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Groton Area School District															
Active COVID-19 Cases															
Updated November 23, 2020; 12:03 PM															
JK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Staff	Total
1	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	8

Updated November 24, 2020; 12:59 PM															
JK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Staff	Total
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	9



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
 The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

#275 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

The weekend's over, and with a vengeance. We had our second-worst ever day for new cases at 187,600 reported, a 1.5% increase in total cases. Today was the 43rd straight day—that's over six weeks—we've set a record for seven-day new-case average. And that case total is now over 12 and one-half million at 12,664,000. We keep this up, we'll be at 13 million for Thanksgiving. Now there's something to take the edge off one's gratitude.

As we continue to set records for hospitalizations—today's number is 85,836, which marks two weeks straight of record-setting days—the average hospitalization number has increased by at least 20% in 23 states. Twelve states set records for hospitalization yesterday: New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Maine, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and North Carolina. The highest numbers are still in the Plains and Midwest, primarily in North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Illinois, and Indiana, even as new case reports appear to be leveling off in the region. There is also great concern that this leveling-off will fall victim to the holidays and cases will start shooting upward again.

So far through the summer surge and again this fall, we've been able to take comfort in the fact that fewer people have been dying than did during the spring peak. We kept reminding ourselves that in the spring deaths were over 2000 per day on some days, and at least, we were staying well below that. Well, not so much anymore: Deaths are over 2000 again. For real. We're at 2218 today, a 0.9% increase in the total. Last time we had a number over 2000 was May 6. Most of us who've been longing for the past were thinking a bit farther back than that, I suspect. There have now been 259,767 deaths from Covid-19 in the US in this pandemic. Even if new case numbers do peak—and sooner or later, they will—deaths will continue to rise for quite some time after as those diagnosed days and weeks earlier become more severely ill, are hospitalized, and then succumb. We're still seeing increases in deaths in these areas where cases appear to be leveling off; unsurprisingly, the Dakotas lead the country in per capita deaths at the moment. Nine states, including North Dakota, Missouri, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and Maine, had record numbers of deaths today.

Here's an interesting thought: Apparently, there's talk in the airline industry about requiring international travelers to prove they've received a Covid-19 vaccine once it is widely available. Qantas, an Australian airline, seems to be leading the charge; but the idea is circulating widely in the industry according to their CEO. The International Air Transport Association has been working on an app to serve as a sort of "digital passport" for vaccinated passengers. There are no clear indications whether domestic travel in some countries would also have such a requirement, but I would certainly favor that. It would raise my confidence level by quite a few notches when I consider resuming travel.

We've talked about mutations in this virus from time to time, and there's some interesting news on one of those mutated variants. It's one we've discussed before called D614G (or just 614G). I explained how mutation happens and how this particular one arose in my Update #202 on September 12 posted at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3965356403480736>, and reading that discussion will inform this new news.

Early on, back in January, this variant first showed up in China. It quickly spread throughout Europe and into the US; and within months became the dominant variant, displacing others. The controversy has been over whether this was a matter of luck—the virus landing in places from which it happened to be carried to more other places, a so-called founder effect—or some inherent quality of the virus which made it more infectious than its already highly-contagious ancestral variant—a selective advantage.

At the time the mutation was first spotted, there was some speculation it might make the virus more damaging, more associated with higher mortality or clinical severity. There is no indication this has happened; but based on the fact that D614G rather rapidly became the predominant variant in a lot of places, there was a fair amount of speculation that it might make the virus more infectious, that is more easily transmissible. There was plenty of push-back on this, but there is now a number of pieces of research indicating this is likely the case: The emergence of this particular variant might be largely responsible for

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the rapid spread (and consequent devastating impacts) of this pandemic. Here's what we've got.

A team in the UK drew on more than 25,000 whole genome viral sequences. They say, "Population genetic analysis indicates that 614G increases in frequency relative to 614D [the ancestral variant] in a manner consistent with a selective advantage . . . 614G is associated with higher viral load and younger age of patients," both of which would be associated with more rapid transmission. This is not conclusive, but it is compelling.

Another group at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Tokyo did some experimental work. They engineered a variant with this D614G substitution and tested it in tissue cultures, finding it "exhibits more efficient infection, replication, and competitive fitness in primary human airway epithelial cells . . . compared with the ancestral wild-type virus." They then proceeded to infect transgenic mice and hamsters (genetically modified to have human ACE-2, the virus's cellular entry point, on their cells) and found "that the D614G substitution enhances SARS-CoV-2 infectivity, competitive fitness, and transmission" in the animal models. Tissue cultures and animals aren't human bodies, but again, this is pretty compelling stuff when taken in conjunction with the other work being done.

A third group at the University of Texas also engineered the mutation into a virus and looked at how it functioned in tissue cultures and animal models. Their findings were very similar to the ones just discussed. About the tissue culture studies, they say, "The D614G mutation significantly enhances SARS-CoV-2 replication on human lung epithelial cells and primary human airway tissues, through an improved infectivity of virions with the spike receptor-binding domain in an 'up' conformation for binding to ACE2 receptor." And about the animal models, "The hamster results confirm clinical evidence that the D614G mutation enhances viral loads in the upper respiratory tract of COVID-19 patients and may increase (sic) transmission."

I think it's really important to recognize that, while this is important information, it doesn't seem to change what we need to do. There is no evidence the D614G variant causes more severe disease or kills more people. There is also no evidence it is going to have any impact on vaccine development; the antigenic composition of the virus in the regions targeted by vaccine development is unchanged in this mutation. And we already knew we were dealing with a highly contagious virus; we simply now know it is even more contagious than the original wild virus that began to circulate all those months ago. We still have to deal with the reality on the ground now, which is that we need to engage in rigorous mitigation measures to stem this transmission.

It does tell us, though, that, but for a chance mutation, we might have been looking at a very different picture. While we cannot quantify this precisely, side-by-side analysis of outbreaks involving known clusters of different variants seems to indicate the mutation gives D614G a roughly 20% advantage in its exponential rate of growth. While that's fairly modest, it has a snowball sort of effect which may have been enormously consequential. David Engelthaler, geneticist at the Translational Genomics Research Institute in Arizona, says, "When this is all said and done, it could be that this mutation is what made the pandemic."

Weston Frank is a country singer known regionally in South Dakota. I hear he's pretty good, but I'm more interested in his kid, Jed, who's just six years old. Jed is a bike lover, so he's been saving his money to buy a new dirt bike. I'm not sure what a six-year-old does to earn enough money for a bike, but I'm guessing it takes a while, whatever he does.

At any rate, he'd saved up \$205 in a piggy bank, which is a tidy sum for a child that age, and he's been thinking. What he's been thinking about is families who might not have enough to eat over the holidays, so he decided to pull \$40 out of his piggy bank and donate it to a charity that feeds the hungry. He said, "I just decided people who need help they would really want some help from people who can help them because I thought people who are in need of food to celebrate the holidays." His dad was so impressed he decided to match Jed's donation. And then, Weston had an idea of his own.

"I just thought wow that's huge. I don't know where that came from, because I don't spend a lot of time reminding my kid to do that, so I thought we'd post it on Facebook and said, 'hey Jed is giving this much money does anybody want to match it?' They made a couple of videos about their project and posted them too. Jed said, 'I'm asking for your help to please share this again to keep raising money for people

in need." They thought they might get a couple hundred dollars, which would be a cool way to multiply their donation.

That's not what happened.

Letters started pouring in, not just from locals, but from more far-flung places—Colorado, Kansas City, Wisconsin. Weston said, "For the most part, people are just matching the \$40 check, we've seen a few that are little and that's okay that's great, the big surprise we get checks that are \$100-\$200 frequently too it's crazy, we didn't expect that." They're up to \$9000.

The current plan is to wait until they reach \$10,000, then reach out to area agencies who can get the money to those who need to buy gifts and food for the holidays. I don't suppose this is exactly what Jed had in mind when he extracted \$40 from his piggy bank for the hungry. Which just goes to show how sometimes the consequences of our actions are unpredictable—and not always for the worse. It's probably a good idea to remember that.

Jed says, "I can't believe how many families we are going to be able to help." And he still plans to buy that dirt bike; it will just take a little longer to get there.

When I took psychology a zillion years ago, I learned that children are born egocentric—unable to see or comprehend the world except in relation to their own needs. That was a long time ago, so I don't exactly remember at what age we're expected to grow out of this, but I'm going to guess it's before the age of six. I know some adults who haven't passed the egocentric stage yet, but Jed Frank seems to have some things figured out. I keep looking around at my fellow citizens and hoping, hoping against hope, that most of us do too.

Take care. We'll talk again.

SDHSAA Winter Sports To Start On Time

From SDPB Facebook Page: High school winter sports and activities that are sanctioned by the South Dakota High School Activities Association will proceed on as scheduled this school year. This decision was recommended by the COVID task force that was set up prior to the 2020-21 school year. On Tuesday, the SDHSAA board of directors spoke about the topic and didn't pass any motion that would challenge the task force's recommendation.

SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos said a strong majority of schools they spoke with were in favor of an on-time start with winter sports and activities. The organizational board did however pass a recommendation regarding masks and fan attendance.

"If there was not a desire from the schools to pause here until after the holidays, that we needed to make a plea to the schools to look at their attendance policies and look at their policies on masks and see if there's a small part we can play to try and help our hospitals who are taxed right now, and our hospital workers who are taxed right now," Swartos explained.

The recommendation that the SDHSAA passed on Tuesday is to require masks and some sort of attendance policy at any of their sanctioned events. Because it is just a recommendation, schools aren't legally required to implement any new policies, but they are strongly encouraged to do so.

Swartos also mentioned, because of constitutional by-laws, he feels the SDHSAA board is going as far as they can legally go with requiring masks and lower attendance numbers at its member schools - ultimately the final decision will rest with each individual school district.

Gymnastics and Wrestling (girls and boys) can officially begin this coming Monday, November 30th, with girls basketball December 3rd and boys basketball a week later on December 10th.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Nov. 18	Nov. 19	Nov. 20	Nov. 21	Nov. 22	Nov. 23	Nov. 24
Minnesota	236,949	242,043	249,906	256,700	262,952	270,157	276,500
Nebraska	103,805	106,617	109,280	111,661	113,029	114,061	115,921
Montana	49,398	50,582	51,818	53,293	54,542	55,580	56,381
Colorado	172,044	176,694	182,801	188,566	194,679	198,600	202,289
Wyoming	21,047	21,750	22,489	23,347	23,567	24,309	25,560
North Dakota	65,967	67,230	68,612	70,016	71,540	72,683	73,397
South Dakota	67,284	68,671	69,742	71,070	72,214	73,065	73,848
United States	11,360,125	11,530,345	11,718,867	11,913,945	12,090,469	12,247,487	12,421,216
US Deaths	248,707	250,548	252,564	254,424	255,905	256,783	257,707

Minnesota	+5,931	+5,094	+7,863	+6,794	+6,252	+7,205	+6,343
Nebraska	+2,204	+2,812	+2,663	+2,381	+1,368	+1,032	+1,860
Montana	+1,371	+1,184	+1,236	+1,475	+1,249	+1,038	+801
Colorado	+4,331	+4,650	+6,107	+5,765	+6,113	+3,921	+3,689
Wyoming	+1,162	+703	+739	+858	+220	+742	+1,251
North Dakota	+1,082	1,263	+1,382	+1,404	+1,524	+1,143	+714
South Dakota	+1,006	+1,387	+1,071	+1,328	+1,144	+851	+783
United States	+154,640	+170,220	+188,522	+195,078	+176,524	+157,018	+173,729
US Deaths	+1,487	+1,841	+2,016	+1,860	+1,481	+878	+924

	Nov. 25
Minnesota	282,916
Nebraska	117,682
Montana	57,504
Colorado	206,439
Wyoming	25,975
North Dakota	74,401
South Dakota	74,859
United States	12,597,333
US Deaths	259,962

Minnesota	+6,416
Nebraska	+1,761
Montana	+1,123
Colorado	+4,150
Wyoming	+415
North Dakota	+1,004
South Dakota	+1,011
United States	+176,117
US Deaths	+2,255

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November 24th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Two deaths in South Dakota, 37 in North Dakota. Both in South Dakota were in the 80+ age group with one male and one female, one in Pennington County and the other in Ziebach County.

There were 693 fewer cases in South Dakota and 947 fewer cases in North Dakota.

In the Groton Area School District, staff members testing positive increased by one for a total of two as of yesterday. Kindergarten students positive dropped by one while an eighth grader has tested positive.

Sanford Aberdeen had two patients needing ventilation and a second one admitted to ICU. Six more patients were admitted to the Aberdeen hospitals.

Glacial Lakes hospital beds being occupied by COVID-19 patients as well as Minnehaha and Pennington counties: Walworth: 1 (-0) Occupied Beds; Potter: 1 (-1) Occupied Beds; Hughes: 18 (+2) Occupied Beds, 5 (-1) ICU Beds, 3 (+0) Ventilation; Hand: 5 (+0) Occupied Beds; Faulk: 1 (-0) Occupied Beds; Edmunds: 0 (-0) Occupied Bed; Brown: 32 (+6) Occupied Beds, 2 (-0) ICU, 2 (+2) Ventilation; Spink: 3 (+0) Occupied Beds; Day: 0 (-0) Occupied Beds; Marshall: 1 (+0) Occupied Beds; Grant: 4 (+0) Occupied Beds; Codington: 10 (-8) Occupied Beds, 2 (-2) ICU, 1 (-1) Ventilation; None (some counties have no hospitals): Clark, Hyde, Stanley, Sully, Campbell, McPherson, Roberts; Minnehaha: 285 (-2) Occupied Beds, 65 (+3) ICU, 37

(+2) Ventilation; Pennington: 77 (-3) Occupied Beds, 13 (+0) ICU, 7 (+0) Ventilation.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +60 (3380) Positivity Rate: 22.1%

Total Tests: +271 (26,216)

Total Individuals Tested: +112 (13,386)

Recovered: +81 (2,656)

Active Cases: -22 (707)

Ever Hospitalized: +4 (192)

Deaths: +0 (17)

Percent Recovered: 78.6%

Hospital Reports:

Avera St. Luke's: Covid-19 Occupied 24 (+5); ICU 0 (-1), Ventilation 0 (0).

Sanford Aberdeen: Covid-19 Occupied 8 (+1); ICU 2 (+1), Ventilation 2 (+2)

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

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

South Dakota:

Positive: +1011 (74,859 total) Positivity Rate: 15.4%

Total Tests: 6534 (575,235 total)

Total Individuals Tested: 2497 (315,794)

Hospitalized: +86 (4193 total). 574 currently hospitalized -8)

Deaths: +2 (821 total)

Recovered: +1702 (57,381 total)

Active Cases: -693 (16,657)

Percent Recovered: 76.7%

Total COVID-19 Occupied Beds: 574 (-8), Black Hills Region 122 (-1), Glacial Lakes Region 76 (-1) Sioux Empire Region 303 (-4), South Central Plains 73 (-2).

ICU Units: Total 104 (+3), BH 15 (+1), GL 9 (-3), SE 65 (+3), SCP 15 (+2).

Ventilation: Total 50 (+3), BH 7 (+0), GL 6 (+1), SE 37 (+2), SCP 0 (-0).

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 21% Covid, 43% Non-Covid, 36% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 50% Covid, 34% non-covid, 17% available.

Staffed Adult + Pediatric ICU Bed Capacity: 66% Occupied, 34% Available

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

Beadle (25) +12 positive, +44 recovered (541 active cases)

Brookings (16) +21 positive, +40 recovered (435 active cases)

Brown (17): +59 positive, +81 recovered (707 active cases)

Clark (1): +9 positive, +6 recovered (67 active cases)

Clay (9): +25 positive, +22 recovered (251 active cases)

Codington (39): +18 positive, +60 recovered (478 active cases)

Davison (28): +27 positive, +68 recovered (729 active cases)

Day (5): +11 positive, +5 recovered (104 active cases)

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cases)

Edmunds (2): +1 positive, +6 recovered (38 active cases)

Faulk (8): +1 positive, +3 recovered (32 active cases)

Grant (5): +12 positive, +12 recovered (152 active cases)

Hanson (1): +9 positive, +4 recovered (76 active cases)

Hughes (17): +9 positive, +42 recovered (371 active cases)

Lawrence (21): +35 positive, +42 recovered (375 active cases)

Lincoln (46): +66 positive, +145 recovered (1116 active cases)

Marshall (3): +7 positive, +5 recovered (53 active cases)

McCook (11): +4 positive, +14 recovered (148 active cases)

McPherson (1): +1 positive, +2 recovery (43 active case)

Minnehaha (162): +248 positive, +503 recovered (3920 active cases)

Pennington (68): +117 positive, +166 recovered (1797 active cases)

Potter (1): +2 positive, +4 recovered (62 active cases)

Roberts (17): +12 positive, +9 recovered (168 active cases)

Spink (12): +9 positive, +8 recovered (125 active cases)

Walworth (11): +4 positive, +8 recovered (117 active cases)

NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Nov. 24:

- 14.3% rolling 14-day positivity
- 1,019 new positives
- 7,677 susceptible test encounters
- 289 currently hospitalized (-25)
- 8,907 active cases (-947)
- 883 total deaths (+37)

Yesterday

Today

Global Cases
59,300,863
12,421,216 US
9,177,840 India
6,087,608 Brazil
2,195,940 France
2,120,836 Russia
1,582,616 Spain
1,531,267 United Kingdom
1,431,795 Italy
1,374,631 Argentina
1,254,979 Colombia
1,049,358 Mexico
950,585 Germany

Global Cases
59,827,512
12,597,333 US
9,222,216 India
6,118,708 Brazil
2,206,126 France
2,144,229 Russia
1,594,844 Spain
1,542,623 United Kingdom
1,455,022 Italy
1,381,795 Argentina
1,262,494 Colombia
1,060,152 Mexico
965,355 Germany

Global Deaths
1,398,838
257,707 deaths US
169,485 deaths Brazil
134,218 deaths India
101,926 deaths Mexico
55,327 deaths United Kingdom
50,453 deaths Italy
49,312 deaths France

Global Deaths
1,410,458
259,962 deaths US
170,115 deaths Brazil
134,699 deaths India
102,739 deaths Mexico
55,935 deaths United Kingdom
51,306 deaths Italy
50,324 deaths France
45,738 deaths Iran

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	340	242	780	3	Substantial	29.41%
Beadle	2178	1612	4541	25	Substantial	31.43%
Bennett	307	243	1025	5	Substantial	20.33%
Bon Homme	1323	1157	1709	14	Substantial	38.50%
Brookings	2292	1841	7972	16	Substantial	15.98%
Brown	3380	2656	10006	17	Substantial	20.21%
Brule	538	416	1572	5	Substantial	20.99%
Buffalo	365	313	799	6	Substantial	32.61%
Butte	675	563	2461	13	Substantial	10.58%
Campbell	101	88	180	1	Moderate	28.57%
Charles Mix	793	536	3282	4	Substantial	28.29%
Clark	235	167	758	1	Substantial	21.02%
Clay	1270	1010	3968	9	Substantial	24.87%
Codington	2500	1983	7410	39	Substantial	22.71%
Corson	352	290	828	4	Substantial	49.23%
Custer	500	398	1970	7	Substantial	14.55%
Davison	2274	1517	5167	28	Substantial	35.89%
Day	331	222	1361	5	Substantial	20.65%
Deuel	287	223	890	2	Substantial	25.00%
Dewey	743	433	3408	3	Substantial	33.82%
Douglas	279	211	738	5	Substantial	18.58%
Edmunds	229	189	829	2	Substantial	9.14%
Fall River	351	278	2037	8	Substantial	7.02%
Faulk	274	234	550	8	Substantial	10.53%
Grant	565	408	1723	5	Substantial	31.12%
Gregory	420	313	933	17	Substantial	24.58%
Haakon	138	111	454	3	Substantial	8.51%
Hamlin	446	283	1353	2	Substantial	20.69%
Hand	274	194	639	1	Substantial	31.96%
Hanson	231	154	522	1	Substantial	46.15%
Harding	66	60	127	0	Minimal	14.29%
Hughes	1557	1169	4811	17	Substantial	14.50%
Hutchinson	529	352	1828	5	Substantial	23.81%

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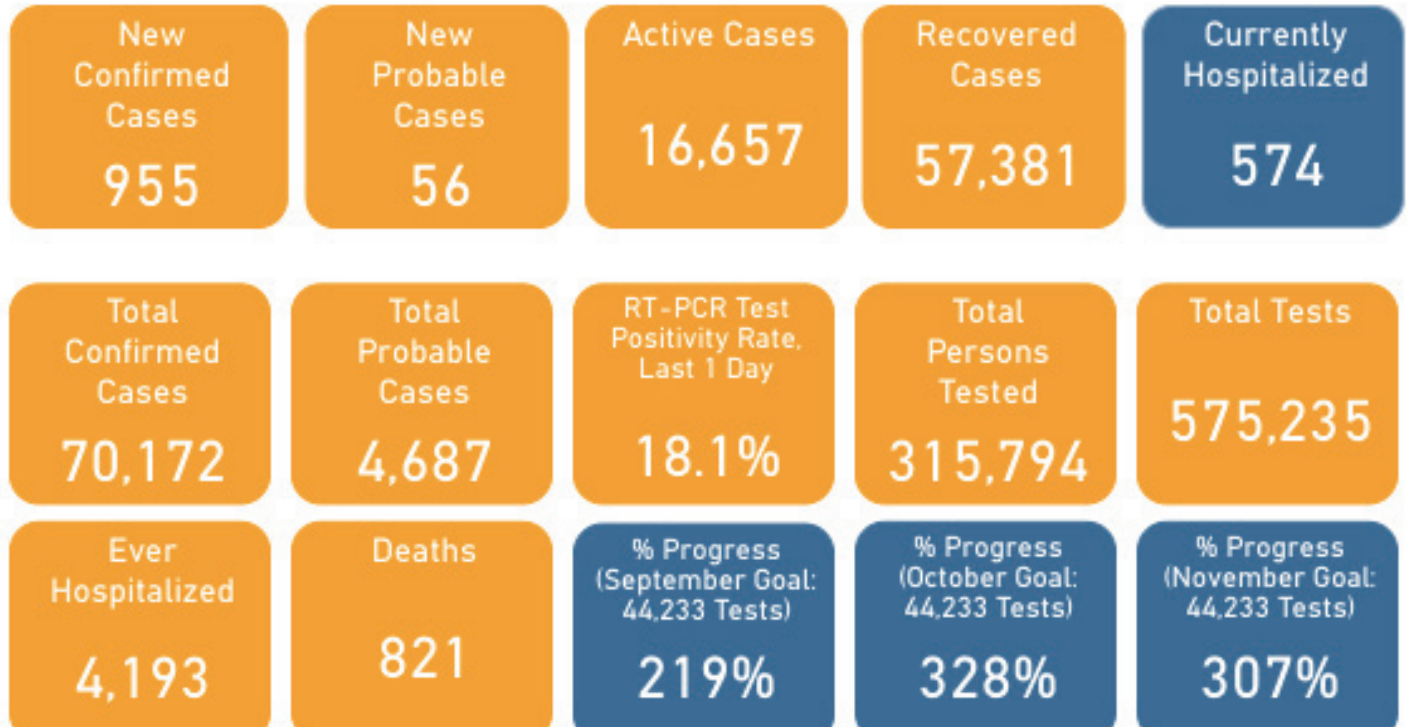
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Hyde	113	78	338	0	Substantial	25.53%
Jackson	186	149	805	6	Substantial	11.90%
Jerauld	231	179	431	13	Substantial	20.69%
Jones	56	44	149	0	Moderate	30.30%
Kingsbury	413	282	1217	8	Substantial	18.72%
Lake	798	583	2350	10	Substantial	18.91%
Lawrence	1869	1473	6516	21	Substantial	11.76%
Lincoln	5099	3937	15164	46	Substantial	27.09%
Lyman	433	338	1536	8	Substantial	24.17%
Marshall	158	102	886	3	Substantial	25.78%
McCook	565	406	1239	11	Substantial	33.12%
McPherson	137	93	455	1	Substantial	12.64%
Meade	1617	1284	5895	13	Substantial	13.69%
Mellette	159	126	601	1	Substantial	54.55%
Miner	182	148	452	4	Moderate	8.82%
Minnehaha	19186	15104	59732	162	Substantial	24.52%
Moody	392	279	1456	10	Substantial	32.50%
Oglala Lakota	1555	1214	5867	20	Substantial	25.95%
Pennington	7960	6095	28909	68	Substantial	16.13%
Perkins	171	103	534	2	Substantial	49.07%
Potter	249	186	649	1	Substantial	12.98%
Roberts	667	482	3528	17	Substantial	22.38%
Sanborn	249	154	521	1	Substantial	37.25%
Spink	524	387	1734	12	Substantial	16.82%
Stanley	217	143	670	0	Substantial	19.68%
Sully	87	63	197	3	Substantial	23.40%
Todd	861	666	3515	12	Substantial	61.54%
Tripp	463	348	1222	2	Substantial	33.91%
Turner	760	596	2083	36	Substantial	17.80%
Union	1183	912	4695	23	Substantial	25.64%
Walworth	449	321	1432	11	Substantial	27.57%
Yankton	1566	1133	7334	8	Substantial	16.65%
Ziebach	161	107	603	7	Substantial	27.27%
Unassigned	0	0	1589	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	2533	0
10-19 years	8132	0
20-29 years	14339	2
30-39 years	12572	9
40-49 years	10712	16
50-59 years	10569	51
60-69 years	8323	106
70-79 years	4320	174
80+ years	3359	463

