states are adopting or considering new restrictions on businesses. Maryland has limited stores and restaurants to 50% capacity. Retailers in most of California are now capped at just 25%; gyms, restaurants and movie theaters are closed to indoor customers. Illinois and

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Washington have limited stores to 25% capacity.

Sales at restaurants and bars fell in October for the first time in six months. Restaurant traffic declined further in November, according to the reservations provider OpenTable. Hotel occupancy is down from a month ago. Consumer spending on credit cards dropped in the first week of November from a month earlier, according to data compiled by Opportunity Insights.

After the deep recession that erupted in early spring, the economy did rebound faster over the summer and fall than most economists had expected. And some industries are still faring well. Home sales rose to a 14-year high last month. Manufacturing output, too, is still growing, though it remains below pre-pandemic levels.

But those positive signs reflect an unequal recovery. While lower-paid employees in face-to-face industries have lost jobs or fear losing them, higher-paid Americans have mainly been able to keep working from home. These consumers have shifted much of their spending away from services, like eating out, going to movies and hitting the gym, to buying goods — from computers and home and garden supplies to appliances and fitness equipment.

Yet many of those purchases have occurred online, with e-commerce sales having jumped 29% in the past year. By contrast, sales at physical retail stores, excluding autos, are essentially flat over the past 12 months.

As Story, the Atlanta consumer, and other Americans cut back and as colder weather ends outdoor dining in much of the country, consumer spending will likely weaken and hiring slow. Layoffs could rise. The number of people seeking unemployment benefits rose last week to 742,000 — a historically high number and the first increase since early October.

Small businesses are particularly worried about being forced to shut down again.

"If we close, it will be a devastation," said Paulette Garafalo, CEO of Paul Stuart, a high-end clothing retailer that operates five stores in Chicago, New York and Washington, D.C.

The stores previously closed for four months while the company pivoted to online sales. But that shift generated only about 25% of pre-COVID business. Sales have since improved. But Garafalo doesn't envision a boost from the holiday season. She just hopes sales won't fall.

Out of a sense of urgency, Garafalo's stores have called in their most seasoned sales people to alert customers to new merchandise and aggressively marketing a gift guide.

Likewise, Elonka Perez, who co-owns two restaurants in Washington state, says she's "scared out of my mind" after Gov. Jay Inslee banned indoor dining again. Perez doesn't know if her Taco Street restaurant in Seattle will earn enough money from takeout to survive colder weather.

"Winter is typically the slowest time for restaurants," Perez says.

Taco Street was open for indoor dining for only a few weeks before having to shut down again. Perez and her husband have been pouring their savings into the business. They don't know how long that can continue.

Macy's, long an iconic symbol of the holiday shopping season, had to temporarily close its store in El Paso, Texas, because of a viral surge there. The chain is studying how the surge in viral cases is affecting the willingness of shoppers to enter its stores. In the meantime, Macy's has sped up its checkout service for curbside delivery.

Other chains, particularly Target and Walmart, have benefited from changing habits. Customers are increasingly spending more when they visit the two chains, because they can combine shopping trips and buy food, clothes and other household goods — all at one location. That additional spending has come at the expense of small and independent stores.

For many consumers, the pandemic has transformed what shopping means. Alyse November, a licensed social worker in Boca Raton, Florida, says her clients have become increasingly stressed about shopping.

"Shopping was an outlet to relieve stress — it was an escape from life," November said. "Now, it's a source of stress because the process of it is so cumbersome. ... We don't know how to do it and do it safely."

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D'Innocenzio reported from New York. AP Business Writer Joyce M. Rosenberg also contributed from New York.

to this report.

Criminal justice reformers cheer multiple election victories

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Almost six months after the death of George Floyd, criminal justice reform advocates are cheering the election of a handful of progressive prosecutors, the passage of ballot initiatives designed to ease mass incarceration and the decriminalization of drugs in several states.

Voters also sent Black Lives Matter activists to Congress, restored voting rights to former prisoners and scored other gains sought by the protests that filled American streets last summer. Leaders in the movement want to build on those successes in 2021.

The aim was to “build a multiracial coalition that could translate the movement power we saw in the streets into electoral might. And it worked,” said Maurice Mitchell, a Movement for Black Lives strategist and national director of the Working Families Party.

