

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Saturday, December 5, 2020

10:00am: Basketball: Girls 7th/8th Jamboree at Groton



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

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Groton Area School District															
Active COVID-19 Cases															
Updated November 30, 2020; 11:47 AM															
JK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Staff	Total
0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	2	8

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

Updated December 1, 2020; 3:03 PM															
JK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Staff	Total
0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	3	8

Updated December 2, 2020; 12:56 PM															
JK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Staff	Total
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	4	6

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**#283 in a series**

## **Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller**

We did it! Set all kind of records today. We're out of the holiday lull, and things aren't pretty. We're up to 13,988,400 cases in the US, 1.4% more than yesterday and sure to hit 14 million tomorrow. That would mean we have a firm pattern now; since we hit 11 million, we've been on a steady one-million-cases-every-six-days pace. This is the fastest we've added cases in the entire pandemic and bodes ill for our immediate future. We keep this up, and in two months, we'll have another 10 million cases. There were 197,000 new cases reported today, our third-worst day ever. It's been a month since we were below 80,000 daily new cases and nearly two months since we were below 40,000. Six states, California, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Vermont, and Massachusetts had record new-case numbers today. This is going nowhere good.

We set another record, the 21st in 22 days, for hospitalizations. We now have 98,691 people in the hospital with Covid-19, and I think we'll hit 100,000 very soon, perhaps tomorrow. The system wasn't built to take this kind of strain, and I fear for what happens next. Arkansas reported another record number of hospitalizations yesterday; they've been doing this right along now.

To be sure, the number of hospitalizations has not been keeping pace with the number of new case reports. There are several possible explanations for this: younger people who are less likely to become severely ill being diagnosed, more testing which detects higher numbers of mildly ill people, better treatment to avoid hospitalization. We should note, however, that the proportion of people needing hospitalization is still significant; they're just spread across the country instead of all concentrated in New York and New England as they were in the spring. We are also seeing hospitals deciding not to admit people they would have admitted before because they can see the overload on the system coming. Dr. Michael Osterholm, infectious disease expert at the University of Minnesota and member of President-elect Joseph Biden's advisory panel, says he suspects this downturn in hospitalizations is an attempt by hospitals to manage rising caseloads. "Patients that would have been hospitalized last month today are being sent home and watched closely. Many of our health care systems are on the edge. They are in a sense triaging, keeping only the most severely ill patients." He adds that the next two weeks will be critical. "If we get this Thanksgiving surge, we will have hospitals hit their case cliff. Then you can't have more hospitalizations because there won't be enough health care professionals to care for them."

We know hospital staffs are stretched now. Considering that with the pandemic so widespread in the country hospitals cannot ship patients off to less-burdened hospitals or bring in health care workers from other states to help, they are doing some preemptive case management. I have discussed with those helping the patients being sent home the extreme difficulty of managing those cases at home, and I am quite prepared to recognize that these seriously ill people are not being admitted or are being discharged early because of high caseloads in the hospitals, not because it's the ideal for treatment. Marvin O'Quinn, president and COO of CommonSpirit Health, which runs hospitals in 21 states, said, "There just aren't enough nurses or doctors. This has escalated around the last two or three weeks. I'm concerned." No kidding. The Thanksgiving surge hasn't even arrived yet.

Philip Landrigan, director of a global public health program at Boston College, says, "Any thinking person has to be worried. That we have so many hospitalizations speaks to the fact that we have done a very poor job of controlling this pandemic. It is spreading very rapidly, and in many places, it is basically spreading out of control." Yeah, we know.

Hospitalizations are the harbingers of deaths; throughout this pandemic, as hospitalizations have risen, deaths have followed, usually within a few weeks. Dr. Jeremy Faust, emergency medicine physician at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston says, "If you tell me the hospitalizations are up this week, I'll tell you that several weeks down the road, the deaths will be up."

We reported a record number of deaths today. On April 15, our previous record was set at 2752; today's haul was 2806, a grim milestone. We have now lost 273,321 lives to this disease, 1.0% more than we had yesterday. These are parents, children, siblings, people who were beloved and who are mourned. No matter the progress we make in the upcoming weeks or months, these are lost and families are bereft. This

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is simply devastating, and that should matter to us. I simply no longer want to hear it's "only" old people or "only" sick people or "only" people who were going to die anyway. These were people who had the right to live their lives out to their natural end, not to be cut short because a bunch of their fellow citizens couldn't be bothered to put on a damned mask or stay home from parties. We all expect this number to continue to rise as the delayed effects of Thanksgiving travel are felt; and we haven't even factored in Christmas or New Year's celebrations yet. Oregon reported a record number of deaths yesterday. Dr. Ashis Jha, dean of Brown University's School of Public Health, explains how this is different from the spring peak, "This is a much worse situation. Summer is not going to bail us out. Things are not shut down."

Commissioner of the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC), Dr. Stephen Hahn, warned us that we're facing a rough winter: "The reality is, December and January and February are going to be rough times. I actually believe they're going to be the most difficult time in the public health history of this nation." He explains, "We're in that range potentially now, starting to see 1,500 to 2,000 to 2,500 deaths a day from this virus. The mortality concerns are real, and I do think, unfortunately, before we see February, we could be close to 450,000 Americans" dead. He adds that there is something we can do about this, if only we will. "It's not a fait accompli. We're not defenseless. The truth is that mitigation works. But it's not going to work if half of us do what we need to do. Probably not even if three-quarters do."

On the plus side, we're better at treating than we were in the spring; nonetheless, deaths are still climbing as daily new-case numbers reach unprecedented heights. "It's terrible, because it was avoidable. We are a world outlier in this regard," according to Dr. Leora Horwitz, associate professor of population health and medicine at the NYU Grossman School of Medicine.

I've been seeing Dr. Roger Hodkinson showing up online lately in association with claims that the coronavirus pandemic is "the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on an unsuspecting public." He says, "Masks are utterly useless, there is no evidence base for their effectiveness whatsoever," and adds, "social distancing is also useless because Covid is spread by aerosols which travel 30 meters or so before landing." He then goes on to say, "There is absolutely nothing that can be done to contain this virus. Other than protecting older, more vulnerable people. It should be sold as nothing more than a bad flu season." The posts quote him saying, "There is utterly unfounded public hysteria driven by the media and politicians" and adding, "All testing should stop because the false numbers they produce are driving public hysteria." He also claims the risk of death for people under 65 is only one in 300,000.

One post said, "If you haven't had a chance to listen to this brilliant man speak at the Edmonton Council meeting a couple weeks ago, you should do yourself a favour and take the 5 minutes, LISTEN, and really grasp the information he is giving out regarding this scam of a situation. Especially since it comes straight from an over qualified professional."

Sigh.

So who is this guy? He's a pathologist, a member of the Alberta (Canada) Section of Laboratory Physicians and the Royal College of Physicians of Canada. And he apparently is the chair of a biotech company that makes a Covid-19 test. You should also know that the Alberta Medical Association's Section of Laboratory Physicians and the Royal College have distanced themselves from him, saying they do "not share the views of the individual in question" and strongly support "all public health advice given by the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada."

Let's take a look at his claims:

(1) That this is just a bad flu season: Nope. This gentleman is Canadian, so let's start with reports from Canada. Their numbers show around 3500 flu deaths per year, whereas Canada has lost more than 12,000 to Covid-19. As for the US, we've had a talk before about how flu deaths are reported here: They are lumped in with pneumonia deaths and then this number of actual reported deaths is statistically adjusted upward to capture the probable number of deaths not reported as flu. (For a fuller discussion on this subject, see my Update #68 posted on May 2 at (3) Facebook.)

This means it is utterly insupportable to draw any direct comparison between the CDC's estimated pneumonia and influenza death figures and Covid-19 figures from actual death certificates. A pair of scientists from Harvard Medical School (Brigham and Women's Hospital) and Emory University School of

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Medicine teased out from the CDC's reports the actual number of reported flu deaths, a number which would bear direct comparison with the actual number of reported Covid-19 deaths. Writing in the Journal of the American Medical Association in May, they found, "The mean number of counted deaths during the peak week of influenza seasons from 2013-2020 was 752.4." This means that, when you average the past seven flu seasons, the number of people dying each day in the worst week of the flu season was 107.5. Today 2806 Covid-19 deaths were reported, and that's not as bad as it's expected to get. And we think it's going to get a whole lot worse before it gets better.

This is no bad flu.

(2) That there's nothing we can do to slow transmission: masks and social distancing are useless. Also nope. An analysis reported in The Lancet in June reviewed 172 studies in 16 countries and concluded that "current policies of at least 1 m in physical distancing are associated with a large reduction in infection, and distances of 2 m might be more effective," adding that "face mask use could result in a large reduction in risk of infection."

A study published in September in Scientific Reports found face masks effective in reducing aerosols because aerosols are frequently generated in clouds of larger droplets, and masks help to reduce outward particle emission rates significantly. Key here is the person with the infection needs to be wearing the mask for optimal effectiveness. Davinder Didhu, president of the Alberta section of Laboratory Physicians who leads the Covid-19 study in Calgary, says of Hodkinson's claim about masks, "That would make sense if the virus particles weren't also attached to water droplets which is actually what is caught in most masks, preventing spread of disease."

Dr. Robert Redfield, director of the CDC, says, "The time for debating whether or not masks work or not is over. We clearly have scientific evidence." The WHO, the CDC, and Health Canada all recommend the use of masks and two-meter physical distancing. Hodkinson's claim is simply wrong.

(3) Positive tests just drive public hysteria, and testing should stop. Another big nope. False-positive tests are rare; the PCR has a near-zero false positive rate. Not only symptomatic, but those who have had contact with infected people and those at high risk should be tested. Barry Pakes, assistant professor at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health, explained that "a false positive test, unless it is a rare false positive, does indicate the possibility for both illness and passing on infection, adding, "We should absolutely be testing everyone who might be infected so that we can do effective contact tracing, so people can self-isolate and decrease transmission, and so we can better understand where we are in the pandemic and how to respond."

Health Canada recommends testing to "find and isolate people who have Covid-19, to prevent the spread to others and to prevent outbreaks," and to "know how many people are infected, which helps us understand the level of risk in a community."

The CDC says the following people should be tested: people with symptoms of Covid-19, people who have had close contact with someone with confirmed Covid-19, and people who have been referred by their healthcare provider." If we don't know who is infected, we hamstring ourselves in trying to get this pandemic under control. Please also note that the CDC is recommending tests for those who wish to have a shortened quarantine period, a subject we'll be discussing tomorrow.

Some people who come with fancy titles are full of baloney. Vet your sources carefully. And don't just believe this random lady on the Internet who's telling you this. Check out my claims too, especially if I start saying crazy stuff.

It's been a difficult year thus far for families. As a parent and grandparent who hasn't touched a family member except my husband since January and regretfully decided to forego the usual holiday gatherings, I can attest to the difficulty of these times. But, ever creative, people are finding ways to be together through this hard time. A pair of grandparents from Texas, Missy and Barry Buchanan, was particularly successful in sharing the holiday with their children and grandchildren. Their daughter said, "My mom had told me that she was sending a large package for the Thanksgiving table. I didn't think twice about it. I just assumed it was going to be a holiday decoration." It was not.

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What arrived was two life-size cardboard cutouts of the Buchanans, ready to be placed at the dinner table with the family. Their daughter in California said, "We were just in stitches, we could not stop laughing. We were not expecting 6-foot cutouts of my parents." She texted, "Omg!" and called to say this was the funniest thing she'd ever seen. The Texas grandchildren propped up the cutouts and took pictures; the cardboard substitute grandparents even traveled to the chicken coop. Word on the street is that the grandparent cutouts will also appear at Christmas dinner.

All of this does two things: It helps our society to control this virus which is upending so many lives, many of them to a greater extent than just a missed holiday dinner; and it provides a light moment in a fraught holiday season. This is a real case of being handed lemons and making lemonade. Good for them.

Let's all stop feeling sorry for ourselves and find ways to bridge the distance we feel from our loved ones. In the scheme of things, we're closer and closer to through this thing; let's not mess it up now.

Take care. We'll talk again.

## Wrestling

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Opponent</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Dec. 10</b>	<b>5:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Madison Quad</b>	<b>Madison</b>
<b>Dec 17</b>	<b>5:00 PM CT</b>	<b>Groton Quad (B-H, W-NW, Ips)</b>	<b>Groton</b>
<b>Dec 19</b>	<b>10:00 PM CT</b>	<b>Sioux Valley Invite</b>	<b>Volga, SD</b>
<b>Jan 02</b>	<b>9:30 PM CT</b>	<b>Webster Area Invitational</b>	<b>Webster, SD</b>
<b>Jan 07</b>	<b>6:00 PM CT</b>	<b>(Redfield, Webster Tri)</b>	<b>Webster, SD</b>
<b>Jan 09</b>	<b>10:00 AM CT</b>	<b>Wolsey-Wessington Quad</b>	<b>Wolsey-Wessington</b>
<b>Jan. 16</b>	<b>10:00 AM CT</b>	<b>Potter County Invite</b>	<b>Gettysburg</b>
<b>Jan 19</b>	<b>2:00 PM CT</b>	<b>Hamlin, Clark Triangular</b>	<b>Groton</b>
<b>Jan 23</b>	<b>10:00 PM CT</b>	<b>Kingsbury County Tournament</b>	<b>Arlington, SD</b>
<b>Jan 28</b>	<b>4:00 PM CT</b>	<b>NEC Tournament</b>	<b>Redfield, SD</b>
<b>Jan 30</b>	<b>10:00 PM CT</b>	<b>Groton Invite</b>	<b>Groton</b>
<b>Feb 05</b>	<b>5:00 PM CT</b>	<b>Lyman, Bennett Co., Marion Quad</b>	<b>Presho</b>
<b>Feb. 25-27</b>		<b>State at Rapid City</b>	

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## Area COVID-19 Cases

	Dec. 3
Minnesota	327,477
Nebraska	132,530
Montana	64,340
Colorado	241,172
Wyoming	29,966
North Dakota	80,135
South Dakota	82,203
United States	13,925,350
US Deaths	273,847

Minnesota	+5165
Nebraska	+2,336
Montana	+1135
Colorado	+3862
Wyoming	+577
North Dakota	+480
South Dakota	+1291
United States	+199,044
US Deaths	+3,156

	Nov. 25	Nov. 26	Nov. 28	Nov.29	Nov. 30	Dec. 01	Dec. 2
Minnesota	282,916	289,303	295,001	304,023	306,603	318,763	322,312
Nebraska	117,682	120,076	124,066	125,323	126,466	128,407	130,194
Montana	57,504	58,565	59,796	60,845	61,801	62,198	63,205
Colorado	206,439	210,630	220,953	225,283	228,772	232,905	237,310
Wyoming	25,975	26,677	27,597	27,737	28,252	29,053	29,389
North Dakota	74,401	75,478	77,232	77,935	78,658	79,252	79,655
South Dakota	74,859	76,142	78,280	79,099	79,900	80,464	80,912
United States	12,597,333	12,780,410	13,092,661	13,247,386	13,385,494	13,545,793	13,726,306
US Deaths	259,962	262,282	264,866	266,074	266,887	268,103	270,691

Minnesota	+6,416	+6,387	+5,698	+9,022	+2,580	+12,160	+3,549
Nebraska	+1,761	+2,294	+2,990	+1,257	+1,143	+1,941	+1,787
Montana	+1,123	+1,061	+1,231	+1,049	+956	+397	+1,007
Colorado	+4,150	+4,191	+10,323	+4,330	3,489	+4,133	+4,405
Wyoming	+415	+702	+920	+140	+515	+801	+336
North Dakota	+1,004	+1,077	+1,754	+703	+723	+594	+403
South Dakota	+1,011	+1,283	+2,138	+819	+801	+564	+448
United States	+176,117	+183,077	+312,251	+154,725	+138,108	+160,299	+180,513
US Deaths	+2,255	+2,320	+2,584	+1,208	+813	+1,216	+2,588

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## December 2nd COVID-19 UPDATE

### Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Do I dare say we are back to normal figures for today. Not only are the positive numbers up to 1,291 for today, but our positivity rate is at 24.1 percent for the day. To add insult to injury, we had 47 deaths across the state today with Jones and Stanley county each recording their first deaths.

We had 23 females and 24 males that died from COVID-19 with one in their 40s, 8 in their 60s, 8 in their 70s and 30 in the 80+ age group. Deaths by county are: Beadle-1, Bon Homme-5, Brown-3, Clay-1, Codington-1, Davison-4, Day-1, Hamlin-5, Hanson-1, Hughes-1, Hutchinson-1, Jones - first death, Kingsbury-1, Lincoln-2, McCook-2, Minnehaha-7, Moody-2, Oglala Lakota-1, Pennington-1, Roberts-1, Stanley-first death, Todd-1, Turner-1, Walworth-1, Yankton-1.

Glacial Lakes hospital beds being occupied by COVID-19 patients as well as Minnehaha and Pennington counties: Walworth: 3 (-1) Occupied Beds.; Potter: 1 (-1) Occupied Beds; Hughes: 11 (-2) Occupied Beds, 3 (-0) ICU Beds, 2 (-0) Ventilation; Hand: 0 (-0) Occupied Beds; Faulk: 0 (-1) Occupied Beds; Edmunds: 2 (-1) Occupied Bed; McPherson: 0 (-0) Occupied Bed; Brown: 36 (+5) Occupied Beds, 5 (+1) ICU, 0 (-0) Ventilation; Spink: 2 (+0) Occupied Beds; Day: 2 (-1) Occupied Beds; Marshall: 0 (-0) Occupied Beds; Grant: 1 (-1) Occupied Beds; Codington: 11 (+0) Occupied Beds, 4 (-1) ICU, 2 (+0) Ventilation; None (some counties have no hospitals): Clark, Hyde, Stanley, Sully, Campbell, Roberts; Minnehaha: 266 (-8) Occupied Beds, 65 (-0) ICU, 47 (+3) Ventilation; Pennington: 66 (-13) Occupied Beds, 14 (+0) ICU, 10 (+0) Ventilation.

Brown County:  
Total Positive: +72 (3729) Positivity Rate: 33.8%  
Total Tests: +213 (28,548)  
Total Individuals Tested: +78 (14,034)  
Recovered: +26 (3,076)  
Active Cases: +43 (629)  
Ever Hospitalized: +5 (224)  
Deaths: +3 (24)  
Percent Recovered: 82.4%  
Hospital Reports:  
Avera St. Luke's: Covid-19 Occupied 27 (+1); ICU 3 (+0), Ventilation 0 (0).  
Sanford Aberdeen: Covid-19 Occupied 9 (+4); ICU 2 (+1), Ventilation 0 (-0)  
Sanford Webster: Covid-19 Occupied 2 (-1).  
Marshall County Healthcare: Covid-19 Occupied: 0 (-0).

South Dakota:  
Positive: +1291 (82,203 total) Positivity Rate: 24.1%  
Total Tests: 5,349 (620,883 total)  
Total Individuals Tested: 2007 (332,540)  
Hospitalized: +54 (4626 total). 531 currently hospitalized -16)  
Deaths: +47 (995 total)  
Recovered: +475 (66,351 total)

Active Cases: +769 (14,857)  
Percent Recovered: 80.7%  
Total COVID-19 Occupied Beds: 531 (-16), Black Hills Region 103 (-13), Glacial Lakes Region 69 (-3) Sioux Empire Region 280 (-5), South Central Plains 79 (+5).  
ICU Units: Total 107 (+1), BH 16 (+1), GL 12 (+0), SE 66 (+1), SCP 13 (-1).  
Ventilation: Total 63 (+4), BH 10 (+0), GL 4 (+0), SE 47 (+3), SCP 2 (+1).  
Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 19% Covid, 46% Non-Covid, 35% Available  
ICU Bed Capacity: 51% Covid, 33% non-covid, 16% available.  
Staffed Adult + Pediatric ICU Bed Capacity: 66% Occupied, 34% Available  
Ventilator Capacity: 15% Covid, 18% Non-Covid, 68% Available

Beadle (30) +33 positive, +10 recovered (411 active cases)  
Brookings (16) +22 positive, +7 recovered (396 active cases)  
Brown (24): +72 positive, +26 recovered (629 active cases)  
Clark (1): +8 positive, +2 recovered (61 active cases)  
Clay (11): +4 positive, +3 recovered (218 active cases)  
Codington (51): +45 positive, +16 recovered (441 active cases)



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Davison (40): +26 positive, +12 recovered (505 active cases)  
 Day (11): +6 positive, +3 recovered (108 active cases)  
 Edmunds (2): +3 positive, +2 recovered (48 active cases)  
 Faulk (10): +1 positive, +2 recovered (21 active cases)  
 Grant (12): +9 positive, +6 recovered (138 active cases)  
 Hanson (3): +5 positive, +2 recovered (77 active cases)  
 Hughes (19): +30 positive, +13 recovered (309 active cases)  
 Lawrence (22): +46 positive, +16 recovered (391 active cases)  
 Lincoln (53): +70 positive, +31 recovered (918 active cases)  
 Marshall (3): +3 positive, +0 recovered (65 active cases)  
 McCook (17): +7 positive, +6 recovered (112 active cases)  
 McPherson (1): +2 positive, +2 recovery (45 active case)  
 Minnehaha (191): +295 positive, +86 recovered (3475 active cases)  
 Pennington (79): +179 positive, +81 recovered (1722 active cases)  
 Potter (1): +4 positive, +0 recovered (68 active cases)  
 Roberts (20): +17 positive, +7 recovered (152 active cases)  
 Spink (14): +12 positive, +2 recovered (118 active cases)  
 Walworth (13): +16 positive, +2 recovered (124 active cases)

## NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Dec. 2:

- 11.9% rolling 14-day positivity
- 486 new positives
- 5,258 susceptible test encounters
- 301 currently hospitalized (-18)
- 5,236 active cases (-450)
- 966 total deaths (+12)

## Yesterday

Global Cases
<b>63,957,998</b>
13,726,306 US
9,499,413 India
6,386,787 Brazil
2,327,105 Russia
2,275,429 France
1,656,444 Spain
1,647,230 United Kingdom
1,620,901 Italy
1,432,570 Argentina
1,324,792 Colombia
1,122,362 Mexico
1,094,678 Germany
1,013,747 Poland
975,951 Iran

Global Deaths
<b>1,482,451</b>

270,691 deaths US
173,817 deaths Brazil
138,122 deaths India
106,765 deaths Mexico
59,148 deaths United Kingdom
56,361 deaths Italy
52,821 deaths France
48,628 deaths Iran

## Today

Global Cases
<b>64,596,395</b>
13,925,350 US
9,534,964 India
6,436,650 Brazil
2,354,934 Russia
2,275,677 France
1,665,775 Spain
1,663,468 United Kingdom
1,641,610 Italy
1,440,103 Argentina
1,334,089 Colombia
1,133,613 Mexico
1,117,953 Germany
1,028,610 Poland
989,572 Iran

Global Deaths
<b>1,494,986</b>

273,847 deaths US
174,515 deaths Brazil
138,648 deaths India
107,565 deaths Mexico
59,796 deaths United Kingdom
57,045 deaths Italy
52,822 deaths France
48,990 deaths Iran

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	368	284	732	5	Substantial	36.54%
Beadle	2325	1884	4691	30	Substantial	21.19%
Bennett	315	268	1037	5	Substantial	7.14%
Bon Homme	1372	1250	1751	19	Substantial	23.85%
Brookings	2483	2071	8795	16	Substantial	9.32%
Brown	3729	3076	10305	24	Substantial	25.91%
Brule	578	494	1595	5	Substantial	27.07%
Buffalo	383	336	824	8	Substantial	21.62%
Butte	740	618	2608	13	Substantial	16.44%
Campbell	105	93	189	1	Moderate	16.67%
Charles Mix	911	626	3359	5	Substantial	19.08%
Clark	262	200	775	1	Substantial	20.00%
Clay	1381	1152	4160	11	Substantial	16.12%
Codington	2745	2253	7568	51	Substantial	25.30%
Corson	398	326	850	5	Substantial	41.18%
Custer	562	446	2179	7	Substantial	13.17%
Davison	2435	1890	5294	40	Substantial	26.75%
Day	388	269	1414	11	Substantial	35.19%
Deuel	326	252	909	2	Substantial	36.36%
Dewey	890	598	3362	3	Substantial	29.55%
Douglas	305	241	754	5	Substantial	17.46%
Edmunds	261	211	852	2	Substantial	11.88%
Fall River	367	307	2117	10	Substantial	9.04%
Faulk	281	250	558	10	Moderate	18.18%
Grant	632	482	1772	12	Substantial	30.32%
Gregory	446	357	983	20	Substantial	23.76%
Haakon	155	129	458	3	Substantial	10.99%
Hamlin	491	359	1381	9	Substantial	22.67%
Hand	290	238	659	1	Substantial	30.00%
Hanson	271	191	534	3	Substantial	54.32%
Harding	77	63	133	0	Moderate	38.89%
Hughes	1687	1359	4996	19	Substantial	20.40%
Hutchinson	586	423	1847	10	Substantial	39.17%