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	39090	405
Male	35769	416

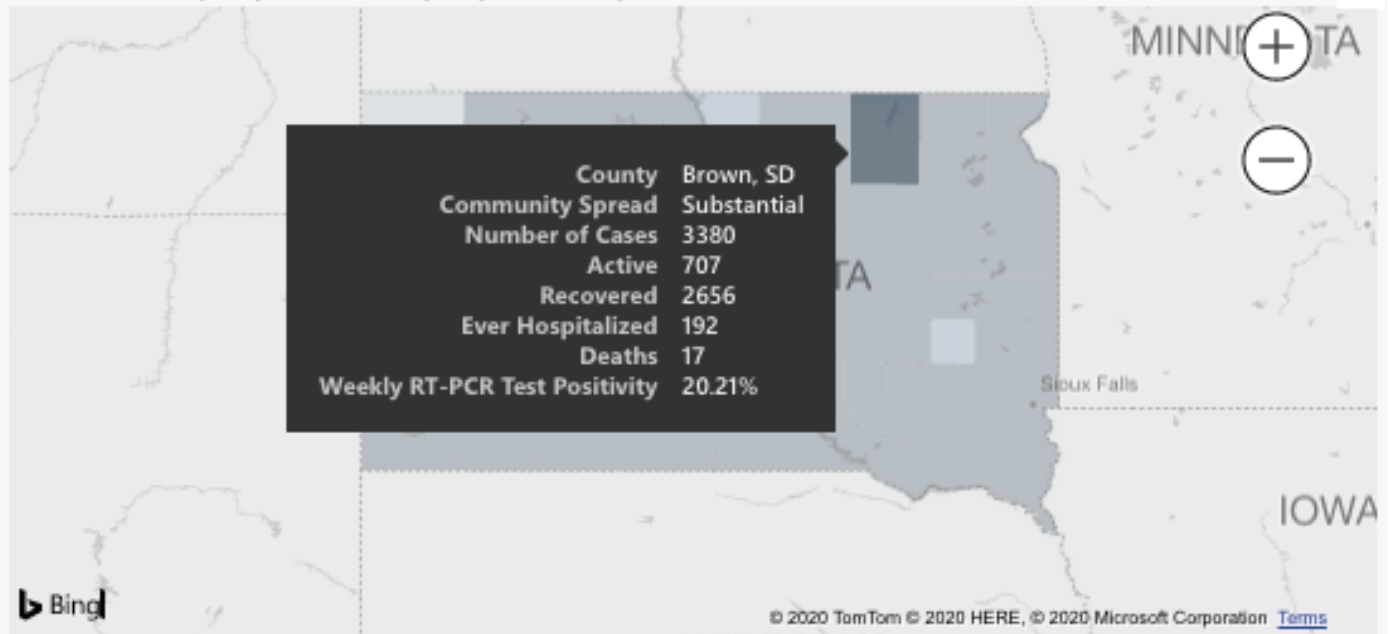
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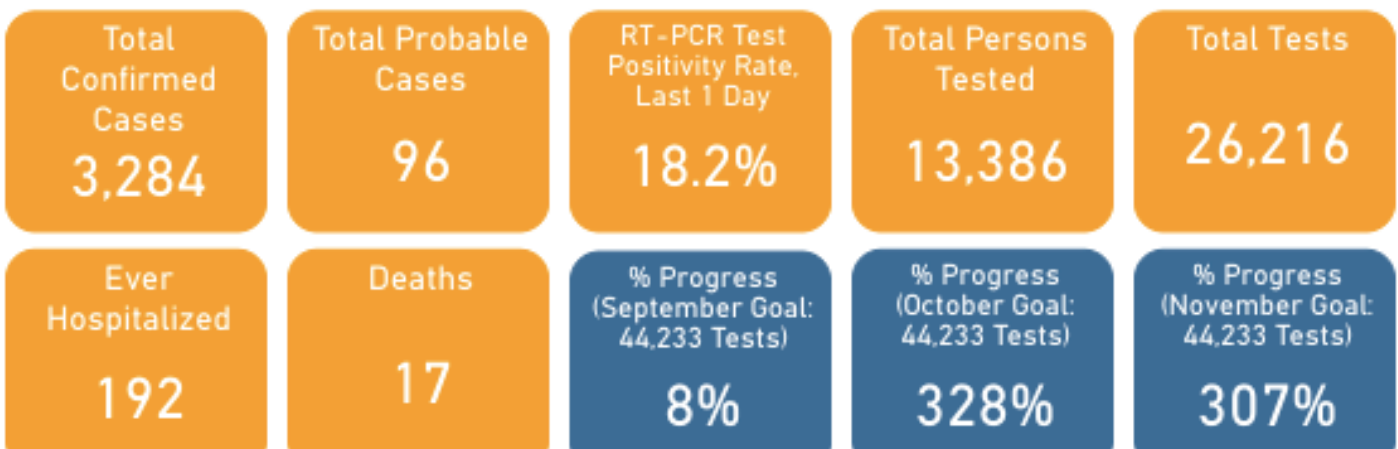
Brown County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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



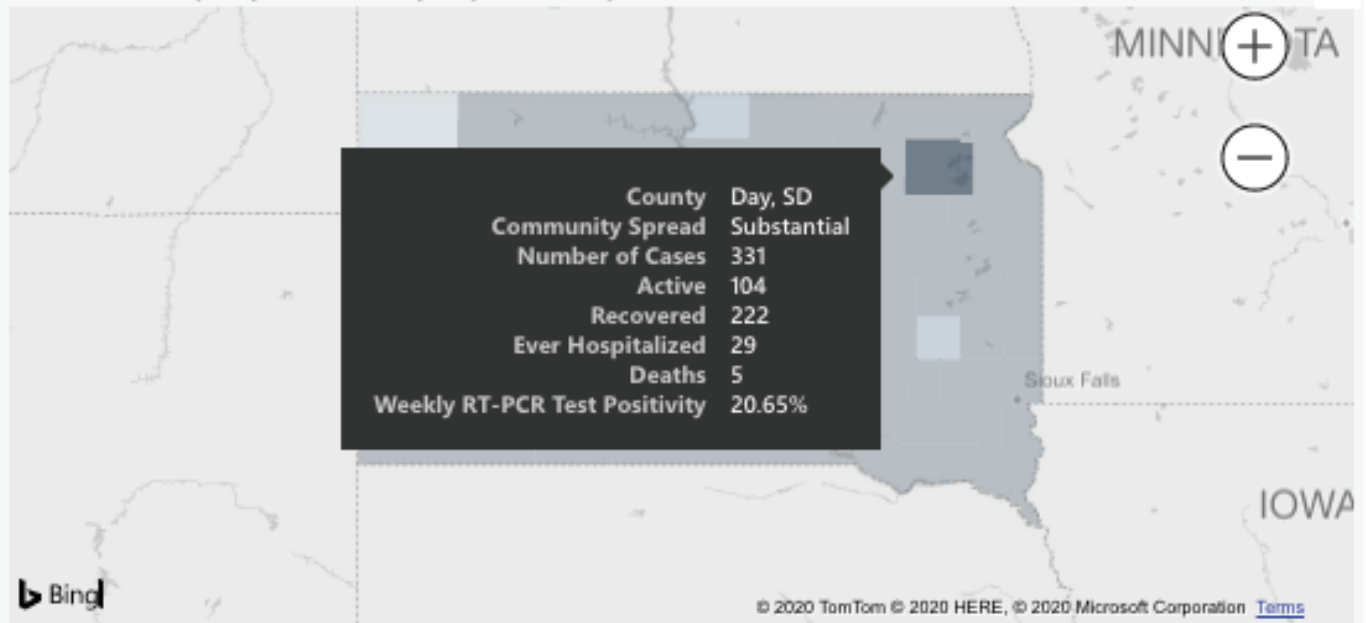
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Day County

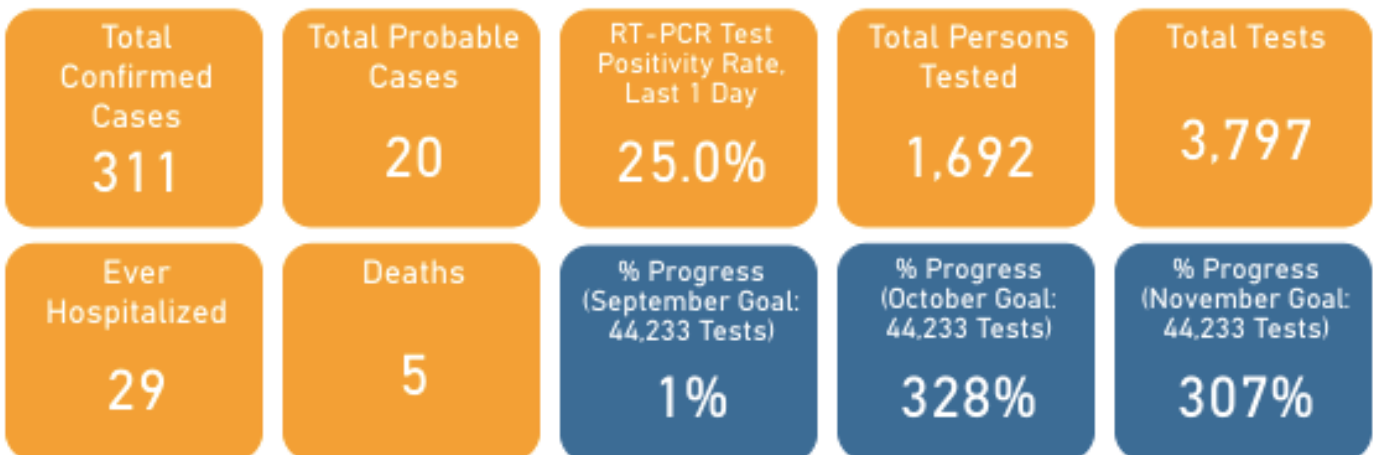


Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Minimal ● Moderate ● Substantial

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

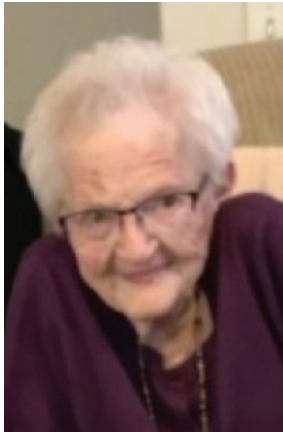


The Life of Marjory Townsend

Marjory Fern Townsend was born September 20, 1932 in Webster, South Dakota to James and Emily Feller Murray. Marjory (Mom) passed away peacefully on November 21, 2020 at the age of 88 in Webster, SD cradled in the arms of Lord Jesus as she once lovingly cradled her eight children.

Marjory was married at the age of 18 to Russell Andrew Townsend. Together they started their own family farm in the Andover/Ferney area.

Marjory was a member of the United Methodist Church in Groton, South Dakota. Her eight children were all baptized and confirmed in this church. Marjory was not only a member but held leadership positions over the years including UMW (United Methodist Women) President and Secretary, and the UMW Membership and Nurture committee. Mom was a woman of faith who took comfort from praying The Lord's Prayer and singing church hymns. When the farm needed rain, she could be heard singing There Shall be Showers of Blessings.



Marjory touched many lives with her quiet presence and ready smile. Mom's kitchen was a gathering place for good food, good memories, much laughter and love. She enjoyed spending time with her grandchildren and great grandchildren whether reading or singing to them, sharing her memories, and her baked treats.

Celebrating her life through memories are her surviving children: David (Judy) Townsend of Denver, Colorado; Gary (Julie) Townsend of Sioux Falls; Janell (Larry) Little of Madison, SD; Bonnie Townsend of Santa Fe, New Mexico; Janet Deuel of Aberdeen; Dona (John) Schulte of Derby Kansas; Laura (Gene) Soukup of Wagner; daughter-in-law Jolene Townsend of Conde; sister-in-law Velma (Mel) Pibal of Minneapolis, Minnesota; 25 grandchildren and 31 great grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

Preceding her in death were her husband Russell, son Alan Townsend, son-in-law Dean Deuel, her parents, her husband's parents, her brothers Jim Murray and Bob Murray, special friend Marlys Rodman and brothers and sisters-in-law.

Honorary pallbearers are all her children and grandchildren.

Pallbearers will be her grandchildren.

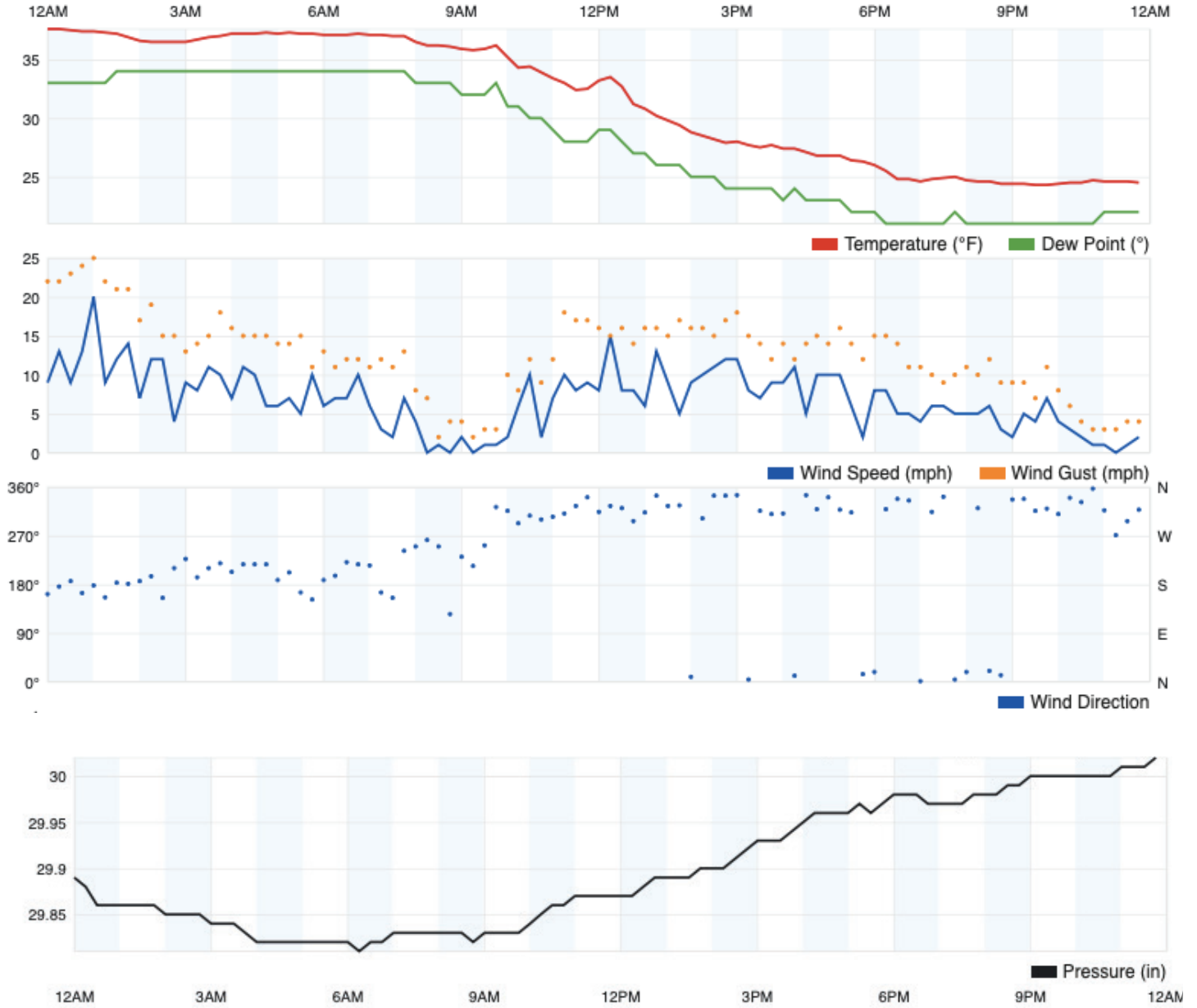
In lieu of flowers the family asks for donations to Mom's church home, the Groton United Methodist Church.

On Saturday November 28, 2020, a public viewing will be held at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel from 10:00 to 11:00; family may not be present. A private viewing for family will be held from 11:00 to 12:00 and a 12:30 graveside service for immediate family at Scotland Cemetery, Rural Verdon, South Dakota. Masks and social distancing guidelines are requested by the family.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today

Tonight

Thanksgiving
Day

Thursday
Night

Friday



Becoming
Sunny

Mostly Clear

Sunny

Mostly Clear

Sunny

High: 42 °F

Low: 22 °F

High: 41 °F

Low: 20 °F

High: 44 °F



Tonight

Wednesday

Thanksgiving

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

15 to 23°

37 to 51°

39 to 44°

39 to 49°

48 to 59°

30 to 39°



Patchy Fog
East



Cool



Mild



Cool



www.weather.gov/abr

GRAPHIC CREATED:
11/24/2020 4:10 PM

The weather pattern is shaping up to give our region a pretty quiet stretch of days that will last through the upcoming holiday. Some low clouds and patchy fog will linger through the evening tonight across the Prairie Coteau. Otherwise, clear to partly cloudy skies are expected with lows falling into the teens and 20s. Partly cloudy to mostly sunny skies and dry conditions are then expected through the remainder of the week. Temperatures will be seasonal to a bit above normal at times.

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Today in Weather History

November 25, 1896: A major blizzard occurred throughout South Dakota, beginning on the 25th and continuing until the 27th. The storm began in most locations as rain and sleet, which turned to snow, accompanied by strong northerly winds. The 26th was the peak of the storm, and the heaviest snow and strongest wind occurred throughout the north, northeast, west and southwest portions of the state. In eastern and southeastern South Dakota, sleet was extraordinarily heavy on the 26th. There were many reports received of large quantities of trees stripped of smaller branches and limbs due to the weight of the sleet. Across the state, telegraph lines were flattened in all directions, and the poles were broken off in many places. Although there was very little loss of livestock in areas with available shelter, there were heavy individual losses on the ranges of South Dakota. Several people also perished on the ranges west of the Missouri River when they became lost in the storm without livestock. Reports of snowfall totals from the storm are very limited but included 17 inches at Aberdeen and 12 inches at Mellette. This blizzard was the most prominent individual feature in a November that was overall frigid, with a state mean temperature of 16.5 degrees, which was 17.2 degrees below normal at the time. The month still stands as the coldest November on record in Aberdeen, with an average temperature nearly 7 degrees Fahrenheit colder than the next coldest November (1985). The lowest reported temperature during the month was -29 F at Webster. Aberdeen recorded a low of -25 F on the 29th with a high temperature of -8 F that same day. The month currently stands as the snowiest November on record and second snowiest overall month on record for Aberdeen, with 32.8 inches, behind 38.5 inches recorded in February 1915.

November 25, 1703: The greatest windstorm ever recorded in the southern part of Great Britain reaches its peak intensity which it maintains through November 27. Winds gust up to 120 mph, and 9,000 people perish in the mighty gale, most of them sailors of the British fleet. The storm continued through December 2nd. It was reported that 4,000 oaks died in the New Forest and an attempt to count the toll of trees in Kent gave up at 17,000. At sea, the Eddystone Lighthouse was washed away, killing six people. Daniel Defoe wrote a journal called *The Storm* (1704) about this event. The storm has been called the first substantial work of modern journalism.

1950: Called the "storm of the century" this storm impacted the eastern part of the US, killing hundreds and causing millions of dollars in damages. New York City recorded a 94 mph wind gust and Bear Mountain, just north of the city recorded a 140 mph gust. Record low temperatures were reported on the southern end of this storm in Tennessee and North Carolina. This storm was unique as Pittsburgh saw 30 inches of snow, while Buffalo saw 50 degrees with 50 mph wind gusts.

1970 - The temperature at Tallahassee, FL, dipped to 13 degrees, following a high of 40 degrees the previous day. The mercury then reached 67 degrees on the 26th, and highs were in the 70s the rest of the month. (The Weather Channel)

1983 - The Great Thanksgiving Weekend Blizzard hit Denver, CO. The storm produced 21.5 inches of snow in 37 hours, closing Stapleton Airport for 24 hours. The snow and wind closed interstate highways around Denver. Visibility at Limon CO was down to zero for 24 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - An early morning thunderstorm in southeastern Texas produced high winds which rolled a mobile home east of Bay City killing two of the four occupants. Thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains in central and eastern Texas, with nine inches reported at Huntsville, and 8.5 inches at Wimberly. Snow fell across northern and central Lower Michigan, with totals ranging up to nine inches at Cadillac. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Arkansas, eastern Oklahoma and northwest Texas during the day and into the night. Thunderstorms in Texas produced softball size hail at Alba, and wind gusts to 80 mph at Krum. Hail and high winds caused nearly five million dollars damage at Kaufman TX, and strong downburst winds derailed twenty-eight freight cars at Fruitvale TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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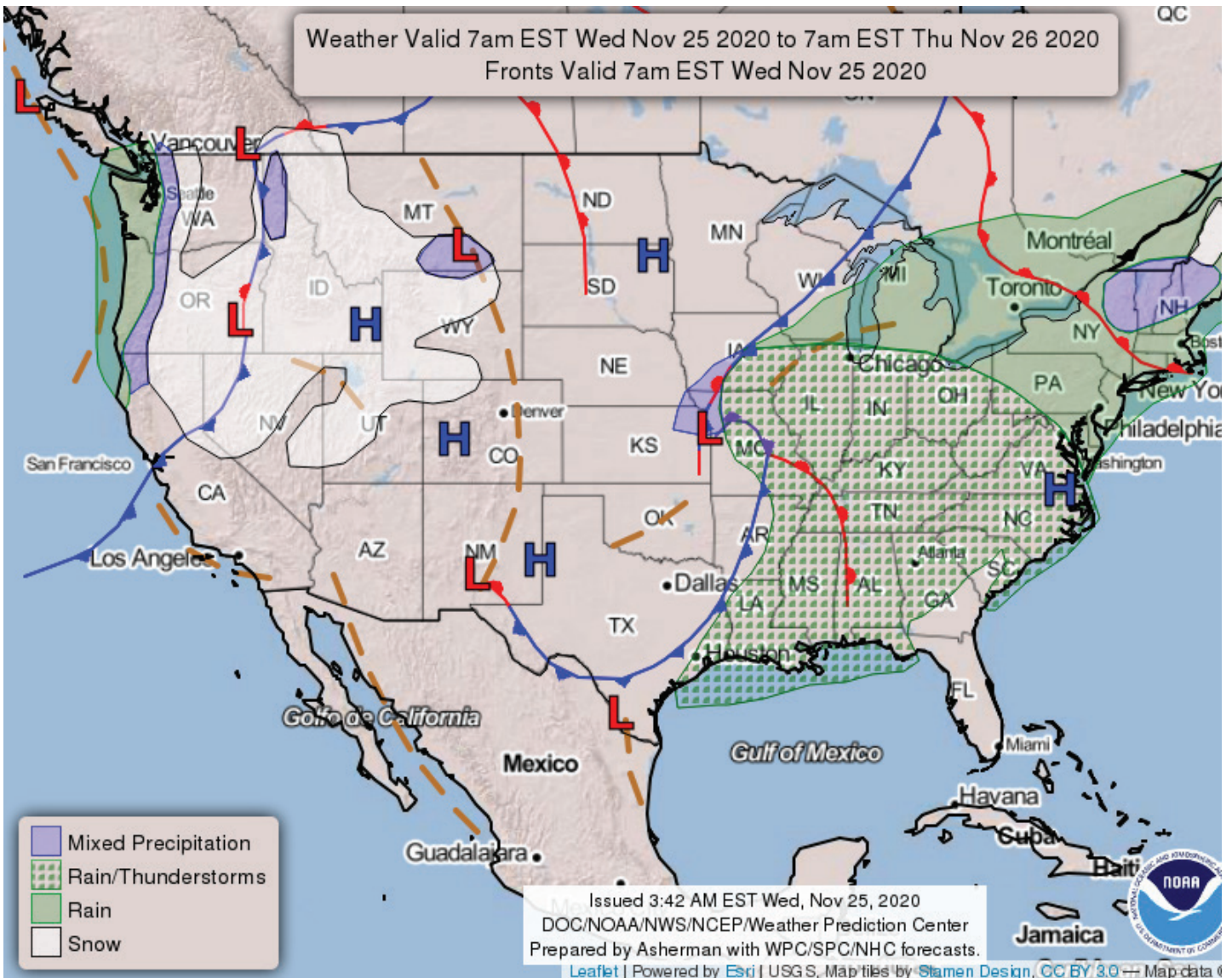
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 38 °F at 12:01 AM
Low Temp: 24 °F at 9:20 PM
Wind: 25 mph at 12:56 AM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 64° in 1960
Record Low: -22° in 1996
Average High: 34°F
Average Low: 14°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.62
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.18
Average Precip to date: 21.09
Precip Year to Date: 16.52
Sunset Tonight: 4:55 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:48 a.m.



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RIGHT WAY - WRONG WAY

God created us to follow Him - not to forsake Him. He desires that we triumph over temptation - not struggle with guilt for surrendering to sin. He wants us to walk with Him and not stray from Him because of our self-centeredness. He waits to help us achieve the potential He has given us and not be satisfied with less than what is possible. He is willing and able to share His wisdom and give His insights whenever we need to make any decision - if only we ask Him.

There are many wrong ways but only one "best" way - His way. And no one but God can reveal that way, His way, to us. We may search one way and then another, try this route, or another until it comes to a dead end. However, only when we allow God to lead us will we be in the center of His will for us.

Israel's experience during the Exodus gives us a great example of God's guidance and guardianship.

The Psalmist gives us a vivid picture of what can happen when people "try to make it on their own" and do not follow God: "Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. Some were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away." How sad. How true. Without God's guidance, we are all wanderers, ebbing away!

"Then they - the Israelites - cried out to the Lord!" And listen to what happened. "He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle."

No one will ever find a "straightway" to a "safe place" in life unless they surrender their life to God and follow Him. Life without God is a "wasteland," and unless we accept His salvation, our lives, like theirs, will "ebb away" unless we follow God.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for guiding us to a safe place - You! Please save us from ourselves and our sins, and then lead us safely throughout our lives into Your presence. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle. Psalm 107:7

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

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

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Tuesday:

Mega Millions

09-15-34-61-64, Mega Ball: 6, Megaplier: 2

(nine, fifteen, thirty-four, sixty-one, sixty-four; Mega Ball: six; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$200 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$202 million

Sanford replaces CEO after controversial email about masks

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The head of one of the largest regional health systems in the Midwest was replaced Tuesday, less than a week after telling employees that he had recovered from COVID-19 and was not wearing a mask around the office.

Sanford Health said in a release that it has “mutually agreed to part ways” with longtime CEO Kelby Krabbenhoft, who took over in 1996 and helped expand the organization from a community hospital into what is billed as the largest rural nonprofit health system in the country.

Krabbenhoft left the executive position after telling employees in an email that he believes he’s now immune to COVID-19 for “at least seven months and perhaps years to come” and that he isn’t a threat to transmit it to anyone. He said wearing a mask would be merely for show. Other Sanford executives tried to distance themselves from the comments.

Dr. Kathy Anderson, president of the North Dakota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, said it was “an especially dangerous message to be sending right now in North Dakota.”

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises people to wear masks because they help prevent people who are infected — whether they know it or not — from spreading the coronavirus. It also says masks can also protect wearers who are not infected, though to a lesser degree.

Krabbenhoft said in a statement that the timing of his departure was right for him and his family.

“We decided that today was a good time to retire,” he said. “Sanford is in a good place, strongest ever.”

The company’s Board of Trustees have named Bill Gassen to take over for Krabbenhoft. Gassen has been with Sanford since 2012, most recently serving as chief administrative officer. His appointment is effective immediately.

Sanford Health, based in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, has 46 hospitals and more than 200 clinics concentrated in South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa. It employs about 50,000 people. The Dakotas have for weeks had the country’s worst spread rates of the coronavirus, according to The COVID Tracking Project.