The 2020 results were not all victories, however. Reformers also saw setbacks, including a blow to the movement to defund local police departments. Rep. James Clyburn, the House majority whip from South Carolina, and other Democrats blamed the defunding rhetoric for the party’s surprise loss of seats in the House. Clyburn warned that the idea could harm the larger BLM movement.

Going into Election Day, most Democrats, including former Vice President Joe Biden, rejected the idea of reducing police budgets to answer for systemic racism in the justice system.

The protests sparked by Floyd’s death at the hands of Minneapolis police in May thrust the defunding demand before city councils, including those in Minneapolis, Milwaukee and New York City. But defunding appears to be unpopular when voters hear it discussed in abstract, said Alex Vitale, a sociology professor at Brooklyn College in New York and author of “The End of Policing.”

“In a whole bunch of places, when people were able to vote on something concrete, it turned out they were in favor of defunding the police, but just not in those terms,” Vitale said. He pointed to a ballot measure in Los Angeles County that reallocates money to services to keep people out of jail.

Measure J, which was approved by nearly 57% of voters in Los Angeles, requires at least 10% of the county’s budget to be earmarked for community investments and alternatives to incarceration, such as addiction treatment and other pretrial services.

Across California, nearly 59% of voters approved Proposition 17, which restores voting rights to formerly incarcerated people who have yet to complete parole.

“When our progressive vision was on the ballot, we won,” said Patrisse Cullors, co-founder of BLM and executive director of the BLM Global Network Foundation, who is from Los Angeles.

The victories happened against a backdrop of mass incarceration and police brutality that took decades to construct: Almost 2.3 million Americans are incarcerated, Black and Latinx people disproportionately so. And Black people are far more likely to be pulled over, searched and or killed by police, studies of criminal justice data have repeatedly shown.

With Ferguson Uprising protester Cori Bush of St. Louis and progressive activist Mondaire Jones of New York headed to Congress, Cullors and other movement leaders believe they now have new champions for sweeping legislative justice reforms at the federal level. The BREATHE Act, a bill drafted by the policy table of the Movement for Black Lives, would erase federal funding for excess military equipment that has been funneled to local police departments, among other aims. The bill has not yet been introduced on Capitol Hill.

Meanwhile, at the local level, winning prosecutor candidates are set to make good on their pledges to take up or continue progressive policies such as declining to prosecute low-level drug offenses, eliminating cash bail and holding police accountable for brutality.

Seven of the eight district attorney candidates endorsed by the Working Families Party easily won their

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ances, including Monique Worrell, who ran for Orange-Osceola state's attorney in Florida, and José Garza, who ran for district attorney in Travis County, Texas.

"There's no question that, in this country, people have spoken overwhelmingly about their desire and the need for us to fix our broken criminal justice system," Garza said.

The district attorney-elect, whose jurisdiction will include Austin, has pledged not to prosecute drug possession or sales of a gram or less. In Austin, that could have a major impact on the racial disparity among inmates at the county jail, Garza believes.

Eli Savit, who was elected prosecutor in Washtenaw County, Michigan, said he was already hard at work on the transition. In his jurisdiction, Ann Arbor voted to decriminalize psychedelic plants and fungi, including magic mushrooms.

Although Savit did not know how many magic mushroom cases were currently being pursued, he said those prosecutions "will go down to zero."

The era of mass incarceration has been fueled largely by prosecutors around the country, Savit said. "Now that we are seeing a reckoning ... getting prosecutors in place to turn the page on mass incarceration is critical."

In Los Angeles County, George Gascón, a criminal justice reformer who previously served as district attorney in San Francisco and as assistant chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, defeated incumbent DA Jackie Lacey, whose campaign was heavily funded by a union representing state prison guards. The county has the nation's largest DA's office, covering a jurisdiction with more than 10 million residents.

Marijuana legalization and decriminalization also won big. Four states, including New Jersey and Arizona, passed referendums allowing recreational cannabis. Voters made Oregon the first state in the nation to decriminalize the possession of small amounts of cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine.

Several cities embraced more police accountability. Voters in two California cities and two Pennsylvania cities joined those in Seattle, Portland, Oregon, and Columbus, Ohio, to approve ballot measures to toughen civilian oversight of law enforcement agencies.

Jim Burch, president of the nonpartisan National Police Foundation, which supports the advancement and reform of policing through science and innovation, said the election proved that voters want fundamental changes in public safety.