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Hyde	125	99	341	0	Substantial	50.00%
Jackson	213	167	824	8	Substantial	23.19%
Jerauld	238	200	450	13	Substantial	17.86%
Jones	63	53	154	1	Moderate	10.00%
Kingsbury	450	354	1270	11	Substantial	15.22%
Lake	872	705	2548	10	Substantial	16.60%
Lawrence	2097	1695	7053	22	Substantial	14.10%
Lincoln	5523	4583	15718	53	Substantial	23.82%
Lyman	461	383	1584	8	Substantial	24.76%
Marshall	194	126	908	3	Substantial	31.58%
McCook	604	475	1284	17	Substantial	28.18%
McPherson	153	107	470	1	Substantial	11.27%
Meade	1809	1441	6169	13	Substantial	15.08%
Mellette	183	150	612	1	Substantial	15.79%
Miner	193	161	464	5	Moderate	8.33%
Minnehaha	20947	17281	61519	191	Substantial	23.48%
Moody	427	332	1494	12	Substantial	25.22%
Oglala Lakota	1677	1342	5962	24	Substantial	22.18%
Pennington	8912	7111	30856	79	Substantial	15.67%
Perkins	207	131	567	2	Substantial	38.67%
Potter	275	206	663	1	Substantial	17.89%
Roberts	737	565	3608	20	Substantial	20.68%
Sanborn	277	196	559	1	Substantial	22.39%
Spink	574	440	1755	14	Substantial	25.32%
Stanley	232	191	681	1	Substantial	21.74%
Sully	93	80	205	3	Moderate	15.00%
Todd	995	818	3583	13	Substantial	24.64%
Tripp	520	411	1243	4	Substantial	34.78%
Turner	802	659	2133	43	Substantial	15.09%
Union	1269	1034	4859	25	Substantial	19.27%
Walworth	505	368	1507	13	Substantial	28.26%
Yankton	1822	1361	7556	10	Substantial	18.19%
Ziebach	209	130	583	7	Substantial	42.31%
Unassigned	0	0	1714	0		

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## South Dakota



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

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	2848	0
10-19 years	8943	0
20-29 years	15469	2
30-39 years	13706	9
40-49 years	11776	18
50-59 years	11720	57
60-69 years	9234	134
70-79 years	4770	213
80+ years	3737	562

### SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	42948	489
Male	39255	506

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## Brown County

New Confirmed Cases

56

New Probable Cases

16

Active Cases

629

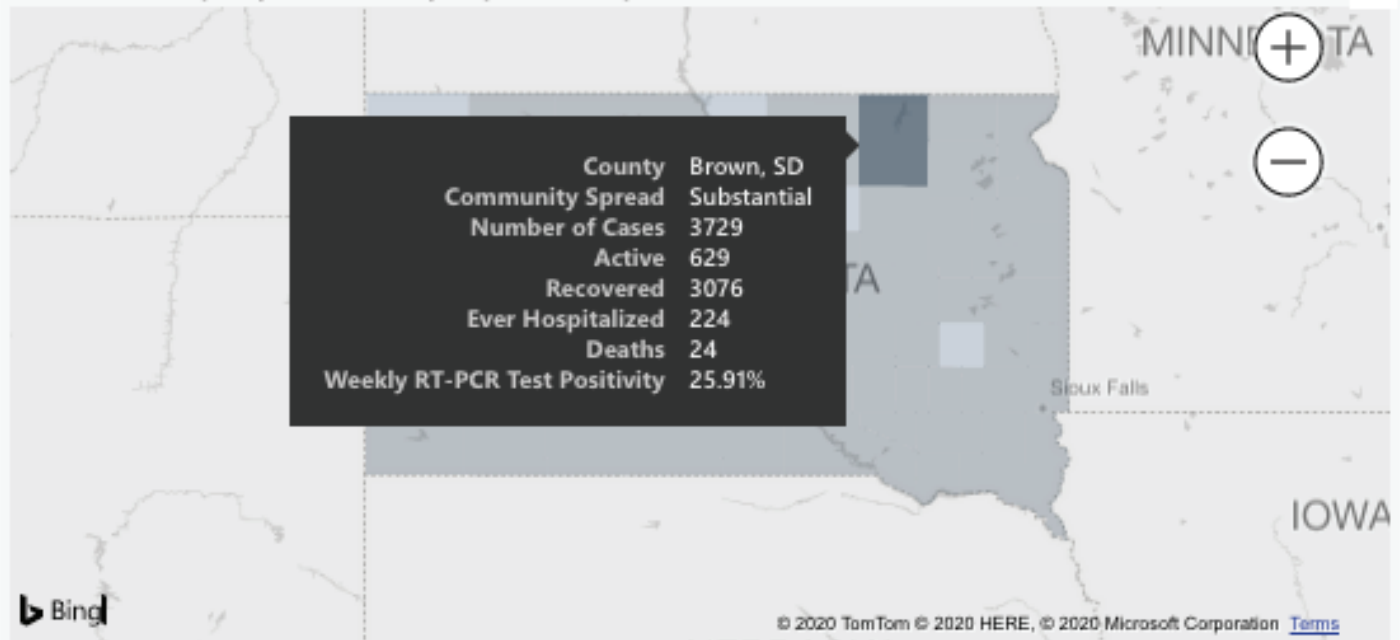
Recovered Cases

3,076

Currently Hospitalized

531

### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Moderate ● Substantial

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

Total Confirmed Cases

3,594

Total Probable Cases

135

RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 1 Day

15.5%

Total Persons Tested

14,034

Total Tests

28,548

Ever Hospitalized

224

Deaths

24

% Progress (October Goal: 44,233 Tests)

16%

% Progress (November Goal: 44,233 Tests)

402%

% Progress (December Goal: 44,233 Tests)

8%

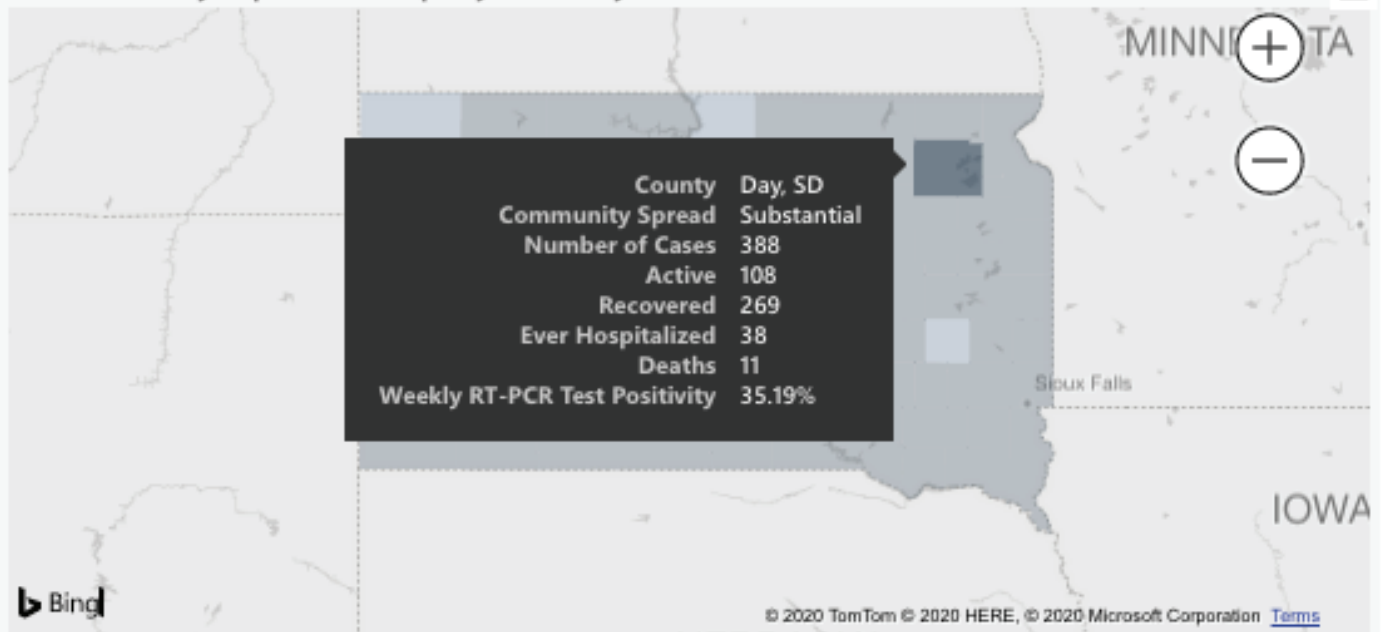
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## Day County

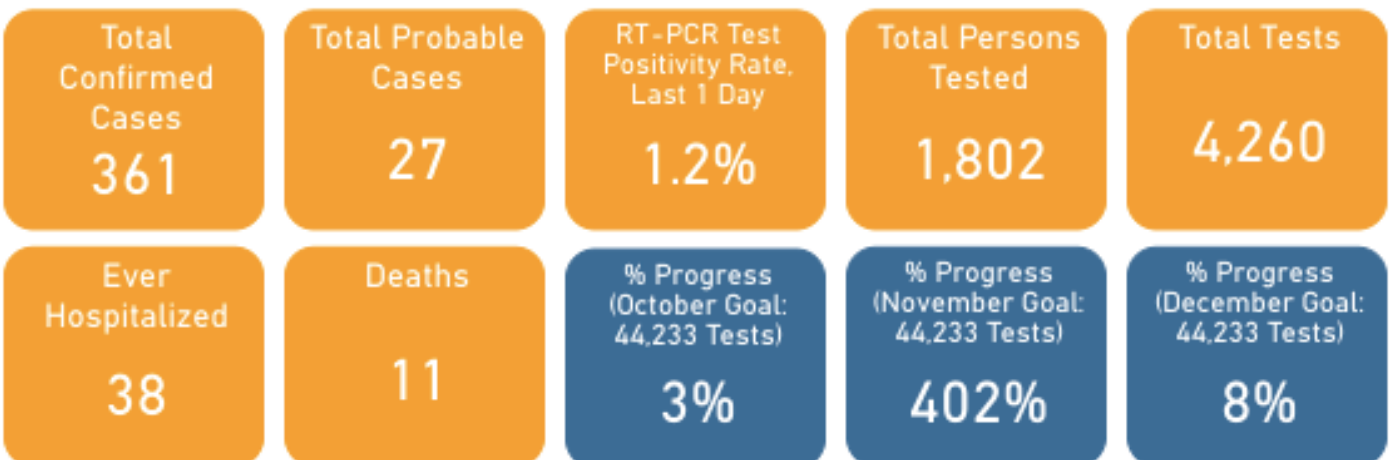


Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Moderate ● Substantial

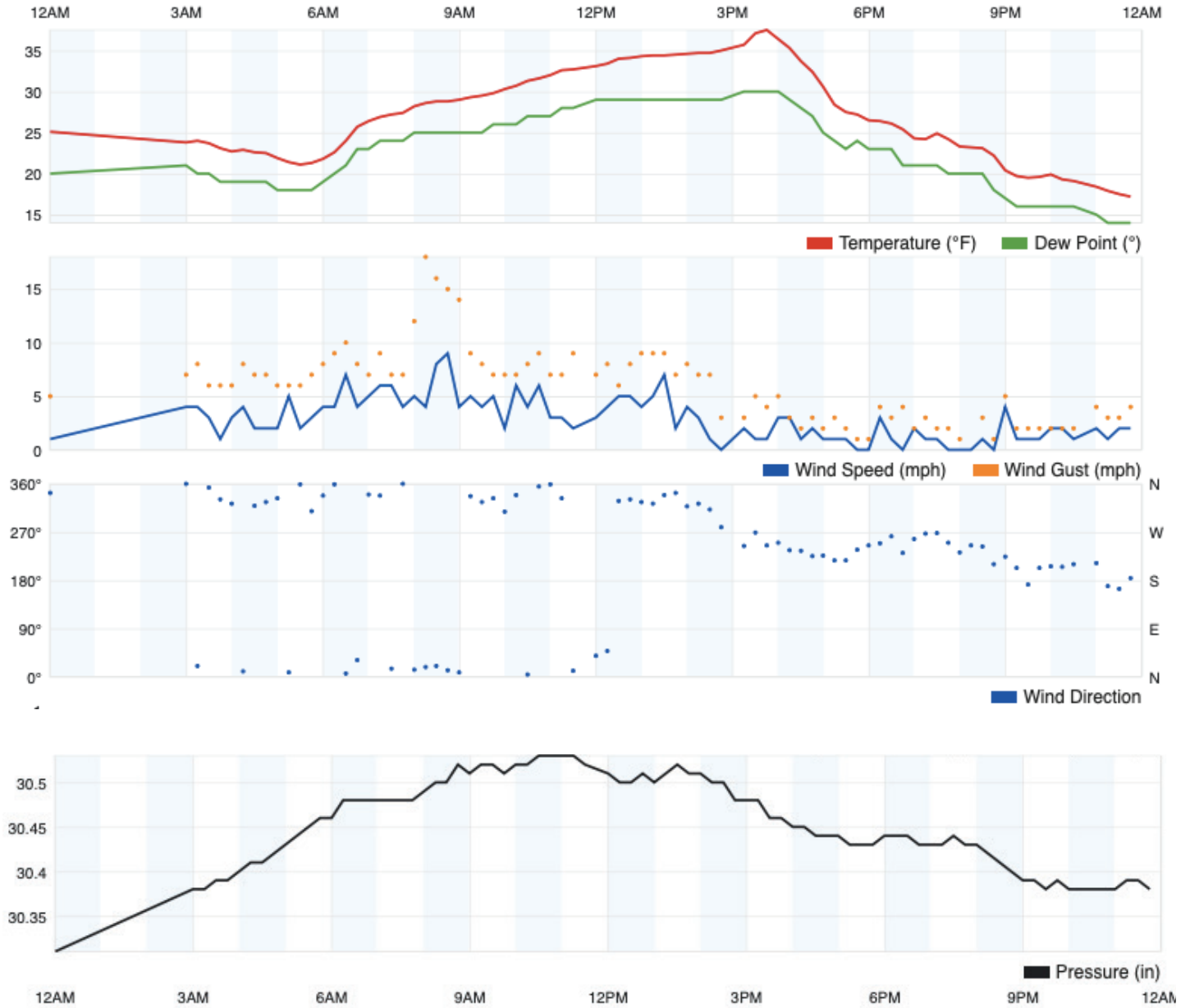
Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today

Tonight

Friday

Friday  
Night

Saturday



Sunny

Mostly Clear

Sunny

Mostly Clear

Sunny

High: 48 °F

Low: 20 °F

High: 47 °F

Low: 22 °F

High: 47 °F

**Continued Dry  
And Mild**

**Today**  
*Mostly Sunny & Mild  
Highs 41-53°F*

**Friday**  
*Mostly Sunny, Mild  
Highs 39-58°F*

**Saturday**  
*Mostly Sunny  
Highs 37-55°F*

Graphic Created 12/3/2020 2:45 AM  
National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Dry and mild conditions are expected through the upcoming weekend. #sdwx #mnwx



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## Today in Weather History

December 3, 1991: Strong northwesterly winds behind a departing surface low brought blizzard conditions and dangerously cold wind chill readings across west central and southwest Minnesota on the 3rd. A general 1 to 3-inch snowfall occurred across the area and combined with winds gusting to 50 mph at times to generate whiteout conditions from the morning into the evening. Air temperatures coupled with the strong wind to produce wind chill values ranging from 30 to 50 below zero. Some schools and businesses were closed during the morning as the storm intensified. Several car accidents and jackknifed tractor-semitrailers littered roadways. Many roads were closed at the height of the storm. Power outages occurred over a small portion of the area due to the strong winds downing ice-covered power lines.

December 3, 1838: Cleveland Abbe, an American meteorologist, and advocate of time zones was born on this day. He was trained as an astronomer and was appointed the director of the Cincinnati Observatory in 1868. He eventually turned to meteorology and inaugurated a public weather service that served as a model for today's National Weather Service.

1896 - An early season snow and ice storm struck the southeastern U.S. It produced 11 inches of snow at Charlotte NC, and six inches at Atlanta GA. (David Ludlum)

1925 - A late season hurricane caused extensive damage across the Florida peninsula, then moved off the Georgia coast crossing Cape Hatteras as a tropical storm. The storm produced whole gales along the Middle Atlantic and Southern New England coast. Winds gusted to 60 mph at Block Island RI, and reached 64 mph at Atlantic City NJ. (David Ludlum)

1950 - A late season tornado killed four persons in Madison County and Bond County, east of St Louis MO. Three tornadoes touched down in Illinois that afternoon, compared to just half a dozen tornadoes in the month of December in 115 years of records up until that time. Thunderstorms also produced hail which caused more than four million dollars damage in the St Louis area, it was the most damaging hailstorm of record for Missouri. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1970 - A tornado, 400 yards in width, touched down about one mile below the summit of Timpanogos Divide. Trees up to 18 inches in diameter were snapped, and some of the 38 inch snow cover was carried 1000 feet above the ground as the tornado traveled one mile. (The Weather Channel)

1982 - A tornado destroyed a home four miles south of Eastwood MO. The owners were not injured in that tornado, but ironically one was killed Christmas Eve when another tornado hit the replacement mobile home on the same site. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A powerful storm over the Gulf of Alaska continued to produced high winds and heavy rain along the northern and central Pacific coast. Winds gusted to 80 mph south of Port Orford OR, Stevens Pass WA was blanketed with sixteen inches of snow, and Blue Canyon CA was soaked with 1.63 inches of rain. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Squalls in the Great Lakes Region produced ten inches of snow at Union City, PA. Gale force winds gusted to 55 mph at Buffalo NY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Squalls produced heavy snow in the Great Lakes Region. Totals in Upper Michigan ranged up to 20 inches at Ironwood. Heavy snow and high winds caused 150 auto accidents in Michigan, resulting in sixteen deaths and 22 injuries. Strong northwesterly winds gusted to 73 mph at Johnstown PA, and Lowville PA received 20 inches of snow in 36 hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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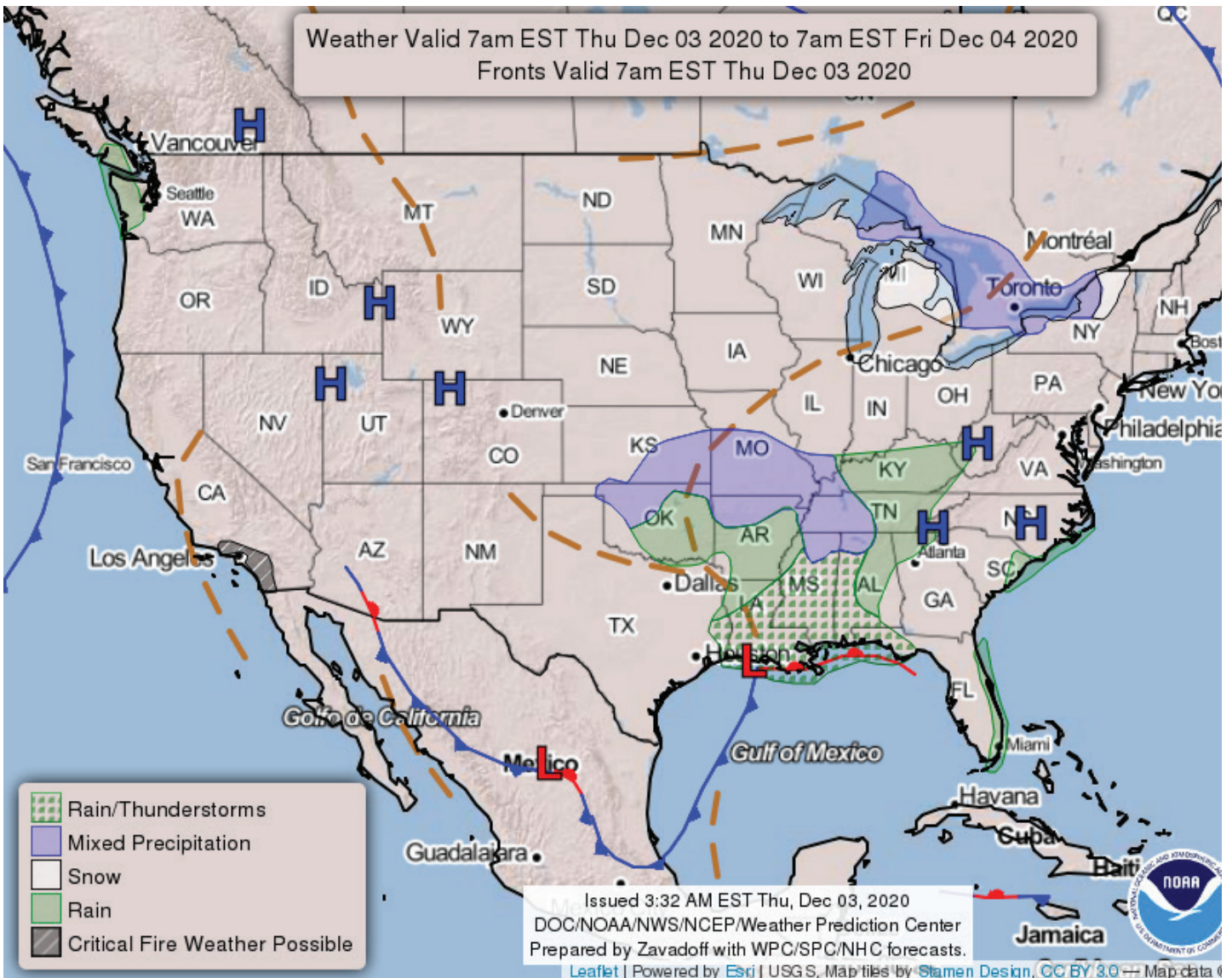
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 38 °F at 3:34 PM**  
**Low Temp: 17 °F at 11:53 PM**  
**Wind: 18 mph at 8:13 AM**  
**Precip: .00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 63° in 1941**  
**Record Low: -18° in 1897, 1905**  
**Average High: 30°F**  
**Average Low: 10°F**  
**Average Precip in Dec.: 0.04**  
**Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00**  
**Average Precip to date: 21.24**  
**Precip Year to Date: 16.52**  
**Sunset Tonight: 4:51 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:57 a.m.**



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## WHAT GIFT?

Joyce fell behind in her Christmas shopping and suddenly realized that she had neglected to purchase cards for her friends. Hurriedly, she ran to the "surprise" section of a large greeting card store and purchased 100 cards with a beautiful scene of a family gathered in front of a glowing fireplace enjoying its warmth.

Returning home she hastily signed each of the cards without reading the message. Several days later she was sitting with her husband reviewing the guest list for a family dinner. She decided to show him the card she had sent to their friends.

After looking at the picture, she opened the card and read the verse to Jason, her husband: "This card is sent to you to say, A lovely gift is on the way!" Quite a surprise!

God gave us a "star" to alert us that His "lovely gift" would be discovered in a manger – His son. All of the books of the Bible describe the Gift that He promised to send, tell us the reason for His gift, and what we can enjoy now and in the life to come because of His gift.

But, as with every gift, there are two parts: one is the giver and the other is the receiver. An angel rejoiced and proclaimed: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior which is Christ the Lord." That is God the Giver, giving. And, John said, "As many as received Him...to them He gave life." But that is our choice: the receiver - to accept God's gift, His Son.

Prayer: We thank You, Father, for the Gift of life You provided for each of us in Your Son. May we accept Your Gift in faith believing, that He came to save us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.

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## 2020 Groton SD Community Events

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

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News from the  Associated Press

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

03-10-11-16-22

(three, ten, eleven, sixteen, twenty-two)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

09-12-22-38-40, Star Ball: 10, ASB: 2

(nine, twelve, twenty-two, thirty-eight, forty; Star Ball: ten; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$3.45 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$244 million

Powerball

28-31-40-41-46, Powerball: 4, Power Play: 3

(twenty-eight, thirty-one, forty, forty-one, forty-six; Powerball: four; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$231 million

## American Indian Movement co-founder Benton-Banai dies at 89

By AMY FORLITI and FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Eddie Benton-Banai, who helped found the American Indian Movement partly in response to alleged police brutality against Indigenous people, has died. He was 89.

Benton-Banai died Monday at a care center in Hayward, Wisconsin, where he had been staying for months, according to family friend Dorene Day. Day said Benton-Banai had several health issues and had been hospitalized multiple times in recent years.

Benton-Banai, who is Anishinaabe Ojibwe, was born and raised on the Lac Courte Oreilles reservation in northern Wisconsin. He made a life of connecting American Indians with their spirituality and promoting sovereignty, and was the grand chief, or spiritual leader, of the Three Fires Midewiwin Lodge. Day said he was someone people looked to for guidance in the religious practice of the Anishinaabe Ojibwe people — and he gave countless babies their traditional names.

Benton-Banai's place in the American Indian Movement, a grassroots group formed in 1968, can be traced to his launch of a cultural program in a Minnesota prison, said co-founder Clyde Bellecourt.

Bellecourt was in solitary confinement when he heard someone whistling "You are My Sunshine," and he looked through a tiny hole in his cell and saw Benton-Banai, a fellow inmate, recognizing him as an Indigenous man.

Bellecourt said Benton-Banai approached him about helping incarcerated Indigenous people, and they started the prison's cultural program to teach American Indians about their history and encourage them to learn a trade or seek higher education. Bellecourt said that Benton-Banai thought they could do the same work in the streets, and the program morphed into the American Indian Movement, an organization that persists today with various chapters.

"It started because I met Eddie in jail," Bellecourt said. "Our whole Indian way of life came back because of him. ... My whole life just changed. I started reading books about history of the Ojibwe nation... dreaming about how beautiful it must have been at one time in our history."