Krabbenhoft’s departure comes a month after Sanford and Salt Lake City-based Intermountain Health-care announced plans to merge companies. Krabbenhoft was slated to become president emeritus after the merger, which still needs to be approved.

South Dakota’s active virus cases decline, 2 deaths reported

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Active coronavirus cases and hospitalizations across South Dakota declined on Tuesday, but the state’s rate of new cases per capita in recent weeks means it is still dealing with one of the worst virus outbreaks in the country.

The Department of Health reported that 16,657 people have active infections of the coronavirus. That’s a decline from recent days, but still means that roughly one out of every 53 people has tested positive and

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is able to transmit the virus. The large number of infections has health care experts worried that South Dakota's recent progress in slowing the virus could be undone by infections spreading as people gather for Thanksgiving.

The average number of daily new cases has declined by nearly 11% over the last two weeks, according to Johns Hopkins researchers. But the state's number of new cases per capita in that time is still the second-highest in the country. There were 1,988 new cases per 100,000 people, according to Johns Hopkins.

On Tuesday, health officials reported 1,011 new cases. The positivity rate was 18.1%, which is an indicator that there could be many more cases than tests are showing.

Health officials reported two new deaths, bringing the total count to 821.

Former Rapid City priest gets nearly 8 years in theft case

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A former Rapid City priest accused of possessing child pornography and having sexual contact with a minor has been sentenced to nearly eight years in federal prison in a separate theft case.

Marcin Garbacz was sentenced Monday to seven years and nine months in prison, following his conviction on 65 financial crimes related to stealing nearly \$260,000 in cash donations from the diocese. His sentence includes more than \$300,000 in restitution, to pay back three churches he victimized, as well the IRS.

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

At Monday's sentencing hearing, Garbacz, 42, apologized to parishioners, saying he unfairly harmed them when he was angry at the Diocese of Rapid City and the Catholic Church. Among other things, he said he was upset that church doctrine considers gay men like him "intrinsically disordered," the Rapid City Journal reported.

Garbacz won't go directly to prison because he now faces the sexual misconduct charges, which were recently unsealed.

The new indictment charges Garbacz 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. Court records show an FBI agent came across child pornography on one of Garbacz's thumb drives while investigating the the financial crimes.

Duchess of Sussex reveals she had miscarriage in the summer

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The Duchess of Sussex has revealed that she had a miscarriage in July, giving a personal account of the traumatic experience in hope of helping others.

Meghan described the miscarriage in an opinion piece in the New York Times on Wednesday, writing that "I knew, as I clutched my firstborn child, that I was losing my second."

The former Meghan Markle and husband Prince Harry have an 18-month-old son, Archie.

The duchess, 39, said she was sharing her story to help break the silence around an all-too-common tragedy. Britain's National Health Service says about one in eight pregnancies in which a woman is aware she is pregnant ends in miscarriage.

"Losing a child means carrying an almost unbearable grief, experienced by many but talked about by few," Meghan wrote.

"In being invited to share our pain, together we take the first steps toward healing."

In a startlingly intimate account of her experience, the duchess described how tragedy struck on a "morning that began as ordinarily as any other day: Make breakfast. Feed the dogs. Take vitamins. Find that missing sock. Pick up the rogue crayon that rolled under the table. Throw my hair in a ponytail before getting my son from his crib.

"After changing his diaper, I felt a sharp cramp. I dropped to the floor with him in my arms, humming a lullaby to keep us both calm, the cheerful tune a stark contrast to my sense that something was not right."

Later, she said, she "lay in a hospital bed, holding my husband's hand. I felt the clamminess of his palm and kissed his knuckles, wet from both our tears. Staring at the cold white walls, my eyes glazed over. I tried to imagine how we'd heal."

Sophie King, a midwife at U.K. child-loss charity Tommy's, said miscarriage and stillbirth remained "a real taboo in society, so mothers like Meghan sharing their stories is a vital step in breaking down that stigma and shame."

"Her honesty and openness today send a powerful message to anyone who loses a baby: this may feel incredibly lonely, but you are not alone," King said.

Meghan, an American actress and star of TV legal drama "Suits," married Harry, a grandson of Queen Elizabeth II, in a lavish ceremony at Windsor Castle in May 2018. Their son was born the following year.

Early this year, the couple announced they were quitting royal duties and moving to North America, citing what they said was the unbearable intrusions and racist attitudes of the British media. They recently bought a house in Santa Barbara, California.

The duchess is currently suing the publisher of Britain's Mail on Sunday newspaper for invasion of privacy over articles that published parts of a letter she wrote to her estranged father after her wedding.

Last month a judge in London agreed to Meghan's request to postpone the trial from January until fall 2021. The decision followed a hearing held in private, and the judge said the reason for the delay request should be kept confidential.

Analysis: Biden prioritizes experience with Cabinet picks

By JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Competence is making a comeback.

President-elect Joe Biden has prized staying power over star power when making his first wave of Cabinet picks and choices for White House staff, with a premium placed on government experience and proficiency as he looks to rebuild a depleted and demoralized federal bureaucracy.

With an eye in part toward making selections who may have to seek approval from a Republican-controlled Senate, Biden has prioritized choosing qualified professionals while eschewing flashy names. Even the most recognizable pick — John Kerry — lacks the showmanship that has defined the Trump era.

In sharp contrast to President Donald Trump, who openly distrusted the very government he led, Biden has showcased a faith in bureaucracy that was born out of his nearly five decades in Washington. He's made hires with the deliberate aim of projecting a sense of dutiful and, even boring, competency.

Surrounding himself with longtime aides and veterans of the Obama administration, many of whom have already worked together for years, Biden has rolled out a team of careerists with bursting resumes and little need of a learning curve.

"Collectively, this team has secured some of the most defining national security and diplomatic achievements in recent memory — made possible through decades of experience working with our partners," Biden said Tuesday as he unveiled his national security team.

"Experience" is indeed the coin of the realm on Biden's burgeoning team.

His pick for secretary of state, Antony Blinken, worked for Biden in the Senate for years, and held the posts of deputy secretary of state and deputy national security adviser. His choice for national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, was the deputy to that post under President Barack Obama. His nominee for treasury secretary, Janet Yellen, was chair of the Federal Reserve and chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers. His incoming White House chief of staff, Ron Klain, was chief of staff to two vice presidents — Al Gore and Biden himself — and was the Obama administration's Ebola czar.

And Kerry, Biden's choice to fill the newly created post of presidential climate envoy, was a longtime U.S. senator and his party's 2004 presidential nominee before serving as secretary of state.

"The team is bringing competency and experience, which are two separate things but deeply interwoven," said retired Navy Adm. James Stavridis, former NATO supreme allied commander Europe, who has worked with much of Biden's new team. "There are deputies stepping up into full roles, seasoned hands

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returning to the job. They tend to be calm and centered and they won't all fight over the ball."

"They know their counterparts overseas and they know whom to pick up the phone and call," said Stavridis. "It's a completely different approach than what we saw with the Trump team — and I hesitate to call it a team because they didn't work all that well together."

Four years ago, contenders for Cabinet posts were marched through the gilded lobby of Trump Tower, the president-elect's Manhattan skyscraper, in full view of reporters and TV cameras. The candidates publicly jockeyed for posts, Trump aides took turn knifing each other in the media, and the incoming president even took one secretary of state contender, Mitt Romney, out to dinner for a public and ultimately unsuccessful audition.

Conversely, Biden's transition hiring process has been carried out behind closed doors or, out of concern for the surging pandemic, on Zoom and over the phone. Leaks to reporters have been few. And the public only got its first glimpse of Biden's choices when they took their spots, spaced apart and wearing masks, on a Delaware stage.

Another change was the distinct lack of tributes from the staffers about their boss, a marked difference from the lengthy, glowing veneration of the president that came to define any Trump Cabinet meeting. Also different: No one who stood with Biden was a family member or an in-law.

"The contrast between Biden's selections and Trump's selections are like night and day: Biden's picks are capable, sensible and play well in the sandbox together," said Steve Rattner, a former Obama economic adviser. "Biden prefers people he has known for decades. Trump picked Rex Tillerson because he thought he looked like a secretary of state."

There are risks. Many progressive Democrats aren't looking for simply a return to the Obama years, which ended with many on the left frustrated at the slow pace of change.

Republicans are also unimpressed with Biden's hires.

"Biden's cabinet picks went to Ivy League schools, have strong resumes, attend all the right conferences & will be polite & orderly caretakers of America's decline," tweeted Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, who may seek the White House again in 2024.

Trump's own hiring process was besieged with chaos of his own making. He jettisoned the man in charge of his transition — former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie — and over 30 binders Christie had prepared in favor of a staffing plan based on his gut, family recommendations and, yes, by his own admission, who looked straight out of central casting.

The tumult didn't end once he took office.

While a few of his picks were establishment choices, like Marine Gen. James Mattis to run the Pentagon, most were plucked from the corporate world — like Tillerson at State and Steve Mnuchin at Treasury — while his senior adviser Steve Bannon declared he wanted to oversee "the destruction of the administrative state."

Trump had more senior staff and Cabinet turnover than any modern predecessor — his first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, didn't last a month — and he declared an informal war on the federal bureaucracy once the investigation began into whether his campaign had any ties to Russia.

Deeply suspicious of what he deemed the "deep state," Trump allowed scores of vacancies to remain unfilled across federal agencies, fired officials he deemed insufficiently loyal, encouraged in-fighting on his staff and, with relentless public attacks, attempted to undermine Americans' faith in the institutions of their own government.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jonathan Lemire has covered the White House and national politics for The Associated Press since 2013.

Follow Lemire on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire>.

With hope high for vaccine, Britain prepares to roll it out

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By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — With major COVID-19 vaccines showing high levels of protection, British officials are cautiously — and they stress cautiously — optimistic that life may start returning to normal by early April.

Even before regulators have approved a single vaccine, the U.K. and countries across Europe are moving quickly to organize the distribution and delivery systems needed to inoculate millions of citizens.

“If we can roll it out at a good lick ... then with a favorable wind, this is entirely hypothetical, but we should be able to inoculate, I believe on the evidence I’m seeing, the vast majority of the people who need the most protection by Easter,” Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Monday after vaccine makers in recent weeks have announced encouraging results. “That will make a very substantial change to where we are at the moment.”

The U.K. has recorded more than 55,000 deaths linked to COVID-19, the deadliest outbreak in Europe. The pandemic has prevented families from meeting, put 750,000 people out of work and devastated businesses that were forced to shut as authorities tried to control the spread. England’s second national lockdown will end Dec. 2, but many restrictions will remain in place.

The British government has agreed to purchase up to 355 million doses of vaccine from seven different producers, as it prepares to vaccinate as many of the country’s 67 million people as possible. Governments around the world are making agreements with multiple developers to ensure they lock in delivery of the products that are ultimately approved by regulators.

The National Health Service is making plans to administer 88.5 million vaccine doses throughout England, according to a planning document dated Nov. 13. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are developing their own plans under the U.K.’s system of devolved administration.

The first to be vaccinated would be health care workers and nursing home residents, followed by older people, starting with those over 80, according to the document, first reported by the London-based Health Service Journal. People under 65 with underlying medical conditions would be next, then healthy people 50 to 65 and finally everyone else 18 and over.

While most of the injections would be delivered at around 1,000 community vaccination centers, about a third would go to 40 to 50 “large-scale mass vaccination centers,” including stadiums, conference centers and similar venues, the document indicates.

The NHS confirmed the document was genuine but said details and target dates are always changing because the vaccination program is a work in progress.

Professor Mark Jit, an expert in vaccine epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, said Britain has the advantage of having a well-developed medical infrastructure that can be used to deliver the vaccine.

But this effort will be unlike standard vaccination programs that target individuals one at a time.

“The challenge now is to deliver the biggest vaccine program in living memory in the U.K. and other countries around the world,” Jit said. “We’re not vaccinating just children or pregnant women like many other vaccination programs.... We’re trying to vaccinate the entire U.K. population. And we’re trying to do it very quickly.”

Other European countries are also getting ready, as are the companies that will be crucial to the rollout.

For example Germany’s Binder, which makes specialized cooling equipment for laboratories, has ramped up production of refrigerated containers needed to transport some of the vaccines under development. Binder is producing a unit that will reach the ultra-cold temperatures needed to ship the Pfizer vaccine.

The German government has asked regional authorities to get special vaccination centers ready by mid-December. France, meanwhile, has reserved 90 million vaccine doses, but has not yet laid out its plan for mass vaccination. A government spokesman said last week that authorities were working to identify locations for vaccination centers, choose companies to transport vaccines and set the rules for shipping and storage.

In Spain, health workers will get priority, as will residents of elder care homes. Spain hopes to vaccinate some 2.5 million people in the first stage between January and March and have most of the vulnerable

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population covered by mid-year. The vaccinations will be administered in 13,000 public health centers.

But sticking syringes in people's arms is just the last part of the enormous logistical challenge the world-wide mass vaccination campaign will pose.

First, drugmakers must ramp up production, so there is enough supply to vaccinate billions of people in a matter of months. Then they have to overcome distribution hurdles such as storing some of the products at minus-70 degrees Celsius (minus-94 Fahrenheit). Finally, they will need to manage complex supply chains reminiscent of the just-in-time delivery systems carmakers use to keep their factories humming.

"It will be the challenge of the century, basically, because of the volumes and everything else which are going to be involved ...," said Richard Wilding, a professor of supply chain strategy at Cranfield School of Management. "It's just the absolute scale."

Vaccines from three drugmakers are considered leading candidates. Pfizer and Moderna have released preliminary data showing their vaccines were about 95% effective. AstraZeneca on Monday reported interim results of its vaccine developed with Oxford researchers that were also encouraging. Dozens of other vaccines are under development, including projects in China and Russia.

Britain and other Northern Hemisphere countries may also get a boost from the weather, said Chris Whitty, England's chief medical officer. Transmission of respiratory viruses generally slows during the warmer months.

"The virus will not disappear, but it will become less and less risky for society."

But Johnson, who credited NHS nurses with saving his life after he was hospitalized with COVID-19 earlier this year, warned restrictions will continue for months and Christmas celebrations will be curtailed this year.

"We can hear the drumming hooves of the cavalry coming over the brow of the hill, but they are not here yet," Johnson said.

Associated Press writers David Rising and Geir Moulson in Berlin, Angela Charlton in Paris and Ciarán Giles in Madrid contributed.

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

'America is back': Biden pushes past Trump era with nominees

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE, MATTHEW LEE and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Declaring "America is back," President-elect Joe Biden introduced his national security team, his first substantive offering of how he'll shift from Trump-era "America First" policies by relying on experts from the Democratic establishment to be some of his most important advisers.

"Together, these public servants will restore America globally, its global leadership and its moral leadership," Biden said Tuesday from a theater in his longtime home of Wilmington, Delaware. "It's a team that reflects the fact that America is back, ready to lead the world, not retreat from it."

The nominees are all Washington veterans with ties to the Obama administration, a sign of Biden's effort to resume some form of normalcy after the tumult of President Donald Trump's four years in office. Another sign that Biden will soon be in charge: He scheduled a Thanksgiving address to the nation for Wednesday afternoon, planning to focus his remarks on shared sacrifices during the holiday season and expressing confidence that Americans will get through the coronavirus pandemic together.

There are risks to choosing experienced hands from the previous Democratic administration. Besides Republican attacks, progressives fret that Biden is tapping some officials who were too cautious and incremental the last time they held power.

Still, Biden's nominees were a clear departure from Trump, whose Cabinet has largely consisted of men, almost all of them white. Biden's picks included several women and people of color, some of whom would break barriers if confirmed to their new positions.

On Tuesday they stood behind Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris spaced apart and wearing

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masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, a contrast with Trump and many of his top aides who have largely eschewed facial coverings.

The president-elect's team includes Antony Blinken, a veteran foreign policy hand well-regarded on Capitol Hill whose ties to Biden go back some 20 years, for secretary of state; lawyer Alejandro Mayorkas to be homeland security secretary; veteran diplomat Linda Thomas-Greenfield to be U.S. ambassador to the United Nations; and Obama White House alumnus Jake Sullivan as national security adviser.

Avril Haines, a former deputy director of the CIA, was picked to serve as director of national intelligence, the first woman to hold that post, and former Secretary of State John Kerry will make a curtain call as a special envoy on climate change. Kerry and Sullivan's position will not require Senate confirmation.

With the Senate's balance of power hinging on two runoff races in Georgia that will be decided in January, some Senate Republicans have already expressed antipathy to Biden's picks as little more than Obama world retreats.

Sen. Tom Cotton, an Arkansas Republican and potential 2024 presidential candidate, argued that Biden is surrounding himself with people who will go soft on China.

Sen. Marco Rubio, another potential White House hopeful, who sits on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that will consider Blinken's nomination, broadly wrote off the early selections.

"Biden's cabinet picks went to Ivy League schools, have strong resumes, attend all the right conferences & will be polite & orderly caretakers of America's decline," Rubio tweeted.

Biden said his choices "reflect the idea that we cannot meet these challenges with old thinking and unchanged habits." He said he tasked them with reasserting global and moral leadership, a clear swipe at Trump, who has resisted many traditional foreign alliances.

The president-elect said he was "struck" by how world leaders have repeatedly told him during congratulatory calls that they look forward to the U.S. "reasserting its historic role as a global leader" under his administration.

Trump, who has debated recently whether to mount another presidential campaign in 2024, appeared to defend his worldview on Tuesday.

"We shouldn't go away from that — America First," he said at the annual turkey pardon, a lighthearted pre-Thanksgiving White House tradition.

While Trump expected total loyalty from his Cabinet and chafed at pushback from advisers, Biden said he expected advisers to tell me "what I need to know, not what I want to know."

Further drawing a contrast with Trump, Haines said she accepted Biden's nomination knowing that "you value the perspective of the intelligence community, and that you will do so even when what I have to say may be inconvenient or difficult."

Haines said she has "never shied away from speaking truth to power" and added "that will be my charge as director of national intelligence."

Biden celebrated the diversity of his picks, offering a particularly poignant tribute to Thomas-Greenfield. The eldest of eight children who grew up in segregated Louisiana, she was the first to graduate from high school and college in her family. The diplomat, in turn, said that with his selections, Biden is achieving much more than a changing of the guard.

"My fellow career diplomats and public servants around the world, I want to say to you, 'America is back, multilateralism is back, diplomacy is back,'" Thomas-Greenfield said.

Mayorkas, who is Cuban American, also offered a nod to his immigrant upbringing.

"My father and mother brought me to this country to escape communism," he said. "They cherished our democracy, and were intensely proud to become United States citizens, as was I."

But Mayorkas might pose the most difficult confirmation challenge from Biden's early round of nominees.

The Senate previously confirmed him in December 2013 by a party-line vote to be the deputy secretary of Homeland Security. The Senate was controlled by Democrats then, and all of the chamber's Republicans voted against his confirmation mainly because he was then under investigation by the inspector general in that department who had been appointed by President Barack Obama. At the time, the Senate historian's

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office said it was unprecedented for the Senate to vote on a nominee who was under investigation.

The inspector general, John Roth, found in March 2015 that Mayorkas, as director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, appeared to give special treatment to certain people as part of the visa program that gives residency preference to immigrants who agree to invest in the U.S. economy.

Meanwhile, there were signs on Tuesday that the stalled formal transition of power is now underway. Biden's team now is in contact with all federal agencies, according to a transition official who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe developments that have not been announced.

At the Pentagon, Kash Patel, chief of staff to the acting secretary of defense, is heading the department's transition work. A transition task force has been assembled, led by Tom Muir, head of the Pentagon office that provides administrative and management services to all Defense Department facilities in the Washington area.

Muir said the first meeting with Biden's team was held virtually on Tuesday morning and that he expected daily meetings to come — some virtually and some in person. He said normal accommodations for the Biden team have been made, including provision of briefing materials, video-teleconferencing capabilities, and office space inside the Pentagon.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar also said his agency is working to get briefing materials to Biden's aides immediately and pledged a "professional, cooperative and collaborative" transition.

The moves came a day after the head of the General Services Administration wrote the necessary letter of "ascertainment" acknowledging Biden as the apparent winner of the election, triggering the transition process.

Trump, who continues to press a legal challenge to overturn the election results, again on Tuesday refused to concede his election loss.

Trump tweeted that "the GSA does not determine who the next President of the United States will be."

Lee and Madhani reported from Washington. Associated Press writer Robert Burns in Washington contributed to this report.

Ethiopian leader rejects international 'interference' in war

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Ethiopia's prime minister is rejecting growing international consensus for dialogue and a halt to deadly fighting in the Tigray region as "unwelcome," saying his country will handle the conflict on its own as a 72-hour surrender ultimatum runs out on Wednesday.

"We respectfully urge the international community to refrain from any unwelcome and unlawful acts of interference," the statement from Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's office said as government forces encircled the Tigray capital, Mekele, with tanks. "The international community should stand by until the government of Ethiopia submits its requests for assistance to the community of nations."

The government led by Abiy, last year's Nobel Peace Prize winner, has warned Mekele's half-million residents to move away from the Tigray People's Liberation Front leaders or there will be "no mercy" — language that the United Nations human rights chief and others have warned could lead to "further violations of international humanitarian law."

But communications remain almost completely severed to the Tigray region of some 6 million people, and is not clear how many people in Mekele are aware of the warnings and the threat of artillery fire.

Diplomats on Tuesday said U.N. Security Council members in a closed-door meeting expressed support for an African Union-led effort to deploy three high-level envoys to Ethiopia. But Ethiopia has said the envoys cannot meet with the TPLF leaders.

"This conflict is already seriously destabilizing the region," European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said Tuesday after meeting with Ethiopia's foreign minister.

"Both sides should immediately begin dialogue facilitated by the AU," the national security adviser for U.S. president-elect Joe Biden, Jake Sullivan, tweeted.

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The Tigray regional leader, Debretsion Gebremichael, could not immediately be reached Wednesday as tensions were high among Mekele's residents.

The TPLF dominated Ethiopia's government for more than a quarter-century, but was sidelined after Abiy took office in 2018 and sought to centralize power. The TPLF opted out when Abiy dissolved the ruling coalition, then infuriated the federal government by holding an election in September after national elections were postponed by COVID-19. Each side now regards the other as illegal.

One Ethiopian military official claims that more than 10,000 "junta forces" have been "destroyed" since the fighting began on Nov. 4, when Abiy accused the TPLF of attacking a military base. Col. Abate Nigatu told the Amhara Mass Media Agency that more than 15,000 heavy weapons and small arms had been seized.

The international community has urgently called for communications to be restored to the Tigray region so warring sides' claims can be investigated, and so food and other desperately needed supplies can be sent as hunger grows. The U.N. says it has been unable to send supplies into Tigray and that people there are "terrified."

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people have been killed in three weeks of fighting. More than 40,000 refugees have fled into Sudan. And nearly 100,000 Eritrean refugees at camps in northern Tigray have come close to the line of fire.

Misery continues for the refugees in Sudan, with little food, little medicine, little shelter, little funding and little or no contact with loved ones left behind in Tigray. "We are absolutely not ready," said Suleiman Ali Mousa, the governor of Qadarif province.

"Help us so that we don't die," said one refugee, Terhas Adiso. "We came from war. We were scared we were going to die from the war and we came here, we don't want to die of hunger, disease. If they are going to help us they need to help us quickly. That's all I am going to say."

Meanwhile, reports continue of alleged targeting of ethnic Tigrayans, even outside Ethiopia. Three soldiers serving with the U.N. peacekeeping force in South Sudan were ordered home over the weekend, the force said in a statement. The Associated Press has confirmed the repatriated soldiers are Tigrayan.

"If personnel are discriminated against because of their ethnicity or any other reason, this could involve a human rights violation under international law," the statement said.

Abiy's government has said it aims to protect civilians, including Tigrayans, but reports continue of arrests, discrimination, house-to-house searches and frozen bank accounts.

Fay Abuelgasim in Umm Rakouba contributed.

27 COVID deaths at Illinois vets nursing home prompts probe

LASALLE, Ill. (AP) — State officials have launched investigations into a coronavirus outbreak at a veterans nursing home in Illinois that has infected nearly 200 residents and staff members, and killed 27 veterans.

News outlets reported Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker's office and the state's Department of Veteran's Affairs are attempting to determine what caused the outbreak at the state-run LaSalle Veterans' Home. The department on Tuesday requested an independent probe into the facility, which was the focus of a state Senate committee virtual hearing on the outbreak.

"The tragedy of what has unfolded at the veterans' home cannot be understated," said State Senator Sue Rezin, who represents the district where the home is located. "I'm glad that the director has called for an independent investigation and agree that there are lesson to be learned from this terrible outbreak that has claimed the lives of 27 of our nation's heroes."

The current outbreak was identified in late October when a staff member and a resident tested positive for the virus, the Chicago Tribune reported. The home was not largely impacted by the pandemic until then. In fact, two-thirds of residents and employees tested positive since the beginning of this month, according to the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs.

"It is no coincidence that cases within the home began to rise just as cases rose dramatically within the

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surrounding community," Veterans Affairs Director Linda Chapa LaVia testified Tuesday at the hearing.

Dr. Avery Hart, a consultant for the state's Public Health department, said at the hearing that all 16 long-term care facilities in LaSalle County have had outbreaks.

State officials have increased staff testing at the facility, and the governor said an infection control team was sent to the home. As of Tuesday morning, 40 residents and 24 staff members were positive for the virus. There are currently 101 residents at the home.

The Latest: WHO says virus cases in Europe are slowing down

By The Associated Press undefined

LONDON — The World Health Organization says the coronavirus pandemic has "slowed down" in the past week although death rates continued to rise, with more than 67,000 new deaths reported.

The U.N. health agency said in its latest epidemiological update Wednesday that even though there was a "downward trend" in the number of cases in Europe, the region still has the biggest proportion of new cases and deaths globally. WHO noted that Africa reported the highest increase in new cases and deaths, driven by South Africa, Algeria and Kenya.

In the past week, WHO said, the number of new cases reported in Europe dropped by about 6% after a 10% decline the previous week, suggesting that lockdowns across the continent are effectively slowing transmission. Still, the region accounts for about half of new global deaths.

Britain's caseload fell by about 13%, its first weekly decline since late August. There were about 1,600 people hospitalized every day in mid-November, but that remains far lower than the more than 3,000 patients admitted daily in early April.

In Asia, WHO noted that Japan reported the largest number of daily cases since the beginning of the outbreak, with more than 2,000 reported every day for five consecutive days, a 41% increase from the previous week. Myanmar reported a 74% jump in cases last week, with more than 11,000 new cases and a 36% increase in deaths, at 188.