However, he said, the group has concerns about the use of ballot initiatives "to advance policy changes that are complex and subject to influence from wealth and populist ideas."

Burch said he is encouraged to see the acknowledgment "that appropriate policing matters" and added that "abolishing the police or mass defunding the police is a knee-jerk reaction that could lead to serious problems and further inequities."

Don't count on activists to drop their push for defunding police, said Jessica Byrd, who leads the Electoral Justice Project of the Movement for Black Lives.

"We are not going to go away, under the cloud of unity that so often gaslights us about what parts of our agenda should be seriously considered," she said.

Morrison is a member of AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Follow him on Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/aaronlmorrison>.

Asia Today: South Korea mulls steps as new virus cases rise

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea has reported 386 new cases of the coronavirus in a resurgence that could force authorities to reimpose stronger social distancing restrictions after easing them in October to spur a faltering economy.

The figures released by the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency on Saturday raised the country's total number of confirmed cases to 30,403, including 503 deaths.

More than 270 of the new cases have come from the Seoul metropolitan area, where health workers have struggled to track transmissions in schools, private tutoring academies and religious facilities.

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Infections were also reported in other major cities, including Busan, Daejeon, Gwangju and Asan. South Korea has so far managed to weather the pandemic without major lockdowns, relying instead on an aggressive test-and-quarantine campaign and mask-wearing.

Officials eased distancing measures to the lowest level in October, which allowed high-risk venues such as nightclubs and karaoke bars to reopen and fans to return to professional sports.

But the Korean Society of Infectious Diseases said Friday that the country could be reporting more than 1,000 new infections a day in a week or two if social distancing measures aren't effectively strengthened.

"COVID-19 transmissions are occurring in large numbers simultaneously across the country, and in some regions, the pace of infections has already overwhelmed local capacities for contact tracing," the doctors' group said.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— Japan is scaling back on the government-backed "GoTo" campaign to encourage travel and dining out, as the number of confirmed coronavirus cases reached a record for the third day straight on Saturday, at 2,418. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga announced the decision at a government panel on coronavirus pandemic measures. Stressing the need for "utmost caution," he said the campaign's travel discounts will no longer apply to hard-hit areas, and discounts on eating out will end temporarily. Japan has never had a total lockdown. It has had fewer than 2,000 deaths so far related to the coronavirus. But worries have been growing about a spike in infections over the three-day weekend. Monday is Labor Thanksgiving, a national holiday.

— India reported 46,232 new cases, with the situation particularly alarming in New Delhi. Intensive care wards and the capital's main crematorium are near capacity, and health officials this week found the prevalence of infections in markets much higher than expected. The city has added an average of 6,700 cases each day in recent weeks. The Health Ministry on Saturday also registered 564 deaths in the past 24 hours, raising the death toll to 132,726. India hit a grim milestone Friday, passing 9 million infections, the second-most behind the U.S.

— China is starting mass testing on 3 million people in a section of the northern city of Tianjin and has tested 4,015 others in a hospital in Shanghai after the discovery of a pair of cases there. The National Health Commission recorded seven new domestically transmitted cases Saturday, including five in Tianjin and two in Shanghai. Tianjin on Friday reported community transmission involving four different individuals and another case. In response, local authorities sealed off the residential community where the people lived as well as a hospital and a kindergarten. On Saturday, authorities began testing all residents in the Binhai district of Tianjin, according to the local government's social media page. Authorities in Shanghai sealed off a hospital after a husband and wife tested positive for the virus Friday night. China's total number of confirmed cases is now 86,414.

— After more than three weeks of no new infections or deaths in Victoria, the focus in Australia has shifted to neighboring South Australia state. On Saturday in the state capital of Adelaide, South Australia Premier Steven Marshall said there were no fresh cases of community transmission. There have been 26 new cases in a north Adelaide suburb, prompting a lockdown that will end at midnight Saturday, although a range of measures will remain to limit crowds at venues including pubs and restaurants.

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

Commander seeks to get embattled Fort Hood 'back on track'

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Every week, Army Lt. Gen. Pat White dons his workout clothes and walks through the neighborhoods at Fort Hood with his wife, Emma, and golden retriever Sadie, looking for some unvarnished feedback from the soldiers at his embattled Texas base.