One of the group's first acts was to organize a patrol to monitor allegations of police harassment and brutality against Native Americans who had settled in Minneapolis where it's based. Members had cameras, asked police for badge numbers and monitored radio scanner traffic for mention of anyone who they

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might recognize as Indigenous to ensure their rights weren't being violated — similar to what the Black Panthers were doing at the time, said Kent Blansett, an associate professor of Indigenous studies at the University of Kansas who has written about the movement.

The group called out instances of cultural appropriation, provided job training, sought to improve housing and education for Indigenous people, provided legal assistance, spotlighted environmental injustice and questioned government policies that were seen as anti-Indigenous.

"Anything they could find that they could insert a Native presence and voice, they were there to do," said Blansett, a Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Shawnee and Potawatomi descendant.

At times, the American Indian Movement's tactics were militant, which led to splintering in the group. In one of its most well-known actions, the group took over Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota in 1973 to protest U.S. and tribal governments. The 71-day occupation turned violent, and two people died in a shootout.

As the movement broadened nationally, Benton-Banai kept his work more local and focused on cultural and traditional teachings, and education. His roots in the group often got overshadowed by more powerful personalities in the movement, including Russell Means, Dennis Banks and John Trudell, said Akim Reinhardt, a history professor at Towson University in Maryland.

"It's a shame, because clearly when we listen to the people who were there, they all mention him," said Reinhardt, who has written broadly about the movement.

Lisa Bellanger, executive director of the National American Indian Movement and Benton-Banai's former assistant, said he was instrumental in the group's work using treaties to protect the rights of Indigenous people. He was also part of a team that pushed for the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, she said, as government policies stifled or outlawed religious practices. The law safeguarded the rights of American Indians to practice their religion and access sacred sites.

Bellanger said Benton-Banai also helped launch the International Indian Treaty Council, which advocates for the rights of Indigenous nations to govern themselves, and for the protection of tradition, culture and sacred land.

In addition to his activism work, Benton-Banai was a father figure.

"We could always go to him with questions," Bellanger said. "We could run crying to him if we needed to. We had that personal faith and trust and love in him, at a time that was crucial for young girls."

Day said Benton-Banai was raised by his grandparents and grew up speaking Ojibwe.

"He had a very solid spiritual foundation to his traditional and Indigenous learning, and that's what made him, I believe, who he was," she said.

His book, "The Mishomis Book" is touted as the first of its kind to offer Anishinaabe families an understanding of spiritual teachings.

Benton-Banai also founded a school in St. Paul in 1972, called the Red School House, which — along with its sister school in Minneapolis — fueled a broader movement to provide alternative education for Indigenous children so they could learn while maintaining their spiritual and cultural practices, Day said. They were known as survival schools.

Bellecourt said American Indian Movement's philosophy of using the sovereignty and spirituality of Indigenous people as a strength can be attributed to Benton-Banai's leadership.

"I considered him our holy man," he said.

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Fonseca reported from Flagstaff, Arizona.

## South Dakota St tops Iowa St for 2nd time in program history

AMES, Iowa (AP) — Noah Freidel scored 23 points, making five 3-pointers, Baylor Scheierman had 18 points, 10 rebounds and four steals, and South Dakota State beat Iowa State 71-68 on Wednesday night for the program's eighth victory over a Power Five team.

SDSU led by at least nine points for the first 14 minutes of the second half before Iowa State got as close

as 67-66 with 21.5 seconds left on two free throws by Javan Johnson. But the Cyclones turned it over on their next possession, and Scheierman and Alex Arians combined to make four straight free throws to seal it.

Douglas Wilson added 16 points and nine rebounds for South Dakota State (2-2). Arians had 10 points and seven assists. South Dakota State was the picked to win the Summit League in the preseason poll, getting 33 of 36 first-place votes.

Solomon Young led Iowa State (1-1) with 24 points. Johnson had 13 points, seven rebounds and eight assists, and Jalen Coleman-Lands scored 12.

SDSU also beat Iowa State 65-58 in Ames on December 23, 2008 for its only road win that season, going 1-15. Current SDSU head coach Eric Henderson was on the Iowa State bench for that game.

More AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/hub/college-basketball> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](https://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

## South Dakota reports 47 virus deaths, anticipates vaccines

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota on Wednesday reported that 47 people had died from COVID-19, one of the highest single-day death tallies since the pandemic began.

The state has reported more than 50 deaths in a day only twice — both in November. The total number of deaths stands at 995. The rate of death from the virus has risen dramatically in recent weeks, and the state now has the nation's ninth-highest number of deaths per capita. There were 107.5 deaths per 100,000 people, according to Johns Hopkins researchers.

But health officials did offer some good news. They are expecting to receive the first shipments of a COVID-19 vaccine in the next two weeks if it is authorized for emergency use by the Food and Drug Administration. Medical workers caring for COVID-19 patients will be the first to receive the vaccine, followed by people in elder care facilities.

The state is expecting 7,800 doses of a vaccine manufactured by Pfizer Inc. to arrive on Dec. 15. That will be enough to begin vaccinations for less than 1% of the state's roughly 885,000 people. But health officials said they expect to receive weekly shipments of vaccines until they are widely available, though that could take several months.

"We want to make sure our health care workers who are taking care of our COVID patients have the ability to get vaccinated," Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said. "We need them to continue to be able to provide care to people until we are over the pandemic."

Meanwhile, an additional 1,291 people tested positive for the virus, a jump from recent days when new cases had slowed. The state has seen a decrease in the average number of daily new cases reported in the last week, but still had the nation's third-highest number of cases per capita over the last two weeks, according to Johns Hopkins researchers. One in every 146 people tested positive in the past week.

The state's prisons have seen particularly bad outbreaks, and another state inmate died of coronavirus complications, according to the Department of Corrections.

The department said Tuesday said the man was incarcerated at the Jameson Annex of the State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls. He's the fourth state inmate to die of the virus.

A total of 2,159 people incarcerated in state prisons have tested positive for the coronavirus, though officials say only 76 of those cases are currently active.

Officials have not provided any other details about the man's death.

Meanwhile, the Department of Health relaxed its guidance on how long people need to quarantine if they are exposed to someone with the coronavirus. The new guidelines follow an expected update on quarantine length from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

State epidemiologist Josh Clayton said that people who are exposed to the virus but don't have symptoms need to quarantine for only seven days if they test negative at least five days after exposure. He also said people who don't develop symptoms can end their quarantine after 10 days without getting tested.

This story has been corrected to note the inmate was held at the Jameson Annex of the State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls, not Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield.

## **Tribes mount organized responses to COVID-19, in contrast to state and federal governments**

Lisa Hardy Northern Arizona University

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Lisa Hardy, Northern Arizona University; Gwendolyn Saul, Northern Arizona University, and Kerry F. Thompson, Northern Arizona University

(THE CONVERSATION) As the months roll by, the pandemic continues to hit Indigenous nations hard. But this phenomenon is not new. Epidemics have been part of colonialism since settlers arrived. Health inequities tell us that illnesses have different outcomes on different populations; however, leading medical professionals warn the general public of the dangers of oversimplifying health data. They don't tell the whole story. And, in the case of Indigenous nations, the story of inequity is imbued with dispossession of lands and is met with organizing from the inside: two crucial points for untangling and responding to COVID-19.

As scholars who have studied impacts of the virus and Native nations, we have found that Indigenous nations have reacted quickly and effectively to the pandemic.

In our analysis, tribal nations have implemented guidelines and policies that appear to be far more effective than those used by the states they are in. These responses include locking down roads and implementing guidelines earlier and more carefully than others and developing relevant modes of delivery of supplies. Their response shows that Indigenous nations and communities know what they need; they are the directors of their own protective measures.

Protecting themselves and their land

Even when governors in the states tribes are in disagree with them, nation leaders stood out. Responding to the pandemic also means continuing to exercise sovereignty.

For example, in April, tribes in South Dakota set up checkpoints for cars coming onto their land and asked passersby not to enter. South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem characterized the checkpoints as illegal roadblocks and ordered the tribes to cease their activities and called on the White House to intervene.

Later, at a rally at Mount Rushmore, President Trump referred to the Native Americans protesting his gathering on their land as "angry mobs" and opened his event with "Garryowen," the well-known Seventh Cavalry regimental song played by Custer in battle. Still, as coronavirus spikes continue to break records, Native nations have managed to control traffic on and off reservation land.

The Shinnecock Nation is also successfully organizing strategies to protect its people, land and ancestors. The Shinnecock Nation is surrounded by Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island, home to some of the wealthiest people in the world. Those counties served as an escape for New Yorkers last spring when the pandemic raged. Even with the onslaught of people, many of whom may have been exposed to the virus, the Shinnecock took action and kept the number of cases to a mere handful by following guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This is nothing new for Shinnecock people. Protecting themselves has been a necessity for survival since 1640, when English settlers purchased eight square miles of Shinnecock land, the origin of what is now Southampton. European settlers brought smallpox to Long Island, which had devastating impacts on Shinnecock and other Indigenous peoples of Long Island. Centuries later, however, they travel across Long Island and from all over the U.S. to attend one of the largest annual powwows on the East Coast, held on Shinnecock Nation every summer. This year, for the first time since its inception in 1967, the powwow was virtual.

In fall 2020, at the behest of members of Shinnecock Nation, Southampton adopted the Unmarked Graves Protection Act. This move came after years of development and disruption of burial grounds. One such example is the well-known Shinnecock Hills golf course. Now, a coalition of Shinnecock and its allies,



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Warriors of the Sunrise, has set up camp on the Shinnecock Nation and is asking for statewide passage of the act. They also want the state to drop its lawsuit against the Shinnecock Nation over a signboard that has provided COVID-19 related information information for heavy commuter traffic.

Navajo mask mandate and organizing from inside

In the Southwest, multiple tribes have quickly responded to COVID-19. The Navajo Nation has acted more swiftly and strongly to COVID-19 numbers than Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, who was slow to suggest guidelines at the pandemic's beginning and quick to let them expire. In contrast, Navajo Nation President Nez put out a mask mandate and began a public education campaign on the Navajo reservation in the early days of the pandemic. Still, numbers and impacts of COVID-19 continue.

Additional Native-led efforts to meet community needs have been relevant and strong. This includes the Native-led Yee Ha'ólníi Doo, a Navajo-Hopi relief fund that raises money for food, water and "kinship kits" with Navajo and Hopi people in the region.

[Deep knowledge, daily. Sign up for The Conversation's newsletter.]

Grassroots strategies work because they are dynamic and vigilant; tribal members best understand community needs. Ethel Branch, former Navajo Nation attorney general, told our authors that the fact that COVID-19 disproportionately impacts these communities indicates a "target on our culture." Elders, she said, carry language and traditional knowledge. This is why Yee Ha'ólníi Doo distributes two weeks' worth of food and water to elders through a "family-based relief approach": because elders, they know, will "share with their family members."

Other organizations left the area after the first surge, but this one has continued to provide consistent relief. They know the foods and resources that are most appropriate for people who live there. "We love our people and we care about them," said Branch. "They are our family members and so we are really purposeful in how we apply resources. We care about saving every life until this pandemic is gone." And now, during another spike, this organization and others continue to collect resources for lifesaving actions across tribal lands. Perhaps it is time to consider dispossession as an ongoing health disparity. Stories that focus only on the need and despair of Native people overlook long-held practices of sustainability, kinship and health.

This article is republished from The Conversation under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article here: <https://theconversation.com/tribes-mount-organized-responses-to-covid-19-in-contrast-to-state-and-federal-governments-150627>.

## **Increase in Long Term Care Costs in South Dakota Mirror National Trends; COVID-19 Pressures Future Costs**

RICHMOND, Va., Dec. 2, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- The cost of long term care services in South Dakota increased year-over-year in line with national trends as COVID-19 intensified providers' existing challenges in meeting the increasing demand for long term care, according to Genworth's 17th annual Cost of Care Survey.

National 2020 data shows a continuation of the upward trajectory in long term care costs, though this year proved to be like no other as patients and providers struggled to cope with the effects of COVID-19. This year's Cost of Care Survey shows national annual median costs increased across the board for assisted living facilities (6.1%), home care (4.3-4.4%) and skilled nursing facilities (3.2-3.5%).

Providers indicated they will have to raise rates again in the next six months to cover the added cost of providing care under the extraordinary challenges posed by COVID-19.

Here's how the costs of care in South Dakota compare with national trends and the previous year:

## **Annual Median Cost of Long Term Care Support Services for South Dakota**

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## South Dakota

National

### Care Category

2020 Annual Cost  
Change Since 20196  
State Rank (High/Low)<sup>7</sup>  
2020 Annual Cost  
Change Since 20196

### Homemaker Services

\$64,0642  
0.00%  
#14  
\$53,7682  
4.44%

### Home Health Aide

\$66,3522  
3.57%  
#11  
\$54,9122  
4.35%

### Adult Day Health Care

\$19,7603  
-32.14%  
#27  
\$19,2403  
-1.33%

### Assisted Living Facilities<sup>1</sup>

\$43,6504  
3.93%  
#44  
\$51,6004  
6.15%

### Nursing Home

Semi-Private Room

\$84,1335  
2.45%  
#39  
\$93,0755  
3.24%

## Nursing Home

Private Room

\$90,2465

4.55%

#40

\$105,8505

3.57%

**1-7 Genworth Cost of Care Survey, conducted by CareScout®. Represents the year-over-year growth rate based on Genworth Cost of Care Surveys conducted from 2019 to 2020. The rate can be influenced by a number of factors such as random variation in samples, different sample sizes and new surveyed providers.**

### **1-7 Additional Genworth Cost of Care Survey supporting table footnotes located at the end of the release**

#### Why Rates Are on the Rise

Rising rates are not a new phenomenon for caregivers or the long term care industry; however, COVID-19 has heightened the severity of already existing factors as well as introduced many new challenges.

In a supplemental study to delve into the cause of the cost increases, providers cited the following factors:

A shortage of workers in the face of increasing demand for care, compounded by competition from higher-paying, less-demanding jobs; anxiety about exposure to COVID-19 and parents needing to stay home with school-age children Increased spending for training on new safety procedures, testing, purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies Higher mandated minimum wages as well as higher recruiting and retention costs, including hazard pay of up to 50% more for workers caring for COVID-19 patients, and added benefits such as free childcare An increase in the cost of doing business, including regulatory, licensing and employee certification costs. Although many providers contacted by Genworth said they were trying to absorb these new costs, more than half (62%) predicted that they would eventually be forced to raise rates in the next six months with 43% saying those increases would top five percent or more.

#### The Importance of Long Term Care Planning

"The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need for individuals and families to plan ahead for how and where they want to receive care when they can no longer care for themselves and how they will pay for those costs, most of which are not covered by Medicare or health insurance," said Gordon Saunders, senior brand marketing manager at Genworth who manages the Cost of Care Survey.

"Our purpose as a company is to help people prepare for the challenges of growing older so that they can continue to live their lives on their own terms. We provide our annual Cost of Care Survey and award-winning interactive website to enable individuals and their families to understand the costs of care, which is the first step toward planning for these expenses down the road," he said.

In addition to the Cost of Care calculator, Genworth's website contains long term care planning tools, practical information on topics such as understanding Medicare and Medicaid, conversation starters, impairment simulations, options for financing long term care, and videos of real families sharing their long term care stories.

To access 17-year Cost of Care trend charts, [click here](#). To access tables ranking states from the highest

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to lowest cost in each care category, click here. About Genworth Cost of Care Survey

Genworth's annual Cost of Care Survey, one of the most comprehensive studies of its kind, contacted nearly 60,000 long term care providers nationwide to complete almost 15,000 surveys for nursing homes, assisted living facilities, adult day health facilities and home care providers during July and August, 2020. The survey includes 435 regions based on the Metropolitan Statistical Areas, defined by the Office of Management and Budget. CareScout®, part of the Genworth Financial family of companies, has conducted the survey since 2004. Located in Waltham, Massachusetts, CareScout has specialized in helping families find long term care providers nationwide since 1997.

About Genworth Financial

Genworth Financial, Inc. is a Fortune 500 insurance holding company committed to helping families achieve the dream of homeownership and address the financial challenges of aging through its leadership positions in mortgage insurance and long term care insurance. Headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, Genworth traces its roots back to 1871 and became a public company in 2004. For more information, visit [genworth.com](http://genworth.com).

From time to time, Genworth releases important information via postings on its corporate website. Accordingly, investors and other interested parties are encouraged to enroll to receive automatic email alerts and Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds regarding new postings. Enrollment information is found under the "Investors" section of [genworth.com](http://genworth.com). From time to time, Genworth's publicly traded subsidiary, Genworth Mortgage Insurance Australia Limited, separately releases financial and other information about their operations. This information can be found at <https://www.genworth.com.au/>.

Table Footnotes:

1 Referred to as Residential Care facilities in California 2 Based on 44 hours per week by 52 weeks 3 Based on 5 days per week by 52 weeks 4 Based on 12 months of care, private, one bedroom 5 Based on 365 days of care 6 Based on 2019 and 2020 Annual Percentage Change 7 Ranking based on the highest to lowest cost per state for each care category

View original content: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/increase-in-long-term-care-costs-in-south-dakota-mirror-national-trends-covid-19-pressures-future-costs-301178696.html>

SOURCE Genworth Financial, Inc.

## 50 years in prison for man convicted of shooting at deputy

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City man has been sentenced to 50 years in prison for shooting at a Pennington County sheriff's deputy in an exchange of gunfire in 2017.

More than 30 law enforcement officers packed a courtroom at the Pennington County Courthouse Tuesday when Cruz DeLeon was sentenced to the maximum term.

DeLeon earlier pleaded guilty to attempted murder and committing a felony while armed with a gun.

Deputy Jakob Whittle was at a Box Elder home in July 2017 to serve a warrant when he approached DeLeon who was 21 at the time and was sitting in a car. Prosecutors say DeLeon refused Whittle's commands to get out of the vehicle and then pointed a gun at him.

Whittle stepped back and fired twice, hitting DeLeon once in the arm. DeLeon also fired two rounds but did not hit Whittle.

"That day will forever be burned into my memory," Whittle said during his victim impact statement. Cruz DeLeon "decided to take my life so he could live his" outside of jail.

Whittle said the situation was dangerous because there were children at the home who could have been hurt, the Rapid City Journal reported.

"Thank God (DeLeon) is not a good shot and I am," he said, explaining that he wasn't trying to kill DeLeon but disarm him by aiming at his arm.

The attorney general ruled Whittle's use of force was justified since DeLeon had a deadly weapon.

## China testing blunders stemmed from secret deals with firms

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By DAKE KANG Associated Press

WUHAN, China (AP) — In the early days in Wuhan, the first city first struck by the virus, getting a COVID test was so difficult that residents compared it to winning the lottery.

Throughout the Chinese city in January, thousands of people waited in hours-long lines for hospitals, sometimes next to corpses lying in hallways. But most couldn't get the test they needed to be admitted as patients. And for the few who did, the tests were often faulty, resulting in false negatives.

The widespread test shortages and problems at a time when the virus could have been slowed were caused largely by secrecy and cronyism at China's top disease control agency, an Associated Press investigation has found.

The flawed testing system prevented scientists and officials from seeing how fast the virus was spreading — another way China fumbled its early response to the virus. Earlier AP reporting showed how top Chinese leaders delayed warning the public and withheld information from the World Health Organization, supplying the most comprehensive picture yet of China's initial missteps. Taken together, these mistakes in January facilitated the virus' spread through Wuhan and across the world undetected, in a pandemic that has now sickened more than 64 million people and killed almost 1.5 million.

China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention gave test kit designs and distribution rights exclusively to three then-obscure Shanghai companies with which officials had personal ties, the reporting found. The deals took place within a culture of backdoor connections that quietly flourished in an underfunded public health system, according to the investigation, which was based on interviews with more than 40 doctors, CDC employees, health experts, and industry insiders, as well as hundreds of internal documents, contracts, messages and emails obtained by the AP.

The Shanghai companies — GeneoDx Biotech, Huirui Biotechnology, and BioGerm Medical Technology -- paid the China CDC for the information and the distribution rights, according to two sources with knowledge of the transaction who asked to remain anonymous to avoid retribution. The price: One million RMB (\$146,600) each, the sources said. It's unclear whether the money went to specific individuals.

In the meantime, the CDC and its parent agency, the National Health Commission, tried to prevent other scientists and organizations from testing for the virus with their own homemade kits. In a departure from past practice for at least two epidemics, the NHC told Wuhan hospitals to send virus samples — from which tests can be developed — only to labs under its authority. It also made testing requirements to confirm coronavirus cases much more complicated, and endorsed only test kits made by the Shanghai companies.

These measures contributed to not a single new case being reported by Chinese authorities between Jan. 5 and 17, even though retrospective infection data shows that hundreds were infected. The apparent lull in cases meant officials were slow to take early actions such as warning the public, barring large gatherings and curbing travel. One study estimates that intervention two weeks earlier could have reduced the number of cases by 86 percent, although it's uncertain whether earlier action could have halted the spread of the virus worldwide.

When tests from the three companies arrived, many didn't work properly, turning out inconclusive results or false negatives. And technicians were hesitant to use test kits that would later prove more accurate from more established companies, because the CDC did not endorse them.

With few and faulty kits, only one in 19 infected people in Wuhan was tested and found positive as of Jan. 31, according to an estimate by Imperial College London. Others without tests or with false negatives were sent back home, where they could spread the virus.

Days after he first started coughing on Jan. 23rd, Peng Yi, a 39-year-old schoolteacher, waited in an eight-hour line at a Wuhan hospital. A CT scan showed signs of viral infection in both his lungs, but he couldn't get the test he needed to be hospitalized.

When Peng finally got a test on Jan. 30, it turned out negative. But his fever wouldn't drop, and his family begged officials for another test.

His second test, on Feb. 4, turned out positive. It was too late. Weeks later, Peng passed away.

"There were very, very few tests, basically none...if you couldn't prove you were positive, you couldn't

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get admitted to a hospital," his mother, Zhong Hanneng, said in a tearful interview in October. "The doctor said there was nothing that could be done."

China was hardly the only country to grapple with testing, which varied widely from nation to nation. Germany, for example, developed a test that became the World Health Organization gold standard days after the Chinese government released genetic sequences on Jan. 12. But in the U.S., the CDC declined to use the WHO design and insisted on developing its own kits, which turned out to be faulty and led to even longer delays than in China.

Other countries also had the benefit of learning from China's experience. But China was grappling with a new pathogen, and it wasn't yet clear how bad the pandemic would be or how many tests would be needed.

"It was very early," said Jane Duckett, a professor at the University of Glasgow examining the Chinese government's response to the coronavirus. She said the government was "just trying to figure it out."

Still, the hiccups and delays in China were especially consequential because it was the first country to detect the virus.

"Because you have only three companies providing testing kits, it kept the capacity of testing very limited," said Yanzhong Huang, a senior fellow for global health at the Council on Foreign Relations. "It was a major problem that led to the rapid increase in cases and deaths."

China's foreign ministry and China's top medical agency, the National Health Commission, did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

"We did a brilliant job, we worked so hard," said Gao Fu, the head of China CDC, in a videoconference in July. "Unluckily, unfortunately, this virus we are facing, it's so special."

None of the first three diagnostics companies tapped to make test kits for the biggest pandemic in a century were well-known in the industry. For one engineer from a Wuhan-based diagnostics firm, the Shanghai competitors popped out of nowhere "like bamboo shoots" – all the more so because his company had the factories and expertise to produce testing kits in the city where the virus was first detected.

"We were surprised, it was very strange," the engineer said, declining to be named to speak on a sensitive topic. "We hadn't heard about it at all, and then suddenly there's test kits from certain companies you have to use, and you can't use ones from anyone else?"

BioGerm was officially founded just over three years ago in a conference room, where the CEO mulled how to survive in a small and crowded market for test kits. GeneoDx had fewer than 100 employees, according to Tianyancha, a Chinese corporate records database – compared to competitors that employ hundreds or even thousands of staff.

But what the companies lacked in resources or experience, they made up for in connections.

Company posts, along with hundreds of internal emails and documents obtained by The Associated Press, show extensive ties between the three companies and top China CDC researchers in Beijing and Shanghai. Chinese regulators barred AP attempts to obtain credit reports on the companies, saying they were classified as "confidential enterprises" during the outbreak.

Despite China's efforts over the years to reform public health and push for open bidding in a competitive marketplace, medical companies still cultivate personal relationships with officials to secure deals, according to seven executives from different competitors. Under President Xi Jinping, China has cracked down on corruption, but industry insiders say a lack of firm boundaries between public and private in China's health system can create opportunities for graft.

It's unclear whether the agreements between the China CDC and the three test kit companies violated Chinese law.

They raise questions around potential violations of bribery laws, along with rules against abuse of authority, self-dealing and conflicts of interest, said James Zimmerman, a Beijing-based corporate attorney and former chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China. Even amid the uncertainty of the pandemic, "there is no excuse for the flow of cash from these companies to the CDC," he said.

Chinese bribery laws also state that any financial transaction has to be recorded and documented clearly.

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The AP was unable to ascertain whether the agreements between the CDC and the Shanghai companies were documented, but a CDC employee with access to some of the agency's finances said there was no record of them.

Despite the questions around bribery, other experts caution that the state may have designated the three companies to make test kits under special laws on the procurement of emergency goods during major natural disasters. The Chinese government is pushing to cultivate domestic companies focused on emergency response technologies, including test kits, to protect its national interest.

"Things will be different in the middle of a crisis," said Lesli Ligorner, a Beijing-based attorney specializing in anti-corruption law. "Anything affecting the national interest can be deemed to be of utmost importance for special regulations... I wouldn't be so quick to rush to judgement."