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

- EXPLAINER: China's claims of coronavirus on frozen foods
- Restaurant employees out of work again as coronavirus surges anew
- A migrant's odyssey from boat to COVID-19 nursing job in Spain
- Christmas traditions axed as pandemic sweeps rural Kansas
- Germany set to extend partial shutdown well into December

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

MOSCOW — Russian authorities have registered a record number of coronavirus deaths for a second straight day.

The government coronavirus task force reported 507 new deaths on Wednesday, the country's highest daily toll. The previous record of 491 deaths was reported on Tuesday. A total of 37,538 people have died from the coronavirus in Russia, according to the task force.

Russia has been swept by a rapid resurgence of the outbreak this fall, with numbers of confirmed infections and deaths hitting new highs almost daily and significantly exceeding those reported in the spring.

The country's authorities have rejected the idea of another nationwide lockdown or widespread closure of businesses, even as media reports from Russian regions showed that the healthcare system was under severe strain.

On Wednesday, officials reported 23,765 new confirmed cases. Russia currently has the world's fifth largest coronavirus caseload of over 2.1 million.

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SANTA FE, N.M. — The New Mexico Legislature has approved a \$330 million economic relief package aimed at helping unemployed workers and businesses that have been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.

Passage came Tuesday night as lawmakers rushed to wrap up a one-day session that was called by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham.

If the Democratic governor signs the measure, the state could distribute \$1,200 stimulus checks to people who are unemployed or who have run out of unemployment this year. Smaller payments will be distributed to residents who missed out on federal stimulus checks, including dependents and immigrants in the country without legal permission.

Most of the proposed spending will be made possible by federal relief funding previously assigned to New Mexico.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Tennessee's governor says that once coronavirus vaccines become available, they will be optional in the state's K-12 public schools.

Gov. Bill Lee said Tuesday that vaccines will be very important for Tennessee to "ultimately really be able to handle" the pandemic. But he says he doesn't foresee vaccine mandates for school districts in Tennessee.

In his words, "Vaccines are a choice and people have the choice and will have the choice in this state as to whether or not they should take that vaccine."

The state's health commissioner says the first doses could arrive in Tennessee around Dec. 15. The first wave will be reserved for frontline health care workers and first responders. She says widespread availability would likely be in late spring or early summer.

EL PASO, Texas — Officials in El Paso County in Texas plan to impose a new curfew in hopes of combatting a surge in coronavirus cases that is overrunning the border area's hospitals and funeral homes.

El Paso County Judge Ricardo Samaniego has said Gov. Greg Abbott's office has approved the curfew. In a letter sent last week to Abbott, Samaniego said the curfew would be limited in nature and would not interfere with people seeking to access essential or nonessential services.

The county judge and state officials have been at odds over Samaniego's efforts to implement rules to slow the virus' spread in the border city of El Paso.

Earlier this month, an appeals court overturned an El Paso County order that would have closed nonessential businesses, including gyms and salons.

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana has nearly recorded its most COVID-19 deaths for a single month with a week remaining as health officials on Tuesday added 103 more deaths to the state's pandemic toll.

The Indiana State Department of Health's daily update included the new deaths mostly occurring over the past several days through Monday, and which push November's total to at least 991.

Indiana's monthly high for COVID-19 deaths was 1,041 in April, when at most the state's moving seven-day average was 42 fatalities a day. That daily average has now reached 51 as Indiana's hospitals are treating nearly double the number of coronavirus patients as at any point since seeing their first infections in March.

Coronavirus hospitalizations have reached a level where health care leaders say the system is becoming overwhelmed and some hospitals have started rationing care to treat those most severely ill.

ATLANTA — Although White House officials are pushing Georgia to do more to slow the spread of the coronavirus, Gov. Brian Kemp said Tuesday that the responsibility rests with individual Georgians, as he implored them to take precautions over Thanksgiving.

The holiday comes at a perilous moment for the state. Although the virus is spreading more slowly in Georgia than in 40 other states, according to figures kept by The Associated Press, the number of infections is still rising rapidly and approaching the peak Georgia saw in late July.

The Republican governor repeated the same guidance he's been giving Georgians since summer, that

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they should wear masks, keep their distance from others, wash their hands, and follow Kemp's rules, including bans on large gatherings. The governor said he wasn't planning any other measures, such as a statewide mask mandate, or renewed restrictions on businesses.

Also on Tuesday, a second member of Congress from Georgia tested positive for COVID-19.

Republican U.S. Rep. Rick Allen of Evans announced Tuesday that a test shows he has the coronavirus. Allen represents the 12th District stretching from Augusta across all or part of 19 counties.

He says he has no symptoms and will isolate at home. Republican U.S. Rep. Drew Ferguson of West Point tested positive in October after experiencing mild symptoms. U.S. Sen. Kelly Loeffler had isolated after she got a positive COVID-19 test on Friday, but has since gotten two straight negative tests.

LOS ANGELES — A California judge has rejected a request from a restaurant industry group to block the nation's most populous county from reinstating a ban on outdoor dining, a plan the group said would devastate businesses and workers.

The California Restaurant Association asked a Los Angeles County Superior Court judge Tuesday to block the order until county health officials provide medical or scientific evidence that it poses an unreasonable risk to public health.

The group challenged an order issued Sunday in light of soaring coronavirus cases that prohibits restaurants, breweries, wineries and bars from providing in-person, outdoor dining.

The new rule scheduled to take effect Wednesday would restrict restaurants, bars and other businesses in the county to takeout and delivery.

Q&A: Will Twitter, Facebook crack down on Trump?

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — For the past four years, President Donald Trump has enjoyed the special status of a world leader on Twitter and Facebook, even as he used his perch atop the social media pyramid to peddle misinformation and hurl abuse at his critics.

While regular users could have faced being suspended or even booted from the platforms, Trump's misleading proclamations and personal attacks have thus far only garnered warning labels.

But could his loose leash on the platforms be yanked on Jan. 20 when his successor, Joe Biden, is inaugurated?

Here are some questions and answers about what the companies have done — and not done — why Twitter's response has been stronger than Facebook's and what, if anything we might see from the platforms in the coming weeks and months, once their most high-profile user is no longer in the White House.

WHY ARE SO MANY OF TRUMP'S TWEETS LABELED?

Ever since he lost his reelection bid, Trump has been spreading falsehoods about purported election fraud and otherwise trying to delegitimize Biden's win. For the most part, Twitter and Facebook have responded by adding what look like warning labels to his statements, gently guiding people to authoritative information.

But it's not just Trump's tweets. Twitter has labeled hundreds of thousands of posts since late October under its "civic integrity" policy, flagging disputed or potentially misleading posts about the election, the voting process and the results. The idea was to prevent voter suppression and premature declarations of victory — in other words, protect the democratic process in an extraordinary election year complicated by a pandemic that led to millions of people voting by mail for the first time.

On Twitter, more than 100 of Trump's tweets and retweets have been labeled under this policy since Election Day. For instance, one on Nov. 15 where he wrote "I WON THE ELECTION!" has a label below it that reads "Multiple sources called this election differently." Other false and misleading tweets about voter fraud are labeled with "This claim about election fraud is disputed." When clicked, users are taken to authoritative sources of information about election results and the prevalence of voter fraud, which is

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exceedingly rare.

Facebook has also put labels on many of Trump's post about election results. Most recently, they say "Joe Biden is the projected winner of the 2020 US Presidential Election."

WHAT ARE FACEBOOK AND TWITTER DOING DIFFERENTLY?

Both companies have been more aggressive about labeling Trump's statements about election fraud and false claims of victory than they have been with other matters of misinformation during his presidency. But Twitter has done more to limit their spread, by placing them behind warning labels and applying brakes in other ways before people can spread them.

Many of Facebook's labels, which during the election it placed on statements and images about voting posted by all of its U.S. users, could be removed just by clicking on an "X." Both companies changed how they labeled Trump's claims of victory after multiple news organizations, including The Associated Press, called the race for Biden. Twitter now says "Multiple sources called this election differently," while Facebook names Biden as the winner. It's still possible to share or retweet the labeled posts on both platforms, though pop-ups try to get users to stop and think before doing so.

DO THE LABELS WORK?

By some measures — public relations, for sure — social media companies fared better in 2020 than they did in 2016 when it comes to protecting the integrity of the U.S. election. But critics say the labels alone often appear to do little more than provide cover for the social media platforms, giving only the appearance that they're working to safeguard against misinformation.

If the platforms continue to allow Trump and others to spread misinformation with no repercussions other than generic labels, even labeling every single post won't do much. In fact, if every post is labeled, the labels will quickly lose whatever impact they have.

Of course, both companies have done more than label posts. They have encouraged voting, pushed authoritative information and watched out for foreign and domestic interference efforts. But the warnings have been the most visible effort: easy to see, easy to point to and, arguably, easy to ignore.

The social networks' actions were a step in the right direction, but not that effective, said Jennifer Grygiel, a professor at Syracuse University and social media expert.

"Each platform has a different risk profile," Grygiel said. In Twitter's case, the risk comes from being a real-time platform people go to for immediate news. This means a label applied to a tweet just 15 minutes after it is sent is already too late. Facebook is less immediate, but the risk comes with spread. If a post is labeled but can continue to spread, it's not enough.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN ONCE BIDEN IS INAUGURATED?

Trump will return to being a private citizen, and at least on paper be subject to the platforms' official rules, like any other user. Twitter's rules exempt "world leaders" from some of its rules, such as those barring glorification of violence or encouraging harassment. That means that even if they violate the company's rules, their tweets can stay up behind a warning label (there are some exceptions that are prohibited even for world leaders, such as promoting terrorism or directly threatening someone with violence.)

On Jan. 20, after Biden is inaugurated, Trump will lose that world leader status.

On Facebook, the big change will be that Trump's posts will be eligible for fact checks by third-party fact-checkers.

Both Twitter and Facebook plan to transfer official government accounts to Biden and his team on Inauguration Day. This includes @POTUS and @WhiteHouse on Twitter and the White House and other accounts on Facebook and Instagram.

COULD TRUMP BE KICKED OFF THE PLATFORMS?

It will be easier once he is again considered a private citizen, but still unlikely. Notably, all of the fact

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checks and all of the labels disputing his claims don't count against him when it comes to his standing on either Facebook or Twitter. To face repercussions such as suspension or permanent removal, he'd have to violate the companies' rules. This might include targeted harassment or racist threats, for instance. Posting misinformation, unless it's extremely specific about COVID-19 or the voting process, doesn't count.

Global shares mostly higher after Dow crests 30,000

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Global shares mostly rose Wednesday after the Dow Jones Industrial Average closed above 30,000 points for the first time despite an ongoing pandemic, as progress in development of coronavirus vaccines kept investors in a buying mood.

France's CAC 40 gained 0.2% in early trading to 5,572.01, while Germany's DAX added nearly 0.2% to 13,313.36. Britain's FTSE 100 edged up 0.5% to 6,462.84. U.S. shares were set to drift higher with Dow futures up nearly 0.2% at 30,050. S&P 500 futures were gaining nearly 0.2% to 3,639.62.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 edged up 0.5% to finish at 26,296.86. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.6% to 6,683.30. South Korea's Kospi lost early gains to decline 0.6% to 2,601.54. Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 0.3% to 26,669.75, while the Shanghai Composite dipped 1.2% to 3,362.33.

Jingyi Pan, senior market strategist at IG in Singapore, noted news that the transition of power in the U.S. to President-elect Joe Biden will finally begin, as well as his selection of former Fed chair Janet Yellen as treasury secretary, were encouraging traders.

"While the vaccine optimism had changed the outlook for Asia markets hoping for a quicker recovery, the formal transition for the Biden administration alongside former Fed chair Janet Yellen's expected lead of the U.S. Treasury had only served as embellishments contributing to expectations for a more conducive environment for the recovery," Pan said.

News about coronavirus vaccines and treatments are setting off hopes that the pandemic's stranglehold on the economy might get gradually loosened.

"We are one step closer to moving past the election uncertainty," said Lindsey Bell, chief investment strategist at Ally Invest. "People are still optimistic about what 2021 has to bring, from an economic perspective and an earnings perspective."

Traders continue to favor stocks that stand to gain the most from a gradual reopening of the economy, such as banks and industrial companies. Technology and communication stocks, which have been investor favorites through the pandemic, also helped lift the market.

"There's some relief that Biden is choosing moderates to fill out the Cabinet," said Barry Bannister, head of institutional equity strategy at Stifel. He also said the encouraging vaccine news continues to give hope there is an end in sight to the pandemic.

Several candidates are in development for a vaccine. Drugmaker AstraZeneca has said its potential vaccine, being developed with Oxford University, was up to 90% effective. Unlike rival candidates, AstraZeneca's doesn't have to be stored at ultra-cold temperatures, making it easier to distribute. Pfizer and Moderna have also reported study results showing their vaccines were almost 95% effective.

Regeneron Pharmaceuticals received U.S. government approval for emergency use of its COVID-19 treatment over the weekend. The drug, which President Donald Trump received when he was sickened last month, is meant to try to prevent hospitalization and worsening disease from developing in patients with mild-to-moderate symptoms.

U.S. markets will be closed Thursday for the Thanksgiving holiday. They will be open for half a day on Friday, closing at 1 p.m. Eastern Time.

In energy trading, benchmark U.S. crude gained 45 cents to \$45.36 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, rose 56 cents to \$48.42 a barrel.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar inched up to 104.42 Japanese yen from 104.30. The euro was at \$1.1918, up from \$1.1878.

EXPLAINER: Why the Dow topped 30,000 for the first time

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street busted through its latest milestone Tuesday, when the Dow Jones Industrial Average topped 30,000 for the first time.

The Dow rose 454.97 points, or 1.5%, to close at 30,046.24. Investors were encouraged by progress in the development of coronavirus vaccines and news that the transition of power to President-elect Joe Biden is finally beginning. Traders also welcomed word that Biden has selected Janet Yellen, a widely respected former Federal Reserve chair, as treasury secretary.

The milestone is an attention-grabbing psychological threshold, and it's an encouraging signal that the market's rally is broadening beyond the handful of stocks that carried Wall Street through the pandemic. But the Dow at 30,000 means less to most investors' 401(k) accounts than the fact that broader market indexes are also at record highs.

Here's a look at how the Dow has rallied to its latest multiple of 10,000, the first time that's happened since January 2017, and what it means for investors.

WHAT IS THE DOW, EXACTLY?

It's a measure of 30 companies, mostly blue-chip stocks spread across a range of industries. They include tech stars like Apple and Microsoft, as well as more traditional industrial companies like Boeing and Caterpillar. Other behemoths in the Dow include Nike and The Walt Disney Co.

Unlike many other measures of the market, the most important thing for the Dow is how big a stock's price is, not how much a company is worth in total. That means a 1% move for UnitedHealth Group has a bigger effect on the Dow than the same movement for Apple, even though Apple is worth more than six times the insurer. That's because UnitedHealth Group's stock price is \$336.01 versus \$115.17 for Apple, due to having a smaller number of total shares.

HOW BIG A DEAL IS DOW 30,000?

It's just an arbitrary number, and it doesn't mean things are much better than when the Dow was at 29,999. What's more impactful is that the Dow has finally clawed back all its losses from the pandemic and is once again reaching new heights. It is up 61.5% since dropping below 18,600 on March 23.

It took just over nine months for the Dow to surpass the record it had set in February, before panic about the coronavirus triggered the market's breathtaking sell-off.

WHAT GOT THE DOW THIS HIGH?

The Dow's rocket ride to 30,000 got big boosts from the Federal Reserve, which slashed short-term interest rates back to roughly zero and took other measures to stabilize financial markets, and Congress, which came through with trillions of dollars of financial aid for the economy.

The economy has improved since the pandemic's initial shock. For instance, claims for unemployment benefits dropped from 6.9 million in March to 742,000 last week. Company profits didn't tank as much as initially feared. And the possibility that a COVID vaccine could begin distribution by the end of the year has recently given the market more reason to be optimistic.

Among individual companies, Apple did much of the heavy lifting early in the Dow's recovery after its price soared nearly \$275 to above \$500 by late August. A four-for-one stock split on Aug. 28 cut Apple's stock price below \$130, diminishing its impact on the Dow, even though its total market value continued to rise.

Since then, Honeywell and Caterpillar have provided the biggest boosts to the Dow as expectations have built for a recovering economy.

Looking over the longer term, profits strengthened sharply for most Dow companies since it first rose above the 20,000 threshold at the start of 2017. At American Express, for example, analysts expect earnings per share to bounce back from the pandemic and tally \$6.69 next year, versus \$6.07 in recurring earnings in 2016.

At the same time, investors today are more willing to pay higher prices for each \$1 of earnings because alternatives are less attractive. The yield on the 10-year Treasury Tuesday was 0.88% compared with 2.5% in January 2017.

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SO THIS MEANS MY 401K IS DOING BETTER?

Probably, but not because the Dow is at 30,000. For most 401(k) accounts, what matters much more is how the S&P 500 is performing. That's because many, many more stock funds either directly mimic the S&P 500 or benchmark themselves against that index than the Dow.

Nearly \$4.6 trillion in investments directly track the S&P 500, while another \$6.65 trillion measure themselves against the index's performance. That total of \$11.24 trillion is roughly 360 times the \$31.5 billion in investments that track or benchmark their performance against the Dow.

Tuesday's rally also pushed the S&P 500 above its record high set on Nov. 16.

WHY PAY ANY ATTENTION TO THE DOW, THEN?

One thing the Dow's final leap to 30,000 indicates is that it's no longer just tech stocks driving the market.

Five Big Tech companies — Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Facebook and Google's parent company — alone account for nearly 22% of the S&P 500 by market value. That gives their movements incredible sway over the S&P 500. The Dow doesn't even include Amazon, Facebook or Google's parent company.

The dominance of Big Tech early in the market's recovery is a big reason the S&P 500 returned to its pre-pandemic record in August compared to November for the Dow. More recently, with hopes rising that a vaccine or two may be arriving soon, the stock market's gains have begun to broaden out.

The Dow is more heavily weighted toward stocks in the financial and industrial industries, which have done better than tech recently after earlier getting walloped by the pandemic.

NEXT STOP IS DOW 40,000, RIGHT?

Many strategists along Wall Street are optimistic that stocks can keep climbing in 2021, mainly because of the prospects for a vaccine. But the market is facing plenty of threats in the near term. Chief among them is the worsening pandemic, which is pushing governments around the world to bring back varying degrees of restrictions on businesses.

Bitter partisanship also means Congress is making little to no progress on delivering more financial support for the economy in the meantime. That sets the stage for a potentially bleak winter for both health and the economy.

So don't be surprised if the Dow crosses back and forth over the 30,000 threshold a few more times.

Amid racial reckoning, Grammys honor the Black experience

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — With police brutality continuing to devastate Black families and the coronavirus ravishing Black America disproportionately, the world was driven to the significance of this year's Juneteenth more than ever before.

And Beyoncé knew she wanted to release a song on that momentous day — so she dropped "Black Parade," an anthemic jam where she proudly sings about her heritage, hometown and returning to her African roots.

Months later, the song — and others focused on protesting, police brutality and the overall Black experience — are taking center stage at the 2021 Grammy Awards.

Beyoncé's "Black Parade" scored nominations for two of the top awards: song of the year and record of the year. The track will also compete for best R&B song and best R&B performance.

"There could have been a different approach as far as releasing the record and capitalizing off of timings of other things, but we really wanted to get it out during a time where we could all remember the feeling and the energy," Derek Dixie, a longtime collaborator of Beyoncé's who co-wrote the song with the pop star, said in an interview with The Associated Press.

"It's not always about the money and about catching streaming numbers and things like that. Sometimes it's just about what it is — which was making our people proud."

"Black Parade" helped Beyoncé land nine nominations, making her the overall top Grammy contender. Dixie earned three Grammy nominations for co-writing and co-producing the song.

For song of the year, "Black Parade" will compete with H.E.R.'s "I Can't Breathe," the R&B singer's track

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about police brutality.

Lil Baby's "The Bigger Picture," a protest song he created in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, scored nominations for best rap song and best rap performance. Proceeds from the song will support the Black Lives Matter movement, Breonna Taylor's attorney, the Bail Project and the National Association of Black Journalists.

Anderson .Paak also released a song on Juneteenth — the holiday that commemorates when the last enslaved African Americans learned they were free — and it's competing for two awards. "Lockdown" is nominated for best rap performance and best music video.

Country singer Mickey Guyton wrote the track "Black Like Me" a year ago but released it this year because she felt it was extremely relevant. Now, it's nominated for best country solo performance, giving the performer her first-ever Grammy nomination.

"It's been so hard in the country music community and trying to get country music to even support my music and for me to get a Grammy (nomination), it just goes to show that writing your truth is just the way to go," Guyton told the AP on Tuesday. "And not only writing your truth, but really bringing your brothers and sisters up with you."

But Guyton admits that everyone's response to her song wasn't warm. It features the lyrics, "If you think we live in the land of the free/You should try to be Black like me."

"I released it and I did get people that were very angry. There were even radio stations that people were like, 'Get this (expletive) off of my radio station,'" she said. "I would get people writing me messages like, 'Well, if you don't like it here then leave.' And I'm like, 'Well, it's just as much my country as it is yours.'"

Guyton added that some "radio stations were scared to play ('Black Like Me') because they were (angering) their listeners because their listeners didn't want to hear that."

"But I wasn't writing that song for them, I was writing that song got the people that understand this exact walk that I'm walking," she continued. "It's for them."

Apart from "Black Parade," Beyoncé also earned nominations for her film honoring Black art and Black history, "Black Is King," as well as her ode to dark- and brown-skinned women, "Brown Skin Girl."

Dixie, who has worked as Beyoncé's music director and has produced, engineered and arranged songs for the singer, said he's grateful he's working with an artist who boldly speaks about Black pride in her music.

"It's just good to see that she's willing to put that type of energy out and not necessarily be thinking about: 'What's going to guarantee me a No. 1? What's going to guarantee me this?' It's a part of our conversation, it's a part of the process, but when it's necessary to put that art out there, to put that energy out there, she's usually ... leading the pack in that regard," Dixie said. "So I'm grateful to be associated with her on that path."

Guyton added that it's comforting to see some many Black musicians reflect the current times in their music, and she's grateful to the Grammys for acknowledging those kinds of songs.

"It's so important because so often Black people, and Black women especially, are getting overlooked and constantly get overlooked and you're constantly just trying to get people to remember that you're there," she said. "It feels like we're seen and I don't think we've always felt seen."

"I use this scenario of going into any grocery store — if you go to any grocery store ... and you look for hair products for someone who is ethnic and ... you see an entire aisle full of every and any hair product you can possibly think for someone that is not Black. But whenever it comes to finding hair products for a Black person, we're designated a shelf. And today, it doesn't feel like we're designated a shelf."

The 2021 Grammy Awards will air live on Jan. 31.

Christmas traditions axed as pandemic sweeps rural Kansas

By ROXANA HEGEMAN Associated Press

BELLE PLAINE, Kan. (AP) — It's barely a town anymore, battered by time on the windswept prairie of northwest Kansas. COVID-19 still managed for find Norcatur.

Not much remains of the rural hamlet, save for service station, a grain elevator, a little museum, and

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a weekend hangout where the locals play pool, eat pizza and drink beer. The roof has collapsed on the crumbling building that once housed its bank and general store. Schools closed decades ago and the former high school building is used for city offices.

But for the 150 or so remaining residents, the cancellation of the beloved Norcatur Christmas Drawing has driven home how the global coronavirus pandemic has reached deep into rural America.

"Due to individuals who have COVID and refuse to stay home and quarantine it has been determined it is not safe for the citizens of Norcatur and the area to proceed," read the notice tucked in the town's newsletter and posted on its Facebook page. It blamed "negligent attitudes of lack of concern for others" for the cancellation.

In a decades-old tradition that evokes Norman Rockwell nostalgia, the whole town typically gathers for a potluck dinner at Christmastime. Its namesake drawing features a plethora of donated meats, crafts and other goodies so every family can go home with prizes. The local 4-H Club puts on its bake sale. Santa Claus comes riding the firetruck.

Decatur County has fewer than 3,000 people scattered across farms and small towns like Norcatur. As of Monday, the county had 194 coronavirus cases and one death, although medical providers say there are at least four more deaths of local residents that have yet to be added to the official toll.

Carolyn Plotts, a 73-year-old Norcatur resident who never had symptoms and only found out she was positive for COVID-19 when tested for a medical procedure in October, said two of her former high school classmates who live in the county died because of the virus. Her husband also tested positive.

"It's been very real to me," she said.

Plotts wondered whether the cancellation notice was maybe "talking about me." During her quarantine she would only leave her house — with her doctor's permission and wearing a mask, she said pointedly — to care for a housebound friend who still believes the pandemic is a hoax.

Carl Lyon, the Norcatur mayor who takes on the annual Santa role, said while most residents are "pretty good" about social distancing and wearing a mask, some have gotten the virus.

"I know a couple of people had it and they were still kind of running around and whatnot," Lyon said. "Didn't seem to bother them that they infected everybody else."

Decatur County Sheriff Ken Badsky estimated that 5% of county residents who should quarantine violate the restrictions and go out. His office has called some and "insisted they do what they are supposed to do," but has taken no legal action.

"I have so much other stuff to do. I don't have time to follow people around," Badsky said. "We have 900 square miles, we have three full-time officers and a part-time to take care of that and we are busy with everything else."

Such sentiments anger medical providers as coronavirus cases surge and it gets more difficult to find beds for their sickest patients as hospitals across the state fill up.

"We need some backing to stop this virus and we are looking to people that need to do their job to do it, and so otherwise this thing is going to run rampant and it is going to put more pressure on our hospital," Kris Mathews, the administrator of Decatur Health, a small critical access hospital in Oberlin, just 19 miles west of Norcatur.

Stan Miller, the announcer for the Christmas Drawing for more than 25 years, has mixed emotions about the decision to forgo it this year. The 63-year-old Norcatur resident said he understands that there are elderly people who you don't want to get the virus. But it's also disappointing.

"I like to see all the joy, especially the little kids," Miller said. "We have Santa Claus after the drawing is over and to see them sit on Santa's lap and tell them what they want for Christmas, you know, always puts a smile on my face."

The Weeknd criticizes Grammys over nominations snub

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Weeknd angrily slammed the Grammy Awards, calling them "corrupt" after

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the pop star walked away with zero nominations despite having multiple hits this year.

The three-time Grammy winner criticized the Recording Academy on Tuesday after he was severely snubbed despite having one of the year's biggest albums with "After Hours" and being tapped as the Super Bowl halftime headline performer. He also topped the Billboard Hot 100 chart with "Blinding Lights" and "Heartless."

"The Grammys remain corrupt," the singer said on Twitter. "You owe me, my fans and the industry transparency."

The harsh words come less than a year after the Recording Academy's ousted CEO accused the group that determines nominations in the top categories of having conflicts of interest and not engaging in a transparent selection process.