As Fort Hood's commander, White faces the immense task of rebuilding trust and turning around an

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installation that has one of the highest rates of murder, sexual assault and harassment in the Army, and drew unwelcome national attention this year because of the disappearance and brutal murder of Spc. Vanessa Guillen.

He knows it will take time to correct what some believe are systemic leadership failures at the base, and that some units will respond more quickly than others. White agrees that he and other commanders bear some responsibility for the problems.

"I think all leadership is accountable for it, if you're in this chain of command," White said in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press. "We have got to do everything we can to get this back on track."

Senior Army leaders have made clear that changes must be made at the base, where many have complained about a command culture that failed to address persistent problems, including sexual assaults and suicides.

How much responsibility White personally bears is debatable because he spent much of the past year deployed to Iraq with his senior leadership team. An independent review into the command climate at the base will weigh in on that question, and is expected to find fault with some commanders and how they handled the Guillen case and other deaths and disciplinary issues. Among those may be Army Maj. Gen. Scott Efflandt, who was left in charge of the base when White deployed, and was already denied a new leadership post as a result of the ongoing investigations.

White acknowledges that communications with commanders back at Fort Hood were spotty when he was in Iraq. "We tried, once a week," he said, in his first extensive remarks since returning to Texas. "Sometimes that worked and sometimes it did not." He added that if he had been in Texas rather than Iraq, "I do things differently than other commanders do things, and so maybe I would have self-discovered some of these challenges."

White said he also thinks the events at Fort Hood that drew so much scrutiny this year, while horrible, aren't "any different than any other installation." How they came to light this year, he added, "will be actually good for our Army and good for this particular installation because we can now make change."

Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy, however, has questioned whether there is a toxic environment at the base, and has pledged to hold leaders accountable. So far this year, 25 soldiers assigned to Fort Hood have died due to suicide, homicide or accidents, compared with 32 last year and 24 in 2018.

According to investigators, Guillen, 20, was bludgeoned to death at Fort Hood by Spc. Aaron Robinson, who killed himself on July 1 as police were trying to take him into custody. Guillen was missing for more than two months before her remains were found. Her family has said Robinson had sexually harassed her. The Army has said there is no evidence supporting the claim.

The body of Pvt. Mejhor Morta was found in July near a reservoir by the base. In June, officials discovered the remains of another missing soldier, Gregory Morales, about 10 miles from that lake.

McCarthy said in a statement this past week that his initial review of the independent commission's report on Fort Hood "hardened my belief that the Army's SHARP program hasn't achieved its mandate to eliminate sexual assaults and sexual harassment by creating a climate that respects the dignity of every member of the Army family." SHARP is the Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program.

McCarthy said the report's findings will be released on Dec. 8. An in-depth investigation into Guillen's death is also underway.

White has given all his Fort Hood commanders until Christmas to hold a five-day session to ensure that unit leaders know how to train and counsel their troops, know what programs are available for any in need, and take initial steps to get to know their soldiers. He set up a hotline that soldiers can call anonymously to report leadership problems, which is averaging about 30 calls a week.

"We may have been assuming that our squad and platoon and company leaders understood the programs that were available for their soldiers," White said. "We may have been assuming that units understood the processes, the procedures by which, when a soldier goes missing, we engage immediately."

On a more personal level, White is turning to the activity deeply embedded in every soldier — the daily workouts and runs that are the bedrock of every base. He said he's working out with various sections

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of his key staff on Mondays and with colonels on the base on Tuesdays. He's also meeting with about a dozen young soldiers every Tuesday afternoon to just listen and get feedback.

And he walks the dog.

The jaunts with his wife and Sadie, he said, provide a way to meet soldiers when he's out of uniform. It's easier, he said, to get "unvarnished comments by the residents when you walk around in your civilian clothes and you don't identify yourself until you're done talking."

White said he has developed goals to help measure progress over the next year, including whether there has been improvement in the number of assaults, accidents, alcohol incidents, problematic urine tests and soldiers who are AWOL.

"I will almost predict, based on having served in the Army for 34 years," he said, "that there will be some units where it's going to work and there will be some units where it's not."

AP FACT CHECK: Trump's flailing effort resting on mendacity

By CALVIN WOODWARD and ALI SWENSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's flailing attempt to cling to office after voters decisively chose to oust him has taken the country into a dark and fictional place.