China CDC guidelines state that the agency is responsible for maintaining a reserve of testing chemicals to screen for rare pathogens, but do not specify how to procure them. An AP search of CDC procurement bids did not turn up any records, even though some other emergency procurements were publicly documented.

The China CDC has about a sixth the staff of its separate American equivalent, and they often earn far lower wages than in the private sector. So many employees from the China CDC have departed for private sector jobs over the past decade, draining its labs of talent.

Among those who left was BioGerm's founder, Zhao Baihui, the former chief technician of the Shanghai CDC's microbiology lab. Emails and financial records obtained by the AP show that Zhao first started BioGerm's predecessor through an intermediary in 2012, while she was still at the Shanghai CDC. In the next five years, she sold thousands of dollars' worth of test kits to her own workplace through the intermediary even as she herself was at times in charge of purchasing, internal emails, records and contracts obtained by the AP show.

After quitting the CDC in 2017, Zhao spearheaded lucrative contracts with government officials – such as one worth 400,000 RMB (\$60,000) with Shanghai customs officials where her husband worked, and another worth 55,500 RMB (\$8,400) with CDC officials in Shanghai's Pudong district, the emails and contracts show. Zhao declined to speak when reached by phone, and did not respond to an emailed request for comment.

Another of the three companies, GeneoDx, enjoyed special access because it is a subsidiary of the state-run firm SinoPharm, which is managed directly by China's cabinet. Before the outbreak, GeneoDx largely imported kits and acquired foreign technology to expand its business rather than develop its own products, according to company posts and a China CDC employee familiar with its operations.

In October 2019, GeneoDx co-organized an internal CDC training conference on emerging respiratory diseases in Shanghai. Tan Wenjie, the CDC official who ran the training, was later put in charge of developing test kits, according to an internal document the AP obtained. In November, the company won a contract to sell 900,000 RMB (\$137,000) worth of test kits to Tan's institute.

GeneoDx did not respond to requests for comment or interviews. The National Health Commission did not respond to a request for a comment or an interview with Tan.

Also in attendance at the invitation-only event was BioGerm, as well as other companies that used the conference to promote their products, blurring the line between the government and the private sector. China CDC staff were invited to join a BioGerm group on WeChat, a Chinese messaging application, which CEO Zhao later used to sell coronavirus test kits, according to a CDC employee and a screenshot seen by the AP.

The last company, Huirui, is a longtime partner with Tan, the CDC official in charge of test kits. Its founder, Li Hui, coauthored a paper with Tan on coronavirus tests in 2012 and "jointly developed" a test kit for the MERS outbreak in 2015 with Tan's institute.

In an interview, CEO Li said the CDC routinely contracted with his company to make emergency testing chemicals. He said Tan's lab at the China CDC had contacted him on Jan. 4 or 5 to make testing chemicals for the coronavirus based on CDC designs. He denied any personal relationship with Tan or any payments to the CDC.

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"We've been working with the CDC to respond to emerging new diseases for about ten years, not just for a day or two, it's normal," Li said.

Their connections situated the three little-known companies in prime position in January, when a then-unknown pathogen was about to sweep the country and the world and change their fortunes.

The first step in making test kits is to get samples of the virus and decode its genetic sequence. This leads to test designs, essentially a recipe for the tests.

In the past, such as with H7N9 in 2013, the China CDC sent test designs to laboratories across the country just days after identifying the pathogen. It also shipped along the chemical compounds needed – in effect the ingredients – for hospitals and CDC branches to mix their own test kits as soon as possible.

At first it looked like the China CDC was using the same playbook this time. The CDC had found the genetic map, or genome, of the virus by Jan. 3. By the next day, under CDC official Tan, the Emergency Technology Center at its Institute for Viral Disease Control had come up with test designs.

But this time, the government held back information about the genome and test designs. Instead, the China CDC finalized "technology transfer" agreements to give the test designs to the three Shanghai companies, according to four people familiar with the matter. The selection process was kept secret.

The CDC did not have the authority to altogether prevent other scientists with competing agencies and companies from getting samples through back door routes and coming up with their own test recipes. But it tried to stymie such efforts and stop testing from being carried out.

For example, Dr. Shi Zhengli, a renowned coronavirus expert at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, obtained patient samples on her own, found the genome from them and came up with a test by Jan. 3, according to a slideshow presentation she gave in March. But her lab fell under the jurisdiction of a competing agency to the CDC, the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology. The CDC barred her from obtaining more samples and testing for cases.

"There's no open collaboration mechanism," said a public health expert who often works with the China CDC, declining to be named for fear of damaging relations there. "Everyone wants their turf."

Provincial CDC staff were told that instead of testing and reporting cases themselves, they had to send patient samples to designated labs in Beijing for full sequencing, a complicated and time-consuming procedure. Otherwise, the cases would not be counted in the national coronavirus tally.

"It was absolutely abnormal," said a CDC lab technician, who declined to be identified out of fear of retribution. "They were totally trying to make it harder for us to report any confirmed cases."

In secret evaluations of test kits on Jan. 10, the CDC also approved only those from the three Shanghai companies, according to internal plans and instructions obtained by the AP.

The Chinese government finally made its genomes public on Jan. 12, a day after another team published one without authorization. That opened the door for more companies to make their own test kits. However, China's top health agency, the National Health Commission, still urged medical staff to buy the test kits from Huirui, BioGerm and GeneoDx that the CDC had validated, according to internal instructions obtained by the AP.

The evaluations and selections of test kits were conducted with the knowledge and direction of China's top health official, Ma Xiaowei, according to a CDC post on Jan. 13.

On Jan. 14, Ma held an internal teleconference to order secret preparations for a pandemic, as AP earlier reported. After that, China's health authorities relaxed the requirements to confirm cases and started distributing the CDC-sanctioned test kits. BioGerm began taking orders from provincial CDC staff across the country on WeChat, a Chinese social media application.

"We've been entrusted by the national CDC to issue kits for you," Zhao said, according to a screenshot of one of the group chats obtained by The Associated Press.

"Quick! Give me, give me," said one staffer in the Sichuan CDC.

But the kits from GeneoDx kept showing inconclusive results, the CDC technician told the AP, and eventually her superior ordered her to toss them aside. The kits from Huirui were also unreliable, and the only



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ones that worked consistently were from BioGerm, she said.

"The quality was not good. Bad, poor quality," said a public health expert familiar with the matter, who declined to be identified to avoid damaging ties with the China CDC. "But because they had a collaboration with the (CDC) Institute for Viral Disease Control and... they paid a million yuan, they were on the list."

BioGerm's test kits were more dependable in part because they used chemicals from Invitrogen, a subsidiary of U.S. biotech giant Thermo Fisher. Huirui and GeneoDx used their own mixes instead, with more unreliable results.

Much larger competitors, including Chinese genetics giant BGI and Tianlong, developed their own kits in January, which were later found to be more effective than those made by the Shanghai companies. But those test kits weren't endorsed by the China CDC.

"No test protocol, no primers and probes, then of course there's no way to confirm cases," said another China CDC employee who declined to be identified for fear of retribution. "And then, all of a sudden, you tell all the CDCs: purchase from these companies, now go for it. Then – chaos and shortage. Valuable time wasted."

Chen Weijun, BGI's chief infectious disease scientist, also said the early products recommended by the China CDC had "quality problems." When asked why the China CDC selected the three Shanghai companies, Chen demurred.

"You better ask the CDC this question," said Chen, who collaborated with CDC researchers to publish the first paper on the virus. "But actually, everyone understands what's going on, why this happened, right? You can reach your own conclusions, right?"

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A day after the first test kits finally arrived in Wuhan on Jan. 16, the case count began to rise again. But test kits were scarce. Some other cities in the same province didn't get kits until Jan. 22, and even those were often flawed.

Samples from 213 patients in February using GeneoDx tests suggested a false-negative rate of over 30 percent, a study by Shenzhen doctors found. A March clinical trial report showed that among the test kits certified at the time, GeneoDx was the worst performer, followed by BioGerm. In general, the rate of false negatives for COVID tests varies widely, from 2% to more than 37%.

Philippe Klein, a French doctor who treated foreign patients in Wuhan during the outbreak, estimated that about 20 percent of the tests turned up false negatives. Still, he said, delays in producing accurate tests kits are natural at the start of an outbreak.

"The Chinese did a lot in a short time," Klein said. "It was a new test, so in the beginning, there was a lack of tests, of course."

On Jan. 22, the National Health Commission quietly removed the names of the three Shanghai companies from its coronavirus guide as preferred distributors. After the Chinese government ordered Wuhan shut down on Jan. 23, the three companies faced massive logistical hurdles to getting their tests in.

On Jan. 26, officials set up a fast-track "green channel" for companies to get their test kits approved. The National Medical Products Administration approved test kits from seven companies, including BioGerm and GeneoDx but not Huirui. Li, Huirui's CEO, said it was because his company was inexperienced in obtaining regulatory approvals for commercial tests.

But it took time for other companies to ramp up production and ship tests in, leaving Wuhan struggling to meet demand into early February and depriving many residents of treatment.

Peng died on Feb. 19. His mother now passes the days gazing blankly out her window, sobbing and lighting candles in his memory.

"In the eyes of officials, he was like a grain of sand or a blade of grass. But in our home, he was our sky, he was our everything," Zhong said. "Without him, we can never be happy again."

The same pandemic that killed Peng brought the Shanghai test kit companies and related scientists fame and fortune.

In September, Tan, the China CDC researcher in charge of developing test kits, was appointed the inau-

gural director of a new National Novel Coronavirus Center. In a nationally televised ceremony, GeneoDx's parent firm won plaudits from President Xi for "outstanding" contributions in the struggle against COVID-19, including developing a test kit.

Huirui has expanded and is now selling commercial test kits for the first time — not in China, but in Latin America, CEO Li said. And the pandemic has allowed BioGerm to "stand out," reaching its business targets much faster than planned, said top marketing executive Guo Xiaoling at a trade show in late August at a five-star hotel.

"Because of the epidemic, 2020 has been a really special year," Guo said. "The country and the economy suffered major damage. But for our nucleic acid diagnostics industry, this year has actually been a bonus."

Contact AP's global investigative team at [Investigative@ap.org](mailto:Investigative@ap.org)

## **EXPLAINER: How could US drawdown in Iraq aid IS, Iran?**

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq (AP) — In a quest to root out Islamic State group hideouts over the summer, Iraqi forces on the ground cleared nearly 90 villages across a notoriously unruly northern province. But the much-touted operation still relied heavily on U.S. intelligence, coalition flights and planning assistance.

While the planned U.S. troop drawdown in Iraq from 3,000 to 2,500 by mid-January is unlikely to have an immediate impact on the campaign against IS remnants, there are concerns that further withdrawals could set the stage for another resurgence of the extremist group.

Although Iraqi forces have become more independent in combat missions, the country is reeling from ongoing anti-government protests, rampant corruption and political divisions that reach into the security apparatus. All of that means foreign support is still crucial.

There are already signs of a possible Islamic State comeback as the group exploits security gaps widened by a year of protests and the pandemic. It's a worrying trend for Iraq's security forces, whose collapse in 2014 allowed IS to seize a third of the country and sent American troops rushing back less than three years after they had withdrawn.

So how could the American drawdown help IS and Iran? Here are three key ways.

### **1. SECURITY COULD WORSEN**

American forces returned at the invitation of the government after IS seized much of northern and western Iraq, including its second largest city, Mosul. A U.S.-led coalition provided crucial air support as Iraqi forces, including Iran-backed militias, regrouped and drove IS out in a costly three-year campaign.

Pressure has been escalating for a U.S. troop withdrawal since the defeat of IS in 2017, particularly among Iraqi factions loyal to Iran, which have stepped up attacks on U.S. interests. Both the U.S. and Iraq are in favor of a scheduled withdrawal but have been unable to agree on specifics.

Senior Iraqi military officials in Baghdad say the withdrawal of 500 American troops will have little, if any, impact. But local officials in areas liberated from IS, where reconstruction has lagged and services have yet to be fully restored, fear a security vacuum if the Americans leave.

"It's true we have a stronger army, stronger security forces," said Najm Jibouri, the governor and former head of provincial operations in Nineveh, which includes Mosul. "But we still need training, support with intelligence gathering."

"If the U.S. leaves us now, it will be a big mistake," he said.

Senior coalition and Iraqi officials say Iraqi forces will continue to rely on U.S. air cover, reconnaissance and intelligence gathering for the foreseeable future.

Iraq's security apparatus is still plagued by many of the same vulnerabilities that enabled the rise of IS, including poor coordination among different branches and rampant corruption. Tensions have mounted as Iran-backed Shiite militias — now incorporated into the armed forces — have accumulated more and more power.

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"These vulnerabilities remain and risk weakening the Iraqi armed forces when they are most needed," Benedicte Aboul-Nasr, project officer at U.K.-based Transparency International — Defence and Security, wrote in a recent analysis.

There's more. The Iraqi military has also reduced its troop presence in some areas because of the coronavirus pandemic, and the U.S. has withdrawn from some northern bases after rocket attacks blamed on Iran-backed groups.

## 2. MILITANTS COULD BECOME MORE RESILIENT

IS lost the last territory under its control in 2017 but quickly returned to its insurgent roots, carrying out hit-and-run attacks on Iraqi forces across a wide stretch of territory in the north.

A longstanding political and territorial dispute between the central government and the semi-autonomous Kurdish authority in the north has hindered coordination against IS. The U.S. has long served as a mediator, a role that would be difficult to fill if it were to completely withdraw.

IS has also struck further south, including an attack on a convoy in Hilla, south of Baghdad, on Nov. 10 that killed and wounded more than a dozen Iraqi soldiers and paramilitary forces. Last week, it claimed a rocket attack that temporarily halted oil production in a small refinery north of the capital.

An Iraqi military commander, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief media, said the country sees five to six attacks every week. "These attacks have not been to hold and control land, but to attack and go back into hiding," he said.

A previous incarnation of IS staged similar attacks in the years before the group exploited the chaos in neighboring Syria to seize large parts of both countries.

## 3. IRAN'S INFLUENCE COULD DEEPEN

A wider American withdrawal would also enable Iran to deepen its influence in Iraq, where it already has strong political, economic and security ties forged since the U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003.

The U.S. strike that killed Iran's top general, Qassim Soleimani, and senior Iraqi militia leaders near Baghdad's airport in January sparked outrage and led Iraq's parliament to pass a non-binding resolution days later calling for the expulsion of all foreign troops.

The government later retreated from such threats, but Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi still faces pressure from Iran-aligned groups to eject U.S. forces.

The U.S. has waged a "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran since the Trump administration unilaterally withdrew from Tehran's nuclear agreement with world powers in 2018 and restored crippling sanctions.

President-elect Joe Biden has said he hopes to return to the agreement while also addressing Iran's military involvement in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East. A significant drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq — while popular at home — could reduce his leverage.

Associated Press writer Qassim Abdul-Zahra in Baghdad contributed reporting.

## Trump's grievances feed menacing undertow after the election

By COLLEEN LONG and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The last throes of Donald Trump's presidency have turned ugly — even dangerous. Death threats are on the rise. Local and state election officials are being hounded into hiding. A Trump campaign lawyer is declaring publicly that a federal official who defended the integrity of the election should be "drawn and quartered" or simply shot.

Neutral public servants, Democrats and a growing number of Republicans who won't do what Trump wants are being caught in a menacing postelection undertow stirred by Trump's grievances about the election he lost.

"Death threats, physical threats, intimidation — it's too much, it's not right," said Gabriel Sterling, a Re-

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publican elections official in Georgia who implored Trump to "stop inspiring people to commit potential acts of violence." Trump in response only pressed his groundless case that he lost unfairly, neither discouraging trouble nor explicitly calling for it.

The triggering of emotions has always been a Trump staple. His political movement was born in arenas that echoed with chants of "lock her up." His support has been animated over the past four years by his relentlessly mocking ways, his slams against the "enemy of the people," and his raw talent for belittling political foes with insulting nicknames like "Sleepy Joe" Biden. That's one of the nicer ones.

But in the final weeks of Trump's presidency, the tenor has taken on an even more toxic edge as state after state has affirmed Biden's victory, judge after judge has dismissed Trump's legal challenges and his cadre of loyalists has played to his frustrations. As Biden builds the foundation of his new administration, Trump is commanding attention for the agitations he is likely to carry forward when he is gone from office.

"I do not think this goes away on January 20," Eric Coomer, security director for Dominion Voting Systems, said from the secret location where he is hiding out from death threats. "I think it will continue for a long time."

Tough beans, Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani said of the state officials who are fearing for their safety.

"They're the ones who should have the courage to step up," Giuliani said Wednesday in Michigan. "You have got to get them to remember that their oath to the Constitution sometimes requires being criticized. Sometimes it even requires being threatened."

For Coomer, the trouble began around the time Trump campaign lawyers falsely claimed his company rigged the election.

Far-right chat rooms posted his photo, details about his family and address. "The first death threats followed almost immediately," he told The Associated Press. "For the first couple days it was your standard online Twitter threats, 'hang him, he's a traitor.'"

But then came targeted phone calls, text messages and a handwritten letter to his father, an Army veteran, from a presumed militia group saying, "How does it feel to have a traitor for a son?" Even now, weeks later and relocated to a secret locale, Coomer is getting messages from people saying they know what town he has fled to and vowing to find him.

"It's terrifying," he said. "I've worked in international elections in all sorts of post-conflict countries where election violence is real and people end up getting killed over it. And I feel that we're on the verge of that."

This week Joe diGenova, a Trump campaign lawyer, told a radio show that a federal election official who was fired for disputing Trump's claims of fraud "should be drawn and quartered. Taken out at dawn and shot." This, as election officials and voting-system contractors in Georgia, Arizona, Michigan and elsewhere have been subjected to sinister threats for doing their jobs.

"Threats like these trigger an avalanche of them," said Louis Clark, executive director and CEO of the Government Accountability Project, an organization to protect whistleblowers. Of diGenova, Clark said, "It's behavior befitting a mob attorney."

DiGenova later said he was joking. The fired official, Christopher Krebs, told The Washington Post, "My lawyers will do the talking, they'll do it in court."

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"This is unprecedented in America," Taylor said. "This is not who we are. This is not what an open society is supposed to look like."

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But such pressure has not silenced some Republicans in Georgia, with telling results.

Intruders have been found on the property of GOP Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, who has de-

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"There's a noose out there with his name on it," Sterling said of the contractor, in a broadside against the rhetoric and threats in the election's aftermath.

Election security expert Matt Blaze tweeted angrily about the threats.

"This is just sickening," he said. "Every conversation I have with election folks, we start with death threats we've gotten. There's no excuse for this no matter who the target is, but going after the on-the-ground technicians and other staff is a new low. Have you no shame?"

Said Sterling, the Republican Georgia election official: "Someone's going to get hurt. Someone's going to get shot. Someone's going to get killed. And it's not right."

Trump last week called Raffensperger an "enemy of the people," Sterling noted, adding, "That helped open the floodgates to this kind of crap." In addition to seeing people drive by and come onto his property, Raffensperger's wife has been getting obscene threats on her cellphone, Sterling said.

In Arizona, Democratic Secretary of State Katie Hobbs said she's faced threats of violence directed at her family and her office.

Trump spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany said the White House condemns any violence. "What I will say though, too, is that the president's lawyers (had) their private information put out," she said, blaming "leftist organizations."

"So we're seeing that happen to people on both sides of the argument and there's no place for that ever anywhere," she said. Indeed, GOP poll watchers said in affidavits in election litigation that they felt threatened and were jeered by Democrats.

A key difference, though, is that intimidation against Republican poll workers or officials by Trump's opponents did not come from the top. Biden has largely stayed out of the fray even as Trump systematically maligns the process, the election workers, the state officials who resist his pressure and some of the judges.

He's gone repeatedly after Dominion Voting Systems, falsely branding it a "radical left company" responsible for a "stolen" election — in contrast to the assurances of state and federal officials that the election was run fairly and remarkably smoothly in the midst of a pandemic, with none of the massive fraud alleged by the president.

Members of Trump's administration have affirmed the legitimacy of the election, though at least one, Krebs, got fired for it. Even Trump's trusted ally, Attorney General William Barr, told The AP he'd seen no widespread fraud.

For Coomer, Dominion's director of product strategy and security, "this election was incredibly smooth across the board."

But sometime around Eric Trump's post-election tweets about Coomer and a bizarre news conference where Trump lawyers Giuliani and Sidney Powell spun fabrications about Dominion and called him out by name, the real trouble started for him.

Dominion hired third-party security for him, and he was told not to go back to his house.

A few nights ago, he said, he was told in texts that people were watching him, and that he'd better run. Others had already said they'd rented a house in the town where he was hiding and would find him.

"It's a daily thing," he said, "and no, I have not had a decent night's sleep since all of this."

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Associated Press writers Kate Brumback in Atlanta, David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan, and Jacques Bileaud in Phoenix contributed to this report.

## **Biden facing growing pressure over secretary of defense pick**

By STEVE PEOPLES and ROBERT BURNS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden is facing escalating pressure from competing factions within his own party as he finalizes his choice for secretary of defense.

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Black leaders have encouraged the incoming president to select an African American to diversify what has so far been a largely white prospective Cabinet, while others are pushing him to appoint a woman to lead the Department of Defense for the first time.

At the same time, a growing collection of progressive groups is opposing the leading female contender, Michèle Flournoy, citing concerns about her record and private-sector associations.

A coalition of at least seven progressive groups warned Biden to avoid Flournoy in an open letter to Biden obtained Wednesday by The Associated Press that referenced her record of "ill-advised policy decisions" — particularly in relation to Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Afghanistan — and an "opaque history of private-sector activity."

"Ms. Flournoy's consistent support for military interventions has contributed to devastating crises around the world, including in Yemen," said Jehan Hakim, chairperson of the Yemeni Alliance Committee, which helped organize the letter.

Other contenders are emerging, including retired Army Gen. Lloyd Austin and Jeh Johnson, who served as the Pentagon's top lawyer and then as head of the Department of Homeland Security during President Barack Obama's second term. Both Austin and Johnson are Black.

The competing pressures are intensifying less than a month into Biden's urgent push to build an administration while trying to preserve the broad coalition that fueled his victory over President Donald Trump last month.

And facing massive governing challenges once he takes office on Jan. 20, Biden can perhaps least afford to lose the backing of the Democratic Party's fiery progressive base. Nearly 100 House Democrats belong to the Progressive Caucus, which may wield significant influence over Biden's policy agenda as Democrats cling to their narrowest House majority in a century.

Biden has already promised to enact a sweeping pandemic relief bill while overhauling health care, immigration and education systems and fighting for the most aggressive environmental protections in U.S. history.

Progressive groups have cheered a handful of Biden's early hires — particularly Heather Boushey and Jared Bernstein to his Council of Economic Advisers — but have been far from satisfied overall. Despite early disappointment, they have resisted the temptation to embrace an adversarial tone as they decide how to flex their muscles most effectively in the new political climate, especially with several major Cabinet positions and senior positions yet to be filled.

Justice Democrats spokesperson Waleed Shahid called Biden's early picks "a mixed bag," but noted that they have generally been more progressive than Obama's early picks after his 2008 election victory.

"The thing that was alarming to me was when Joe Biden said, 'We already have a significant number of progressives in our administration,'" Shahid said. "I talked to a lot of people, and they said, 'We have no idea what he's talking about.'"

Beyond the Defense Department, progressives are gearing up for the possibility of more aggressive fights on Commerce, Labor, Education, Interior and Justice, among other unfilled Cabinet posts. They have already signaled intense opposition to the likes of Rahm Emanuel, a former Obama White House chief being considered for transportation secretary, and Mike Morell, another Obama-era figure being eyed for CIA director.

Flournoy, meanwhile, had been seen as the leading candidate for defense secretary under a Democratic president since Hillary Clinton's failed 2016 campaign.

She stood out as deeply experienced, respected on Capitol Hill and well known on the international stage. But soon after Biden's victory, her stock seemed to slip as others, including Austin and Johnson, came into consideration.

A leading Black voice in Congress, South Carolina Rep. James Clyburn, has openly called for Biden to choose more Black men and women for Cabinet positions. The Pentagon job, which has never been held by a woman or a Black person, is one of the last remaining opportunities for Biden to demonstrate his commitment to diversity at the senior levels of his national security team.

Liberal critics have suggested Flournoy's views are more hawkish than the president-elect's, particu-

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larly on the Afghanistan War, and some have pointed to her position as a co-founder of consulting firm WestExec Advisors, which provides what it calls "unique geopolitical and policy expertise to help business leaders" and which has become a source of Biden selections for other national security positions. Another of WestExec's founders, Antony Blinken, is Biden's nominee for secretary of state, and Avril Haines, the nominee for director of national intelligence, is a former WestExec principal.

There was no reference to race or gender in Wednesday's letter opposing Flournoy. The signatories include the Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation; Justice Democrats, which is aligned with Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders; Demand Progress; and Just Foreign Policy, among others.

They were especially critical of reports that Flournoy had resisted calls to end the Saudi-led war in Yemen. Biden has promised to end U.S. support for the war.

The letter offers support for two potential Flournoy alternatives: Sens. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois and Kirsten Gillibrand of New York. Advisers for both camps declined to comment, though neither is believed to have emerged as a leading contender. Gillibrand, in particular, is thought to have little interest in the position.

"While we are by no means winning all of these fights, it is clear that a focus by progressives on personnel is making a difference that will likely pay dividends when it comes to policy determinations over years to come," said David Segal, who leads the progressive group Demand Progress.