Harvey Mason Jr., the Recording Academy's interim president and CEO, spoke earlier about whether he was surprised the Weeknd didn't earn a single nomination. He said it's hard to predict the voters' decisions.

"You know, there's so many nominations and there's only so many slots, it's really tough to predict what the voters are going to vote for in any given year," he told The Associated Press. "I try not to be too surprised."

After the Weeknd called out the academy, Mason Jr. released a statement explaining some that "unfortunately, every year, there are fewer nominations than the number of deserving artists."

"We understand that The Weeknd is disappointed at not being nominated. I was surprised and can empathize with what he's feeling," Mason Jr. said.

The Weeknd was shut out from being a Grammy nominee along with Luke Combs, who set records on streaming services and dominated the country charts. Morgan Wallen also had a successful year in country music, but he came away empty.

A group of young R&B female acts moving the needle also missed out on nominations, including Summer Walker, Teyana Taylor and Kehlani. Late rapper Juice WRLD, Brandy and Chris Brown were also snubbed.

Justin Bieber earned four nominations, but the singer also criticized the Grammys decision-making as well. He said music from his fifth studio album "Changes" was wrongly viewed as a pop album, rather than an R&B project.

Bieber gave thanks saying he was "flattered" for being acknowledged but thought being left out of the R&B category was a mistake.

"I set out to make an R&B album," he wrote on Instagram. "Changes' was and is an R&B album. It is not being acknowledged as an R&B album, which is very strange to me."

Bieber was nominated in the categories for best pop solo performance, best pop duo/group performance, best pop vocal album and best country duo/group performance.

The singer said he loves pop music, but he wants to be respected for his work.

"I grew up admiring R&B music and wished to make a project that would embody that sound," he said. "For this not to be put into that category feels weird, considering from the chords to the melodies to the vocal style, all the way down to the hip-hop drums that were chosen, it is undeniably, unmistakably an R&B album!"

Asian shares rise after Dow crests 30,000 on vaccine hopes

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares rose Wednesday after the Dow Jones Industrial Average closed above 30,000 points for the first time despite an ongoing pandemic, as progress in development of coronavirus vaccines kept investors in a buying mood.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 jumped 1.7% to 26,607.63 in morning trading. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.7% to 6,691.80. South Korea's Kospi added 0.5% to 2,630.04. Hong Kong's Hang Seng surged 1.3% to 26,931.98, while the Shanghai Composite edged up 0.1% to 3,406.45.

Jingyi Pan, senior market strategist at IG in Singapore, noted news that the transition of power in the U.S. to President-elect Joe Biden will finally begin, as well as his selection of former Fed chair Janet Yellen

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as Treasury secretary, were encouraging traders.

"While the vaccine optimism had changed the outlook for Asia markets hoping for a quicker recovery, the formal transition for the Biden administration alongside former Fed chair Janet Yellen's expected lead of the U.S. Treasury had only served as embellishments contributing to expectations for a more conducive environment for the recovery," Pan said.

The Dow rose more than 450 points, or 1.5%, to cross the milestone. The S&P 500 index, which has a far greater impact on 401(k) accounts than the Dow, rose 1.6%, climbing to its own all-time high.

The gains extend a monthlong market rally driven by growing optimism that development of coronavirus vaccines and treatments will loosen the pandemic's stranglehold on the economy. They also mark a rapid climb for the Dow from its March 23 low of just under 18,600 during the worst of its early pandemic nosedive.

"We are one step closer to moving past the election uncertainty," said Lindsey Bell, chief investment strategist at Ally Invest. "People are still optimistic about what 2021 has to bring, from an economic perspective and an earnings perspective."

The S&P 500 rose 57.82 points to 3,635.41. The Dow gained 454.97 points to 30,046.24. Both indexes eclipsed record highs set early last week. The technology-heavy Nasdaq composite picked up 156.15 points, or 1.3%, to 12,036.79.

Traders continued to favor stocks that stand to gain the most from a gradual reopening of the economy, such as banks and industrial companies. Technology and communication stocks, which have been investor favorites through the pandemic, also helped lift the market.

In another signal that investors were feeling confident, the Russell 2000 index of smaller stocks outpaced the broader market, picking up 35.23 points, or 1.9%, to 1,853.53, also a record high.

"There's some relief that Biden is choosing moderates to fill out the cabinet," said Barry Bannister, head of institutional equity strategy at Stifel. Bannister also said the encouraging vaccine news continues to give hope there is an end in sight to the pandemic.

Several candidates are in development for a vaccine. Drugmaker AstraZeneca has said its potential vaccine, being developed with Oxford University, was up to 90% effective. Unlike rival candidates, AstraZeneca's doesn't have to be stored at ultra-cold temperatures, making it easier to distribute. Pfizer and Moderna have also reported study results showing their vaccines were almost 95% effective.

Regeneron Pharmaceuticals received U.S. government approval for emergency use of its COVID-19 treatment over the weekend. The drug, which President Donald Trump received when he was sickened last month, is meant to try to prevent hospitalization and worsening disease from developing in patients with mild-to-moderate symptoms.

U.S. markets will be closed Thursday for the Thanksgiving holiday. They will be open for half the day on Friday, closing at 1 p.m. Eastern.

In energy trading, benchmark U.S. crude gained 67 cents to \$45.58 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, rose 76 cents to \$48.62 a barrel.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar inched up to 104.56 Japanese yen from 104.30 yen. The euro cost \$1.1901, up from \$1.1878.

AP Business Writers Alex Veiga and Damian J. Troise contributed to this report.

California OK'd aid in name of Scott Peterson, other killers

By ADAM BEAM Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California's system for paying unemployment benefits is so dysfunctional that the state approved more than \$140 million for at least 20,000 prisoners, local and federal prosecutors said Tuesday, detailing a scheme that resulted in claims filed in the names of well-known convicted murderers like Scott Peterson and Cary Stayner.

From March to August, more than 35,000 inmates were named in claims filed with the California Em-

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ployment Development Department, with more than 20,000 being paid, according to Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert. At least 158 claims were filed for 133 death-row inmates, resulting in more than \$420,000 in benefits paid

"It involves rapists and child molesters, human traffickers and other violent criminals in our state prisons," Schubert said.

The list includes Peterson, who was sentenced to death after being convicted of killing his pregnant wife following a trial that riveted the nation. The California Supreme Court recently overturned Peterson's death sentence and has ordered a lower court to review his murder conviction.

Schubert confirmed there was a claim made in the name of Scott Peterson, but declined to provide further details.

Peterson's attorney, Pat Harris, said while Peterson's name surfaced during the investigation, there is no evidence Peterson received unemployment aid from the state.

"This investigation, when it's completed, will show that he had not a thing to do with any kind of scheme to get fraudulent benefits," Harris said.

Schubert listed a number of inmates there who had claims filed in their names, including Stayner, convicted of killing four people in or near Yosemite National Park in 1999; Susan Eubanks, a San Diego woman convicted of shooting her four sons to death in 1997; Isauro Aguirre, who was sentenced to death for the 2013 murder of 8-year-old Gabriel Fernandez in Los Angeles; and Wesley Shermantine, part of the duo dubbed the "Speed Freak Killers" for their meth-induced killing rampage in the 1980s and '90s.

Prosecutors said they learned of the scheme from listening in on recorded prison phone calls, where inmates would talk about how easy it was for everyone to get paid. They said the scheme always involved someone on the outside — usually friends or family members of the inmates, who would then receive the benefits.

In Kern County, home to five state prisons, one address was used to receive benefits for 16 inmates.

"In my nearly four decades as a prosecutor in this state, I have never seen fraud of this magnitude," Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer said.

In some cases, inmates used their real names. In others, they used fake names and even fake Social Security numbers. In one instance, an inmate used the name: "poopy britches," Schubert said.

"Quite frankly, the inmates are mocking us," Schubert said.

So far, 22 people have been charged in San Mateo County, including six people who were not in prison. Prosecutors said dozens of other investigations across the state are continuing.

Prosecutors blamed the Employment Development Department, which has been overwhelmed by more than 16.4 million benefit claims since the pandemic began in March, resulting in a backlog that at one time totaled more than 1.6 million people.

But prosecutors said in its haste to approve benefits, the department did not check unemployment claims against a list of prisoners, as many other states do. San Mateo District Attorney Stephen Wagstaffe said that when he notified the department about inmates fraudulently receiving benefits, they told him they could not cut off the payments until they were formally charged with a crime.

The problem was so bad that on Monday, nine county district attorneys sent a letter to Gov. Gavin Newsom asking for him to intervene.

"We face a manifest problem that requires action, not talk," said McGregor Scott, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of California.

Employment Development Department spokeswoman Loree Levy said the agency has been working with the Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General on cross-checking claims with inmates, saying they are "pursuing how to integrate such cross-matches moving forward as part of enhanced prevention efforts during this unprecedented time of pandemic-related unemployment fraud across the country."

In an email to the AP, Newsom called the fraud "absolutely unacceptable." He said he first learned of the fraud earlier this year, which prompted him to order the department to "review its practices and take immediate actions to prevent fraud and to hold people accountable."

Newsom said he has ordered the Office of Emergency Services to set up a task force to assist prosecu-

tors with their investigation.

"While we have made improvements, we need to do more," Newsom said.

This story has been corrected to say that Cary Stayner killed four people in or near Yosemite National Park; to show 20,000 of 35,000 claims were paid; and to accurately spell the last name of convicted killer Wesley Shermantine.

Biden transition OK'd to start as Trump runs out of options

By ZEKE MILLER, DAVID EGGERT and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The federal government recognized President-elect Joe Biden as the "apparent winner" of the Nov. 3 election, formally starting the transition of power after President Donald Trump spent weeks testing the boundaries of American democracy. Trump relented after suffering yet more legal and procedural defeats in his seemingly futile effort to overturn the election with baseless claims of fraud.

Trump still refused to concede and vowed to continue to fight in court after General Services Administrator Emily Murphy gave the green light Monday for Biden to coordinate with federal agencies ahead of his Jan. 20 inauguration. But Trump did tweet that he was directing his team to cooperate on the transition.

The fast-moving series of events seemed to let much of the air out of Trump's frantic efforts to undermine the will of the people in what has amounted to a weeklong stress test for the nation's confidence in the political system and the fairness of U.S. elections. Those efforts haven't ended and are likely to persist well beyond his lame-duck presidency.

Murphy, explaining her decision, cited "recent developments involving legal challenges and certifications of election results."

She acted after Michigan on Monday certified Biden's victory in the battleground state and a federal judge in Pennsylvania tossed a Trump campaign lawsuit on Saturday seeking to prevent certification in that state. Pennsylvania certified its results, and its 20 electors for Biden on Tuesday morning.

It also came as an increasing number of Republicans were publicly acknowledging Biden's victory, after weeks of tolerating Trump's baseless claims of fraud. The Republican president had grown increasingly frustrated with the flailing tactics of his legal team.

In recent days, senior Trump aides including chief of staff Mark Meadows and White House counsel Pat Cipollone had also encouraged Trump to allow the transition to begin, telling the president he didn't need to concede but could no longer justify withholding support to the Biden transition.

Meadows, late Monday, sent a memo to White House staffers saying that their work was not yet finished and that the administration would "comply with all actions needed to ensure the smooth transfer of power," according to a person who received it.

Yohannes Abraham, executive director of the Biden transition, said the decision "is a needed step to begin tackling the challenges facing our nation, including getting the pandemic under control and our economy back on track."

Murphy, a Trump appointee, had faced bipartisan criticism for failing to begin the transition process sooner, preventing Biden's team from working with career agency officials on plans for his administration. The delay denied the Democratic president-elect access to highly classified national security briefings and hindered his team's ability to begin drawing up its own plans to respond to the raging coronavirus pandemic.

Murphy insisted she acted on her own.

"Please know that I came to my decision independently, based on the law and available facts. I was never directly or indirectly pressured by any Executive Branch official — including those who work at the White House or GSA — with regard to the substance or timing of my decision," she wrote in a letter to Biden.

Trump tweeted moments after Murphy's decision: "We will keep up the good fight and I believe we will prevail! Nevertheless, in the best interest of our Country, I am recommending that Emily and her team do what needs to be done with regard to initial protocols, and have told my team to do the same."

Still, Trump continued to spread false information about the vote and indicated he would not concede.

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He tweeted Tuesday morning, "the GSA does not determine who the next President of the United States will be."

Max Stier, president and CEO of the nonpartisan Partnership for Public Service, criticized the delay but said Biden's team would be able to overcome it.

"Unfortunately, every day lost to the delayed ascertainment was a missed opportunity for the outgoing administration to help President-elect Joe Biden prepare to meet our country's greatest challenges," he said. "The good news is that the president-elect and his team are the most prepared and best equipped of any incoming administration in recent memory."

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said the GSA action "is probably the closest thing to a concession that President Trump could issue." Noting that the nation "faces multiple crises that demand an orderly transition," Schumer urged Democrats and Republicans to "unite together" for a smooth and peaceful transition.

Murphy's action came just 90 minutes after Michigan election officials certified Biden's 154,000-vote victory in the state. The Board of State Canvassers, which has two Republicans and two Democrats, confirmed the results on a 3-0 vote with one GOP abstention. Trump and his allies had hoped to block the vote to allow time for an audit of ballots in Wayne County, where Trump has claimed without evidence that he was the victim of fraud. Biden crushed the president by more than 330,000 votes there.

Some Trump allies had expressed hope that state lawmakers could intervene in selecting Republican electors in states that do not certify. That long-shot bid is no longer possible in Michigan.

"The people of Michigan have spoken. President-elect Biden won the State of Michigan by more than 154,000 votes, and he will be our next president on January 20th," Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat, said.

Trump was increasingly frustrated by his legal team, led by former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, whose erratic public performances drew bipartisan mockery in recent weeks. Still, the legal challenges were expected to continue, as Trump seeks to keep his supporters on his side and keep his options open for opportunities post-presidency.

In Pennsylvania on Saturday, a conservative Republican judge shot down the Trump campaign's biggest legal effort in the state with a scathing ruling that questioned why he was supposed to disenfranchise 7 million voters with no evidence to back their claims and an inept legal argument at best.

Biden won Pennsylvania by more than 80,000 votes.

Associated Press writers Maryclaire Dale in Philadelphia, Jonathan Lemire in New York, Mark Scoloro in Harrisburg, Pa., Christina A. Cassidy in Atlanta and John Flesher in Traverse City, Mich., contributed to this report.

Restaurant workers out of work again as virus surges anew

By TAMMY WEBBER, DANIELLA PETERS and BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

Writers and bartenders are being thrown out of work — again — as governors and local officials shut down indoor dining and drinking establishments to combat the nationwide surge in coronavirus infections that is overwhelming hospitals and dashing hopes for a quick economic recovery.

And the timing, just before the holidays, couldn't be worse.

Restaurant owner Greg Morena in Los Angeles County was trying to figure out his next step after officials in the nation's largest county banned in-person dining for at least three weeks, beginning Wednesday. But he was mainly dreading having to notify his employees.

"To tell you, 'I can't employ you during the holidays,' to staff that has family and kids, I haven't figured that part out yet. It's the heaviest weight that I carry," said Morena, who had to close one restaurant earlier in the year and has two operating at the Santa Monica Pier.

Randine Karnitz, a server in Elk River, Minnesota, said her boss laid her off last week after Gov. Tim Walz announced that bars, restaurants and gyms would close for four weeks as infections spiked to an all-time

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high and pushed hospitals to the breaking point.

"Well, your last day is tomorrow. You don't have a job. You can thank your governor for that," Karnitz said her boss told her.

She said her husband's hours also have been cut at his manufacturing job, forcing the family to postpone house repairs.

Karnitz, though, said that she supports a shutdown and that people who didn't take the virus seriously bear much of the blame.

"I just think that if we all would've done our part to begin with, we wouldn't be in this predicament," she said. "Things are only going to get worse for the service industry before it gets better, unfortunately."

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards on Tuesday said he is limiting the number of customers in restaurants, gyms, salons, casinos, malls and other nonessential businesses to 50% of their capacity as the state sees a third spike in coronavirus cases and hospitalizations. Most bars will be restricted to takeout, delivery and outside seating.

Restaurant owners — most of whom underwent shutdowns in the spring and summer — are finding the new round of closings challenging as colder weather sets in. Many are offering curbside pickup but also trying to hold outdoor dining, even if it means setting up shelters or heaters.

But in Los Angeles County, restaurants and bars are prohibited from providing outdoor dining beginning Wednesday. They will be limited to takeout and delivery.

Some are challenging shutdown orders in court, with little success.

On Tuesday, a judge rejected a request from a restaurant industry group to block the Los Angeles County outdoor dining ban. A day earlier, a California judge refused to temporarily restore indoor service at restaurants and gyms in San Diego County that were forced to move operations outside, saying there is scientific evidence to support Gov. Gavin Newsom's sweeping public health orders.

A federal judge last week declined to halt a three-week ban on indoor dining in Michigan after an industry association complained that restaurants were being treated unfairly. The judge noted that restaurants are unlike other businesses in that their customers have to remove their masks to eat or drink.

The U.S. has seen more than 12.5 million confirmed infections and over 259,000 deaths from the coronavirus. Almost 86,000 people — an all-time high — were in the hospital in the U.S. with COVID-19 as of Monday.

The infections have led to a shortage of hospital beds and health care workers, and they threaten non-COVID-19-related surgeries and other care.

On average, the U.S. is recording over 172,000 new cases per day. It is seeing more than 1,500 deaths per day on average — the highest level since May.

Restaurant owners in Los Angeles County contend infections are more likely to be coming from private gatherings where rules about masks and spaced-apart seating aren't in force.

"The same people desperate to go to bars are going to party in their houses," said Brittney Valles, owner of Guerrilla Tacos in Los Angeles. "You will never see them until they're spreading coronavirus around willy-nilly. It's insane."

Valles said she broke down Saturday as she realized it could be the last time — at least for a while — that she would see some of her employees. It will be the third time she has had to furlough employees, and she was working Monday to develop a plan to keep as many employed as possible.

She has already opened a coffee shop that offers breakfast burritos. She plans to expand those hours, continue to operate the taco business for lunch takeout and open a burger joint at night that would deliver meals and offer food to go.

Some restaurateurs have been defiant. Colorado Gov. Jared Polis warned restaurants Tuesday that they could lose their licenses if they violate closure orders after several businesses in Larimer County signed a letter saying they will continue operating at full indoor capacity.

Webber reported from Fenton, Michigan; Peters from Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Melley from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Patty Nieberg in Denver; and Juliet

Williams in Los Angeles contributed to this story.

VIRUS TODAY: Holiday party defiance, mask wearing in 2021

By The Associated Press undefined

Here's what's happening Tuesday with the coronavirus pandemic in the U.S.:

— The promising advances with vaccine development do not mean that people can stop wearing masks and socially distancing anytime soon. That's because it will take months for the vaccine to roll out and reach a sizable percentage of the population needed to accomplish herd immunity.

— The cascade of business restrictions shutting down indoor dining and drinking establishments is being felt by restaurant workers who are losing their jobs — again — just as the holiday season approaches.

— Holiday celebrations are moving forward at the White House despite the pandemic. The delivery of an 18-foot Christmas tree, the ceremonial presidential turkey pardon and a series of festivities and parties are all happening, even as health officials warn about the risk associated with holiday gatherings.

THE NUMBERS: The U.S. is averaging 172,000 new cases per day over the last week and 1,529 deaths. A record of nearly 86,000 people are hospitalized with the virus.

QUOTABLE: "No one is going to tell me what I can or not do in my own home. They do not pay my bills and they are not going to tell me what to do." — Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, resident Barb Chestnut on her plans to avoid Thanksgiving gathering restrictions.

ICYMI: More people are realizing that they have difficulty hearing during the pandemic. The reason: They weren't aware they had hearing troubles and how much they were relying on lip reading and facial expressions until people around them started wearing masks.

ON THE HORIZON: Los Angeles County supervisors are meeting Tuesday to decide how to respond to an alarming surge in cases in the nation's second-largest city. They are considering a stay-home order.

Find AP's full coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>

'America is back': Biden pushes past Trump era with nominees

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE, MATTHEW LEE and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Declaring "America is back," President-elect Joe Biden introduced his national security team on Tuesday, his first substantive offering of how he'll shift from Trump-era "America First" policies by relying on experts from the Democratic establishment to be some of his most important advisers.

"Together, these public servants will restore America globally, its global leadership and its moral leadership," Biden said from a theater in his longtime home of Wilmington, Delaware. "It's a team that reflects the fact that America is back, ready to lead the world, not retreat from it."

The nominees are all Washington veterans with ties to former President Barack Obama's administration, a sign of Biden's effort to resume some form of normalcy after the tumult of President Donald Trump's four years in office. There are risks to the approach as Republicans plan attacks and progressives fret that Biden is tapping some officials who were too cautious and incremental the last time they held power.

Still, Biden's nominees were a clear departure from Trump, whose Cabinet has largely consisted of men, almost all of them white. Biden's picks included several women and people of color, some of whom would break barriers if confirmed to their new positions.

They stood behind Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris spaced apart and wearing masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, a contrast with Trump and many of his top aides who have largely eschewed facial coverings.

The president-elect's team includes Antony Blinken, a veteran foreign policy hand well-regarded on Capitol Hill whose ties to Biden go back some 20 years, for secretary of state; lawyer Alejandro Mayorkas to be homeland security secretary; veteran diplomat Linda Thomas-Greenfield to be U.S. ambassador to the United Nations; and Obama White House alumnus Jake Sullivan as national security adviser.

Avril Haines, a former deputy director of the CIA, was picked to serve as director of national intelligence,

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the first woman to hold that post, and former Secretary of State John Kerry will make a curtain call as a special envoy on climate change. Kerry and Sullivan's position will not require Senate confirmation.

With the Senate's balance of power hinging on two runoff races in Georgia that will be decided in January, some Senate Republicans have already expressed antipathy to Biden's picks as little more than Obama world retreads.

Sen. Tom Cotton, an Arkansas Republican and potential 2024 presidential candidate, argued that Biden is surrounding himself with people who will go soft on China.

Sen. Marco Rubio, another potential White House hopeful, who sits on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that will consider Blinken's nomination, broadly wrote off the early selections.

"Biden's cabinet picks went to Ivy League schools, have strong resumes, attend all the right conferences & will be polite & orderly caretakers of America's decline," Rubio tweeted.

Biden said his choices "reflect the idea that we cannot meet these challenges with old thinking and unchanged habits." He said he tasked them with reasserting global and moral leadership, a clear swipe at Trump, who has resisted many traditional foreign alliances.

The president-elect said he was "struck" by how world leaders have repeatedly told him during congratulatory calls that they look forward to the U.S. "reasserting its historic role as a global leader" under his administration.

Trump, who has debated recently whether to mount another presidential campaign in 2024, appeared to defend his worldview on Tuesday.

"We shouldn't go away from that — America First," he said at the annual turkey pardon, a lighthearted pre-Thanksgiving White House tradition.

While Trump expected total loyalty from his Cabinet and chafed at pushback from advisers, Biden said he expected advisers to tell me "what I need to know, not what I want to know."

Further drawing a contrast with Trump, Haines said she accepted Biden's nomination knowing that "you value the perspective of the intelligence community, and that you will do so even when what I have to say may be inconvenient or difficult."

Haines said she has "never shied away from speaking truth to power" and added "that will be my charge as director of national intelligence."

Biden celebrated the diversity of his picks, offering a particularly poignant tribute to Thomas-Greenfield. The eldest of eight children who grew up in segregated Louisiana, she was the first to graduate from high school and college in her family. The diplomat, in turn, said that with his selections, Biden is achieving much more than a changing of the guard.

"My fellow career diplomats and public servants around the world, I want to say to you, 'America is back, multilateralism is back, diplomacy is back,'" Thomas-Greenfield said.

Mayorkas, who is Cuban American, also offered a nod to his immigrant upbringing.

"My father and mother brought me to this country to escape communism," he said. "They cherished our democracy, and were intensely proud to become United States citizens, as was I."

But Mayorkas might pose the most difficult confirmation challenge from Biden's early round of nominees.

The Senate previously confirmed him in December 2013 by a party-line vote to be the deputy secretary of Homeland Security. The Senate was controlled by Democrats then, and all of the chamber's Republicans voted against his confirmation mainly because he was then under investigation by the Obama-appointed inspector general in that department. At the time, the Senate historian's office said it was unprecedented for the Senate to vote on a nominee who was under investigation.

The inspector general, John Roth, found in March 2015 that Mayorkas, as director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, appeared to give special treatment to certain people as part of the visa program that gives residency preference to immigrants who agree to invest in the U.S. economy.

Meanwhile, there were signs on Tuesday that the stalled formal transition of power is now underway. Biden's team now is in contact with all federal agencies, according to a transition official who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe developments that have not been announced.

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At the Pentagon, Kash Patel, chief of staff to the acting secretary of defense, is heading the department's transition work. A transition task force has been assembled, led by Tom Muir, head of the Pentagon office that provides administrative and management services to all Defense Department facilities in the Washington area.

Muir said the first meeting with Biden's team was held virtually on Tuesday morning and that he expected daily meetings to come — some virtually and some in person. He said normal accommodations for the Biden team have been made, including provision of briefing materials, video-teleconferencing capabilities, and office space inside the Pentagon.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar also said his agency is working to get briefing materials to Biden's aides immediately and pledged a "professional, cooperative and collaborative" transition.

The moves came a day after the head of the General Services Administration wrote the necessary letter of "ascertainment" acknowledging Biden as the apparent winner of the election, triggering the transition process.

Trump, who continues to press a legal challenge to overturn the election results, again on Tuesday refused to concede his election loss.

Trump tweeted that "the GSA does not determine who the next President of the United States will be."

Lee and Madhani reported from Washington. Associated Press writer Robert Burns in Washington contributed to this report.

Left for dead, twice, RadioShack gets another shot online

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

SILVER SPRING, Md. (AP) — RadioShack, a fixture at the mall for decades, has been pulled from brink of death, again.

It's the most prized name in the basket of brands that entrepreneur investors Alex Mehr and Tai Lopez have scooped up since the coronavirus pandemic bowled over the U.S. retail sector and sent a number of chains into bankruptcy protection. Those brands so far include Pier1, Dressbarn and Modell's.

Mehr and Lopez plan to make RadioShack competitive again, this time online, rather than on street corners or in malls. However, unlike RadioShack's glory years, it's Amazon's world now.

The big question is: How much value does the RadioShack brand have when the prized target audience of younger consumers may have never owned a radio, let alone stepped inside a RadioShack store?

"It's a very thin line between being iconic and being dead," said Robert Passikoff, founder and president of Brand Keys Inc., a marketing and research consultancy. "Being iconic a lot of the time just means people have a memory of it. I'm not sure that just remembering something is leverageable enough to be able to convert something into success."