According to falsehoods being told on his behalf and embraced by him, the U.S. election was manipulated by scheming from a dead Venezuelan strongman, by a computer system capable of flipping Trump votes to Joe Biden ones across the country, and by something weird happening in Germany. If that's not enough, the communists are coming.

None of this happened. None of it is true.

But Trump and his legal team are making poisonous allegations in hopes that state Republican legislators will shatter the foundational procedures and traditions of U.S. democracy and nullify the voters' will.

While this plays out, President-elect Biden continues to be denied the briefings and facilities given during presidential transitions. An increasing number of Republican lawmakers say he should be getting that cooperation but they haven't done anything to make that happen.

From the past week:

THE TWEETS

TRUMP: "I WON THE ELECTION! ... I won the Election! ... I WON THE ELECTION!" — tweets Sunday, Monday and Wednesday.

THE FACTS: No, Biden won the election.

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

Biden also won Georgia after a recount by hand this past week. That gives him 306 electoral votes, a total that Trump called a "landslide" when states delivered him that number in 2016. (Trump ended up with 304 electoral votes because two electors defected.)

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

A coalition of state election officials and the Trump administration's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency have declared that the election was the most secure in history. Trump responded by firing the head of his agency, Chris Krebs.

NEWS CONFERENCE THURSDAY

SIDNEY POWELL, Trump attorney: "President Trump won by a landslide."

THE FACTS: Two fabrications in one short remark.

Biden won. Needing 270 electoral votes to prevail, he has 306 and Trump has 232.

There was no landslide. Trump's 306 electoral votes in 2016 did not make up a landslide win and Biden's victory was not a landslide, either. But it was a comfortable and unassailable victory. And although it doesn't

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matter in the outcome, Biden also leads the popular vote by nearly 6 million. Trump lost the popular vote in 2016 by about 3 million.

POWELL, on Dominion Voting Systems electoral software used in many states: "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 voting system deleted or lost votes, changed votes or was in any way compromised," said the federal agency that oversees election security, in the statement joined by state and electoral-industry officials.

Against that, Powell offered the baseless allegation that it "probably" did.

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."

POWELL: "Smartmatic has been associated with the Venezuelan government led by Hugo Chavez, which is openly hostile to the United States."

THE FACTS: To be clear, Chavez is not leading the Venezuelan government because he is dead, He died in 2013.

As well, Dominion does not have any ties to Venezuela, according to Eddie Perez, a voting technology expert at the OSET Institute, a nonpartisan election technology research and development nonprofit. Dominion was founded in Canada. The company says it is a competitor with Smartmatic, not a partner.

Smartmatic is 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.

POWELL: "What we are really dealing with here and uncovering more by the day is the massive influence of communist money through Venezuela, Cuba and likely China and the interference with our elections here in the United States."

THE FACTS: No such communist chicanery has been uncovered. The election security branch of Trump's Homeland Security Department said the election was secure against foreign interference and all forms of mass manipulation.

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 referring to 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 this month circulated the rumor that "U.S. Army forces" seized a server from a Frankfurt office, though he acknowledged it was something he saw on Twitter and "I don't know the truth." The Army said the claim was false.

Still, Powell presented the bogus story as fact.

Swenson reported from Seattle. 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.

Find AP Fact Checks at <http://apnews.com/APFactCheck>

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The show goes on at Madrid's opera house despite pandemic

By CIARÁN GILES Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — No one performing onstage in Spain's Teatro Real opera house is masked, and that alone looks odd these days amid a pandemic.

And that's even before the second act scene in Antonín Dvořák's "Rusalka" — about a water nymph who falls in love with a mortal — in which cast members kiss and grope in a feigned, non-socially distanced orgy.

While many of the world's major venues are shut down, including the Metropolitan Opera in New York, Covent Garden in London and La Scala in Milan, watching a performance at the Teatro Real in Madrid can almost make you forget about the coronavirus.

Located in one of the cities hit hardest by the virus, the Teatro Real is making a herculean effort for the show to go on, investing in safety measures that have allowed it to stage performances — albeit with smaller audiences — since July.

In March and April, soaring infections had Madrid's hospitals filled with COVID-19 patients. That eased in the summer, but another wave saw cases surge in the city and surrounding region. Authorities now seem to have gained the upper hand, with hospital occupancy rates falling steadily. Overall, Spain's Health Ministry has recorded more than 1.54 million cases and has attributed almost 42,300 deaths to the virus.