He added, however, that "the national security space is more worrisome."

Shahid, of Justice Democrats, suggested that progressives would give Biden a relatively long leash before revolting, even if there are more disappointments to come as he builds out his administration.

The true nature of Biden's presidency won't be known until he takes office in January and begins to work with Congress to enact his agenda, Shahid said. Biden has promised both to fight for big, bold policy changes and to compromise with Republicans.

"In the same way Joe Biden said his campaign was a fight for the soul of America, the Cabinet is the beginning, not the end, of the fight for the soul of the Biden presidency," Shahid said. "If he chooses the path of deal-making with Mitch McConnell, those divides within the Democratic Party will become much more apparent."

## **Barr's special counsel move could tie up his successor**

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Outgoing Attorney General William Barr's decision to appoint a special counsel to investigate the handling of the Russia probe ensures his successor won't have an easy transition.

The move, which Barr detailed to The Associated Press on Tuesday, could lead to heated confirmation hearings for President-elect Joe Biden's nominee, who hasn't been announced. Senate Republicans will likely use that forum to extract a pledge from the pick to commit to an independent investigation.

The pressure on the new attorney general is unlikely to ease once they take office. With the special counsel continuing to work during the early days of the Biden administration, it may be tough for the Justice Department's new leadership to launch investigations of President Donald Trump and his associates without seeming to be swayed by political considerations.

Barr elevated U.S. Attorney John Durham to special counsel as Trump continues to propel his claims that the Russia investigation that shadowed his presidency was a "witch hunt." It's the latest example of efforts by Trump officials to use the final days of his administration to essentially box Biden in by enacting new rules, regulations and orders designed to cement the president's legacy.

But the maneuvering over the special counsel is especially significant because it saddles Democrats with an investigation that they've derided as tainted. Now there's little the new administration can do about it.

"From a political perspective, the move is so elegantly lethal that it would make Machiavelli green with envy," Jonathan Turley, a professor of public interest law at George Washington University, wrote in an op-ed for USA Today.

A special counsel can only be dismissed for cause. And as was the case during Robert Mueller's Russia

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investigation, such probes can sometimes stray from their origins.

The Biden transition did not respond to a request for comment on the special counsel appointment.

But Barr's decision could influence whom the president-elect puts forth as a nominee for attorney general. One leading candidate, Sally Yates, was already viewed skeptically by some Trump-aligned Republicans for her role in the early days of the Russia investigation. Her nomination could face even greater challenges because she's connected to some of the work that Durham is examining.

As deputy attorney general, Yates signed off on the first two applications to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to monitor communications of ex-Trump campaign adviser Carter Page, a process that has been among the focuses of the Durham investigation.

A Justice Department inspector general report found significant flaws and omissions in the four applications to the court, though it also found no evidence that Yates or any other senior Justice Department officials were aware of the problems.

Some Democrats have privately expressed concerns – likely to deepen with Durham's appointment as a special counsel – that nominating Yates would lead to a messy confirmation process that focuses on the Russia investigation, instead of focusing on reforms and shifting priorities at the Justice Department, people familiar with the matter have said. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

Others potentially in the mix for the role include Lisa Monaco, a former homeland security adviser and senior Justice Department official in the Obama administration, and outgoing Alabama Sen. Doug Jones, who famously prosecuted Ku Klux Klan members who bombed a Birmingham church in the 1960s.

The question for Biden, however, is how to balance top Cabinet picks as he attempts to fulfill his pledge for racial, ethnic and gender diversity. Many of Biden's leading nominees so far have been white, which could work against Yates, Monaco and Jones.

Some Black Democrats are attempting to elevate former Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick, who is Black and led the Justice Department's civil rights division under President Bill Clinton, in discussions about potential attorneys general.

Whoever emerges as the nominee will be pressed to demonstrate independence from the new White House after Biden campaigned on a pledge to depoliticize the Justice Department.

That could be tough, however, if the future attorney general faces calls for new probes into the Trump administration. Some investigations into Trump have been frozen because of the immunity he enjoys as president. Others swirling around members of his family and associates have been simmering for years.

On Tuesday, an unsealed court filing revealed an investigation into a potential plot to solicit political donations in exchange for the president using his pardon power.

Barr, for his part, insisted that he was trying to keep politics out of the Durham probe, explaining that is why he delayed announcing the special counsel appointment until a month after the election.

"With the election approaching, I decided the best thing to do would be to appoint them under the same regulation that covered Bob Muller, to provide Durham and his team some assurance that they'd be able to complete their work regardless of the outcome of the election," Barr said in an interview with the AP on Tuesday.

"I wanted to have the team, both Durham and his team understand that they be able to finish their work," Barr said.

Durham has already been a huge disappointment for Trump and his allies, and prompted a dispute with Barr over why things weren't moving faster and why the investigation did not yield major prosecutions in the weeks before the election. The investigation wasn't expected to result in many more criminal charges, and there has only been one so far — a former FBI lawyer who pleaded guilty to a single charge.

But the investigation is worth more politically than practically.

A nearly 500-page inspector general report chronicled in great detail the errors and omissions FBI agents made in a series of applications to surveil Page. Declassified documents released by congressional Republicans have raised additional questions while not undercutting the overarching legitimacy of the Russia probe. And the facts of the one criminal case Durham has brought so far, against an FBI lawyer



who admitted altering an email, were already mostly laid out in the watchdog report.

There's also been a degree of turmoil within Durham's ranks as one of the team's leaders, Nora Dannehy, resigned months ago, a significant departure given the active role she had played.

Miller reported from Wilmington, Delaware. Associated Press writers Eric Tucker and Colleen Long in Washington and Bill Barrow in Atlanta contributed to this report.

## **In video, Trump recycles unsubstantiated voter fraud claims**

By AAMER MADHANI and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Increasingly detached from reality, President Donald Trump stood before a White House lectern and delivered a 46-minute diatribe against the election results that produced a win for Democrat Joe Biden, unspooling one misstatement after another to back his baseless claim that he really won.

Trump called his address, released Wednesday only on social media and delivered in front of no audience, perhaps "the most important speech" of his presidency. But it was largely a recycling of the same litany of misinformation and unsubstantiated allegations of voter fraud that he has been making for the past month.

Trump, who spoke from the Diplomatic Reception Room, kept up his futile pushback against the election even as state after state certifies its results and as Biden presses ahead with shaping his Cabinet in advance of his inauguration on Jan. 20.

Trump's remarks raised questions about how far he may be willing to go in his campaign to overturn Biden's win, including whether he might press Republicans in Congress to block certification of the vote, a move that's been floated by the president's allies.

Biden received a record 81 million votes compared to 74 million for Trump. The Democrat also won 306 electoral votes compared to 232 for Trump. The Electoral College split matches Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton four years ago, which he described then as a "landslide."

Trump dug further into his contention of a "rigged election" even though members of his own administration, including Attorney General William Barr, say that no proof of widespread voter fraud has been uncovered. Courts in multiple battleground states have thrown out a barrage of lawsuits filed on behalf of the president.

"This is not just about honoring the votes of 74 million Americans who voted for me," Trump said. "It's about ensuring that Americans can have faith in this election. And in all future elections."

In fact, his baseless claims are having the opposite effect — undermining public faith in the integrity of U.S. elections.

About an hour after it was posted, Trump's video had been viewed hundreds of thousands of times on Facebook and shared by more than 60,000 Facebook users. Both Facebook and Twitter flagged the president's posting as problematic, with Twitter noting that Trump's claims about election fraud are disputed.

Julian Zelizer, a professor of political history at Princeton University, said the nation has seen close elections before — 1800, 1876 and, most recently, 2000. But this year's election does not fit in that category.

"This is just a random baseless attack on the entire election," Zelizer said. "Trump has no turning point. I often say there are parallels or precedents, but there aren't in this case. He keeps bending norms."

Trump said the election results should be "overturned immediately" in several battleground states and suggested the Supreme Court should intervene in his favor, saying, "Hopefully, they will do what's right for our country because our country can't live with this kind of an election."

But chances are remote that the Supreme Court would get involved. No appeals claiming fraud have been filed at the high court. Pennsylvania Republicans want the justices to prevent certification of Biden's win in the state, but their appeal alleges Pennsylvania's vote-by-mail law is unconstitutional, not fraud. The state Supreme Court already has dismissed the lawsuit.

Many of Trump's claims have been debunked repeatedly in recent weeks.

His overarching claim: "This election is about great voter fraud, fraud that has never been seen like this

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before.”

In fact, Christopher Krebs, the director of the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, voiced confidence in the integrity of the election ahead of the November vote. And afterward, he knocked down allegations that the count was tainted by fraud.

Krebs was fired by Trump weeks ago.

Barr, in an interview with The Associated Press on Tuesday, said the Justice Department has uncovered no evidence of widespread voter fraud that could change the election outcome.

Trump, in his speech, delved into a series of baseless claims about voting in battleground states including Pennsylvania, Michigan and beyond.

He alleged that in Pennsylvania, “large amounts of mail-in and absentee ballots were processed illegally and in secret in Philadelphia and Allegheny County without our observers present.”

In fact, no one tried to ban poll watchers representing each side in the election. And Democrats did not try to stop Republican representatives from being able to observe the process.

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

Trump zeroed in on the high use of mail-in ballots this year, citing the “Democrat Party’s relentless push to print and mail out tens of millions of ballots sent to unknown recipients with virtually no safeguards of any kind.”

In fact, mail-in ballots have a series of built-in safeguards to verify voter identity and prevent fraud. Some states mail ballots to every registered voter, while other states mail ballots only to voters who request them. But the ballots are subject to that state’s verification requirements in either case.

Use of mail-in ballots soared as Democrats encouraged their use to reduce in-person voting during a pandemic.

In the video, Trump also bitterly alluded to legal troubles he could face once he leaves office. New York’s attorney general, Letitia James, is conducting a civil investigation into whether the Trump Organization improperly inflated the value of assets for loan or insurance purposes and deflated the value for tax purposes.

Trump fumed that “these same people that failed to get me in Washington have sent every piece of information to New York so that they can try to get me there.”

James responded in statement: “Unlike the president and the unfounded accusations he hurled today, we are guided by the facts and the law, and the politics stop at the door. Period.”

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Madhani reported from Chicago. Associated Press writers Mark Sherman in Washington, Amanda Seitz in Chicago, Ali Swenson in Seattle and Michael Sisak in New York contributed to this report.

## **Trump’s grievances feed menacing undertow after the election**

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Election security expert Matt Blaze tweeted angrily about the threats.

"This is just sickening," he said. "Every conversation I have with election folks, we start with death threats we've gotten. There's no excuse for this no matter who the target is, but going after the on-the-ground technicians and other staff is a new low. Have you no shame?"

Said Sterling, the Republican Georgia election official: "Someone's going to get hurt. Someone's going to get shot. Someone's going to get killed. And it's not right."

Trump last week called Raffensperger an "enemy of the people," Sterling noted, adding, "That helped open the floodgates to this kind of crap." In addition to seeing people drive by and come onto his property, Raffensperger's wife has been getting obscene threats on her cellphone, Sterling said.

In Arizona, Democratic Secretary of State Katie Hobbs said she's faced threats of violence directed at her family and her office.

Trump spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany said the White House condemns any violence. "What I will say though, too, is that the president's lawyers (had) their private information put out," she said, blaming "leftist organizations."

"So we're seeing that happen to people on both sides of the argument and there's no place for that ever anywhere," she said. Indeed, GOP poll watchers said in affidavits in election litigation that they felt threatened and were jeered by Democrats.

A key difference, though, is that intimidation against Republican poll workers or officials by Trump's opponents did not come from the top. Biden has largely stayed out of the fray even as Trump systematically maligns the process, the election workers, the state officials who resist his pressure and some of the judges.

He's gone repeatedly after Dominion Voting Systems, falsely branding it a "radical left company" responsible for a "stolen" election — in contrast to the assurances of state and federal officials that the election was run fairly and remarkably smoothly in the midst of a pandemic, with none of the massive fraud alleged by the president.

Members of Trump's administration have affirmed the legitimacy of the election, though at least one, Krebs, got fired for it. Even Trump's trusted ally, Attorney General William Barr, told the AP he'd seen no widespread fraud.

For Coomer, Dominion's director of product strategy and security, "this election was incredibly smooth across the board."

But sometime around Eric Trump's post-election tweets about Coomer and a bizarre news conference where Trump lawyers Giuliani and Sidney Powell spun fabrications about Dominion and called him out by name, the real trouble started for him.

Dominion hired third-party security for him, and he was told not to go back to his house.

A few nights ago, he said, he was told in texts that people were watching him, and that he'd better run. Others had already said they'd rented a house in the town where he was hiding and would find him.

"It's a daily thing," he said, "and no, I have not had a decent night's sleep since all of this."

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Associated Press writers Kate Brumback in Atlanta, David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan, and Jacques Billeaud in Phoenix contributed to this report.

## China: Moon probe preparing to return rock samples to Earth

BEIJING (AP) — China said Thursday its latest lunar probe has finished taking samples of the moon's surface and sealed them within the spacecraft for return to Earth, the first time such a mission has been attempted by any country in more than 40 years.

The Chang'e 5, the third Chinese probe to land on the moon, is the latest in a series of increasingly ambitious missions for Beijing's space program, which also has a probe en route to Mars carrying a robot rover.

The Chang'e 5 touched down Tuesday on the Sea of Storms on the moon's near side, on a mission to return lunar rocks to Earth for the first time since 1976.

The probe "has completed sampling on the moon, and the samples have been sealed within the space-

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craft," the China National Space Administration said in a statement.

Plans call for the upper stage of the probe known as the ascender to be launched back into lunar orbit to transfer the samples to a capsule for return to Earth. The timing of its return was not immediately clear and the lander can last up to one moon day, or 14 Earth days, before plummeting temperatures would make it inoperable.

Chang'e is equipped to both scoop samples from the surface and drill 2 meters (more than 6 feet) to retrieve materials that could provide clues into the history of the moon, Earth other planets and space features.

While retrieving samples is its main task, the lander is also equipped to extensively photograph the area surrounding its landing site, map conditions below the surface with ground penetrating radar and analyze the lunar soil for minerals and water content.

Chang'e 5's return module is supposed to touch down around the middle of December on the grasslands of Inner Mongolia, where China's crewed Shenzhou spacecraft have made their returns since China first put a man in space in 2003, becoming only the third country to do so after Russia and the United States.

Chang'e 5 has revived talk of China one day sending a crewed mission to the moon and possibly building a scientific base there, although no timeline has been proposed for such projects.

China also launched its first temporary orbiting laboratory in 2011 and a second in 2016. Plans call for a permanent space station after 2022, possibly to be serviced by a reusable space plane.

While China is boosting cooperation with the European Space Agency and others, interactions with NASA are severely limited by concerns over the secretive nature and close military links of the Chinese program. While

## Steelers overcome rust, short-handed Ravens to move to 11-0

By WILL GRAVES AP Sports Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Mike Tomlin isn't one for excuses. Even as COVID-19 wreaked havoc with his team's schedule, pushing their matchup with Baltimore from Thanksgiving night to middle of the afternoon in the middle of the week in the middle of a pandemic, the longtime Pittsburgh Steelers coach refused to reach for one.

So while the Steelers stayed perfect with a disjointed 19-14 win over the undermanned Ravens in the first NFL game on a Wednesday in eight years, their play was anything but. And Tomlin knows it.

"To be bluntly honest, I'm really disappointed in our performance tonight," he said after Pittsburgh improved to 11-0. "We did enough to win tonight, that's all."

Calling it "junior varsity"-level play, Tomlin seethed in the aftermath, a testament to both how high the bar is set and just how far the Steelers came from clearing it.

Asked about an offense that managed just one touchdown in four trips to the red zone — missed opportunities that allowed the Ravens (6-5) to hang around until the final minutes — Tomlin didn't offer analysis as much as rage.

"Us sucking," he said, declining to get into specifics.

There really was no need to.

The Steelers turned it over twice, once on a fourth-down heave into the end zone by Ben Roethlisberger, the other a fumbled punt by Ray-Ray McCloud that set up a 1-yard touchdown plunge by Gus Edwards. They let Baltimore backup quarterback Robert Griffin III briefly turn back the clock to his 2012 Rookie of the Year season and looked at times like a team in the middle of ho-hum midweek practice — which, to be fair, Wednesdays typically are — rather than a showdown with its longtime rivals.

"Obviously we won, but it sure doesn't feel like it," said Roethlisberger, whose 1-yard strike to JuJu Smith-Schuster early in the fourth quarter gave the Steelers a 12-point lead they flirted with squandering. "Just not good football. It starts with me. It's a mental game, it's been a challenging and draining week but at the end of the day we need to step on the field and play good football when it's time."

Pittsburgh didn't for long stretches, though some of the credit goes to a spirited effort from the Ravens. Running onto Heinz Field missing more than a dozen players on the reserve/COVID-19 list, including reign-

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ing NFL MVP Lamar Jackson and running backs Mark Ingram and J.K. Dobbins, Baltimore didn't exactly roll over.

While Griffin completed just 7 of 12 passes for 33 yards and a first-quarter Pick-6 by Joe Haden that gave the Steelers an early lead, Griffin ran for a game-high 68 yards before leaving in the fourth quarter with a left hamstring injury. Trace McSorley, one of 11 players promoted from the practice squad, came on and connected with Marquise Brown for a 70-yard touchdown with 2:58 to go. But the Steelers were able to drain the clock behind a third-down grab by James Washington, eliminating the Ravens from repeating as AFC North champions.

"The way the game went, obviously we wanted to win," Griffin said. "We felt like we had a chance to come in here and win, shock the world and do something special. I put it on myself. I feel like if I didn't pull my hamstring in the second quarter we would have won. It was really emotional trying to fight through that. I feel like I let my guys down."

A COVID-19 outbreak in Baltimore forced the NFL to push the game back three times: first from Thanksgiving to Sunday, then from Sunday to Tuesday, and eventually from Tuesday to Wednesday. The teams kicked off in the afternoon to not interfere with NBC's annual Christmas special at Rockefeller Center.

Good idea. The fewer eyeballs on this one the better.

While NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell called it "a great game," the product on the field suggested otherwise.

The Ravens couldn't pass. Pittsburgh's receivers couldn't catch. And a contest that looked like a mismatch — the Steelers went off as 10 1/2-point favorites, a rarity in a rivalry that is one of the NFL's best — was instead a festival of blah.

## PILING ON

The Ravens were trailing 12-7 late in the second quarter when a 39-yard sprint by Griffin helped move the ball to the Pittsburgh 1. A handoff to Gus Edwards on second down went nowhere. Out of timeouts, the Ravens could have spiked the ball to set up a field goal to draw within two at the break. Instead, Baltimore nearly converted, but Luke Willson — a reserve who had played all of 21 offensive snaps on the season coming in — couldn't bring in Griffin's pass in the end zone.

Ravens coach John Harbaugh thought Pittsburgh's defense took its time — perhaps too much of it — getting up after stopping Edwards, allowing the clock to tick away.

"We knew we had enough time to run the two plays we wanted to run," He said. "I just feel like if you're laying on the ground like that you're either injured or it's delay of game."

## INJURIES

Ravens: Cornerback Jimmy Smith left with a groin injury in the first half.

Steelers: Outside linebacker Bud Dupree exited in the fourth with what appeared to be a knee injury. Dupree has eight sacks this season and is set to become a free agent next spring. Pittsburgh lost starting inside linebacker Devin Bush to a torn ACL earlier this year.

## UP NEXT

Ravens: Host Dallas on Tuesday in a game originally scheduled for this Thursday.

Steelers: Welcome the Washington Football Team next Monday afternoon. The NFL pushed back the game a day after Pittsburgh's game against Baltimore was rescheduled.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](https://twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## NASA: Mystery object is 54-year-old rocket, not asteroid

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A mysterious object temporarily orbiting Earth is a 54-year-old rocket, not an asteroid after all, astronomers confirmed Wednesday.

Observations by a telescope in Hawaii clinched its identity, according to NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

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The object was classified as an asteroid after its discovery in September. But NASA's top asteroid expert, Paul Chodas, quickly suspected it was the Centaur upper rocket stage from Surveyor 2, a failed 1966 moon-landing mission. Size estimates had put it in the range of the old Centaur, which was about 32 feet (10 meters) long and 10 feet (3 meters) in diameter.

Chodas was proven right after a team led by the University of Arizona's Vishnu Reddy used an infrared telescope in Hawaii to observe not only the mystery object, but — just on Tuesday — a Centaur from 1971 still orbiting Earth. The data from the images matched.

"Today's news was super gratifying!," Chodas said via email. "It was teamwork that wrapped up this puzzle."

The object formally known as 2020 SO entered a wide, lopsided orbit around Earth last month and, on Tuesday, made its closest approach at just over 31,000 miles (50,476 kilometers). It will depart the neighborhood in March, shooting back into its own orbit around the sun. Its next return: 2036.

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## **Nurses wanted: Swamped hospitals scramble for pandemic help**

By GRANT SCHULTE and AMY FORLITI Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — U.S. hospitals slammed with COVID-19 patients are trying to lure nurses and doctors out of retirement, recruiting students and new graduates who have yet to earn their licenses and offering eye-popping salaries in a desperate bid to ease staffing shortages.

With the virus surging from coast to coast, the number of patients in the hospital with the virus has more than doubled over the past month to a record high of nearly 100,000, pushing medical centers and health care workers to the breaking point. Nurses are increasingly burned out and getting sick on the job, and the stress on the nation's medical system prompted a dire warning from the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"The reality is December and January and February are going to be rough times. I actually believe they are going to be the most difficult time in the public health history of this nation," Dr. Robert Redfield said.

Governors in hard-hit states like Wisconsin and Nebraska are making it easier for retired nurses to come back, including by waiving licensing requirements and fees, though it can be a tough sell for older nurses, who would be in more danger than many of their colleagues if they contracted the virus.

Some are taking jobs that don't involve working directly with patients to free up front-line nurses, McMullan said.

Iowa is allowing temporary, emergency licenses for new nurses who have met the state's educational requirements but haven't yet taken the state licensing exam. Some Minnesota hospitals are offering winter internships to nursing students to boost their staffs. The internships are typically offered in the summer but were canceled this year because of COVID-19.

Methodist Hospital in Minneapolis will place 25 interns for one to two months to work with COVID-19 patients, though certain tasks will remain off-limits, such as inserting IVs or urinary catheters, said Tina Kvalheim, a nurse who runs the program.

"They'll be fully supported in their roles so that our patients receive the best possible, safe care," Kvalheim said.

Landon Brown, 21, of Des Moines, Iowa, a senior nursing student at Minnesota State University, Mankato, recently accepted an internship at the Mayo Clinic Health System in Mankato. He was assigned to the pediatric unit's medical-surgical area but said he might come across patients with the coronavirus.

Brown's resolve to help patients as a nurse was reaffirmed after his 90-year-old grandfather contracted the virus and died over the weekend.

"The staff that he had were great, and they really took a lot of pressure off of my folks and my family," he said. "I think that if I can be that for another family, that would be great."

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The University of Iowa's College of Nursing is also trying to get graduates into the workforce quickly. It worked to fast-track students' transcripts to the Iowa Board of Nursing so they could get licensed sooner upon graduating, said Anita Nicholson, associate dean for undergraduate programs.

Nicholson said the college also scheduled senior internships earlier than normal and created a program that allows students to gain hospital experience under a nurse's supervision. Those students aren't caring for coronavirus patients, but their work frees up nurses to do so, Nicholson said.

"The sooner we can get our graduates out and into the workforce, the better," she said.

Wausau, Wisconsin-based Aspirus Health Care is offering signing bonuses of up to \$15,000 for nurses with a year of experience.

Hospitals also are turning to nurses who travel from state to state. But that's expensive, because hospitals around the country are competing for them, driving salaries as high as \$6,200 per week, according to postings for travel nursing jobs.

April Hansen, executive vice president at San Diego-based Aya Healthcare, said there are now 31,000 openings for travel nurses, more than twice the number being sought when the pandemic surged in the spring.

"It is crazy," Hansen said. "It doesn't matter if you are rural or urban, if you are an Indian health facility or an academic medical center or anything in between. ... All facilities are experiencing increased demand right now."

Nurses who work in intensive care and on medical-surgical floors are the most in demand. Employers also are willing to pay extra for nurses who can show up on short notice and work 48 or 60 hours per week instead of the standard 36.

Laura Cutolo, a 32-year-old emergency room and ICU nurse from Gilbert, Arizona, began travel nursing when the pandemic began, landing in New York during the deadliest stretch of the U.S. outbreak last spring. She is now working in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and soon will return to New York.

She said she hopes her work will be an example to her children, now 2 and 5, when the crisis passes into history and they read about it someday.

"If they ask me, 'Where were you?' I can be proud of where I was and what I did," Cutolo said.

Doctors are in demand, too.

"I don't even practice anymore, and I've gotten lots of emails asking me to travel across the country to work in ERs," said Dr. Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association.

The outbreak in the U.S. is blamed for more than 270,000 deaths and 13.8 million confirmed infections. New cases are running at over 160,000 a day on average, and deaths are up to more than 1,500 a day, a level seen back in May, during the crisis in the New York City area. Several states reported huge numbers of new cases Wednesday, including a combined 40,000 in California, Illinois and Florida alone.

States are seeing record-breaking surges in deaths, including Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky in the middle of the country. Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear said the virus is "spreading like wildfire."