Success is something that's been in RadioShack's rear-view mirror for quite some time. The company, which would celebrate its 100th birthday in 2021, appeared to be on top of the tech world in the pre-personal computer days of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the place kids and hobbyist would go to buy radios, walkie-talkies and all the parts to fix them, or even build them themselves.

Somewhere along the way, "The Shack" got lost. Unable to capitalize on the PC boom that began in the mid-eighties, it also found itself largely on the outside of the portable device revolution of the aughts and drifting toward irrelevancy. It booked its last profit in 2011. After store redesigns and other changes failed to draw customers, the Fort-Worth, Texas, company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in 2015 and then again two years later.

Mehr and Lopez have no designs on rebuilding the brick-and-mortar RadioShack empire. But they say there is a path back to profitability, and it all starts with the name.

"We bought the raw material to build a big business," Mehr said. "Brand means trust. And the brand is very, very strong. I have quantifiable data that the brand is very strong."

Mehr said REV's formula for measuring public opinion of a brand differs significantly from the way other

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experts value such things, including their own polling and analysis of how the company might work in a specific "ecosystem."

The plan, in short, is to build a vast online marketplace on top of the RadioShack brand. Trust in that name will get consumers to the site, where the quality and variety of merchandise will dictate whether or not shoppers click the "Buy" button, they say.

Since it was founded in 2019, REV has been in the hunt for other names that could once be described as "household." It's turned Pier1, Dressbarn and Modell's into online-first businesses.

Other bankrupt retailers have found a second life online. The overhead is low and there are people who remain loyal to the brand, even after the store lights go out. But they are typically much reduced affairs. American Apparel, which went bankrupt and closed all its stores a few years ago, now sells hoodies and sweatpants online. Toys R Us, which closed its doors two years ago, opened a couple of small stores and it has a website. However, the Toys R Us site redirects those who want toys to Amazon.com.

REV says that its much leaner RadioShack will sell from its own website and an Amazon storefront. RadioShack was the place to go for batteries, phone chargers and headphones. Those are products that Amazon sells under its own brand name in vast quantities.

And therein lies REV's challenge. Megachains like Walmart and Target have been able to slow Amazon's encroachment, but Amazon is the ultimate disrupter. It has upended industries from tech and grocery, to global shipping.

If Amazon is the biggest threat to some of America's largest corporations, what are the prospects for a relic from the 1980s?

"Amazon is the Death Star," said Allen Adamson, co-founder of the marketing strategy firm Metaforce. "They have everything and it's easy and fast. There's no need to go to your corner RadioShack to find something, or even to RadioShack online."

Yet Mehr doesn't look at Amazon as a competitor. Rather, he said, it's another channel where RadioShack can sell its products.

"It's like a big mall with a lot of traffic," Mehr said. "So I think of Amazon as a partner, and I've done that in other brands, too. So this is yet another distribution channel for us."

REV bought RadioShack from General Wireless Operations Inc. for an undisclosed amount this year. The former owners have retained a minority stake, betting on the social media marketing expertise of Mehr and Lopez.

The new owners say they hope to have RadioShack.com open for business by the end of the month. About 400 RadioShack locations remain open, but operate independently from the REV-owned parent company.

Trump vents about election as agencies aid Biden transition

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump insisted Tuesday that he is not giving up his fight to overturn the election results, but across the federal government, preparations were beginning in earnest to support President-elect Joe Biden's incoming administration.

Within hours of the General Services Administration's acknowledgement Monday evening of Biden's victory in the Nov. 3 election, career federal officials opened the doors of agencies to hundreds of transition aides ready to prepare for his Jan. 20 inauguration. And on Tuesday, Trump signed off on allowing Biden to receive the presidential daily brief, the highly classified briefing prepared by the nation's intelligence community for the government's most senior leaders.

An administration official said logistics on when and where Biden will first receive the briefing were still being worked out.

Biden, in an interview with "NBC Nightly News," said he was also working out a meeting with the White House's coronavirus task force and vaccine distribution effort.

"So I think we're going to not be so far behind the curve as we thought we might be in the past," he

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said. "And there's a lot of immediate discussion, and I must say, the outreach has been sincere. There has not been begrudging so far. And I don't expect it to be. So yes it's already begun."

By Tuesday afternoon, the Biden transition had been in contact with all federal agencies about transition planning, according to a transition official.

But Trump, who has not formally conceded to Biden — and may never — continued to sow doubt about the vote, despite his own administration's assessment that it was conducted without widespread fraud, misconduct or interference.

The president has maintained a low profile since his defeat. He made a quick appearance in the briefing room on Tuesday to deliver just over one minute of remarks on the Dow Jones Industrial Average trading at record levels and later delivered the traditional pre-Thanksgiving turkey pardon in the White House Rose Garden. He has not taken questions from journalists in weeks.

He did not hold back on Twitter regarding the election results.

"Remember, the GSA has been terrific, and (Administrator) Emily Murphy has done a great job, but the GSA does not determine who the next President of the United States will be," Trump tweeted Tuesday morning. His legal team continued to mount seemingly futile challenges to the votes in battleground states.

Murphy acted after Michigan certified Biden's victory in the battleground state on Monday, and a federal judge in Pennsylvania tossed a Trump campaign lawsuit on Saturday seeking to prevent certification in that state. Pennsylvania certified its results, and its 20 electors for Biden, on Tuesday morning, followed hours later by Nevada.

It also came as an increasing number of Republicans were publicly acknowledging Biden's victory, after weeks of tolerating Trump's baseless claims of fraud. The Republican president had grown increasingly frustrated with the flailing tactics of his legal team.

In recent days, senior Trump aides including chief of staff Mark Meadows and White House counsel Pat Cipollone had also encouraged Trump to allow the transition to begin, telling the president he didn't need to concede but could no longer justify withholding support to the Biden transition.

Late Monday, Meadows sent a memo to White House staffers saying that their work was not yet finished and that the administration would "comply with all actions needed to ensure the smooth transfer of power," according to a person who received it. At the same time, he warned staffers who are not specifically authorized to interact with the Biden team against contact with the incoming administration.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar told reporters Tuesday that within hours of GSA's ascertainment of Biden's victory, his agency's top career official was in contact with the Biden team on coordinating briefings, including on the Trump administration's planning to distribute vaccines for COVID-19.

"We are immediately getting them all of the pre-prepared transition briefing materials," Azar said. "We will ensure coordinated briefings with them to ensure they're getting whatever information that they feel they need."

The official managing the Pentagon's transition work with the Biden landing team said that the first meeting was held virtually on Tuesday morning and that he expected daily meetings to come -- some virtually and some in person. The official, Tom Muir, told reporters that normal accommodations for the Biden team have been made, including provision of briefing materials, video-teleconferencing capabilities and office space inside the Pentagon.

"HUD career officials have begun the process of scheduling briefings with the Biden transition team in response to their requests," said a spokesperson for the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

GSA's move frees up millions of dollars in federal support for the Biden transition and gives his team access to additional federal office space and support services, including computers, phones and secure briefing rooms.

A day after Trump said his administration should begin working with Biden's team, Republican allies filed two more lawsuits attempting to stop the certification in two battleground states. One in Minnesota was swiftly rejected by a state court Tuesday before the state certified its results for Biden. Shortly after, another was filed in Wisconsin, which doesn't certify until Dec. 1.

Associated Press writers Kevin Freking, Colleen Long and Robert Burns in Washington and Alexandra Jaffe in Wilmington, Del., contributed to this report.

Biden seeks swift Cabinet votes, but GOP Senate stays silent

By LISA MASCARO and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As President-elect Joe Biden started rolling out his administrative team, one voice has been notably silent: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Senate Republicans will hold great sway in confirming or denying Biden's Cabinet nominees, regardless of which party controls the narrowly split Senate after runoff elections. But key Republican senators, including the GOP leader, are keeping quiet, for now, choosing their battles ahead.

In announcing his national security team, Biden appealed Tuesday to the Senate to give the nominees "a prompt hearing" and "begin the work to heal and unite America and the world."

The soonest the Senate would consider the nominations is Inauguration Day, Jan. 20, when past presidents often have been able to win swift confirmation of top national security officials shortly after taking the oath of office.

But with President Donald Trump still disputing the election, McConnell is setting the tone for Senate Republicans by not publicly congratulating Biden or acknowledging Trump's defeat. He wants to give the president time to contest the vote, even as Trump's legal team has been losing most of the cases.

Even if McConnell is willing to accept Biden's choices for top Cabinet positions, the Republican leader is not expected to allow easy Senate confirmation without a political price.

He is known for driving hard bargains even on routine business, and Republicans are eager to level payback on Democrats for running out the clock with procedural hurdles to Trump's nominees.

Nominees need 51 votes for confirmation. Heading into 2021, Republicans have a 50-48 hold on the chamber. But if Democrats win both Georgia seats in the Jan. 5 runoff elections, they would flip to majority control because the vice president-elect, Kamala Harris, is a tie breaker.

Republican strategist Alex Conant said McConnell is "trying to show some deference to Trump in hopes of promoting party unity" ahead of the Georgia election.

The outcome in January is certain to make a narrowly held Senate. If McConnell retains control, it's unclear what priorities he would extract from the Biden administration in return for confirmation. If Democrats win control, they will have no margin for dissent among more progressive or conservative flanks in approving Biden's nominees.

Biden purposefully tapped seasoned government officials for his national security team as he vows a diverse administration reflecting the nation.

Those introduced Tuesday are alumni of Barack Obama's administration and Biden's own decades in Washington: Antony Blinken, nominated to be secretary of state; Alejandro Mayorkas, a Cuban American former federal prosecutor who would be the first immigrant as secretary of homeland security; Linda Thomas-Greenfield, a career diplomat, as ambassador to the United Nations; and Avril Haines, who would be the first woman to serve as director of national intelligence.

He also announced John Kerry, the former secretary of state, senator and 2004 Democratic presidential nominee, as a special presidential envoy for climate, and Jake Sullivan, a former top Hillary Clinton aide as national security adviser. Those two positions do not require Senate confirmation.

Biden is also expected to tap Janet Yellen, the former chair of the Federal Reserve, as treasury secretary.

Some Republican senators, particularly those being watched for their own potential 2024 presidential bids, are objecting to Biden's team as they flex their national security credentials.

Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., mocked Biden for selecting a team that "will only reinforce his instincts to go soft on China."

Being tough on China is fast emerging as a theme among Republicans, echoing Trump in taking a more confrontational approach to the economic and military powerhouse.

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GOP Sen. Marco Rubio, a 2016 presidential contender, tweeted that Biden's team was stacked with Ivy League graduates who "will be polite & orderly caretakers of America's decline."

Rubio said in a tweet, "I have no interest in returning to the 'normal' that left us dependent on China."

Another potential 2024 hopeful, Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., tweeted about the Biden team: "What a group of corporatists and war enthusiasts."

But silent this week were the potential GOP chairs of key committees who would be expected to hold confirmation hearings for the nominees.

Also declining to weigh in were centrist GOP senators — Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine — who will be keenly watched as possibly supporting Biden's ability to assemble his team.

Mayorkas faces the potentially toughest path to confirmation, having been narrowly confirmed on a party-line vote without GOP support in 2013 as deputy secretary at homeland security.

At the time, he had been under investigation by the department's inspector general, who later found that Mayorkas, as director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, appeared to give special treatment to certain people as part of the visa program.

Democrats "have got a lot of work to do" to persuade Republican senators to support Mayorkas, said one Republican aide who spoke on condition of anonymity Tuesday to frankly discuss the situation.

Blinken also faces hurdles. Just one Republican voted to confirm him as a deputy secretary of state in 2014 — former Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake.

Others, though, may have an easier path to confirmation.

Thomas-Greenfield was twice confirmed on a voice vote without dissent in 2012 to be director general of the Foreign Service and in 2015 as an assistant secretary of state.

Yellen was confirmed twice with bipartisan support, including as Fed chair in 2014 with the backing of three sitting Republican senators: Collins, Murkowski and Richard Burr of North Carolina.

12 Grammy facts: BTS and Dr. Luke in, The Weeknd out

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Twelve things worth noting about Tuesday's nominations for the 2021 Grammy Awards, from snubbed singers to posthumous nominees to famous folks competing for awards.

SNUBBED SINGERS

The Weeknd sings about being a "star boy" but the Grammys' response to his latest album? Bye boy.

The pop star was severely snubbed this year despite having one of the year's biggest albums with "After Hours" and topping the Billboard Hot 100 chart with "Blinding Lights" and "Heartless."

Luke Combs also walked away without a single nomination though he was country music's most successful musician this year. Morgan Wallen also had a great year in country music, but didn't earn any nods. And the Chicks' first album in 14 years was not recognized.

A group of young R&B female acts moving the needle also missed out on nominations, including Summer Walker, Teyana Taylor and Kehlani. Late rapper Juice WRLD, Brandy and Chris Brown were also snubbed.

Though they received nominations in their genre categories, acts such as Lady Gaga, Fiona Apple and Harry Styles didn't pick up bids for album, song or record of the year.

K-POP KINGS

For years BTS have said their dream is to be Grammy-nominated. And they've finally achieved it.

The K-pop band is nominated for best pop duo/group performance with "Dynamite," their first song to hit the No. 1 spot on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

Others who scored their first-ever nominations include Harry Styles, Megan Thee Stallion, the Strokes, Jay Electronica, Michael Kiwanuka and Mickey Guyton.

DR. LUKE aka TYSON TRAX

Dr. Luke marked a major comeback this year, producing hits for Saweetie, Juice WRLD and Doja Cat, who is signed to his record label. And it earned him his first Grammy nomination in six years.

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The hit "Say So" marked a breakthrough for Doja Cat and Dr. Luke, who last launched a No. 1 smash with Katy Perry's "Dark Horse" in 2014, the same year his former collaborator Kesha accused him of sexual assault during their yearslong partnership. Dr. Luke has vigorously denied the allegations.

"Say So" is nominated for record of the year, an award given to the song's artist and producer, helping Dr. Luke earn a nomination. But instead of using his known name on the credits for the song, he's listed as Tyson Trax.

Other monikers Dr. Luke has used are Loctor Duke and MADE IN CHINA.

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Reflecting the current times, Black artists released songs this year about the Black Lives Matter movement and the international protests that took place following the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and others.

And those songs are nominated for Grammys.

Beyoncé's "Black Parade," released on Juneteenth, is up for four awards including record and song of the year. The protest song "I Can't Breathe" by H.E.R. is nominated for song of the year, while Lil Baby's "The Bigger Picture" — which reached the No. 3 spot on the pop charts — is up for best rap song and best rap performance. And Anderson .Paak's "Lockdown," about police brutality and racial injustice, is up for best melodic rap performance and best music video.

Country singer Mickey Guyton wrote "Black Like Me" a year before Floyd's death, but rushed to release the song because she said the time was right. The poignant track earned a nomination for best country solo performance.

LONG LIVE THE DEAD

John Prine died of complications of the coronavirus in April, but his spirit is all over the Grammy Awards.

The icon earned two posthumous nominations, including best American Roots performance and best American Roots song for "I Remember Everything."

Breakthrough rapper Pop Smoke died this year but his hit song "Dior," a double platinum success, is nominated for best rap performance. Nipsey Hussle, who died last year and won two posthumous Grammys earlier this year, scored a nomination for best rap performance for his guest appearance on Big Sean's "Deep Reverence."

Leonard Cohen has earned multiple posthumous nominations since his death in 2016 and is nominated for best folk album with "Thanks for the Dance," his fifteenth and final studio album.

And songwriter LaShawn Daniels, who died last year and won a Grammy for co-writing Destiny's Child's "Say My Name," is competing for best gospel performance/song with "Come Together" by his close friend Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins. Daniels and Jerkins started writing the song about the world coming together 17 years ago but Jerkins released it this year during the pandemic to offer healing and hope to listeners.

A-LIST ACTS

Oscar winners Meryl Streep and Renée Zellweger are vying for Grammy gold.

Streep is nominated for best spoken word album for "Charlotte's Web," pitting her against MSNBC's Rachel Maddow, journalist Ronan Farrow and "Jeopardy!" record-holder Ken Jennings, who is nominated for reading "Alex Trebek — The Answer Is..."

Zellweger won her second Academy Award for "Judy" and her performance on the soundtrack earned her a nomination for best traditional pop vocal album.

Cynthia Erivo, a Grammy, Emmy and Tony winner, scored a nomination for best written song for visual media with "Stand Up" from "Harriet." The song, which she co-wrote with Joshua Brian Campbell, also earned an Oscar nomination earlier this year.

And the best comedy album award is stacked with famous folks, including Tiffany Haddish, Jerry Seinfeld, Patton Oswalt, Jim Gaffigan and Bill Burr.

WOMEN WHO ROCK

Female acts dominate in the best rock song and best rock performance categories, with performers like Fiona Apple, Brittany Howard, HAIM, Grace Potter, Phoebe Bridgers and Big Thief — led by Adrienne

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Lenker — in contention.

And while country radio is overloaded with male artists, the Grammys' best country album category is packed with women, including Miranda Lambert, Brandy Clark, Ashley McBryde and Ingrid Andress.

IT'S BRITTANY B----!

Brittany Howard has already won four Grammys with her talented band Alabama Shakes, but her first solo album is getting tons of Grammy love.

"Jaime" was released last year and is one of those rare albums competing for multiple genres at the Grammys. The album is nominated for best alternative music album, her song "Stay High" is up for best rock song and best rock performance, the track "Goat Head" is nominated for best R&B performance, and "Short and Sweet" is competing for best American Roots performance.

JAY-Z, THE SONGWRITERS, SHINES

Happy wife, happy life: Jay-Z has lent his songwriting hand to his wife Beyoncé and he's earned Grammy nominations for it.

Jay-Z co-wrote Beyoncé's "Black Parade" and "Savage" with Megan Thee Stallion, and now he's nominated for song of the year, best R&B song and best rap song — categories reserved for songwriters.

Jay-Z and Beyoncé have won five Grammys together.

HIP-HOP IS DEAD

Despite rap music being today's most popular genre, no rap albums are nominated for the top prize, album of the year.

Expected nominees included Roddy Ricch's "Please Excuse Me for Being Antisocial," Lil Baby's "My Turn" and DaBaby's "Blame It on Baby" or "Kirk."

But those albums didn't even score nomination in the best rap album category. Instead, nominees were focused on rap purists and respected lyricists instead of the young performers dominating the pop charts.

Nominees for best rap album include Nas' "King's Disease," Jay Electronica's "A Written Testimony," Freddie Gibbs and The Alchemist's "Alfredo," "The Allegory" by Royce Da 5'9" and D Smoke's "Black Habits."

PAUL McCARTNEY, THE ART DIRECTOR

Paul McCartney scored his 79th Grammy nominations this year — as an art director.

The former Beatle is nominated for best boxed or special limited edition package for the collector's edition of his 10th solo album, "Flaming Pie." He's listed as one of the art directors on the project, and shares his nomination with Linn Wie Andersen, Simon Earith and James Musgrave.

McCartney is the owner of 18 Grammys.

PAIN OF THE PANDEMIC

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, the Best Immersive Audio Album Craft Committee was unable to meet to decide winners for the best immersive audio album Grammy. The judging of the entries has been postponed, and the nominees will be announced next year. The winners for the 2021 award will be announced at the 2022 show.

Trump skips turkey jokes, gives thanks for COVID-19 vaccines

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nostalgia was in and jokes were out Tuesday as President Donald Trump offered a reprieve to a pair of meaty turkeys at the traditional Thanksgiving turkey pardon ceremony at the White House.

The National Turkey Federation presented the White House with two birds, Corn and Cob. Corn was declared the national Thanksgiving turkey, though both will retire to a new home on the campus of Iowa State University.

It's not the first time the typically light-hearted turkey pardon ceremony has taken place in a tense time for the nation.

This time, the ceremony came amid a global pandemic and as Trump refuses to concede he lost his reelection bid. In his remarks, Trump cited the vaccines that could soon receive emergency approval from

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U.S. regulators.

"We give thanks for the vaccines and therapies that will soon end the pandemic," Trump said at one point. He did not reference the recent surge in confirmed COVID-19 cases in many parts of the country.

The turkey pardon ceremony came just a few hours after President-elect Joe Biden announced his national security team and emphasized the need to work with allies. Trump worked into his remarks a familiar refrain of his presidency: "America first -- shouldn't go away from that," he said.

Trump did not take questions from reporters as he spoke in the Rose Garden to more than 100 staff and guests, the vast majority wearing masks. His tone was more serious than in prior turkey pardon ceremonies.

Trump used last year's pardon to make jokes about the impeachment process. The House would go on to approve two articles of impeachment the next month and the Senate would subsequently vote to acquit him.

In 2018, Trump joked about one of the turkeys contesting the election. The scenario he described bears a striking resemblance to the one he faces today.

"This was a fair election," the president joked two years ago. "Unfortunately, Carrots refused to concede and demanded a recount, and we're still fighting with Carrots. But I will tell you, we've come to a conclusion. Carrots. I'm sorry to tell you, the result did not change. That's too bad for Carrots."

The practice of sending a turkey to a farm became the norm under President Ronald Reagan. George H.W. Bush established the annual turkey pardon tradition in 1989 by sparing a 50-pound (23-kilogram) bird as animal rights activists picketed nearby.

Punishing hurricanes to spur more Central American migration

By CLAUDIO ESCALON and MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

SAN PEDRO SULA, Honduras (AP) — At a shelter in this northern Honduran city, Lilian Gabriela Santos Sarmiento says back-to-back hurricanes that hit with devastating fury this month have overturned her life. Her home in what was once a pretty neighborhood in nearby La Lima was destroyed by flooding.

The 29-year-old woman who never finished middle school had managed to build a life for herself, most recently cleaning COVID-19 wards at a local hospital. Now, having lost everything, she says she sees no future in Honduras at her age and with her level of education.

"I think that in Honduras it is very difficult to do again what it took me 10 years to do," Santos said. So her plan is to leave for the United States.

"If there's a caravan, I'm going," she said, referring to the large groups of migrants who make the arduous journey together, often on foot.

Inside shelters and improvised camps across Central America, families who lost everything in the severe flooding set off by the two major hurricanes are arriving at the same conclusion.

According to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, more than 4.3 million Central Americans, including 3 million Hondurans, were affected by Hurricane Eta alone. Those numbers only rose when Iota, another Category 4 storm, hit the region last week.

The hurricanes' destruction comes on top of the economic paralysis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the persistent violence and lack of jobs that have driven families north from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador in great numbers during recent years. Add an element of hope from the incoming government of President-elect Joe Biden, and experts predict the region is on the verge of another mass migration.

"This is going to be much bigger than what we have been seeing," said Jenny Arguello, a sociologist in San Pedro Sula who studies migration flows. "I believe entire communities are going to leave."

"The outlook is heartbreaking."

It's still early. Tens of thousands remain in shelters, but those along the migration route have already started to see storm victims begin to trickle north.

Eta made landfall Nov. 3 in Nicaragua, leaving a path of death and destruction from Panama to Mexico. Iota hit the same stretch of Nicaragua's Caribbean coast Nov. 16, pouring more rain on still flooded countries. At least 150 people were killed and more than 100 remain missing.

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The same day Eta landed, U.S. voters elected Biden amid a pandemic that has devastated the continent for more than eight months. The Democrat has promised a more compassionate approach to immigration even as desperate families weigh their options inside mud-filled Central American homes.

Among the hardest-hit areas was Honduras' north, the country's most productive agricultural region. The Sula Valley reported massive crop losses raising fears of food shortages. Damaged businesses mean fewer jobs.

Thousands of homes were destroyed and the infamous gang violence has not relented. Some residents around San Pedro Sula reported gangs charging a tax to boats trying to rescue people from flooded neighborhoods.

Mauro Verzeletti, director of the Casa del Migrante in Guatemala City, said the storms will increase poverty on top of the violence people already faced, forcing more to migrate.

"They've already started to come, it has begun," he said, adding that a group of eight Hondurans driven out by the storms had arrived last week, stayed the night and continued on their way.

Jarlin Antonio Lorenzo has been living for days under a San Pedro Sula overpass in an encampment without any bathrooms after being flooded out of his home. He said there was no other option but to migrate.

"You're going to see all of these faces in the caravan," he said, pointing to those around him. "We're going because we can't stand the poverty, the hunger."

Felipe Del Cid, Americas chief of operations for the Red Cross, described a "triple emergency" in countries like Honduras and Guatemala, referring to Eta, the pandemic and the years-long drought that has made even subsistence agriculture impossible across a long swath of the region. He said the Red Cross was preparing for internal displacement, as well as migration to other countries.

Honduras' Red Cross was just finishing up its search and rescue phase after Eta when Iota hit, said Mauricio Paredes, vice president of the Honduras Red Cross in San Pedro Sula.

"There's a lot of flooding again in some cities that had flooded before, but this time it has been more severe and faster because the levees that protect the cities had been damaged by Eta," Paredes said.

Meanwhile, big expectations are building for the incoming Biden administration. A dramatic change in tone toward migrants is the most immediate expectation, followed by hopes for the elimination of the Trump administration policy that made asylum seekers wait out their cases from Mexico.

Still, changes, particularly to the U.S. asylum process, could take time.

Last week, U.S. Rep. Nydia Velázquez, a Democrat from New York, introduced a bill that would grant Temporary Protected Status to Guatemalans, Hondurans and Nicaraguans already living in the United States. Trump had sought to end so-called TPS, potentially sending thousands of families back to their native countries, in some cases decades after they left.

But experts caution that Biden will be careful not to make changes that could attract a new wave of migrants.

They also warn that policies in Mexico and Guatemala to stop migrant caravans are unlikely to change. Guatemala dissolved a caravan of mostly Hondurans in early October before it reached Mexico.

"The change of government doesn't mean the United States is going to weaken its borders so that there would be a massive migration. All of the families in the region have to take this into account," said César Ríos, director of the non-governmental Salvadoran Migrant Institute.

"The fact that (Biden) has committed to a respectful approach to human rights doesn't mean they're going to make immigration easier."

At the same time, Ríos sees only growing necessity. "We are going to enter a very painful reality in the region. Poverty is going to increase in our countries in Central America and families are going to have more needs."

For Santos, back at the San Pedro Sula shelter, losing everything has reinforced why so many of her countrymen have left.

"When they go, it's that the anguish has already overwhelmed them, they can't anymore," she said. "I'm headed there too."

Verza reported from Mexico City. AP writer Christopher Sherman in Mexico City and Sonia Pérez D. in Guatemala City contributed to this report.

Simon Haydon, ex-AP international sports editor, dies at 64

By ROB HARRIS AP Sports Writer

LONDON (AP) — Simon Haydon, who shaped The Associated Press' coverage of World Cups and Olympics as international sports editor and reported on landmark news events while traveling the world as a correspondent, including the downfall of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, has died. He was 64.