"The theater and culture must bet on staying open at all times," Teatro Real managing director Ignacio García-Belenguier told The Associated Press. "It's not about going against the flow or trying to be exceptional. ... It's what we believe we have to do."

With a yearly budget of 60 million euros (\$71 million), Spain's prime cultural center acknowledges it has the capacity and ability to carry on.

García-Belenguier says its financing from public subsidies, sponsors and ticketing puts Teatro Real in a unique spot to break even, unlike other opera houses that are normally mostly public or private. Extra state funding because of the pandemic will help too, he adds.

But it also has the good fortune of being in a region that has decided to take a different tack with the virus and apply fewer and more-localized restrictions, allowing bars, restaurants and cultural venues to stay open with reduced attendance.

It was closed during Spain's three months of national confinement between March and May, but preparations for reopening went on. It rolled out an array of measures that allowed it to stage a work with an audience, Giuseppe Verdi's "La Traviata," in July. Since then, it has put on two other operas, ballets and flamenco shows, and plans a full season for 2021.

Everyone entering the theater has their temperature taken automatically by machines. Hand sanitizers abound and surgical masks are supplied to all. There are ultra-violet lamps to disinfect the main theater, dressing rooms and clothing, and the air conditioning has been adapted to ensure a healthier air flow and temperature.

García-Belenguier says they will spend 1 million euros (\$1.2 million) on safety measures by year's end.

"I feel like I'm in a miracle," says Lithuanian soprano Asmik Grigorian, the star of "Rusalka," which is a co-production with companies in Dresden, Bologna, Barcelona and Valencia. Those sites will not be able to stage the opera for some time.

"We are always tested, (and) with masks, it's really strict in the theater," says Grigorian, who had her October 2021 debut in the Met canceled while shows in Berlin and elsewhere are uncertain.

"I have no idea where I am going after Madrid," she says. "If everything will be locked down then I'll stay in Madrid."

She and "Rusalka" director Christof Loy believe Madrid is leading the way.

"I think the governments are wrong in closing theaters," Loy said. "People need music, they need arts."

García-Belenguier compares the situation to now universally accepted security measures adopted after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The "new normality," he says, demands "a deployment to minimize the health risk when someone comes to the theater, or boards a plane."

Key to staying open during the pandemic was Teatro Real's decision to set up a medical committee with

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specialists from five Madrid hospitals giving advice, he said.

Offstage, masks are compulsory for all. The cast, chorus and orchestra are tested every three days, with others monitored regularly. Stagehands and other workers must fill out health questionnaires every day.

There have been isolated positive tests, but in each one, the theater says it reacted promptly and often tested up to 50 people who came in contact with the infected person.

The average of 1,000-plus audience members — about 65% of normal capacity — are divided into 19 sectors with separate refreshment areas and toilets and a small army of ushers ensuring there is no roaming about.

“It is a complex system to try to reduce to the maximum the impact,” García-Belenguer said.

He knows any outbreak could prove embarrassing. Memories are still fresh of the furor at a performance of Verdi’s “Un Ballo in Maschera” in September, when a show was interrupted and eventually canceled after spectators in cheaper seats protested loudly that they were crammed together, while those in expensive ones appeared to have plenty of space.

The opera house was in full compliance with regulations at the time, but since then, a one-seat separation between every two is the norm.

Associated Press photographer Bernat Armangué contributed.

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

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Nov. 22, the 327th day of 2020. There are 39 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On Nov. 22, 1963, John F. Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States, was shot to death during a motorcade in Dallas; Texas Gov. John B. Connally, riding in the same car as Kennedy, was seriously wounded; suspected gunman Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as president.

On this date:

In 1935, a flying boat, the China Clipper, took off from Alameda, California, carrying more than 100,000 pieces of mail on the first trans-Pacific airmail flight.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek (chang ky-shehk) met in Cairo to discuss measures for defeating Japan. Lyricist Lorenz Hart died in New York at age 48.

In 1961, Frank Robinson of the Cincinnati Reds was named Most Valuable Player of the National League.

In 1965, the musical “Man of La Mancha” opened on Broadway.

In 1967, the U.N. Security Council approved Resolution 242, which called for Israel to withdraw from territories it had captured the previous June, and implicitly called on adversaries to recognize Israel’s right to exist.