A COVID-19 vaccine is expected to become available in a few weeks, and health care workers are likely to be given priority for the first shots. That could make it easier for hospitals to recruit help.

To make room for the sickest, hard-hit institutions are sending home some COVID-19 patients who otherwise would have been kept in the hospital. They are also canceling elective surgeries or sending adult non-COVID-19 patients to pediatric hospitals.

A hospital system in Idaho is sending some COVID-19 patients home with iPads, supplemental oxygen, blood pressure cuffs and oxygen monitors so they can finish recovering in their own beds. The computer tablets enable nurses to check in with them, and the oxygen monitors automatically send back vital information.

Across the U.S., hospitals are converting cafeterias, waiting rooms, even a parking garage to patient treatment areas. Some states are opening field hospitals.

But that does nothing to ease the staffing shortage, especially in rural areas where officials say many people aren't taking basic precautions against the virus.



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Dr. Eli Perencevich, an epidemiology and internal medicine professor at the University of Iowa, said health care workers are paying the price for other people's refusal to wear masks.

"It's sending everyone to war, really," he said. "We've decided as a society that we're going to take all the people in our health care system and pummel them because we have some insane idea about what freedom really is."

Forliti reported from Minneapolis. Associated Press writers Tammy Webber in Fenton, Michigan; Heather Hollingsworth in Mission, Kansas; Brian Witte in Annapolis, Maryland; John O'Connor in Springfield, Illinois; and Ken Kusmer in Indianapolis contributed to this story.

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

## Britain OKs Pfizer vaccine and will begin shots within days

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain became the first country in the world to authorize a rigorously tested COVID-19 vaccine Wednesday and could be dispensing shots within days — a historic step toward eventually ending the outbreak that has killed more than 1.4 million people around the globe.

In giving the go-ahead for emergency use of the vaccine developed by American drugmaker Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech, Britain vaulted past the United States by at least a week. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is not scheduled to consider the vaccine until Dec. 10.

"This is a day to remember, frankly, in a year to forget," British Health Secretary Matt Hancock said.

The announcement sets the stage for the biggest vaccination campaign in British history and came just ahead of what experts are warning will be a long, dark winter, with the coronavirus surging to epic levels in recent weeks in the U.S. and Europe.

Officials cautioned that several tough months still lie ahead even in Britain, given the monumental task of inoculating large swaths of the population. Because of the limited initial supply, the first shots will be reserved for those most in danger, namely nursing home residents, the elderly and health care workers.

Britain's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency recommended the vaccine after clinical trials involving tens of thousands of volunteers showed it was 95% effective and turned up no serious side effects. The vaccine is still considered experimental while final testing is done.

"This is an unprecedented piece of science," given that the vaccine was authorized less than a year after the virus was discovered, said David Harper, senior consulting fellow in global health at the Chatham House think tank.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson declared that the "searchlights of science" had picked out the "invisible enemy," which has been blamed for close to 60,000 deaths in Britain. He said that in developing the vaccine, scientists had performed "biological jujitsu" by turning the virus on itself.

Other countries aren't far behind: Regulators in not only the U.S. but the European Union and Canada also are vetting the Pfizer vaccine along with a shot made by Moderna. British and Canadian regulators are also considering a vaccine made by AstraZeneca and Oxford University.

Amid growing concern that Americans will greet vaccines with skepticism, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said Britain's decision "should give Americans additional confidence in the quality of such a vaccine." The virus has killed more than 270,000 in the U.S. On Wednesday, the head of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention signed off on an expert panel's recommendation that health care workers and nursing home residents be the first to be vaccinated when shots become available.

Hancock said Britain will begin receiving the first shipment of 800,000 doses from Belgium within days, and people will start getting the shots as soon as it arrives. Two doses three weeks apart are required. The country expects to receive millions of doses by the end of this year, Hancock said, though the exact number will depend on how fast it can be manufactured and checked for quality.

BioNTech, which owns the vaccine, said it has so far signed deals to supply 570 million doses worldwide

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in 2021, with options to deliver 600 million more. It hopes to supply at least 1.3 billion in 2021.

That is only a fraction of what will be needed as public health officials try to vaccinate much of the world's population. Experts have said several vaccines will be required to quickly end the pandemic that has infected more than 64 million people globally.

In Britain, the first shots will go to nursing home residents and those who care for them, followed by everyone over 80 and health care workers. From there, the program will be expanded as the supply increases, with the vaccine offered roughly on the basis of age groups, starting with the oldest people.

Amid the burst of optimism, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla warned governments against any immediate move to relax restrictions and reopen their economies.

"The time that we will have to go back to normality is not far away," he said. "But it is definitely not now."

Despite the speed with which they approved the vaccine, and the intense political pressure surrounding the worldwide race to solve the crisis, British regulators insisted "no corners have been cut" during the review process.

The MHRA made its recommendation after a so-called rolling review that allowed it to assess information about the vaccine as it came in, starting back in October.

"The safety of the public will always come first," said Dr. June Raine, the agency's chief executive. "And I emphasize again that this recommendation has only been given by the MHRA following the most rigorous scientific assessment of every piece of data."

Getting that message to the public will be critical if any vaccination program is to be successful. Some people are worried about getting any vaccine, never mind a new one.

"But I think once they understand and see everyone else having it without hesitation, I think you'll find that people will go and have it," Jacqueline Roubians, a 76-year-old retired nurse, said at Brixton Market in London. "People are dying of COVID, so you make that decision: Do you want to die or do you want the vaccine?"

In addition to the huge logistical challenges of distributing the vaccines, the Pfizer-BioNTech one must be stored and shipped at ultra-cold temperatures of around minus 70 degrees Celsius (minus 94 degrees Fahrenheit).

Pfizer said it has developed shipping containers that use dry ice and GPS-enabled sensors will allow the company to track each shipment and ensure it stays cold.

Every country has different rules for determining when an experimental vaccine is safe and effective enough to use. China and Russia have offered different vaccines to their citizens before they had gone through large-scale, late-stage testing.

Hours after Britain's announcement, Russian President Vladimir Putin, not to be outdone, ordered the start of a large-scale COVID-19 vaccination campaign by late next week, with doctors and teachers to be first in line to receive the Sputnik V shot, whose name was inspired by the 1957 satellite that was one of Moscow's proudest technical achievements.

The Russian vaccine won regulatory approval in August but has yet to complete advanced studies of its effectiveness and safety. Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said more than 100,000 people in Russia have been given the shots.

Still to be determined is whether the Pfizer-BioNTech shots prevent people from spreading the virus when they have no symptoms. Another question is how long protection lasts.

The vaccine also has been tested in only a small number of children, none younger than 12, and there's no information on its effects in pregnant women.

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Neergaard reported from Alexandria, Virginia. Associated Press writers Frank Jordans in Berlin and Lawless, Pan Pylas and Jo Kearney in London contributed

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

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## **Biden, top Democrats swing behind bipartisan virus aid bill**

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden swung behind a bipartisan COVID-19 relief effort Wednesday and his top Capitol Hill allies cut their demands for a \$2 trillion-plus measure by more than half in hopes of breaking a monthslong logjam and delivering much-sought aid as the tempestuous congressional session speeds to a close.

Biden said the developing aid package "wouldn't be the answer, but it would be the immediate help for a lot of things." He wants a relief bill to pass Congress now, with more aid to come next year.

Biden's remarks followed an announcement by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Democrat leader Chuck Schumer of New York in support of an almost \$1 trillion approach as the "basis" for discussions. The announcement appeared aimed at budging Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., who so far has been unwilling to abandon a \$550 billion Senate GOP plan that has failed twice this fall.

The Democrats embraced a \$908 billion approach from moderate Sens. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and Susan Collins, R-Maine, among others. It would establish a \$300 per week jobless benefit, send \$160 billion to help state and local governments, boost schools and universities, revive popular "paycheck protection" subsidies for businesses, and bail out transit systems and airlines.

"In the spirit of compromise we believe the bipartisan framework introduced by Senators yesterday should be used as the basis for immediate bipartisan, bicameral negotiations," Pelosi and Schumer said. They said they would try to build upon the approach, which has support in the House from a bipartisan "problem solvers" coalition.

The statement was a significant concession by Pelosi and Schumer, who played hardball this fall during failed preelection discussions with the administration on a costlier bill. They wanted a more generous unemployment benefit and far more for state and local government. Their embrace of the \$908 billion measure was a retreat from a secret \$1.3 trillion offer the two Democrats gave McConnell just on Monday.

It's another sign of urgency for additional COVID aid and economic stimulus as the economy struggles to recover from being slammed by the novel coronavirus. While the jobless rate isn't as high as was feared, the restaurant and airline industries are desperate for aid, as are other businesses, state and local officials, transit systems and the Postal Service, among others.

The new plan includes a liability shield for businesses and other organizations that have reopened their doors during the pandemic. It's the first time Pelosi and Schumer have shown a willingness to consider the idea, a top priority of McConnell, though there's been no discussion on the details, which are sure to be tricky.

McConnell had dismissed the bipartisan offer on Tuesday, instead aiming to rally Republicans around the \$550 billion GOP proposal. But McConnell himself endorsed a \$1 trillion-or so plan this summer, only to encounter resistance from conservatives that prompted him to retrench. He has acknowledged that another infusion of aid to states and local governments, a key Pelosi demand, probably will pass eventually.

McConnell wouldn't respond when asked about the Democratic statement. His top deputy, Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., said GOP leaders might agree to merging the bipartisan proposal with McConnell's bill.

"I think there's still time, although it's short, to put a bill together," Thune said.

Any relief package would be attached to a \$1.4 trillion year-end spending bill required to avert a government shutdown next weekend. Talks on that measure are proceeding but if lawmakers should stumble, a temporary spending bill would be needed as a bridge into next year.

The bipartisan group of lawmakers proposed a split-the-difference solution to the protracted impasse, hoping to speed overdue help to a hurting nation before Congress adjourns for the holidays. It was a sign that some lawmakers reluctant to adjourn for the year without approving some pandemic aid.

Their proposal includes \$228 billion to extend and upgrade “paycheck protection” subsidies for businesses for a second round of relief to hard-hit businesses such as restaurants. It would revive a special jobless benefit, but at a reduced level of \$300 per week rather than the \$600 benefit enacted in March. State and local governments would receive \$160 billion.

There’s also \$45 billion for transportation, including aid to transit systems and Amtrak; \$82 billion to reopen schools and universities; and money for vaccines and health care providers, as well as for food stamps, rental assistance and the Postal Service.

The new effort follows a split-decision election that delivered the White House to Democrats and gave Republicans down-ballot success.

Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin struggled over a relief bill for weeks before the November election, discussing legislation of up to \$2 trillion. Senate GOP conservatives opposed their efforts and Pelosi refused to yield on key points.

## **Congress swats back Trump’s veto threat of defense bill**

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is closing out his relationship with Congress with one more power jab, threatening to veto a hugely popular defense bill unless lawmakers clamp down on big tech companies he claims were biased against him during the election.

Trump is demanding that Congress repeal so-called Section 230, a part of the communications code that shields Twitter, Facebook and others from content liability. His complaint is a battle cry of conservatives — and some Democrats — who say the social media giants treat them unfairly.

But interjecting the complicated tech issue threatens to upend the massive defense bill, which Congress takes pride in having passed unflinchingly for half a century. Trump almost sabotaged the package with an earlier veto threat over plans to stop allowing military bases to be named for Confederate leaders.

It’s another example of the president’s brazen willingness to undercut Congress, even his allies, to impose his will in his final months in office.

On Wednesday, a bipartisan coalition of leaders on the House and Senate Armed Services committees said enough is enough.

“We have toiled through almost 2,200 provisions to reach compromise on important issues affecting our national security and our military,” Reps. Adam Smith of Washington and Mac Thornberry of Texas, the chairman and top Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, said in a joint statement.

In a rare joint rebuke, they said that “for 59 straight years,” the National Defense Authorization Act has passed because lawmakers and presidents agreed to set aside their own preferences “and put the needs of our military personnel and America’s security first.”

“The time has come to do that again,” they said.

The powerful Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma, said he personally spoke with Trump, explaining that the defense bill is not the place for the big tech fight.

“I agree with his sentiments — we ought to do away with 230,” Inhofe told reporters Wednesday on Capitol Hill after having spoken with Trump. “But you can’t do it in this bill.”

While cooler heads are expected to prevail, Trump’s veto threat in the final months of his administration is his latest attempt to bend the norms. From taking money from military bases to build the border wall with Mexico to installing his nominees in administrative position without Senate confirmation, Trump has chipped away at the legislative branch like few other executives in recent times.

“The president seems intent on filling each of his remaining days in office with petulance, grievance, self-interest,” said Democratic leader Chuck Schumer during a speech in the Senate.

White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said at briefing Wednesday that the president is serious about vetoing the defense bill unless Congress repeals Section 230.

“He is going to put the pressure on Congress to step up on this,” she said.

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"Twitter has become a publisher, choosing to fact-check content," she said. "And when you're a publisher, there are certain responsibilities with that and you should not be immune from liability."

Past presidents have certainly threatened to veto defense bills, which set annual policy with troop levels, equipment priorities, pay raises and other matters.

It's typically a widely bipartisan measure, one of the few areas of common ground. Over the summer, the Senate approved its version, 86-14, while the House similarly passed its effort, with opposition coming mostly from the liberal and conservative flanks.

On Wednesday, the two chambers announced bicameral agreement ahead of final votes.

When Trump first threatened a veto to keep the Confederate base names, White House chief of staff Mark Meadows floated a compromise that would instead insert a new provision repealing Section 230.

Trump's allies on Capitol Hill, including House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, have railed against the social media companies, especially during the heated November election.

In a pair of tweets late Tuesday, Trump said the country cannot allow Section 230 to stand. "If the very dangerous & unfair Section 230 is not completely terminated as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), I will be forced to unequivocally VETO the Bill when sent to the very beautiful Resolute desk," he tweeted.

Some Democrats, including Schumer, agree the Section 230 provision could be revisited, even as they disagree with Trump's tactic of attaching it to the defense bill.

Inhofe said Wednesday that Section 230 "has nothing to do with the military" and should be kept out of the Defense bill.

One Republican, Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi, the chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, said he was tasked with showing the White House an alternative approach that could provide some clarifying language around the tech companies.

Wicker told reporters he wasn't sure if his proposal would be accepted. But he also said he doesn't believe Trump will veto the must-pass defense bill.

"I don't think that will occur," he said.

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Associated Press writer Deb Riechmann contributed to this article.

## Fed reports slowing US economic activity due to virus surge

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Federal Reserve survey of business conditions around the country found that economic activity in several regions slowed in November as coronavirus cases surged.

The Fed report released Wednesday said that overall, the Fed's 12 regional banks characterized the economic expansion as "modest or moderate." But it noted that three Midwest regions and the Philadelphia region reported activity had begun to cool in early November as COVID-19 cases surged.

Four districts reported "little or no growth" during November, while five others reported that activity remained well below pre-pandemic levels in some sectors.

Kathy Bostjancic, chief U.S. financial economist for Oxford Economics, said the latest Fed survey showed the recovery continues to be uneven across many sectors of the economy.

The report said that among the sectors doing better were manufacturing, housing construction and existing home sales. But banks said there had been deterioration in their loans, particularly those to retailers and the leisure and hospitality industries.

The report said that most districts found that local businesses' optimism has "waned," with many citing concerns about the wave of virus cases and renewed lockdown restrictions. The report also said there was concern about the looming expiration dates for government support programs, including extended unemployment benefits and the moratoriums that have been in place on evictions and foreclosures.

The report, known as the beige book, will be used by Fed officials when they hold their last meeting of the year on Dec. 15-16 to discuss possible changes to the central bank's interest-rate policies.

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In response to the deep recession brought on when the virus struck with force in March, the Fed slashed its key interest rate to a record low and began buying billions of dollars in Treasury bonds and mortgage-backed securities to put downward pressure on long-term rates.

The Fed is expected to maintain its ultra-low interest rates over the next three years. But it may also decide as soon as this month's meeting to expand the support it is providing through its bond purchases, especially if Congress is unable to pass further economic relief legislation in the lame-duck session.

At a congressional hearing Wednesday, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said that increased support from Congress is needed as a bridge between the current economic troubles and the time next year when a virus vaccine is expected to be widely available.

The new Fed survey said that while employment increased during November, the pace of job gains was slow at best.

Many of the Fed's business "contacts noted that the sharp rise in Covid-19 cases had precipitated more school and plant closings and renewed fears of infection, which have further aggravated labor supply problems," the report said. "Providing for childcare and virtual schooling needs was widely cited as a significant and growing issue for the workforce, especially for women."

The Fed survey said that the staffing issues had prompted some companies to extend greater accommodations for flexible work schedules.

The Philadelphia district reported that sharply rising COVID-19 cases in November had "heightened concerns over anticipated layoffs, foreclosures, evictions and bankruptcies."

The Fed's St. Louis regional bank, meanwhile, reported that conditions had deteriorated toward the end of November, while the Minneapolis region reported a softening in consumer demand due to rising virus infections.

The Dallas district said that energy activity remained depressed and business prospects were "highly uncertain due to looming concerns surrounding political uncertainty and the unknown course of the pandemic."

## House committee chair presses Census on delays to count

By ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

Internal U.S. Census Bureau documents indicate that it will be unable to meet a year-end deadline for handing in data used for allocating congressional seats as it deals with irregularities found in the numbers-crunching phase of the count, according to a Wednesday letter from the chair of the U.S. House committee that oversees the bureau.

The letter from Democratic U.S. Rep. Carolyn Maloney of New York, chair of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, to U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross accuses Republican President Donald Trump's administration of "a dangerous pattern of obstruction" in withholding documents about state population totals required to reallocate seats in the House.

Maloney wrote that the Commerce Department — which oversees the Census Bureau — missed a Nov. 24 deadline to give the documents to the committee. However, the committee has received internal bureau documents from an unnamed source that indicate that addressing the data anomalies "impacts overall end date by 20 days" and anticipates that the population count will not be complete until between Jan. 26 and Feb. 6, the letter said.

Those dates are significant because they would come after the inauguration of President-Elect Joe Biden on Jan. 20, likely leaving crucial decisions about the apportionment of congressional districts in the hands of a Democratic administration.

Maloney threatened a subpoena if "a full and unredacted set" of the requested documents are not given to the committee by Dec. 9. The Commerce Department did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

"By blocking the production of the full set of documents requested by the Committee last month, the Trump Administration is preventing Congress from verifying the scope of these anomalies, their impact

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on the accuracy of the Census, and the time professionals at the Census Bureau need to fix them," the letter said. "Your failure to cooperate with the Committee's investigation appears to be part of a dangerous pattern of obstruction with the Census."

Missing the Dec. 31 deadline for turning in the apportionment numbers would be a blow to Trump's unprecedented efforts to exclude people in the country illegally from being counted in the numbers used to determine how many congressional seats each state gets and how \$1.5 trillion in federal spending is distributed.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, the Census Bureau switched its deadline for wrapping up the once-a-decade head count of every U.S. resident from the end of July to the end of October. It also extended the deadline for turning in apportionment numbers from the end of December to the end of next April, giving bureau statisticians five months to crunch the numbers.

However, in late July and early August, officials at the Commerce Department announced field operations would finish at the end of September and the apportionment numbers would stick to a congressionally-mandated deadline of Dec. 31.

The Census Bureau already was facing a shortened schedule of two and a half months for processing the data collected during the 2020 census — about half the time originally planned. The bureau has not officially said what the anomalies were or publicly stated if there would be a new deadline for the apportionment numbers.

In a Nov. 19 statement, Census Bureau Director Steve Dillingham said processing anomalies have occurred in past censuses and he was directing the bureau to use all resources available to resolve the issues as quickly as possible.

One of the internal documents cited by Maloney is a Nov. 19 presentation for senior bureau officials that describes 13 anomalies that affect more than 900,000 census records. They include a problem related to duplicate non-response follow-up records in every state, a data error from the count of group quarters that affects more than 16,000 records, and a coding error affecting about 46,000 records in nine states.

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments this week in a case about Trump's move to exclude people living in the country illegally from the population count.

Federal courts in California, Maryland and New York have ruled that Trump's plan violates the Constitution, which provides that "representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State." A fourth court, in Washington, D.C., held this past week that a similar challenge to the administration plan was premature, an argument that also has been made to the high court

## **Austin mayor went to Mexico while urging people to stay home**

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Austin Mayor Steve Adler went on vacation to Mexico with family in November as he urged people to stay home amid worsening coronavirus caseloads in Texas, at one point recording a video during the trip in which he told residents back home that now was "not the time to relax."

The trip revealed Wednesday by the Austin American-Statesman is the latest example of a public official who has pleaded for vigilance in the face of rising cases and hospitalizations across the U.S. seeming to not heed their own guidance.

Hours after the story was published, Adler issued a statement apologizing for the trip.

"While I violated no orders or guidelines, I regret this travel," Adler said. "I wouldn't travel now, didn't over Thanksgiving and won't over Christmas. But my fear is that this travel, even having happened during a safer period, could be used by some as justification for risky behavior. In hindsight, it set a bad example, for which I apologize."

Last month, California Gov. Gavin Newsom came under scrutiny for attending a birthday party at a posh restaurant in the wine country near San Francisco as he urged people to stay within their own households. Denver Mayor Michael Hancock also flew to Mississippi to visit family for Thanksgiving despite sending messages on social media and to city staff asking them to avoid traveling for the holiday.

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"There was no recommendation for people not to travel during that period of time," Adler told the newspaper. "Someone could look at me and say, 'He traveled.' But what they could not say is that I traveled at a time when I was telling other people not to travel."

Texas surpassed 9,000 hospitalized virus patients this week for the first time since a deadly summer outbreak. More than 15,000 new cases were reported Tuesday, smashing a single-day record, though state health officials attributed some of that spike to a backlog of results from the long Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

The trip to Cabo San Lucas came after Adler hosted an outdoor wedding and reception with 20 guests for his daughter at a hotel near downtown, according to the newspaper. Adler said the attendees had to take a rapid COVID-19 test and maintain social distancing. He acknowledged, however, that although masks were distributed at the wedding, all guests were "probably not" wearing them all the time.

Adler typically does a nightly livestream on Facebook, and while in Mexico on Nov. 9, he recorded a video warning about the rising number of cases. He did not say in the video that he was on vacation.

"We need to stay home if you can," Adler said in the video. "This is not the time to relax. We are going to be looking really closely. ... We may have to close things down if we are not careful."

After Adler returned from the trip, local health officials elevated the city's COVID-19 guidance ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday to Stage 4, which discourages nonessential travel.

## **Biden facing growing pressure over secretary of defense pick**

By STEVE PEOPLES and ROBERT BURNS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden is facing escalating pressure from competing factions within his own party as he finalizes his choice for secretary of defense.

Black leaders have encouraged the incoming president to select an African American to diversify what has so far been a largely white prospective Cabinet, while others are pushing him to appoint a woman to lead the Department of Defense for the first time.

At the same time, a growing collection of progressive groups is opposing the leading female contender, Michèle Flournoy, citing concerns about her record and private-sector associations.

A coalition of at least seven progressive groups warned Biden to avoid Flournoy in an open letter to Biden obtained Wednesday by The Associated Press that referenced her record of "ill-advised policy decisions" — particularly in relation to Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Afghanistan — and an "opaque history of private-sector activity."

"Ms. Flournoy's consistent support for military interventions has contributed to devastating crises around the world, including in Yemen," said Jehan Hakim, chairperson of the Yemeni Alliance Committee, which helped organize the letter.

Other contenders are emerging, including retired Army Gen. Lloyd Austin and Jeh Johnson, who served as the Pentagon's top lawyer and then as head of the Department of Homeland Security during President Barack Obama's second term. Both Austin and Johnson are Black.

The competing pressures are intensifying less than a month into Biden's urgent push to build an administration while trying to preserve the broad coalition that fueled his victory over President Donald Trump last month.

And facing massive governing challenges once he takes office on Jan. 20, Biden can perhaps least afford to lose the backing of the Democratic Party's fiery progressive base. Nearly 100 House Democrats belong to the Progressive Caucus, which may wield significant influence over Biden's policy agenda as Democrats cling to their narrowest House majority in a century.

Biden has already promised to enact a sweeping pandemic relief bill while overhauling health care, immigration and education systems and fighting for the most aggressive environmental protections in U.S. history.

Progressive groups have cheered a handful of Biden's early hires — particularly Heather Boushey and Jared Bernstein to his Council of Economic Advisers — but have been far from satisfied overall. Despite



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early disappointment, they have resisted the temptation to embrace an adversarial tone as they decide how to flex their muscles most effectively in the new political climate, especially with several major Cabinet positions and senior positions yet to be filled.

Justice Democrats spokesperson Waleed Shahid called Biden's early picks "a mixed bag," but noted that they have generally been more progressive than Obama's early picks after his 2008 election victory.

"The thing that was alarming to me was when Joe Biden said, 'We already have a significant number of progressives in our administration,'" Shahid said. "I talked to a lot of people, and they said, 'We have no idea what he's talking about.'"

Beyond the Defense Department, progressives are gearing up for the possibility of more aggressive fights on Commerce, Labor, Education, Interior and Justice, among other unfilled Cabinet posts. They have already signaled intense opposition to the likes of Rahm Emanuel, a former Obama White House chief being considered for transportation secretary, and Mike Morell, another Obama-era figure being eyed for CIA director.

Flournoy, meanwhile, had been seen as the leading candidate for defense secretary under a Democratic president since Hillary Clinton's failed 2016 campaign.