Haydon had recently been diagnosed with cancer and contracted the coronavirus last week. He died early Tuesday in a hospice in southern England, according to his wife, Barbara.

Haydon left the AP in 2018 after a decade based in London overseeing global sports coverage, retiring to further his recovery from a heart attack and to pursue interests outside journalism.

"Simon never forgot that covering sports is supposed to be fun. He was at his happiest at global tournaments and big events, always willing to help on whatever was needed," said Michael Giarrusso, the AP's global sports editor. "He could conduct interviews in several different languages, and he had a deep knowledge of European football history and cricket."

Despite stepping back from journalism after four decades, Haydon did not lose touch with writing or sports -- particularly soccer, or football as he pushed for the American-based AP to call the world's most popular sport.

Through his "Fat Ref" blog, Haydon — who would joke about his girth -- used his experience as an amateur referee to analyze calls by officials in the world's biggest matches.

"While I've never been a good footballer, I've had a lot to do with football," he wrote. "My four sons have all played football at varying levels and I became a referee after shouting at a referee in Kent one day and receiving a dressing down from him."

Likewise, he cautioned AP writers against quoting unsubstantiated criticism by coaches deflecting from losses.

"As an amateur referee, he was one of the few journalists who consistently advocated for the officials," Giarrusso said. "Whenever a referee is criticized, I'll think of Simon and imagine that he would have a good excuse for that mistake."

Haydon began his journalism career on local newspapers in eastern England after graduating from the University of East Anglia with a bachelor's degree in European literature.

After three years, he joined the editing desk of Reuters, where he went on to serve as a correspondent and bureau chief in London, Oslo, Paris and New Zealand and in Nordic and Baltic countries.

In December 1989, he helped to break the news in Romania of the execution of the Communist dictator Ceausescu.

He was one of the first journalists to visit Ceausescu's 40-room mansion, which he said was "dripping with gold and silver and packed with art treasures while his nation starved. Even his nuclear bunker was lined with marble."

Haydon first joined the AP as part of its Europe and Africa desk in London in 2005 and helped cover the 2006 World Cup. He left to become editor of a real estate financial newsletter but returned in 2008, tasked with expanding AP's coverage of major sports outside the United States and preparing for the 2012 Olympics in London.

He oversaw journalists in dozens of countries and advanced enterprise reporting, including acclaimed investigations into match-fixing in international football, worker abuses in 2022 World Cup host nation Qatar and doping scandals among Kenyan athletes.

He saw the power of social media in advancing the reach of the AP's journalism, encouraging reporters to join Twitter in its early development.

He worked with journalists to liven up football coverage, away from often formulaic news agency writing.

"The mark of a good journalist is finding something fresh to say time and time again," he wrote in 2010. The most wide-ranging of tasks was configuring football coverage of World Cups, Confederations Cups, European Championships, gathering preview packages and assigning reporters to fly in to cover every team. "Like all the best sports journalists, Simon had a real love and feel for his subject matter," said Tony Hicks, the AP's deputy director of photography (international). "That said, Simon was not a one-dimensional sports enthusiast. He was well traveled, well educated, a bon vivant, a raconteur and a pleasure to spend time when we got those fleeting moments to unwind in the middle of many hectic assignments."

After a career spent writing and editing text, leaving the AP provided him a chance to hone his passion for photography.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by sons Harry, Jack, Tom and Will

"In his last years at AP and after he retired, it was good to see Simon reach a healthy work-life balance — exercising, eating right, reducing stress and spending more time with his family and pets," Giarrusso said. "In our chats and emails after he retired, he seemed relaxed, happy and excited about a book he was working on. It was energizing to talk to him."

OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma pleads guilty in criminal case

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Purdue Pharma pleaded guilty Tuesday to three criminal charges, formally taking responsibility for its part in an opioid epidemic that has contributed to hundreds of thousands of deaths but also angering critics who want to see individuals held accountable, in addition to the company.

In a virtual hearing with a federal judge in Newark, New Jersey, the OxyContin maker admitted impeding the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's efforts to combat the addiction crisis.

Purdue acknowledged that it had not maintained an effective program to prevent prescription drugs from being diverted to the black market, even though it had told the DEA it did have such a program, and that it provided misleading information to the agency as a way to boost company manufacturing quotas.

It also admitted paying doctors through a speakers program to induce them to write more prescriptions for its painkillers.

And it admitted paying an electronic medical records company to send doctors information on patients that encouraged them to prescribe opioids.

The guilty pleas were entered by Purdue board chairperson Steve Miller on behalf of the company. They were part of a criminal and civil settlement announced last month between the Stamford, Connecticut-based company and the Justice Department.

The deal includes \$8.3 billion in penalties and forfeitures, but the company is on the hook for a direct payment to the federal government of only a fraction of that, \$225 million. It would pay the smaller amount as long as it executes a settlement moving through federal bankruptcy court with state and local governments and other entities suing it over the toll of the opioid epidemic.

Members of the wealthy Sackler family who own the company have also agreed to pay \$225 million to the federal government to settle civil claims. No criminal charges have been filed against family members, although their deal leaves open the possibility of that in the future.

"Having our plea accepted in federal court, and taking responsibility for past misconduct, is an essential step to preserve billions of dollars of value" for the settlement it is pursuing through bankruptcy court, the company said in a statement.

"We continue to work tirelessly to build additional support for a proposed bankruptcy settlement, which would direct the overwhelming majority of the settlement funds to state, local and tribal governments for the purpose of abating the opioid crisis," the statement read.

Purdue's plea to federal crimes provides only minor comfort for advocates who want to see harsher penalties for the OxyContin maker and its owners.

The ongoing drug overdose crisis, which appears to be worsening during the coronavirus pandemic, has contributed to the deaths of more than 470,000 Americans over the past two decades, most of those from opioids both legal and illicit.

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Cynthia Munger, whose son is in recovery from opioid addiction after being prescribed OxyContin more than a decade ago as a high school baseball player with a shoulder injury, is among the activists pushing for Purdue owners and company officials to be charged with crimes.

"Until we do that and we stop accusing brick and mortar and not individuals, nothing will change," said Munger, who lives in Wayne, Pennsylvania.

The attorneys general for about half the states opposed the federal settlement, as well as the company's proposed settlement in bankruptcy court. In the bankruptcy case, Purdue has proposed transforming into a public benefit corporation with its proceeds going to help address the opioid crisis.

The attorneys general and some activists are upset that despite the Sacklers giving up control of the company, the family remains wealthy and its members will not face prison or other individual penalties.

The activists say there's no difference between the actions of the company and its owners, who also controlled Purdue's board until the past few years.

Last week, as part of a motion to get access to more family documents, the attorneys general who oppose the deals filed documents that put members of the Sackler family at the center of Purdue's continued push for OxyContin sales even as opioid-related deaths rose.

The newly public documents include emails among consultants from McKinsey & Corp. hired by the company to help boost the business. One from 2008, a year after the company first pleaded guilty to opioid-related crimes, says board members, including a Sackler family member, "'blessed' him to do whatever he thinks is necessary to 'save the business.'"

Another McKinsey internal email details how a midlevel Purdue employee felt about the company. It offers more evidence of the Sacklers being hands-on, saying, "The brothers who started the company viewed all employees like the guys who 'trim the hedges' — employees should do exactly what's asked of them and not say too much."

The documents also describe the company trying to "supercharge" opioid sales in 2013, as reaction to the overdose crisis was taking a toll on prescribing.

John Boyega isn't going to 'take the money and shush'

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — John Boyega is only 28, but being a professional actor of 10 years and a veteran of three "Star Wars" films has given him insight into what it's like for a young performer breaking into Hollywood.

"I always tell young actors who are getting into it, they've got their first franchise or first big role: You're gonna have to navigate people assuming that you're a piece of (expletive)," says Boyega. "Normally the assumption is you keep quiet, you keep cashing checks and you keep it moving. That's the hardest thing to navigate, when you don't feel that way."

This year, Boyega has made it clear he doesn't feel that way, that he isn't going to bite his tongue. In July, he gave a fiery speech at a London protest in the wake of George Floyd's death, shouting through a megaphone and fighting back tears. He wondered aloud whether he'd have a career afterward.

"Black lives have always mattered," Boyega told demonstrators. "We have always been important. We have always meant something. We have always succeeded regardless. And now is the time. I ain't waiting."

In September, Boyega severed ties with the London cosmetics brand Jo Malone after the company reshoot, with a different brand ambassador, a video he had made that touched on his childhood neighborhood and Nigerian heritage. He said on Twitter, "dismissively trading out one's culture this way is not something I can condone."

And in a GQ interview in September, Boyega criticized the makers of "Star Wars" for their uncertain handling of his character, Finn, and for giving "all the nuance" to characters played by Adam Driver and Daisy Ridley: "What I would say to Disney is do not bring out a Black character, market them to be much more important in the franchise than they are and then have them pushed to the side. It's not good. I'll say it straight up."

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In a year riven with resistance, Boyega has seemed suited to the moment -- an unapologetically candid actor breaking free of PR-controlled Hollywood constraints. He won't, he says, "fashion my career to be like a politician" or "take the money and shush."

"People need to go up there and reflect what's real," says Boyega, speaking by video conference in an interview from London. "Sometimes you get angry, sometimes I'm wrong, sometimes I'm right. Be human, rather than having to get into a space where you're successful but then you have to lose your identity. That's whack. No one's doing that, especially not my generation."

Boyega stars in Steve McQueen's "Red White and Blue," the third film in the director's extraordinary anthology of Black life in London from the '60s through the '80s. The five-film series is playing on the BBC in the U.K. and on Amazon Prime in the U.S.; "Red, White and Blue" will debut Dec. 4 on Amazon. In the true story, Boyega plays Leroy Logan, an aspiring research scientist who gives up the lab to join the overwhelmingly white London police force in the 1980s.

It's almost certainly Boyega's best performance yet -- a reintroduction, in a way, to a young actor who has shown flashes of his potential but who to most remains identifiable as a central "Star Wars" character who seemed to drift to the sidelines of the space saga. "Red, White and Blue" puts Boyega front and center and wrestles with many of the social issues -- race, change, belonging -- that he is grappling with, too.

"There's something about him right now that's vital," says McQueen. "You want to hear that voice. It reminds me of Jack Nicholson in the '70s where you wanted to hear that voice. There's something dangerous and uncensored and untethered and sexy about him. That's what you want in a leading man."

Logan's decision to join the police is confounding to his father (Steve Toussaint), who was beaten by racist police officers. But Logan believes he can, as one of very few officers of color, remake the system from the inside, despite regular abuse.

For an actor recoiling from his experience within the belly of blockbuster-making Hollywood, "Red White and Blue" has both powerful parallels and telling distinctions about navigating a system that can be inhospitable to people of color.

"Everybody's different and the fight requires all different types of people, all different types of strategies," says Boyega. "Being an actor, living within that privilege and having the opportunity to go onto other projects and greenlight things, you can use a lot of that for the impactful stuff. I see the lines between the experiences.... But you understand that these obstacles are all too familiar."

Born John Adedayo Bamidele Adegboyega to parents of Nigerian descent in the Peckham district of London, Boyega drew partly on his own upbringing for "Red, White and Blue" -- a drama of institutional racism but also a father-son tale. An early scene recalls a memory of Boyega's when his father, a Pentecostal minister, was searched by police on the way home from church.

McQueen said he, Boyega and co-writer Courttia Newland talked a lot "about what Black fathers said to their sons, because they wanted to protect them and they knew the dangers of the world out there. Obviously the movie is dealing with masculinity in a way. But it's also one generation dealing with the same situation as the younger generation and how they deal with it differently. It's a difficult conversation. When you want to integrate and be a part of something and you find out you're not welcome, it's difficult."

Since Boyega's comments about "Star Wars," he's received a supportive phone call from producer Kathleen Kennedy that Boyega has described as frank and transparent. Following his protest speech, many filmmakers and actors responded that they would be honored to work with him. "We got you, John," wrote Jordan Peele.

But if anyone thought that moment reflected a new John Boyega, it didn't. He's just being heard more clearly.

"I don't think it's me necessarily finding my voice. I think it's the audience noticing me in that sense," says Boyega. "This is kind of an eye-opener to you guys more than it is to me. I've kind of been about it."

Mysterious shiny monolith found in otherworldly Utah desert

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Deep in the Mars-like landscape of Utah's red-rock desert lies a mystery: A gleaming metal monolith in one of the most remote parts of the state.

The smooth, tall structure was found during a helicopter survey of bighorn sheep in southeastern Utah, officials said Monday.

A crew from the Utah Department of Public Safety and Division of Wildlife Resources spotted the gleaming object from the air Nov. 18 and landed to check it out during a break from their work.

They found the three-sided stainless-steel object is about as tall as two men put together. But they discovered no clues about who might have driven it into the ground among the undulating red rocks or why.

"This thing is not from another world," said Lt. Nick Street of the Utah Highway Patrol, part of the Department of Public Safety.

Still, it's clear that it took some planning and work to construct the 10- to 12-foot (3- to 4-meter) monolith and embed it in the rock.

The exact location is so remote that officials are not revealing it publicly, worried that people might get lost or stranded trying to find it and need to be rescued.

The monolith evokes the one that appears in the Stanley Kubrick movie "2001: A Space Odyssey." Because it's on federal public land, it's illegal to place art objects without authorization.

Bureau of Land Management officials are investigating how long it's been there, who might have created it and whether to remove it.

Keep the mask: A vaccine won't end the US crisis right away

By CANDICE CHOI Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Don't even think of putting the mask away anytime soon.

Despite the expected arrival of COVID-19 vaccines in just a few weeks, it could take several months — probably well into 2021 — before things get back to something close to normal in the U.S. and Americans can once again go to the movies, cheer at an NBA game or give Grandma a hug.

The first, limited shipments of the vaccine would mark just the beginning of what could be a long and messy road toward the end of the pandemic that has upended life and killed more than a quarter-million people in the U.S. In the meantime, Americans are being warned not to let their guard down.

"If you're fighting a battle and the cavalry is on the way, you don't stop shooting; you keep going until the cavalry gets here, and then you might even want to continue fighting," Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious-disease expert, said last week.

This week, AstraZeneca became the third vaccine maker to say early data indicates its shots are highly effective. Pfizer last week asked the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for emergency authorization to begin distributing its vaccine, and Moderna is expected to do the same any day. Federal officials say the first doses will ship within a day of authorization.

But most people will probably have to wait months for shots to become widely available. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines also each require two doses, meaning people will have to go back for a second shot after three and four weeks, respectively, to get the full protection.

Moncef Slaoui, head of the U.S. vaccine development effort, said on CNN on Sunday that early data on the Pfizer and Moderna shots suggest about 70% of the population would need to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity — a milestone he said is likely to happen in May.

But along the way, experts say the logistical challenges of the biggest vaccination campaign in U.S. history and public fear and misinformation could hinder the effort and kick the end of the pandemic further down the road.

"It's going to be a slow process and it's going to be a process with ups and downs, like we've seen already," said Dr. Bill Moss, an infectious-disease expert at Johns Hopkins University.

SHOTS IN ARMS

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Once federal officials give a vaccine the go-ahead, doses that are already being stockpiled will be deployed with the goal of "putting needles in people's arms" within 24 to 48 hours, said Paul Mango, a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services official involved in the Operation Warp Speed effort to develop COVID-19 vaccines.

Those first shipments are expected to be limited and will be directed to high-risk groups at designated locations, such as front-line health care workers at hospitals.

Federal and state officials are still figuring out exactly how to prioritize those most at risk, including the elderly, prison inmates and homeless people. By the end of January, HHS officials say, all senior citizens should be able to get shots, assuming a vaccine becomes available by the end of 2020.

For everyone else, they expect widespread availability of vaccines would start a couple of months later.

To make shots easily accessible, state and federal officials are enlisting a vast network of providers, such as pharmacies and doctor's offices.

But some worry long lines won't be the problem.

"One of the things that may be a factor that hasn't been discussed that much is: 'How many will be willing to be vaccinated?'" said Christine Finley, director of Vermont's immunization program. She noted the accelerated development of the vaccine and the politics around it have fueled worries about safety.

Even if the first vaccines prove as effective as suggested by early data, they won't have much impact if enough people don't take them.

NO MAGIC BULLET

Vaccines aren't always effective in everyone: Over the past decade, for example, seasonal flu vaccines have been effective in about 20% to 60% of people who get them.

AstraZeneca, Pfizer and Moderna say early trial data suggests their vaccine candidates are about 90% or more effective. But those rates could change by the time the studies end.

Also, the definition of "effective" can vary.

Rather than prevent infection entirely, the first COVID-19 vaccines might only prevent illness. Vaccinated people might still be able to transmit the virus, another reason experts say masks will remain crucial for some time.

Another important aspect of vaccines: They can take awhile to work.

The first shot of a COVID-19 vaccine might bring about a degree of protection within a couple of weeks, meaning people who get infected might not get as sick as they otherwise would. But full protection could take up to two weeks after the second shot -- or about six weeks after the first shot, said Deborah Fuller, a vaccine expert at the University of Washington.

People who don't understand that lag could mistakenly think the vaccine made them sick if they happen to come down with COVID-19 soon after a shot. People might also blame the vaccine for unrelated health problems and amplify those fears online.

"All you need is a few people getting on social media," said Moss of Johns Hopkins University.

There's also the possibility of real side effects. COVID-19 vaccine trials have to include at least 30,000 people, but the chances of a rare side effect turning up are more likely as growing numbers of people are vaccinated.

Even if a link between the vaccine and a possible side effect seems likely, distribution of shots might not be halted if the risk is deemed small and is outweighed by the benefits, said Dr. Wilbur Chen, a vaccine expert at the University of Maryland.

But Chen said public health officials will need to clearly explain the relative risks to avoid public panic.

Depending on whether the virus mutates in coming years and how long the vaccine's protection lasts, booster shots later on may also be necessary, said Dr. Edward Belongia, a vaccine researcher with the Marshfield Clinic Research Institute in Wisconsin.

Belongia and many others say the coronavirus won't ever be stamped out and will become one of the many seasonal viruses that sicken people. How quickly will vaccines help reduce the threat of the virus to that level?

"At this point, we just need to wait and see," Belongia said.

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Can you repeat that? Hearing trouble more obvious with masks

By JAMIE STENGLER Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — As nurse Teri Wheat made her rounds at a Texas maternity ward, she began to realize she was having a hard time understanding the new mothers who were wearing masks due to the coronavirus pandemic.

So she got her hearing tested and now wears hearing aids.

Her hearing loss "became more noticeable the more barriers that we had to have," said Wheat, 52, who wears a mask and a face shield at work to protect herself and others against the virus.

Hearing specialists across the U.S. say they have seen an uptick in visits from people like Wheat, who only realized how much they relied on lip reading and facial expressions when people started wearing masks that cover the nose and mouth.

"More than likely, these are people that had some kind of hearing loss prior to all this starting but they were adapting," said Andrea Gohmert, director of the hearing clinic at the University of Texas at Dallas' Callier Center for Communication Disorders.

Most of the time, hearing loss happens gradually and people will often wait around seven years to get their hearing tested, according to audiologists, the professionals who assess hearing.

"We would have seen these people eventually but it could have been quite a few years from now," said Catherine Palmer, audiology director for the western Pennsylvania health care system UPMC.

Wheat, who had her hearing tested at the Callier Center in August, said that even before the pandemic, she frequently asked her kids to repeat what they said, and people pointed out how loud she listened to programs on her computer or television. But, she said, her hearing loss hadn't been obvious to her.

Audiologists say it's not just the lack of visual clues that's making hearing difficult: masks and plastic barriers also reduce the sound level. And standing closer to the person you are talking to — another coping mechanism — has also been eliminated in most settings because of recommendations to socially distance during the pandemic.

Palmer, who just finished a stint as president of the American Academy of Audiology, said people with normal hearing can manage if voices are muffled a bit, but those with some hearing loss have a much harder time.

Nancy Tye-Murray, a professor at Washington University in St. Louis, said the visual is a "powerful supplement" to hearing.

"Most people with hearing loss don't realize they rely on it so much, and even people with normal hearing rely on it, say, when you are in a noisy restaurant," Tye-Murray said.

Palmer said adults can usually fill in the blanks and find words they aren't hearing, but it's exhausting.

Lorie D'Elia, an audiologist with Ohio State University's Wexner Medical Center in Columbus, Ohio, said that once people are fitted with hearing aids they realize that "a lot of that effort of listening is taken away."

Palmer said even people who already have hearing aids have been coming in during the pandemic to get them adjusted to manage the sound difference caused by the new barriers.

She said masks have created another problem for hearing aid wearers: They lose or damage their hearing aids when they get caught and flipped out by the ear loops.

Then there's the dogs adopted during the pandemic chewing on or swallowing hearing aids, she said.

"Unfortunately, we're replacing a lot of hearing aids right now as well," Palmer said.

In pandemic era's isolation, meaning of 'self-care' evolves

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO and SOPHIA ROSENBAUM Associated Press

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NEW YORK (AP) — These days, with a pandemic raging, this is what life can look like:

Staring at your face on Zoom for hours instead of occasionally glimpsing it in the mirror. Living out the days in loungewear. Wearing minimal makeup because no one sees much of you. Considering an investment in home exercise equipment because gyms are closed or restricted.

The pandemic has forced people to spend more time with themselves than ever. Along the way, it has reshaped and broadened the way many think about and prioritize how they treat themselves — what has come to be called self-care.

The pandemic-era incarnation of self-care isn't about buying a signature outfit, wearing a trendy shade of lipstick or getting a perfect haircut. It has, for many, put the purpose and meaning of life front and center, reconfiguring priorities and needs as the virus-inflected months drift by. No longer are worries about longevity and fears of mortality mere hypotheticals. They are 2020's reality.

It is that daunting reality that has skyrocketed the importance of "me" time: stress-baking the latest viral creation, tending to a garden, learning a new skill, getting dressed like you're going out just to feel some semblance of normalcy.

"People are social beings. And while the social fabric has been torn down, and you can't be a normal social person, you have been more focused on yourself," says Rod Little, CEO of Edgewell Personal Care, which makes Schick and Bull Dog products. "It's beautifying for longevity, as opposed to how I look in the office tomorrow."

It's also a way to mitigate the feeling that life is careening forward haphazardly in so many ways. That's true for Tonya Speaks, a 43-year-old wardrobe coach from Fort Mill, South Carolina. Before the pandemic, she was always zipping to and from business meetings. Now, the mother of two teenagers exercises regularly and opts for luxurious baths at night instead of quick showers in the morning. She's happier doing so.

"Taking care of myself," Speaks says, "is one way for me to have control."

BEYOND THE 'LIPSTICK INDEX'

Self-care isn't a new fad. The difference is that pre-pandemic, it could fall by the wayside if a to-do list got crowded. Now, eight months into the new reality, it is a priority. After all, the thinking goes: If we're not taking care of ourselves, how can we do jobs, parent children, care for loved ones?

For those who have the means — and that's no small caveat during this pandemic — feeling good can mean looking good. And the widespread isolation has produced new trends in beauty and clothing.

Companies like Signet Jewelers and Blue Nile are seeing a surge in sales of earrings, which are visible on video calls and when people are out wearing face masks. Department stores like Kohl's and Macy's are expanding casual clothing offerings as more people stay close to home.

Pop star Lady Gaga, who has her own beauty line, recently posted a close-up shot in which she wears a cat-eye look with natural, peach-colored lipstick. She did her makeup "to cheer myself up."

"(S)o many people are going through hard times during this pandemic," she wrote in the Instagram post. "It is SO IMPORTANT that you celebrate yourself, live colorfully and rejoice in that BRAVE SOUL that is you."

But when it comes to consumer products, the pandemic is pushing makeup aside as people gravitate towards skin care products. The virus is even turning the "lipstick index" upside down.

Typically, lipstick sales skyrocket when the economy gets rough because it is an inexpensive way to feel good. But during the pandemic, makeup sales have been rocky, and sales of skincare products are up. In fact, 70% of consumers scaled back their use of makeup this year, according to the NPD Group Inc., a market research firm. As a result, skincare has eclipsed makeup as the top category in the beauty industry's market share from January through August.

"People are being more mindful of what people are putting on their skin and in their bodies because of the pandemic," says Lauren Yavor, a beauty influencer who recently launched a "clean" nail polish line that sold out in just days. "This really was a turning point for clean beauty."

— Beauty chains like Ulta and department stores like Macy's are ramping up offerings in moisturizers and bath and body products. Walmart teamed up with Unilever, maker of Dove and Suave, to launch shops called "Find Your Happy Place" aimed at customers looking to destress. The concept, in the works before

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the pandemic, was accelerated by one year.

— Companies are also reinventing marketing to cater to the new way of grooming. Little says Edgewell retooled an ad campaign for a multipurpose facial beauty tool to focus on eyebrow-shaping because of the rise in video calls.

— Within makeup, eyeshadow and eyeliner as well as false eyelashes are thriving as people play up the features that are peeping through their masks when they're out, says Larissa Jensen, NPD's beauty industry advisor. Hair products saw an 11% sales increase during the third quarter as people take a DIY approach to coloring and styling.

Says Esi Eggleston Bracey, chief operating officer of Unilever North America's personal care and beauty division: "This is a wellness revolution."

A DEEPER IMPORTANCE

How deep does this run? Is all the pandemic self-care working, or are people are just going through haphazard motions? One psychologist compares it to a roller coaster — up on some days, down on others.

"Some days, you have a great day when you did all the things you wanted to do. You got up on time, you made a salad. And then the next day, it's Cheetos for lunch," says Dr. Vaile Wright, a senior director at the American Psychological Association.

Being kind to one's self feels especially important during the pandemic, where every aspect of human life has been impacted and there is little control over what's next. That level of uncertainty is unnerving, Wright says, and further depletes already limited energy levels.

Self-care, of course, is only one dimension of coping during stressful times. Surveys have shown a sharp increase in anxiety disorders. Many therapists are reporting upticks in referrals and increases in caseloads. Virtual mental health services are booming — another form of self-care, in a more medical sense.

"Having a toolbox of coping skills is really critical," Wright says. She highlights other types of self-care like meditation, journaling and organizing — each of which has its own culture and committed practitioners. "We have a tendency to isolate emotionally," Wright says. "It is really important that people don't do that."

Ultimately, "self-care" contains as many definitions as there are people who take care of themselves — a Google search of the term will show you that. The World Health Organization takes an expansive view, describing it as a "broad concept" that includes hygiene, lifestyle, social habits, income levels and cultural beliefs — and, in the best cases, can "strengthen national institutions" to encourage a society's overall health.