In 1977, regular passenger service between New York and Europe on the supersonic Concorde began on a trial basis.

In 1980, death claimed film star Mae West at her Hollywood residence at age 87 and former House Speaker John W. McCormack in Dedham, Mass. at age 88.

In 1990, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, having failed to win re-election of the Conservative Party leadership on the first ballot, announced she would resign.

In 1995, acting swiftly to boost the Balkan peace accord, the U-N Security Council suspended economic sanctions against Serbia and eased the arms embargo against the states of the former Yugoslavia.

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In 2003, thousands of mourners gathered in downtown Dallas along the street where President John F. Kennedy was assassinated 40 years earlier.

In 2005, Angela Merkel (AHN'-geh-lah MEHR'-kuhl) took power as Germany's first female chancellor. Ted Koppel hosted his final edition of ABC News' "Nightline."

In 2014, A 12-year-old Black boy, Tamir (tuh-MEER') Rice, was shot and mortally wounded by police outside a Cleveland recreation center after brandishing what turned out to be a pellet gun. (A grand jury declined to indict either the patrolman who fired the fatal shot or a training officer.)

Ten years ago: Thousands of people stampeded during a festival in the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, leaving some 350 dead and hundreds injured in what the prime minister called the country's biggest tragedy since the 1970s reign of terror by the Khmer Rouge. Cincinnati Reds first baseman Joey Votto was overwhelmingly elected the National League's Most Valuable Player.

Five years ago: Trying to reassure a nation on edge, President Barack Obama said in Malaysia that the Islamic State group "cannot strike a mortal blow" against the U.S., and he warned that overreacting to the Paris attacks would play into extremists' hands. Opposition candidate Mauricio Macri won Argentina's presidential election, marking an end to the left-leaning era of President Cristina Fernandez. Former South Korean President Kim Young-sam, 87, who led the country's transition to democracy, died in Seoul. Novak Djokovic won his fourth straight title at the season-ending ATP finals by beating six-time champion Roger Federer 6-3, 6-4. Kyle Busch won his first career Sprint Cup title claiming the season finale at Homestead-Miami Speedway. One Direction won artist of the year at the American Music Awards.

One year ago: After five long days of public impeachment hearings, President Donald Trump brushed off the probe as "total nonsense" and bad-mouthed a number of the U.S. diplomats who testified to Congress about his Ukraine pressure campaign. A Pennsylvania judge dashed the hopes of former Penn State assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky for a shorter prison term, sentencing him to the same 30 to 60 years that had been imposed in 2012 for sexually abusing children. The unveiling of Tesla's electric pickup near Los Angeles went off-script when its supposedly unbreakable window glass splintered twice when hit with a large metal ball.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Michael Callan is 85. Animator and movie director Terry Gilliam is 80. Actor Tom Conti is 79. Singer Jesse Colin Young is 79. Astronaut Guion (GEYE'-uhn) Bluford is 78. International Tennis Hall of Famer Billie Jean King is 77. Rock musician-actor Steve Van Zandt (a.k.a. Little Steven) is 70. Rock musician Tina Weymouth (The Heads; Talking Heads; The Tom Tom Club) is 70. Retired MLB All-Star Greg Luzinski is 70. Rock musician Lawrence Gowan is 64. Actor Richard Kind is 64. Actor Jamie Lee Curtis is 62. Alt-country singer Jason Ringenberg (Jason & the Scorchers) is 62. Actor Mariel Hemingway is 59. Actor Winsor Harmon is 57. Actor-turned-producer Brian Robbins is 57. Actor Stephen Geoffreys is 56. Rock musician Charlie Colin is 54. Actor Nicholas Rowe is 54. Actor Michael Kenneth Williams is 54. Actor Mark Ruffalo is 53. International Tennis Hall of Famer Boris Becker is 53. Actor Sidse (SIH'-sa) Babbett Knudsen is 52. Country musician Chris Fryar (Zac Brown Band) is 50. Actor Josh Cooke is 41. Actor-singer Tyler Hilton is 37. Actor Scarlett Johansson is 36. Actor Jamie Campbell Bower is 32. Singer Candice Glover (TV: "American Idol") is 31. Actor Alden Ehrenreich is 31. Actor Dacre Montgomery is 26. Actor Mackenzie Lintz is 24.