She stood out as deeply experienced, respected on Capitol Hill and well known on the international stage. But soon after Biden's victory, her stock seemed to slip as others, including Austin and Johnson, came into consideration.

A leading Black voice in Congress, South Carolina Rep. James Clyburn, has openly called for Biden to choose more Black men and women for Cabinet positions. The Pentagon job, which has never been held by a woman or a Black person, is one of the last remaining opportunities for Biden to demonstrate his commitment to diversity at the senior levels of his national security team.

Liberal critics have suggested Flournoy's views are more hawkish than the president-elect's, particularly on the Afghanistan War, and some have pointed to her position as a co-founder of consulting firm WestExec Advisors, which provides what it calls "unique geopolitical and policy expertise to help business leaders" and which has become a source of Biden selections for other national security positions. Another of WestExec's founders, Antony Blinken, is Biden's nominee for secretary of state, and Avril Haines, the nominee for director of national intelligence, is a former WestExec principal.

There was no reference to race or gender in Wednesday's letter opposing Flournoy. The signatories include the Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation; Justice Democrats, which is aligned with Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders; Demand Progress; and Just Foreign Policy, among others.

They were especially critical of reports that Flournoy had resisted calls to end the Saudi-led war in Yemen. Biden has promised to end U.S. support for the war.

The letter offers support for two potential Flournoy alternatives: Sens. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois and Kirsten Gillibrand of New York. Advisers for both camps declined to comment, though neither is believed to have emerged as a leading contender. Gillibrand, in particular, is thought to have little interest in the position.

"While we are by no means winning all of these fights, it is clear that a focus by progressives on personnel is making a difference that will likely pay dividends when it comes to policy determinations over years to come," said David Segal, who leads the progressive group Demand Progress.

He added, however, that "the national security space is more worrisome."

Shahid, of Justice Democrats, suggested that progressives would give Biden a relatively long leash before revolting, even if there are more disappointments to come as he builds out his administration.

The true nature of Biden's presidency won't be known until he takes office in January and begins to work with Congress to enact his agenda, Shahid said. Biden has promised both to fight for big, bold policy changes and to compromise with Republicans.

"In the same way Joe Biden said his campaign was a fight for the soul of America, the Cabinet is the beginning, not the end, of the fight for the soul of the Biden presidency," Shahid said. "If he chooses the path of deal-making with Mitch McConnell, those divides within the Democratic Party will become much more apparent."

## Arizona's Kelly is sworn into Senate, narrowing GOP edge

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Arizona Democrat and former astronaut Mark Kelly was sworn into the Senate on Wednesday, narrowing Republican control of the chamber and underscoring his state's shift from red to blue.

Kelly, 56, defeated GOP Sen. Martha McSally in last month's election, making her one of only three incumbents to lose. By taking office, he has reduced the Republican edge in the chamber to 52-48.

That will have scant impact on Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's control over the chamber for the final month of this congressional session. But it sets the stage for two pivotal Jan. 5 Senate runoff elections in Georgia.

If Democrats win both, they will command the 50-50 chamber for the new Congress that begins in early January because Vice President-elect Kamala Harris would cast tie-breaking votes.

Kelly cast himself as a problem-solving centrist during his campaign, and his slender 2 percentage point victory over McSally suggests he'll want to be part of Democrats' moderate wing.

In an interview, he praised the late Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., a political maverick whose seat he now holds and whose grave he visited Tuesday at the U.S. Naval Academy in nearby Annapolis, Maryland.

He also voiced support for a push by bipartisan congressional moderates to pass a COVID-19 relief bill before Congress adjourns for the year. "I think something should happen now," he said.

Kelly was sworn into office by Vice President Mike Pence, and both men wore masks and bumped arms in congratulations when the oath was over. Among those watching from the visitors' gallery were his wife, former Rep. Gabby Giffords, D-Ariz., and Scott Kelly, his twin brother and fellow retired astronaut.

Kelly's Arizona colleague, Democratic Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, held the Bible on which he took his oath. In what may be a Senate first for such ceremonies, Sinema, known for dramatic fashion, wore a zebra-striped coat and had purple hair, or perhaps a wig.

Kelly's Senate arrival marks a political milestone for Arizona, which has two Democratic senators for the first time since January 1953. That is when GOP Sen. Barry Goldwater took office, barely a decade before he became his party's unsuccessful 1964 presidential candidate.

In other evidence of Arizona's political shift, the state backed President-elect Joe Biden last month, the first time a Democratic presidential candidate carried it since 1996.

McSally was appointed to her seat in 2019 to replace McCain. Her appointment lasted only until last month's special election was officially certified, which occurred this week. That cleared the way for Kelly to take office and fill the rest of McCain's six-year term, meaning Kelly will face reelection in 2022.

Kelly was parachuting into a fractious lame-duck session in which lawmakers and President Donald Trump are so far deadlocked over whether to provide a pre-holiday COVID-19 relief package worth hundreds of billions of dollars. They're also trying to address year-end budget work and a defense policy bill.

In what was one of the country's most expensive Senate races, Kelly raised \$89 million. That was second only to the \$108 million collected by defeated South Carolina Democratic Senate candidate Jaime Harrison, according to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics.

Republican Cory Gardner of Colorado and Democrat Doug Jones of Alabama were the only other Senate incumbents defeated last month.

The son of two police officers, Kelly is a retired astronaut who flew four space missions, including spending time aboard the International Space Station. He was also a Navy pilot who flew combat missions during Operation Desert Storm in the early 1990s.

Giffords was grievously wounded in a 2011 mass shooting in which six people were killed and a dozen others hurt. She and Kelly became leading figures in unsuccessful efforts to pressure Congress to strengthen gun controls.

"Great day, excellent day," Giffords told reporters afterward.

Kelly is the fourth astronaut to be elected to Congress. John Glenn was a Democratic senator from Ohio and Harrison Schmitt was a GOP senator from New Mexico. Republican Jack Swigert was elected to the

House from Colorado, but died of cancer before taking office.

AP reporter Jonathan J. Cooper contributed from Phoenix, Arizona.

## US tightens definition of service animals allowed on planes

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

The days of pets flying with their owners in airplane cabins for free are coming to an end.

The Transportation Department issued a final rule Wednesday covering animals on airlines. It decided that only dogs can fly as service animals, and companions that passengers use for emotional support don't count.

The rule aims to settle years of tension between airlines and passengers who bring their pets on board for free by saying they need them for emotional help. Under a longstanding department policy, all the passengers needed was a note from a health professional.

Airlines argued that passengers abused the situation to bring a menagerie of animals on board including cats, turtles, pot-bellied pigs and, in one case, a peacock.

The agency said Wednesday that it was rewriting the rules partly because passengers carrying unusual animals on board "eroded the public trust in legitimate service animals." It also cited the increasing frequency of people "fraudulently representing their pets as service animals," and a rise in misbehavior by emotional-support animals, ranging from peeing on the carpet to biting other passengers.

The Transportation Department proposed the new rule back in January and received more than 15,000 comments. While 3,000 commenters favored dropping protections for support animals, 6,000 spoke in favor of them, including people suffering from depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, the department said.

The Paralyzed Veterans of America said the mere presence of a dog, cat or rabbit — even if untrained — can help some travelers, and pet fees of up to \$175 one-way are a hardship on low-income people.

The new rule will force passengers with support animals to check them into the cargo hold — and pay a pet fee — or leave them at home. The agency estimated that airlines will gain up to \$59.6 million a year in pet fees.

The number of animals on planes took off several years ago, and a cottage industry grew around providing papers, doctor's notes and even dog vests for support animals.

Delta Air Lines says it carried about 250,000 animals including service dogs in 2017 and about 600,000 last year.

Under the final rule, which takes effect in 30 days, a service animal is a dog trained to help a person with a physical or psychiatric disability. Advocates for veterans and others had pushed for inclusion of psychiatric service dogs.

Airlines will be able to require owners to vouch for the dog's health, behavior and training. Airlines can require people with a service dog to turn in paperwork up to 48 hours before a flight, but they can't bar those travelers from checking in online like other passengers.

Airlines can require that service dogs to be leashed at all times, and they can bar dogs that show aggressive behavior. There have been incidents of support animals biting passengers and growling or barking at guide dogs for the blind.

Airlines for America, a trade group for the biggest U.S. carriers, said the new rule will protect passengers and airline employees while helping people travel with trained service dogs.

The Transportation Department stood by an earlier decision to prohibit airlines from banning entire dog breeds as service animals. That is a setback for Delta Air Lines, which banned "pit bull type dogs" in 2018, a move that was criticized by disability advocates.

Delta, however, is giving no indication of backing down. In a statement, a Delta spokeswoman said the airline is reviewing the new rule but, "At this time, there are no changes to Delta's current service and

support animal policies.”

David Koenig can be reached at [www.twitter.com/airlinewriter](https://www.twitter.com/airlinewriter)

## Israeli parliament takes step toward new national elections

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel took a major step toward plunging into its fourth national election in under two years on Wednesday as lawmakers — supported by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s main coalition partner — passed a preliminary proposal to dissolve parliament.

The 61-54 vote came just seven months after the coalition took office following three inconclusive elections in just over a year. Netanyahu’s Likud party and Defense Minister Benny Gantz’s Blue and White said they were seeking national unity to confront the coronavirus crisis. But since then, the rivals have been locked in infighting.

The vote gave only preliminary approval to ending the alliance and forcing a new election early next year. The legislation now heads to a committee before parliament as a whole takes up final approval, perhaps as soon as next week. In the meantime, Gantz and Netanyahu are expected to continue negotiations in a last-ditch attempt to preserve their troubled alliance.

By joining the opposition in Wednesday’s vote, Gantz’s party voiced its dissatisfaction with Netanyahu, accusing him of putting his own personal interests ahead of those of the country.

Netanyahu is on trial for a series of corruption charges, and Gantz accuses the prime minister of hindering key governmental work, including the passage of a national budget, in hopes of stalling or overturning the legal proceedings against him. Gantz and other critics believe Netanyahu is ultimately hoping to see a friendlier parliament elected next year that will give him immunity from prosecution.

Opposition leader Yair Lapid, whose Yesh Atid party sponsored the bill to trigger new elections, accused the government of gross mishandling of the coronavirus crisis and its economic fallout. He said the one thing all citizens share is “the feeling that they lost control over their lives.”

The government still has not yet passed a budget for 2020, a result of the deep divisions produced by its power-sharing agreement. The lack of budget has caused severe hardships and cutbacks for Israelis at a time when unemployment is estimated at over 20% because of the pandemic.

In a nationally broadcast news conference Wednesday evening, Netanyahu delivered a mixed message, calling on Gantz to remain in the government but also sounding very much like a politician on the campaign trail.

Netanyahu began his address by claiming credit for leading the battle against the coronavirus, forging diplomatic agreements with Gulf Arab countries and protecting Israel against its enemies in the region.

He derisively referred to Gantz’s party as “an opposition within the coalition” and skirted around questions about passing the budget or honoring the rotation agreement with Gantz.

“In dramatic times like these, we don’t need to go to elections. The people of Israel want unity, not ballots. It wants vaccines, and not campaign ads,” he said. “The only way we can defeat corona is defeating it together. We need to put politics aside.”

Gantz, meanwhile, released a video blaming Netanyahu for the political paralysis and economic damage resulting from the pandemic.

“We all know the truth. You know the truth,” Gantz said in the video. “If there was no trial, there would be a budget. If there was no trial, there would be a functioning government. There would be unity.”

Israel has gone through two nationwide lockdowns since March, and officials are already warning that rising infections could result in a return to strict restrictions that were only recently lifted.

If a budget for 2020 isn’t passed by Dec. 23, Israeli law stipulates an automatic dissolution of parliament and new elections three months later in late March.

Under the coalition deal, Netanyahu is to serve as prime minister until November 2021, with the job rotating to Gantz for 18 months after that. The only way Netanyahu can hold onto his seat and get out

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of that agreement is if a budget doesn't pass and new elections are held.

There were no indications that either side is interested in preserving their partnership for the long run. Instead, the battle is expected to be over when the election will be held.

Although Gantz's party has plummeted in opinion polls, he appears to have concluded that elections are inevitable and the sooner they are held, the better.

By pushing for an election early next year, he seems to be banking that Netanyahu will be punished by voters for a still-raging pandemic, a struggling economy and the resumption of his corruption trial.

Starting in February, Netanyahu's corruption trial is scheduled to kick into high gear, with a string of witnesses testifying against him. The prime minister expected to be a frequent visitor to the courtroom.

Netanyahu, on the other hand, is expected to try to drag out budget talks to delay elections until the summer in hopes that a vaccine will arrive and the economy will begin to recover. If he can put together a hardline coalition at that time, he might finally be positioned to push through an immunity bill or appoint new judicial officials to freeze or overturn his case.

"Over the last two years, the only question you need to ask is not what is best for the country and not what is best for this or that party, but what is in the best interest of Benjamin Netanyahu," Gayil Tashir, a political scientist at Hebrew University, told reporters. She said it looks like Netanyahu thinks it is his best interest to hold an election next summer.

One wild card in any Israeli election will be the administration of President-elect Joe Biden.

Netanyahu has had a close relationship with President Donald Trump after clashing with President Barack Obama for the previous eight years. Israeli officials fear that Biden, who was Obama's vice president, will return to the policies of that era, especially renewing possible diplomatic engagement with archenemy Iran.

Tashir said this would be a "big issue" in the next Israeli campaign.

"Netanyahu is going to put forward an argument which says 'I'm the only Israeli leader who can actually stand up against a Biden administration,'" she said.

## **VIRUS TODAY: Hospitals desperate for help as cases pile up**

By The Associated Press undefined

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

### THREE THINGS TO KNOW TODAY

— With hospitalizations hitting new peaks every day, medical providers are desperately trying to add beds and find nurses and doctors. Governors are trying to lure nurses out of retirement and convince college students to work in hospitals for academic credit.

— In a major milestone, Britain authorized the COVID-19 vaccine from Pfizer and BioNTech, and could begin dispensing shots this week.

— Health officials are already issuing guidance for the upcoming holidays, and their advice is clear: Stay home or get tested before and after traveling if they decide to leave town.

**THE NUMBERS:** The number of people hospitalized with the virus in the U.S. is approaching 100,000, more than doubling from one month earlier. The nation is averaging more than 160,000 cases and 1,500 deaths per day.

**QUOTABLE:** "We cannot get this pandemic under control if we do not address head-on the issues of inequity in our country. There is no other way." — Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, a pandemic adviser to President-elect Joe Biden.

**ICYMI:** California has been going deeper into lockdown as its case counts and hospitalizations soar, but some governments are pushing back. Pasadena has kept outdoor dining open despite the restrictions.

**ON THE HORIZON:** Key dates for the vaccine are quickly approaching. States must submit requests for doses of the Pfizer vaccine this week. The Food and Drug Administration has a critical meeting next Thursday to authorize emergency use.

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

## The Sundance Film Festival goes largely virtual for 2021

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Leave the snow boots, parkas and glove warmers in the closet, the 2021 Sundance Film Festival is coming down from the mountain and straight to your living room.

Organizers on Wednesday said that this year they will premiere over 70 films on a custom online platform during the seven day event. There will also be some socially distanced screening opportunities around the country. The festival, which is normally held in Park City, Utah, has been preparing for various scenarios for months as the pandemic has raged on.

Festival director Tabitha Jackson said that this model, "Gives us the opportunity to reach new audiences, safely, where they are."

Over the course of the festival, feature films will premiere throughout the day at a dedicated time followed by a live Q&A. Ticketholders will have a three-hour window to watch. Second screenings will be available for 24 hours two days later. The rollout, organizers said, is designed to "preserve the energy of a Festival."

There will also be limited screenings at venues across the county, including Birmingham, Alabama's Sidewalk Drive-In, Pasadena, California's Rose Bowl, Denver's Sie Film Center and Columbus, Ohio's Gateway Film Center.

"At the heart of all this is a belief in the power of coming together, and the desire to preserve what makes a festival unique -- a collaborative spirit, a collective energy, and a celebration of the art, artists, and ideas that leave us changed," Jackson said.

The 2021 Sundance Film Festival runs from January 28 through February 3, and tickets will be available for purchase for the general public beginning Jan. 7. The 2021 slate will be revealed in the coming weeks.

## Stay home for the holidays or get tested twice, CDC urges

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

Don't travel over the upcoming holidays. But if you must, consider getting coronavirus tests before and after, U.S. health officials urged Wednesday.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that the best way to stay safe and protect others is to stay home.

The agency also announced new guidelines that shorten recommended quarantines after close contact with someone infected with coronavirus. The agency said the risk in a shorter quarantine is small, but that the change makes following the guidance less of a hardship.

The no-travel advice echoes recommendations for Thanksgiving but many Americans ignored it. With COVID-19 continuing to surge, the CDC added the testing option.

"Cases are rising, hospitalizations are increasing, deaths are increasing. We need to try to bend the curve, stop this exponential increase," the CDC's Dr. Henry Walke said during a briefing.

He said any travel-related surge in cases from travel would likely be apparent about a week to 10 days after Thanksgiving.

The virus has infected more than 13.5 million Americans and killed at least 270,000 since January.

"The safest thing to do is to postpone holiday travel and stay home," said Dr. Cindy Friedman, another CDC official. "Travel volume was high over Thanksgiving," and even if small numbers were infected, that could result in "hundreds of thousands of new infections."

"Travel is a door-to-door experience that can spread virus during the journey and also into communities that travelers visit or live," she added.

For those who decide to travel, COVID-19 tests should be considered one to three days before the trip and again three to five days afterward, the CDC said. The agency also recommended travelers reduce non-essential activities for a full week after they return or for 10 days if not tested afterward. And it emphasized the importance of continuing to follow precautions including masks, social distancing and frequent hand-washing.

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The revised quarantine guidance says people who have been in contact with someone infected with the virus can resume normal activity after 10 days, or seven days if they receive a negative test result. That's down from the 14-day period recommended since the pandemic began.

The change is based on extensive modeling by CDC and others, said the agency's Dr. John Brooks..

Follow AP Medical Writer Lindsey Tanner at @LindseyTanner.

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

## US lawmakers unveil anti-slavery constitutional amendment

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — National lawmakers introduced a joint resolution Wednesday aimed at striking language from the U.S. Constitution that enshrines a form of slavery in America's foundational documents.

The resolution, spearheaded and supported by Democratic members of the House and Senate, would amend the 13th Amendment's ban on chattel enslavement to expressly prohibit involuntary servitude as a punishment for crime. As ratified, the original amendment has permitted exploitation of labor by convicted felons for over 155 years since the abolition of slavery.

The 13th Amendment "continued the process of a white power class gravely mistreating Black Americans, creating generations of poverty, the breakup of families and this wave of mass incarceration that we still wrestle with today," Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon told The Associated Press ahead of the resolution's introduction.

A House version is led by outgoing Rep. William Lacy Clay, of St. Louis, who said the amendment "seeks to finish the job that President (Abraham) Lincoln started."

It would "eliminate the dehumanizing and discriminatory forced labor of prisoners for profit that has been used to drive the over-incarceration of African Americans since the end of the Civil War," Clay said.

In the Senate, the resolution has Sens. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, Ed Markey of Massachusetts and Chris Van Hollen of Maryland signed on as co-sponsors. "This change to the 13th Amendment will finally, fully rid our nation of a form of legalized slavery," Van Hollen said in an emailed statement.

Constitutional amendments are rare and require approval by two-thirds of the House and Senate, as well as ratification by three-quarters of state legislatures. Should the proposal fail to move out of committee in the remaining weeks of the current Congress, Merkley said he hoped to revive it next year.

The effort has been endorsed by more than a dozen human rights and social justice organizations, including The Sentencing Project, the Anti-Recidivism Coalition and Color of Change.

"It is long past time that Congress excise this language from the U.S. Constitution which should begin to put an end to the abusive practices derived from it," said Laura Pitter, deputy director of the U.S. program at Human Rights Watch, which also endorsed the amendment.

The proposed amendment comes nearly one month after voters in Nebraska and Utah approved initiatives amending their state constitutions to remove language that allows slavery and involuntary servitude as criminal punishments. In 2018, Colorado was among the first U.S. states to remove such language by ballot measure.

Although nearly half of state constitutions do not mention human bondage or prison labor as punishment, just over 20 states still include such clauses in governing documents that date back to the 19th century abolition of slavery.

In Merkley's Oregon, voters in 2002 approved the elimination of constitutional language that prohibited Black Americans from living in the state unless they were enslaved.

He said the movement toward a federal amendment is "kind of saying to the world, let's not forget this big piece of injustice that's sitting squarely in the middle of our Constitution, as we wrestle with criminal justice reform."

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Many Americans will recognize modern-day prison labor as chain gangs deployed from prison facilities for agricultural and infrastructure work. The prevalence of prison labor has been largely accepted as a means for promoting rehabilitation, teaching trade skills and reducing idleness among prisoners.

But the practice has a much darker history. Following the abolition of slavery, Southern states that lost the literal backbone of their economies began criminalizing formerly enslaved Black men and women for offenses as petty as vagrancy or having unkempt children.

This allowed legal re-enslavement of African Americans, who were no longer seen as sympathetic victims of inhumane bondage, said Michele Goodwin, a constitutional law professor at the University of California, Irvine.

"These people became criminals, and it became very difficult for many abolitionists to use the same kinds of emotional messaging about the humanity of these individuals," Goodwin said.

Today, incarcerated workers, many of them making pennies on the dollar, work in plants, manufacturing clothing, assembling furniture and even battling wildfires across the U.S., much of it to the benefit of large corporations, governments and communities where they've historically been unwelcome upon release.

Researchers have estimated the minimum annual value of prison labor commodities at \$2 billion, derived largely through a system of convict leasing that leaves these workers without the legal protections and benefits that Americans are otherwise entitled to.

And while prison work is largely optional for the 2.2 million individuals incarcerated in the U.S., it's a grave mistake to disassociate their labor from the original intent of the penal system, Goodwin said.

"Your freedom has been taken away — that's the punishment that society has assigned," she said. "The punishment is not that you do slave work, that is unpaid labor or barely paid labor."

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

## 'My God, we're scared': Serial attacks put a suburb on edge

By MARK PRATT Associated Press

WALTHAM, Mass. (AP) — The attacks come after dark, without warning, usually from behind.

The victims, all men, are hit so hard on the head with some sort of blunt object that they are often knocked to the ground and require medical attention.

The apparently random string of at least 10 attacks in the Boston suburb of Waltham has angered city leaders, frustrated police and frightened residents.

"There is definitely a fear factor in our city right now," police detective Sgt. Steve McCarthy, who is leading the investigation, said at a news conference Tuesday.

The attacks started Nov. 10 at the Gardencrest apartment complex but have spread to the downtown of the city of about 60,000 residents roughly 10 miles west of Boston. The latest attack was the day after Thanksgiving.

"People are concerned, and a small group of people are genuinely scared," said City Councilor Sean Durkee, whose ward includes Gardencrest. "I have always told people that there is no place in Waltham I would not let my mother walk at night — until last week. It's not the sort of thing that happens here."

Unnerved residents are changing their routines and paying more attention to their surroundings.

"My God, we're scared," Amos Frederick, 37, said Wednesday as he walked through the complex. "All of us stay indoors except during the day. If someone is just walking to their car, we watch out for them."

Nathan Lumunye, 24, works nights at a home improvement store.

"I have to go to work," he said. "So I make sure I leave the house earlier and keep an eye out."

The victims have all been men, and all on foot, but they range in age from 20 to the mid-40s and are of various ethnic backgrounds, Police Chief Keith MacPherson said. All have been ambushed after dark by someone wearing a mask or with a hoodie pulled tight around their face, the chief said.

One victim was walking a dog. One was getting into a vehicle. A U.S. Postal Service mail carrier was



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also attacked.

Some required hospitalization.

"They're pretty serious injuries, including orbital facial fractures, fractured nose, lacerations to the face. So we don't believe it can be just someone's fist," the chief said.

Emerson Antonio Aroche Paz was struck in the head twice around 10 p.m. Nov. 25, he told The Boston Globe.

He wiped the blood from his face so he could see his assailant, but the person had fled. He called 911 and went to the hospital.

"My nose broke. Part of my head is cracked," Aroche Paz said. "But my brain is fine."

Because of the manner of the attacks, and because the attacker immediately flees, victims have not been able to provide a clear description to investigators.

The city has released surveillance images of a suspect that have led to some tips, and offered a \$5,000 reward for information that leads to an arrest and conviction.

"We do have a couple persons of interest," McCarthy said.

What is sparking the attacks remains unclear.

"The motive is somewhat in question but it appears to be a thrill of the assault, or someone who's very violent and enjoys seeing someone hurt by this," MacPherson said Tuesday. "There's never been a robbery. It's always been just an assault and the assailant takes off."

Waltham police consulted with Boston police to determine whether the attacks could be some sort of gang initiation, but that does not appear to be the case.

Although police are not sure if they are searching for one attacker or more, the suspect is likely working alone and is probably motivated by thrills, enjoyment, a sense of power and a sense of dominance, James Alan Fox, a professor of criminology, law and public policy at Northeastern University said in a phone interview Wednesday.

"This person is holding the entire city of Waltham in his grip of terror," said Fox, who has written several books on mass murderers.

The fact that the victims are men may indicate the attacker has some sense of morality.

"He may feel attacking women is unfair. It's too easy. He believes you don't hit a girl or a woman," Fox said.