As the world navigates a web of unknowns that sometimes feels like the Upside Down in "Stranger Things," there is one thing that people can do something about: themselves. For all the horror the pandemic has brought, it has also revealed things that matter. And from the way people have reacted through this year, it seems clear that, in all the forms it takes, self-care matters — particularly right now, particularly with so many unknowns still ahead.

Biden certified as winner of Pennsylvania presidential vote

By MARK SCOLFORO Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Democrat Joe Biden was certified Tuesday as winner of the presidential election in Pennsylvania, culminating three weeks of vote counting and a string of failed legal challenges by President Donald Trump.

Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf first disclosed in a tweet that the Department of State had certified the vote count for president and vice president.

Wolf sent a "certificate of ascertainment" to the national archivist Washington with the slate of electors who support President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.

Pennsylvania's 20 electors, a mix of elected Democrats, party activists and other staunch Biden backers, will meet in the state Capitol on Dec. 14.

One of them, state Democratic Party chair Nancy Patton Mills, said she will also lead the Electoral College's meeting in Harrisburg next month.

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Patton Mills said she was gratified that Pennsylvania was "the state that made it possible" for Biden to win. Biden's win in the state, giving him its haul of 20 electoral votes, put him over the 270 needed and led The Associated Press to declare him the president-elect four days after Election Day. Biden has collected 306 overall electoral votes to Trump's 232.

The Pennsylvania results show Biden and Harris with 3.46 million votes, Trump and Vice President Mike Pence with 3.38 million, and Libertarian Jo Jorgensen with 79,000.

Democratic Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar, in a news release, called the state's election officials and poll workers "the true heroes of our democracy."

"We are tremendously grateful to all 67 counties who have been working extremely long hours to ensure that every qualified voter's vote is counted safely and securely," Boockvar said.

Trump made Pennsylvania a centerpiece of his unsuccessful legal attempts to invalidate the election results, launching legal attacks on vote counting rules and county election procedures.

A federal judge on Saturday dealt a serious blow to the Trump campaign's legal efforts by dismissing a lawsuit that he said lacked evidence and offered "strained legal arguments without merit and speculative accusations."

The federal government on Monday recognized Biden as the "apparent winner" of the national presidential contest.

Virus outbreak delays production at world's top glove maker

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysia's Top Glove Corp., the world's largest maker of rubber gloves, said Tuesday it expects a two-to-four-week delay in deliveries after more than 2,000 workers at its factories were infected by the coronavirus, raising the possibility of supply disruptions during the pandemic.

Top Glove said it has temporarily stopped production at 16 factories in Klang, a town outside Kuala Lumpur, since Nov. 17 to screen workers, with its remaining 12 facilities in the area operating at much reduced capacities.

The government on Monday ordered 28 Top Glove factories in Klang to shut down in stages to allow workers to undergo screening and mandatory quarantine after 2,453 factory workers tested positive for COVID-19.

The health ministry reported 1,511 more cases in the area on Tuesday, but didn't say how many were factory workers. The cluster contributed to a record daily high of 2,188 cases nationwide, bringing Malaysia's total cases to 58,847. The cluster in the Klang area is currently the most active in the country with 4,036 cases.

Top Glove says it produces about 90 billion rubber gloves a year, about one quarter of the world's supply, and exports to 195 countries. It has seen profits soar amid rising demand for its products due to the pandemic.

"We expect delays in some deliveries by about two to four weeks, as well as a longer lead time for orders, and estimate a possible 3% impact on projected annual sales for financial year 2021," Top Glove said in a statement.

"To minimize the impact on our customers, we are allocating sales orders to unaffected factories and rescheduling deliveries where possible," it said, without elaborating.

It said it is working closely with the authorities and implementing stringent health measures, including daily disinfection of the workers' dormitories and its factories. Top Glove reportedly has about 13,000 workers at its 28 factories in Klang.

It employs a total of 21,000 workers in its 41 factories in Malaysia and six others in Thailand, Vietnam and China.

US agrees for now to stop deporting women who alleged abuse

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — The U.S. government has agreed temporarily not to deport detained immigrant women

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who have alleged being abused by a rural Georgia gynecologist, according to court papers filed Tuesday.

In a motion that must still be approved by a federal judge, the Justice Department and lawyers for several of the women agreed that immigration authorities would not carry out any deportations until mid-January.

Dozens of women have alleged that they were mistreated by Dr. Mahendra Amin, a gynecologist who was seeing patients from the Irwin County Detention Center in Ocilla, Georgia. The Justice Department is conducting a criminal investigation, and the Department of Homeland Security's inspector general is investigating as well. Amin has denied any wrongdoing through his lawyer.

Several women say they have faced retaliation by immigration authorities for coming forward. One woman has said that hours after she spoke to investigators, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement notified her that it had lifted a hold on her deportation. Another woman was taken to an airport to be placed on a deportation flight before her lawyers could intervene.

The agreement filed in court Tuesday proposes that no deportations would take place until at least mid-January for women who have "substantially similar factual allegations."

Elora Mukherjee, a Columbia University law professor working with several of the women, said the agreement gives the women "a measure of protection for trying to expose the abuses there."

"ICE and others at Irwin thought they could silence these women," she said. "They thought they could act with impunity and nothing would ever happen. But the women have organized and had the audacity to speak out."

ICE said Tuesday that it "complies with all binding court orders." The agency has previously denied allegations that it tried to deport women to silence them, saying in a written statement: "Any implication that ICE is attempting to impede the investigation by conducting removals of those being interviewed is completely false."

Scott Grubman, a lawyer for Amin, did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment.

The allegations were originally revealed by a whistleblower complaint. Further investigations have found several examples of Amin performing surgeries on women who later said they didn't consent to the procedures or didn't fully understand them.

Grubman has denied any wrongdoing by the doctor and previously described Amin as a "highly respected physician who has dedicated his adult life to treating a high-risk, underserved population in rural Georgia."

'We just ran': Ethiopians fleeing war find little relief

By FAY ABUELGASIM and NARIMAN EL-MOFTY Associated Press

UMM RAKOUBA, Sudan (AP) — The baby was born on the run from war. Her first bath was in a puddle. Now she cries all night in a country that is not her own.

Wrapped in borrowed clothing, the child is one of the newest and most fragile refugees among more than 40,000 who have fled the Ethiopian government's offensive in the defiant Tigray region.

They have hurried into Sudan, often under gunfire, sometimes so quickly they had to leave family behind. There is not enough to feed them in this remote area, and very little shelter. Some drink from the river that separates the countries, and more cross it every day.

"We walked in the desert. We slept in the desert," said one refugee, Blaines Alfao Eileen, who is eight months pregnant and has befriended Lemlem Haylo Rada, the mother of the newborn. One woman is ethnic Tigrayan, the other ethnic Amhara. The conflict could have turned them against each other, but motherhood intervened.

That, and tragedy. "I do not know where my husband is and whether he's alive," Eileen said.

Her journey took four days. "I slept on this scarf that I am holding," she said, "and I would wake up and do it again."

Almost half the refugees are children under 18. Around 700 women are currently pregnant, the United Nations says. At least nine have given birth in Sudan.

It has been three weeks since Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sent federal troops into Tigray after accusing the region's forces of attacking a military base. Abiy's government and the regional one each

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view the other as illegitimate, and the Nobel Peace Prize-winning prime minister on Sunday warned that a final assault to take Tigray's capital is imminent.

Civilians are caught in the middle of what some experts describe as a conflict akin to an inter-state war, so heavily armed is each side.

Many people barely know why they had to flee. Now, people of all classes, from bankers to subsistence farmers, spend up to two weeks in so-called transit centers, waiting in makeshift shelters in arid, almost treeless surroundings just over the border in Sudan; it used to be just two or three days.

Some refugees have little to protect them from the heat and sun and curl under possessions as meager as umbrellas. Men have begun weaving dried grass into temporary homes.

COVID-19 could be passing through the crowds, but the people's focus is elsewhere. More wear crosses around their necks than face masks.

The local Sudanese villagers have been praised for their generosity, but they have little to give.

More permanent camps for the refugees are a drive of several hours away, and there is sometimes not even enough fuel to transport them there. The threat of hostilities remains while they wait so close to the border.

Some overworked humanitarians have used the bare floor of a local building as a makeshift hospital, treating wounds that refugees say were inflicted with machetes as Ethiopia's long pent-up ethnic tensions were unleashed.

Authorities are trying to keep ethnic Tigrayan refugees separate from ethnic Amhara ones, out of concern about possible clashes.

"We don't know who is fighting us. We don't know who is with us or who is not with us. We don't know. When the war came, we just ran," said Aret Abraham.

There is little comfort to be found, even a hot meal. The refugees can wait several hours to receive food. Sometimes they get none.

"I have been here 14 days and have not received anything," one said. "I have no clothes to wear." But everyone wears the new plastic bracelet of a refugee, handed out by the U.N. as they are registered.

The U.N. refugee agency has provided food and care to some 300 malnourished Ethiopian children and pregnant and nursing women in Sudan, according to spokesperson Babar Baloch.

People sit and wait, and wait. One small girl, frustrated, twisted the head of a plastic doll until the head popped free.

A man wept into the crook of his arm as he held up a tiny photo of his 12-year-old son. The boy was shot dead, he said.

The more permanent camps were last used in the 1980s for Ethiopians fleeing a famine worsened by a yearslong civil war.

For a long time, those images of starving people were seared onto Ethiopia's reputation. It took decades to turn the country into one of Africa's biggest success stories, with one of the world's fastest-growing economies. But behind the boom, political repression kept hostilities among ethnic groups in check.

"We felt like we'd made it, and we were happy," recalled Menas Hgoos, who now finds herself fleeing to Sudan a second time. "And now Abiy Ahmed is attacking us, we just left with only the clothes on our backs."

Many of the new refugees are too young to remember past miseries. They are suddenly too burdened with their own — and with worries for those who did not make it out.

"There are also a lot of people who live there who can't escape here," said Haftoun Berha, pausing to think of loved ones who are now impossible to reach. "That is so more sad."

Associated Press journalists Cara Anna in Nairobi, Kenya, Samy Magdy in Cairo, and Mohaned Awad in Qadafif, Sudan, contributed to this report.

Thanksgiving could make or break US coronavirus response

By MICHAEL RUBINKAM Associated Press

In Pennsylvania, if you're having friends over to socialize, you're supposed to wear a mask — and so are

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your friends. That's the rule, but Barb Chestnut has no intention of following it.

"No one is going to tell me what I can or not do in my own home," said Chestnut, 60, of Shippensburg. "They do not pay my bills and they are not going to tell me what to do."

As governors and mayors grapple with an out-of-control pandemic, they are ratcheting up mask mandates and imposing restrictions on small indoor gatherings, which have been blamed for accelerating the spread of the coronavirus. But while such measures carry the weight of law, they are, in practical terms, unenforceable, and officials are banking on voluntary compliance instead.

Good luck with that.

While many are undoubtedly heeding public health advice — downsizing Thanksgiving plans, avoiding get-togethers, wearing masks when they're around people who don't live with them — it's inevitable that a segment of the population will blow off new state and local restrictions and socialize anyway. Experts say that could put greater stress on overburdened hospitals and lead to an even bigger spike in sickness and death over the holidays.

"When this started in early March, we weren't staring at Thanksgiving and Christmas, and we didn't have the disease reservoir that we have. And that, to me, is the biggest concern in the next few weeks," said Dr. David Rubin, the director of PolicyLab at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. He called the risk of a Thanksgiving spike "extremely high."

"I think you're seeing a lot of resistance here," Rubin said. "I can't speculate on what people are going to do, but I can say that to the degree that there isn't a collective buy-in here, it sort of blunts the impact of the measures themselves."

The nation is averaging 172,000 new virus cases per day, nearly doubling since the end of October, according to Johns Hopkins University. Hospitalizations, deaths and the testing positivity rate are also up sharply as the nation approaches Thanksgiving.

In response, elected officials are imposing restrictions that, with some exceptions, fall short of the broad-based stay-at-home orders and business shutdowns seen in the spring.

Utah and Vermont have banned all social gatherings. So have local governments in Philadelphia and Dane County, Wisconsin. In Kentucky, no more than eight people from two households are permitted to get together; in Oregon, the gathering limit is six. California has imposed an overnight curfew. More states are requiring masks, including those with GOP governors who have long resisted them. The nation's top health officials are pleading with Americans to avoid Thanksgiving travel.

There's some evidence the holiday will be quieter.

Tamika Hickson, who co-owns a party rental business in Philadelphia, said Thanksgiving was a bust even before her city moved to prohibit indoor gatherings of any size.

"Nobody's calling," Hickson said. "A lot of people lost a lot of loved ones, so they're not playing with this. And I don't blame them."

AAA projects Thanksgiving travel will fall by at least 10%, which would be the steepest one-year plunge since the Great Recession in 2008. But that still means tens of millions of people on the road. On social media, people defiantly talk about their Thanksgiving plans, arguing that nothing will stop them from seeing friends and family.

More than 1 million people thronged U.S. airports on Sunday, according to the Transportation Security Administration — the highest number since the beginning of the pandemic.

Dr. Debra Bogen, the health director for Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, which includes Pittsburgh, said that too many have been ignoring public health guidance and that the result has been unchecked spread of the virus.

"For the past few weeks, I've asked people to follow the rules, curtail gatherings and parties, stay home except for essentials, and wear masks. I'm done asking," Bogen said at a news conference, her frustration palpable. She announced a stay-at-home advisory that she said would turn into an order if people didn't comply.

Some people are underestimating the risk to themselves and their friends and families, said Baruch Fischhoff, a Carnegie Mellon University psychologist who has written about COVID-19 risk analysis and

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communications. Others doubt what health officials are telling them about the virus. And still others are simply irresponsible.

Fischhoff said the lack of a cohesive national pandemic strategy; patchwork and seemingly arbitrary restrictions at the state and local level; and ineffective, politicized and contradictory public health messaging have sown confusion and mistrust.

"It has been a colossal, tragic failure of leadership from the very beginning that we didn't find the common ground in which we were working to protect the weakest among us. And once you've lost that coordination, you're scrambling to get it back and that's the tragic mess that we're in now," he said.

In York County, Pennsylvania, 51-year-old retail worker Kori Jess tested positive for the virus last week. Long a mask skeptic, her personal experience with COVID-19 has changed her opinion — to a point. She said it's appropriate to wear a mask when circumstances warrant, but she still doesn't like the idea of government mandating them.

"I'm so torn," Jess said. "I like that people are fighting for their freedoms, but I understand why people are wearing masks."

In upstate New York, some sheriffs say they have no intention of enforcing Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo's recent mandate barring private gatherings of more than 10 people.

"There is no need to hide cars and sneak around during your attempt to gather with family. We are not going to exhaust our limited resources obtaining search warrants and counting the turkey eaters in your house," Madison County Sheriff Todd Hood said in a Facebook post. He encouraged people in the largely rural area to use common sense to keep themselves safe.

Kim Collins is among those planning a slimmed-down Thanksgiving. In a typical year, Collins would have as many as 20 people at her home in South Orange, New Jersey. This year, her extended family is staying put. "My husband's having a hard time with the fact that his mom, who's on her own, won't be here," she said.

But Collins wasn't optimistic that others would be so careful. She said plenty of people are going through "mental gymnastics" to justify their holiday get-togethers. "I think that a lot of people aren't great at the honor system," she said. ____

Associated Press reporters Deepti Hajela in New York City and Michael Hill in Albany, New York, contributed to this story.

Texts: US census manager told counters to use fake answers

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

The texts from an Alabama census supervisor had an urgent tone. "THIS JUST IN ...," one of them began. It then laid out how census takers should fake data to mark households as having only one resident even if they had no idea how many people actually lived there.

The goal of the texts from October, obtained by The Associated Press, was to check off as many households as possible on the list of homes census takers were supposed to visit because residents never had filled out census questionnaires. The supervisor wanted the census takers to finalize cases — without interviewing households — as the Trump administration waged a legal battle to end the once-a-decade head count early.

The texts are the latest evidence suggesting census accuracy was sacrificed for speed as census takers and supervisors rushed to complete a head count last month. Critics contend the schedule was shortened by two weeks so the Trump administration could enforce a presidential order excluding people in the country illegally from the numbers used for apportionment of congressional districts.

The texted instructions said that if two failed attempts were made to interview members of the households, along with two unsuccessful tries to interview landlords or neighbors about the homes' residents, then the census takers should mark that a single person lived there.

"You are to clear the case indicating occupied by 1," said the text from the census supervisor in the small city of Dothan, Alabama.

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The texts were shared with the AP by a census taker from Florida who traveled to Alabama among groups of enumerators dispatched to areas lagging behind in the count. The existence of the texts suggests that falsification of census data may be more widespread than previously known.

The census taker who provided the texts asked for anonymity because of privacy concerns and said she refused to follow the texted guidance because she felt doing so would falsify data. She declined to name the supervisor, who was identified only by her first name in screenshots of the texts seen by the AP.

The U.S. Census Bureau has denied any attempts to systemically falsify information during the 2020 census, which is vital to determining the allocation of congressional seats and federal spending. But the AP has chronicled similar instructions sent to census takers in other U.S. regions.

Census Bureau spokesman Michael Cook said the agency is investigating the Alabama case and has not identified any data irregularities. When there appear to be problems with data collection, the bureau can take steps such as revisiting households to improve accuracy, he said.

"We take falsification allegations very seriously," Cook said.

More than two dozen census takers and supervisors have contacted the AP since the beginning of the month, telling similar stories about corners cut in the rush to close cases as the Trump administration sought to end the census before the Oct. 31 deadline set in response to the pandemic.

The most recent cases also include a census supervisor in Baltimore who said that thousands of addresses were manually marked completed without evidence that residents had been interviewed.

The Alabama supervisor in her text included a photo of her hand-written instructions listing the 15 steps she said would allow the census takers to mark in their bureau-issued iPhones that only one person lived in a home without interviewing anyone about the household's demographic makeup or the number of people living there.

The supervisor also recommended performing the steps two to three hours after trying to interview members of a household to avoid arousing suspicions from higher-ups who could track where census takers had been through their iPhones.

The instructions for the census takers in Alabama were sent a week before the Supreme Court made a ruling that allowed the Trump administration to end field operations for the 2020 census on Oct. 15 instead of Oct 31.

The Census Bureau has said it compiled information for about 99.9% of U.S. households in the U.S. during field operations. At the height of the door-knocking phase of the census in mid-August, there were more than 285,000 temporary census takers on the bureau's payroll.

In Baltimore, census supervisor Amanda Colianni said she believes 5,300 cases in neighborhoods she managed were closed prematurely and removed from the door-knocking effort after only one attempt by census takers to interview members of households in mid-to-late September. The Census Bureau was working toward what officials believed at the time would be an Oct. 5 early finish for the count.

Colianni said she does not know why the cases were removed or how they were resolved, though she says it's possible that government administrative records were used to fill in the information gaps when detailed records from the IRS, the Social Security Administration or other agencies existed for the households.

An outside census advisory group warned this month that filling in large numbers of households with administrative data late in the census process suggests no high quality data existed for the addresses. If that had been the case, the group said, it would have been used earlier to save census takers time.

"I know the management level in Baltimore was trying to push, push, push to get everything done," Colianni said. "There was no possible way we could have any semblance of a reasonable completion rate by Oct. 5."

Colianni filed statements with the Commerce Department's Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Office of Special Counsel and a coalition of local governments and advocacy groups that have sued the Trump administration over its attempts to shorten the 2020 census schedule. The coalition's case led to the Supreme Court decision allowing the Trump administration to end the head count.

The coalition's lawsuit in San Jose, California said the deadline for finishing the count was changed from the end of October to the end of September to ensure that number-crunching for the census would take

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place while President Donald Trump was still in office, no matter the outcome of the presidential race.

That could guarantee the enforcement of an order Trump issued in July seeking to exclude people in the country illegally from numbers used to determine congressional seat distribution. Trump's order has been found unlawful by three courts — in New York, California and Maryland. The Justice Department is appealing.

Whether the Census Bureau can meet a Dec. 31 deadline for turning in the apportionment numbers to Trump is now in jeopardy after the agency said Thursday that it found anomalies in the data during the numbers-crunching phase.

The coalition contesting the early end to the count is seeking to extend the numbers-crunching phase of the census from the end of December to the end of next April, especially since the Census Bureau is relying on large numbers of administrative records to fill in gaps from data collection.

Lawyers for the coalition have said they have documented other cases of census takers being instructed to cut corners and fudge numbers in order to close cases.

"Shortening data-processing operations will prevent the Bureau from finding and fixing these errors, as the Bureau itself has acknowledged," their lawsuit said.

Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/MikeSchneiderAP>

Trevor Noah to host 2021 Grammy Awards

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "The Daily Show" host and comedian Trevor Noah has been tapped to host the 2021 Grammy Awards.

The Recording Academy made the announcement hours before the nominees for the upcoming show are revealed. It would mark Noah's first time hosting the Grammys, which will be held Jan. 31.

Earlier this year, Noah competed for his first Grammy Award: The 36-year-old Emmy winner was nominated for best comedy album with "Son of Patricia," but lost to Dave Chappelle.

"Despite the fact that I am extremely disappointed that the GRAMMYS have refused to have me sing or be nominated for best pop album, I am thrilled to be hosting this auspicious event," Noah said in a statement. "I think as a one-time GRAMMY nominee, I am the best person to provide a shoulder to all the amazing artists who do not win on the night because I too know the pain of not winning the award! (This is a metaphorical shoulder, I'm not trying to catch Corona). See you at the 63rd GRAMMYS!"

Alicia Keys was the most recent Grammys host. Past hosts include James Corden and LL Cool J.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Nov. 25, the 330th day of 2020. There are 36 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 25, 2002, President George W. Bush signed legislation creating the Department of Homeland Security, and appointed Tom Ridge to be its head.

On this date:

In 1783, the British evacuated New York during the Revolutionary War.

In 1915, a new version of the Ku Klux Klan, targeting blacks, Jews, Catholics and immigrants, was founded by William Joseph Simmons.

In 1947, movie studio executives meeting in New York agreed to blacklist the "Hollywood Ten" who'd been cited for contempt of Congress the day before.

In 1961, the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, USS Enterprise, was commissioned.

In 1963, the body of President John F. Kennedy was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery; his

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widow, Jacqueline, lighted an "eternal flame" at the gravesite.

In 1986, the Iran-Contra affair erupted as President Ronald Reagan and Attorney General Edwin Meese revealed that profits from secret arms sales to Iran had been diverted to Nicaraguan rebels.

In 1999, Elian Gonzalez, a 5-year-old Cuban boy, was rescued by a pair of sport fishermen off the coast of Florida, setting off an international custody battle.

In 2001, as the war in Afghanistan entered its eighth week, CIA officer Johnny "Mike" Spann was killed during a prison uprising in Mazar-e-Sharif, becoming America's first combat casualty of the conflict.

In 2009, Toyota said it would replace the gas pedals on 4 million vehicles in the United States because the pedals could get stuck in the floor mats and cause sudden acceleration.

In 2014, attorneys for Michael Brown's family vowed to push for federal charges against the Ferguson, Missouri, police officer who killed the Black 18-year-old, a day after a grand jury declined to indict Darren Wilson. (The Justice Department later declined to prosecute Wilson.) President Barack Obama sharply rebuked protesters for racially charged violence in Ferguson, saying there was no excuse for burning buildings, torching cars and destroying other property.

In 2016, Fidel Castro, who led his rebels to victorious revolution in 1959, embraced Soviet-style communism and defied the power of 10 U.S. presidents during his half-century of rule in Cuba, died at age 90.

In 2018, U.S. border agents fired tear gas on hundreds of migrants protesting near the border with Mexico after some of them tried to get through the fencing and wire separating the two countries; U.S. authorities temporarily shut down the border crossing from Tijuana, Mexico, where thousands were waiting to apply for asylum.

Ten years ago: Incumbent Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki (NOO'-ree ahl-MAHL'-ih-kee) cemented his grip on power, bringing an end to nearly nine months of political deadlock after he was asked to form the next government. South Korea's defense minister, Kim Tae-young, resigned amid intense criticism two days after a North Korean artillery attack killed four people on a small island near the Koreas' disputed frontier.

Five years ago: Vice President Joe Biden attended an urgent summit of southeast European leaders in Zagreb, Croatia, focusing on tensions and security concerns over a surge of asylum-seekers and migrants crossing the region. Pope Francis arrived in Kenya on his first-ever trip to Africa and urged Kenyans to work for peace and forgiveness amid a wave of extremist violence on the continent that threatened to disrupt his trip.

One year ago: A federal judge said former White House counsel Donald McGahn would have to appear before Congress to testify in the impeachment investigation. (An appeals court later undid that ruling, finding that federal judges had no role to play in the subpoena fight.) Defense Secretary Mark Esper said President Donald Trump had ordered him to stop a disciplinary review of a Navy SEAL, Edward Gallagher, who was accused of battlefield misconduct. The Supreme Court rejected the bid of a Maryland man, Adnan Syed, for a new trial based on information uncovered by the hit podcast "Serial"; Syed had been sentenced to life in the strangling death of a high school classmate. Charles Schwab announced that it was buying rival TD Ameritrade, which would combine two of the biggest players in the online brokerage industry. London's transit authority refused to renew Uber's operating license over concerns about impostor drivers. (Uber appealed, and won an 18-month license with conditions.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor Kathryn Crosby is 87. Actor Christopher Riordan is 83. Pro Football Hall of Fame coach Joe Gibbs is 80. Singer Bob Lind is 78. Author, actor and economist Ben Stein is 76. Actor John Larroquette is 73. Actor Tracey Walter is 73. Movie director Jonathan Kaplan is 73. Author Charlaine Harris is 69. Retired MLB All-Star Bucky Dent is 69. Dance judge Bruno Tonioli (TV: "Dancing with the Stars") is 65. Singer Amy Grant is 60. Former NFL quarterback Bernie Kosar is 57. Rock musician Eric Grossman (K's Choice) is 56. Rock musician Scott Mercado is 56. Rock singer Mark Lanegan is 56. Rock singer-musician Tim Armstrong is 55. Actor Steve Harris is 55. Actor Billy Burke is 54. Singer Stacy Lattisaw is 54. Rock musician Rodney Sheppard (Sugar Ray) is 54. Rapper-producer Erick Sermon is 52. Actor Jill Hennessy is 51. Actor Christina Applegate is 49. Actor Eddie Steeples is 47. Actor Kristian Nairn is 45. Former NFL quarterback Donovan McNabb is 44. Actor Jill Flint is 43. Actor Jerry Ferrara is 41. Actor Joel Kinnaman

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is 41. Actor Valerie Azlynn is 40. Former first daughter Barbara Pierce Bush is 39. Former first daughter Jenna Bush Hager is 39. Actor Katie Cassidy is 34. Actor Stephanie Hsu is 30. Contemporary Christian singer Jamie Grace is 29.