In response to the attacks, police have stepped up patrols with both uniformed and plainclothes officers and are also using drones for aerial surveillance.

The fact that the suspect has gotten away with so many attacks may be his undoing, Fox said.

"At some point his luck runs out and he makes a blunder," Fox said.

## Police guide that calls BLM a terrorist group draws outrage

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — A prominent law enforcement training group is promoting a lengthy research document riddled with falsehoods and conspiracies that urges local police to treat Black Lives Matter activists as terrorists plotting a violent revolution.

The document distributed by the International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association contains misinformation and inflammatory rhetoric that could incite officers against protesters and people of color, critics said. It alleges Black Lives Matter and antifa, an umbrella term for leftist militants, are "revolutionary movements whose aims are to overthrow the U.S. government" and claims they are planning "extreme violence."

Phillip Atiba Goff, a Yale University professor who is an expert on racial bias in policing, called the document dangerous, noting that the association is an important source of training materials for many small and midsize departments across the country.

"It's stunning. It's distressing in many ways. It's untethered to reality," said Goff, CEO of the Center for Policing Equity. "I worry that it leads to people dying unnecessarily."

The association in October sent a link to the 176-page paper, "Understanding Antifa and Urban Guerrilla

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Warfare," in an email news update to its thousands of members. The document, labeled "restricted to law enforcement only," is one of the few publicly available materials on its website. The Associated Press learned of the document from one of the policing organization's members.

The group's executive director, Harvey Hedden, defended the document, which he called one member's opinion and open for critique and debate. He said the association supports the exchange of ideas and strategies to improve criminal justice training but does not endorse specific approaches.

Hedden argued that fact-checking the paper or restricting its distribution would amount to censorship and that its publication would allow for peer review by other trainers.

"There will always be differences of opinion on training issues but so long as the disagreements remain professional and not personal we do not censor these ideas," he said. "I am willing to allow the trainer to evaluate the information themselves."

He added, "Just like law enforcement, I am afraid BLM has earned some of these criticisms and others might be overgeneralizations."

The Black Lives Matter movement emerged in 2013 after the acquittal of the Florida man who fatally shot 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, and exploded in size and influence earlier this year after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis police custody. Protests across the nation were largely peaceful but occasionally marked by clashes with police or the destruction of property. Since then, many activists have been working to reduce the scope and cost of local police departments and overhaul police training.

The law enforcement association, known by its nickname ILEETA, says in a mission statement that it's "committed to the reduction of law enforcement risk" and saving lives through high-quality training. The association promotes its annual conference, set for St. Louis this coming March, as the "largest gathering of law enforcement trainers in the world." It publishes a research journal, provides other educational and training materials and operates a Facebook page for members to network and share ideas.

An official with Color of Change, a nationwide racial justice organization, called on police departments Wednesday to cut training ties with the association, saying it encourages a warrior-style mindset that creates more conflict in communities.

"This is disturbing to read but not at all surprising to me. This is the type of thinking that is sadly pretty prominent within police culture," said Scott Roberts, its senior director of criminal justice campaigns.

Goff said police executives with whom he's discussed the document this week were "disturbed by it." He and others said it was irresponsible for the group to promote the paper.

"This document is below the belt because of how much misinformation there is, how many conspiracy theories there are, how much violence it promotes and how many reasons it gives to justify dehumanizing people," said Sherice Nelson, assistant professor of political science at Southern University and A&M College who studies Black political movements.

She said the paper repeatedly promotes "wildly outlandish" claims about Black Lives Matter, shows cultural ignorance by falsely conflating the movement with antifa, and primes officers to use force by painting both as terrorists plotting to kill police.

Among its many unsupported claims is that the two movements have "trained, dedicated snipers" stationed in certain cities, are fronts for Russia and China, and planned attacks before and after last month's presidential election.

The paper claims that those who participated in months of protests earlier this year in Portland and Seattle were "useful idiots" designed to give cover to the "hard-core, terrorist trained troops" that would follow. "Extreme acts of violence are expected and called for," the document warns.

The paper claims that military officials who served in Iraq and Afghanistan are concerned about the movements because they "have witnessed these types of terrorist groups organizing, creating insurgencies and the horrible consequences of it."

The FBI is largely "clueless" about the nature of their threat and, along with the news media, has wrongly focused attention on violence carried out by white supremacists, it argues.

Goff, whose group works with departments to make policing "less racist and deadly," said the document showed why it's important for critics to engage directly with local law enforcement to seek changes.

Otherwise, he said, "you are abandoning that profession to the worst impulses of this country."

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

## UN, Ethiopia sign deal for aid access to embattled Tigray

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — In a breakthrough a month after deadly conflict cut off Ethiopia's Tigray region from the world, the United Nations on Wednesday said it and the Ethiopian government have signed a deal to allow "unimpeded" humanitarian access, at least for areas under federal government control after the prime minister's declaration of victory over the weekend.

This will allow the first food, medicines and other aid into the region of 6 million people that has seen rising hunger during the fighting between the federal and Tigray regional governments. Each regards the other as illegal in a power struggle that has been months in the making.

For weeks, the U.N. and others have pleaded for access amid reports of supplies running desperately low for millions of people. A U.N. humanitarian spokesman, Saviano Abreu, said the first mission to carry out a needs assessment would begin Wednesday.

"We are of course working to make sure assistance will be provided in the whole region and for every single person who needs it," he said. The U.N. and partners are committed to engaging with "all parties to the conflict" to ensure that aid to Tigray and the neighboring Amhara and Afar regions is "strictly based on needs."

Ethiopia's government did not immediately comment.

For weeks, aid-laden trucks have been blocked at Tigray's borders, and the U.N. and other humanitarian groups were increasingly anxious to reach Tigray as hunger grows and hospitals run out of basic supplies like gloves and body bags.

"We literally have staff reaching out to us to say they have no food for their children," one humanitarian worker told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the situation.

"We have been urging, waiting, begging for access," another aid official, Jan Egeland with the Norwegian Refugee Council, told the AP. "We're ready to go tomorrow. ... It has been heartbreaking to be forced to wait."

More than 1 million people in Tigray are now thought to be displaced, including over 45,000 who have fled into a remote area of neighboring Sudan. Humanitarians have struggled to feed them as they set up a crisis response from scratch.

Communications and transport links remain almost completely severed to Tigray, and the fugitive leader of the defiant regional government this week told the AP that fighting continues despite Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's declaration of victory.

It remains almost impossible to verify either side's claims as the conflict threatens to destabilize both the country and the entire Horn of Africa.

"It is critically important to get objective information as to what is going on," the top U.S. diplomat for Africa, Tibor Nagy, told the BBC. "The active military phase is basically over. I'm not saying the fighting is over. So at this point, the humanitarian phase is the most important one."

Nagy added that "now the danger is this evolving into a long-term insurgency." He also disagreed with Ethiopia's description of the conflict as a "law enforcement operation" to arrest the Tigray leaders, saying that "it was obviously a military operation." The fighting between two heavily armed forces has seen airstrikes, rocket attacks and tanks.

For weeks, the U.N. and others have been increasingly insistent on the need to reach some 600,000 people in Tigray who already were dependent on food aid even before the conflict.

Now those needs have exploded, but Abiy has resisted international pressure for dialogue and de-escalation, saying his government will not "negotiate our sovereignty." His government regards the Tigray regional government, which dominated Ethiopia's ruling coalition for more than a quarter-century, as il-

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legitimate after months of growing friction as he sought to centralize power.

Amid the warring sides' claims and counter-claims, one thing is clear: Civilians have suffered.

The U.N. says food has run out for the nearly 100,000 refugees from Eritrea whose camps close to the Tigray border with Eritrea have been in the line of fire as the fighting swept through. Reports that some refugees have been killed or abducted, if true, "would be major violations of international norms," the U.N. refugee chief said over the weekend in an urgent appeal to Abiy.

These are "extremely vulnerable people" who fled persecution in Eritrea, Egeland said. "It's been extremely frustrating to lose access and communication."

With infrastructure there and elsewhere in Tigray damaged, the U.N. has said some people are now drinking untreated water, increasing the risk of diseases.

In the largest hospital in the Tigray capital, Mekele, staff had to suspend other activities to focus on treating the large number of wounded from the conflict, the International Committee for the Red Cross said.

The ICRC, the rare organization to travel inside the Tigray region and its borderlands, has reported coming across abandoned communities and camps of displaced people.

No one knows the true toll of the fighting. Human rights and humanitarian groups have reported several hundred people killed, including civilians, but many more are feared.

Inside Tigray, and among the majority ethnic Tigrayan refugees in Sudan, people are exhausted.

"The world hasn't seen anything like this year. I have never seen anything like this," said one refugee who gave his name as Danyo, standing on the edge of a river that people on Tuesday were crossing to seek safety.

"When Dr. Abiy came, we saw him as a good thing," he said. "Our hopes were fulfilled, because his talk in the beginning was as sweet as honey, but now the honey has gone sour."

Fay Abuelgasim in Hamdayet, Sudan, contributed.

## UN calls on humanity to end 'war on nature,' go carbon-free

By SETH BORENSTEIN and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

As an extreme year for hurricanes, wildfires and heat waves comes to an end, the head of the United Nations challenged world leaders to make 2021 the year that humanity ends its "war on nature" and commits to a future free of planet-warming carbon pollution.

With new reports highlighting 2020's record-breaking weather and growing fossil fuels extraction that triggers global warming, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres delivered yet another urgent appeal to curb climate change. It was tinged with optimism but delivered dire warnings, as the UN gears up for a Dec. 12 virtual climate summit in France on the 5th anniversary of the landmark 2015 Paris climate agreement.

"The state of the planet is broken," Guterres said in a speech at Columbia University. "Humanity is waging war on nature. This is suicidal."

"Apocalyptic fires and floods, cyclones and hurricanes are increasingly the new normal," he said.

In a report, the World Meteorological Organization said this year is set to end about 1.2 degrees Celsius (2.2 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than the last half of the 1800s, which scientists use as a baseline for warming caused by heat-trapping gases from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas. Most trapped heat goes into the world's seas, and ocean temperatures now are at record levels. It also means 2020 will go down as one of the three hottest years on record.

"There is at least a one-in-five chance of it temporarily exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2024," WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said. The Paris climate accord set a goal of not exceeding 1.5-degree (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warming since pre-industrial times.

A new analysis by Climate Action Tracker scientists who monitor carbon pollution and pledges to cut them said public commitments to emission cuts, if kept, would limit warming to about 2.6 degrees Celsius (4.7 degrees Fahrenheit) and possibly as low as 2.1 degrees Celsius.

Guterres saw hope in promises by more than 100 countries that by mid-century they will not be adding

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more heat-trapping gases to the atmosphere than trees and technology can remove, along with shorter term pollution cuts. China and U.S. President-elect Joe Biden have pledged net zero carbon emissions.

"I firmly believe that 2021 can be a new kind of leap year — the year of a quantum leap towards carbon neutrality," Guterres said.

But he said the two U.N. reports Wednesday "spell out how close we are to climate catastrophe."

When countries spend trillions of dollars to recover from the pandemic-triggered economic slowdown, Guterres said they must do so in a way that emphasizes clean energy.

Nations should stop funding and subsidizing fossil fuels, he said. And countries need to fulfill their Paris promise to spend \$100 billion annually to help poorer countries develop cleaner energy.

Guterres said there's no way the world can curb the climate change "without U.S. leadership" and urged students and other Americans to do "everything you can" to get their governments to curb emissions more quickly.

One of the new reports found countries would need to cut production of oil, coal and natural gas by 6% each year by 2030 to keep global temperatures from rising more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. Instead, a review of eight major fossil-fuel producing nations showed they plan to increase production by 2% annually. That means twice the amount of carbon-based fuel would come onto the market than feasible to keep the Paris goal within reach.

Governments in the Group of 20 major and emerging economies have so far committed more money to prop up fossil fuel sectors than to boost the rollout of renewable energy, the report found.

Co-author Ivetta Gerasimchuk of the International Institute for Sustainable Development said investing in oil, coal and gas no longer makes economic sense because renewable energy is becoming cheaper than fossil fuels. But, she said, "We see that instead of governments letting these fossil fuel projects die they resurrect them from the dead."

The WMO's report found global warming is worsening in all seven key climate indicators, but the problem is increasing human suffering in an already bad year.

"In 2020, over 50 million people have been doubly hit: by climate-related disasters (floods, droughts and storms) and the COVID-19 pandemic," the report said. "Countries in Central America are suffering from the triple-impact of hurricanes Eta and Iota, COVID-19 and pre-existing humanitarian crises."

Among the dozens of extremes the report highlighted:

-- A record 30 Atlantic named tropical storms and hurricanes.

--Death Valley, California, hit 129.9 degrees (54.4 degrees Celsius), the hottest the world has seen in 80 years.

--Record wildfires struck California and Colorado in the western United States, following a major fire season and record heat in Australia.

--The Arctic had record wildfires and a prolonged heat wave culminating in a 100-degree mark (38 degrees Celsius) in Siberia in June.

--Record low Arctic sea ice was reported for April and August and the yearly minimum, in September, was the second lowest on record.

--More than 2,000 people died in record summer rains and flooding in Pakistan and surrounding nations.

While these events can't solely be blamed on climate change, "these are the types of events scientists fear will increase due to climate change," said Cornell University climate scientist Natalie Mahowald, who wasn't part of the report.

"Human activities are at the root of our descent towards chaos," Guterres said. "But that means human action can solve it."

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Follow AP's climate coverage at <https://www.apnews.com/Climate>

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## China's space ambitions: Robot on Mars, a human on the moon

By JOE McDONALD and VICTORIA MILKO Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's landing of its third probe on the moon is part of an increasingly ambitious space program that has a robot rover en route to Mars, is developing a reusable space plane and is planning to put humans back on the lunar surface.

The Chang'e 5, the first effort to bring lunar rocks to Earth since the 1970s, collected samples on Wednesday, the Chinese space agency announced. The probe landed Tuesday on the Sea of Storms on the moon's near side.

Space exploration is a political trophy for the ruling Communist Party, which wants global influence to match China's economic success.

China is a generation behind the United States and Russia, but its secretive, military-linked program is developing rapidly. It is creating distinctive missions that, if successful, could put Beijing on the leading edge of space flight.

The coming decade will be "quite critical" in space exploration, said Kathleen Campbell, an astrobiologist and geologist at The University of Auckland.

"This is where we're going to transform out of near Earth orbit and back into what people will call 'deep space,'" Campbell said.

In 2003, China became the third nation to launch an astronaut into orbit on its own, four decades after the former Soviet Union and the United States. Its first temporary orbiting laboratory was launched in 2011 and a second in 2016. Plans call for a permanent space station to be launched after 2022.

This week's landing is "a historic step in China's cooperation with the international community in the peaceful use of outer space," said a foreign ministry spokeswoman, Hua Chunying.

"China will continue to promote international cooperation and the exploration and use of outer space in the spirit of working for the benefit of all mankind," Hua said.

After astronaut Yang Liwei's 2003 flight, space officials expressed hope for a crewed lunar mission as early as this year. But they said that depended on budget and technology. They have pushed back that target to 2024 or later.

The space agency gave no reason for landing its latest probe on the Sea of Storms, far from where American and Soviet craft touched down. But the choice might help to shed light on possible sites being studied for a crewed mission.

Beijing's space plane would be China's version of the American Space Shuttle and the former Soviet Union's short-lived Buran.

China also has launched its own Beidou network of navigation satellites so the Communist Party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army, doesn't need to rely on the U.S.-run GPS or a rival Russian system.

Last year, China graduated from "me too" missions copying Soviet and American ventures to scoring its own firsts when it became the first nation to land a probe on the moon's little-explored far side.

That probe, the Chang'e 4, and its robot rover still are functioning, transmitting to Earth via an orbiter that passes over the moon's far side. China's first moon lander, the Chang'e 3, still is transmitting.

China's earliest crewed spacecraft, the Shenzhou capsules, were based on Russian technology. Its powerful Long March rockets are, like their Soviet and American predecessors, based on ballistic missiles developed using technology seized from Nazi Germany after World War II.

China has proceeded more cautiously than the breakneck U.S.-Soviet space race of the 1960s, which was marked by fatalities. China's crewed missions have gone ahead without incident. Some launches of robot vehicles have been delayed by technical problems but those appear to have been resolved.

China is in a growing space rivalry with Asian neighbors Japan and India, which it sees as strategic competitors. Both have sent their own probes to Mars.

While Chang'e 5 gathers moon rocks, Japan's space agency just pulled off the even more challenging

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feat of obtaining samples from an asteroid, Ryugu. The Hayabusa2 mission is due to deliver those to Earth on Saturday.

As its confidence grows, Beijing's space goals have multiplied.

It has joined the race to explore Mars, and its Tianwen-1 probe, launched in July carrying a robot rover to search for signs of water, is due to complete its 470-million kilometer (292-million mile) journey in February.

Plans call for a permanent crewed space station as early as 2022.

China is excluded from the International Space Station due to U.S. opposition to including Chinese military officers in a venture that otherwise is operated by civilian space agencies.

Plans also call for an international lunar research base at some point, the deputy director of the Chinese agency's lunar exploration center, Pei Zhaoyu, told reporters last week.

Despite its successes, the military-run Chinese program is more secretive than those of other governments.

Yang and other Chinese astronauts made only a handful of brief public appearances following their flights, in contrast to Soviet and American astronauts who were sent on global publicity tours before cheering foreign crowds.

The agency announced in September its space plane had completed a successful test flight but has yet to release details or even a photo of the craft.

Milko reported from Jakarta, Indonesia.

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## People magazine reveals its '2020 People of the Year'

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — People magazine has named George Clooney, Dr. Anthony Fauci, Selena Gomez and Regina King as the "2020 People of the Year."

The magazine revealed its list Wednesday morning as part of a year-end double issue with four covers. The four will be celebrated for their positive impact in the world during a challenging 2020.

Clooney, Fauci, Gomez and King will be separately featured on the magazine covers of the issue, which is out Friday.

Clooney has received some Oscar buzz for his upcoming film "The Midnight Sky," but the actor was also in spotlight for his advocacy work. He donated \$500,000 to the Equal Justice Initiative in wake of George Floyd's death and \$1 million for COVID-19 relief efforts in Italy, London and Los Angeles.

As the nation's top infectious disease expert, Fauci provided steady guidance during the turbulent pandemic. As the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, he has been one of the nation's leading sources of information about the fight against COVID-19.

Gomez released her chart-topping album "Rare" and hosted the cooking show "Selena + Chef" on HBO Max. But the pop superstar also spread her message of inclusion through her makeup brand Rare Beauty, which set the goal of raising \$100 million in 10 years to help give people access to mental health initiatives.

King, who won an Emmy in September, used her voice to encourage people to vote. The actor also called for support of marginalized communities during the pandemic and end police brutality of unarmed Black people. Her directorial debut, "One Night in Miami," has also been talked about as a possible Oscar contender.

## Report: Climate change damaging more World Heritage sites

GENEVA (AP) — Climate change is increasingly damaging the U.N.'s most cherished heritage sites, a leading conservation agency warned Wednesday, reporting that Australia's Great Barrier Reef and dozens of other natural wonders are facing severe threats.

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Climate change that has led to shrinking glaciers, increasing fires, floods and droughts, and the bleaching of coral reefs are among the troubles facing 83 of the 252 World Heritage Sites listed by UNESCO, the U.N.'s cultural agency.

Sixteen World Heritage sites have deteriorated since the last World Heritage Outlook was released three years ago, while only eight improved, said the International Union for Conservation of Nature, made up of governments and civil society groups and advises UNESCO on natural threats to those sites.

"Natural World Heritage sites are amongst the world's most precious places, and we owe it to future generations to protect them," IUCN Director-General Bruno Oberle said. "Climate change is wreaking (havoc) on natural World Heritage, from shrinking glaciers to coral bleaching to increasingly frequent and severe fires and droughts."

The report says the Great Barrier Reef, where ocean warming, acidification and extreme weather have added to the coral decline and shrinking marine species populations, were one of four sites in Australia under "very high" threat.

The islands of protected areas in the Gulf of California in Mexico have also entered the "critical" category in the listing. Spain's Garajonay National Park, Olympic National Park in the United States, and Mexico's Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve are among those under "very high" threat, the new report said.

It said while 63% of the heritage sites are classified as "good" or "good with some concerns," 30% are of "significant concern" and 7% are in "critical" shape.

In a difference from the previous two IUCN reports, climate change has eclipsed "invasive alien species" — such as when foreign rodents, fish or plants are transplanted, accidentally or not, to new environments — as the most potent threat against such sites.

Human activities like tourism, hunting and fishing, and livestock grazing have also had an impact.

Read all of AP's stories about climate change at <https://apnews.com/hub/Climate>.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Dec. 3, the 338th day of 2020. There are 28 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 3, 1984, thousands of people died after a cloud of methyl isocyanate gas escaped from a pesticide plant operated by a Union Carbide subsidiary in Bhopal, India.

On this date:

In 1818, Illinois was admitted as the 21st state.

In 1828, Andrew Jackson was elected president of the United States by the Electoral College.

In 1833, Oberlin College in Ohio — the first truly coeducational school of higher learning in the United States — began holding classes.

In 1960, the Lerner and Loewe musical "Camelot," starring Julie Andrews as Guenevere, Richard Burton as King Arthur and Robert Goulet as Lancelot, opened on Broadway.

In 1964, police arrested some 800 students at the University of California at Berkeley, one day after the students stormed the administration building and staged a massive sit-in.

In 1965, the Beatles' sixth studio album, "Rubber Soul," was released in the United Kingdom by Parlophone (it was released in the U.S. by Capitol Records three days later).

In 1967, a surgical team in Cape Town, South Africa, led by Dr. Christiaan Barnard (BAHR'-nard) performed the first human heart transplant on Louis Washkansky, who lived 18 days with the donor organ, which came from Denise Darvall, a 25-year-old bank clerk who had died in a traffic accident.

In 1979, 11 people were killed in a crush of fans at Cincinnati's Riverfront Coliseum, where the British rock group The Who was performing.

In 1992, the Greek tanker Aegean Sea spilled more than 21 million gallons of crude oil when it ran



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aground off northwestern Spain.

In 1994, AIDS activist Elizabeth Glaser, who along with her two children were infected with HIV because of a blood transfusion, died in Santa Monica, California, at age 47.

In 2014, a Staten Island, New York, grand jury declined to indict police officer Daniel Pantaleo in the July 2014 chokehold death of Eric Garner, a Black man who'd been stopped on suspicion of selling loose, untaxed cigarettes. (Pantaleo would be fired from the police force in August 2019.) Herman Badillo (bah-DEE'-yoh), a Bronx politician who was the first person born in Puerto Rico to become a U.S. congressman, died at age 85.

In 2017, the second-largest U.S. drugstore chain, CVS, announced that it was buying Aetna, the third-largest health insurer, in order to push much deeper into customer care.

Ten years ago: During a surprise holiday-season visit to Afghanistan, President Barack Obama told cheering U.S. troops at Bagram Air Field they were succeeding in their mission to fight terrorism; however, foul weather prevented Obama from meeting with President Hamid Karzai in Kabul to address frayed relations. The Labor Department reported the U.S. unemployment rate had risen in November 2010 to 9.8 percent after three straight months at 9.6 percent.

Five years ago: Congress approved a 5-year, \$305 billion bill to address the nation's aging and congested transportation systems (the bill was approved on a 359-65 vote in the House, and an 83-16 vote in the Senate). Defense Secretary Ash Carter ordered the armed services to open all military jobs to women, removing the final barriers that had kept women from serving in combat, including the most dangerous and grueling commando posts. Former Stone Temple Pilots frontman Scott Weiland was found dead in his tour bus in Bloomington, Minnesota; he was 48.

One year ago: A 300-page report prepared by Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee found "serious misconduct" by President Donald Trump in his dealings with Ukraine; the report would serve as a foundation for debate over whether Trump should be impeached and removed from office. At the NATO summit in London, Trump branded Democrats as "unpatriotic" for moving ahead with the impeachment effort while he was overseas. After initially seeking to hold the 2020 G7 summit at a resort he owns in Florida, Trump announced that the annual gathering would be held at the Camp David retreat in Maryland. (It ended up being postponed by the coronavirus outbreak.)

Today's Birthdays: Movie director Jean-Luc Godard is 90. Singer Jaye P. Morgan is 89. Actor Nicolas Coster is 87. Actor Mary Alice is 79. Rock singer Ozzy Osbourne is 72. Rock singer Mickey Thomas is 71. Country musician Paul Gregg (Restless Heart) is 66. Actor Steven Culp is 65. Actor Daryl Hannah is 60. Actor Julianne Moore is 60. Olympic gold medal figure skater Katarina Witt is 55. Actor Brendan Fraser is 52. Singer Montell Jordan is 52. Actor Royale Watkins is 51. Actor Bruno Campos is 47. Actor Holly Marie Combs is 47. Actor Liza Lapira is 45. Actor Lauren Roman is 45. Pop-rock singer Daniel Bedingfield is 41. Actor/comedian Tiffany Haddish is 41. Actor Anna Chlumsky (KLUHM'-skee) is 40. Actor Jenna Dewan is 40. Actor Brian Bonsall is 39. Actor Dascha Polanco is 38. Pop/rock singer-songwriter Andy Grammer is 37. Americana musician Michael Calabrese (Lake Street Dive) is 36. Actor Amanda Seyfried is 35. Actor Michael Angarano is 33. Actor Jake T. Austin is 26.